SEPTEMBER 15, 2017

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Trustees discuss student-borne costs

Proposed operating budget presentation sparks debate

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

Presentations on the proposed operating budgets for the University of Alabama System campuses prompted a discussion among trustees Thursday about the growing cost borne by students.

The 2018 fiscal year budgets for the three campuses and system office will be considered by the full board when it meets Friday.

The operating budget for the University of Alabama is proposed to surpass $1 billion. The University of Alabama at Birmingham's proposed operating budget is $1.27 million. The UAB hospital budget is $1.63 billion. The University of Alabama in Huntsville's proposed operating budget is $233.4 million.

In June and April, the board approved tuition rate increases for the three campuses this fall. Net tuition revenues are conservatively estimated to grow by 2 percent to 13 percent among the campuses, according to Thursday's budget presentations.

"As you can see our revenues are increasing, but, of course, the populations of students and patients we serve, the volume those, have also increased," Vice Chancellor of Finance and Administration Dana Keith said.

The revenue growth became the inspiration for a conversation about the cost burden.

"I would very much like one day to sit in this meeting and say that the increasing revenues are coming from research dollars and consulting contracts, and as we go through, I would really like the universities to address that," trustee Marietta Urquhart said.

Trustee Joe Espy followed Urquhart with concerns about the fees in addition to tuition.

"If you look at a bill, and I looked at one lately, those sure do add up," he said. "Parking fees, residence fees, every kind of fee you can imagine — I think that is something that ought to be looked at by the finance committee, and the finance committee ought to at least have some say-so in it."

Espy asked whether the fees come before the committee for approval.

"I would like for them to express what fees are and how they decide what fees are and how do they decide the rates," Espy said.

Keith said the board sometimes sees business plans related to parking and other services in the physical properties committee. Tuition and course and college fees are part of the resolutions provided to the board in June, she said.

Trustee James Wilson III acknowledged the concerns but framed the increases in terms of state funding losses during the last decade. The state appropriations for the system will remain flat for the fiscal year at roughly $475 million, which is roughly 70 percent of the funding provided by the state in 2008. The loss of state funding has been the foundation of the system's argument for the tuition increases in the last decade.

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"We are kind of in a Catch-22 in that, and we are doing the best we can, but if we could every reduce tuition and maintain the integrity of the staff, the faculty and the education we deliver, I am all for it," Wilson said. "And I don't like raising tuition at all. I would rather give as much away as we can. But we have to keep that in front of the narrative. If you look at the metrics, that is the real number we have been hit. It's the last thing we want to do, but without state help we are kind of hamstrung."

Committee Chairman Ronald Gray said the committee is thinking about reconsidering some of the budget approval processes, including the timing of tuition rate changes and the budget approvals.

"As part of that, I would think it is completely appropriate to ask for more definition of both how research is factored into revenue and a complete listing of fees we are approving as part of a tuition and fees request," Gray said. "Those are completely appropriate and we should make sure we factor those in."

Bigger budgets

The proposed fiscal year operating budget for the University of Alabama would increase about 7 percent to $1 billion, with $855 million in operating revenues including tuition and services and non-operating revenues of about $239 million. The revenues and expenses are typically conservative estimates. The budget approved by the board last year was $894 million. The university is projected to close the year with operating expenses of $991 million and about $1 billion in revenues.

Net tuition revenues are projected to grow by about 1.6 percent based on the projected income compared to the actual income. Revenue from auxiliary enterprises such as housing, parking and food services is projected to grow about 2 percent. Compensation is projected to grow about 3 percent to $652 million. It includes $9.3 million for faculty and staff merit raises. There is $7.26 million allocated for new faculty salaries and benefits. Around $554,000 is allocated for faculty promotions and $336,000 for graduate assistant stipends. Retirement and health care contributions are projected to increase by $1.15 million.

Scholarships would increase by $27 million to $278.3 million.

The University of Alabama at Birmingham's budget would increase by about 4 percent to $1.27 billion. Operating revenues are projected to increase 0.8 percent, driven by tuition, grant and auxiliary increases. Operating expenses are budgeted to increase 3.25 percent. Compensation is budgeted to increase 3 percent to $809 million. Scholarships are budgeted to increase 12 percent to $98.9 million.

The University Hospital budget for the upcoming fiscal year is proposed at $1.63 billion, growing by about 5 percent with increases in expenses for compensation, medical supplies and pharmaceuticals. Salaries and benefits are budgeted to increase by $44 million. Supply costs are projected to increase by $17 million.

Operating revenues are projected to grow by a 6 percent increase driven by patient volume.

The University of Alabama in Huntsville's operating budget is proposed at $233 million, increasing 1.1 percent. Operating revenues are projected to increase by 3 percent to $170 million. Non-operating revenues such as state appropriations would remain roughly flat at $59 million.

Compensation and benefits is forecast to decrease 3 percent to $154.9 million, though the budget includes increases for graduate student stipends and $1.3 million for 17 new faculty positions. The new faculty increases were offset by leaving select faculty and staff positions unfilled.

The UA System budget will decrease 2.36 percent to $20.4 million.

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UA plans renovations, new restaurant

Staff report

The University of Alabama System board of trustees is set to consider plans to renovate Lakeside Dining and building a new restaurant in Robert Witt Student Activity Center when it meets Friday.

The physical properties committee gave preliminary approval to the project on Thursday. The preliminary plans for the $4.5-million renovation of Lakeside Dining include building an 5,400-square-foot mezzanine inside that can seat 200 diners.

The Bama Zone - Dining at the Robert Witt Student Activity Center would be a $3.5-million project that would renovate the existing convenience store and deli and fill up about 2,000 square feet of the outdoor patio area overlooking the river to create a sports-themed restaurant and entertainment venue.
The daunting cost of a college degree can’t last

Gone are the days when a person with determination can improve their life by working their way through college. It takes a great deal more for a young person fresh out of high school to earn a college degree. Say what you will about the so-called “Millennials,” but, with regard to a college education, the “Baby Boomer” had a much easier row to hoe.

Maybe working two jobs in the summer and part-time during the school year was enough to make ends meet and still afford tuition. These days, that won’t cover the cost of books, which often cost hundreds of dollars each.

The University of Alabama estimates that the total cost to attend as a full-time in-state student is about $30,000 each year. For out of state students, the cost can rise as high as $48,000.

To put that in perspective, hundreds of students graduate each year who will not find a job coming right out of school that would pay an annual salary that high.

The university has done a tremendous job in recent years of offsetting the dual pinch of lagging funding in the state’s education budget and increasing operating costs. Much of this has been accomplished by recruiting students from out of state. Students from out of state now make up more than half of the student population at the Capstone. There is no doubt that Alabama’s return to national dominance on the football field has done wonders for that effort.

But we all know this tremendous run can’t last forever. If history has taught us anything about college football it has taught us to enjoy it as much as we can now, because no team can stay on top forever. We also know that the tremendous increases each year in annual enrollment can’t continue unabated. What happens when it becomes harder to attract the same level of interest from out of state students and annual enrollment increases aren’t ticking up at such a remarkable rate?

And other funding sources aren’t helping. The maximum Pell Grant payout in 1976 was $6,215. The maximum Pell Grant payout in 2016 was $5,822.

More students are being priced out of the option of attending the state’s flagship university. There is a renewed effort in our community, our state and nationally to reintroduce the idea that not everyone should go to college. For generations, we’ve told young people that the key to a better future is higher education. But now, many are measuring the value of that degree against many years of student debt, increasingly difficult job markets and stagnant salaries. Horror stories about mounting college loan debt certainly make career paths in a craft or trade more attractive.

Those career paths do not require a four-year liberal arts degree. In many cases, they also offer greater long-term job security. The truth is that what was true for the Baby Boomer generation is increasingly a false narrative for the Millennials, and this bubble can’t keep expanding forever.
These are the issues that defined Michael Sentance’s 369 days in Alabama

Trisha Powell Crain tcrain@al.com

Michael Sentance resigned Wednesday, 398 days after the Alabama State Board of Education voted to appoint him superintendent and 369 days after his first day on the job. Here's a look at the issues driving his brief and tumultuous tenure.

Graduation rates: Sentance said his first week on the job included a meeting with federal officials to discuss an audit of the department's ability to oversee how local school districts calculate graduation rates. Though the investigation began April 2016, Sentance said no one made him aware of it until after he was hired. State officials in April had to pull down 2016 graduation rates because those, too, were inaccurate. In a statement, Sentance said, “There were a number of mistakes made, both in data manipulation and basic protocol, which caused superintendents and others to take issue with the graduation rates posted by the (State Department of Education)."

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Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey had supported Superintendent Michael Sentance, but ended up brokering a deal for him to resign when it became apparent the board was going to fire him. Julie Bennett, jbennett@al.com

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Educators insulted: Sentance hinted at coming reforms during the Business Council of Alabama's annual meeting in late October, telling attendees teachers needed more knowledge of their subject, and some educators took that as an insult. In early November, former Gov. Robert Bentley told a group of county managers in Montgomery, "Our education system in this state sucks." Sentance's response, seemingly in agreement with Bentley's assessment, angered education groups.

'Betrayed' trust: Sentance told state board members in November that federal officials determined Alabama's 2015 high school graduation rates were inflated and "not honestly earned." Board member Betty Peters said she felt "betrayed." Board member Mary Scott Hunter said the entire department would be under scrutiny as a result. "I hate for people to betray my trust," said board member Ella Bell.

Montgomery intervention: Sentance announced in January the state department would take over Montgomery County's school system to improve the district's chronically underperforming schools. The intervention, still ongoing, hit bumps along the way, and with state board members Ella Bell, D-Montgomery, and Stephanie Bell, R-Montgomery, both residents of Montgomery, questions arose about the intervention during the board's meetings and work sessions. On June 8, the board passed a resolution to keep Sentance from hiring any new personnel to work in the intervention. Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall on July 17 issued an opinion affirming Sentance's sole authority over the operational management of the Montgomery schools, and Sentance used the opinion to instruct board members to stop micromanaging and interfering.

Teacher training: Sentance got pushback from educators when plans to restructure popular teacher training programs were made public at the board's February work session. Sentance told board members that continuing to do things the way they had been done would only produce the same achievement results for students. The idea was ultimately scrapped.

Reorganization: In March, Sentance announced the creation of four new high-level positions he said were needed to implement the reorganization of the state department of education.

Board members 'blindsided': State board of education members in March put the brakes on Sentance during a marathon work session, saying they need more information about the changes he planned. Those proposals stirred concerns among educators and legislators, and board members had been hearing from their constituents, asking questions board members couldn't answer, they said. "You don't let your board members be blindsided," said board member Jeff Newman, a Republican who represents areas of northwest Alabama. Board members made clear their concerns about Sentance's lack of communication, a recurring complaint.

New plan: In June Sentance shared the newest plan to improve public education — improve preparation and support for teachers and use broader ways to engage students in their own learning. Sentance said the timing of the new plan was driven partially by a federal deadline under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which replaced No Child Left Behind in December 2015. The board was set to discuss Alabama's ESSA plan Thursday.

ACT Aspire dropped: Sentance recommended in June ending ACT Aspire testing and the board unanimously approved. Work was underway to determine what test would replace the Aspire. For the 2017-2018 school year, students will take the Scantron test. District superintendents, while not happy with the ACT Aspire, were undecided on whether to drop the Aspire with no test to replace it.

Standards questioned: An August proposal by Sentance to raise expectations of what students should learn in math and English language arts was met with little enthusiasm by board members. Sentance proposed the board drop Alabama's College and Career Ready math and English standards by August 2018 and to start work immediately to create new ones. The board would have to approve a resolution to do so.
Sentance resigns as education chief

Resignation comes after one year as superintendent

By Kim Chandler
The Associated Press

MONTGOMERY -- Alabama Education Superintendent Michael Sentance resigned Wednesday after a tumultuous year on the job and ahead of a school board meeting in which some members were expected to push to fire him.

Sentance submitted a resignation, effective immediately, to Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey and state board members.

"I am humbled and appreciative of the opportunity to serve as state superintendent in Alabama," Sentance said in a statement issued through the Alabama Department of Education.

"There are many good things happening in public education in this state. My hope is that Alabama makes educating all children the state's highest priority, allowing the state to make significant educational gains and truly becoming the jewel of the south that it has the ability to become."

The resignation comes one year and one day after Sentance became Alabama superintendent of education Michael Sentance speaks during the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama's annual education summit at the Hotel Capstone in March. (STAFF PHOTO/ GARY COSBY JR.)
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The state had a crisis in math education and wanted to develop a strategy to raise languishing scores. He also worked on an intervention in the Montgomery public school system.

However, board members criticized his communication skills and handling of the intervention. Board members this summer gave him low scores on a performance evaluation. They ranked the superintendent's performance on a scale of one to three in several categories. Sentence scored averages between 1.28 and 2.07.

There also appeared to be lingering resentments over the selection process. Board members in June accepted a report that said there was a "scheme to malign" another superintendent candidate, who had been the first choice of several board members, by circulating old plagiarism accusations against him.

The resignation came a day before a Thursday meeting in which board of education members has scheduled a discussion of Sentence's contract.

Board member Mary Scott Hunter, one of Sentence's allies on the board, said he had lost support from many board members and she expected there would be a push to fire him had he not resigned.

"There have been a lot of issues. Unfortunately, there have been people who have not helped him or dug the road out from other him," Hunter said.

Ivey, who as governor serves as president of the school board, said she will ask the board to accept Sentence's resignation and begin the search for a new school leader.

"Over the past two years, Alabama has experienced far too many changes in state government. As with previous changes in leadership positions, we will use the pending resignation of the state superintendent as an opportunity to move forward and begin a new chapter in public education," Ivey said in a statement.
HUNTSVILLE

City may get new tallest building

Proposal calls for 17-story ‘iconic’ structure

Paul Gattis  pgattis@ai.com

The proposed downtown “iconic building,” as described by Mayor Tommy Battle, may evolve into two of the tallest buildings in Huntsville.

According to a summary of the letter of intent between the city of Huntsville and Triad Properties and Crunkleton & Associates, one building could be as tall as 17 stories while a neighboring building could be as tall as 11 stories.

Currently, Huntsville’s tallest building is the 11-story Regions Bank building at Clinton Avenue and Church Street, which stands at 188 feet.

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The letter of intent is non-binding between the city and Triad/Crunkleton. The letter also establishes a Dec. 31 deadline for the city and developers to approve and execute a purchase-and-sale agreement, as well as a development agreement. That purchase-and-sale agreement would include a “fair market value” price for the property that the city would sell to the developers, according to the summary.

The project has emerged as a dramatic early step of a downtown master plan approved by the city council earlier this year. The city is also in the process of planning bike lanes on Spragins Avenue in downtown Huntsville.

The tallest building will be at least 10 stories and as many as 17. The secondary building will have to be at least four stories and as many as 11 stories, according to the letter of intent summary.

Other tall buildings in Huntsville include The Times Building at Holmes Avenue and Greene Street and the Russel Erskine Hotel at Clinton Avenue and Spragins Avenue, both of which are 12 stories. Even though the Regions building is 11 stories, it still stands as the tallest building in Huntsville.

Battle described the maximum 17-story building as an “iconic building” in July in presenting the City Council the idea of the non-binding letter of intent.

“It has that element of, when you look at it, you go ‘Wow!’” Battle told AL.com following the July 30 council meeting.

NEW LOOK SKYLINE

The Rocket City’s skyline would figure to have a definitive new look with the potential dominating high rises should both buildings be erected to their maximum heights.

The buildings would be located at the site of the current City Hall and the mothballed City Hall annex next door and provide a southern framework to Big Spring Park East. The letter of intent said the buildings will “architecturally connect.”

The buildings would “form a corner of the project by fronting both Church Street and Big Spring Park East,” the summary of the letter of intent said.

The buildings, the developers and the city agreed, must include retail, hospitality and multi-family residencies and possibly office space and other general commercial and residential uses. The buildings must cumulatively consist of at least 200,000 square feet.

A second phase of the project would include a third building that would front Big Spring Park East. That building would connect with the potential 17-story building. It would be between four and six stories and would not include office space.

A structured parking facility is also a part of the project.

The letter of intent also stipulates that the developers will use renderings by Urban Design Associates — the Pittsburgh-based group that put together the new downtown master plan — as guidance for the projects.

The developers, according to the summary, intend for the first floor of the potential 17-story building to have retail space that will front Church Street. There will also be first-floor retail space in the second phase fronting Big Spring Park East.

NEW CITY HALL

The master plan also calls for a new City Hall to be built at the southwest corner of the Madison County Courthouse where the city hall parking deck currently stands.

“Part of the development agreement is that (the developers) will bring in a scale model, something to look at, to make sure we don’t overpower the park or underpower the park,” Battle said. “We will have renderings that will tell us what this will look like in context to the city parks and the city buildings around it.

“It will also tie in portions of what city hall has because city hall needs to tie into that so we can have a continuity of process that we come through so we have continuity from one building to the other building to the other building.”

Battle said there will be public presentations of the plans as the project advances.

“We started this process over a year ago,” he said. “Now we are coming down to some actually actionable items.”
UA enrolls 38,563 students

Trend of record growth continues, increasing by about 2 percent

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

Enrollment at the University of Alabama grew by about 2 percent this fall to 38,563, continuing a trend of record growth.

Fall enrollment grew by 908 compared to last year, though the freshman class of 7,407 was slightly smaller than it was last year. The 2016 freshman class was 7,559. Graduate student enrollment increased by 158 to 4,787, said UA spokesman Chris Bryant.

"We're pleased to see our growth continue as we add another talented and bright class to our University family," UA President Stuart R. Bell said in a statement released by the university. "With more students than ever before, it is clear that our exceptional academic programs and outstanding faculty continue to

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attract much-deserved attention from across the country."

Out-of-state students represented about 59 percent of the total enrollment. There are 15,965 from Alabama on campus this fall, Bryant said.

The university continued to tout the academic profile of its growing student body. More than 40 percent of the incoming class scored 30 or higher on the ACT. The new students had an average high school grade-point average of 3.72, with 34 percent scoring 4.0 or higher. The profile is similar to last year’s class, which had similar numbers.

"I would like to thank our faculty, staff, alumni and students who worked diligently to help make this year’s student body our highest-achieving group yet," said Kevin Whitaker, executive vice president and provost. "We take seriously our responsibilities to provide a premier education to these outstanding students."
Research could improve storm shelters

Blair Butler, left, a graduate student in structural engineering, and Collin Sewell, a research engineer, examine a 2-by-4-inch piece of wood lodged into a storm shelter wall Wednesday at Hardaway Hall on the University of Alabama. The wood was projected at 100 miles per hour from a cannon as a method of testing the wall’s strength. [STAFF PHOTO/ERIN NELSON]

University of Alabama students use debris cannon to test shelter walls

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

With blast of smoky condensation, a pressurized air cannon shot an 8-foot 2-by-4-inch board into a mockup of a storm shelter wall, a strike meant to replicate flying debris during a hurricane or tornado.

The cannon is one of four in a lab at the University of Alabama, where professor Michael Kreger, the Drummond chair of civil engineering, and a team of graduate students are testing the shelter walls to see how they behave in violent storm conditions when they are struck by airborne debris.

The pressure-treated 2-by-4 was traveling at 100 mph when it struck the wall, which was built to Federal Emergency Management Agency standards for internal storm shelters. The plywood wall is reinforced with a steel panel, Kreger said.

The research, in part, will examine different materials and different ways of fastening them.

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together, Kreger said, using the example of Kevlar as a possible substitute for steel. The hope is the research could help identify better designs, a quicker construction process and reduced costs.

"So you reduce the cost of being able to put one of these in a home," he said.

The research is funded in part by Habitat by Humanity, which requires its new homes to include storm shelter rooms, Kreger said. In-home storm shelters are expensive fixtures, he said.

"If you can stretch that, you can build more homes," he said.

The other funding source is the Alabama Center for Insurance Information and Research in the UA Culverhouse College of Commerce.

The center's mission is to solve insurance problems with research and education. Destructive tornadoes and hurricanes have resulted in higher insurance rates in the state, said the center's director Lars Powell.

"That is a problem that manifests in insurance that is really an engineering problem," he said.

By improving the engineering, Powell said they hope to reduce the costs seen on the insurance side by improving the construction of homes and structures.

The lab is about a year old, Kreger said. The test of the wall sections is the first funded research in the lab.

The lab grew out of conversations in the College of Engineering about ways to make home construction better in the wake of storms such as the April 2011 tornado, he said. The cannon were built by a local contractor.

The lab has an array of four air cannons capable of firing individually or simultaneous. The cannon array is operated from a control room adjoining the lab, where the targets are enclosed in a chain-link cage to catch any shrapnel.

On Wednesday, the researchers took two shots at the wall. In the first, the 15-pound 2-by-4 embedded near the center of the wall section. In the second, the board struck near a stud and shattered. The test protocol calls for multiple shots to be fired at the wall at different spots, Kreger said.

The wall did its job, Kreger said, noting the first shot didn't penetrate the wall completely, and the second was deflected.

Future tests might include factors such as distortion to the structures caused by severe storms, he said.

Graduate student Blair Butler was in the control room during the test. Butler is studying how walls behave during debris strikes in order to develop a model that will reduce the need for testing in the design phase. Right now, she said new ways of constructing walls must be tested in lab conditions as they are designed.

The hope is the model she is working on will allow engineer to understand the behavior well enough to design walls without as much testing, speeding up the design process.

"That is the norm in engineering. You calculate the force and design to the force," she said.
KEN ROGERS COLUMN: Tide A.D. Greg Byrne shares thoughts during Enterprise visit

By: Ken Rogers

ENTERPRISE – Alabama 24, Florida State 7. Now that’s some good athletic directing.

Greg Byrne is now undefeated as Crimson Tide athletics director, 1-0 since he was named successor to Bill Battle back in January.

He was a guest speaker at the Coffee County Chapter of the Alabama Alumni Association’s annual meeting Tuesday night at the packed Enterprise Country Club. Not surprising, everyone was still buzzing over the season-opening win in Atlanta.

“We’re all smarter and better looking when we win,” Byrne said before his comments to the chapter. “It was really a heck of a weekend for our team, for our program and for all of our fans in Atlanta last weekend.”

After the months of anticipation, Byrne said it was something to see at Mercedes-Benz Stadium.

“It was really special just to see our fans come out in force like they do, like they always do,” he said. “Just a wonderful atmosphere there at the new stadium there in Atlanta, and obviously against a great opponent in Florida State.”

Earlier in the day, Alabama announced it was returning to Atlanta to open the 2021 season with a game against the Miami Hurricanes. The Crimson Tide is already scheduled for another season-opening visit in Atlanta for the 2019 opener Aug. 31 against Duke.

“We’re working on a few things scheduling-wise that make sense for us, but Atlanta’s been a good place for us,” Byrne said.

Alabama is 11-0 in the Nick Saban era in season openers. Five of those victories have come in Atlanta against Clemson (2008), Virginia Tech (2009, 2013) and West Virginia (2014) in the Georgia Dome before the win over the Seminoles.

Byrne said he enjoys his talks to alumni groups because it gives him an opportunity to meet Alabama fans.

“I spent quite a bit of time in Alabama in the past with my years in the SEC, but this is the first time I’ve been to Enterprise,” he said. “Just get a chance to get out and thank the fans for all their support, tell them how important they are. Talk a little about today and also making sure we honor the past, but then talk about the future, as well.”

He wasn’t exactly specific about what’s coming next, but said he is working ahead.

“Actually, we’ve been working on a strategic plan for the athletics department moving forward with the university’s plan,” Byrne said. “We’ve started talking internally about that and soon we’ll be talking more about it externally, as well.”

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Byrne has earned high marks since his arrival in Tuscaloosa. His most visible action was making a change in the baseball program when he fired Greg Goff after one season and hired former Auburn assistant Brad Bohannon. He saw a problem and fixed it.

Many feel his next major move could be landing a new apparel deal. Forbes Magazine last year reported that Alabama’s apparel contract was set to expire in 2018. Byrne said that’s not accurate.

“We’ve got I don’t know how many years left with Nike, but it’s not expiring any time soon,” he said.

It’s fairly clear that the only change coming will the amount of that deal. Alabama reportedly gets $3.52 million a year to wear Nike uniforms and gear. According to the Forbes chart published in 2016, that amount ranks the Crimson Tide 26th nationally and ninth in the Southeastern Conference.

Of course, that deal supposedly began in 2011 and most of the schools ahead of the Crimson Tide have signed new agreements much more recently – including UCLA, which just announced a record 12-year, $280 million agreement with Adidas that will start in 2018 and will be worth $18.67 million a year.

Ohio State’s lucrative deal with Nike will be worth $16.8 million each year when its extension begins in 2019 and runs through 2033.

The next two biggest apparel deals are also Nike schools – Texas ($16.67 million annually through 2031) and Michigan ($15.73 million annually through 2027.)

Auburn has the most lucrative apparel deal in the SEC. The Tigers receive $7.81 million a year for a deal that runs through 2025.

Whenever Alabama’s apparel deal comes up, Byrne knows it will be important to get it right, both with dollars and with the right company. Byrne was the AD at the University of Arizona – also a Nike client – before his move to Alabama.

Let’s say it sounds like a hard sell for any company other than the Swoosh.

“We’ve been really pleased with having Nike as a partner,” Byrne said. “They’ve done a great job for us. Our student-athletes like Nike. They obviously are one of the best companies in the world and it’s great to have that wonderful brand affiliated with our university.”

The Coffee County Chapter used the night as its annual fund-raiser for scholarship money. A Saban-autographed football was raffled off last night.

“This is the biggest crowd we’ve ever had,” said Mary Sue Cain, who is the recruiting coordinator and events coordinator for the chapter.

The chapter president, Rhett Marques, credited Cain’s work with making the event a success.
The chapter also announced a new fully endowed scholarship in memory of Taylor Creel Stinson, who was just 25 when she died June 1 of this year.

"The family wanted to honor with a scholarship," Cain said. "It's $25,000 to endow a scholarship, but they give people five years (to raise the money). Well, they raised the money in a couple months – and a lot of these were $5 and $10 donations from her young friends – that it got fully endowed. We'll be able to award it next spring."
'Growing energy':
UAB enrollment
swells by 7%

Erin Edgemon  eedgemon@al.com

Enrollment at UAB increased by 7 percent this fall compared to last year, according to the university.

Student population grew to 20,902 — an increase of 1,367 — from last year's record enrollment of 19,535.

"Our consistent enrollment growth across the board is a result of, and a testament to, the dedication of all UAB students, faculty and staff, as well as our many supporters in Birmingham, Alabama and beyond," UAB President Ray L. Watts said. "There is a growing energy and excitement on campus — a momentum that represents many people working with strategic focus toward UAB's standard of excellence in education, research, community service, health care and economic development."

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UAB student body

20,902
This fall

19,535
Last fall

7%
Increase

Freshmen

2,299
This fall

2,021
Last fall

13.8%
Increase

UAB freshman figures

62.5%
Female

37.5%
Male

18.5
Average age

25.1
Mean ACT score

3.66
Mean high school GPA

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UAB enrolled 2,299 freshmen, its largest class, representing an increase of 13.8 percent over last year’s record class of 2,021. UAB is exceeding the enrollment growth that Watts set as a priority when he was named president in 2013. His goal was for the university to have 20,000 students by 2018.

Bradley Barnes, vice provost for enrollment management at UAB, said a big reason UAB continues to see growth is because of increased student retention.

“We are keeping more students than before,” he said.

In the past two years, total enrollment at UAB has increased by 2,200 students.

“We are up 6.1 percent in freshman retention,” Barnes said.

UAB has invested in a new model for student success by making sure students are “put on the right path the first day they set foot on campus,” he said.

Freshmen are welcomed to campus with a first-year student convocation, and first-year curriculum is offered.

Beginning this fall, Barnes said UAB asked all freshman to live on campus. Nearly 80 percent of freshmen now live on campus, he said.

The return of Blazers football doesn’t hurt, either.

“I think football plays a big role in student experience and adds a new level of excitement for the student experience,” Barnes said. “It gives students something to rally behind. I don’t think there is any doubt that the return of football has really energized campus.”

Despite enrollment being ahead of projections, Barnes said he doesn’t expect growth to slow anytime soon.

“We are up to 100 city blocks now. We are a large urban campus,” he said, adding UAB is optimizing the space it has. “We will continue to see steady growth over the next few years.”

The current freshman class is UAB’s most academically prepared, with an average ACT of 25.1 and average high school GPA of 3.66.

The student population is one of the most diverse in the nation. The student body is 38.62 percent minority, and minority students make up 44.53 percent of the freshman class, according to UAB.

The student population is 21.22 percent black and 61.21 percent female.

UAB has 973 international students enrolled this fall, who along with 628 international faculty, staff and visiting scholars on campus, represent more than 100 countries around the world.

Barnes said UAB has stepped up its efforts to market the university to out-of-state students. He said this could be critical within the next decade, as the number of high school graduates in Alabama is expected to decline by 9 percent, per a Chronicle for Higher Education report.

Attracting more out-of-state students, however, doesn’t mean less Alabama students get admitted, Barnes said.

“In no way is there a finite number of seats,” he said.

More out-of-state students brings a new culture and experience to the classroom, Barnes said, and improves the quality of education for in-state students. Out-of-state students also pay higher tuition, which helps keep tuition increases down.
Building a Business Future

By: Nancy Mann Jackson

Rigved Joshi’s family business in India provided the spark of entrepreneurship. Now he is set to share that inspiration with students and start-ups in Huntsville.

Pune, India is home to several well-known educational institutions and high-tech companies and is especially noted for STEM education. Located about 90 miles from Mumbai, India’s financial capital, Pune is the country’s de facto capital for engineering and high-tech industries. In many ways, the city is similar to Huntsville, with its robust economy focused on information technology, engineering, precision manufacturing and automotive services.

And it is the hometown of Rigved Joshi, the director of Huntsville’s newest business incubator for innovative startups.

The Dorothy S. Davidson Invention to Innovation Center (D.S. Davidson I2C) is to be located in a 45,000-square-foot building on the campus of the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH). The $14 million project, funded through private donations, the state, the Madison County Commission and the city of Huntsville, will focus on providing space and resources for startups, innovation teams and corporate partners. And Joshi, with a long history of work in business building and innovation, will lead the way.

“My family has been involved in technology- and engineering-related businesses for generations,” Joshi says. “Exposure to that culture in my formative years provided a window into entrepreneurship in the most organic way, [including] the highs and lows, successes and failures, and most importantly the need to evolve, assess, pivot and in some cases, make hard decisions to close and move on to the next venture.”

Throughout his formative years in the bustling, entrepreneurial city of Pune, Joshi was included in many aspects of running and growing his family’s businesses, including preparing funding proposals, business plans for investors, interacting with customers and business development. “These early experiences were priceless and shaped my thought process as I continued to focus on developing and honing my skills towards a career dedicated to entrepreneurship and new venture creation,” he says.

Beyond the Family Businesses

Joshi, who trained as an engineer and holds an MBA, has career experience in venture capital, private equity, startup incubation and intellectual property monetization. Recently, he managed new ventures, strategy and innovation at Vanderbilt University, and also has run a venture capital fund and his own technology startup.

The I2C is “the first of its kind for Huntsville,” focused on becoming a platform to launch and develop high-tech startups into sustainable, scalable and investable businesses, Joshi says. And his breadth of experience will be a good fit for leading the project.

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A key component of the incubator will be a focus on collaboration. "My best successes in entrepreneurship, whether it was mentoring founders, sourcing deals for investment, developing related curriculum for students, or starting my own ventures, have all happened through collaboration and partnerships," Joshi says.

Through collaboration and partnerships, Joshi and the I2C will encourage entrepreneurship, promote calculated risk-taking, support development of disruptive technologies and inspire the next generation of entrepreneurial leaders at UAH, he says. "The key to our success is to champion and ignite a community that can support and enhance this experience for our students and faculty," he adds.

Getting to Know Huntsville

While he was working at Vanderbilt from 2012 to 2015, Joshi had an opportunity to visit Huntsville’s HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology and tour Cummings Research Park. From his first introduction to the city’s business community, he was hooked.

"It was an enthralling experience to see what was happening in Huntsville, with the focus on R&D, technology, biotech and other related areas," Joshi says. "The more I learned about the characteristics of Rocket City, such as its small business culture and the fabric of this STEM-focused economy, the more I was convinced about the potential of this place emerging as a dominant entrepreneurial hub in the Southeast."

In late 2015, Joshi left Vanderbilt to pursue his own fund and a startup venture in the financial technology space. Last year, he began looking for his next opportunity to participate in a university-led innovation initiative. When he learned about the I2C opportunity in late 2016, he was interested. "I was most excited about the location being Huntsville and the fact that it was a regional effort led by UAH," Joshi says.

Looking Ahead

Now settled in Huntsville, Joshi is looking forward to growing the I2C into a regional resource for emerging technology companies through leadership and support of entrepreneurial initiatives throughout northern Alabama and south-central Tennessee. The center will serve a 15-county region including Madison County and neighboring Blount, Colbert, Cullman, DeKalb, Etowah, Jackson, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Limestone, Marshall and Morgan counties.

"All of I2C’s activities and programming elements conducted for the regional communities are to encourage sharing, build cross-sector connections and attract like-minded members or participants to contribute, collaborate and thrive under an entrepreneurial environment," Joshi says. "I2C will focus on venture acceleration, mentorship, programming and incubation — a vibrant and dynamic platform that supports and stimulates co-creation and open innovation."

Joshi says he is looking forward to playing a pivotal role in championing innovation, entrepreneurship and new venture creation for the North Alabama region in the years to come. "The I2C presents a unique opportunity to be a powerful collaboration of resources, people, communities and like-minded organizations," he says.

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Nancy Jackson and Tyler Brown are freelance contributors to Business Alabama. Both are based in Huntsville.
Debunking Climate-change Deception

By: James Murphy

In his new e-book, An Inconvenient Deception: How Al Gore Distorts Climate Science and Energy Policy, climatologist Roy Spencer dismantles and debunks climate alarmist and former Vice President Al Gore’s new movie, An Inconvenient Sequel, the follow-up to Gore’s hugely successful 2006 propaganda film, An Inconvenient Truth. Spencer’s book is currently outselling Gore’s companion book to his new film by a wide margin. As of Monday, the Amazon Seller’s rank for Spencer’s book was 244th, which included a number-one ranking in the science and math category. The rank for Gore’s offering was 9,775th.

Spencer, a climatologist at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, is not the typical “global-warming denier.” He has a B.S. in atmospheric science from the University of Michigan and a Ph. D. in meteorology from the University of Wisconsin. He has worked with NASA as a senior scientist for climate studies and has published several peer-reviewed papers on the topic of climate science. Despite his scientific credentials, Spencer explains the complex issues of climate science in an engaging way that the layman can appreciate and understand.

While Spencer doesn’t deny that humans may have some role in the observed warming of the Earth, he believes that propagandists such as Gore vastly exaggerate mankind’s effect on the vast and complex global climate system, which is not yet entirely understood. “There is no ‘fingerprint’ of human causation versus natural causation,” Spencer states. “The evidence supporting human causation is largely circumstantial.”

Spencer, who once testified for Gore on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, theorizes that Gore, and others like him in the climate-change business, have developed an almost cult-like devotion to the theory of anthropogenic global warming, as witnessed by Gore’s 1992 tome Earth in the Balance. “In my reading of the book at the time, I felt it had a rather heavy nature-worship feel to it,” Spencer wrote. “Gore views nature as being inherently fragile, which is not a scientific concept.”

Spencer calls Gore’s description of climate change and his fanatical adherence to the belief that man is the cause of all of nature’s woes a “mish-mash of untruths, half-truths and misrepresentations.” Further, even if Gore were completely correct about the so-called crisis, the solutions proposed by the former vice president to deal with it are not necessarily the wisest course of action. “Even if Gore were 100 percent correct, how we then should proceed is not at all obvious,” Spencer asserts.

While revisiting An Inconvenient Truth, one thing Spencer explained was a little-known tenet of the global-warming theory. Though climate scientists know with certainty that certain thermostatic control mechanisms (i.e., clouds and precipitation) respond to natural rises in CO2 levels, such as from volcanoes or forest fires — hence limiting changes in the Earth’s temperature — most climate scientists assume that this is not the case with man-made CO2 emissions. Yet, how would nature know the difference between sources of CO2? Spencer also catalogs several of the unfulfilled prophecies of Gore’s first film on global warming, among

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them the complete meltdown of the glacier on Mt. Kilimanjaro (didn’t happen) and the disappearance of summer sea ice in the Arctic Ocean by 2014 (not even close).

In his take-down of Gore’s latest global-warming film, Spencer decries the use of deceptive imagery, such as images of massive chunks of ice falling into the ocean. The implication in this footage is that global warming is the cause of it. What Gore fails to mention is that this is a natural, yearly occurrence. Every summer, even in atypically cool ones such as 2017, there is a certain amount of melting, thus some ice loss. This is how we get icebergs.

Additionally, Spencer points out that receding glaciers in Alaska and Canada have been revealing ancient tree stumps in abundance. This proves beyond the shadow of a doubt that the world was much warmer roughly a thousand years ago, during Medieval Warm Period. These ancient stumps are strong evidence that the world goes through natural warming and cooling cycles that man is not responsible for.

An Inconvenient Deception goes on to describe Gore’s deceptive use of graphs, statistics, and naturally occurring phenomena as “proof” of anthropogenic global warming. He also rightly points out the former vice president’s stunning hypocrisy on the issue, wanting everyone else in the world to reduce their own standard of living while he flies around in private jets and maintains multiple, energy-hogging mansions.

Spencer also takes to task some of the celebrity scientists who have weighed in on the climate-change issue, most notably Neil de Grasse-Tyson and Bill Nye. “Our current crop of pop-science icons should be largely ignored for information outside their specific areas of expertise,” Spencer wrote.

An Inconvenient Deception contains sound scientific thinking, written by an actual climate scientist, in language that is comprehensible to non-scientific minds. It is a worthy read for anyone who might question the panicked voices we hear each day on the mainstream media.
Leaving a legacy for future generations

By: Steve Johnson

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. -- On July 8th, 2011, NASA launched the last Space Shuttle. Dave Christensen joined Greg Screws in the WHNT News 19 studio as part of our extensive coverage. "Go USA, there you go, go NASA! It was great and the whole space shuttle team did a great job and they stuck to the very end, and I'm very impressed," said Dave Christensen.

That was high praise from a man who would know a great job when he saw it. In 1956 Dave worked for the Army, and with Wernher Von Braun on the development of the Redstone Missile. When the Soviets shocked the world with the launch of Sputnik, America needed to respond. Eventually the word came down that Von Braun's team would lead the effort, and launch America's first satellite, Explorer. "So we were all space cadets. That word was very exciting, that now we were going to get our chance to do it," said Christensen.

And of course Von Braun's team did do it. In 1960 the leader of the German Rocket team would leave the Army and move to NASA. Work on the Saturn 5 would begin in earnest, and Dave Christensen would in several different ways, be part of that. In 1970 he would also be part of the initial proposals to build the Space Shuttle. "The first stage had jet engines, and would land at the Cape and then fly again," said Christensen as he looked at a booklet which had technical details of a possible shuttle.

Christensen would be part of America's space program for most of his adult life. He would hang on to papers, blue prints, drawings, models and all sort of memorabilia from his career. "You get the entire slice of his career, back from White Sands in the 1950s all the way up to the things he was doing as a consultant in the later years of his life, and that spans about 60 years," said Reagan Grimsley, the Head of Special Collections and Archives at UAH.

The material from Christensen's collection covers more than 150 linear feet, and that's half a football field. It's all going to the UAH library archives. It includes everything from carefully labeled boxes on strategy and planning, to other boxes on Marshall Space Flight Center history. To a UAH history grad student, the material from Christensen is something special. "You are very appreciative for the fact that Christensen went to the lengths that he did to make sure that this material will be preserved, and it's something that we can look back in future generations," said Mark Potter.

The archives cover more than just space, because Dave Christensen was interested in much more than that. He worked on solar and renewable energy projects for much of his career. Space, and science were obviously his work and his pleasure. "I guess it was my calling. I just fit right into it very naturally. It's hard to get out of something that you really enjoy," said Christensen.

Christensen passed away on September 1st in Texas. A great loss for his family, his friends and the Rocket City.
BSC reducing tuition by 50 percent

Erin Edgemon
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Birmingham-Southern College is reducing its tuition and mandatory fees by more than 50 percent starting in fall 2018, the college announced Tuesday.

"The marketplace spoke, and we listened," BSC President Linda Flaherty-Goldsmith said in a prepared statement. "Students and families are telling colleges all across the United States — and they're telling us — that encountering a high published price is a real barrier to a high-quality education. We want to make sure that the best and brightest students have access to the kind of personalized, challenging, hands-on educational experience that BSC provides."

BSC is resetting tuition back to what it was more than 15 years ago, officials said. Tuition for the 2017-18 academic year was $35,840. Beginning next year, tuition will be $17,650.

In 2018-19, BSC will have the most affordable published price among all of the South's prestigious private colleges and universities, the college said.

The drop in tuition also is expected to allow the college to increase enrollment numbers. BSC currently has 1,300 students and has the capacity to grow to 1,600.

College officials said BSC is able to reduce tuition without sacrificing education because more than 90 percent of students already pay less than full price. BSC is generous with merit aid, and many students receive need-based financial aid and private scholarships, the college said.

With a lower tuition, not as much financial aid will be required directly from BSC in order for students to achieve their same net cost, according to the college.

"True college value comes from the quality and results you get. But a too-high published price creates two problems: It causes people to stop at the sticker price and lose sight of how the published price is very often not what they'll really pay. And it also prevents them from learning how an investment in a high-quality education pays off over a student's lifetime," Flaherty-Goldsmith said. "BSC aims to correct both of those problems with our tuition reset."

BSC will continue to award its own merit scholarships and need-based grants on top of federal and state financial aid to reduce tuition even further for eligible students, the college said Tuesday.

The new price also will apply to current students continuing next fall, BSC said. The amount of financial aid coming directly from BSC will be reduced by roughly the same dollar amount as the tuition reduction, resulting in a net cost similar to what students are currently paying — and less than they would have paid with a standard annual increase of about 3.9 percent.

Some returning students could see a tuition price reduction of about $1,400, the college said.

"The difference with our reset is that now our published price more closely matches a student's actual cost before need-based financial aid is awarded," Flaherty-Goldsmith said. "With this better pricing transparency, we hope more students will be able to discover both the affordability and the value of a BSC education."
‘HE’S A BAD MAN’

Powerhouse freshman Spencer Brown emerges as Blazers’ top weapon in backfield

Drew Champlin  dchamplin@al.com

Tevin Crews knew what he was getting into, but wasn’t sure how he was going to stop it.

The UAB senior linebacker faced NFL pro bowler Jordan Howard in practice during the 2013 and 2014 seasons, so when 6-foot, 235-pound Spencer Brown from the small city of Kimberly reported to campus this summer, the size was nothing new.

And then he saw him squat 500 pounds. Later, he knew he’d be faced with tackling him in preseason camp.

“I’ve never really tackled a train,” Crews said. “He’s made our defense a lot better. He’s a full load. The kid squats (almost) 600 pounds as a freshman. He’s a bad man.”

The kid is already UAB’s top rusher with 193 yards, coming off his 17-carry, 151-yard performance in Saturday’s 31-31 loss at Ball State. He rushed seven times for 42 yards and a 5-yard touchdown late in the season-opening 38-7 win over Alabama A&M.

UAB (1-1) hosts Coastal Carolina (1-0) on Saturday.

UAB had bodies at the running back position, but none with the mixture of size and ability of Brown. He rushed for 1,972 yards and scored 33 touchdowns as a senior at Mortimer Jordan.

He just had to fully learn how to play the position.

Brown was a standout linebacker as a junior, but he also ran for 890 yards and 26 touchdowns. His first offer came from UAB after a camp before his senior season.

“He came in at camp and ran a 4.53, 4.54 (40-yard dash) twice,” UAB coach Bill Clark said. “(We were saying) ‘Who is this guy?’ He had been a linebacker before. We put him through the drills and you’re offered. Immediately, he commits and he’s been family ever since.”

Brown is now listed second on the depth chart behind James Noble III, but is likely to lead UAB in rushing attempts provided that he can also do his other assignments.

It’s reasonable to think that he could set UAB’s freshman record for rushing yards. Howard gained 881 yards in 2013.

Clark said UAB’s defense “couldn’t really tackle him” during preseason camp.

“You have to use your technique,” Crews said. “Get low to him and use your hips. He makes you dig deep. He’s a tough guy to bring down.”

After those early impressions, it turned into a battle of how fast UAB coaches could get him ready for a big role.

“He’s still got to work on the blocking and protection, and they’ve all got to work on ball security,” Clark said. “It’s exciting. That’s a physical running back. We have seen him run over our own guys in practice.

“When you’re an offensive lineman and you’re blocking for a guy who’s going to create his own yards, it’s exciting. All of our guys are doing that, but this guy is going to be something else.”

Brown had success Saturday from a diamond formation, lining up behind quarterback A.J. Erdely. The quarterback, operating from the shotgun, had players to his left and right.

Clark said offensive coordinator Les Koenning has used that in previous stops. UAB didn’t show it against Alabama A&M.

“It’s a great way to get him the ball and protect him,” Clark said. “His role is just going to increase. (The formation) will progress and there’s a lot of stuff you can do with it.

“Now you’re looking for what hurts (Coastal Carolina) and from what we can tell, they do a great job (using multiple defensive looks). We can feature different guys within that same look. Each one of them has a special skill set. That’s how we tailored it, hopefully to accentuate what each (running back) does.”
Tide men’s golf building on team chemistry

By Joe Kingbeil
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

When you think of team sports, golf may be the last that comes in mind.

But as Alabama men’s golf coach Jay Seawell enters his 16th year as at the helm of the Crimson Tide, team camaraderie is exactly what he wants to see from his group this season.

“I want to build off the team building we had last spring,” Seawell said. “You could see when everybody got healthy, the energy and the momentum of the team. It’s the only time guys play team golf in college, most of the time it’s just individual golf their whole life.

“I really want to continue the development of understanding team golf and what that means, you have to be a little selfless.”

After a 17th place finish in last season’s NCAA Men’s Golf Championship, the Crimson Tide rolls into 2017 returning all five starters. Even though the season has just begun, Seawell has already seen leadership out of upper-classmen golfers Jonathan Hardee, Lee Hodges and Davis Riley.

“When we’ve been successful, our best players have also been our best teammates,” Seawell said. “Not only were they good in doing the things they needed to do, but they were also leaders.”

The Crimson Tide opened the season on Sept. 8 at the Carpet Capital Collegiate and nearly won the tournament, but finished runner-up to Georgia Tech after the Yellow Jackets defeated Alabama on the third playoff hole. Even though the Crimson Tide came up short, Seawell liked the resolve his team showed after being down 13 strokes after the first day of play.

“Those guys, especially Lee and Davis, were extremely great leaders last week,” Seawell said. “The Crimson Tide is ranked 19th after last weeks finish, but the road only gets tougher. Alabama travels to Champaign, Illinois, on Saturday to face a field consisting of eight other teams ranked in the top 20, including top-ranked Oklahoma State.

But to the golfers, competition is what brings them to Alabama.

“Our goal is to play the best golf course against the best teams,” Seawell said. “We’ve had a top 10 strength of schedule since I’ve been here and I think it energizes the players. They want to play against the best.”
Lessons learned for Tide women

UA women's golf team enters 2017 with something to prove after disappointing finish last season

By Joe Klingbeil
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

Alabama women's golf coach Mic Potter refuses to get caught up in expectations heading into a new season.

The Crimson Tide has three players ranked in the top 15 of the Women's World Amateur Golf Ranking, and enters the new year ranked near the top.

But Potter knows expectations don't bring home championships.

"I really have none," Potter said. "I know we have really good team and I'm afraid of putting limits on them so my expectations are for us to, as they always are, hit the first tee shot, hopefully it's in the fairway, and we do that all around the golf course. With the talent we have, and we do that, we are going to have a great result."

Last season, the Crimson Tide finished tied for 14th at the NCAA Women's Golf Championship. It was not what the Crimson Tide envisioned as they entered play that weekend. Alabama is

See GOLF, C4
GOLF

Continued from C1

taking that experience and using it as fuel.

"I think we learned a lot about our games," junior Lauren Stephenson said. "Especially mentally, just things we need to work on. Just throughout the year we have to focus on the process and it doesn't really matter how many tournaments you win, it's about how you finish."

Stephenson, along with golfers Cheyenne Knight and Kristen Gillman, earned Women's Golf Coaches All-America Honors at the end of last season, and have the accolades to boost expectations. But, like their coach and teammates, are focused on the prize.

"I think the expectation thing, like we have been really talented for the past few years and haven't finished where we wanted to," Knight said. "So this year we are really focusing on every day, and trusting the process and making sure we are doing everything we need to do."

If expectations are not what this team has this year, a tight-knit bond is, and that is what motivates each golfer come out strong every day.

"I don't think we need anything special to motivate us because we are all such motivated people already," Gillman said. "I think we just carry that through every single day, we all motivate each other and ourselves to become the best player we can and the best team there is in the country."

The Crimson Tide begins its season Friday at the Mason Rudolph Championship in Franklin, Tennessee.
Tide looking for deeper dive into postseason

By Spencer Main
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

Alabama swimming and diving coach Dennis Pursley won't be in the pool Friday, but he still hopes to feel a ripple effect.

"We felt like we got off to a really good start last year, and for a lot of reasons it just didn't finish the way we hoped," Pursley said. "We've got renewed hope and optimism this year."

When the UA men's and women's swimming and diving teams race against Delta State in Cleveland, Mississippi, it will be for the fifth straight season. Pursley stressed the importance of transforming old routine into new results.

"If you're doing it exactly the way you did the year before, at best you're probably going to get the exact same results," Pursley said. "If you want to get better you've got to look for ways, no matter how good you did, to get better and to enhance results."

For the last three years, the Crimson Tide's men's swim and dive team finished in the top 10 at the NCAA Championships. Pursley expects captains Matt Adams and Luke Kaliszak, an individual NCAA champion, to spearhead a deeper dive into the postseason.

"They've got the kind of attitude and influence on the team that you want from positive teammates," Pursley said. "Attitude is important all the way through. That's going to make the job a whole lot easier or a whole lot more difficult."

Even though Pursley said the men and women's teams are facing different short-term expectations, the long-term goals are the same.

"I think our biggest challenge is to get the women's team up to the level where the men have been the last three years," Pursley said. "We just want to see that quantum leap in the rankings that we saw with the men three years ago. With the freshman class that we have coming in, we think that it's a realistic possibility."
November bout expected for Wilder

By Aaron Suttles
Sports Writer

World Boxing Council heavyweight champion Deontay Wilder is expected to defend his title against Luis Ortiz on Nov. 4 in Brooklyn at the Barclays Center. The Tuscaloosa News has learned. The fight is expected to be broadcast on Showtime.

Yahoo! Sports first reported the news on Tuesday.

Wilder, a 2008 Olympic bronze medalist from Tuscaloosa, carries a 38-0 record with 37 knockouts. Ortiz, a Cuban who fights out of Miami with the nickname of "King Kong," is 27-0 with 23 knockouts.

Wilder hasn't fought since his stoppage of Gerald Washington in February in Birmingham.

There has been nothing official from Wilder or his promoter, Lou DiBella, but Wilder and Ortiz traded barbs on their Twitter accounts Tuesday.

Wilder tweeted: "You see @kingkongboxing and NYC don't mix, for we all know what happened to KING KONG when they #Bomb2quad cannons hit." The Twitter handle "kingkongboxing" is run by the management/advisor for Ortiz.

Ortiz is the WBC's No. 2-ranked contender behind top-ranked Bermane Stiverne, who Wilder defeated for the WBC title in Jan. 2015. With an extensive amateur of more than 350 fights (343-19), Ortiz is a seasoned fighter.

Although now enrolled in the VADA testing protocol, Ortiz tested positive for steroids following a tainted urine sample before his September 2014 fight against Lateef Kayode.

Ortiz last fought in December of 2016, winning by a seventh-round technical knockout over David Allen. He is currently ranked as the No. 1 contender in the WBA, not ranked by the IBF and 11th in the WBO ratings.

Wilder's co-manager and See WILDER, B7
WILDER

Continued from B5

trainer Jay Deas said he is already preparing Wilder’s training camp.

“As of now, we can’t confirm anything, but we know they’re working on a big fight,” Deas said. “As far as we’re concerned, Team Wilder, we can’t wait. We have to prepare. We’re already preparing camp, training, bringing in sparring partners. We have a job to do to get Wilder ready for the fight. Whether the announcement comes today or in a week, we’re getting ready to start camp Monday.”

Reach Aaron Suttles at aaron.suttles@tuscaloosanews.com or at 205-722-0229.
It's early, but get ready for Bama-Clemson III

Kevin Scarbinsky  kscarbinsky@al.com

This opinion is subject to change, perhaps by midnight Saturday given the individual brilliance of Lamar Jackson, but based on the personal observation of two whole football games, I feel confident climbing out on this limb:

I've already seen the two best teams in college football in person, and against all reason, logic and metrics, you're going to see them meet in the national championship game for the third straight season.

Come Jan. 8, 2018, the Battle in the Benz will be Alabama and Clemson: Part III. The rubber match. It just feels inevitable.

Neither team has played its best game yet, but each team has demonstrated just how dangerous it remains by putting down the other team's alleged primary challenger in its conference.

Alabama didn't look particularly sharp, diverse or improved on offense in its opener against Florida State, and Crimson Tide linebackers dropped like flies. Didn't matter in a 24-7 stranguation that wasn't as close as the final score indicated.

Clemson still has miles to go to produce an offense as frightening as the one that featured Deshaun Watson, Wayne Gallman and Mike Williams. Still the Tigers had no worries in their 14-6 shutdown of Auburn. It may have been the most one-sided one-score game I've ever witnessed.

Nick Saban remains the best overall coach in college football. It also should be clear to everyone by now that his closest peer in terms of building a total program and sustaining high-quality performance is Dabo Swinney.

That machine? The one beneath Bryant-Denny Stadium that mass produces future NFL players, particularly defensive linemen? It's obvious Swinney has constructed one of his own somewhere inside Death Valley.

What's the one position that's anchored Alabama's current run to three straight playoffs and two straight title games? The defensive front. Well, guess what? You won't find more immovable object anywhere in college football than the Clemson defensive line. Not even in Tuscaloosa.

The Tigers aren't likely to hold Jackson and Louisville to 117 total yards Saturday — there will be no question who's calling Bobby Petrino's plays — but Jackson, the reigning Heisman winner, will have to earn every yard he gains.

SEE SCARBINSKY, B3

SCARBINSKY
FROM B1

Meanwhile, Colorado State is no Fresno, but former Georgia offensive coordinator Mike Bobo's not about to get his revenge on Alabama for the 2012 SEC Championship Game. Not this weekend.

It's not unthinkable that neither Clemson nor Alabama will run the table from here to Jan. 18 in Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta. What's undeniable is that each team is good enough that should it drop one game on an off night, it won't happen twice.

If Auburn shapes up as Alabama's biggest hurdle in the SEC and FSU rebound to become the greatest ACC threat to Clemson, good luck to Auburn and FSU. Early returns have done nothing but validate Alabama and Clemson as not only the best teams in their leagues but, until further notice, the best teams in the land.

The last two national championship games between the Tide and Tigers have been instant classics. Alabama 45, Clemson 40 gave us Jake Coker to O.J. Howard, Kenyan Drake in full flight and the most important onside kick in college football history. Clemson 35, Alabama 31 featured Watson, Watson and more Watson, with Hunter Renfrow cementing his reputation as the Crimson killer.

So the score stands Alabama 1, Clemson 1. It's only fitting they should play one more and settle the score.
Saban on how hurricanes have affected Alabama

By Ben Jones
Sports Writer

Hurricanes have hit areas that are home to Alabama players twice in the first two weeks of the season. The storms haven't altered Alabama's season, but they've still been in the minds of coach Nick Saban and many of his players.

"We have lots of friends at our place in Florida, so you kind of get the full feeling of anxiety that comes with all this," Saban said on Monday. "Hopefully we'll be able to do something to help some of those people as well."

The athletic department gathered items for donation to victims of Hurricane Harvey last week. Alabama also sent a private plane for the father of defensive back Tony Brown, who is from Beaumont, Texas. Other schools around the country, including Florida, have had to cancel or reschedule games because of the storms.

"You've got to try to get people to separate focus on their family, but when they're there for football and getting ready for the game, try to focus on that, knowing that they really can't do anything about that part of it at that time," Saban said. "We certainly respect that when they're not there so that they support their family in every way that they can."

Saban said he'd been through a similar situation while he was head coach of the Miami Dolphins. Hurricane Wilma made landfall in south Florida during the 2005 season, and Hurricane Ernesto hit just as the 2006 season was beginning.

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"Your team gets disrupted with something that takes them out of their routine of how they practice every day, how they prepare every day. I think it makes it much more difficult for players not to get affected by external factors, and obviously a hurricane — because of how it affects people's families and things like that — is something that affects people, and rightfully so. It's something they should be concerned about. So, I think the real challenge is to get the players to focus and not be affected by the disruption that something like this causes your routine."

Retracing steps

One area Nick Saban cited as needing improvement after Saturday's win over Fresno State was for Alabama's linebackers to "retrace" on certain plays. That didn't always happen with the Crimson Tide breaking in several inexperienced

Alabama defensive back Tony Brown gives a fan a high-five as the Crimson Tide football team arrives at Bryant-Denny Stadium for the Walk of Champions before the Fresno State game on Saturday, Sept. 9, 2017. [STAFF PHOTO/ERIN NELSON]

linebackers due to injury at the position.

"We obviously have a lot of work to do at that position," Saban said. "I think some things that maybe the fan doesn't notice is, a guy doesn't retrace on a screen, that's part of stopping screens. Guys don't retrace on the quarterback draw. That's part of being a good pass rusher, is knowing when a guy is setting up for a screen, when's he setting for a draw, when's he pass setting. These are all things we need to improve on so we can play those particular plays better."

Defensive tackle Da'Ron Payne explained what "retracing" means while speaking to the media earlier this week.

"When they throw the ball sideways it just comes out the stack," he said. "The DBs bring them back inside, and we need to be there to make the plays."

Injury update

Sophomore running back Josh Jacobs (hamstring) practiced all three days this week and is expected to make his season debut on Saturday. Right guard Lester Cotton (concussion protocol) participated in practice on Tuesday and Wednesday and is expected to play, Saban said.

"Most of the time when guys practice, they're able to play," Saban said. "We have every thought that he will play in the game."

Freshman linebacker Dylan Moses was not seen at practice during the viewing period on Tuesday and Wednesday.

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FAKE NEWS?

Has the analysis of Jalen Hurts' passing ability been overblown? Nick Saban certainly thinks so.

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Dating back to the spring, there haven’t been many Alabama press conferences or player interviews where it didn’t come up.

Nick Saban and Jalen Hurts have been asked a ton about it. Other Crimson Tide players have been, too.

The question: How much has Hurts improved as a passer?

Now each Alabama game is being closely analyzed and dissected to determine whether the all the preseason feedback is accurate, and whether the sophomore quarterback has in fact grown significantly in the passing game since the end of last season.

Even after Hurts accounted for 282 yards and three touchdowns in Alabama’s win against Fresno State on Saturday, the postgame conversation centered on only 128 of those yards coming through the air. Asked Monday whether the weekly dissection of his quarterback’s passing is “overblown,” Alabama’s coach offered a strong take.

“Well, I think a lot of things you do are overblown, but I realize why you do it,” Saban said. “It’s your job to create news. It’s our job to try to help our guys play winning football. I think different players play winning football in different ways.

“If you want to be critical of a guy for rushing for 154 yards and think he should not do that so he can pass more, then that’s up to you. You can do that if you want. But we did pass for 192 yards (total) and I think that’s the kind of balance that we want to create. We’re going to continue to try to help our players play to their strengths and work on any weakness that they have so that they can do better on those things.

“I don’t think this is any more overblown than a lot of other things you do, if you want to know the truth about it. But I kind of get it. It’s not personal. I don’t mind it. It’s OK, I get it.”

Though Hurts only threw for 128 yards against Fresno State, he completed 14 of his 18 pass attempts. One of the four incompletions was a drop of a well-thrown slant and another came on an intermediate pass that Hurts nearly completed despite being hit while throwing.

Saban was complimentary of Hurts after the game and again Monday, praising his decision-making, accuracy and overall performance as a passer. Hurts’ longest completion was only 23 yards, but Saban attributed some of that to pass protection issues.

There were plays designed to take deep shots down the field, but Saban said the protection didn’t hold up on some of those plays, and Hurts didn’t have the necessary time to wait for the play to develop.

“Some of the conclusions that get drawn are not fair in some instances,” Saban said. “Sometimes no one’s perfect. They don’t make exactly the right read or whatever. That didn’t happen much in this game, really, with either quarterback that played. There’s certain things that we need to improve on as a team in the passing game, and that’s something that we’ll work hard on. The things that we did in the short, quick passes are things that complement our running game and complement what we do on offense, and I think it makes our offense more effective when we can do these things.

“They’re things that hopefully we’ll be able to continue to do successfully in the future.”

There will surely be plenty watching closely to see if they can while continuing to dissect, analyze and sometimes overreact to each Hurts pass.

“I’ve said it all spring, everybody’s liable to their own opinion,” Hurts said after the game on Saturday. “That’s just how that is.”
College Football's Latest Trend: Coaches Who Don't Coach

By MARC TRACY

When Nick Saban, Alabama's football coach, decided to replace his offensive coordinator, Lane Kiffin, in the run-up to last season's national championship game, he had an experienced former head coach ready to step in.

Actually, he had several.

Not including Saban, there were five former top-tier head coaches on the Alabama staff when the post season began, including three working as so-called analysts in what are (at least officially) noncoaching roles. Saban tapped one of them, the former Washington and Southern California coach Steve Sarkisian, to run the offense in the title game against Clemson. Though Alabama lost, it was not because of the offense, which scored 31 points and did not struggle in unfamiliar hands.

"This isn't like I flew in on a plane and I just took over this week," Sarkisian said at the time. "I've been here for four months. I've worked with Lane hand in hand."

In fact, Sarkisian's primary job was not to be Kiffin's understudy, but to consult with Kiffin and other coaches in a range of areas. But his unusual trajectory was merely the starkest example of the advantage—and the luxury—of having noncoaching advisers in place, ready to step in at a moment's notice.

These staff members do not count against N.C.A.A. bylaws restricting Football Bowl Subdivision teams to nine assistant coaches, a figure that will rise by one next year. And they must abide by rules barring them from activities only coaches may perform, including coaching athletes, actively coaching during games or practices, and recruiting off campus. But for the programs that can afford them, they provide an invaluable service.

"They're involved in the organization," Saban said in January. "That's where they make their contribution, in the coaching meetings. They're not really allowed to be involved with the team."

While Alabama was a trailblazer in employing analysts to supplement the official staff, it is not alone. Texas has four quality-control coaches and a bevy of other noncoaching football staff members. Auburn's roster of analysts includes the veteran offensive coordinator Al Borges. And after a fruitful N.F.L. career, the onetime wide re-

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ceiver Brian Hartline recently returned to his alma mater as one of Ohio State’s quality-control coaches.

“They call it best practices,” said Tom Herman, the new coach at Texas. “You go to Alabama, you go to Ohio State, you go to Clemson, you say: ‘What do you got? What’re you doing?’ And one of the things that certainly jumped off the page was the amount of support staff those elite programs had both in recruiting and off-the-field analysts.

“If we say we want to compete on the field with those teams,” Herman added, “we have to do business the way business is done.”

But as that word “business” hints, the trend highlights how college football’s best programs, which are nearly synonymous with its richest ones, have entrenched advantages in a system ostensibly designed to maintain competitive equity. The N.C.A.A. has long batted caps on compensating players as important for ensuring parity, with the organization’s president, Mark Emmert, testifying three years ago in a pivotal class-action lawsuit that the amateur model was “essential” to competitive balance.

Critics characterize that supposed motivation as a fig leaf. They note the country’s richer teams have been able to realize higher returns, in the form of wins, on higher investments, in the form of perks like better coaches and better facilities, even amid what amounts to a hard salary cap for players.

“You have this economic system that is very competitive, where you’re not allowed to pay the producers,” said Andrew Zimbalist, a sports economist at Smith College, referring to the players. “So the schools do everything they do to gain a competitive advantage given that they have this artificial restraint.”

“There are cracks in the system,” he added. “If a crack is hiring someone called an analyst instead of an assistant coach, that’s what you do.”

Shadowing coordinators so they can step in at a moment’s notice is actually not the primary job of these analysts. Rather, they serve as extra sets of expert eyeballs for coaching staffs seeking all available edges. Perhaps they have the time to break down an extra year of an opposing coach’s games; perhaps they can pay especially close attention to which second-string defensive back should replace an injured starter.

Their salaries, even at places like Alabama, are generally not commensurate with the six-figure (or more) paychecks that assistant coaches command, and they are not always experienced hands with head-coaching experience; frequently, they are younger, aspiring coaches looking for another way to break into the business.

At West Virginia, for instance, Coach Dana Holgorsen hired three analysts ahead of this season, tasking them with looking ahead an extra week on the schedule. So as the Mountaineers’ coaches focus and prepare for Saturday’s game, Holgorsen and his assistants also know they will be getting a jump-start on the following Saturday’s.

“I’m not smart enough to figure out two opponents at the same time, so I encourage our entire staff to focus on the game, win it, and then go on to the next game,” Holgorsen said. “Well, in the meantime, I’ve got three guys now that can move on to the game and get us ahead for the next week.”

Some coaches with the means to assemble a phalanx of experienced scouts have disdained that path. Coach Jim Harbaugh of Michigan has boasted of consolidating jobs. Oklahoma’s coach, Lincoln Riley, posited last month that “the more people you bring in, the bigger chance there is of having somebody that’s not all in, not as invested, and I think that can hurt a staff, hurt a team faster than anything.”

Still, if there were no advantages to the practice, there is a good chance it would have ceased altogether. Instead, it is spreading, and it is currently unregulated (two decades ago, a federal jury found that an N.C.A.A. cap on assistant coaches’ pay violated antitrust law).

“Teams like Texas that have all the money in the world can hire as many of those guys as they want,” Holgorsen said. “There’s no N.C.A.A. rule on this right now. I think there will be in the future.”

Perhaps, Todd Berry, the executive director of the American Football Coaches Association — and a nonvoting member of the Division I Football Oversight Committee — said his group had discussed some limits on analysts, saying, “We recognize there needs to be some autonomy for our universities to decide what’s best for them, but there needs to be some fairness — not necessarily equity.”

In other words: Alabama need not sweat losing its helping hands just yet.

This off-season it brought on Chris Weinke, the 2000 Heisman Trophy winner and most recently the Los Angeles Rams’ quarterbacks coach, as an analyst. And though Sarkisian departed for the N.F.L., one of his replacements, as co-offensive coordinator, is Mike Locksley — a former New Mexico head coach who spent last season as an Alabama analyst.

“His time as an analyst with us over the past season,” Saban said in announcing Locksley’s promotion, “should also ensure a smooth transition and a full understanding of how our organization operates.”

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From First Sports Page

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