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UA System appoints general counsel

Salary approved for diversity officer

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

The University of Alabama System board of trustees appointed a new general counsel for the system and approved salaries for UA’s first vice president of diversity and the new provost of its Birmingham campus. The appointments were confirmed when the board’s compensation and executive committees met Friday morning by phone.

Birmingham attorney Sid J. Trant was appointed general counsel and secretary of the board. He is scheduled to start Sept. 1. For the combined position, he will be paid $305,000 annually.

Trant, an alumnus of UA, is a partner at Bradley, formerly Bradley Arant Boult Cummings LLP. He will leave the role with the firm to take up the position with the system, UA System spokeswoman Kellee Reinhart said.

The combined position will fill offices vacated in 2016 with the retirement of former general counsel Cooper Shattuck and board secretary Michael Bownes.

“While this is different than what we have had in the past, it’s a model that is common in the corporate sector and it reflects changes we have made in the past few years,” said Trustee Scott Phelps, who led the committee that recommended Trant.

Phelps and Trustee Joe Espy

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praised Trant’s experience.

“I am thrilled with the arrangement we made,” Espy said.

John Daniel, chief counsel at UAB, served as interim counsel. Deputy board secretary Matt Calderone served in the interim following Bownes retirement.

This is not the first time the positions have been combined. Former system counsel Rufus Bealle was the last appointment to serve in both roles, according Reinhart.

UA announced G. Christine Taylor as the new vice president and associate provost for diversity, equity and inclusion in June. The trustees approved her employment on Friday. Taylor is scheduled to begin Aug. 14, UA spokeswoman Monica Watts said. Taylor’s annual salary will be $252,000.

Taylor previously served as a chief diversity officer at Purdue University and Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. She earned a bachelor’s degree in broadcast journalism from Middle Tennessee State University and her doctorate from Ohio University.

The trustees also approved an annual salary of $360,000 for Pamela Benoit, senior vice president for Academic Affairs and provost for UAB. Benoit was named to the position in May. She replaced Linda Lucas, who retired earlier this year.

— Reach Ed Enoch at ed.enoch@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0209.
Johnson, UA coaches get raises

Baseball coach Brad Bohannon's contract approved

By Tommy Deas
Executive Sports Editor

Alabama men's basketball coach Avery Johnson and six other UA coaches got raises Friday when the board of trustees' compensation committee met, and new baseball coach Brad Bohannon's contract was approved with a total compensation package of $425,000 per year.

Johnson's compensation was raised to $2.9 million per year from the $2.8 million he signed for when he was hired in 2015. His contract was extended through 2023.

Johnson has gone 18-15 and 19-15 in his two seasons as head coach, finishing 10th in the SEC in his first season and tied for fifth last season. UA made it to the NIT in both seasons.

The Crimson Tide will enter the 2017-18 season with top-5 (See COACHES, C3)

COACHES

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expectations after landing a signing class ranked in the top three nationally, with five incoming players who were all ranked among the nation's top 100 prospects and rated as four- or five-star recruits.

Collin Sexton, John Petty, Herb Jones, Alex Reese and Galin Smith make up the class.

New baseball coach Bohannon had his five-year contract approved with a base salary of $265,000, same as his predecessor, Greg Goff, who was fired after one year. Bohannon will receive a $160,000 talent fee in addition to his salary.

Men's basketball associate head coach John Pelphrey, hired in 2016, received a salary bump of $75,000 to $425,000 per year and had his term extended through 2019. Basketball assistant Antoine Pettway got a raise from $210,000 to $275,000.

Women's gymnastics head coach Dana Duckworth received a raise of $35,000 to increase her compensation to $205,000 per year and received an extension through 2021.

Men's golf coach Jay Seawell had his compensation raised by $15,000 to $240,000 per year. His contract was extended through 2022.

Women's golf coach Mic Potter will now make $215,000 in total compensation, up $10,000 from his previous salary, and saw his deal extended through 2021.

Men's and women's swimming and diving coach Dennis Pursley had his salary increased by $20,000 to $180,000.

He received an extension through 2020.

Men's and women's track and field coach Dan Waters received an increase of $25,000 to $210,000 and had his contract extended through 2021.
Mercedes-Benz expansion on track for 2018 production

Mike Nicoll looked around the new 1.3 million-square-foot body shop at Mercedes-Benz, still under construction, and allowed himself a moment.

“We’re starting to see some things take shape,” Nicoll, the body shop’s senior manager, said. “When you think about how much has gone into this, the pre-planning, how much it took to get to this point, it’s a little overwhelming.

“But we have a large responsibility, to make quality cars at the right time, and there are a lot of customers waiting.”

The plant’s new body shop is still more than a year away from the start of production, but already presents an impressive picture at the Tuscaloosa County automotive plant, now beginning its 20th year of production.

For a little perspective, the body shop addition is larger than the original plant built for the start of production in 1997. But its look, design and feel also represents another step forward for the company, as it has accompanied a larger plant-wide style redesign.

In addition to the body shop, the construction project includes a rebuilding of part of the existing body shop, an expansion of the SUV assembly shop and various logistical and information technology upgrades. The body shop will see production of the next generation of Mercedes-Benz SUVs.

Once the newest addition to the plant is up and running, Mercedes will have a total area of more than 6 million square feet.

Equipment installation is still taking shape at the body shop and will continue through the rest of the year. Then will begin two to three months of engineering trials, followed by about three months of production trials. Production should be fully going by September 2018.

Prior to that, engineers and workers will have spent multi-week intervals in Germany building the car there and getting up to speed on production methods and equipment.

The new building they will enter when production begins in Vance incorporates several ideas that are part of the larger Mercedes corporate ethos.

Workers will come from the parking lot down a tunneled walkway to the cream-colored building, striding underneath canvas architectural awnings that give the building a cool, innovative feel.

The conference areas, with open windows, employ specially designed lighting, seating and colors to reinforce the idea of openness. That carries over into a shared open office floor plan. The larger plant began an office redesign in early 2016 to look at efficiency and employee recommendations. The new design also looked at how best to integrate technology into the workplace, Nicoll said.

The look is also apparent in the first floor cafeteria. The entrance way and office areas are the only part of the body shop that is multistory. The rest is simply one story and represents a different way of production at

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the plant.

Instead of a multi-floor conveyor assembly line to manufacture vehicles, the new body shop will actually be two body shops in one, Nicoll said. Action will continue along two lines throughout the L-shaped body shop, utilizing more than 1,000 robots of varying sizes.

The body shop will also use automated guided vehicles, or AGVs, to transport vehicles during the assembly process. Imagine a self-driving apparatus that can pick up the vehicle while it is being assembled, then take it to the next step in the line. This technology is a first for the plant.

The autonomous vehicles will travel at about 1.5 meters per second in special lanes at the plant, or at a “fast trot,” transporting vehicles from one production area to the next.

The AGVs are controlled through a traffic management software package, which will coordinate their movements through between 30,000 to 40,000 magnets located in the body shop floor. There will be between 85 to 90 AGVs running at certain speeds at any given time, with many built-in safety features.

But in the midst of all that activity are glass-windowed break rooms on the factory floor. Once the door closes, all that’s discernible outside is an indistinct hum.
Grassroots effort lands pro soccer – now support it

Joseph Goodman
jgoodman@al.com

Birmingham has a professional soccer team, and if you believe in this city then you’ll support it.

It can’t be written any simpler.

It doesn’t matter if you’ve never kicked a soccer ball in your life. It doesn’t matter if you’ve never been to a match. Black and white people. New immigrants and old. This is your team, and it can be a reflection of this city with the right kind of spirit.

Birmingham already succeeded in resurrecting the UAB football team. Now is the second act.

If Birmingham wants to send a message to the world that things are different, here’s its chance. There will be naysayers, of course. Don’t ignore them. Invite them...
GOODMAN

FROM A1

to a game, too.

Soccer is here, y'all, and it's going to be a lot of fun.

Team USL Birmingham was introduced Tuesday at Good People Brewing Company, and the venue for the big announcement was fitting. It was at Good People back in 2014 when video clips of Birmingham's World Cup soccer celebrations went viral.

Since then, Birmingham's support for the U.S. men's and women's national teams has continued to surprise the country's soccer establishment. Birmingham-area TV ratings for World Cup matches were among the nation's best. In 2015, the USWNT set an attendance record (35,753) at Legion Field for a stand-alone women's match in the southeastern United States.

"Soccer has grown tremendously, and there is still a wide area that it can grow," said Birmingham Mayor William Bell, who was so excited about the USL celebration on Tuesday at Good People that he announced the new club himself. "Throughout the years, soccer has grown and grown in excitement, and we oftentimes watch on TV as other cities and other countries have experienced live soccer right there in their communities. Well, today the time has come. The time has come."

Birmingham's soccer team begins playing in the United Soccer League in 2019. USL is a second-division league, which means it's one tier below Major League Soccer. People have already started asking me if Birmingham can make the jump to MLS. I don't know the answer to that question, but I do know, even if it's a long shot, this is the most realistic path for Birmingham to finally have a major professional sports franchise.

Other cities have embraced USL teams and supported them so passionately that MLS awarded their cities a franchise because they had a billionaire backer and a publicly funded mega stadium. In Nashville, another billionaire is leading that push for MLS.

In Birmingham, this new franchise will live or die through its fan support. It started from grassroots, and from there it will succeed. If USL Birmingham wants to prosper, then its new investors need to do two things: let Copes and Killian run the team, and look for some affordable land near Lakeview.

Oh, and keep the name the Hammers. The kids don't want it any other way.

Good news: There are a lot of those people around.

Small markets can succeed in professional sports with the right community support. The San Antonio Spurs are the franchise all other franchises emulate in the NBA. Memphis has the Grizzlies. Unlike the Birmingham Barons, which is a farm team of the Chicago White Sox, USL Birmingham will be an independent franchise. It can create its own destiny, and, in a way, it already has.

How this town landed a franchise in the USL is a reflection of the new energy pumping through these streets. It is a testament to the hope of a younger generation that Birmingham can achieve something greater than itself. The grassroots movement to bring soccer to Birmingham started with two guys out of college who had a crazy dream. They wanted to start a pro soccer team for their city. In 2014, Morgan Copes and John Killian founded a team called the Birmingham Hammers. Copes and Killian were young, and still are, but these guys had a vision and they believed. The Hammers started out as an amateur club before attracting investors who wanted to take it to the next level.

It doesn't get any more grassroots than that. This is Birmingham's team, started by Birmingham millennials. Over in Atlanta, that city was awarded an MLS franchise because they had a billionaire backer and a publicly funded mega stadium. In Nashville, another billionaire is leading that push for MLS.

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Joseph Goodman is a columnist for Alabama Media Group. He's on Twitter @JoeGoodmanJr.

How this town landed a franchise in the USL is a reflection of the new energy pumping through these streets. It is a testament to the hope of a younger generation that Birmingham can achieve something greater than itself.
Local businessman named president of hall of fame

A Tuscaloosa businessman will serve as president and chief operating officer of the Alabama Healthcare Hall of Fame.

Dennis Stanard will lead the hall of fame, which was founded in 1997 to recognize people who have made outstanding contributions to health care in Alabama.

Stanard graduated from the University of Alabama School of Business with bachelor of science and master of arts degrees.

He is an Air Force veteran and served as past chairman of the Tuscaloosa Historic Preservation Commission. He earned the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama's Charles H. Land Member of the Year Award and the Healthcare Hall of Fame's Distinguished Service Award.

Dr. Wayne H. Finley, chairman of the Alabama Healthcare Hall of Fame and a professor emeritus at UAB, said the board of directors looks forward to working with Stanard.

"His expertise and previous involvement with the program will be important to its future development as we continue to recognize those persons who have made outstanding contributions to Alabama healthcare," Finley said in a news release.

Several people with Tuscaloosa ties have been inducted into the Alabama Healthcare Hall of Fame: Dr. Peter Bryce, a pioneer in mental health in the post-Civil War era and the namesake of Bryce Hospital; James I. Harrison Jr., founder of Harco drugstores; Dr. Charles A. "Mickey" LeMaistre, physician, educator, administrator, and proponent of public health education; David Mathews, a former president of the University of Alabama; D. O. McClusky, a longtime hospital pharmacy administrator and community leader; Dr. William Dempsey Partlow, a former superintendent of the Alabama State Hospitals and namesake of one of Tuscaloosa's mental health facilities; and Richard A. Thigpen, a higher education leader, community volunteer and Alabama healthcare advocate.

For more information about the Alabama Healthcare Hall of Fame, visit www.healthcarehof.org, or email ahhof@live.com.
Could Trump shake up Alabama Senate race?

By Bridget Bowman
CQ-Roll Call (TNS)

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump threw his political weight behind GOP Sen. Luther Strange just days before Alabama voters decide who will replace Jeff Sessions in a special election. How other candidates respond could determine whether that makes a difference.

Polls show that Strange, Rep. Mo Brooks and former Alabama Supreme Court Justice Roy Moore are the top three contenders in the crowded Republican primary field. Strange was appointed to the seat after Sessions, who is now the attorney general, left office.

If none of the candidates garner more than 50 percent of the vote on the Aug. 15 primary, the top two candidates advance to a Sept. 26 runoff.

With just days left before the primary, Strange is working to make sure voters remember that he is Trump's choice. And Brooks and Moore are forging ahead with their campaigns.

With Trump's endorsement coming one week before the primary, Strange's team will be spreading the word about the endorsement in a state where Trump is very popular.

"An endorsement even of this magnitude requires six to 10 reinforcements with voters for them to even realize that this occurred," said Brent Buchanan, a GOP strategist based in Montgomery, Ala. "The impact of this endorsement is going to hinge on whether the Strange campaigns puts enough paid media behind it."

Strange's campaign launched a radio and a 30-second television ad on Thursday morning touting the endorsement. A campaign spokeswoman did not immediately respond to requests for comment about the size and length of the ad buy.

"President Trump says Luther Strange is the best conservative to pass our agenda," the narrator says as an image of Trump's tweet is shown.

Buchanan said the key for Strange is getting that message to voters in Alabama who strongly support Trump.

"That's the person that is going to make the decision here," Buchanan said. "Does that make him turn out to vote when he was previously not going to?"

Election officials are expecting a low turnout next Tuesday. Alabama Secretary of State John Merrill said turnout could be between 20 and 25 percent, about 10 points below a typical primary, according to the Associated Press.

Buchanan and GOP strategist David Ferguson said Trump's endorsement could bring some voters to the polls who otherwise would not have voted or were undecided.

"It really could push people who were on the edge, or didn't know what to think, or didn't know what commercials to believe," Ferguson said. "They're likely going to side with the president.

See SENATE, A5
Civil rights icon John Lewis endorses Jones

Paul Gattis  pgattis@al.com

Civil rights icon and U.S. Rep. John Lewis, with whom President Trump feuded earlier this year, has endorsed former U.S. attorney Doug Jones of Birmingham in the Democratic Senate primary.

The Jones campaign announced the endorsement on Monday night.

"Today, I am proud to support Doug Jones for U.S. Senate in Alabama’s special election," Lewis said in the endorsement statement. "I have seen Doug’s dedication to civil rights and social justice. From his time as U.S. Attorney prosecuting the 16th Street Baptist Church bombers to his private life as an advocate for social justice and economic empowerment, Doug Jones is a proven leader in which we can place our trust.

"I am particularly enthused to see Doug’s commitments to prioritize the reform of the Voting Rights Act — to reverse voter suppression, his commitment to quality, affordable health care for all Americans, and his stand to raise the wages of low income families to a level that make the American Dream available for millions more."

Lewis, a congressman from Georgia who grew up in Pike County, Alabama, received criticism from Trump days before the inauguration in January. After Lewis questioned the legitimacy of Trump’s election and vowed to boycott the swearing in, the then-president-elect blistered Lewis on Twitter, accusing Lewis of being “All talk, talk, talk — no action or results.”

Lewis was among the leaders of the civil rights movement and suffered a skull fracture in 1965 during the famed march in Selma when marchers were attacked by Alabama State Troopers.

He received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2011, the nation’s highest civilian honor, was once described by U.S. Sen. John McCain as “one of the most respected men in America” and last year the Navy announced it would name a ship after him, making Lewis one of just a few non-presidents to receive that honor.

The Democratic and Republican primaries are Aug. 15.
Low turnout in primary will help Roy Moore

Folks we are getting down to the proverbial logjam in the much-anticipated vote for the open U.S. Senate seat vacated by Jeff Sessions. After 20 years as our junior U.S. senator, Sessions left to become Donald Trump’s attorney general. He probably regrets this decision.

When the race began it looked like a Roy Moore vs. Luther Strange race. However, the third outside horse emerged about a month ago. Tennessee Valley Congressman Mo Brooks got a $2 million bump from the shooting he endured while a member of the Republican baseball team. He seized the moment, which gave him the “Big Mo.”

About three weeks ago it looked like a three-man race between Moore, Strange and Brooks. However, the Washington beltway consultants, pollsters, and media experts supporting Strange poured a ton of money into stopping Mo’s momentum with negative ads designed to thwart his catching Luther and ousting him from the runoff. Recent polls indicate that it has worked.

The latest polls indicate a one-two finish between Moore and Strange. Strange’s Washington pollsters tout that he may finish in first place ahead of Moore. Money talks and it is the mother’s milk of politics.

State Sen. Trip Pittman will do better than some experts expect. Watch for him to get a good hometown vote in Mobile and Baldwin Counties.

Moore’s support has never diminished. It consistently hovers around 30 percent, even with his inability to raise or spend much money. On the other hand, Strange’s supporters have spent $3-$5 million. The Bentley appointment has been a tremendous albatross for Luther. Turnout is critical. Strange would benefit from a large turnout among upscale Jefferson/Shelby metro voters. Brooks’ hopes may ride on a large turnout in the Tennessee Valley.

Strange’s and Moore’s odds are enhanced by the short window in which the race is being run. Strange’s chances have been boosted by the endorsement of Alfa. This conservative group’s support carries a lot of weight.

When Strange took the tainted appointment from Robert Bentley six months ago, he was told that he would have two years before he would run. Under that scenario, his bet that a ton of money would be all he would need to keep the seat was a good bet. However, when Gov. Kay Ivey changed that election to this year the scenario changed dramatically.

If Strange were running in 2018 there would be 60 races on the ballot with a record 300 names from which to choose. The average voter, who could care less who the junior U.S. senator is anyway, will also be voting for state senator, state representative, sheriff, probate judge, circuit judge, district judge, and five seats on the state Supreme Court, along with a spirited chief justice contest, races for state auditor, state treasurer, agriculture commissioner, an open contested Attorney General race, an open contested lieutenant governor’s race, and one of the most crowded governor’s races in state history that may well attract to viable candidates.

The millions spent to elect Luther Strange would have been overwhelming. Folks would have walked into the booth and voted for the only name they knew. However, this is the only race in town. The people who show up to vote will know the score. With the primary being Aug. 15 and it being the only race, there will be a low turnout. Also, any money spent for negative attacks will generally drive down the voter turnout.

And a low voter turnout helps Moore. He began with 30 percent and that support has not gone anywhere. That 30 percent will vote and the lower the turnout, the higher percentage that 30 percent becomes.

Moore’s folks will not be at the lake or beach or deterred by the August heat. They are ardent and they will vote.

Remember a poll is a picture of the total electorate. The final poll and the one that counts is the count of votes of those who actually show up to vote next Tuesday.

We will see.

Steve Flowers served 16 years in the Alabama Legislature.
Readers can contact him at www.steveflowers.us.
Education superintendent responds to low evaluation

Sentance said he takes pride in his accomplishments so far

The Associated Press

MONTGOMERY — Alabama Superintendent of Education Michael Sentance responded Thursday to a poor performance evaluation from board members, saying he’s proud of his work so far after taking the helm of the state’s public schools 11 months ago. He said his accomplishments include creating the first office of school improvement, creating a strategic improvement plan and developing plans to better teacher education programs.

“Alabama is a great state. I believe that it could have a great future. It deserves a great public education system. It cannot continue to educate 20 to 30 percent of our students well and hope that is enough. We need more,” Sentance told board members.

Alabama Board of Education members last month handed low evaluation marks to the education reformer they picked less than a year ago to lead public schools. The evaluation, issued in a specially called meeting and over the objections of some members, could signal a push by some board members to demand changes or force his ouster before his contract expires.

Sentance apologized to board members if he had sometimes failed to communicate well with them.

“I have learned a great deal

See LOW, B3
and have more to learn, but I also believe that I am making a contribution to this state. I would like to continue the great task at hand," Sentance said.

Board members ended the meeting without responding to Sentance's comments.

In their evaluation, the board members ranked the superintendent's performance on a scale of one to three in several categories. Sentance scored averages between 1.28 and 2.07. One board member did not participate, calling the process unfair to Sentance.

Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey on Thursday voiced support for the superintendent.

"Mr. Sentance has been on the job for less than a year, and in that time, has advocated many necessary reforms. Though he is certainly not without fault, I trust that the board will give him time to implement those reforms," Ivey said in a statement.

Sentance was new to Alabama when a divided school board hired him last August. He previously served as Massachusetts education secretary. Board members who voted for him praised his innovation, saying he would bring fresh ideas. Others raised concerns about his lack of classroom and school experience.

Sentance was hired after the first choice of several board members became embroiled in controversy.

Before the 2016 vote, someone anonymously gave board members a packet of information, including internal department emails, accusing former deputy state superintendent Craig Pouncey of getting state staff to write his 2009 dissertation when he was with the department. Pouncey said the accusation was untrue.

Some board members said there had been an effort to malign Pouncey.
Town confirmed as U.S. attorney

Paul Gattis  pgattis@al.com

The U.S. Senate on Thursday confirmed two attorneys with deep Alabama connections to federal positions.

Jay Town was confirmed as the U.S. attorney for Alabama's northern district, and Stephen Boyd was confirmed as an assistant attorney general in the Department of Justice.

Town and Boyd had been nominated for their positions by President Trump.

Trump nominees as U.S. attorneys for Alabama's middle and southern districts, Louis V. Franklin Sr. and Richard W. Moore, respectively, were approved in a Senate committee vote Thursday. They are awaiting confirmation by the full Senate.

Town currently serves as a senior prosecutor in the Madison County district attorney's office, where he has worked since 2005. Previously, Town served as a Judge Advocate General in the United States Marine Corps, where he served on active duty and as a reservist for twelve years. During his Marine Corps service, he received several personal and unit decorations.

From 2002 to 2005, Town served as an associate at McElroy, Deutsch, Mulvaney & Carpenter, LLP. Town received his B.A. from the University of Notre Dame in 1995 and his J.D. from Seton Hall University School of Law in 1998.

Boyd is currently chief of staff of the Justice Department's Office of Legal Policy. He previously served as former Sen. Jeff Sessions' communications director, as well as six years as chief of staff for U.S. Rep. Martha Roby, R-Montgomery.

Boyd assisted Sessions in his preparation for his Senate confirmation hearing earlier this year.
Russia sanctions not yet affecting NASA

Space partnership seems exempt 'for now'

Lee Roop lroop@al.com

Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered America to cut its diplomatic and technical staffs to 455 late last week in an angry response to American sanctions against his country, but NASA and other space partnerships seem exempt from the reaction — at least for now.

Putin hit back after Congress passed tough sanctions against Russia last week for interference in the 2016 election. President Trump has said he will sign them. "It's time to show we're not going to leave that without an answer," Putin said over the weekend on Russian state television.

As a response, Putin's order would affect NASA's operations in Russia, the space agency referred questions to the U.S. State Department. The State Department declined comment saying Putin's order was still being assessed.

In the news vacuum, American news agencies took note of comments Saturday by Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin. "They (the United States) have an interesting approach, they try not to harm areas in which they are interested. They say that 'space is outside politics.' We take the 'space is outside politics' slogan into account, but nothing lasts forever."

"Nothing lasts forever" has been the ominous takeaway from Rogozin's comments. But there are reasons to think this latest Russia-U.S. feud won't extend to space.

First, Russia and the U.S. have worked long and hard to build their relationship in space. The International Space Station has been staffed with cosmonauts and American astronauts since 2000. A new crew that included one American, one European and one Russian launched in a Soyuz rocket from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan on Friday.

Just this April, Igor Komarov, general director of the Russian space agency Roscosmos, said at the U.S. Space Symposium in Colorado Springs that Russia would consider a four-year extension of its partnership on the station beyond 2024.

"We appreciate that ... political problems do not touch this sphere," Komarov said.

There's also big money involved. America pays Russia to take its astronauts to the International Space Station, and Russia sells its RD-180 rocket engine to an American rocket company that uses them at its north Alabama plant.

SEE NASA, A6
The RD-180 engine deal was estimated to be worth $1 billion to Russia when it was signed in 1997. Congress has banned the engine once, but lifted the ban when the American rocket company, United Launch Alliance, couldn't find a replacement fast enough.

ULA builds rockets in Decatur that carry U.S. military and commercial satellites into orbit, and it has ordered 20 more RD-180s to bridge the gap until that replacement engine arrives.

Meanwhile, NASA has only 12 employees in Russia now, according to a tally in the Washington Post. They are supporting those rides for American astronauts to the space station. America has been paying Russia $81 million per seat for rides to the station while it awaits completion of two U.S. crew carriers being built by Boeing and SpaceX.

Take the history of cooperation and the money together and it seems clear. If Russia does sever its relationship with America's space program and send NASA home, it will be a sign of a truly serious breach between the two countries.
UA students begin moving in

Classes will begin on Aug. 23

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

Early move-in continues Friday for University of Alabama students who are arriving on campus for approved activities before the start of classes.

Students arriving early are participating in sorority recruitment, marching band, athletics, freshmen first-year experiences and Honor's College and academic activities.

Early move-in began Thursday at Bryce Lawn, Burke East and West, Friedman, Harris, Highland, Lakeside, Parham, Paty, Presidential I and II, Ridgecrest, Riversi de and Tutwiler residential buildings.

Move-in will occur for the rest of the new and returning students living on campus from Aug. 18-20.

UA estimates that 3,000 students will be moving in during the early arrival period this week. Next week, another 5,000 students will arrive for the regular move-in.

Classes are scheduled to begin Aug. 23.

UA has experienced steady enrollment growth in recent years.

Last year, enrollment at UA reached a record high of 37,665. The 2016 freshman class, at 7,559 students was the largest in UA history.

Reach Ed Enoch at ed.enoch@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0209.
A space of honor
UA unveils Purple Heart parking space

By Drew Taylor
Staff Writer

In the parking lot of the southwest corner of the Ferguson Center, a new space will be reserved for those wounded in the line of military duty.

The University of Alabama unveiled a new parking space for Purple Heart recipients Wednesday during a special ceremony that included university officials and veterans alike.

“We need not forget that not just today, but every day, there are individuals who are making sacrifices and making decisions on our behalf,” UA President Stuart Bell said.

The process of getting a parking space reserved for Purple Heart recipients was a year in the making. Steven Arango, a second-year law student at UA who serves in the Marines on reserve status, contacted the university about trying to get a space recognized for veterans who were wounded during service.

Arango’s stepbrother, Flynn Bluett, created the design for the parking space.

“Humans love grandiose ideas, and there’s nothing wrong with that, but we should also remember that small, incremental change is extremely important,” Arango said. “When God put this idea in my heart and gave me this passion, I had to go forward with it.”

According to UA, there are two active students with Purple Heart status, but the reserved space means more than just a place to park, UA Office of Veteran and Military Affairs David Blair said.

“It’s our desire that walking by this space, people don’t just see a Purple Heart parking space, but they recognize that it stands for selflessness, attitude and integrity of all the people that have served our country,” Blair said.

Evan Van Norstrand served two tours in Iraq and one tour in Afghanistan in the Marines, suffering a concussion and lower back injury from an improvised explosive device while on duty. He was later awarded the Purple Heart and graduated from the university.

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with a degree in exercise sports science.

For Van Norstrand, the university has always been a place he has cherished because of how they have treated his service.

“I graduated here and that’s the reason why I came to school, because this school has always gone above and beyond for the men and women who served our country and continue to serve our country,” Van Norstrand said. “This parking space is another thing that makes this great and shows appreciation for everyone’s service.”

Duane Lamb, assistant vice president for facilities and grounds and commander of Tuscaloosa’s local Purple Heart chapter, commended the university for its efforts to honor veterans.

“Today, once again, our outstanding leadership here at the university leads the way, setting the right example,” Lamb said. “As an alumnus and veteran, it makes me proud of my alma mater.”

Purple Heart recipients who would like to use the parking space can register for parking tags at UA’s Office of Veteran and Military Affairs.

Reach Drew Taylor at drew.taylor@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0204.
Parking spot reserved for Purple Heart recipients

University of Alabama will unveil marker on Wednesday

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

The University of Alabama plans to unveil a parking space on campus for Purple Heart recipients on Wednesday.

"Honoring veterans in this way shows the commitment and dedication UA has for taking care of these students," said David Blair, director of the UA Office of Veteran and Military Affairs, in a statement released by the university. "This is just one more reason UA continues to be recognized as a top military- and veteran-friendly university. Currently we serve just over 4,000 veterans, service members and dependents."

The parking space near the Ferguson Student Center will be unveiled during a ceremony at 11 a.m. Wednesday. The ceremony will be held in the lot and include comments by members of UA's veterans community, including retired Air Force Col. and Purple Heart recipient Duane Lamb, assistant vice president for facilities and grounds and commander of the Purple Heart chapter in Tuscaloosa. The award is given to men or women who have either been wounded or killed in combat.

The parking space at the southwest corner of the Ferguson Center parking lot will be designated with purple striping, a marker and the logo of the medal painted on the asphalt. The spot will be available to Purple Heart recipients who register with parking services.

UA has two registered Purple Heart recipients in its student body, according to the university. UA's Purple Heart recipients can register with UA's Office of Veteran and Military Affairs for parking hang-tags that will allow them to use the spot. The tags will also be valid for any spot or zone on campus, except for handicapped spaces, according to the university.

The UA Military Law Society proposed to UA Transportation Services the idea of honoring Purple Heart veterans with the spot.

"My grandfather, who was a sniper in the Marine Corps, was awarded the Purple Heart after being wounded in the Marshall Islands during World War II," said UA law student Steven Arango, a second lieutenant in the Marines on reserve status and president of the society. "This is something that's been on my heart. I've seen similar parking spaces at Home Depot, and anytime we can do something on campus to honor our veterans, I'm all for it."

Arango's step-brother, Flynn Bluett, helped create the design for the parking space.

Reach Ed Enoch at ed.enoch@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0209.
Our View

Criticism in Hand matter directed at wrong target

Nick Saban has taken some heat this summer for what some commentators have deemed a soft stance on discipline. Some have gone so far as to suggest that Saban is all too willing to look the other way when star players get in trouble, because winning trumps all else.

Because this is a family newspaper and the word that immediately comes to mind to address those concerns would not be appropriate, we’ll call it baloney, even though that doesn’t seem strong enough to convey our sentiments on the matter.

It is almost as if these critics can’t take issue with him on much else, so they grasp at what they can when they can; opposing fan bases, apparently, cherish the opportunity to take any shot available at a coach who has caused them so much frustration on the field of play.

The latest issue came up when University of Alabama player Da’Shawn Hand was arrested by Tuscaloosa Police for DUI. Many pundits quickly called for a stiff penalty for the star defensive lineman.

Saban put out a statement that he was aware of the situation, looking into it, and that driving while intoxicated is an issue his program takes seriously.

There have been previous instances where players were arrested and each one was handled differently.

Now, part of the problem is that Saban likes to hold his cards close to the vest. He doesn’t like to publicize the exact punishment handed out in each instance and instead prefers to handle the situations as “internal matters.”

Many would say that’s his prerogative and that these are, after all, college kids. Of course, as a media outlet, we don’t always agree with that approach, but that’s another matter for another day.

In the instance of Hand, just a day after the initial criticism and calls for a stiff punishment, we discovered, as is often the case when all the details aren’t public, that things were not quite as they seemed.

Hand, we learned, was charged under Alabama law with driving under the influence, even though he was not driving. Hand did the right thing. He had been drinking, but he decided to stay in his parked car with the keys in the ignition and sleep it off.

“It is not OK that he’s drinking, with me, and that’s a behavioral issue that needs to be addressed and we will address it,” Saban said. “But the fact that he didn’t drive the car and wasn’t driving the car, he didn’t put other people at risk, which to me is the most significant thing when you drive under the influence.”

Hand is still subject to a disciplinary program that includes evaluation by professionals to determine if he has a problem and needs help.

To us, it looks like the criticism directed at Saban should be directed at the Legislature. The law is flawed and neither a football coach nor the state should punish a young man who made the right decision not to drive impaired.

“It is not OK that he’s drinking, with me, and that’s a behavioral issue that needs to be addressed and we will address it. But the fact that he didn’t drive the car and wasn’t driving the car, he didn’t put other people at risk, which to me is the most significant thing when you drive under the influence."

Nick Saban
UA students will help second-graders improve reading skills

By Drew Taylor
Staff Writer

Among the many goals Tuscaloosa City Schools has set for the system in the coming years, literacy remains one of the most critical.

Like many school systems across Alabama, students in Tuscaloosa's city school system have lagged behind in reading, especially in the younger grades. According to results from the ACT Aspire test during the 2015-16 school year, only 18 percent of third-graders were considered proficient in reading while 39 percent were considered in need of support.

Starting this year, Tuscaloosa City Schools will pilot a program at Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School to get second-grade students reading at grade level before the end of the school year. The program, called Book Buddies, is a collaboration between the school system and the Honors College at the University of Alabama. Both the school system and the program partners hope that the program will help students who struggle with reading and pave the way for the program being used in every school in the system.

The program was founded by Jeanne Burkhalter, former principal of Tuscaloosa Magnet Elementary School, who developed the curriculum.

See PILOT, B3
for the program. The curriculum encompasses different reading and phonic exercises for 15 students identified by the school as reading below grade level.

Burkhalter, who is retired from the city school system, said it is crucial for students to be able to read on par with their grade level early on.

"One of the reasons we're focusing on second-graders is if they are not reading by third grade, they will have problems," Burkhalter.

According to a study published by Donald J. Hernandez in 2012 for The Annie E. Casey Foundation, students who cannot read at grade level by third grade are four times more likely to not graduate from high school by 19 years old compared to a student who is proficient in reading by third grade.

In addition, the study pointed to socioeconomic conditions that also come into play when it comes to literacy. According to the study, 86 percent of students living in poverty were not reading proficiently in 2011, compared to 50 percent of students living in affluent conditions.

For Burkhalter, there should be no reason that students cannot read proficiently by the time they are in third grade.

"We want to create something that is inspiring," she said.

For the first year, students in the Honors College will visit with individual students twice a week after school, one hour each day, to go through lesson plans Burkhalter has designed. TCS Superintendent Mike Daria said MLK Elementary was chosen as the site for the pilot program because it's a priority school for the system.

"This is our work to look at the after-school hours to support reading and literacy," Daria said.

According to ACT Aspire results from the 2015-16 school year, at least 66 percent of third-graders at MLK Elementary needed support in reading while only 3.5 percent of students were considered ready.

Vicki Holt, coordinator of educational outreach at the Honors College, said the program will also help the college students who volunteer.

"Hopefully, this will build in them the idea that I need to know about the world more than what I see in my college and that there is another segment of the population that needs help," Holt said.

Holt said that throughout August, college students would be vetted for the program and would take a course about how to teach children. Both Burkhalter and Holt hope to have the program running by the middle of September.

"Most of these children don't know what a good book experience can be," Holt said. "They're missing that component."

Ideally, Burkhalter would like to see the program move from just college student volunteers to having people from across the community reading with students.

"I want to see everyone from firefighters, grandmothers and all kinds of people (wanting) to help out these children," she said.

Tyrone Jones, principal at MLK Elementary, said he is excited for the possibilities the program can bring for his students.

"My main thing is I hope we see growth in the ability of those children," Jones said. "We have potential benefits for everyone involved."

Daria said the first year of the program will be a time for the school system to see how the program progresses.

"Sometimes, you have to try things a little differently, and this is something different," Daria said. "We'll learn from it and progress from there."

Reach Drew Taylor at drew.taylor@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0204.
Innovation, technology fuel a bright future

Birmingham is embracing innovation and technology in the marketplace and leveraging its best assets — especially at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Southern Research and Innovation Depot — to meet the growing demands of industries, from health care and pharmaceutical development to finance, insurance and automotive manufacturing.

With half a billion dollars in annual federal funding for research, UAB is driving Birmingham’s new economy and partnering with research organizations around the world to ensure that collaboration takes us further.

UAB’s Alabama Drug Discovery Alliance, a one-of-a-kind development partnership with Southern Research, has more than 15 drugs in the development pipeline. And those compounds may find a home at the Innovation Depot, which already houses Birmingham’s brightest startups.

Whether it’s Regions Financial Corp.’s recent $101 million tech expansion or the ongoing $530 million expansion by automotive supplier Kamtek, innovation is central to growth in Birmingham.

Birmingham companies are changing and evolving to meet the global needs of their customers through innovation and technology, and as the companies change, so does the workforce. Alabama’s renowned AIDT workforce program continues to lead the way in training today’s workforce for tomorrow’s jobs, especially at the Alabama Workforce Training Center in Birmingham. The AWTC provides valuable training for the manufacturing and construction industries, providing guidance and technical skills training, as well as lessons in leadership.

The vibrancy of Birmingham’s technology community is a result of entrepreneurs, innovative companies and the unique collaboration we enjoy among local businesses and community leaders. By building upon this foundation, Birmingham will continue to grow and thrive as one of the emerging technology hubs in the country.

Brian Hilson is president and CEO of the Birmingham Business Alliance.
Redstone Test Center technical director ends career

By: Christy Barnett

It is the end of an era at the Redstone Test Center. After 36 years, Technical Director David Byrd is retiring from the organization where he has spent his entire career.

Byrd's relationship with RTC began well before its existence. While still studying at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, he was hired as a contractor, an engineering aide at what was then known as the Missile Command's Research, Development and Engineering Center Test and Evaluation Directorate. A few months after graduation, he entered into federal service for the very same Test and Evaluation Directorate. This organization was later realigned as the Redstone Technical Test Center.

Serving first as a test engineer, Byrd worked his way up through the organization where his titles included division chief, directorate chief, and in 2007, he became the director of RTTC. As part of the Base Realignment and Closure Act in August 2009, RTTC was consolidated with the Aviation Technical Test Center from Fort Rucker to form the Redstone Test Center. Under the realignment, the commander of RTC became an Army aviation officer and Byrd was named technical director. While Byrd has capably led the organization for many years, some of his fondest memories are the early years, pre-email, when this mechanical engineer could get his hands on the hardware.

"One thing I won't miss is the BlackBerry! Seriously, I'm going to miss the people, because they became my family. I'll also miss the ability to go down to the ranges and get hands on," he said. "When you get into leadership, you get to where it's less and less time to be able to get out there with the hardware. I enjoyed the hands on - being able to see the systems that are being developed. I can go to the labs and the ranges and the airfield and see these systems that are being built and see the technologies that are being incorporated into these. It's awesome to see how innovative our own people are on figuring out ways to test these complex systems."

Reflecting on the accomplishments in his career at RTC, Byrd said first and foremost it was always about the team.

"The biggest thing was the creation of RTC. That was a leadership challenge if you will, of bringing two organizations, two cultures together and forming what we have today," he said. "Looking back and seeing the synergy now, where we have labs and ranges that used to only do missile tests and now doing missile and aviation. And we've got people who did missile work, working in the aviation arena and vice versa. And how the expertise has intermingled and come together and the synergies that have come out of bringing the two organizations together is kind of amazing to see that all of that has happened in just eight years."

Byrd moved with his parents to the Huntsville area before he was a year old. He was educated in Huntsville schools and graduated with a bachelor's in mechanical engineering from UAH in 1981. That same year he married Laura Roach, and together they raised two children in Madison County. With the exception of a six-month assignment as acting director of test management at the Developmental Test Command headquarters, Byrd has never left the Huntsville area and has

See next page
no plans to do so in retirement. After a trip with his father, he plans to start some renovation projects he’s been planning, get in some hunting in the fall, rediscover some hobbies that have been pushed to the side over the years and, most importantly, spend time with his four grandchildren and a fifth being born this December.

“I hate to leave the job, I enjoy what I’m doing but I’ve worked a long time to be able to do things in retirement and I want to do it while I still have my health.”
U.S. Senate Confirms Jay E. Town As U.S. Attorney For North Alabama

By: Staff

The U.S. Senate today confirmed Jay E. Town as U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Alabama.

Town was in the first wave of U.S. Attorneys nominated by President Donald J. Trump and is one of the first three to be confirmed by the Senate. He will take office next week.

Town, 43, a former judge advocate in the U.S. Marine Corps, has been a prosecutor in the Madison County District Attorney's Office since arriving in Huntsville in 2005. He leaves that office as a senior prosecutor focused on prosecuting a full catalogue of crimes, including capital murder, murder, robbery and burglary. Town assisted the district attorney and the Alabama D.A.'s Association in a variety of administrative, training and legislative functions.

Town also was instrumental in forming the Madison County Veterans Court, one of the first such diversionary courts in Alabama dedicated to the physical and mental health needs of veterans in the criminal justice system.

'I am humbled and honored to continue to serve the great people of Alabama as United States Attorney for the Northern District,' Town said. 'I am grateful for the special trust and confidence shown me by President Trump, Attorney General Sessions, Senator Shelby, Senator Strange, and all of those who supported me throughout this process. I inherit a very capable office and look forward to joining them in continuing to do great things.'

Town served in the Marine Corps for 12 years and was honorably discharged in 2008, attaining the rank of major.

Before moving to Alabama, he was outside counsel at a large firm in New Jersey focused on commercial defense of major pharmaceutical, commercial and surety companies involved in litigation with federal agencies, including the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of New Jersey, the FBI and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Town has sat on several charitable boards, to include the Congressional Medal of Honor Foundation, a national organization promoting educational, patriotic and veterans' initiatives directed by the living Medal of Honor recipients. He also served as chairman of the Audit Committee, President's Advisory Group, and was a member of the Foundation's Executive Committee. He also serves as a director for America's Warrior Partnership which is a national organization which empowers communities to empower veterans through community integration. He is an original board member of The Bennie Adkins Foundation which provides scholarships to veterans in Alabama. He also was chairman of the Boys & Girls Clubs of North Alabama for two years and a board member for nearly a decade.

The National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution awarded Town the Medal of Honor for his many charitable activities.
Town has taught as an adjunct professor at the University of Alabama-Huntsville in the Department of Political Science with the curriculum focused on executive war powers and the Geneva Conventions.

He is a former member of the Huntsville Committee of 100 and a graduate of Leadership Alabama.

Town earned a bachelor's degree in Government & International Relations from the University of Notre Dame in 1995 and received his Juris Doctor from the Seton Hall University School of Law in 1998. He is a member of the State Bars of Indiana, New Jersey and Alabama, and the Supreme Court of the United States.
Vector Successfully Launches First Ever Rocket From Spaceport Camden

By: Staff

Vector, a micro satellite space launch company comprised of new-space and enterprise software industry veterans from SpaceX, Virgin Galactic, McDonnell Douglas, Boeing, Sea Launch and VMware, today announced the successful suborbital flight of its B0.002 test vehicle, a full-scale prototype of the company's Vector-R launch vehicle. This launch represents both the first customer-funded launch operation for the new space commercial launch industry, as well as the first launch out of the historic Spaceport Camden in Georgia, which was originally used by NASA in the 1960's for ground-based static fire testing of large solid rocket motors.

The flight test is particularly significant for Vector because the company is manifesting customer-sponsored experiments and payloads - a major achievement among the next generation of small launch vehicle developers. Test packages from Astro Digital, a leader in real-time satellite imagery data, and the Center for Applied Space Technology, an organization focused on space-based medicine research and applications, highlight Vector's mission to deliver increased access for organizations looking to launch microsatellites more affordably and at a higher frequency than ever before.

"Since our inception, Vector has been committed to making space open for business," said Jim Cantrell, CEO and co-founder of Vector. "Our historic launch today is a testament to the hard work of the Vector team, as well as support from NASA and Spaceport Camden. Together, we're on the fast-track to get to an orbital capability in 2018 and look forward to continuing momentum and unprecedented growth through the course of this year."

A primary objective of today's test was the demonstration and evaluation of a next-generation 3D additively manufactured engine injector developed through a collaborative research program with NASA Marshall Space Flight Center. This injector was ground tested last month and an earlier version was used in Vector's initial B0.001 launch vehicle in May. Today's launch represents another milestone for Vector, as it was the first time spark igniter technology developed with University of Alabama - Huntsville and NASA Marshall Space Flight Center was attempted to start the booster main engine.

"This is a significant accomplishment for Vector and for NASA's initiatives to advance enabling technologies for suborbital and orbital small launch vehicles," said Ron Young, NASA Flight Opportunities Program Manager. "NASA's role in helping the industry to develop commercial small satellite launch capabilities through the STMD Announcement of Collaborative Opportunities (ACO) awards, enables companies such as Vector to offer this capability to the commercial market place sooner."

Earlier this year, Georgia Governor Nathan Deal signed House Bill 1, also dubbed The Georgia Space Flight Act, to encourage commercial space activities in Georgia. Camden County has been working closely with Vector to put Spaceport Camden back on the map, not only because of its rich history of space innovation, but also to assert Camden as a top player in the competition for commercial launches. Vector conducted an initial set of ground operations at Spaceport Camden.

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in March, 2017 to showcase the Vector-R launch system in anticipation of this groundbreaking launch.

"Vector's successful tests prove that it is an innovator in this dynamic field. Georgia looks forward to working with commercial space companies, like Vector, as we begin the next chapter of space exploration and innovation," said David Ralston, Speaker of the Georgia House of Representatives.

"By investing in Camden County to create the first commercial spaceport in Georgia - the only exclusively vertical, non-federal range on the East Coast - we are making a significant investment in our future. Georgia is ready to lead the nation, and the world, in building a workforce and an economy that is second to none", added Georgia Lieutenant Governor Casey Cagle.

This most recent test of the Vector-R launch vehicle comes on the heels of a $21M Series A funding round led by Sequoia Capital, with participation from Shasta Ventures and Lightspeed Venture Partners. With this most recent round of funding, Vector will accelerate the company's flight test series, develop its first GalacticSky satellites, open its Silicon Valley Headquarters and break ground on a rocket factory in Pima County, Arizona.
Joint NASA-Brazil SPORT CubeSat Mission will unlock complex equatorial phenomena, lay groundwork for better space weather prediction

By: Staff

Two phenomena in the ionosphere -- equatorial plasma bubbles and scintillation -- have impacted radio communication systems, satellite technologies and global positioning system (GPS) signals for decades, said Jim Spann, chief scientist for the Science and Technology Directorate at NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama. Equatorial plasma bubbles are regions of comparatively low density which may elongate into towering plumes during high-intensity periods. Scintillation is a unique type of atmospheric fluctuation that can interrupt radio frequencies, much like the "twinkling" effect seen in starlight when optical frequencies are disrupted.

The Scintillation Prediction Observations Research Task (SPORT) mission, funded by NASA's Science Mission Directorate in Washington, will observe these peculiar structures in order to understand what causes them, determine how to predict their behavior and assess ways to mitigate their effects.

The joint U.S.-Brazilian team, led by Spann as principal investigator, will design and launch SPORT as a CubeSat, a compact satellite about the size of two loaves of bread. It will be launched in 2019 to an Earth orbit approximately 217-248 miles high (350-400 km). Its operational phase is expected to last at least a year.

"Degraded communications and GPS signals are known to be closely linked to these phenomena," Spann said. It's his goal to shed new light on these phenomena and inspire new operational solutions to contend with the disturbed conditions.

The Brazilian SPORT team seeks targeted solutions as well. Otavio Durão, project manager for the team at Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas Espaciais (INPE) in São Jose dos Campos, a São Paulo municipality, said ionospheric responses to a space phenomenon called the South Atlantic Anomaly or the South American Magnetic Anomaly -- where space radiation dips close to Earth -- negatively impacts Brazil's busy airports. "Our country is interested in refining GPS signal processing, making takeoffs and landings safer and more precise," he said. "Because so many international flights come to and through Brazil, this should be a matter of concern for all countries."

Brazil's strong agricultural industry also is concerned about the anomaly's effects on GPS, said Durão's colleague Dr. Luis Loures, the SPORT spacecraft manager at the Instituto Tecnológico da Aeronáutica in São Jose dos Campos. "Our agribusiness is always trying to increase crop productivity," he said. "One way to accomplish this is by using automated tools. But being able to precisely position those automated tractors and field sprayers, without disruption from solar phenomena, is crucial."

"As society becomes more dependent every day on space-based technology -- cell phones, self-driving cars, secure military communications -- it's critically important we first understand the
environment in which our technology resides, then learn how to operate through and preserve it from potentially disruptive or damaging interference," Spann said.

Building on decades of previous ground-based studies of plasma bubbles over equatorial regions, especially intensive research in Brazil and Peru, SPORT will help researchers determine what's happening in the ionosphere to stir up the bubbles, why they form along the equator and what causes them to appear at night. Plasma bubbles and scintillation are global equatorial and mid-latitude phenomena, made worse by the South American Magnetic Anomaly, where Earth's magnetic equator dips close to Earth.

"Many of the discoveries to date have been confined to a limited number of longitudinal sectors," Spann said. "SPORT will make a systematic study of the ionosphere at all longitudes around the planet, documenting the conditions that trigger formation of the bubbles, with particular focus on the South American sector."

As multiple instruments on the ground also record data, Spann said, SPORT will probe the ionosphere from above. During subsequent passes, it will study specific sectors to identify conditions favorable for developing plasma bubbles and ionospheric scintillations. These simultaneous satellite and ground-based studies will help researchers identify how the observations are related, providing a better understanding of the results at all longitudes.

The team is confident the findings will enable researchers to use physics-based models to determine the physics of plasma bubble triggers, and thus identify the resulting scintillation of radio signals that propagate throughout the turbulent region.

SPORT science mission data will be distributed from and archived at the EMBRACE space-weather forecasting center in Brazil's National Institute for Space Research (INPE) and mirrored at the Space Physics Data Facility at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland.

The SPORT mission management team is led by Marshall alongside its international partners, the Brazilian Space Agency in Brasília, and the National Institute for Space Research and Technical Aeronautics Institute, both in São Jose dos Campos, São Paulo. Spann's team, which oversees the mission science, flight instruments and the CubeSat launch, includes researchers at Marshall; Goddard; Utah State University in Logan, Utah; The Aerospace Corporation in El Segundo, California; the University of Texas at Dallas; and the University of Alabama in Huntsville. NASA's Brazilian partners are overseeing the development of the spacecraft; integration and testing; mission operations; data management and dissemination; and the ground observation network. The science analysis will be conducted by the entire team.
LONDON – Alabama’s Ruebin Walters (Trinidad & Tobago) finished sixth in his heat in the men’s 110-meter hurdles at the IAAF World Championships on Sunday in a time of 13.56. Walters, who finished second in the event at the NCAA Outdoor Track & Field Championships in June, was making his first appearance at the IAAF Championships. Walters qualified for London with a victory at the Trinidad & Tobago national championships earlier this summer, where he set an Alabama record with a winning time of 13.30.

Former Alabama sprinter Domonique Williams (Trinidad & Tobago) finished eighth in her heat in the opening round of the women’s 400 meters in 53.72. Williams ran a personal-best 51.90 at the NCAA East Regional in May, which is the fifth-fastest time in school history and the second-fastest ever run by a Trinidad & Tobago sprinter.

Monday’s schedule will feature Alabama’s Jereem Richards (Trinidad & Tobago) and Ahmed Ali (Sudan) competing in the opening round of the men’s 200 meters at 12:30 p.m. (CT).

EAST MEADOW, N.Y. – The Alabama swimming and diving team’s men took second while the women were 25th in the 2017 United States Open in East Meadow, N.Y., at the Nassau County Aquatics Center this past week.

The Crimson Tide men and women combined to take sixth place with 194 points.

The men’s squad scored 155 points while the women tallied 39. Robert Howard won the 100-meter freestyle to kick off the Crimson Tide’s medal haul and was part of UA’s winning 400-medley relay that included Christopher Reid, Pavel Romanov and Laurent Bams, as well as its silver-medal 400-meter freestyle relay that included Reid, Bams and Luke Kaliszak.

Reid took the silver in the 100-meter backstroke and the bronze in the 200-meter backstroke. New school records (long course meters) came in the 400m medley relay (1:39.11) and the 200-meter freestyle, when Howard clocked a 1:49.50.

The Crimson Tide women were led by Mia Nonnenberg and Bailey Scott. Nonnenberg took fourth in the 400-meter individual medley and seventh in the 200-meter IM, while Scott was seventh in the 50-meter freestyle with a new school record 25.68.

On Sunday, Howard was fifth in the 50-meter freestyle (22.46) while Reid was 19th (23.46). Crimson Tide alum BJ Hornikel was seventh in the 50m freestyle (22.87) swimming unattached. Alabama’s Kyle Maas, swimming for his home club team, was seventh in the 200m IM with a 2:03.89.
Jereem Richards takes bronze in 200 meters at World Championships

By: Staff

Alabama’s Jereem Richards (Trinidad & Tobago) took home the bronze medal in the final of the men’s 200 meters at the IAAF World Championships Thursday evening at London’s Olympic Stadium.

Running with 2017 world leader Isaac Makwala of Botswana on his inside shoulder, Richards was in sixth coming off the turn, but caught Makwala, Japan’s Abdul Hakim Sani Brown and the United States’ Ameer Webb down the stretch. South Africa’s Wayde Van Niekerk, who was seeking to become just the second man to win the 200 meters and 400 meters in one IAAF World Championships, finished second in 20.11 (.106), just ahead of Richards at 20.11 (.107). Turkey’s Ramil Guliyev took gold at 20.09.

“I slipped coming out of my blocks and into my drive phase.” Richards said following the race. “I tried my best not to let it affect me too much. At the turn I wasn’t in contention really, so to get a medal from there is a great achievement. I always wanted to bring a medal back home for my mom. I do everything for her, so I am so happy I can take her the bronze.”

Richards joins Calvin Smith (United States), Clive Wright (Jamaica) and Kirani James (Grenada) as the only Alabama men to medal at the IAAF World Championships.

“Words alone can’t explain how grateful I am to be in this position and be lucky enough to perform here,” Richards said. “I have been very relaxed amongst so many professional athletes, the greatest athletes of all time. Hopefully I will become one of those type of athletes over the next few years. I still feel like I’m dreaming. I hope I don’t wake up.”

Richards will turn his attention to the 4×400-meter relay, which will begin with the semifinals on Saturday. Richards’ 2017 Alabama teammate Steven Gayle will also compete in the 4×400 for Jamaica. Former Alabama sprinter Akeem Haynes will run for Canada in first round of the 4×100-meter relay on Saturday morning as well. Haynes was a bronze medalist in the relay at the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio.
Tide's Richards reaches 200 meter finals at World Championships

Staff Report

Alabama's Jereem Richards (Trinidad & Tobago) advanced to the finals of the men's 200 meters at the 2017 IAAF World Championships with a victory in his semifinal heat on a rainy Wednesday evening at London's Olympic Stadium.

Richards, who posted the fastest first round time in the event on Monday, took the lead at the top of the turn in the semifinal and pulled away down the homestretch to finish in 20.14, tying for the second-fastest time in the semifinals with 2017 world leader Isaac Makwala of Botswana. Isiah Young of the United States had the fastest semifinal time at 20.12. Richards' time is also the seventh-fastest in Alabama history. He now owns seven of the 10 fastest 200-meter times ever run at Alabama.

The men's 200-meter final is Thursday at 3:52 pm (CT). With a top-three finish, Richards would join Calvin Smith (United States), Clive Wright (Jamaica) and Kirani James (Grenada) as the only Alabama men to medal at the IAAF World Championships.

Smith was a four-time medalist, winning silver (100 meters) and gold (200 meters, 4x100-meter relay) at the first IAAF Championships in Helsinki in 1983 and gold again in the 200 meters at the 1987 championships in Rome. Wright was a member of Jamaica's bronze medal-winning 4x100-meter relay in Rome. James won gold in the 400 meters in 2011 in Daegu and bronze in the same event in Beijing in 2015.

Alabama All-American Quanesha Burks (United States) finished ninth in her first round flight of the women's long jump with a mark of 21-1 1/2 (6.44m) and did not advance to Friday's semifinal. Burks was making her first appearance at the World Championships at this year's meet.
Six players in double figures in Tide win

OTTAWA, Ontario – The University of Alabama men’s basketball team defeated the University of Ottawa, 81-71, on Thursday night in the final contest of the Crimson Tide’s Canadian Tour. Six players scored in double figures to lead a balanced attack for Alabama, which finished the trip with a 2-1 record.

Sophomore Avery Johnson Jr., who started in place of Collin Sexton, led the Crimson Tide with 15 points and four assists. Senior Riley Norris added 13 points – all coming over the final 20 minutes. Sophomore Braxton Key added 12 points and a team-high nine rebounds, while freshman John Petty and junior Donta Hall each collected 11 points and eight rebounds. Senior Ar’Mond Davis also hit double digits with points to go along with seven rebounds off the bench.

“For a team that’s just played three games in four nights, I thought we gave an outstanding effort, especially in the second half,” Alabama head coach Avery Johnson said. “We were able to get out defense set, guys made the extra pass and we did a great job on the boards. Thankfully, we were able to close it out.

“We wanted to take a look at different rotations because we had a lot of different guys playing tonight. We have a lot of young players and they all got their share of minutes. We looked at a lot of different combinations and I like the different combinations we can utilize this year – we can go big, we can go small or we can spread the floor. We had a chance to look at multiple defenses, so from a video standpoint, we’ve got a lot that we are able to analyze.”

The Tide got off to a slow start, trailing by as many as seven, 13-6, over the opening 3:14 of play. The Gee-Gee’s led 23-18 after the first quarter. Alabama responded in the second quarter. The Crimson Tide went on a 12-4 run early in the period to gain its first lead at 30-27, forcing an Ottawa timeout. Alabama then outscored Ottawa 22-11 in the stanza to take a 40-34 lead into halftime. It was a lead the Tide did not relinquish.

After the Gee-Gee’s trimmed the lead to just one point, 46-45, with 6:37 remaining in the third quarter, the Tide scored seven of the game’s next eight points to stretch its lead to 53-47.

Alabama continued to play well in the fourth quarter. After Ottawa cut the lead to 59-55 with 9:02 left, the Tide scored eight straight over the next 1:58 to pull ahead by 12. From there, Alabama cruised to its second double-digit victory of the tour.

The Tide controlled the paint, owning a 54-43 edge on the glass and a 32-16 advantage in the paint. Alabama’s bench also stepped up in the absence of Sexton, Dazon Ingram and Herb Jones, who did not play, outscoring the Ottawa reserves convincingly, 34-9.

“The main thing we wanted when we decided to come to Canada was to play,” Johnson said. “We thought this would be the best competition we could face. We've had two really tough games and that's what we wanted, especially given the fact that we have some of our key guys banged up. We didn't want to go somewhere where we would win 105-5 or something like that. We wanted to have somewhat of a real game, and that's what we accomplished on this trip.”

See WIN, C3
Nick Saban overrated? LOL

By: Kevin Scarbinsky

Candor. Honesty. The uncensored truth. That's what you're seeking as a journalist when you grant a source anonymity.

That's what CBSports.com hoped to get in a series called Candid Coaches. According to the site, "college football reporters Dennis Dodd, Chip Patterson and Barrett Sallee spoke with one-fifth of the 130 active coaches leading FBS teams entering the 2017 season. They asked for honest opinions on everything from NCAA rules to social issues to their peers in the profession."

Do the math, and one-fifth of 130 is 26 so from the jump you know this is a small sample, which shouldn't be interpreted as an indication of any kind of trend.

One installment in the series asked coaches to identify their most overrated and underrated peers. In the most overrated category, Michigan's Jim Harbaugh finished first with 13 percent of the vote. Who finished second at 9 percent?

It was a three-way tie among FAU's Lane Kiffin, Lovie Smith of Illinois and - wait for it - Alabama's Nick Saban.

Excuse me while I laugh out loud.

My colleague Mark Heim did the math and deduced that a very small number of coaches described Saban as the nation's most overrated coach, but it would be comical if even one FBS competitor held and voiced that opinion.

Here's the best argument to shoot down that misguided notion.

From 1983-2006, Alabama had six head football coaches over 24 seasons, not counting Mike Price. Those coaches combined to win three SEC championships and one national title.

Alabama has had one head coach the last 10 years. Saban has won five SEC championships with the Crimson Tide and four national titles.

Same school. Same rabid fan base. Same passion for football. Vastly different results.

The program's not the same for one primary reason. The coach isn't the same.

One anonymous coach offered this money quote as his reason for picking Saban as the nation's most overrated coach: "We're going to have a war. You're going to have a howitzer, and I have a musket, and then every time we'll say that you're brilliant."

Alabama does enjoy some advantages over other programs primarily based on its rich history, but those advantages didn't allow Ray Perkins, Bill Curry, Gene Stallings, Mike DuBose, Dennis Franchione or Mike Shula to dominate the SEC and set the pace nationally as Alabama has under Saban.
Granted, those coaches faced burdens Saban hasn't. Perkins had to follow the legendary Bear Bryant. Franchione and Shula had to operate under the weight of an NCAA investigation and probation not of their making.

Still, it took Saban to point Alabama's howitzers in the right direction. He's as overrated as he is overpaid, and as we've said since he landed that original eight-year, $32-million deal, he's worth every penny and more.

That's my take. Bring yours to AL.com All-Access. Also, here's a new podcast featuring me and Scott Griffin of 99.1 The Game in Birmingham.
UAB football hits 10,000 mark for season tickets sold

By: Drew Champlin

On the day before UAB announced a gameday partnership with Bruno Event Team, UAB sold season ticket No. 10,000.

The buyer was Gwendolyn Murphy from Fairfield, athletics director Mark Ingram said. Ingram was not present when Murphy showed up to purchase the ticket, but did hear some of her background.

Ingram said Thursday afternoon that 10,134 season tickets have been sold. That's the most UAB has ever sold. UAB returns to game action after a two-year absence with a Sept. 2 game at Legion Field against Alabama A&M.

"I don't think we knew it at the time (that she was No. 10,000)," Ingram said. "We've been tracking that to see. She was gone before we had a chance to hug her neck.

"She had bought a ticket in 2012 and none since. She said, 'I'm so excited. I want to be here. I want to be here for the full season.' So she bought one. I'd like to call her and thank her."

Ingram said he didn't have the data, but most purchases have been individual or family packages more so than of the corporate variety.

"We had some in the community saying they want to buy for their own company," Ingram said. "Like our fundraising efforts, it all matters. If you made a seven-figure gift or bought a t-shirt or bought season tickets, it all adds up to put us in a position to achieve success.

"I do know the large majority has been from individual buyers, which is what we want. But, the corporate community has absolutely been helpful to get where we needed to be."
Brock Mccoin didn't end his Tennessee Tech career on a high note, but UAB coaches have high expectations for the graduate transfer wide receiver.

The 6-foot, 174-pound Mccoin was a star for former UAB head coach Watson Brown during his first two years at Tennessee Tech, playing mostly receiver and some quarterback.

He didn't have the best of relationships with Brown's replacement, Marcus Satterfield. He was released from his scholarship early last season and came to UAB to play right away after graduating from Tennessee Tech in May.

Mccoin caught 118 passes for 1,410 yards and added 373 rushing yards and 463 pass yards during his career at Tennessee Tech. He's a likely starter for UAB at receiver this fall.

Brown, who retired from Tennessee Tech after the 2015 season, helped Mccoin land at UAB.

"He just makes plays," UAB head coach Bill Clark said. "If the ball is in the air, he just goes up and gets it. The thing I'd heard on him from people who played against him and Coach Brown was, 'What a phenomenal athlete he is' and he really is. Great hands, super competitor.

"He's learning what it's like to practice at this tempo basically every second of practice. We're glad to have him."

Mccoin wanted to transfer after his sophomore season, but his new coaches wouldn't agree to a release. He stayed, but got his release early last year.

"To make a long story short, that didn't work out during my junior year," Mccoin said. "It was different. We didn't see eye to eye on a lot of things. We came together, had some words and he said, 'OK, we're going to release you.'"

Mccoin was a quarterback in high school and came to Tennessee Tech to play the position, but earned second team Freshman All-American honors in 2014. He finished the 2015 season at quarterback due to injuries and was slated to play out his career there, but the new staff didn't see it the same way.

So he came to UAB knowing that receiver would be the position for him, but Mccoin's versatility allows the coaches to use him in different ways. More than likely, it'll be as an outside receiver.

"If he had been a receiver the whole time (in high school), he probably could have gone to a lot of places," Clark said. "He is a talented athlete."

It was tough for Mccoin, who spent the entire school year at Tennessee Tech before graduating. He enrolled at UAB in June and is roommates with quarterback A.J. Erdely.

"I knew I was going to go somewhere," Mccoin said. "It's tough, especially after leaving a school on not the greatest of terms, and then having to drive four hours away to a new school. It's been tough, but I've been able to keep it up."

Mccoin may not ever get used to the big city. He's from Livingston, Tennessee, a town of around 4,000 people and a 20-minute drive from Tennessee Tech. Away from the field, Mccoin spent most of his time hunting, fishing or playing golf.

"If I ain't seen a cow, tree or golf course, something is wrong," Mccoin said. "It's different. I'd hunt before the games. I'd hunt on the night of the games. I was into it."

But now he's getting into the UAB football program, where he's expected to make an impact as the Blazers return to game action on Sept. 2.

"If you lack confidence, you're not going to do good," Mccoin said. "I wanted to make the (FBS) level jump after my sophomore year."

Mccoin said his playing style is similar to Erdely. He doesn't want to be the only shock absorber for the offense.

"I want us to be a balanced offense," Mccoin said. "We're going to run the ball a lot, but we're also going to pass the ball."
Former Tide player joins coaching staff

By Aaron Suttles
Sports Writer

Former Alabama consensus All-American Javier Arenas has joined the Alabama staff, The Tuscaloosa News has learned.
Arenas’ role is yet to be defined. The former standout defensive back and returner has been spotted at the Crimson Tide’s practices this week.

He has been shadowing the coaching staff to determine if coaching is something the 29-year-old wants to pursue. Per NCAA guidelines, which restrict the amount of on-the-field personnel allowed to instruct, Arenas will serve in an off-the-field role.

Arenas, a Tampa native, had a stellar career at Alabama (2006-09), which culminated in a 2009 BCS national championship. He made active rosters for three NFL teams (Kansas City Chiefs, Arizona Cardinals and Atlanta Falcons).

Arenas is the latest in a host of former Nick Saban players to find a role in the veteran coach’s program. Former defensive back Nick Perry is a graduate assistant. Former defensive tackle Josh Chapman is a strength and conditioning coach. Former linebacker Denzel DeVall is the director of player development.
Former running back Glen Coffee joined the staff this week as a student-assistant as he continues work toward his degree.

“I’m very loyal to our players,” Saban said. “We probably have a half of dozen guys around here now that have played for us in the past. They understand the culture, they understand how we do things, they buy into it and they believe in it. I’m happy to have them back if they want to be coaches or be in the strength and conditioning program or get in some kind of athletic administration, we certainly want to help them have the opportunity to do that.”
As game draws near, fans could see steady increase in price for Alabama-FSU tickets

By Aaron Suttles  
Sports Writer

As with any gamble in life, inherent risks are involved.

For fans not yet secured of their place inside Mercedes Benz Stadium for the season-opening tilt of No. 1 Alabama versus No. 3 Florida State, the question one must ask oneself is if you believe market demand will increase or decrease when the tickets hit the secondary market next week?

For a game that is officially marketing itself as the “Greatest Opener of All Time,” odds are likely that demand increases.

The cheapest face-value ticket for the game is $125. That’s the price if you were one of the lucky ones who were offered an opportunity to buy tickets through the institutions.

For the rest of of you, the secondary market is where you’ll have to go.

“It looks like it’s going to a very good market,” John Ed Belvin of T-Town Tickets said. “One thing is that tickets aren’t out yet so a lot of it is speculative. Anytime you’ve got the No. 1 and No. 3 team in the country playing the first game of the year, you can’t have but have good interest. “I expect right now, the way it looks, you probably should be looking for about $400 to get in the door. It could change and come down a little bit depending on how many tickets hit the market and there’s a lot out there for sale.”

Part of the attraction lies in the unveiling of a new venue in Mercedes Benz Stadium. Much of the Alabama fan base was more than familiar with Georgia Dome, where the Crimson Tide played frequently.

Alabama played in the Georgia Dome in 2014-16 for the SEC Championship Game and won its last game in the Dome in a College Football Playoff semi-final over Washington.

Calls to the UA ticket office have been steady.

“Naturally, there is excitement around the start of a new season, and given some of the factors surrounding this game it is no surprise that tickets are in high demand,” Alabama Director of Athletics Greg Byrne said. “Being able to experience a game in the newly-built Mercedes-Benz Stadium is certainly something special, while the proximity and location for a large number of Crimson Tide fans is also appealing. The matchup on the field features two programs that have won national championships in the last four years as well.”

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

TICKETS

Continued from C1
COMMENTARY

Odd timing for story on former Tide QBs

Cecil Hurt

For some reason, nearly a year after Blake Barnett decided he no longer wanted to compete for playing time at the University of Alabama -- and over six months after Cooper Bateman decided he'd play his fifth and final year of eligibility elsewhere, as players often do -- the ex-Crimson Tide quarterbacks are back in headlines talking about (who else?) Nick Saban.

No one questions that either Barnett or Bateman had the right to

See HURT, C4
transfer elsewhere. No one questions that they have the right to voice their opinions. I don't like the word "quitter," which gets thrown around too much in reference to young men who have spent most of their lives playing a grueling sport. But is this still news, the way ESPN made it out to be on Tuesday? The fact that the story featured a screaming headline about Saban's "tactics" but contained no attempt to get a response from Saban is unsurprising.

In his defense, Barnett indicated on social media that the ESPN story wasn't something he was enthusiastic about doing. "We were both "asked" to do the interview and we just answered the questions we were asked," Barnett said in a Twitter reply to a former Alabama teammate, Alphonse Taylor. "Never grudges, much love."

I'm a trifle curious as to who did the "asking" and why, but the best route is probably to let the two players get on with their lives and careers. If they feel like "communications" were an issue, they can certainly say so. The fact is, they were beaten out by a better player, Jalen Hurts. Maybe they didn't see it that way, and needed to be better informed of the obvious. If so, it's too bad that notification didn't happen.

Batum, for his part, said he "didn't want to be a part of it," presumably meaning Alabama football, after the first week of the 2016 season, but said he "toughed it out" until the end of the year. He eventually returned to his home state, walking on at the University of Utah. Barnett, given an NCAA instant-eligibility waiver, transferred to Arizona State. Neither is expected to be a starter this fall, although Barnett is No. 2 on the Sun Devil depth chart (or administrative grouping, if that's the terminology in Tempe) and is still competing for the job.

Every year, a couple of hundred high school quarterbacks sign college scholarships with FBS schools. More than half of those quarterbacks end up transferring before their career ends.

Some of those transfers will go on to be tremendous success stories. Jake Coker won a national championship at Alabama. Cam Newton won one at Auburn. Baker Mayfield is a Heisman candidate at Oklahoma after starting his career as a walk-on at Texas Tech. There's no stigma attached to looking for greener pastures, nor should there be. Alabama fans generally like to see their former players do well when they transfer -- even when, like running back Alvin Kamara, they end up playing at a major rival like Tennessee. That doesn't mean any fan base is 100 percent supportive. There are always an angry few among the faithful. Usually, though, it's live and let live -- in both directions.

Even Saban's 2016 quotes about Barnett, which Barnett again mentioned in the latest interview, had nothing to do with his transfer per se. The issue was Barnett leaving after the fourth week of the season. At this point, I suspect Saban cares more about the quarterbacks on the 2017 team and, short of wishing them well, devotes little, if any, thought to the departed.

Here's hoping that both have success in the future.

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After 16 years as an NFL assistant, Brian Daboll adjusts to life in the college ranks

Michael Casagrande mcasagrande@al.com

For someone who doesn’t have to do this much, Brian Daboll looked comfortable in front of the media firing squad Saturday in Tuscaloosa.

The Alabama offensive coordinator sequel to the Lane Kiffin experience won’t easily be confused for his predecessor. For nearly 17 minutes, the former New England Patriots tight ends coach took six months of pent-up questions since the annual media day news conference was his first time in front of the press since being hired in February.

This has been a trip back in time for a career football guy who hasn’t coached college players since 1999. Daboll was a graduate assistant for two years under Nick Saban at Michigan State before heading off to the NFL.

Perhaps the biggest question is the most obvious one: What’s the biggest difference in the college game after spending the last 16 years in the pros?

“There’s some time requirements there that you can’t，“ maybe, meet as much, but, again, the philosophy of the organization and the structure and the detail that Coach Saban provides for us is very similar to the system that I came from,” said Daboll, who worked for Bill Belichick for 11 seasons in two stints with the Patriots.

Of course, the NFL doesn’t have the 20-hour rule that restricts football activities during school terms.

But football is football.

“Coaching fundamentals is coaching fundamentals, so whether you’re coaching a 30-year-old man or an 18-year-old young man, a 19-year-old young man, you still got to coach the fundamentals and make sure they do it properly. And those don’t change based on age.”

Saban made the transition a few times from NFL assistant to college head coach, back to the NFL and around the block again.

These are different days and his answer to the question about transitioning to college reflected that.

SEE ALABAMA, BS
"I think that there are some differences in our game," Saban said. "I think the biggest thing is the rule about being downfield, being able to throw RPOs, kind of play-action passes are a little bit different because the linemen can be 3½ yards downfield."

The NFL allows linemen to go just one yard downfield on passing plays, which eliminates much of the threat that's presented by the college version of the rule. Saban said other staff additions have had success with that kind of offense, likely a hat tip to former Ole Miss offensive coordinator Dan Werner, who is now an Alabama analyst.

Working for a coach like Saban isn't unfamiliar territory since he already did one tour on his staff and did two stints with Belichick.

So, the demanding nature of being Saban's offensive lieutenant won’t be a culture shock for Daboll.

"I was raised by some old-school grandparents, it wasn’t always easy too sometimes, they were pretty demanding," Daboll said. "But it's a mindset. You have a boss, you have a job and you’re hired for a reason, and you have to know there’s a hierarchy to every organization. So the leader of the organization is the guy you take the lead from. "Whatever he asked you to do, that’s what you do. That’s your job. That’s your responsibility. And if you don’t do it there’s always consequences, especially in this business."

Then there’s recruiting. As a graduate assistant in East Lansing, that wasn’t part of a younger Daboll’s job in Round 1 with Saban.

Daboll said he's a "straight shooter" when sitting down with high school coaches and their players.

"I really enjoyed it," he said. "You come in from spring ball and you get out on the road and you get to meet a lot of really good individuals. A lot of really good high school football coaches out there, and sometimes you get to go out to practice and watch how they operate and pick up some things and develop some relationships with both the coaching staff and the players. It really was an enjoyable time for me to sit down to do that aspect of it. It’s something that I hadn’t done, but you try to develop relationships, be a good person and steer guys the right way."

Daboll is credited with landing a commitment from four-star offensive lineman Tommy Brown from California, according to 247Sports.

The new offensive coordinator also brings a unique perspective to the program. He worked with Saban in his first major college job and now returns five national titles later.

What’s different about Saban in that time away?

"He’s a pretty consistent individual," Daboll said after thinking a second. "Whether I was a graduate assistant at Michigan State or here doing this job, I’ve seen tremendous consistency, great leadership. He gives you a set of instructions to do. When there's structure and organization and there's things to be done and you have deadlines to do them, and he tells you how he wants them done, then it’s your job to go out there and do it. Whether you’re a GA or you’re a receivers coach, quarterback coach, whatever it may be. It's a good work environment."
Where's Minkah?  
DB can play all 6 spots

Rainer Sabin  
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Within those brief windows when Alabama has pulled back the curtain during practice, trying to find Minkah Fitzpatrick has been a challenge. He's been seen at safety. He's been spotted at cornerback. He has been caught hovering near the line of scrimmage in the slot.

With his practice jersey rolled up, as it typically is, Fitzpatrick isn't easy to identify. The top of his, No. 29, looks similar to cornerback Anthony Averett's 28. Then the mind starts to wander. Could he be deployed where Averett usually is? Nah.

But talk to the coaches and it really is possible.

"The fact that he can play all six positions in the secondary allows you a little flexibility to kind of see who the other guys are," said defensive coordinator Jeremy Pruitt.

Fitzpatrick has become Alabama's chameleon, or better yet, its Waldo — a super-athletic version of the bespectacled character in those children's books who blends in with the crowd. The difference with Fitzpatrick is that he's not two-dimensional and he will quickly make his presence felt.

Last season, while starting at three different positions, Fitzpatrick led the team with six interceptions and was selected as a first-team All-American.

He also emerged as the most valuable member of the secondary, helping Alabama minimize damage incurred by injury. He filled in for Eddie Jackson when the safety broke his leg last October. He then moonlighted at cornerback in the SEC Championship game when Marlon Humphrey was sidelined with a hamstring injury.

Now, he's allowing the Tide to tinker with the secondary to find the right mix of personnel. As it has been since the spring, Alabama is experimenting with Trevon Diggs at outside cornerback after the sophomore played receiver last season.

"I think the goal is to get the best four guys, the best five guys on the field in the best positions that will give us the best opportunity to have a chance to be successful in the back end," Alabama coach Nick Saban said. "Minkah can play either place [safety or cornerback] extremely well. So based on how the other players develop will probably determine to a large degree how they end up playing."

Fitzpatrick, as he has throughout his career, will go with the flow. "Coach thinks I am versatile and I think I am pretty versatile, too," he said Saturday. "I can play multiple positions and he trusts me to do that. I am just out there wherever coach needs me to play. [Friday] I played all corner yesterday. Then, the day before that, I was playing safety and corner."

To most of his teammates, so much change from one day to the next could be dizzying. But Fitzpatrick is regarded as one of the most cerebral members of the Tide. He finds out his assignment before practice. He'll then confer with Saban, get some details and go do his job.

It's become second nature for Fitzpatrick, even though it's not as simple as he makes it look.

"He pretty much can do everything in my eyes," Averett said back in April. "Put him at corner, safety, Star, wherever you want to put Minkah, he can play. Wherever Saban wants to put him or wherever he wants to experiment with him, he's willing to do that."

It's no big deal, as Fitzpatrick explains with nonchalance. He even passes it off as easy. Tracking him down, on the other hand, is where the real challenge lies.
Scarborough, Tide not worried about competition at running back

By: Ben Jones

Competition is a word that’s used often during fall football camp around the University of Alabama. The Crimson Tide’s running backs could certainly choose to use that word. But Bo Scarborough prefers a different term.

“I don’t call it competition, I call it creation,” Scarborough said. “We’re all together as one, we’re on the same team and trying to help each other out, become a better team and person.”

However it’s characterized, the running back position is among Alabama’s deepest. Scarborough and fellow junior Damien Harris were both key contributors last season. Sophomore Josh Jacobs also has experience. Freshmen Najee Harris and Brian Robinson Jr., a Hillcrest High product, are two highly-regarded freshmen.

They’re working to build on something together. That’s the difference between what others see as competition, but Scarborough sees as creation.

“I think that a lot of times skill players you’d think they would be cocky because of all the success they have had, but they’re all just workhorses,” sophomore offensive lineman Jonah Williams said. “It’s definitely exciting; no matter who we have back there we’re going to work to be successful.”

Each running back has something he can learn from one of the others, Scarborough said. Damien Harris was the most productive last season and may be the most well-rounded of the bunch. Scarborough is the biggest, and took a heftier role late last season. Jacobs showed his shiftiness last season. Najee Harris is bigger than Jacobs, but has also shown that he can be elusive in his first practices at Alabama.

“They can stick their foot in the ground and get up field real quick, and that’s something that I’m kind of taken from their game,” Scarborough said. “That’s something that we all need to take from each other.”

Scarborough has also had some time to learn from some former Alabama running backs. Players like Mark Ingram and Glen Coffee still hang around the program from time to time. Scarborough played with Derrick Henry.

Many of those players were part of teams that were also built on several running backs who worked together. Alabama’s backfields have always been talented, and often been deep. That’s how offensive players view this group.

“It’s exciting because if we do our jobs we know it’s going to be a big play,” Williams said, “and if somebody messes up a little bit, it might still be a big play.”

Scarborough didn’t want to divulge what specific skills he has been developing in the offseason with the help of his teammates. He did say he wants to sustain his production and be more consistent this year. He missed two games last season, and more than half of his rushing yardage came in the final four games.
Scarborough and the rest of the backs will try and build on that kind of production. There’s still more that each of them can do.

“I mean, it’s about helping each other out, showing them the ropes and learning from each other,” Scarborough said. “Even though we’re the oldest guy, there’s something we can take from the younger guys and we can put it into our perspective. That’s how you make creation.”
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Scarbrough has also had some time to learn from some former Alabama running backs. Players like Mark Ingram and Glen Coffee still hang around the program from time to time. Scarbrough played with Derrick Henry. They don’t always discuss football, but he’s picked things up from them over the years as well.

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Offensive coordinator's style meshes well in a program defined by organization

By Aaron Suttles
Sports Writer

What kind of man does it take to work for Bill Belichick and Nick Saban, the most demanding coaches in professional and collegiate football, respectively? It takes a man who knows the consequences that come from not doing your job.

First-year offensive coordinator Brian Daboll learned those lessons early in life. "I was raised by some old-school grandparents," Daboll said Saturday morning in his first press conference at Alabama.

He found that same old-school mindset in professional mentors Belichick and Saban. "I appreciate the way they do things," Daboll said. "They make it easy to work for them. There's a standard, you know the standard. You've got to meet it every day. And if you don't, there's consequences. I think it's very fair, demanding, but I like the work environment from those guys."

Daboll faced multiple questions about his offensive philosophy from rub routes to how he could use the Crimson Tide's talented running backs. As expected, he offered little in substantive information about what he plans to do. Why would he tip his hand so future opponents could get a jump start on game planning?

Still, Daboll did offer an assessment of sophomore quarterback Jalen Hurts, whose development has been on the minds of Alabama fans this offseason. "We've watched every piece of film that he's had, whether it was last year, in the spring. And our goal, our mantra really, not just for Jalen but all the quarterbacks and the guys on our team, is to improve every single day with their fundamentals. Because it doesn't matter what play you call, your scheme, it doesn't really matter until you really perfect your fundamentals. At the end of the day, when it's crunch time, the team that plays with good fundamentals usually has the best chance to win. "So he's really improved his feet, his eyes and where he's going with the football. But we're in the third day of training camp and we'll just keep grinding away, trying to string some good ones together. But I appreciate the effort that he's put in, (he's) a great young man, really dedicated, smart, tough. So we'll just keep grinding away with him."

See DABOLL, C3

DABOLL

Continued from C1

One thing noticeable about his style comes via his contact feedback to his players. During the media viewing periods, which are only typically the first 10 or so minutes of practice, Daboll has been spotted giving assessments between each repetition. His players, including Hurts, have praised his organization, which they credit in helping in the learning process.

Whether it be an "atta boy" or some constructive criticism, Daboll's communication style is a plus thus far. "You teach them what to do, you show them how to do it and then you accept no excuses," Daboll said. "That's how I was raised in this business. So if there's something not run properly, you fix it. If it's the way you want it to run, you give some encouragement.

"Every play is not going to be perfect, so you've got to take care of the big things -- ball security, knowing where to go with the football, understanding our reads. There's a million things you can tell a player on every play, there's a lot of things in football, there's so many different plays and verbiages, make sure you take care of the big things first, and then you work on the little details as you go. You stay on them, that's your job as a coach."

It's a style that meshes well with Saban, especially the organization part. Saban's entire program, from top to bottom, is defined by organization. Everyone's job is defined down to the finest details. "I think that's exactly what we want them to do," Saban said. "We want to be well-organized in our presentations and how we teach the players. I think conceptually that helps players understand and learn more efficiently and effectively. And, of all the people that I've ever been with, Bill Belichick probably does this as well as anybody. For Brian to have been in that system and that organization for a long time, I think, is reflected in his organization and in his teaching progressions that he has for the players."

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Pruitt tasked with replacing open positions

Defensive coordinator has been here before

By Ben Jones
Sports Writer

Jeremy Pruitt has spent enough years with University of Alabama football to understand how each offseason goes.

Seven NFL draft picks from the defense walked out the door in January. Now the defensive coordinator has to find a way to replace them.

"It's something that we had to do the year before and has been done here for a while," he said.

It's true; Pruitt had to replace four NFL draft picks and a handful of other key seniors before his first season as UA's coordinator last year.

Pruitt had spent six years at Alabama as an off-field staffer and assistant coach under Saban before returning as defensive coordinator. The Crimson Tide defense didn't slow down when Pruitt took over for Kirby Smart. UA's defense led the nation in yards per game, rushing yards per game, yards per play and points per game last year.

"I think he did a fabulous job," head coach Nick Saban said. "I think statistically, we were better in a lot of categories than even the year before. Granted we had a lot of good players, but he got the good players to play well, and I think that's the key."

The task will be the same even with a new cast of players for Pruitt this year. The Alabama defense will be expected to stonewall running backs and intimidate quarterbacks and receivers.

Alabama actually improved on its sack numbers in 2016 even after setting a school record with 52 in 2015. Pruitt's...
unit had 54 last fall. That's become a recent trademark of the Alabama defense, but the personnel this year may not allow for such a torrid pace again.

"Any time you bring more than four guys, you're putting pressure on the back end," Pruitt said. "To do that, you have to have guys who can stand up and play man-to-man. Obviously, that's where the pressure's at. We had some guys back there that have experience and we have some guys that were good blitzers.

I think over the next two or three weeks we'll kind of see how we develop as a team and see if that's our identity or not."

Two starters from last year's secondary must be replaced. Players in those positions will have to show they can handle the pressure of man-on-man coverage before Pruitt can apply similar pressure up front on quarterbacks.

One possibility in the secondary will be Trevon Diggs, who spent last year working on both sides of the ball. Saban said the 6-2 sophomore will be left at cornerback to develop. He's one of the players who will vie to replace Marlon Humphrey.

"The good thing is at wide receiver and you come over there to DB, you don't have any bad habits," Pruitt said. "You're really just learning. I think Trevon's got a good skill set."

On other position groups, Pruitt was less definitive. The defensive line needs depth and consistency. The outside linebackers have some experienced players whose production has been limited by playing time. Junior Minkah Fitzpatrick could play either safety or cornerback as the roster's needs dictate.

"We'll see over the next few weeks," Pruitt said often, capping his answers to several questions.

Saturday's open practice was just the third day of fall camp for Alabama, and still early to have anything settled. It was also four weeks away from the opener against Florida State. Pruitt's first job as a college defensive coordinator was with the Seminoles, but he deferred a question on that as well.

Alabama's defense has built its reputation on consistency from play to play, game to game and year to year. Pruitt has been with the Crimson Tide long enough to know that. Alabama has found the answers to those questions before, even if Pruitt doesn't know this year's answers just yet.

"One thing about great defenses is very unique is that they find the way to do the right thing over and over and over again. You watch college football, probably every team out there plays well at certain times in the game. But who can do it over and over? I think that's one thing our guys have to prove in the course of the next couple weeks."

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Precision punting

JK Scott also in the mix for kickoff and field-goal kicking duties

By Tommy Deas
Executive Sports Editor

At 6-foot-6, JK Scott may be the tallest punter in college football.

"I have no idea," he said. "I don't know how tall everyone else is."

The lean, 204-pound senior has grown two inches since he arrived at Alabama. It isn't even close to the largest growth spurt in his life. That came in high school in Denver.

"I was actually decently tall, like average, my freshman year, and then I grew like seven inches my sophomore year," he said. "It was a ton all at once, and I got really tall."

It wasn't expected.

"My dad's like 5-10 and my mom's 5-4," he said. "They're not that tall. We don't have any tall relatives, either."

See FOOTBALL, C3
Scott may not be done. He continues to adjust to his ever-increasing height.

"I'm still growing into it," he said. "Just through high school, all the growing, I would lose coordination and have tightness in muscles because you're growing so fast. I'd have to do a lot of work to just keep my body right."

His punting has never suffered for it, even though he's had to adjust his drop point a bit at Alabama as his legs and arms have grown longer. His 47.2-yard average last season ranked third nationally, earning him first-team All-SEC and second-team All-America honors. Almost 40 percent of his punts went beyond 50 yards, and seven went beyond 60.

"I've gotten more explosive. Little things have been tweaked and changed just to adjust. Some of that has been (from growing), but not a lot," Scott said.

Lately, he's been working on precision.

"One of the big things I worked on in the offseason is the Australian-style punt," he said, noting that it's not to be confused with the roll-out-style rugby punt.

"You're trying to like pin inside the 5 (yard-line). That's where you have the end-over-end, you drop it straight down, and I just put a little more focus on those kind of things."

That's not all. Scott is also in the mix for Crimson Tide kickoff and field-goal kicking duties. He says he's ready if called upon.

In high school, he did all three jobs. His longest field goal was 58 yards.

"At Alabama, I've always done backup kickoff," he said. "I've kept that going, kept training for that. I enjoy kicking. I will say that. Or kicking off. I enjoy punting. Whatever they need me for."

He'll leave it up to the coaching staff to determine whether he'll add kicking to his punting duties.

"I don't really know what they're planning for that," he said Saturday. "We'll see. We haven't even kicked off yet, we've just been punting. We haven't done field goals yet this year."

Whether he becomes a kicker/punter or sticks to punting, Scott's teammates recognize his value.

"Every day (in practice) when we do punt, he'll punt that ball 50 yards and we'll have to run down and get it," said linebacker Keith Holcombe. "It helps us out so much come season. JK's a freak of a punter and a freak of an athlete. We know what we have."

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Hurts puts in plenty of work to enhance his passing game

By: Aaron Suttles

Jalen Hurts wants to throw you the ball.

Well, maybe not you specifically. But the sophomore quarterback was willing to throw with any wide receiver this offseason, no matter if they were a starter, backup or walk-on. If they were willing to put in extra work to get better, he was all about it.

“I’m not nitpicky who I throw with. If you’re willing to get some work in, we can get some work in,” Hurts said. “It’ll only make the entire team better. Walk-on or not, starter or not, whatever. If you’re trying to get better, I’m 100 percent with that.”

That speaks volume about Hurts, a quarterback so remarkably mature for this station of his life that you sometimes forget he hasn’t been in the program for four years. There is very little “I” with Hurts, more “We” and “Us.”

No matter that, though. Fans want to see an improved passer this season, and Hurts has put the work in, toiling through the offseason and even attending the Manning Passing Academy in Louisiana earlier this summer.

“The goal is to come out and improve every day,” Hurts said. “You improve every day (if) you take a stride, a positive step, that’s all you can ask for, all you want to do. Go out and improve as a team, individually, on every aspect of the game. Improve.”

Improving his timing and accuracy are of importance, and if those improve the intermediate to downfield passing game will take off, too.

Hurts completed nearly 63 percent of his passes as a freshman, and his 23-9 touchdown-to-interception ratio was impressive. However, many of his passes came on short completions that didn’t involve much reading of the defense.

The offensive staff chose to mitigate the risk of playing an inexperienced quarterback by limiting his amount of reads. The goal this season is to open the offense up down the field.

“We wanted to improve his ability to be more efficient, effective, confident passer,” UA head coach Nick Saban said. “I think he’s made tremendous strides in the spring. We’re not allowed to watch a lot of what they do over the summer, but based on his confidence, the poise that he played with out there in practice (Thursday), I think there has been a lot of improvement in his knowledge and understanding and confidence. His leadership, his presence, all those things I think have a real positive impact on the offensive team and the offensive players. I think he’s really improved as a passer.”

He voluntarily gave up his Twitter and Instagram accounts once practice started so there would be no distractions.

He’s obviously heard the criticisms of his shortcomings as a passer. Those opinions, right or wrong, don’t mean much to him. He blocks that talk out of his mind.
“I don’t listen to anything that’s said,” Hurts said. “Everyone’s entitled to their own opinion. Kudos to them, whoever thinks that. All we can do is improve.”
FAMILY BUSINESS

NFL legacy Jonathan Haden ready to make impact

Drew Champlin
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Jonathan Haden was at a crossroads last fall, looking for the next step in his college football career.

The Upper Marlboro, Maryland, product left Arizona after not playing much and felt like he had a lot to offer.

That's when he got his friend, current UAB defensive back Mar'Sean Diggs, to send Blazers coaches his film.

"When he did, they wanted to get in contact with me ASAP and everything worked out after that," Haden said.

Haden was a three-star all-purpose back and signed with Arizona in 2014. He was there for two seasons, playing sparingly before leaving. He needed to finish 24 credit hours last summer and fall so he could enroll at UAB in the spring.

The 5-foot-6, 180-pound Haden has emerged as a top offensive weapon for the Blazers and figures to play a key role as a slot receiver and kick returner.

UAB loves his abilities in open space and won't be afraid to stick him in the backfield at times.

"Those multipurpose, real football player kind of guys who can play a bunch of positions are great to have," Clark said. "When you see him in 1-on-1s, he's really dynamic.

"He's that guy who's really fast, but really strong. Those guys are hard to tackle."

Haden has four older brothers within six years of each other. Three played college football. Joe Haden is a two-time Pro Bowler with the NFL's Cleveland Browns after earning All-American honors at Florida. Brothers Josh (Boston College) and Jordan (Toledo) also played FBS football.

"I learned everything from them," Haden said.

Haden got caught up academically last fall at Prince George's Community College in Largo, Maryland, sitting out last fall as a redshirt. Like many of the Blazers who didn't play in games last season, Haden is itching to hit the field. UAB is in its second week of preseason practice and opens the season on Sept. 2 at home against Alabama A&M.

"It feels crazy," Haden said. "I was at home taking classes and just waiting for this. Now that it's here, I can't wait for the first game."

Haden feels that the receivers can put a lot of pressure on defenses.

"We have tall guys who can go deep and go get it," Haden said. "We have guys like me and Collin Lisa, smaller guys who are quick and fast who can get down the field. We have a lot of versatility."
Ban dorms; they worsen inequality

Conjure an image of where under-graduates live: a dry-erase board at the door, opening onto a tight space with lofted beds, desk chairs engineered against tipping over backwards, fluorescent lighting overhead and bad poster art on the walls.

For decades, the most selective institutions of higher learning in the United States have championed a residential model of university life, with successive classes assigned to dormitories clustered around pleasant quads. My alma mater, Pomona College, has long housed 99 percent of its students on campus. I enjoyed that culture and thought it should survive indefinitely.

But now I wonder if that model is bad for the country. I wonder if it should be tweaked or even abandoned in favor of an alternative that exposes overachievers to more people unlike themselves. Later, I’ll sketch one idea for how that might happen.

Don’t worry: The typical American college student would not be affected. At public four-year institutions, just under a quarter of students live on campus. Just 1 percent of community college students live in dorms. But America’s ruling elites would face a profound change. The percentage of students in university-affiliated housing is 99 percent at Harvard, 93 percent at Stanford and 84 percent at Yale.

Such unapologetically elitist institutions operate on the premise that it is proper to identify gifted young people with leadership potential; to separate them out from their peers; and to cluster them in an exclusive, member-only settings for four years of intense learning. That approach has some validity. When bright young people study math, physics, philosophy and other subjects among minds of similar caliber, they learn at a similar pace and help one another to achieve greater mastery. Their greater mastery is, in turn, good for society.

But if the case for grouping the best students together for academic purposes is as strong as ever, it is much harder to defend a separatist approach to their lives outside of the classroom — especially insofar as elite institutions purport to produce not just future scholars, but future leaders.

Students would learn more outside the classroom if exposed to young people from a greater variety of backgrounds than they’d typically find at a top-tier college. And the future leaders among them might better serve the public, or the private sector workers beneath them, if they spent more of their formative years with generational peers who, for whatever reason, did not want to or could not attend a fancy university — i.e., the vast majority of Americans.

The status quo certainly seems inadequate.

In the United States, the ideological gap between more and less educated adults is widening. A majority of Republicans now say that higher education has a negative effect on the country. Voters have lost faith in elites of all kinds. And that’s true at least in part because elites unthinkingly perpetuate their own tribe’s interests — without ever having to meet the people harmed through trade policy or restrictive urban planning or professional licensing laws that disproportionately burden the working class.

It therefore seems perverse to maintain tax-exempt, institutionalized programs of extreme residential cloistering where cognitive elites form social bonds exclusively.

See DORMS, A15
DORMS

Continued from A14

with one another.

How would the world be different if the next startup billionaire from Stanford formed friendships in college with elder care workers, plumbers and long haul truckers in addition to doctors, lawyers and consultants?

These arrangements are unlikely to occur naturally even off-campus. (Our residential housing market is highly segregated by class and race.)

They could, however, happen at institutions already dedicated to shaping leaders through contrived housing regimes.

Imagine a selective college that used part of its hefty endowment to partner with nearby institutions on a brand new kind of dorm. Half its residents would come from the college itself. The other half would be drawn from vocational schools, community colleges and technical training programs -- people of the same age cohort, all working toward a degree or certificate, though the particulars of their circumstances would vary depending on the particular city or town.

They'd go off to their respective classes by day and return in the evening to programming and activities that encouraged them to interact.

Graduates of selective institutions would balk at such a change. They have fond memories of living on campuses composed of people with very similar academic profiles, some of whom went on to be close friends. Consumerist students tend to prefer what is comfortable to what will help them learn or serve best. Finally, selective colleges recognize that they appeal to families in part because they bring together up-and-coming young people in a world where who you know matters tremendously.

But maybe there's a university out there that's ready to put its narrow interests aside, and build the E Pluribus Dorm before it's too late.

—Conor Friedersdorf is a staff writer at the Atlantic. He wrote this for the Los Angeles Times (TNS), where he is also a contributing writer.