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Is the price right? UA tuition rises, but so does enrollment

By: Ed Enoch

University of Alabama System Chancellor Ray Hayes likens the growth of the cost of a college education to the difference between a classic model Ford Mustang and the modern iteration of the sports car.

The 1975 model cost about $3,800, he notes. The 2016 Mustang costs about $25,000 but also comes with airbags and other features that weren’t part of the package in 1975.

In 1975, the university collected about $2,089 on average per full-time student in tuition payments and state appropriations to educate students, according to Hayes. In 2016, the amount was $16,645, but the college experience, like the Mustang, now comes with more features.

The average undergraduate tuition at the University of Alabama for full-time students in state this academic year is $10,780. Out-of-state students are charged an average of $28,100 for a full course load. But tuition typically is less than half the overall cost of going to college for in-state students and a little more than half the cost for students from outside the state. Once rent and other living expenses are added, UA estimates that the cost of attendance increases to $30,184 for Alabama residents and to $48,634 for students from outside the state.

Tuition, however, is the piece that has grown the most in the past decade, with rates increasing roughly 89 percent. It’s the revenue stream UA and other state institutions nationwide say gives them the flexibility to respond to shortfalls in state funding or other disruptions.

Myriad factors are behind the growth, according to system officials.

“The whole thing of setting tuition is a very complex point,” Hayes said. “You have state funds, you have what you are trying to provide the kids on campus, replacement of the faculty. It is a very dynamic analysis — how much donations come in. How much you are able to support from the endowment and other factors.”

System officials also say the university’s record enrollment growth in the past 15 years has helped mitigate the need for tuition increases.

While tuition has nearly doubled in the past decade in an environment that has pitted UA’s desire to grow into a national brand against diminishing state funding, Hayes and other officials say a college education at UA remains a good value, though some analysts question whether the university can continue its rapid growth and warn that the increasing costs are gradually eroding the value of a degree.

State funding versus tuition

When discussing the rate of tuition increase in the last decade, system officials say everything changed after 2008 as the economy soured at the outset of the Great Recession. The state appropriation for UA in 2008 was $199 million. Administrators have used it as a high-water mark to illustrate their losses in state support each year since.
In 2009, the state appropriation was cut to $156 million. During the past decade, the annual appropriation on average has been about $50 million less than in 2008.

"In other words, we saw at that point in time that the paradigm had shifted and the state funding we had come to rely on was not going to be like that in the future," Hayes said.

State funding represented about 60 percent of the operating budget 20 years ago. Now, the state’s contribution of $155 million represents about 20 percent of revenues. The state appropriation was roughly $86 million less than the budget for faculty salaries and benefits in the last completed fiscal year. The total operating budget for fiscal year 2016 was $948 million.

“We made a conscious decision as a system, as the leadership of the campuses and the leadership of the board, to put in place plans that would protect us as much as possible, from a fiscal and fiduciary aspect, for the future,” Hayes said of 2008.

State funding began to recover gradually in 2014, though it remains about 70 percent of the 2008 appropriation. Since 2008, gross revenues from tuition and fees increased about 190 percent as rates have increased and enrollment has grown by roughly 12,000, a trend begun under the leadership of former UA President and System Chancellor Robert Witt, who was hired to lead the campus in 2003. Witt’s tenure marked a period of rapid expansion of the UA campus — in both enrollment and infrastructure.

When Witt arrived, the university’s enrollment stood at about 19,600 students, having increased by about 3,000 in the preceding 15 years. Enrollment grew by roughly the same amount in the first three years alone of Witt’s presidency. Last year, enrollment was 37,655 and could be higher when this fall’s figures are tallied.

The UA System board of trustees, which ultimately approves the tuition rate increases, is sensitive to the cost to families, said Trustee Finis St. John.

“The bottom-line question we press the administrators on is, ‘Is the recommendation the lowest recommendation you can make and still maintain excellence and momentum?’ If it is not, we send them back to the drawing board. If it is, we keep talking,” St. John said. “We are not going to give up our momentum and our excellence and we are trying not to raise a penny more.”

The nonprofit Southern Regional Education Board, using 2014 data, estimated that Alabama families making between $30,000 and $48,000 annually would need about 45 percent of their income to pay for a full-time college student’s tuition at UA, the system’s Birmingham and Huntsville campuses or Auburn University. The percentage was 34 percent for households making from $48,000 to $75,000. The median household income in Alabama is $43,623, according to U.S. Census data.

The SREB, which promotes education and helps set policy, estimates the average graduate from UA and its peers leaves having borrowed about $22,622. Nationally, the average is about $21,598.
The reasons presented to the UA trustees for the annual rate increases over the decade have included offsetting shortfalls, increased operating expenses, capital projects, scholarships and merit raises.

But the university’s revenue gains from enrollment and tuition increases have more than offset the loss in state funding during the last decade, by an average of about $1 million a year.

The system has used the tuition revenue not only to make up for that shortfall but also to sustain a strategy of growing the campus from a regional to a national brand. Part of that strategy, Hayes and St. John said, has been focusing on adding more and better resources, facilities and student services to differentiate UA in a competitive market.

“The reason I use (differentiate) is, in order to have the resources you need to be different, you need to provide those services and resources and classrooms and support activities that they see on our three campuses that they may not see somewhere else,” Hayes said. “I think that is the reason this campus has grown so much. It has really focused on that, and students want to come here.”

Demand has not abated

The system’s leadership noted UA’s tuition remains below the national average for top-50 public universities and in the middle of the pack for peer institutions in the Southeast.

“If the tuition was too high, they wouldn’t be applying. If it wasn’t what they wanted, they wouldn’t be coming,” St. John said.

St. John, who was a member of the board when it hired Witt, believes the additional and better resources are necessary to compete in the modern marketplace for “the best and the brightest.”

“The whole package is important in attracting the best and the brightest students. All these questions about should we have built these new residential halls, should we have invested in these new professors, should we have upgraded these facilities...” St. John said. “Those are tough questions on the front end, but on the back end, that answer is we have increasing applications year after year.”

With that growth, the ratio of in-state students to students from outside the state has gradually shifted. As the university began classes last year, 54 percent of the student body came from outside the state. For most of the previous 30 years, out-of-state students made up about 25 percent of the student body.

“I am proud about what we have done since 2008,” Hayes said. “And it is coming up on 10 years since that has happened. And we were very aggressive, assertive on student enrollment. This campus, in particular, under President Witt really focused on out-of-state students. The other two campuses have taken that model now and are reaping benefits from it.”

To accommodate the growth, the university has added nearly 5 million gross square feet of space in the past decade, including new dining halls, new academic buildings, a new student activity and recreation center and more than 2 million gross square feet in new residential dorms. It has
an additional 2.2 million gross square feet of space, with combined budgets of more than $596 million, in various stages of design or construction, including two additional residential complexes, a new retail center and a dining hall.

St. John argues the growth of the campus and growth of the cost of attendance, while intertwined, are separate issues.

"I think the (enrollment) growth, in some respects, has eased the pressure on the cost because of the model we have adopted," he said.

That model means the chance of tuition decreasing, or at least remaining stagnant, is unlikely because state funding isn't likely to grow at pre-recession rates. The growth of amenities, coupled with the growing enrollment from out of state, could make any argument for more state funding tougher, Richard Vedder said. Vedder, a professor emeritus of economics at Ohio University, is director of the Center for College Affordability and Productivity.

"I think if I were the public policy side of it, if I were a legislator in Alabama, I don’t want to support upper middle class kids from other states, I don’t want to build recreation faculties for them," he said. "The nationwide experience is as out-of-state enrollment grows, the willingness of the local politician to support the university erodes. There is almost, in some cases, a tradeoff there."

Nationwide, state schools such as UA also face economic realities that will continue to make prospects of large-scale increases in state appropriations remote.

Vedder noted sluggish economic growth and the growing public costs associated with an aging of the population.

"Medical costs, particularly, are crowding out monies for other things in state budgets," he said. "If (lawmakers) give a lot more to higher education, (they) are going to have to have more taxes. You see nationally over the last 30, 40, 50 years, a significant decline in the state budgets going to higher education. I don’t see that reversing anytime soon."

Can it last?

The Capstone has been cited as the fastest growing flagship university in the nation, and Vedder says it deserves praise for the growth in both the size and quality of its student body. But he questions whether that growth trend can continue as UA and other state institutions face economic and political forces that he believes will only make the environment more challenging.

"Alabama has been bucking the trend, and the question is, can they buck the trend forever? My guess is that Alabama will eventually have to bow to market forces," he said.

Enrollment trends are flatter nationwide, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. Its data shows enrollment rates have not changed measurably at four-year institutions and have declined at two-year institutions over the past five years.

And Vedder sees competition for out-of-state students growing as the pool of students begins to stagnate.

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Hayes says the system is mindful of the possibility of a higher-education enrollment bubble as the cost of college continues to grow, and is preparing for a possible decline in enrollment.

From the system perspective, there will remain a limited pool of high school graduates in the state. Hayes estimated there were about 49,000 high school graduates in Alabama this year, with that number projected to gradually decline over the next 15 years.

While UA and the other system campuses have looked outside the state to grow enrollment, Hayes said the system is also thinking more about the potential to serve different types of students.

“What is intriguing, and the (campus) presidents and I have been talking about it, is there is 10 times (the number of Alabama high school graduates), about 400,000, that have taken some college and have dropped out, or ... for whatever reason are no longer in a college degree program, and we are discussing what can we do to provide avenues for them to get a certificate, a degree,” Hayes said.

Those avenues might not include four-year degrees but could include programs to enhance skill sets, he said.

“Those kinds of things are things we should be looking at,” Hayes said.

Sticker price

While the sticker price for tuition is now $10,780-$28,100 for undergraduates, Hayes and Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration Dana Keith note student loans, as well as aid and scholarships provided by UA, mean the amount many students are left paying out-of-pocket is much less.

“We are offering a lot of scholarships, particularly for those academically gifted students,” Hayes said.

In the last fiscal year, the gross total revenue from tuition and fees was $692.2 million. After scholarships and fellowships from UA and outside sources were credited, the amount left to be paid by students was $476.7 million, or about 70 percent of the original tuition amount.

In 2016, about 65 percent of UA’s student body applied for aid. There was $418.2 million in scholarships and financial aid awarded through UA’s financial aid office in fiscal year 2016, including $184 million in federal loans, grants and work study allowances in fall of 2016. In 2007, $120.2 million in aid was provided, including $71.6 million in federal assistance.

Vedder and other analysts have argued that widely available federal student loans have helped drive some of the tuition-rate growth, by lessening the immediate impact of the hikes borne by students.

Borrowing from federal programs grew from $78.2 billion in 2007 to $96.1 billion in 2016 nationwide, with 60-70 percent representing loans, according to data compiled by the nonprofit College Board.

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“That too is a big question about the future: The enormous growth of the loan sector,” Vedder said. “It has allowed those tuition increases to take place. They would have never taken place if the kids didn’t have money to borrow for it to take place.”

Without the widely available funds, it would be more difficult to raise tuition rates and fees.

“I can’t believe that growth is going to continue,” Vedder said of tuition rates.

Hayes said the system is also considering aid for students who fall between those who qualify for need-based grants like Pell and those who win academic scholarships.

The students in this middle strata may need as little as $500 to $1,000 to cover tuition and make it to the next semester, he said. Statistically, with each year completed, the chance a student completes college grows, Hayes said.

“We are trying to be sensitive to those students. All three campuses are looking at, are there ways we can redirect some of that scholarship money to those students to help them through their process of graduating,” he said.

Enhanced experience

At the same time, while students’ non-academic needs — food, shelter, extracurricular activities — have not changed over the years, the cost of them has increased as the university strives to create an enhanced college experience.

This includes offering multiple dining halls, nicer dorms, recreation centers complete with climbing walls, and numerous other campus amenities.

This enhanced experience is part of what Vedder calls the “country club-ization of higher education.”

“Back in the old days when I went to school and started teaching, university food and housing was relatively cheap,” he said. “Nowadays, it is the opposite; kids who move (off campus) in their junior and senior years find, even with inflated rents near campus, their housing costs have not increased and have even fallen. Part of it is the quality (on campus) has gone up.”

Nationwide, the trend is noticeable in the recreation facilities and the dorms, Vedder said.

Roughly 28 percent of the residential buildings at UA were more than 25 years old in 2003. That percentage has shrunk to less than 10 percent under a program of renovations and new construction.

“A decision was made that we wanted to be a residential campus of the first rate,” Hayes said. “In order to do that, (Vice Chancellor Dana Keith) in a previous life spent a lot of time projecting out the needs about our current enrollment growth and replacement of old high maintenance, inefficient, high-utility resident halls.”

A requirement for freshman to live on campus was also added in 2006, adding to the expenses students are obliged to pay in their first year.
Upperclassmen are not required to live on campus or have meal plans. Housing and meal plans represent about 30-40 percent of the estimated overall cost of college.

UA and system officials, like counterparts in higher education nationwide, say the freshman residency requirements improve outcomes and retention.

"The facts are very strong about the 18- to 21-year-old freshman living on campus and taking advantage of that residential experience," Hayes said. "Statistically, they are going to be more successful if they do; that is just a fact. Now jumping ahead to older students, I think older students can go to school without living on campus."

The trend is visible in the growth in expenditures for student services, Vedder, said, noting non-instructional expenditures and administrative costs — spending outside of the core missions.

"My guess is I would be shocked if Alabama spending hasn’t risen very significantly even in the last decade," he said.

In fact, the overall operating budget for UA grew from $549 million in 2007 to $948 million in 2016, with costs associated with instruction remaining the largest operational expense. But within the budget the expenditures for student services more than doubled.

UA spent $54 million on student services in 2016, according to its annual financial report for the last complete fiscal year. Student services include but are not limited to everything from the admissions and registrars offices, to the student health center, and intramural athletics. UA spent $25.2 million on student services in 2007. From fiscal years 2015 to 2016, the budget for student services increased by $1.4 million.

Value of a college degree

While the costs have grown, attending UA remains affordable and a college degree remains a sound investment, Hayes and St. John said.

In-state tuition is equivalent to the average cost of child care annually, Hayes said.

“When you look at it in that context, it puts things in perspective," Hayes said. “While tuition certainly has risen, and we are much more dependent on that than we were used to, it is still in the relative scheme of things a very good value for what we are providing the students.”

Hayes also framed the question of cost in terms of investment, noting the difference in earning potential between college degree holders and those who only have a high school diploma or didn’t complete their secondary education.

The median annual income of young adults with a bachelor’s degree was $50,000 compared with $30,500 for those with only high school diplomas, according to data from the National Center for Education Statistics using 2015 information. For young adults with a master’s or higher degree, the median income was $60,000.

“IT is still a significant advantage to have a college education,” Hayes said.
St. John argued the growth of the last 15 years at UA has improved that value.

"It is critical too because of the value it provides to our students," St. John said. "If the university's reputation, prestige, quality of our professors, quality of our programs go up ... then the degree they receive from attending the university is worth more. It is worth more to employers, it is worth more to their future."

While the gap between earnings for college degree holders and those with less education remains, median income for college graduates has declined slightly over the past decade, according to the NCES data. The median income was $51,000 in 2007, down from $55,000 in 2000.

"The more fundamental issue facing higher education right now is the perceived gains of going to college in terms of income gains has stagnated in the last decade or so," Vedder said. "The earning advantage over high school graduates is essentially the same today or slightly less today."

The cost of college is growing but the gains of college are not, he said.

"Is college a good investment?" Vedder said. "That question is starting to be asked more and more."
Sessions: ‘We have your back’

Attorney general lauds law officers, pledges to stand up for them

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U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions returned to Alabama Friday and assured a room full of law-enforcement leaders and officers that the Trump administration fully supports them.

“We have your back, and you have our thanks,” Sessions said before a large crowd of police officers, prosecutors and others at the 30th annual Alabama Statewide Law Enforcement Coordinating Committees Conference at the Perdido Beach Resort in Orange Beach.

During a 40-minute speech, the former Alabama senator emphasized President Donald Trump’s “law-and-order” agenda, insisting that crime will not be tolerated. He also promoted the president’s recent order to eliminate an Obama-era policy that blocked local police agencies from obtaining surplus military equipment. And he touted the Justice Department’s reinstatement of civil asset forfeitures as a way to “put drug dealers in jails.”

“The practice of civil asset forfeitures, when done right, weakens the cartels,” said Sessions about a program that has been criticized by Democrats and Republicans for its past abuse and disproportionate impact on minority communities.

The GOP-controlled Congress has hinted at eliminating funding for an expansive forfeiture program. Under the program, police can seize property when they suspect it’s

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Attorney General Jeff Sessions, in a major address to Alabama law-enforcement leaders and officers, tells them, “We have your back, and you have our thanks.” Brian Kelly, bkelly@al.com

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connected to criminal activity, even if the property owner is not convicted or charged with a crime.

"I'm amazed these people don't get it," said Sessions, regarding the program's critics. "We'll keep it out there as long as we can, and we'll do it as long as we can. Taking ill-gotten gains from drug dealers is appropriate."

CRIME AND DRUGS

Sessions, sworn in as the 84th attorney general in February, also highlighted his concerns about what he has described as an epidemic of drug crime and violent crime spreading across the U.S.

Though he acknowledged that overall crime has fallen since the early 1980s, he said that the numbers of homicides and drug overdoses are alarming. "These rises in crime and drugs is not a blip," he said. "We have confront it in a serious way. I am convinced we can do better."

Sessions has been criticized by national media for painting a darkening picture of crime despite federal data showing otherwise. In Sessions' hometown of Mobile, violent crime levels reached 20-year lows two years ago, before seeing a slight rise in 2016.

Still, opioid drug overdoses, particularly in states with large rural populations like Alabama, have caused considerable consterna-
tion in law-enforcement circles. Gov. Kay Ivey recently formed the Alabama Opioid Overdose and Addiction Council to study the issue.

In 2015, Alabama was the No. 1 state in the per-capita number of opioid prescriptions, according to the Center for Public Integrity. Alabama has also been the scene of high-profile raids on purported "pill mills" and the arrests of their physician owners.

"It's no surprise that in 2014, Alabama saw a nearly 20 percent increase in drug overdose deaths," said Sessions. "We are losing 700 Alabamians every year to drug overdose deaths. That's almost two per day. It cannot continue."

Sessions has also come under fire in some quarters for his opposition to legalization of marijuana. Seven states and the District of Columbia have legalized the recreational use of marijuana, while 29 states have authorized its use for medical purposes. Alabama is not one of them.

Last year, while serving as an Alabama senator, Sessions said that "good people don't smoke marijuana."

On Friday, he said, "With our record death toll, still some of our government officials and the media and Hollywood elites have sent mixed messages and harmful messages on drugs and the dangers of drugs in this country ... They've enabled this drug culture to grow and it's dangerous today."

He said, "We have to stand up to and push back on drugs as recreational substances.

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I don’t agree with that. It’s filling up … our cemeteries. A rattlesnake in your bed is not a good policy.”

POLICE CONFIDENCE

Sessions, meanwhile, said that overall confidence in police is growing. He cited a Gallup poll published last month indicating that 57 percent of Americans have confidence in police. That same poll, however, showed that Hispanics, self-described liberals and respondents under age 35 have become less confident of police.

Sessions took aim at what he said has been “divisive rhetoric” directed at police, which “discourages cooperation with law-enforcement agencies, makes your job less safe and more dangerous and encourages violence.”

He lamented police officer deaths, singling out the fatal shootings of Sgt. Sam Howard and Officer Matthew Baxter of Kissimmee, Florida in August, and the slaying of New York Police Officer Miosotis Familia in July.

“This Department of Justice will do what we can to support their grieving families,” said Sessions. “We will never give in and yield to thoughtless criticisms.”

Sessions’ speech was similar to others he’s given in recent weeks to law enforcement audiences. He spoke Monday at the National Fraternal Order of Police conference in Nashville, where he first announced a rollback of the Obama-era restriction on allowing local agencies to receive surplus military equipment. That restriction had been put into place in the aftermath of the 2014 police shooting of an 18-year-old black man in Ferguson, Missouri.

But Sessions’ speech in Orange Beach differed from others because of its setting: It was the first one he’s given in his home state since becoming attorney general. “It is emotional to be back,” Sessions said.

Sessions, who 30 years ago helped started the conference while serving in the U.S. Attorney’s Office in Mobile, credited it as an “important” institutional event, which brings together law enforcement personnel from federal, state and local agencies.

He called the working cohesion as “a wave of the future” and promised that as attorney general, “we’ll strengthen that partnership.”

“We fully and totally understand that (a majority) of law enforcers in the United States are state and local,” said Sessions. “We are going to work together in a way I think will be successful. We will need every bit of that talent … The challenge is significant.”

For law-enforcement personnel in attendance, Sessions’ speech seemed to provide an inspiring moment.

Said Baldwin County Sheriff Huey “Hoss” Mack: “It was refreshing to know we have the total back out of Washington toward local level law enforcement. This is a big change from the prior administration.

Added Mobile County District Attorney Ashley Rich: “It was incredibly motivational today for all of us who heard his comments.”
Stan Pate has sold more than $100 million worth of property

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

He insists this isn’t a retirement, but Tuscaloosa-based developer, businessman and political influencer Stan Pate says he is stepping back.

Pate, 60, said he would remain involved in some ongoing projects — the ongoing revitalization of McFarland Mall, Encore Tuscaloosa, chief among them — but he is removing himself and his business, Pate Companies, from the widespread, ongoing development-seeking opportunities that have defined him for almost 30 years.

And he’s doing it, he said, because of a girl.

“This, in many ways, is simply a love story,” Pate said.

“And I want to make room for other things.”
To do that, he said he’s selling his corporate jet, his three Tuscaloosa homes and his holdings and interest in properties across the nation.

He’s keeping some — the most profitable ones, he said — and dedicating others to the public good, such as a land tract 30 miles west of Atlanta that he’s establishing as a protected conservation easement.

He’s made such a declaration before. In 2005, following the sale of the Midtown Village site that he had acquired, razed and prepared for construction, only to be thwarted by a contentious relationship with the Tuscaloosa City Council, Pate said he was selling his homes and offices and hinted at seeking public office.

Since then, he’s sold more than $100 million worth of property in and around Tuscaloosa. But this time, he said, it’s different.

Pate, who has never married, said it has become increasingly difficult for his Swedish girlfriend of 15 years to enter the U.S. for visits. He said she’s not been here in more than a year and once was even turned away by immigration officials.

“I’ve spent a year trying to come to grips with this,” Pate said. “When I look at an empty chair, I get irritated that somebody I love cannot be in this country.”

So with that, he’s decided to make a change.

“You can’t take for granted that you’re going to live forever and need to continue to grow in business,” Pate said. “I am going to start growing in life.”

A boy and a bench

Born Luther Stancel Pate IV on June 27, 1957, the man who would become known as “Stan” began life as a self-described “farm boy” in Buhl.

But a car crash that claimed his father’s life when Pate was 10 and a mother he said was abusive led him to a life in the state foster home system and a lifestyle that gained the attention of authorities.

This, however, did not keep him from succeeding in school and, in 1981, he walked out of the University of Alabama.
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with a degree in chemical engineering.

"Without good teachers, I have no idea where I would've been," Pate said.

"Their commitment to me was more than just to educate me."

His career, though, diverted into real estate and developing. He described the late James Hinton Sr. as a mentor, and it was this emotional connection that, in May 2009, led him to purchase the aging McFarland Mall site as a way to preserve the legacy of Hinton, who financed the mall that was developed by Ward McFarland in 1960.

Since then, Pate has built himself into a self-made millionaire through development projects ranging from Wyoming to the Florida panhandle.

He's become a patron for politicians he believes in and a thorn for those with whom he disagrees. Sometimes, that same politician or public official has seen both sides of Pate, depending on their decisions or policy shifts.

But he still remembers being a boy on a bench in the basement of the Tuscaloosa County Courthouse listening as authorities tried to decide his future.

As he grew older and, ultimately, successful, Pate said he'd sometimes return to that basement whenever an occasion brought him back to the courthouse.

"The bench is gone," Pate said. "The spot's not, where that bench sat, but the opportunity I've had speaks a lot to America.

"You can overcome a lot of adversity and you learn a lot of things on life's highway. I spent a lot of time speeding on it, but every once in a while, you need to slow down and look around."

His own way

Pate's developmental career began in the 1980s and, since that time, he's left an indelible mark upon his adopted hometown.

And when he felt justified, Pate never let hurt feelings stand in his way.

Pate's showdown with the City Council over the development of Midtown Village made headlines for months. Ultimately, it took selling the land that Pate amassed along McFarland Boulevard to an outside development firm to get the project across the finish line.

He retained a stake in the project until a couple of years ago and, despite not being able to develop it on his own, Pate still considers Midtown Village one of his most important contributions to Tuscaloosa.

In 2005, after he won an appeal of a city condemnation order for a building he owned on 15th Street, Pate climbed into the cab of a front-end loader and knocked it down anyway. But before doing so, he hung a banner reading "Anger Mgt 101" on the side, which was itself a thumbing of the nose at a prior municipal misdemeanor conviction for harassment that he was appealing, for which he'd been ordered by the court to undergo anger management classes.

And once the Santa Fe Cattle Co. on Pate-owned property off Alabama Highway 69 and Skyland Boulevard closed in 2009, Pate pulled a shotgun from his vehicle after the restaurant's employees would not vacate the premises and leave the property inside. This led to another misdemeanor charge – this time, for menacing – for which Pate was convicted but, ultimately, exonerated by the Alabama Supreme Court.

"Stan has audacity and passion about what he believes in and I think that is what has made him such a unique person in the city's current time and history," said Tuscaloosa Mayor Walt Maddox, who acknowledged that he has had his own disagreements with Pate throughout the years.

But Maddox said that while he may have at times questioned Pate's position, he never doubted Pate's intelligence.

"On issues where Stan and I may agree or disagree, I always appreciate the fact that he had a knowledge-based, articulate argument for what he believed in and why he felt it would be good for the community," the mayor said. "He was always prepared, and his developments have improved the city's quality of life."

Jim Page, president and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, agreed with Maddox that Pate's vision for development is among his greatest assets.

"Certainly a legacy he will have in this community is his eye for development and making things happen," Page said. "He's consistent. He's a good businessman. He's firm and he's going to make sure that the deal works for him or he's not going to do it."

"He's going to do a project the way he thinks
it should be done. Not everyone likes that, but you have to respect him for holding his ground.”

There have been other flare-ups, from Pasadena, Calif., to Montgomery and beyond, where Pate’s belief in a particular issue has led to public confrontations with people in power.

And while his motives may have been questioned along the way, Pate said he has always — and will continue — to fight for the good of the common citizen, as evidenced by numerous stories of him offering aid, assistance or an otherwise helping hand to someone out of the limelight. These are the acts he has been known to commit but reluctant to publicize.

“When it comes to standing up for what I believe in,” Pate said, “my shoulders are still broad.”

**Giving something back**

While Pate puts his prospective timeline to unburden himself from certain trappings of his success at about a year or so, for others he expects it to take a little longer.

But he is adamant that he has no plan to disappear. “I’m not abandoning Tuscaloosa,” Pate said, “but it is a wholesale change.”

Pate said he has plans to live in Europe — he’s building a house in Sweden — and he’s also open to returning to Alabama, perhaps for a run at political office, to teach or simply for a way to give back.

“I’m extremely interested in child abuse, poverty with children and education of children,” Pate said. “I was lucky enough to work my way out of a few of those.”

Along Pate’s path away from his troubled youth, he found guideposts in the words of Thomas Paine and the transcendental writings of Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson, among others.

Lately, though, he’s been reading about the life of late Apple co-founder Steve Jobs and now sees that there is more to life and living than commercial and economic conquests.

“He forgot to live,” Pate said of Jobs. “I think I’ve done a lot of important things in the community, when I look around. But I’ve got more to offer than pushing down some trees, pushing around some dirt and building a building.

“The world is a big place. I’ll miss Tuscaloosa. I don’t know if Tuscaloosa will miss me, but it’s been a good ride.”

Reach Jason Morton at jason.morton@tuscaloosanews.com or (205) 722-0200.
Alabama's rural hospitals are dying

By: Christopher Harress

On September 1, a rural hospital serving one of Alabama poorest counties will close its doors after 60 years. The J. Paul Jones Hospital in Camden, Wilcox County, the birth county of Alabama Governor Kay Ivey, will become one of seven rural hospitals that has closed over the last eight years, placing Alabama near the top of the list for rural hospital closures nationwide, according to experts who spoke to AL.com.

Georgia has closed six rural hospitals while Texas has closed nine, the highest in the nation.

"Alabama is without doubt facing a rural health crisis," said Jim Carnes, policy director at Alabama Arise, a non-profit advocate group for low-income residents. "The hospital closures, along with other medical facilities, have already had and will continue to have dire consequences for residents in rural areas."

Michael's question comes during a time of uncertainty across the U.S. healthcare sector. The Republican controlled Congress tried to pass numerous bills that would repeal and replace Obamacare, while President Donald Trump has threatened to cut federal funding for Medicaid, which would likely hurt rural communities in Alabama and across the country.

While the GOP failed to scrap Obamacare and Trump has yet to follow through on his threat, the closure of J. Paul Jones Hospital in Wilcox County is the latest chapter of how healthcare in the country is changing, and has become a cautionary tale for rural communities.

In hospital chairman George Alford's press release, explaining the hospital's closure and transition to an urgent care facility, he said that the county's high poverty rate of 40 percent, unemployment rate of 15.3 percent (June) and the declining population of the region - currently at its lowest level since 1840 - meant the hospital has very few sources of income other than Medicaid.

Wilcox County's population was predicted to hit just under 11,000 in 2016. It was 9,548 in 1840, but has been in decline since hitting 36,000 in 1900, according to Census statistics. Dale Quinney, Executive Director of the Alabama Rural Health Association (ARHA), a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving and enhancing the health of rural Alabama citizens, told AL.com that 41 out of 67 counties are projected to have less population in 2040 than they had in 2010.

What's more alarming he said was that 46 rural hospitals that report annual income, 34 were operating at a loss.

"These counties need people if hospitals are to survive," said Quinney. "They are magnets of economic opportunity. Why would people or businesses move to a county without adequate medical care?"

See next page
The Medicaid payments haven't come close to footing the bills of people who benefit.

Between Oct. 1, 2016 and May 31, 2017 the Camden-based hospital had $3,880,000 in charges through the Emergency Room alone, explained Alford. Of that total, around $850,000 was recouped during that time period. $129,000 of that came from Medicaid.

"If you have an item for sale in a retail situation that cost you $50.00 and you are required to sell it for $5.00-$10.00, you wouldn't be in business very long," said Alford in his Aug. 3 press release. "I believe these figures speak for themselves."

Alford said the hospital was losing roughly $1 million a year. As many as 40 staff members are expected to lose their jobs while locals will have to make the 50 minute drive to hospitals in Monroeville, Greenville, Selma and Grove Hill. But that might not be so easy.

According to the ARHA, up to 16 percent of households in 14 of Alabama's rural counties do not have access to a vehicle.

**Medicaid battle**

"Alabama's rural hospitals are paid among the lowest for Medicaid in the entire country," he said. "Only about three or four U.S. territories have lower payments, so it's no wonder they are struggling to survive."

Medicaid payments are calculated using a complex mathematical formula based on the average wage of hospital workers, according to the American Hospital Association. Known as the Medicare Area Wage Index, it currently pays rural Alabama hospitals $6,900 per $10,000 of the cost of an operation. The Alabama Hospital Association (ALHA) said the formula, originally designed to reflect market-to-market differences in healthcare costs, has become manipulated. Some states are paid up to $18,000 for the same operation.

"As a state like California receives higher payments, it has more resources to increase wages, driving its wage index higher and small rural states' wage index lower," said a 2014 fact sheet from ALHA. "Low wage index states typically have lower margins, decreasing their ability to add staff or increase wages in order to increase their wage index."

"Without a more equitable wage index, some hospitals will be forced to close their doors, cut jobs or reduce services."

And when the Medicaid payments don't pay the bills, healthcare costs are spread to patients with private insurance. "Unfortunately," said Quinney, "there are allegations that rural hospitals receive significantly less reimbursement that their urban counterparts."

But the story doesn't end there for residents of rural counties. While all but seven of the 54 rural counties in Alabama will continue to have a hospital, many are cutting back on expensive procedures and services. For example, in 1980, 45 rural hospitals had obstetric services, loosely
known as the field of medicine that deals with childbirth and childcare once the child is born. Today only 16 of the 54 rural counties offer that service, according to ARHA. In the Black Belt’s 12 rural counties, where poverty and health issues are most acute, the number of hospitals offering obstetrics has gone from 10 in 1980 to 1 in 2017.

"There is no indication that these trends are reversing," said Carnes.

**Remedies**

Carnes claims the solution to the "funding gap," as he calls it, is quite simple, but extremely unpopular. Alabama needs to expand its Medicaid.

"A lot of people don't realize that the option to get heavily subsidized Medicaid is still there," he said. "The state would have to pitch in a small amount, I think about 5% now and then 10% by 2020. So you would have healthcare for hundreds of thousands of Alabamians for a dime on the dollar.

"Just a terrific bargain that we passed up there, but we can still turn it around and prevent more hospitals from being forced to close their doors."

It was Gov. Robert Bentley, a doctor, who passed up that opportunity. He said in his 2014 State of the State Address that "it is not my goal to put more people on Medicaid but to have less. It is not my intent to put able-bodied individuals on a government dependency program."

Quinney also said Alabama should follow the lead of neighboring states and allow nurse practitioners to take on more of the tasks that doctors would normally do. "Alabama has a very restrictive policy on what nurse practitioners can do," he said. "So that also restricts the care people can get in rural communities where there aren't many doctors."

Coosa County, north of Montgomery, does not have a physician, said Quinney, who has travelled to 51 of the 54 rural counties to study all aspects of health in those areas.

Another solution, claims both Carnes and Quinney, is Telehealth, the use of electronic information and telecommunications technologies to support and promote long-distance clinical health care, according to a Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) description. The technology involved includes videoconferencing, the internet, store-and-forward imaging, streaming media, and terrestrial and wireless communications.

However, two issues prevent Alabama from fully embracing the innovative idea.

"Unlike Georgia, Tennessee and Mississippi, we do not have legislation that mandates private insurance coverage or reimbursement for telemedicine,' said Quinney."And also we need universal broadband coverage. You cannot offer telemedicine in many rural areas because of the terrible cell and internet access."

This issue of rural broadband access is a topic that Ask Alabama has covered in the past.

See next page
The last solution is the creation of hospitals with fewer beds. Many rural communities in Alabama have hospitals that operate with empty beds - because Medicaid, Medicare and private insurance companies have limits on how long a patient can be an inpatient before being shown the door. So the turnover is quick, meaning smaller hospitals with fewer beds would be ideal, said Quinney. However, under Alabama law, all hospitals in the state must have at least 15 beds, which use up more resources and requiring greater staffing levels.
The Strange path: Daunting, but doable

John Sharp  jssharp@al.com

"Big Luther" appears to be in big trouble ahead of his Sept. 26 runoff against Roy Moore.

Two polls, released in the past two weeks, show a similar result — Moore leading Luther Strange by 18-19 percentage points one month out from the Republican showdown to determine the party's U.S. Senate nominee.

Polling is also giving Moore a decisive advantage in favorability scores. Moreover, Moore appears to be winning over voters who backed U.S. Rep. Mo Brooks during the Aug. 15 primary. Brooks finished third with 82,363 votes.

Strange, the Senate incumbent, has dismissed the poll findings, maintaining that his campaign's internal polling suggests a much tighter contest.

For the most part, political pundits agree that there's time for Strange to forge through to victory. But what campaign advice would they have for him? That's where the pundits differ.

'TIT'S NOT FAIR'

One tactic would be to "go negative" on Moore, seeking to tarnish the image of the former chief justice.

Strange has the financial backing to do so, if he wishes. Millions of dollars have already been pledged to Strange's campaign by the Senate Leadership Fund, which supports GOP candidates backed by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

"There is no other way than to go negative," said Steve Flowers, an author and political analyst whose weekly column about Alabama politics appears in more than 60 newspapers. "You have to try and peel off Moore's hardcore support, which is very resilient and will be difficult to do."

Moore, in fact, expects the negative ads to come hard and fast.

Two recent polls show Luther Strange lagging badly behind Roy Moore in their runoff campaign for the Republican U.S. Senate nomination. "He needs to get out among the people and make some controversial speeches," says a veteran political pundit.  Bob Gathany, staff file
"Washington should not control people in Alabama," said Moore during an interview last week on Mobile talk radio FM 106.5. "When they do negative ads as they have done and put millions of dollars into it, it's not fair."

Jonathan Gray, a Mobile-based political strategist, said that Strange does have other options, such as working to raise his favorability scores, sharpening his campaign message, and trying to bring in President Donald Trump for a campaign-style rally.

But Gray said that the alternatives to "going negative" seem unlikely, at this point, particularly the prospects for Trump jetting in.

Trump endorsed Strange, via Twitter posts, twice in the days leading up to the primary. But a Washington Post report last Friday indicated that Trump was considering turning his focus away from the Alabama contest.

Gray said, "No one can question whether Roy Moore is the anchor of conservative values in Alabama. Period. End of story. For Donald Trump to go up against someone like that is very risky. If Donald Trump loses, what does that say about his coattails and influence?"

William Stewart, professor emeritus of political science at the University of Alabama, said that Strange's campaign needs a jolt of charisma.

"He's a very laid-back person who I consider a friend," Stewart said. "This was all right as a Washington lobbyist and as attorney general, but running a race against Roy Moore is challenging to someone with his personality. He needs to get out among the people and make some controversial speeches."

Stewart said "Big Luther" needs to be more like James "Big Jim" Folsom, who was Alabama's governor in the late 1940s and the 1950s.

The folksy Folsom, who stood 6-foot-8 — one inch shorter than Stranger — touted himself as "the little man's big friend." He enjoyed campaigning with a hillbilly band.

"That is what Strange needs to do ... do things that will make news and also make a favorable impression on Alabama voters," said Stewart. "I can remember when the GOP was small and referred to as the country club set. That's how Strange is regarded. Ironically, he needs to distance himself from those who have supplied most of the funds for his campaign."

Brent Buchanan, a Republican political strategist based in Montgomery, said the key for Strange is to increase his favorable scores, and identify his voters for a stronger turnout, while "not tearing down Moore." Fierce negativity against Moore will only fire up Moore's base, Buchanan said.

Quin Hillyer, a Mobile-based political writer, doesn't see a path for a Strange victory. But he does see an opportunity for a noble campaign: "I would advise him to find some new issue, something positive, and make himself a crusader for it," said Hillyer. "Cut all the horrendous negativity ... Go down swinging for something positive he believes in."

'SOLD OUT'

Moore finished ahead of Strange by a 38-32 percent margin during the Aug. 15 GOP primary. The runoff winner will face Democrat Doug Jones in the Dec. 12 general election.

Recent history shows that a reversal of fortune is doable for Strange. In 2010, in Georgia, Nathan Deal defeated Karen Handel in a Republican gubernatorial runoff by 50.2-49.8 percent. That runoff occurred a mere 22 days after Deal trailed Handel by 11 percentage points in the first round of voting.

But Strange carries some unusual baggage. He was appointed senator in February by Gov. Robert Bentley, who at the time was under investigation by the Attorney General's Office for his romantic relationship with a former political aide. Weeks later, Bentley resigned and pleaded guilty to two misdemeanor violations.

"Luther's negatives are so high because people think he sold out his principles to get the job," said Gray. "It's incredibly expensive and difficult to undo those negatives."

Strange, at this point, seems undeterred by the polling that's been made public.

At an appearance in Huntsville last week, he criticized as "bogus" the two recent polls by Opinion Savvy-Decision Desk HQ and Louisiana-based JMC Analytics and polling. "When people start doing legitimate, in-depth polling, you'll see that," he said.

Reached for a response, John Couvillon, who runs JMC Analytics and polling in Baton Rouge, said, "I'm accustomed to that kind of reaction when it's a number displeasing to one or more candidates."

Likewise, Matthew Towery, with Atlanta-based Opinion Savvy, said, "Our data is consistent not only with the results of the first round, but also across multiple survey modes and demographics." He added, "Short of a miracle, his campaign appears to be in serious trouble."
Bannon to back Moore, report says

Trip Pittman also on the Moore bandwagon

Howard Koplowitz  hkoplowitz@al.com

Steve Bannon, former chief strategist to President Trump, told influential conservatives he would be backing Alabama Senate candidate Roy Moore, giving the ex-state chief justice a powerful ally and access to a broader fundraising base for his race against incumbent Sen. Luther Strange in next month’s Republican runoff, Politico reported Monday.

Bannon’s apparent support of Moore puts him on opposing sides with Trump, who endorsed Strange ahead of the Republican primary earlier this month. Trump tweeted numerous times up until the election urging his Alabama followers to vote for Strange.

The Moore campaign could not immediately be reached for comment.

Bannon, the controversial executive chairman of Breitbart News who was fired from the White House last week for giving a lengthy interview that was seen as undermining Trump — a week after a woman counter-protesting neo-Nazis died in Charlottesville — made the announcement during a closed-door meeting of the Conservative Action Project, according to two people in the room who spoke to Politico.

Reports say former White House Chief Strategist Steve Bannon is throwing his support behind Roy Moore in the runoff against Sen. Luther Strange.
Bannon framed his support of Moore as not being in opposition to Trump but in opposition to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, who has provided support and millions of dollars to Strange's campaign.

Moore is using Strange's D.C. support to tie his rival to the Washington establishment.

In the private meeting where he announced his support of Moore, Bannon characterized the race as being between Republican camps who support and oppose the president.

Politico pointed out that Bannon has close ties to Robert Mercer, a megadonor that bankrolled Breitbart and who could steer his wealth to Strange's campaign or outside groups that support the judge.

Moore, who was removed twice from the Alabama Supreme Court, is known for his social conservative positions and recently gained the endorsement of former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin. During the primary, he gained the support of action hero Chuck Norris and "Duck Dynasty" patriarch Phil Robertson.

Moore also picked up an endorsement this week from one of his former rivals in the U.S. Senate race.

State Sen. Trip Pittman of Montrose endorsed Moore Monday at a meeting of the state Republican Party at Troy University.

Pittman said candidates get to know those who they compete against.

"You figure out their character and you know who they are and you get a lot more depth into what they represent and what they stand for," Pittman said. "Obviously, Roy Moore is a man of outstanding integrity, of commitment, of faith."

Moore faces Sen. Luther Strange in the Sept. 26 runoff for the Republican nomination for the seat Jeff Sessions left to become attorney general. The winner faces Democratic nominee Doug Jones in December.

Moore led the nine-candidate field in the Aug. 15 primary, with 39 percent of the vote, while Strange ran second with 33 percent. Pittman finished fourth, with 7 percent of the vote. U.S. Rep. Mo Brooks, R-Huntsville, finished third, with 19 percent of the vote. He has not endorsed either candidate.

Moore and Strange briefly shared the stage twice at Monday's meeting of the state Republican Party executive committee at Troy's Trojan Arena. They shook hands and did not mention each other during their brief comments.

AL.com reporter Mike Cason contributed to this report
$7.9 billion put toward state-made vehicles

Germany was top market for Ala. auto exports during record-making 2016

The Associated Press

MOBILE — Alabama had one of the largest auto exports in last year’s record-setting $20 billion.

The Alabama Department of Commerce officials say exports of automobiles rose 13 percent in 2016 to $7.9 billion, Al.com reported. State-built models were shipped to 86 countries last year.

Germany was the top export market for Alabama-made vehicles last year, with more than $2.4 billion in shipments. Next to follow were China, Canada, Mexico, the United Kingdom, Australia, South Korea, South Africa, the United Arab Emirates and India.

“Around the world, demand is climbing for vehicles produced by the skilled hands of Alabama’s auto workers,” Alabama Commerce Secretary Greg Canfield said.

Honda accounted for exports to 45 countries, with more than $1 billion in export sales.

Top markets for Honda’s Alabama-made vehicles are Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, South Korea and the Middle East.

The company’s jump in exports can be traced to “the very positive response from both the domestic and international markets” involving luxury sport utility vehicle and the introduction of the all-new, 2016 Pilot SUV, which debuted in the spring of 2015, according to Mike Oatridge, vice president of Honda Manufacturing Alabama.

When the first Acura dealership opened in Dubai, Oatridge said, the Alabama-built Acura MDX was the only Acura product sold there for several months.

Vietnam’s exports are up nearly 70 percent to cater to a younger population with income to spare. In the Middle East, Saudi Arabia has seen a 65 percent jump and Kuwait is up 125 percent.
He was my friend, but now Robert Lee offends me

Roy S. Johnson
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I just told one of my best friends from high school that I'm never speaking to him again.

His name is Robert Lee.

Back in the day, we called him Bobby Lee. He was my white friend who lived near me in the black side of Tulsa, so we often rode together to school on the other side of town — by bus until one of us got our drivers' license.

He was my teammate in football and baseball.

Later, he became a minister and officiated my first wedding.

But now I'm through with him.

I unfriended him on Facebook, blocked him on Twitter, deleted him from my contacts and now refuse to answer his text messages.

I'm through with him because his true name — Robert Lee — offends me.

It offends me, of course, because Robert E. Lee commanded the Confederate Army during the Civil War. Every time my friend popped up on my timeline it sparked painful thoughts of...

By now, I hope you know I'm kidding. I haven't really ditched my longtime friend because he shares the name of a Confederate general.

That would be ridiculous — as ridiculous as ESPN's decision to reassign play-by-play announcer Robert Lee from the University of Virginia's home opener against William & Mary on Saturday in Charlottesville, Virginia, because the city was the site of a violent, and tragic, clash over the removal of a statue honoring the general with the same name.

Instead, Lee, who, for what it's worth, is Asian American, will be in Pennsylvania broadcasting the University of Pittsburgh's home opener against Youngstown State.

And that's a shame.

Even ESPN agrees.

In a statement, the network released after the move prompted the kind of blowback almost anyone would expect — anyone except the execs who made it, clearly — ESPN said, in part, "It's a shame that this is even a topic of conversation."

It shouldn't have been. And that it is, that ESPN made it one, demeans the sincere — and necessary — national movement to remove Confederate monuments and memorials from public spaces and reminds us of just how uber-sensitive we've become to the topic itself.

And to the larger topic of race.


It is vital that we are able to have healthy, even passionate, discussions on race and the many areas of our society it permeates, including Confederate monuments.

Unfortunately, we're not there. Not even close.

Instead, we launch verbal hand grenades at each other, both sides slapping vile labels on the other until tongues go dry.

And we accomplish nothing.

What transpired in Charlottesville left us all on edge. The ugliest, most dangerous extremes that had long been brewing and building for years nationwide — from the alt-right white supremacists and New Nazi to the hooded and masked ANTIFA followers who confront them — were revealed for all of us to see.

The torches. The chants. The guns. The shields. The weapons. The beatings.

And, of course, the depraved senselessness that led James Alex French to drive his car into a crowd of people (allegedly I'm supposed to write here), killing 32-year-old Heather D. Hayer, merely because they disagreed with him.

These events, along with the racially tinged incidents that invade social media timelines every day, have heightened our awareness to the injustices that surround us, but also exposed the violent degrees to which too many are willing to go to further their cause.

We must all do what we can to resist the hatred, to prevent those who spew it from hijacking — or, yes, whitewashing — our vast and colorful America.

Yet in doing so, we cannot overreact. We cannot begin to be so sensitive and fearful we begin to treat the Robert Lees, Ulysses Grants or even the Stonewall Jacksons in our midst as if they — not the statues of the men for whom they may (or, most likely, may not) have been named — were lightning rods for hate.

If we do, we are only feeding the beasts, the purveyors of hate like Richard Spencer and Christopher Cantwell.

Also in their statement, ESPN said, "In that moment, (the decision) felt right to all parties."

Yet it was very wrong.

ESPN's Lee probably could have slipped into Charlottesville, done his gig, and returned home without anyone hardly noticing.

Frankly, I didn't know of him at all before this week.

And, frankly, it should have stayed that way.

Johnson writes a regular opinion column for AL.com.
GUEST NOTEBOOK

Birmingham needs regional vision to thrive in the future

Innovators and entrepreneurs are key to a community’s economic success, and they will be even more critical in the future. More and more of us will be in business for ourselves, and rapid technological advances require us to look forward continually or risk getting left behind.

These changes require cities and counties to think differently about what it means to attract investment and jobs. Communities ultimately don’t succeed today by competing with their neighbors to land a big retailer – or even a new manufacturing plant.

Today, “economic development” means something far more complex than recruiting new storefronts and factories. It means creating an environment where entrepreneurs and innovators can flourish – and where they want to live, work and play.

It is vital for the Birmingham area to create this kind of environment, and it requires all of us to work together in ways we haven’t in the past.

Why?

Layers of red tape don’t promote innovation. What promotes innovation is a coordinated network of support that encourages success from research to commercialization and beyond.

In addition, innovation thrives in communities that offer a quality of life that appeals to top-flight talent. Metro areas that work together can offer a better quality of life because they tackle big issues and projects.

The bottom line is simple: To promote innovation in the private sector, we need local governments that are also innovative – local governments that solve problems, that build critical infrastructure, that continually look forward, and that are ready to respond to new opportunities. Metro areas that cooperate can do this better than metro areas whose individual cities are pulling in different directions.

A new report commissioned by the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham and conducted by the Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama demonstrates a clear link between cooperation and prosperity. The report, which can be found at www.TogetherWeProsper.org, shows that the Birmingham area is more fragmented than our Southeastern peers – and less prosperous on just about every yardstick.

For instance, Birmingham’s metro area had job growth of just 0.24 from 2000–2016. In a sampling of more cooperative metro areas, job growth during those years ranged from 20 percent to 50 percent, according to the report. If we had performed as well as the worst of those cooperative metros, we would have benefited from 103,000 additional jobs.

To be sure, what makes a metro area successful and competitive is a complicated equation, with many factors.

But a key ingredient is a spirit of enterprise that is manifested in partnerships: partnerships between the public and private sector, between diverse institutions, and between local governmental entities.

The Community Foundation report examines the way four other metro areas across the country found ways to work together better. Though some of them have divisions far greater than ours, they found ways to cooperate and succeed.

To build a foundation for innovation, Birmingham must find an approach that works for us. This is not about requiring cities in Jefferson County to give up their identity or autonomy. It’s about finding a way for us to identify and achieve common goals.

If failing to do this has hindered us in the past, it will cripple us in the future.

We are blessed in Birmingham to have star players in innovation and research, including University of Alabama at Birmingham, Southern Research and Innovation Depot. But if we want to sustain and build on their success, we must move forward as a team.

Only by working together can we put our best foot forward and compete with the rest of the world.

Susan Matlock is the now-retired founding president and CEO of Innovation Depot. She served on an advisory committee that helped guide the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham’s regional cooperation project.

Susan Matlock
Stimpson coasts to victory, pledges unity

Council incumbents enjoy big nights, too.

Lawrence Specker lspecker@aol.com

Mayor Sandy Stimpson and the Mobile City Council’s incumbents made it a clean sweep in Tuesday’s municipal elections, without a runoff in sight.

In the mayoral race, Stimpson won with 28,436 votes or 57.05 percent, compared to 21,072 votes and 42.27 percent for Sam Jones. Anthony Thompson came in a distant third with 198 votes, or 0.4 percent, followed by Donavette Ely with 140 votes and 0.28 percent.

It was a substantially wider margin than in 2013 when Stimpson, then a political newcomer, won with 53.5 percent of the vote and Jones, a two-term incumbent who’d also served as a county commissioner, took 46.3 percent.

Total turnout Tuesday was 49,913 votes cast out of 126,474 registered voters, for 39.57 percent turnout. That too presents a dramatic change from 2013, when final numbers ratified by the City Council were 57,813 votes cast in the mayor’s race out of 125,711 potential voters, for a turnout of 46 percent.

Five of seven City Council seats were contested: District 2 Commissioner Leon Mandie and District 7 Commissioner Gina Gregory faced no opposition.

Official results released by the City Clerk’s office at about 10:30 p.m. showed Fred Richardson easily dodging a runoff by collecting 4,831 votes for 60.38 percent of the vote.
ELECTION
FROM A1

the District 1 total against three challengers. Of those, Cory Penn fared the best with 24.92 percent, while Timothy Hollis drew 6.27 percent and Perry Boness took 2.43 percent.

Per official returns, District 3 incumbent C.J. Small faced off a challenge from Leola L. Chaney with 80 percent of the vote, District 4 incumbent John Williams took 70.49 percent against challenger Robert Martin, Joel Davis collected 77.47 percent to defeat Arianna McArthur in District 5, and Bess Rich had 81.49 percent in District 6 to top Deryl Pendleton.

At Stimpson’s campaign rally inside a 173-year-old former church-turned-concert venue, the victorious mayor recognized his family, campaign team and city staff.

"I’m blessed beyond measure to be your mayor," said Stimpson before a large and celebratory crowd at The Steeple.

Stimpson spoke briefly with an electronic American flag as a backdrop. Sticking to his successful "One Mobile" campaign pledge from the 2013 mayoral election, Stimpson promised to work hard to unite Mobile.

"Obviously, for those in this room, it’s a happy day," said Stimpson. Honestly, everyone in this room voted for Sandy Stimpson, which I’m tremendously gracious and appreciative of. But I wanted to tell all Mobilians, even those who didn’t vote for me, I promise that we’ll work as hard for you as those in this room. We’ll work to earn your trust because we can and we will unite this city.

Stimpson added, "The opportunities that are before us, none of us can ever imagine. There is hope for every single Mobilian, no matter where you live or who you voted for."

Jones had expressed optimism shortly before 7 p.m. as he and supporters waited for the polls to close and results to begin coming in. He said he spent the day traveling from one polling place to another, and that he’d sensed an energy that wasn’t there in 2013.

"It’s a little bit different because of the enthusiasm of the voters that I’m seeing this time," he said.

At Jones’ campaign headquarters, large charts were ready on the walls, one for each council district, ready for campaign workers to tally the results. But when preliminary numbers began coming from local TV stations, they came fast and they didn’t bode well. The charts were never filled out.

Jones remained upbeat as he spoke to supporters after conceding, however. He said the campaign had put him in contact with many young supporters and that he’d been impressed by their views and energy.

"You know, Facebook is an amazing thing," Jones said. His social media-savvy volunteers had done great things, he said. "Let me thank you. Thank you so much for doing that. I got calls from folks all over the country about some of your posts on Facebook. And let me just thank you for what you did in doing that. And you also really spread our community throughout this country. That was a great job."

Jones thanked his volunteers and added: "The most important thing that we need to do is continue to work together to better the entire community for everybody in Mobile. You got a lot of folks’ attention. They understand that you’re here, they understand what your goals are and they understand what your desires are, they understand some of the needs are that they may not have understood in the past, and that’s extremely important."

"I am not complaining about anything," Jones said, to applause. "We did the very best we could with what we had to work with. Everybody did. Everybody who was here with us did their very, very best, everybody that was here was all in ... This is probably one of the most sincere efforts I’ve seen in politics since I’ve been in office. This was the most sincere of all of them. Regardless of what I’ve done or where I’ve been, this really is something that will always stick with me, watching you come together, and watching you come together and watching the passion you have for this community and the passion you have for this city."

Jones said that despite the loss, the campaign had encouraged him to remain engaged in community affairs. "I’m not going anywhere," he said.

City election results
84 of 85 precincts reporting (1: incumbent)

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Unopposed: City Council members Levin C. Mance of District 2 and Gina Gregory of District 7 were unopposed for re-election.
Judge to hear motions in Rondini case

News' attorneys want records on reported 2015 sexual assault made public

By Stephanie Taylor
Staff Writer

Attorneys for The Tuscaloosa News will argue in court that records related to the Megan Rondini case should be made public.

An attorney for The Tuscaloosa News filed a motion Tuesday, asking Tuscaloosa County Circuit Court Judge Brad Almond to order the release of investigative records from the Tuscaloosa County Sheriff's Office.

Almond agreed to hear arguments from attorneys at a hearing he set for Sept. 11, according to an order he filed Thursday. A hearing in the case was previously scheduled for Sept. 25, which he canceled, saying that he will hear arguments on all pending motions at the Sept. 11 hearing.

The News is seeking recorded interviews and other evidence collected after Rondini, a former University of Alabama student, told police that T.J. Bunn Jr. raped her at his home in 2015. Rondini hanged herself in 2016, around six months after investigators told her they would not prosecute the case. Bunn, then 34, has denied the rape allegation through his attorney and has told investigators that he and Rondini, who was 20, had consensual sex.

Publicity surrounding the case

See RONDINI, B4

See next page
case and a wrongful death lawsuit filed by her family has led to questions about whether the case was mishandled, and has prompted heated responses and criticisms on social media.

Rondini family attorney Leroy Maxwell has filed a motion asking for seven days to respond to The News' request that the records be made public. Bunn family attorney Ivey Gilmore filed a motion asking the judge to expedite and comply with the request.

"For the purpose of promoting public safety and for the secondary purpose of providing a more rational response to the confusion and damage the Rondini case has created regarding the reputation of institutions throughout Tuscaloosa, the appropriate judicial authority should order the full release of the investigative records currently possessed by the Tuscaloosa County Sheriff's Department," Gilmore wrote. "These such records, through a probate action, have already been released to selected attorneys and in turn selected portions then released to other news outlets and internet bloggers. Therefore, any argument that these records should not be made public is not credible."

The Tuscaloosa News is seeking the files in order to make them available for public review in their entirety. Alabama Press Association attorney Dennis Bailey filed a motion Tuesday, intervening in the case on behalf of the newspaper and a reporter, and asking for the files to be made public.

"An essential function of the Media Intervenors is the gathering of information from public records for publication in The Tuscaloosa News in order that the workings of public institutions not be conducted in secret but rather be subject to public review," he wrote. "The public is entitled to understand and intelligently consider the affairs of such institutions and cannot do so without access to information from public records."

Almond has already allowed the release of some records to the Rondini and Bunn families, who are free to share them.

"The Media Intervenors cannot be certain that they have received the complete investigative file of the Tuscaloosa Sheriff unless the information comes directly from the proper custodian of those records," Bailey wrote. The files, while initially protected from public disclosure, should be public record because a grand jury reviewed the evidence and declined to prosecute.

Sheriff Ron Abernathy denied a request by a Tuscaloosa News reporter, but said he would make the records available if he is ordered by a court.

"Significant portions of documents sought by The Tuscaloosa News have ... appeared in widely published media reports at the apparent behest of one or both of the parties that obtained them," Abernathy's attorneys wrote in a motion, stating they would not oppose the release of the records. "The Office of the Sheriff of Tuscaloosa County respects the Constitution of the United States as the supreme law of the land, including its First Amendment protection of freedom of the press and the public's right to know matters of public interest and concern that are published by a free press."
Facility to help sex assault victims

Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner program will open this fall

By Stephanie Taylor
Staff Writer

A new facility staffed by nurses trained to treat sexual assault victims will be open this fall.

The Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner (SAFE) program will be housed near DCH Regional Medical Center and will serve sexual assault victims from all West Alabama counties. Services will include medical care, follow-up counseling, specialized therapy and information about reporting options, said Kellee Reinhart, spokeswoman for the partners who established the program.

Partners include the DCH Health System, the DCH Foundation, the University of Alabama, the Tuscaloosa County District Attorney's Office, local law enforcement and city and county leaders, she said.

SAFE, or SANE (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner), nurses are specially trained to care for patients who are victims of sexual assault or abuse and collect forensic evidence, such as rape kits. In addition to trained personnel, spaces dedicated to meeting the needs of sexual assault survivors typically include rooms with appropriate beds and necessary equipment such as rape kits, medication for sexually transmitted diseases and the morning-after pill.

Planning and research to establish the program began last fall, Reinhart said. The lack of a SAFE staff at DCH became widely-discussed throughout the community in June when the case of former University of Alabama student Megan Rondini was made public. Rondini committed suicide in 2016, a year after she reported to police that she was raped. Her family says that she didn't receive the proper treatment or follow-up care, which they believe contributed to her death.

Reinhart said that the timing of the new program is not related to that case. The program was announced in a news release sent Wednesday.

"Providing the best quality care for those impacted by sexual assault is critical.

See FACILITY, A5
for our community," University of Alabama System Chancellor C. Ray Hayes stated in the release. "I am proud of the collaboration and the partners that have come together to take this important step to develop a program to serve the entire West Alabama region."

A location for the new facility hasn't been finalized, but it will be near the hospital because of its central location, said Reinhart, who is also the spokeswoman for the UA System. About 17 DCH emergency department nurses are undergoing classroom and additional clinical training, and are expected to staff the facility when the training is completed in early October.

"Advancing the services and support we provide is at the heart of our mission," DCH Health System President and CEO Bryan Kindred stated in the release. "DCH has endorsed this type of program, and it is gratifying to see all of these community groups come together to ensure the new SAFE program provides a broad scope of professional services."

Kathleen Cramer, a longtime community volunteer and retired University of Alabama administrator, will lead efforts to launch the SAFE program, which will be overseen by a volunteer board of directors.

"The University of Alabama is proud to support the ongoing effort to establish a SAFE program serving the West Alabama region, including the Tuscaloosa area," UA President Stuart Bell said in the release. "These efforts, which began last fall, will provide community-based services to enhance the resources available to those within our local and campus communities."

Tuscaloosa County District Attorney Hays Webb said that the specially-trained nurses will help with the prosecution of sexual assault cases.

"We are pleased to be a part of this effort," he said. "A SAFE program in Tuscaloosa will better fulfill the needs of our community. This program will assist our office in seeking justice, providing us strong evidence as we analyze and prosecute cases."
FOOTBALL FEVER

UA students camp out overnight for Alabama-Florida State tickets

Staff report

Dozens of University of Alabama students camped out overnight Sunday at Coleman Coliseum to buy football tickets.

The ticket office opened at 7 a.m. Monday to begin distributing an allotment of student tickets to the Alabama-Florida State game.

Alabama will begin the 2017 football season at 7 p.m. Saturday against the Seminoles in Atlanta’s brand-new Mercedes-Benz Stadium. The neutral-site game sold out in July, with tickets on the resale market starting at $300.

UA’s home schedule begins Sept. 9 with a game against Fresno State at Bryant-Denny Stadium.

According to UA’s athletic department website, tickets are still available to the general public for five home games: Fresno State, Colorado State, Ole Miss, Arkansas and Mercer. UA is also offering a three-game mini plan that features tickets to the Fresno State, Arkansas and Mercer games. Tickets to those games can be purchased at www.rolltide.com.

The Tennessee and LSU games are sold out.

University of Alabama students Julia Stauffer, left, and Lauren Milani, right, sit on an air mattress with friends Sunday as they make the best of an overnight wait to claim their football tickets at Coleman Coliseum. The tickets became available at 7 a.m. Monday. [STAFF PHOTO/GARY COSBY JR.]

Schedule

Here’s Alabama’s home football schedule for 2017. Kickoff times that have been scheduled are in parentheses; otherwise kickoff will be announced:

- Sept. 9: Fresno State (2:30 p.m. kickoff)
- Sept. 16: Colorado State (6 p.m. kickoff)
- Sept. 30: Ole Miss
- Oct. 14: Arkansas (Homecoming)
- Oct. 21: Tennessee
- Nov. 4: LSU
- Nov. 18: Mercer
Road

Continued from A1

spaces will be moved to side
streets — and access in some
areas will be limited.

Bid packages are planned
to go out in December with
selection of the contractor and
actual construction to follow.

Kemp said it was ALDOT’s
goal to keep at least two of the
boulevard’s three northbound
and southbound lanes open for
the duration of the project, but
will be reduced to one open
lane during certain parts of
the work.

In other road work updates,
Kemp said the nearly $85 mil-
ion project to widen Interstate
35% and add a crimson-colored
suspension bridge over
McFarland Boulevard is also
expected to go out for bids in
December.

The overall plan calls for
adding a third lane to I-35%,
between Exit 73 — the McFar-
land Boulevard exit — and Exit
76 while eliminating one of
the traffic signals at the inter-
state’s entrance and adding an
additional lane on McFarland
Boulevard westbound between
the interstate’s exit and 31st
Street East.

This additional lane is
expected to ease traffic con-
gestion associated with
vehicles leaving the interstate,
Kemp said.

Also, ALDOT is adding
accent lighting to the crimson-
colored bridge and showed the
commission what it selected
during Monday’s meeting.

Kemp said the agency
selected a style called
“washes,” which will bathe
much of the arch and under-
side of the bridge in light.

“There are all kinds of options
for this kind of stuff,” Kemp
said.

The lighting system is
expected to cost between
$250,000 to $300,000, but
Kemp said it was an aspect that
demanded attention as long as
it’s in use.

“You don’t just pay for this
one time,” he said, noting the
selected lights have a lifespan
of about 10 years. “You’ve
got to pay for the power,
and you’ve got to pay for the
maintenance.”

Reach Jason Morton at jason.
morton@tuscaloosanews.
com or 205-722-0200.
Sororities boost minority recruitment during Bid Day

By Rebecca Rakowitz / News Editor

This year's Bid Day at The University of Alabama continued the trend of increased minority involvement in formal sorority recruitment. The University has worked to diversify the Greek system over the last few years.

"Every student that comes to The University of Alabama deserves to find a home within our Greek community; if that's where they'd like to be," said Ryan Powell, associate director of the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life. "So we're really proud of what our students have done in terms of supporting the inclusion initiatives ... and that we've been able to communicate to students that the Greek community is a place where everyone is welcome."

This Bid Day, Sat. Aug. 19, diversity among the young women who received bids from 16 Panhellenic sororities increased by close to 5 percent from last year. Of the women who received bids, 258 self-identified as racial or ethnic minorities, an increase from the 246 women in 2016.

"And, the number of African-American students who received bids was 36, which is up 11 compared to last year," Chris Bryant, assistant director for the Office of Media Relations, said in a e-mail.

Minority participation in the Greek system has been on the rise since the publication of a 2013 Crimson White article which explained how black women going through formal sorority recruitment were repeatedly dropped. Before 2014, only one black woman, Carla Ferguson in 2013, had ever received a bid from a Panhellenic sorority during formal recruitment at The University of Alabama.

Just over 2,300 women received bids this year, meaning that 90 percent of the 2,589 women who attended the first round of recruitment events were accepted to a sorority. The numbers are lower than last year, but the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life said involvement in greek life is consistently proportional to the enrollment of the University.

"We're really happy with the way that Bid Day turned out," Powell said. "And seeing all those women celebrate is something we're really proud that we were a part of in helping them find the organization that was a good fit for them."

To the unknowing onlooker, the streets surrounding Bryant-Denny Stadium on Bid Day looked strikingly similar to most fall semester Saturdays. With people flooding the streets and security on hand, it could be any game day morning. That is, except, that instead of thousands of people rushing into the stadium, thousands of young women ran out.

Starting in the early hours of the morning, chants of "Bid Day, Bid Day, Bid Day!" can be heard around campus as thousands of young women head to Bryant-Denny Stadium, where they'll have their "fate" handed to them in a manilla envelope.

In the stadium, girls find out what sorority they've received a bid from. After that, each sisterhood gets a turn to rush out of the stadium, sprinting to their new house, chanting their sorority's chants and saying things like, "I can't believe this," "this is so exciting," and "I really hope I don't fall!"

Hundreds of spectators filled the street for the event, some running along the girls, all with smiles on their faces and high-energy levels to match. Alyssa Delia, a junior biology major and member of the Greek community, describes the day as the "best kind of crazy" and encourages people to experience it for themselves to have a better understanding of the pride in the Greek community.

"Anyone who hasn't [been to a Bid Day] should come out," Delia said. "Even if they're not Greek, they'll get to see why we love it so much and the excitement we have with it."
Privacy rules may not apply to Hunter's violations

By Wil Jones / Assistant News Editor

In the wake of The Crimson White's Monday article detailing the resignation of the University Elections Board, The CW has been made aware of a campaign document that SGA President Jared Hunter would have had to sign in order to run for office. In this document, Hunter waived his rights under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, which he previously cited as the reason why he couldn't comment on the Office of Student Conduct's investigation into his campaign.

This form has to be signed by any student seeking elected SGA office. A portion of the form reads as follows:

"I hereby give my consent to and authorize the Elections Board, Elections Review Board and the University of Alabama, including its Office of Student Conduct, to disclose to the media, including The Crimson White and the general public, with permission to redisclose all records of any type maintained by the University and containing any personally identifiable information about me concerning or related to my candidacy for SGA office including, without limitation, election information, violation of campaign and other SGA election rules and/or provisions of the University's Code of Student Conduct, hearing results and sanctions imposed."

Hunter admits to signing the form and said the FERPA section must have slipped his mind earlier this week. He said he wants to be transparent, but that he isn't sure if he is legally allowed to share potentially confidential documents.

"I don't have anything to hide," Hunter said. "I just don't know what the process is of sharing [the OSC's findings]."

Hunter said he and the administration are currently looking into the legality of the form to see if it means he signed away his FERPA rights indefinitely, or just for the campaign process.

Keeli Mallory, a May graduate from the University, served as the chair of the Elections Board this past year. While speaking on behalf of the Board, she said the Board is aware of the form but it was forgotten about.

"We knew about [the form] and it was something that had been discussed in March during the campaign season and everything," Mallory said. "In discussing whether we should send [Hunter's case] to the OSC, that was brought up and it was definitely on our radar and then I think with everything that happened it took like a back burner."

Mallory also said it is unfortunate that the board did not rediscover the form until after their statement discussing their resignation. She said that because of the board's resignation, the group has relinquished their right to discuss Hunter's OSC investigation.

Previously, the University said the OSC ruled on Hunter's case over the summer, but that the matter must remain confidential.

Todd Borst, executive director of the OSC, said his office is aware of the document that would have waived Hunter's FERPA rights.

"We're aware of the document but will not comment on it," Borst said.

Once Hunter has a better understanding of the legality of the actions, he emphasized that he hopes to be able to comment further on the situation.

"I'm happy to release what I need to," Hunter said. "But it's not because a group of students forced me into this. It's because I'm trying to act as a respectful and responsible SGA president and not as anyone who has something to hide. Because I don't."
Elections Board will not tolerate disregard for rules

The SGA Elections Board is a committee of students, faculty and non-voting administrative staff who volunteer in an effort to regulate and to safeguard the integrity of the SGA election process. The Elections Board undertakes this task with the utmost seriousness, and its sole focus is on fairly upholding the provisions of the Elections Manual each year. The core purpose of the Elections Board is to enforce the rules and regulations in place in order to ensure a fair, transparent and legitimate election. To the extent that anyone — faculty, staff, students, or alumni — fails to respect these rules and this committee, we set a poor example for our University, and undermine its ideals. Even more seriously, we fall into the danger of making a mockery of the democratic process itself.

Unfortunately, the Spring 2017 election cycle presented an unprecedented degree of precisely this kind of dangerous disrespect. In particular, the Elections Board was confronted with a number of significant complaints concerning the SGA presidential race, especially concerning Jared Hunter’s conduct throughout the campaign. These complaints included, among others, violations associated with his failure to complete community service obligations by their assigned deadline, and his public acknowledgment of his endorsement by Theta Nu Epsilon, a.k.a. “The Machine.” The Board investigated these matters diligently, deliberated over them thoroughly, often for hours on end, and considered a full range of sanctions. But due to the significance and volume of these matters, especially in conjunction with other violations, and consistent with Article IV of the Elections Manual, the Elections Board ruled to refer all issues to the Office of Student Conduct (OSC) for a full investigation. A detailed account of our deliberations can be found on the UA Student Government Association Facebook page.

During the summer months, OSC reviewed all evidence gathered by the Elections Board, as well as additional evidence gathered by the OSC itself. Mr. Hunter was given due process, and was given the chance to accept responsibility for his actions. OSC has now completed its investigation, and under the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), its rulings must remain confidential.

Put simply, the matter is this: With all due respect to Hunter, and also to our administration, we are dismayed at the blatant disregard and disrespect for the rules during our last election cycle. Hunter’s violations were numerous and serious, and for that reason the Elections board in the end voted unanimously that the sanction of disqualification be applied. But given the gravity of that decision, the Board was persuaded to defer the case to OSC for review. Unfortunately, Hunter seems ultimately not to have faced any real repercussions. If the conduct and the violations at issue in this cycle can be allowed to stand without any meaningful consequences, why then do we have an elections manual, or indeed an Elections Board at all?

The lack of respect for fair elections is particularly frustrating given the many long hours that our predecessors and we have put into ensuring a fair process. This is to say nothing of the University’s vigorous and public embrace of the Capstone Creed. “As a member of The University of Alabama community, I will pursue knowledge, act with fairness, integrity and respect; promote equity and inclusion; foster individual and civic responsibility; and strive for excellence in all I do.” These are noble ideals, and we should all live up to them. A new class of freshmen this year will memorize the Creed, but sadly, they will also learn of the great distance between its ideals and the conduct of our most recent SGA elections.

We want to be very clear: We have the utmost respect for the ideals of our administration, our Greek system, our Student Government Association and our faculty, staff and students generally. We also want to point out that our University and SGA have the tradition, the visibility, and the power to set an example for excellence. Precisely for that reason, the Elections Board has worked hard to uphold a strong transparent and ethically sound elections process. And precisely for that reason, we must point out the failures of our community in this egregious case. Moreover, we must charge our community — current office holders, future candidates, the University administration, and alumni alike — to recommit to these ideals. Concretely, we call on our students, in and beyond the Greek system, to denounce corruption when they see it. We also call on our community to hold its current SGA president accountable, and we challenge him to account — voluntarily, but fully and also publicly — for his actions. Finally, we challenge Theta Nu Epsilon to follow its own candidate’s lead, and to end its charade of secrecy.

We believe there is no place for corruption, coercion or secrecy in democratic elections, and that our student leaders must be given a fair chance, through fair and legitimate elections, to create change on this campus. Sadly, our experience as a Board has caused us to lose faith in the possibility of that fair chance. We do not believe the Elections Board, in the current climate, to be a viable entity for ensuring genuinely fair elections.

For that reason, as our last official act, and in protest of the injustices allowed to stand during the Spring 2017 election, we the 2016-2017 Elections Board unanimously resign, effective immediately.

The SGA Elections Board is composed of four undergraduate students, two graduate or law students, one voting faculty member, and on non-voting staff member.
Elections board steps down after 2017 election

By Will Jones | Assistant News Editor

The University's entire Student Government Association Elections Board has resigned because of what members cited in a statement Sunday as "a blatant disregard and disrespect for the rules during our last election cycle."

The board's announcement, in a letter sent to The Crimson White (see P. 4), centers around SGA campaign violations that it found in late February had been committed by presidential candidate Jared Hunter. Instead of sanctioning Hunter, the board sent its findings on to the University's Office of Student Conduct for further investigation.

Hunter subsequently won the March 7 election and took office as SGA president, despite the findings. Among several violations the board cited was Hunter's failure to fulfill a required 10 hours of community imposed for a previous violation. The board also found that his public acknowledgement of an endorsement from Theta Nu Epsilon (the secretive political organization known as "The Machine") violated a section in the SGA Elections Manual.

Since the election, the Office of Student Conduct has reviewed the case, and made a determination over the summer break. However, because of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 the ruling is not available to the public. Hunter has continued to serve as SGA president.

"We do not believe the Elections Board, in the current climate, to be a viable entity for ensuring genuinely fair elections," board members said in the letter to The Crimson White.

Keeli Mallory, who graduated from UA in May and served as the chair of the Elections Board during the past year, spoke on behalf of the entire board about what led to its decision to resign. She said the board was updated throughout the OSC's investigation and was notified about the investigation's results.

"We don't regret our decision to send [Hunter's case] to [the Office of Student Conduct]," Mallory said. "Our reaction to their findings were not what we believed would happen."

Hunter, a senior majoring in political science, said he was unable to comment on the OSC investigation's results, but said he disagreed with the Elections Board's original findings. The Elections Board initially required Hunter to complete 10 hours of community service before March 6. The Board in its violations report noted that Hunter failed to complete this requirement. Because he did not complete the original required number of hours, Hunter was required to complete a certain number of service hours before the end of the spring semester. Hunter said he has completed this requirement.

"While I personally don't agree with [the sanctions], I was given them by the Office of Student Conduct and the Elections Board so I did my best to fulfill them and I completed the service hours they required of me in the required time and am continuing to abide by the sanctions that I was, you know, given after the fact," he said.

"We do not believe the Elections Board, in the current climate, to be a viable entity for ensuring genuinely fair elections."

- Elections Board

In a statement to The Crimson White Sunday, the University spokesman Chris Bryant underscored that the findings from OSC must remain confidential. "The Office of Student Conduct's review of the Election Board's referral was completed earlier this summer. Any outcome of a student conduct review is considered confidential according to student privacy law. The Election Board's important work and diligence over the past year is appreciated," the statement read.

In the aftermath of the OSC's investigation, board members felt their best course of action was to resign. Mallory said this decision was determined to be the best way to make a statement to the Hunter administration, the student body and the University administration that change is necessary in order to have fair elections.

The board called on students to denounce corruption in their statement. It called on Hunter "to account voluntarily, but fully and also publicly for his actions." The board also called on Theta Nu Epsilon to "end its charade of secrecy."

In the statement the board said it is disappointed at the obvious disregard and disrespect for election laws that occurred during the SGA elections.

As for the future of The Elections Board, it will be filled by four undergraduate students, two graduate or law school students, one voting faculty member and one non-voting staff member as outlined by the SGA Constitution. One of the undergraduate positions is filled by the SGA president, while the other positions are filled by the University's vice president for student affairs.
UA names water institute leader

Microbiologist is a proven researcher

By Ken Roberts
City Editor

A University of Alabama microbiologist has been chosen to lead the campus’ newly launched Alabama Water Institute.

Patricia Sobecky, UA associate provost for academic affairs and professor of biological sciences, will lead the interdisciplinary research institute, which was formally established by the UA System board of trustees in February.

“Water-related issues are becoming a global challenge,” said Kevin Whitaker, UA executive vice president and provost, who made the announcement last week. “Patty is a proven leader and researcher; we look forward to the Alabama Water Institute, under her leadership, expanding the University of Alabama’s research contributions in freshwater science, engineering and policy.”

The Alabama Water Institute includes research already being done at UA. The institute is expected to expand UA’s expertise in water-related research and be integrated into educational efforts. The institute will also collaborate with the National Water Center — a federal facility on UA’s campus — as well as other universities, national laboratories, state agencies and private industry.

The institute draws upon researchers from numerous

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See next page
disciplines including biological sciences, computer science, engineering, geography, geology, law and mathematics.

Sobecky is a Pennsylvania native who earned a bachelor’s degree in biology from the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown. She earned a doctorate in microbiology from the University of Georgia. She has written more than 60 scientific publications and has been awarded more than $8 million in research funding.

Sobecky has served as chief scientist for oceanographic research cruises in the Gulf of Mexico, and she is an editor for the international journal FEMS Microbiology Ecology.

Her work has been funded by the Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative to assess the impact, recovery and restoration efforts after the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the northern Gulf of Mexico. An article Sobecky co-authored in 2015, “Microbial Responses to the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill: From Coastal Wetlands to the Deep Sea,” was among the top 1 percent of most cited papers in its field that year.

Earlier this year, Sobecky was named a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the world’s largest general scientific society. Fellows are recognized for their scientifically or socially distinguished efforts to advance science or its applications.

Sobecky became an associate provost at UA in 2014. She first joined UA in 2009, where she chaired the department of biological sciences. Before 2009, Sobecky was an associate professor in the School of Biology at the Georgia Institute of Technology.
Roots of the alt-right

Two UA professors writing books about the movement explore its ominous arrival into the public arena

John Sharp jsharp@al.

Pecification about the alt-right has swelled, following violence in Charlottesville, Virginia, and President Donald Trump's suggestions there were some "very fine people" at the demonstration who've been treated poorly by the media.

Trump's comments have been almost universally denounced by Republicans, CEOs of major businesses and others.

Why? They see the alt-right as nothing more than a rebranding of white supremacy.

Two University of Alabama political science professors are on the front line of analyzing the alt-right, short for alternative right.

George Hawley and Richard Fording are each working on books dedicated to analyzing the movement, its history and why it evolved. Fording's work, which does not have a release date, focuses on what the alt-right movement meant to Trump's election last year.


It's been described as an account of the alt-right, its origins, and how it differs from white nationalistic movements that have come before. A prevailing misconception, according to Hawley, is to label the alt-right as a group with structure and leadership.

"That cannot be applied to the alt-right, which is an amorphous and anonymous and disorganized Internet mob that broadly shares a particular agenda when it comes to race," he said.

Hawley has been interviewed by dozens of national and international news outlets in the aftermath of Charlottesville. He said that most of the people identifying in the movement are younger white men. "The alt-right is predominately millennials," said Hawley, referring to those born after the early 1990s. "There seems to intersect in it from the upcoming Generation Z, today's high schoolers and where the alt-right hopes to see their big wave of interest."

Hawley said the alternative right movement was born in 2008, with the term alt-right coined by Richard Spencer, who's since become one of the movement's high-profile names.

"It was then a fairly broad ecumenical term that could have been applied to anyone whose political thinking was right-wing, but they were opposed to George Bush conservatives," he said.

Two years later in 2010, Hawley said, the movement became more race-focused. Adherents began to emphasize isolationism, protectionism and nativism, and some delved into neo-Nazism. On the Internet, alt-right followers often create and circulate Internet memes that express their ideologies. Members have used Twitter, Reddit and other social media platforms to convey their messages.

Charlottesville, Hawley said, "was an attempt at a real-world movement." He classified it as a bit of a "coming out" in which alt-right emerged from anonymity to the public forefront.

"Whether that was a start remains to be seen," said Hawley.

‘CONSTANT BEHAVIOR’

Fording’s focus is on the movement’s relationship with Trump. The president, last week, coined the term alt-left to describe the counterprotesters in Charlottesville, and said that they were just as violent as the alt-right.

Throughout the campaign, there was this constant behavior both on the part of the white supremacists and the activists and Trump himself who led many people to speculate that he was actively quoting those groups and people who share their views," said Fording.

"The recent events have done nothing, obviously, to change anyone’s opinion about that."

"The present attempt to normalize the alt-right has drawn strong condemnation from Republicans and conservatives. Mobile-based conservative writer Quin Hillyer, in a column posted last week, praised strong anti-racist statements by senators and conservative writers in the aftermath of the Charlottesville violence.

Hillyer, who battled with former KKK leader and Louisiana politician David Duke in the 1990s, said he’s been "very happy" with how many conservative leaders have come forward to denounce the alt-right.

"Racists have no place among real conservatives," Hillyer said. "Completely apart from what’s happened in the last week, the alt-right is a contemptible collection of hateful people, falsely trying to put an intellectual veneer, with a smiley face, on the same old sick, pathetic white supremacist garbage."

Carla Hill, an investigative researcher with the Anti-Defamation League’s Center on Extremism, said the movement desires a mainstream legitimacy.

"It’s, ‘Don’t come wearing a Klan robe but bring your khakis and polo shirts,’" said Hill. "It’s a rebranding and unfortunately everyone is falling into using their terminology. It’s a repackaging of preaching hate."

‘IN THE NEWS’

Hawley said the alt-right isn’t defined by geography, nor is it more pronounced in the Deep South.

"Things like Southern heritage have not been their main focus," said Hawley. "I suspect they took advantage of Charlottesville because it was a subject in the news ... It wasn’t so much a passion of the Confederacy as it was that an attack on these monuments was an attack on whites, more generally."

Following Charlottesville, Alabama legislators are coming under scrutiny for approving a law, signed by Gov. Kay Ivey in May, that protects Confederate monuments.

Birmingham city officials have cut funding for a Confederate monument in Linn Park with plywood. Marshall is threatening to fine the city $25,000 a day if the city continues to obstruct the monument.

State Rep. Juneau Bonnen, D-Birmingham, is calling for a repeal of the law, allowing Birmingham and other cities to decide if they want to keep Confederate monuments.

Now, however, Confederate monuments dominate news shows, and the alt-right mobilizes to defend them. Said Fording: "That puts the politicians in Montgomery right in the middle of this."

Fording said he suspects that state lawmakers would have hesitated to pass the law had Charlottesville occurred back in the spring.

In Alabama, the alt-right movement has sought to wed its way onto college campuses. The most notable public incident occurred in April when Spencer spoke at Auburn University. The university had barred Spencer’s appearance, but a federal judge reversed the school’s decision on First Amendment grounds.

Also, various fellow travelers are trying to revive themselves and jump on the alt-right bandwagon. Among them is the League of the South, the longtime white supremacist group.

"Their existence precedes the alt-right and they focus exclusively on the South," said Hawley.

"I would say the tone and culture in the League of the South differs from the alt-right. But ideologically, the League of the South is not all that different from the alt-right."
Thomas L. Jones

Obituary

Thomas L. Jones, age 86, passed away peacefully August 27, 2017, at Hospice of West Alabama. A memorial service to celebrate his life will be Thursday, August 31, at 11:00 a.m. at First Presbyterian Church Tuscaloosa with Rev. Michael Bailey and Rev. James Goodlet officiating and Norwood-Wyatt Chapel Funeral Home directing. Visitation will follow in the Pat Faucett Family Life Center of the church.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Elizabeth and Rev. Veachel Jones; his sister, Ruth Jones; and his brother, Emery E. Jones, all of Greensburg, Kentucky. He is survived by his wife of 56 years, Shelley; one brother, Joseph M. Jones of Campbellsville, Kentucky; nieces, Ann Druary of Houston, Texas and Dana Jones of Nashville, Tennessee; nephews, Byron Jones of Nashville, Tennessee, and Thomas E. Jones of Greensburg, Kentucky; and goddaughters, Marla Parks and Shelley Parks of Tuscaloosa, Alabama who brought him much joy and love to his life.

Tom was born in Garfield, Kentucky and moved at age 2 to Greensburg, where he grew up as the youngest of four children. After four years serving his country in the United States Air Force, he entered the University of Kentucky, receiving his Bachelor of Science degree in 1959 and Juris Doctorate degree in 1961. He was awarded the Master of Laws degree from the University of Michigan in 1965. He joined the University of Alabama Law School faculty in 1962 and retired in 1995 after having taught and mentored two generations of Alabama law graduates.

He was a Fellow of the American and Alabama Bar Associations and held memberships in both the state and local Bar Associations. Tom served on the Executive Committee of the Association of American Law Schools and was a life member of the American Law Institute. He was a life member with 50 years of service representing the State of Alabama as a member of the Uniform Law Commission. His peers elected him Vice-President of the nationally prestigious group of legal scholars and practitioners. One of the contributions he was most proud of as a commissioner was being instrumental in the writing of the Uniform Probate Laws used throughout the country today.

His service to the University of Alabama extended beyond the Law school as he was called upon to serve in several posts including Acting Dean of the Law School, Faculty Chair of Athletics and in the Legal Department of the University Systems Office.

At First Presbyterian Church, Tom serviced as a Deacon and Elder and as chairman and active member of many committees. He was a faithful member of the Faith Sunday School class. Tom served as President of the University Club Board and was a charter member of the Greater

See next page
Tuscaloosa Kiwanis Club. For 50 years he was a member of the Alabama Credit Union Board serving as chair at the time the present Main Branch was built.

Tom enjoyed very much his weekly luncheon with friends in the Romeo Lunch Group. He looked forward to the Wednesday morning breakfast group at Rama Jama and the gatherings of the Apollo Club with great friends.

Tom never lost sight of his real reason for being a teacher. He endeavored to get to know students while they were in Law School and to stay in contact after they became practicing attorneys. He followed their successes and comforted them in times of personal tragedies. Former students would often consult with him about legal issues and he would willingly assist them through the complexities of an issue just for the joy of making them better.

For 55 years, his love for and appreciation of the University of Alabama and the Tuscaloosa community motivated him to strive to "give back" for all that had been given to him.

Honorary Pallbearers will be past and present faculty and Staff of the University of Alabama Law School, Past and Present Board members of the Alabama Credit Union, members of the Faith Sunday School Class and Romeo Lunch Group.

In lieu of flowers, expressions of sympathy may be given to the following:
The Thomas L. Jones Endowed Scholarship, University of Alabama School of Law Foundation, P.O. Box 870382 Tuscaloosa, AL 35487, Hospice of West Alabama, 3851 Loop Road Tuscaloosa, AL 35404, First Presbyterian Church, 900 Greensboro Avenue Tuscaloosa, AL 35401 or Secret Meals for Hungry Children c/o Alabama Credit Union, P.O. Box 862998 Tuscaloosa, AL 35486.
The Return

This is why UAB won before the game was played

John Archibald, jarchibald@al.com

It wasn’t the crowd in the stands, which was ... impressive.

It wasn’t the performance on the field, which was ... developing.

It wasn’t even the fact that six University of Alabama System trustees — and the chancellor, for Pete’s sake — found the decency to show up for UAB’s return to Legion Field. If only as a pitstop on their way to real football in Atlanta.

Which is ... something.

But not the thing.

What that thing was on this perfect Saturday in Birmingham was joy. Screamy-head-off-and-wear-stupid-costumes joy. Cry-like-a-child-when-ahallclub-back-from-the-dead-runs-on-the-turf-at-the-stadium-that-gets-no-respect joy.

Like the kind of joy Steven Chappell drove 862 miles from Missouri to express.

This guy, who set up the FireRay-Watts.com site when the team was laid to rest in 2014, wouldn’t miss it for the world.

SEE ARCHIBALD, A10

ARCHIBALD

FROM A1

It was the kind of joy that wasn’t dependent on a scoreboard, because the game was won when the Blazers ran onto the turf at Legion Field in green and shiny gold.

The Return, as fans call it, has come to mean victory over death and the whims of Watts. What it was for UAB’s most blazing devotees — and there’s a harder-core base of them now than before football was banished — was proof that little guys can win.

If they work hard enough.

That the impossible is possible.

If you’re loud enough, and persistent enough, and refuse to believe all those who insist you are wasting your time, or spitting into the wind, or bashing your head against the walls of the way things are.

That joy.

It came out for some fans as the kind of emotion generally reserved for weddings or funerals.

Sarah Holsonbeck expected that sort of feeling. She’s in the middle of a three-generation family of Blazers, and her father worked closely with Gene Bartow, the Moses of UAB athletics, and mourned the loss of football.

What happened on the field? That’s one thing. How many seats were filled? That’s another thing. But this day was about a whole lot more.

This day belonged to people like Holsonbeck’s dad, and Bartow and “to so many others who stuck with UAB through thick and thin,” she said. “Go Blazers.”
UAB's most intrepid fans — I have in the past referred to them accurately as the "ornery and obnoxious" — saved this program from extinction. And this day. This kickoff and this spectacle and this crowd in Green and Gold were the spoils of a long and bitter campaign.

They were just happy to be there. Cheering for football.

Others, like alum Dixie Robinson, bought season tickets even though she moved out of state after graduation and can't get back for a lot of games. She gave them out, so others could have seats in her name.

Because today, because this team, because this effort, was about loyalty as much as anything.

The day that would never come. It came.

The game that would never happen. It did.

It wasn't a championship performance, but it was bigger than football. It wasn't an Alabama game or an Auburn game, but it didn't have to be. Because it was Lazarus back from the dead. It was a UAB game, again, with a magic dragon and tailgating and cheers and a traffic jam and a team that returned with a dream that remains.

On this day UAB won.

Tomorrow? Well, tomorrow is tomorrow. And on those days we'll talk more of attendance and performance and places to play and why — why if UAB really wants this program to succeed it should schedule a lot of Thursday night games.

But today was joy.

And that was enough.

Archibald writes a regular opinion column for AL.com.
UAB Hospital opens new clinics

$10.8M Whitaker renovation job now complete

Erin Edgemon
ereganon@uab.com

A newly expanded Whitaker Clinic at UAB Hospital will house primary care, dermatology, podiatry and rheumatology clinics.

The second and third floors of the John N. Whitaker Building recently underwent a $10.8 million renovation, adding 38,600 square feet of state-of-the-art clinical space, according to UAB. The newly dubbed Whitaker Clinic sits just east of the Kirklin Clinic of UAB Hospital parking deck.

The renovation includes 80 exam rooms, waiting areas, a full laboratory, digital x-ray and a convenient injection area for flu shots or other basic inoculations.

The extra space was made available when administrative and business offices for the UAB Health System were moved out of the Whitaker Building and into the new UAB Medicine Avondale Business Center.

“This is a much-needed expansion of our clinical capacity, which will improve access to UAB Medicine’s world-class health care,” UAB Health Systems CEO Will Fernaty said. “The Kirklin Clinic of UAB Hospital is Alabama’s pre-eminent outpatient medical facility, and this expansion will enhance the patient experience in both the original Kirklin building and the new Whitaker facility.”

The primary care, dermatology and podiatry clinics are now open. The rheumatology clinic will open Sept. 11.

Valet and self-parking will be available at the Kirklin parking deck on Fifth Avenue South. A new second floor sky bridge will connect the deck to the Whitaker Clinic. Signage and patient escorts will be available to help patients make their way to the new clinics. Valet parking and patient drop-off also will be available at the front entrance of the Whitaker Clinic, 500 22nd St. S.

The new clinic space was designed using ideas from staff and some of the best concepts from medical facilities around the country, according to UAB.

"All of the medical team — nurses, physicians and technicians — were involved in working out the design and layout, which produced a better design across the board," said Stuart Cohen, medical director for UAB Prime Care. "Among other features, the space makes extensive use of natural light and provides exam chairs, not tables, that can recline if needed, but provide a more comfortable, dignified experience."

The clinics will employ the care team model, in which all members of a physician-led care team are involved in providing patient care. The team includes a physician, physician assistant or nurse practitioner, nurses and other medical staff who form groups of primary care staff members with collective responsibility for a set of patients.

"The care team model engages the entire team more closely with each patient, so that each patient develops a stronger relationship with all the members of the team," Cohen said. "This facilitates communication and helps each patient make more informed decisions about their care."

Boni E. Eiwazki, chair of the Department of Dermatology, said the Whitaker Clinic will boost the department's ability to provide outstanding clinical care and conduct important clinic research.

"The incorporation of natural light and use of exam chairs rather than exam tables will contribute to a more pleasant experience for the patient as well as a better work environment for our care team," she said.

"The additional exam rooms provide an opportunity to redesign the flow of specific clinics, thus allowing us to increase access for medical dermatology patients."

The department is reintroducing aesthetic dermatology and laser services in the new clinic.

Other new features include an additional elevator, natural light in all patient care areas, sliding doors to maximize space, and advanced technology in heating, cooling and lighting. The facility is handicapped-accessible, and all furniture in the exam and waiting areas is bariatric-rated.

Renovations will begin in the Kirklin Clinic of UAB Hospital later this year to reconfigure space there for additional growth.
Singer throws ‘House Party’ to kick off season

Ex-Blazers QB headlines free show tonight

Mary Colours
mcolours@al.com

Birmingham's Uptown entertainment district is likely to transform into a sea of green, white and red tonight, celebrating the return of UAB football and a concert with Sam Hunt.

The country star — known for No. 1 hits such as “Leave the Night On,” “House Party,” “Take Your Time” and “Body Like a Back Road” — is a former quarterback for the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Hunt, 32, is returning to support his alma mater and stir up support for the first game of the season at Legion Field.

The UAB Blazers will face the Alabama A&M Bulldogs at 2:30 p.m. on Saturday, but before they do, Hunt will entertain a crowd of about 25,000 people at a mini-festival across the street from the Uptown restaurants. In the area between 11th Avenue North and Richard Arrington Jr. Boulevard North, and 22nd and 24th streets.

Three parking lots will be transformed into a concert site by producer Red Mountain Entertainment. Hunt will headline the show, labeled the “UAB House Party” as a nod to his good-time radio single of 2015. Openers are Maren Morris, a fast-rising country star, and Ryan Follese, a country singer-songwriter who formerly fronted the pop-punk band Hot Chelle Rae.

Music starts at 7 p.m., but there's a pop salute planned for 6:30 p.m. with appearances by the football team, coach Bill Clark, the school's spirit squads, the Marching Blazer Band and mascot Blaze the dragon. Gates open at 5 p.m.; the event ends about 11 p.m.

Admission is free, but tickets are required, and they were snapped up quickly in August. When Hunt’s “House Party” was announced by UAB, according to UAB’s Christopher Clifford, Hunt and his management team had significant input in shaping the event, and the singer considered it to be more than a routine stop on his current tour.

“Sam had a real specific vision that he had for what he wanted to be a party,” Clifford said. “He wanted it to be a free concert that was open to the community in Birmingham.”

The UAB, for its part, aims to make a splash with this event, heralding the revived team and emphasizing its new commitment to football.

It’s been nearly three years since the school terminated its football program — a controversial decision announced by UAB President Ray Watts on Dec. 2, 2014 — and a public outcry from students, business leaders and the community ensued. The team was reinstated in June 2015, and it’s taken a couple of years for the program to rebuild.

As the 2017 Blazers approach the gridiron, Hunt’s “House Party” is meant to mark the occasion with gusto.

“We're recognizing the community and everyone who was involved in bringing UAB football back,” said Clifford, the university’s associate vice president for business and auxiliary services.

Securing Hunt’s services for the celebration was a coup for UAB, but the star’s willingness to return here isn’t too surprising, considering his strong ties to the school.

“It was disappointing the team was killed,” Hunt told AL.com during an April interview. “I hoped that my time at UAB wasn’t just an investment in my own life, but a program I could be part of as an ex-player, fan and alumnus.

To see that fizzle out was disappointing and really unfortunate. ... My heart was with the football program, and I’m proud to see they’ve gotten the program back. I hope to become more involved as an ex-player and alumnus. Now that my life is more stabilized, I can get more involved and give back.”

Hunt, who started 19 games at quarterback in 2006-07, is making good on that promise with today’s concert. According to Clifford, Hunt’s tour was booked at Uptown for a greatly reduced fee, “compared to what he would earn on a typical night.” Others said Hunt is essentially donating his time and talent, while folks working on his tour — opening acts, crew, band members, etc. — will be paid as usual.

Hunt’s memories of UAB are fond ones, and some of them hark back to his time off the field. He had one of his first public music performances here in 2003, at the university’s Alys Stephens Center. With guitar in hand, Hunt joined the UAB Gospel Choir during its spring concert, singing “Nothing Goes Unnoticed.”

The Inspirational anthem, composed by Kevin P. Turner, paid tribute to the victims of the 2007 massacre at Virginia Tech.

“That was one of my favorite experiences, in terms of public performing, to this day,” Hunt told AL.com.

Hunt’s fan base has grown exponentially since then, along with his experience and stage confidence. He’s playing Madison Square Garden on Sept. 14, for example, and his fall dates focus on amphitheaters and arenas. Hunt has several major award nominations to his credit — including nods from Grammy, Billboard and the Academy of Country Music.

Clifford said the UAB show was about a year in the making, with the help of Red Mountain Entertainment and Steve DeMedici, a major UAB supporter and the owner of the Iron City concert venue in Birmingham.

Iron City had presented Hunt in 2014 on its main stage, selling out the show and drawing about 1,300 people. The concert was timed to the release of Hunt’s debut album, “Montevallo,” named after the Alabama town where he romanced Hannah Lee Fowler, the woman who became his wife (this year).

“When Sam played Iron City, he told me how much he loved UAB. Hunt loved UAB and wanted to come back for maybe two nights,” DeMedici said. “In the meantime, his career blew up. I worked real hard in bringing UAB football back — me and other business guys in town were at a premium. According to Clifford, UAB is pointing ticket holders to live nearby parking decks:

- Boutwell Auditorium parking deck at 19th Avenue North and 19th Street;
- Parking deck at 12th Fifth Avenue North;
- Parking deck at 2122 4th Avenue North;
- Parking deck at 401 20th Street North;
- Parking deck at 11th Avenue North between 19th and 21st Street.

Meanwhile, UAB has checked off nearly every item on its wish list for the event. Clifford said, but one thing couldn’t be fulfilled. The university would have loved to see Hunt attend the football game on Saturday, and perhaps sing the national anthem — but the country star is set to perform at the Red, White & Blue Boom music festival in Lexington, Kentucky.

Still, organizers hope that Hunt will trumpet his allegiance to the Blazers, and they intend to give him a gentle nudge in that direction.

“Hey, can you help us out?” Hunt said laughing. “If he doesn’t show up on stage, it won’t be for a lack of trying.”
Song of the summer

Former UAB quarterback and his smash hit will christen football rebirth with concert

Emily Yahr  Washington Post

Defining the "song of the summer" is a fraught concept, with so many options from so many genres — but there’s no question one of the top contenders of 2017 originated in Nashville.

Sam Hunt’s inescapable "Body Like a Back Road," a two-minute-and-45-second earworm in which a narrator extols the physical virtues of his ladyfriend, shattered records this summer after reaching 25 consecutive weeks on the top of the Billboard Hot Country Songs chart, the longest No. 1 streak in history. The previous record-holder was Florida Georgia Line’s "Cruise" in 2012, at 24 weeks, followed by Leroy Van Dyke’s "Walk On By" in 1961, at 19 weeks.

The chart, which has existed since 1958, measures radio play and sales, and in more recent years, streaming. Spotify and Pandora numbers probably gave a big boost to "Body Like a Back Road," which is also the third most-downloaded song of any genre in 2017, selling approximately 1.4 million digital copies so far. The track also spent three weeks at No. 1 on country radio, a rare accomplishment in an era where hits are quickly shuffled off the top of the charts.

Hunt will likely serenade a full house with his hit Friday night in Uptown Birmingham. The former UAB quarterback’s concert coordinates with the rebirth of the school’s football program. The Blazers take on Alabama A&M on Saturday at Legion Field, the first game since the program was shuttered in 2014.
Blazers’ return bittersweet for ex-players

Former UAB football player Jordan Ricks captured the video of teammate Tristan Henderson challenging UAB President Ray Watts after Watts ended football in 2014. Ricks is now a video coordinator at Wenonah High School. Courtesy of Deacon Williams

The Birmingham News
Friday, September 1, 2017

UAB Football Schedule

- Sept. 2: vs. Alabama A&M
- Sept. 9: vs. Appalachian State
- Sept. 16: vs. Georgia State
- Sept. 23: vs. MTSU
- Sept. 30: vs. Western Kentucky
- Oct. 7: vs. Middle Tennessee
- Oct. 14: at Charlotte
- Oct. 21: at Southern Miss
- Nov. 4: at Rice
- Nov. 11: vs. ECU
- Nov. 18: at Florida
- Nov. 25: v. UTEP

vision meteorologist for Birmingham ABC 33/40, threw his social media weight of several hundred thousand Twitter followers behind the movement.

On Aug. 18, Spann was the master of ceremonies for the official ribbon cutting of UAB’s new football headquarters. The two-story facility features indoor and outdoor practice fields, and a state-of-the-art weight room, it is the first building ever constructed for UAB football since the program began competing in the NCAA in 1991.

"Social media proved that the little people have a voice now," Spann said. "Back in the old days, it might have been the good of boy network that ran this state and made all the decisions and the truth is now, they don't have the power they used to have. The people have the power. Those voices were shocking. Shocking. To see that amount of support through social media, it was just unbelievable good."

Inspired by the students’ daily protests, the group of businessness now known as the "Gang of Seven" organized fundraising efforts, which included a commitment of $1 million in one day. The linchpin of the plan was hatton Smith. The CEO emeritus of Royal Cup Coffee, Smith has the energy of a man who is constantly running on two cups of his company’s strongest brew.

Screaming like a fight promoter, Smith addressed attendees of the new facility's ribbon-cutting ceremony with manic vigor. On ground located about 200 yards from where Watts killed the team in 2014, Smith officially announced #thereturn. "What is this about? It is about belief!" Hatton yelled. "When we did this, it was a belief that UAB mattered. It was a belief that the city of Birmingham made a difference. It was a belief that we needed a victory. We need a victory in this town."

More than six would be ideal.

Joseph Goodman is a columnist for Alabama Media Group, Jr on Twitter @jogoodmanjr.
Dr. J. Marion Sims — a medical miracle worker or torturer of slaves?

The Washington Post

Dr. J. Marion Sims, who practiced medicine in Alabama from 1835 to 1849 before moving to New York, invented the speculum and other instruments still in use today. He pioneered surgery for fistula, a condition that left women incontinent after giving birth; historians say the treatment revolutionized the field of gynecology. He also performed the first successful gallbladder surgery and the first successful artificial insemination.

But to make those advances, Sims performed experimental surgeries on enslaved women, raising disturbing ethical questions. His legacy has long been questioned by those who believe he used black women as medical guinea pigs without their consent.

Anarcha Wescott, a patient of Sims who was depicted in a painting that was removed from the University of Alabama at Birmingham’s Center for Advanced Medical Studies, endured 30 surgeries as Sims worked to perfect the technique. She was among a dozen slaves on whom Sims operated repeatedly without anesthesia, which was just being developed and not widely used at the time.

Some scholars have questioned whether the slaves gave or were capable of giving informed consent to the surgery, despite Sims’s claim they eagerly sought his cures.

Sims, who was born in 1813 in Lancaster County, South Carolina, graduated in 1835 from Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia, according to the Encyclopedia of Alabama. Sims opened a medical practice in Lancaster, but his practice "failed within a year after two infants under his treatment died."

Sims moved to Alabama and settled in Macon County, where he began working as a doctor treating enslaved people on local plantations. He built a hospital, Sims wrote in his autobiography, "The Story of My Life," "in the corner of my yard for taking care of my negro patients and for negro surgical cases."

According to the U.S. National Library of Medicine, part of the National Institutes of Health, "First reports of successful repairs emerged in the literature around the mid-19th century when James Marion Sims described his technique of a transvaginal approach with the use of silver sutures and bladder drainage postoperatively."

In his autobiography, Sims described surgeries performed on enslaved patients, including Anarcha, Lucy and Betsey.

Sims wrote that he made a "proposition to owners of negroes: if you will give me Anarcha and Betsey for experiment, I agree to perform no experiment or operation on either of them to endanger their lives and will not charge a cent for keeping them, but you must pay their taxes and clothe them. I will keep them at my own expense."

He wrote that he "was very enthusiastic" and expected to cure them within six months. Anarcha was described as "a mulatto girl" about 14 years old; Lucy was described as about 18 years old and had given birth to a child "two months ago, and that since that time she had been unable to hold any water."

Lucy’s bladder was destroyed, "leaving an opening between the vagina and the bladder, at least two inches in diameter or more," Sims wrote.

"That was before the days of anaesthetics, and the poor girl, on her knees, bore the operations with great heroism and bravery. I had about a dozen doctors there to witness the series of experiments that I expected to perform. All the doctors had seen my notes often and examined them, and agreed that I was on the eve of a great discovery, and every one of them was interested in seeing me operate."
BIRMINGHAM ECONOMY

More grad education variety can plug our brain drain

Drew Lehe  for AL.com

Businesses commonly bemoan the lack of population and job growth in Birmingham, and I often see people scratching their heads on how to solve this issue.

Our medical sector is great, but we can’t be a one-trick pony and expect to compete nationally.

Now that UAB is trying to increase enrollment by several thousand students, it’s time to branch out from their medical-only focus.

Our residents want business growth, but there’s actually not much business education here. Nowhere in Birmingham can one attain a business PhD, or graduate degree in economics, statistics or finance. Many working professionals would like to go back to school to expand their skills, but Birmingham doesn’t have a program.

Historically, industries have located where there’s a talent pool and tech companies have founded near technical universities. Silicon Valley is by Stanford and Berkeley; North Carolina’s Research Triangle is one of the fastest-growing regions of the country (now called the “Silicon Valley of the East”).

Graduate programs in economics, statistics and finance will train in high-demand analytical skills and bring our talent pool into the future, aiding local industry and even advancing research in other fields. If UAB officials have foresight and vision they’ll implement programs in these high-earning areas. If not, Birmingham is economically stunted.

I’d like to point out a recent study from MIT and the London School of Economics: after surveying 15,000 universities across 78 countries, they found fairly incontrovertible evidence that universities cause regional growth, drive innovation and aid local business.

My favorite part, though: “We also find that universities in neighboring regions or other regions in a country also affect a region’s growth, and there appears to be a spatial element to this, with larger effects for regions that are close together.”

Not every graduate is bound to Birmingham, but we can’t hope to reverse our brain drain if we can’t even train the brains here. Too many of my cohorts leave for doctoral degrees in fields they can’t study here — and aren’t going to return.
With enrollment under 20,000, UAB is not a large school. Expanding UAB causes growth here, eventually creating a strong Birmingham-Tuscaloosa region.

Not every graduate is bound to Birmingham, but we can't hope to reverse our brain drain if we can't even train the brains here. Too many of my cohorts leave for doctoral degrees in fields they can't study here — and aren't going to return.

Some are going to specialized, lucrative degrees like financial engineering. Too many talented graduates took their brains to San Francisco and left their hearts in Birmingham. Let's build the entrepreneurial and innovative spirit at home.

We've vaguely tried to spur "tech" and "growth" with startup incubators, but we don't need to play catch-up to other cities; let's complement our existing strengths. An actuary program would be a world-class opportunity for Birmingham since we're home to four large insurance headquarters.

It should actually strike you as odd we don't train anyone in insurance here. Health care economics is a big field today. What it boils down to is making UAB offer a new degree that doesn't say "health" in front of it. UAB should, though, because there's a large and growing demand for these jobs in Alabama.

These programs are relatively inexpensive since they don't require special lab space. UAB's already taken care of the hard part; we don't need more buildings, just endowed professors and programs. By growing in these areas, UAB could easily reach 30,000 students. That's a big economic impact. With centers in Quantitative Finance, Statistics, Data Science, and Economics there's no telling what industry we will attract.

I'm open to funding from the city as well. If Birmingham can foot the bill for sports stadiums, it can contribute to programs that actually have a significant effect on our economy and train job skills.

The urban economy is a mixture of ingredients interacting with each other, and professional education is the yeast we need to make our dough rise. Let's take Birmingham forward in leaps and bounds. Let's invest in business brainpower.
HEALTH

Hospitals to ID infectious patients

Three Alabama hospitals will be designated to identify patients with highly infectious diseases under a new program announced by the Alabama Department of Public Health.

Huntsville Hospital, University of Alabama at Birmingham Hospital and the University of South Alabama Medical Center in Mobile will be the assessment hospitals in a Serious Infectious Disease Network.

The ADPH announced last week it was establishing the network in response to several national disease outbreaks.

Dr. Mary McIntyre, chief medical officer for the ADPH, said managing diseases that are new to the state's health system is complex.

"One of the more critical components is the identification and testing of individuals who may be carriers of the disease," McIntyre said. "For that we have partnered with these three hospitals to serve as assessment centers in an effort to best focus our resources."

Patients identified by other hospitals or health care providers as carrying a highly infectious disease will be transferred to one of the three assessment hospitals. If the diagnosis is confirmed, the patients would be transferred to a regional treatment center. The closest is Emory Medical Center in Atlanta. — Mike Cason
Underappreciated natural wonders, bats could provide insights on aging

By: Steven Austad

We called the Russian wildlife biologist "Hagrid" because I couldn't pronounce his real name. At a pre-arranged time, Hagrid would emerge from the Siberian forest and wait for our call at the village's only pay phone. He would then tell my colleague Andrej wonderful stories about his bats. Yes, bats. Andrej would translate the stories for me.

Bats are an underappreciated natural wonder. Flight powered by flapping wings has evolved only four times in the three and a half billion year history of life; first insects, then reptiles (some of the extinct flying pterosaurs were the size of small Cesnas), then birds, and most recently bats.

Because of flight, bats have spread to pretty much everywhere. The only native mammals of isolated islands such as Hawaii and Guam are bats. Alabama has 15 bat species, the United States 47 species, but the tropics are bat paradise. Costa Rica, a country 200 times smaller than the U.S., has more than three times as many bats.

Bats perform a service by eating insects, insects that bite and those that in the caterpillar stage of life consume our crops. Because flight is so physically demanding, bats have to eat up to two-thirds their body weight in insects each night. Next time you are not bitten by a mosquito or bite into a worm-free tomato, thank a bat.

Also, the next time you sip a margarita, thank a bat. The agave plant from which tequila is made is pollinated by bats. Although all of our Alabama bat species dine on insects, other species especially in the tropics drink nectar from flowers or eat fruit.

Some bats eat frogs, somewhat unfairly locating them and picking them off by eavesdropping on their mating calls. Others eat fish or lizards or scorpions or even other bats. And, yes, vampire bats drink blood for a living, although there are no vampire bats in the U.S.

None of this is why I found Hagrid's bats stories so interesting though. I found them interesting because of their implications for my aging research.

Hagrid's story began in 1962. It was the height of the Cold War. The Berlin Wall had just been completed. The world tensely waited out the Cuban missile crisis. Despite these political distractions, or maybe because of them, several Soviet field biologists found the time to mark about 1500 tiny bats in a Siberian cave.

For the next 20 years, no one entered that cave. The marked bats were forgotten.

Brandt's bat, the species they had marked, weighs no more than the combined weight of a nickel and a dime. That makes it among the world's smallest mammals, about one-fifth the size of a mouse. Small mammals typically lead sped-up lives compared with larger species such as ourselves.

They use energy faster, reach adult size faster and reproduce faster. Their hearts beat faster too. Bat hearts beat up to 20 times per second when they are flying, faster than most machine guns.
can fire. They breathe faster, their muscles contract faster. You get the idea. Consequently they rush from youth to maturity to old age faster. Mice grow old, frail, and feeble in just a couple of years.

Which made it all the more remarkable when biologists finally visited the cave again after a two decade absence and to their astonishment found almost 70 of the original marked bats still there.

This is where Hagrid entered the picture. For years after that, he made it his mission to revisit the cave and record how many of the bats still survived. The last bat finally disappeared after having reached at least the ripe old bat age of 41 years.

Last time I wrote about some important lessons we have learned about preventing cancer from the study of elephants and what we still might learn from the study of whales. Let's apply that same style of thinking to these bats.

Brandt's bats, like most small bats, locate their insect prey with sound. Echolocation it is called. Essentially they scream repeatedly and track their flying, diving, dodging prey by interpreting the echoes that bounce back off them.

We don't hear these screams because they are pitched too high for our ears to detect. If you could hear them though, they would be deafening. A bat's scream comes out of its mouth as loud as a jackhammer.

The first of our senses that we lose as we age is the ability to hear high-pitch sounds. When my daughters were in high school, their classmates (but not my daughters, of course) discovered cell phone ring tones that were high pitched enough that all the students, but none of their teachers, could hear them.

To bats, the ability to hear high-pitch sounds is all that stands between them and starvation. They continue to do it well apparently decade after decade, otherwise they wouldn't survive. Discovering how they continue to do it through the decades could help us discover ways to preserve our own hearing.

Bats also retain the strength, endurance, and agility to pluck fleeing insects out of the air (not to mention avoid their own predators) for decades on end. How do bats preserve their physical abilities for so long?

And if you or I were bedridden for even a week or two, we would lose muscle quickly and probably hobble around for a few days before we recovered. Early astronauts often needed help climbing out of their space capsules after only a few days of immobility in space. Yet some bats hibernate for months, then wake up and fly off. How do they keep their muscles fit and functional while sleeping all winter?

And what about longevity itself? Not all mammals' lives fall along that line from small and short-lived to large and long-lived. People, for instance, live about 5 times as long as an average mammal of the same size. But Brandt's bat? It lives 10 times as long as an average mammal of its size. How do they do that?

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Brandt's bats, in other words, have discovered the secret of maintaining life-long peak health.

Amazingly, we actually don't even know whether Brandt's bat is all that unusual, because we know almost nothing about the longevity of most bat species. There aren't enough Hagrids out there.

But bat numbers in the U.S., in fact worldwide, are in serious decline from diseases such as white nose syndrome, which was recently discovered here in Shelby county. Bats are also threatened by the widespread use of insecticides, habitat loss, disturbance of their roosting sites, even poorly-situated wind turbines, which can be much more dangerous to bats than they are to migrating birds.

It would be a shame if some species disappeared before we discovered their secrets for healthy living.
New UAB accelerator targets more commercialization

The University of Alabama at Birmingham has launched a new program to help foster and grow entrepreneurial initiatives.

The new Commercialization Accelerator was formed to be a key component of UAB's plan to attract and embolden innovators within the university and ultimately help boost innovation-driven economic development.

UAB's accelerator aims to assist those innovators with defining, developing and growing their ideas as well as connecting them to the city's larger innovation ecosystem, which includes Innovation Depot and the new Innovate Birmingham initiative, among several others.

One of the end goals is creating an easier pathway from research to job creation and more spinoff companies. &

"What we've been focused on is how we can more efficiently move things along the path of research to commercialization more efficiently. What we want to do is create an environment where innovation and entrepreneurship can really flourish, and having an accelerator will help to shepherd that along," said Kathy Nugent, executive director of the Bill L. Harbert Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship. Nugent will be assisting this project along with the newly created UAB Council for Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

There are smaller programs and initiatives within the university, but this is the first time there will be a dedicated accelerator focused on commercializing research that comes from the school. UAB is a major recipient of research funding, and many of those funded projects have potential commercialization potential.

"The accelerator process and place for university employees and students to bring an idea for a company where there is a mapped pathway for development and success - a place to innovate and be disruptive," Nugent said.

For the past three years, UAB has been set on improving the path from research to economic development. Its leaders have been working to increase company creation, tech licensing and research, mostly in part with federal grant financing.

The program, which launched on Aug. 21, is still in what Nugent calls the "bootstrapping phase," pulling together available space and resources to get up and running.

The program will be housed in the Snellman International House.

"This accelerator gives the Birmingham region, using UAB as the vehicle, to take this knowledge-based research opportunities, that have real commercial ability, and transform them into real companies that create jobs and opportunities for Alabamians across the state," said Alabama Secretary of Commerce Greg Canfield. "It's really what we are trying to focus on in terms of growing opportunity from within and particularly with attention to knowledge based and tech jobs."

The program also will be working with the Collat School of Business, and according to Molly Wasko, associate dean for research, innovation and facility success, the school will be acting in a teaching and assisting role.

That will include providing the advice and processes necessary to take an idea from the initial stage to developing a business model.

The teaching team was trained through the NSF-funded I-Corps program.

The program has also named a director, Max Polce. Polce's work is sponsored by the two-year fellowship program, Venture for America. Polce plans to bring his own startup experience with him, as he was a member of the University of Pittsburgh Innovation Institute's student startup accelerator, where he was part of several successful projects.

"I plan to take what I have learned from competing through various collegiate innovation competitions and a university accelerator from the student perspective and use that experience to build out the UAB Commercialization Accelerator within the context of the needs and pain points at UAB and my new home, the city of Birmingham," Polce said.
Bringing Back the Blazers: Recapping the past, present, and future of UAB football

By: Birmingham magazine

The clock hangs just outside the office of UAB head football coach Bill Clark, an ever-present electronic reminder counting down the days--second by second--until the Blazers' 2017 season-opener September 2 at Legion Field. Common in college football offices throughout the nation, these countdown clocks serve to motivate the team toward the upcoming season.

The difference with the one at UAB is that when it was first installed, the number of days until kickoff--displayed in bright red--was nearly 600. That figure was so high because after the UAB program was shut down for financial reasons following the 2014 season and then reinstated six months later, it was determined that the Blazers would need two full off seasons for player recruitment and preparation before taking the field again.

"I almost didn't put [the clock] up at first, because of how many days away it was," Clark says with a chuckle. "I thought, 'Why are we reminding ourselves that we have to practice and prepare for that long with no games to play?' But I kept telling everybody to be patient, and before we know it we're going to look up and that clock is going to be at zero."

That moment is almost here. After a two-season absence, UAB football is back and better than ever, at least off the playing field. With newfound enthusiasm from both fans and the business community, approximately $40 million has been raised in support of the program, funds that led to the creation of a new multi-purpose football building, as well as a covered practice field.

The team's return to action coincides with the revival of the city the Blazers call home. From Regions Field to Railroad Park, from Avondale to the Rotary Trail, Birmingham has been on a winning streak in recent years. And for many people, keeping UAB on the football field was important not only for university, but also for maintaining the city's positive momentum.

"When you lose something, it stings," says Royal Cup Coffee CEO emeritus Hatton Smith, one of several area business leaders who helped raise funds for the program's reinstatement. "There was this perception that Birmingham couldn't even support a local college football team. That hurt. There was a kickback in the community against that.

"[The program's return] was an immense victory for our city. It shows that Birmingham has a bright future. And it gives us confidence. If we can do this, then what's next?"

So how did UAB football reach this point of importance and newfound popularity, especially in a state where the football focus rarely extends beyond Alabama and Auburn? Here is a quick look at the history of the program.

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First Quarter: The Beginning

A basketball man was responsible for the birth of UAB football.

When Gene Bartow was hired by the University of Alabama at Birmingham in 1977, he was given the title of Athletic Director and charged with overseeing the implementation of the school's entire sports department. But make no mistake, Bartow's primary task was to coach basketball. After all, he had been lured away from UCLA--one of the most prestigious programs in college hoops--just two years after leading the Bruins to the NCAA Tournament's Final Four.

This was a basketball-lifer hired to do a basketball job. And he did it extraordinarily well, lifting the fledgling Blazers to national prominence in the 1980s with seven consecutive trips to the NCAA Tournament. But along the way, the athletic director kept having a nagging thought. He wondered why a large university like UAB that was located in a football-crazy state shouldn't have a football program of its own.

Others, including then-university president Charles McCallum, gradually agreed. So, in 1989, UAB formed a club football program with Dr. Jim Hiley--strength-and-conditioning coach and School of Medicine professor--serving as its head coach. The team moved up to the NCAA-sanctioned, non-scholarship Division III level in 1991, then jumped into Division I-AA scholarship football just two years later.

Suddenly, only four years after the formation of the club program, UAB football was just one step below the level of the Tide and the Tigers. But while the Blazers might have been close to their in-state brethren on paper, they were nowhere near equal footing in terms of facilities and support.

There are some amazing stories from those early years, and as a former sportswriter for the Birmingham Post-Herald who covered UAB at that time, I can attest that most of them are true. Yes, the on-campus locker room for the team was so small that players had to get dressed in shifts before practice. Same thing for the training room, leading many players to get their ankles and wrists taped while sitting in the back of a pickup truck parked next to the practice field.

There were players who arrived at the practice field wearing scrubs, having just finished working at UAB Hospital as part of their medical school training. Others had to leave practice early in order to get to their night jobs.

There were no true offices for the coaches, and the practice field was shared with various intramural teams. I once played a game of Ultimate Frisbee on the field--kicking up divots with my cleats--moments before the football team arrived for practice.
Yet despite all these obstacles, Hilyer led the Blazers to a 27-12-2 record in his four seasons as head coach. He stepped aside when it was announced that the program was moving up a level once again, to top-tier Division I-A, just in time for the 1996 season. Watson Brown, the former head coach at Vanderbilt, was brought in to try to duplicate in football what Gene Bartow had done years earlier in basketball.

Second Quarter: The Rise

To understand the task facing the Blazers in the mid-1990s, consider this tidbit. In 1992, UAB's Division III non-scholarship team played a home game at tiny Lawson Field (which is usually used for high schools) against Gallaudet University, a college for the deaf and hard of hearing.

Just four years later, the Blazers made their Division I-A debut, taking on the Auburn Tigers in front of 80,000 people at Jordan-Hare Stadium. The fact that UAB lost only 29-0 and kept the game reasonably close into the fourth quarter was sort of a victory for the Blazers.

The program experienced several major milestones throughout the next 10 seasons, including a stunning 13-10 victory in 2000 over LSU, which was coached at that time by none other than famed Alabama head coach Nick Saban.

In 2004, the Blazers got off to a 5-1 start and were ranked No. 24 in the nation in the Bowl Championship Series Standings, the program's first appearance in any national poll or rankings. They ended the year with their inaugural post-season bowl appearance, in Hawaii.

But even as the team showed progress on the field, their situation off the field barely changed. There were a few improvements in the facilities, but for the most part, a feeling of stagnation began to hit the program, and Brown left after the team went 3-9 in 2006.

"We had it going there for a while," Brown told me several years later. "We were close to getting really good. We just needed a little something more."

Third Quarter: The Fall

Instead of moving forward, the program took several huge strides backward. There were a total of nine consecutive losing seasons, and attendance at Legion Field for home games rarely reached 10,000 people. The team was not winning and--even worse--had become basically irrelevant, even in Birmingham.

Briefly, new life was injected into the program with the hiring in 2014 of Clark, an Alabama native who brought an air of enthusiasm with him from Jacksonville State. But after the Blazers went 6-6 for their first non-losing season in 10 years, it was announced that the university was shutting down the program. UAB football would be no more, becoming the first Division I team in the nation to disband in nearly 20 years.

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And then something unexpected happened. People within the Birmingham community began to protest the decision. Loudly. Students and fans and a few local politicians took up the cause. Demonstrations were held on campus and chants reverberated through Bartow Arena during UAB basketball games. The rabble had been roused, and they were determined to be heard.

"We wanted to keep it in front of everybody's face," says UAB graduate student Timothy Alexander, who helped organize several of the rallies. "We fed students just to get them together. We took them to the state capitol. We worked with the SGA president. Wherever the camera was, we wanted to be there. We might not have had money, but we all had different resources to keep it active."

This sudden passion being demonstrated for the football program caught the attention of those who do have money, and plans began to be made for the Blazers to complete the ultimate Hail Mary pass.

"Other people kept it alive at first," Smith says, "and then the business community stepped up and coalesced in a way it really hadn't before."

**Fourth Quarter: The Comeback**

A number of prominent business leaders met for breakfast at the Birmingham Country Club one spring morning in 2015 to discuss the financial situation facing the UAB football program, and what they could do to help. Within days, they already had lined up $4 million in pledges.

"There were people who didn’t go to the games who still thought UAB should have a football program," says Craft O'Neal, chairman and CEO of Birmingham-based O'Neal Industries. "We're in the Deep South, and we felt like football is important for UAB undergraduate growth."

There are some statistics to back that up. After the announcement was made that UAB was ending the program, the school's first-time freshman class dropped from 1,748 in 2014 to 1,621 in 2015. Then, after the program was reinstated, the 2016 class jumped 24.7 percent to a total of 2,021, the largest in UAB history.

What does that mean for the city? Well, according to the Birmingham Business Alliance, it is estimated that for every 1,000 UAB students, there is a total annual economic impact of nearly $50 million for the city.

"It just felt like that without UAB football, the city was going to lose some of that momentum we've gained recently," O'Neal says. "Being from Birmingham and loving our city, that's why I wanted to get involved, to help UAB and our city."

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"You had all these groups pulling together in a unified effort, and that made the difference. It took all of that. It took a team effort from everyone to make this a reality."

By June of 2015, approximately $27 million had been raised through the UAB Football Foundation, the city of Birmingham, and the UAB Undergraduate Student Government Association. When UAB president Ray Watts announced the program's reinstatement later that month, he said, "The biggest single difference is we now have tangible commitments for additional support that we have never had before."

And so the countdown began, with Clark working to assemble a team basically from scratch. There were a few players who stuck it out and stayed with the team for two years without playing a single game. There were others who transferred to another school but have since returned to UAB for this season. And, of course, there are the fans who have endured two seasons without a hometown team to cheer for.

They have all been waiting--second by second--for the moment when UAB football finally returns to the field, where they will be met with what is expected to be a new level of excitement for the program.

"My gut feeling is we'll have more than 40,000 people at that first game," says Tommy Brigham, chairman of ARC Realty and one of the program's financial supporters. "We're going to have a different experience for UAB football, unlike anything that's been seen in the past.

"This is just the beginning of the beginning. I think this is a chance to put a legacy stamp on the future of Birmingham, and have a coalescing of all these things that are making Birmingham a better city."

**UAB Player Loyalty**

Players on the 2014 team who stayed at UAB:

DL Shaq Jones  
LB Tevin Crews  
WR Wally Adams  
CB Darious Williams  
CB Jordan Petty  
S Tajh Lowe  
WR Zavier Morris  
OL Zach Sims  
OL Bryant Novick
Players on the 2014 team who transferred and then returned:

WR Collin Lisa (Buffalo), PK Nick Vogel (Southern Miss)
TE Stephen Pickren (Chattanooga), OL Lee Dufour (South Alabama), S Jordan Petty (Old Dominion)

-By Cary Estes | Photos by James Acomb and the Alabama Media Group archives
Young blood, I can't get you out of my mind

By: Steven Austad

Could it be that Count Dracula was on to something after all?

Dracula - at least the movie version of him - drinks the blood of young, beautiful people so that he can remain young, beautiful, and immortal. His victims are transformed as well. They can stay young, beautiful and immortal too -- as long as they can find enough blood meals from their as-yet-unbitten young and beautiful friends. I guess the "immortal" part may not be technically correct. The appropriate term seems to be "undead," but that looks to me a lot like "alive," just with a craving for young blood.

As with all medications, there are side effects of drinking young blood if you are a vampire. First, you have to avoid sunlight forever after. But let's face it, sunlight ages skin - photo-aging, the dermatologists call it. So becoming a vampire can be said to improve skin health. Vampires also apparently have excellent dental health even if they develop a bit of an overbite. One problem the movies don't emphasize enough is how difficult staying well-groomed is for vampires. With no mirror reflection, doing your hair or touching up that eyeliner can give a vampire fits.

All kidding aside, young blood may indeed turn out to have fountain-of-youth-like properties for us just as it apparently had for Dracula. That's what some intriguing new mouse experiments tell us.

The mouse experiments I'm talking about work like this. Mice are surgically sewn together side-by-side. The blood vessels underlying the surgical site on each mouse will grow together and fuse. They now share a single blood supply.

Although this technique has been used in the laboratory for more than 150 years, don't try it at home, folks. It only works with laboratory mice that are genetically identical to one another. If the mice were genetically different they would both die from a massive immune response.

What scientists hadn't done until relatively recently was suture an old mouse to a young mouse and observe how that affected both of them. As we all know, the older you get, the slower you heal if injured. So researchers injured a muscle of the older mouse of these old-young conjoined pairs and found that the old muscle healed like the mouse was much younger. There appeared to be something in the young blood that was making the old muscles act like they were young again.

Other labs followed suit, checking out whether young blood could rejuvenate old mouse hearts. It could. Others investigated the brain. Could young blood improve memory in an aging brain? It could.

What this means of course is that there is something in young mouse blood that is rejuvenating.

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Researchers don't often mention the other result. The muscle, heart, and brain of the younger mouse in the old-young pair appeared to grow older. So maybe there was something in the blood of old mice that accelerated aging.

Here is where it begins to get spooky. Researchers transfused the blood - actually only the plasma, the liquid part of the blood - of young humans into old mice. The memory of the old mice improved. Whatever rejuvenation factors were in young mouse blood was apparently there in human blood too.

No, they didn't sew a mouse to a human or vice versa. In this case, they used traditional hypodermic needles for the transfusing. Take note, normal human blood would kill a normal mouse because of the immune response. They had to use a mouse with its immune system removed to do this experiment.

One of the problems with this sort of rejuvenation research is that people are so desperate to remain young that at the slightest hint of scientific progress in that direction - long before there is clear proof -- some people will be willing to pay to give whatever it is a try.

And so, for a mere $8,000 a company called Ambrosia will top you up with plasma from a 16-25 year old. They claim to be doing science, tracking their customers for signs of improved health. Unfortunately, they are not. The appropriate design for doing this sort of science is to have half the people getting plasma from someone their own age, the other half getting young plasma but neither group knowing which they were getting. This design guards against false positive results due to the placebo effect. The placebo effect is the well-known phenomenon that when people think they are getting medication they get better even if they are being given colored water or a sugar pill. An interesting twist on the placebo effect is that it works better the more people pay for the bogus medication.

I was thinking of this the other day walking around the UAB campus, noticing signs all over advertising pay for plasma donation. Blood plasma has all sorts of valuable products in it for producing pharmaceuticals. In fact, plasma donation is now an $11 billion industry. This, by the way, is an industry in which America is #1. About 70% of all worldwide plasma donations are from the USA.

Of course, college students and other down-and-outers do not get rich donating plasma. I went through this thoroughly unpleasant experience several times as a graduate student, getting as I recall, about $20 per donation and I could donate every two weeks. I think the going rate currently is more like $50 per donation.

Where some people see exploitation, others see a business opportunity. College students listen up. There are people out there - lots of them - who are willing to pay $8,000 for a transfusion of plasma from 16-25 year olds. How does this compare with $50 every two weeks?

Vampires don't have to be the only blood suckers out there.
Climate skeptic's e-book outselling Gore's 'Inconvenient' sequel

By: Rick Moran

An e-book by climate skeptic Roy Spencer is outselling the follow up to Al Gore's "Inconvenient Truth" and it's not even close.

Washington Times:

A self-published e-book by a leading climate skeptic challenging the science behind Al Gore’s "An Inconvenient Sequel" is outselling the film’s companion book on Amazon.

Mr. Gore’s book was ranked 16,459th among paid Amazon e-books as of midday Friday, while the e-book “An Inconvenient Deception: How Al Gore Distorts Climate Science and Energy Policy,” was ranked 328th.

The 81-page rebuttal was written by climatologist Roy W. Spencer, principal research scientist at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, who criticized the Gore movie and book as “chock-full of bad science, bad policy, and factual errors.”

In a head-to-head matchup in the Amazon category of climatology, the Spencer book was ranked first Thursday while Mr. Gore’s handbook came in 11th.

The comparison isn’t entirely scientific. Mr. Spencer’s e-book is the more recent release, appearing on Amazon last week, while Mr. Gore’s was published July 25 by Rodale Books.

Mr. Gore’s book is also available in paperback and audio, which has presumably cut into his Kindle sales, while Mr. Spencer’s is only available in e-book form.

At the same time, Mr. Spencer self-published his rebuttal with no paid advertising, while “An Inconvenient Sequel” benefited from the film’s publicity blitz by Paramount Pictures and Mr. Gore’s own international promotional tour.

“Maybe people are finally wising up to Mr. Gore,” Mr. Spencer said on his Global Warming blog.

“An Inconvenient Deception” was also ranked first in Kindle short reads for science and math, and first in the environment category.

Gore's book will almost certainly outdo Spencer's in total sales. But that's hardly the point. The strong sales of Spencer's e-book shows that people want to understand all sides of the global warming debate and have not been taken in by the climate hysteric's narrative that the "science is settled" or that all skeptics are tools of the fossil fuel industry.

Another positive note: Since Gore's book and film are tanking, it will be harder for him to find people to invest in his next media venture. Hollywood, even committed liberals, don't usually

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invest in properties with an excellent chance of failure. Nobody wants to lose money and Gore will face a lot more skepticism the next time he wants to make a film.

True believers will continue to treat Gore as a seer. But for many people who read Spencer's critique, there will be a lot more questions about Gore's knowledge and motivations than there were previously.
How one climate skeptic is making life 'Inconvenient' for Al Gore

By: Valerie Richardson

A self-published e-book by a leading climate skeptic challenging the science behind Al Gore’s “An Inconvenient Sequel” is outselling the film’s companion book on Amazon.

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Mr. Gore’s 320-page book “An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power,” is described as “your action handbook to learn the science, find your voice, and help solve the climate crisis.”

The movie, which played last weekend in 514 theaters, has grossed $3.1 million since its July 28 limited release, according to Box Office Mojo.
‘I could have been more forthcoming’

Athletic director Jay Jacobs said he had to ‘walk a line’ in softball investigation

James Credea
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Auburn athletic director Jay Jacobs says he had to “walk a line” in making changes to the softball coaching staff while respecting student privacy, but also says he “could have been more forthcoming about the investigation” into former assistant coach Corey Myers when he denied any knowledge of it to AL.com in April.

Jacobs made those remarks in a statement in which he defends the actions of the university and the athletic department in its investigation of the softball program, specifically former associate head coach Corey Myers and former coach Clint Myers, neither of whom were mentioned by name in the statement.

The university has hired Birmingham law firm Lightfoot, Franklin & White to review the softball program to determine “if any unresolved issues remain,” according to a spokesman.

It’s unclear if the focus of that review is on the alleged abuse and sexual harassment of players, the actions of administrators, or both.

Jacobs said in his statement that “Wrongdoing took place by the assistant coach on the softball team and that is why he is no longer part of the staff. Before a decision was announced regarding the head coach, he decided to retire.”

He said members of the softball team asked that the situation be handled discreetly.

“They are young women, and I was determined to honor their request for privacy,” Jacobs said. “I made the decision to walk a line that involved making changes to the coaching staff while respecting the privacy of those who asked for it. It was not an easy line to walk and that’s why I said the things I said and handled it as I did. I’m an athletics director and I’m a father. I handled the coaches the way an AD should handle them and I handled the students the way I think a father would want it handled.”

During the investigation process, “I answered a question about whether there was an investigation underway. I answered that question in a manner that was guarded to the point that made some people question the accuracy of my words. In retrospect, I could have been more forthcoming about the investigation,” Jacobs said. “But, I wanted to live up to the promise I made to the students who asked for confidentiality. I erred on the side of maintaining my promise to these young women.”

Jacobs sent a similar statement in a letter to parents of softball players on Thursday, with some differences.

In referencing the departures of Clint and Corey Myers in his letter to parents, which a source provided to AL.com, Jacobs wrote, “Wrongdoing took place by two coaches on the softball team and that is why they are no longer part of the staff. The facts and circumstances of what each did are very different.”

Also in his letter to parents, Jacobs says the “most important point I want to leave you with is this: issues were raised, investigations occurred, and actions were taken. Changes occurred with the coaching staff because of the factual findings of a fair and thorough investigation.” He also stressed that student-athletes are always encouraged to come forward with concerns.

Former walk-on pitcher Alexa Nemeth filed a Title IX sexual discrimination complaint with the school on May 3, claiming, “coaches Clint Myers knowingly let his son Corey Myers have relations and pursue relations with multiple members of the team.”

Nemeth’s father, Alan Demaske, is accusing Jacobs of whistleblower retaliation for not responding to her efforts over the past week to be reinstated to the program.

In an email sent Thursday night, Demaske claims his daughter emailed Jacobs last week and visited his office in April, but has not received a response:

“She wants to be rightfully reinstated to the team,” Demaske wrote. “Is this an example of caring for the ‘Student Athlete’? Sounds like whistleblower (sic) retaliation to me. ... All she has wanted, and still desires, is the same as all elite athletes — a fair chance on the playing field.”

The email was also sent to associate athletic director for compliance Bernard Hill, Auburn president Steven Leath, Title IX coordinator Kelley Taylor and Nemeth’s lawyer, Martin Greenberg.
Auburn: AD should not have refuted investigation

School calls comments about probe 'unfortunate,' denies coach's contract extended

James Crepea  jcrepea@al.com

An Auburn athletics spokeswoman says the school began investigating its softball program last September, and that comments Athletics Director Jay Jacobs made to AL.com in April saying he was unaware of any investigation into former associate head softball coach Corey Myers were "unfortunate."

Spokeswoman Cassie Arner also said that former softball coach Clint Myers' claim in July that he agreed in principle to a three-year contract extension was "categorically false."

Arner, associate athletic director for strategic communications, confirmed to ESPN on Monday that Auburn's softball program is under investigation for the alleged abuse and sexual harassment of players by the coaching staff. The attorney for a former player, walk-on pitcher Alexa Nemeth, filed a Title IX lawsuit and sent a letter alleging abusive treatment by the coaching staff, sexual harassment and concerns about an administrative cover-up to school officials and Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey on July 20, ESPN has reported, about a month before Clint Myers' abrupt retirement last week.

SEE AUBURN, A4
AUBURN
FROM AL

Auburn Athletic Director Jay Jacobs' statements that he wasn't aware of an investigation into its softball program were possibly "misleading," a school spokeswoman said.

"I'm not sure why you're asking that," Clint Myers said. "So, I have no comment."

Auburn went on to deny the July 7 claim by Clint Myers that he agreed in principle to a three-year contract extension until 2023, which was first reported by AuburnSports.com.

According to Arner, Clint Myers mentioned the extension to a "friendly" reporter and it "caught fire from there."

In response to a request for confirmation by AL.com on the afternoon of July 7, Clint Myers said via text message, "Jay (Jacobs) is proposing to the board (of trustees) a 3-year extension to my current contract which means my contract would end in 2023."

He then confirmed again it was pending approval, but agreed to in principle.

Jacobs never responded to AL.com's July 7 text message requesting confirmation of the proposed three-year contract extension for Clint Myers, who was earning $203,500 annually through July 2020.

In the more than 50 days since, no member of Auburn's athletic department refused or attempted to clarify to AL.com Clint Myers' claim of the contract extension in principle.

"I think there was a little misunderstanding," Arner told ESPN on Sunday. "It was premature to say that there was a contract extension extended."

Auburn issued a release announcing Clint Myers' retirement on Aug. 23, citing family reasons.

In four statements released by the athletic department and Auburn University since the school has stated, "there is a reason changes took place with the coaching staff."

Auburn has not responded to any of AL.com's six public records requests related to Corey Myers and the softball program, which began on March 21, nine days before he resigned.

Martin Greenberg, Nemeth's lawyer, has not responded to multiple messages from AL.com requesting the information he shared with ESPN.

Auburn's investigation began last September, after players filed anonymous ethics complaints about the alleged behavior of Corey Myers, which led then to a two-week leave of absence, and it has been a "continuous process," according to ESPN.

Jacobs' comments to AL.com on April 27, in which he denied knowledge of any investigation into Corey Myers, were "unfortunate" and possibly "misleading," Arner told ESPN.

"There's a big fear of admitting investigations because of what that does to the privacy of some of the people involved," Arner told ESPN. "He (Jacobs) should have just said, 'We don't comment on investigations.' Publicly, he was just echoing the statements from when Corey resigned, which does seem misleading."

Corey Myers resigned on March 30, in the middle of Auburn's 2017 softball season, citing family reasons. The entirety of the April 27 exchange between Jacobs and AL.com regarding Corey Myers was as follows:

AL.com: "There was the Corey Myers situation; there hasn't been a statement from the administration on that. What was your reaction to that situation?"

Jacobs: "I really didn't have a reaction other than what his statement was, which is that he wanted to spend more time with his family. It's a grind being an assistant coach and having a family, little kids, it's a tough thing. I appreciate him being willing to say, 'You know what, I can't keep up doing both of these.' I can't have my family the way I need to with the time and keep up with softball too. So, I respect him for stepping out."

AL.com: "To your knowledge, was there ever any kind of investigation into his conduct in any capacity?"

Jacobs: "Not to my knowledge."

In late March, multiple players provided Clint Myers and athletics administrators copies of text messages obtained from the cell phone of a teammate they believed was engaged in an inappropriate relationship with Corey Myers, ESPN has reported. According to ESPN, five players said a more than three-hour meeting followed, during which Auburn senior women's administrator, Meredith Jenkiss, demanded players delete photos of the text messages or they were risking arrest.

Auburn has not yet commented on Jenkiss' alleged actions.

On April 6, Clint Myers said he would welcome Corey Myers back to the program "in a heartbeat," but did not know if his youngest son's resignation was related to the leave of absence he took in September 2016. That day, AL.com asked Clint Myers if there had ever been a Title IX investigation into Corey Myers.

"I'm not sure why you're asking that," Clint Myers said. "So, I have no comment."

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Amid chaos at Auburn, where is AD Jay Jacobs?

Kevin Scarbinsky
kscarbinsky@al.com

When Hugh Freeze resigned in July as the Ole Miss head football coach, suddenly, shockingly and without warning, the university didn’t couch his resignation as a retirement. Ole Miss didn’t issue a simple statement on the decision and attempt to leave it at that.

Ole Miss didn’t allow Freeze to explain away the decision as an admirable choice to spend more time with his family.

Instead both the Ole Miss chancellor and athletics director held a press conference that day explaining the real reasons behind Freeze’s resignation, as tawdry as those reasons were.

The AD called it “a pattern of misconduct.” Which leads to a question about the way Auburn has handled its ongoing softball scandal: Where is Jay Jacobs?

Where has the Auburn athletics director been as one of the school’s most successful programs in recent years has become the subject of rumor, resignation, “retirement,” investigation and a flurry of contradictory statements?

Head softball coach Clint Myers had been perhaps Jacobs’ most successful hire, at least as judged by the scoreboard. Yet Jacobs didn’t conduct a press conference when Myers suddenly, shockingly and without warning stepped down last week after four outwardly successful seasons.

The AD’s contribution to the newsworthy occasion was an upbeat quote in an athletics department statement that couched Myers’ departure as a “retirement” so he could spend more time with his family.

Jacobs’ quote complimented Myers and attributed the success of his program to his “love of Auburn.”

In short, all is well.

Four days later, that athletics department statement was contradicted by a university statement suggesting the March 30 resignation of Clint Myers’ son and associate head coach Corey and the Aug. 23 “retirement” of Clint Myers were not voluntary, unrelated or an occasion for celebration.

Here is the relevant passage from the university’s Sunday statement:

“While the law requires us to protect the privacy of our students, tying our hands about what can be said publicly, there is a reason changes took place with the coaching staff. As much as we may want to give more details, we have been approached by some of the student-athletes involved, directly asking us to protect them because they don’t want their names made public. Once the facts were established, changes to the staff quickly followed.”

SEE SCARBINSKY, B4
SCARBINSKY
FROM B1
Notice the use of the plural "changes."
The university statement contradicting
the athletics department statement on Clint
Myers' "retirement" isn't the only glaring
example of a failure to communicate. Wit-
ness Cassie Arner, Auburn's associate ath-
etics director for strategic communications,
correcting what Jacobs told AL.com's James
Crepea on April 27 about the March 30 resi-
nation of Corey Myers.
The day of that resignation, Auburn
released a bare-bones statement that
included the news and a Corey Myers quote
indicating it was his decision to leave the
program for family reasons.
A month later, Jacobs told Crepea he was
unaware of any investigation into Corey
Myers' behavior. Yet Arner told ESPN.com
Sunday that Auburn had been investigat-
ing its softball program since September,
making Jacobs' April comments, in her
words, "unfortunate" and potentially "mis-
leading."
"He probably should have just said, 'We
don't comment on investigations,' " Arner
told ESPN.
Wow. It's extraordinary to hear an ath-
etics department spokesperson publicly
contradict and counsel her boss, the ath-
etics director. It calls into question Jacobs'knowledge of and grasp on an important
issue that was bubbling inside his depart-
ment for months.
The ESPN.com story that changed
Auburn's tune mentions allegations of
"abusive treatment by the Auburn coach-
ing staff, a pattern of sexual harassment
and concerns about an administrative
cover-up," as well as a Title IX complaint
claiming "coach Clint Myers knowingly let
his son Corey Myers have relations and pur-
sue relations with multiple members of the
team."
If those allegations prompted the March
resignation of Corey Myers and the August
"retirement" of Clint Myers — as the uni-
versity's Sunday statement indicates — why
did the athletics department put forth what
appears to be a false impression of both
departures when they occurred?
To protect student privacy? Or to try to
avoid further scrutiny?
Two SEC West schools have been con-
fronted in the last two months with the
unexpected departures of successful head
coaches in the midst of allegations swirl-
ing around them and their programs. Ole
Miss handled Freeze's resignation head on.
Auburn, not to its benefit, took a different
approach with Clint Myers.
UNA paid professor $50,000 after sexual assault claim

Ashley Remkus aremkus@al.com

A former University of North Alabama professor remained on the school's payroll for several months after he was accused of sexually assaulting a student, according to records obtained by AL.com.

Accused of sexual assault in November 2015, David Dickerson remained on the university's payroll — making $10,555 per month — until the following May, according to spending records and personnel documents. AL.com obtained Dickerson's personnel file through a public records request.

Dickerson is at the center of a federal lawsuit filed by a former student accusing UNA of failing to properly investigate or respond to the sexual assault claim. The lawsuit alleges Dickerson sexually assaulted an unnamed student, referred to as "Jane Doe," during a school-sponsored trip during the fall semester.

Rather than firing Dickerson, a visiting professor of marketing, UNA placed him on paid administrative leave and allowed him to perform off-campus research for the university, according to personnel documents. In a prepared statement to AL.com, UNA President Ken Kitts said the university "carefully weighed the consequences associated with placing Dickerson on administrative leave... versus the termination of his one-year contract."

"UNA was concerned that Dickerson would request a due process hearing, to which he would have been entitled, and to be paid his salary during the hearing process," Kitts said in the statement. "A hearing might have necessitated testimony from the students affected by his conduct, which could have been intimidating or emotionally challenging for those students. It also would have risked exposing the identities of these students."

In a Dec. 17, 2015 letter, the university told Dickerson he was being placed on administrative leave with pay and benefits, effective Jan. 8, 2016. The letter also reminded Dickerson of a no-contact order that was issued Dec. 11, prohibiting him from communicating with students associated with the sexual assault case.

Dickerson on Jan. 6 signed an agreement with the university that he would vacate his office and work off-campus doing research for the College of Business.

"During the research period, UNA shall employ Dickerson solely for the purpose of conducting research," the agreement states. The agreement allowed Dickerson to identify himself as a visiting associate professor of marketing research at the College of Business at UNA.

Kitts said Dickerson "likely would have vigorously defended against the accusations with the assistance of legal counsel." If he had done so, the university would be required to continue paying him until legal proceedings were complete — likely after the May 1, 2016, end of his contract, the president said.

"By instead placing Dickerson on administrative leave, UNA was able to get him off campus quickly and prohibit student contact," Kitts said. "UNA teased the chance of the identities of the students involved becoming public and avoided any emotional impact on them.

"In summary, placing Dickerson on administrative leave until his contract term expired protected the best interests of the students involved as well as those of the entire UNA community by removing him from campus while avoiding protracted disciplinary appeals and potential litigation by Dickerson."

The now-former student claims she was inappropriately touched by Dickerson while they were attending a conference in Orlando. The first inappropriate contact happened at the pool of the hotel where they were staying, according to the lawsuit, which also claims that other students witnessed the incident and took pictures on their cellphones.

Also during the Orlando trip, Dickerson took the victim and another student to dinner, according to the lawsuit. The woman remembers being in and out of consciousness, being walked back to the hotel by Dickerson and being undressed by the professor, according to the lawsuit. She did not have the strength to fight Dickerson and when she later regained consciousness, she realized she was naked, the lawsuit states. She immediately dressed herself and left the room.

Dickerson later called the woman's cell phone, the lawsuit states. "I want us to be good friends," Dickerson told the woman, according to the lawsuit. The lawsuit alleges the university violated Title IX of the Education Act of 1972 because it did not terminate the professor, while removing and restricting classes from the student. It also states the university failed to do a background check on Dickerson. Attorneys representing the plaintiff against Dickerson had former charges for rape and assault on a 16-year-old.

Dickerson was given a two-semester contract worth $85,000 when he started working for UNA in August 2015, personnel records show. He officially was hired after passing a background check. The background check, which searched records in national criminal databases, shows no prior arrests, according to his personnel file.
Ex-softball player alleges Title IX violations

James Crepea  jcrepea@al.com

A month prior to Wednesday’s abrupt retirement of Auburn softball coach Clint Myers, a former player sent a complaint alleging abusive treatment by the coaching staff, sexual harassment and concerns about an administrative cover-up to school officials and Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey, according to a report by ESPN.

A 14-page letter was sent on behalf of former walk-on pitcher Alexa Nemeth from attorney Martin Greenberg after Nemeth filed a Title IX sexual discrimination complaint with the school, ESPN reported Saturday. In the letter, Nemeth claimed “coach Clint Myers knowingly let his son, Corey Myers, have relations and pursue relations with multiple members of the team.”

Auburn officials said the university is adhering to procedure following the Title IX complaint, but offered little further comment.

The letter obtained by ESPN alleges that on March 30, the same day Corey Myers resigned as associate head coach citing family reasons, “several players approached head coach Myers with proof in the form of text messages from a student-athlete’s cell phone that coach Corey was having an inappropriate relationship with one of the student-athletes.”

Afterward, the team was “quarantined” for several hours prior to a scheduled road trip to play Georgia, ESPN reported, citing both the letter and several unnamed players. During that meeting, Auburn executive associate athletic director and senior women’s administrator Meredith Jenkins told the players they were risking arrest for taking the text messages from their teammate’s phone and ordered them to delete the messages, according to ESPN’s report.

Over the past five months, AL.com attempted to contact more than a dozen former Auburn athletes, coaches and support staffers regarding the circumstances surrounding Corey Myers’ resignation. Most did not respond, in some cases to multiple messages, but one former player claimed she received “inappropriate” text messages from Corey Myers during her time at Auburn. She did not initially provide copies of those interactions to AL.com, but shared them Saturday. The messages included references rating her physical appearance.

“People are so scared to come out because they think that nothing’s going to come about it because of who (the Myers are),” said Blaire Bass, the former player. “People are just scared that they’re going to get in trouble because at the end of the day (Clint Myers) is going to have Corey’s back; it’s his son.”

Auburn has not responded to AL.com’s public records requests on the matter, which began on March 21. On March 31, AL.com refiled its public records request to extend the end date and expand the scope of its inquiry.

“The well-being of Auburn student-athletes was and is our utmost concern,” Auburn University said in a statement to AL.com Saturday. “In each instance of a personnel issue or question, Auburn Ath-

See Next Page
letics works in conjunction with the university's administration, following all established guidelines and in compliance with NCAA and SEC regulations when applicable, to investigate, learn the facts and take appropriate action.

"We followed the same procedure in matters related to the softball program. By both practice and in compliance with federal privacy laws, Auburn doesn't disclose details of personnel matters."

Former shortstop Haley Fagan told ESPN several players filed anonymous ethics complaints with Auburn's athletic department in September 2016 and the university conducted an internal investigation that led Corey Myers to resign. However, that lasted just two weeks, Fagan told ESPN, after Clint Myers and another coach "asked select members of the team to 'go fight for Corey' with the athletic department," according to ESPN's report.

A week after the March 30 team meeting alleged in the ESPN report, Clint Myers on April 6 said he would welcome Corey Myers back to the program "in a heartbeat." AL.com asked Clint Myers at that time if there had ever been a Title IX investigation into Corey Myers.

"I'm not sure why you're asking that," Clint Myers said, "so I have no comment."

On April 27, Auburn athletic director Jay Jacobs said he had no knowledge of any investigation into Corey Myers' conduct.

"I really didn't have a reaction other than what his statement was, which is that he wanted to spend more time with his family," Jacobs told AL.com on April 27. "It's a grind being an assistant coach and having a family; little kids, it's a tough thing. I appreciate him being willing to say, 'You know what, I can't keep doing both of these. I can't have my family the way I need to with the time I keep up with softball too.' So, I respect him for stepping out."

On Wednesday, less than eight weeks after agreeing in principle to a three-year contract extension through 2023, Clint Myers' four-year tenure as Auburn's soft-

ball coach ended via a five-paragraph press release from the school announcing his retirement.

Auburn went 205-54-1 with four straight postseason appearances under Clint Myers, who was named SEC coach of the year in 2015 after leading the Tigers to their first SEC Tournament championship and first WCWS appearance, feats repeated in 2016.

A search for Auburn softball's next softball coach is underway.
A look at the Greatest Opener of All Time

By Terrin Waack
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

NOTE: For the 2017 University of Alabama football season, TideSports intern Terrin Waack will provide select stellar states, obscure facts and notable quotes from the most recent game to show how the Crimson Tide uses "The Process" against its opponents.

ATLANTA — No. 1 Alabama defeated No. 3 Florida State, 24-7, at the new Mercedes-Benz Stadium on Saturday in front of 76,330 people in what was dubbed the Greatest Opener of All Time (or GOAT, for short).

Stellar stats

- This was the highest-ranked opener ever. The closest it has come in the past was between No. 1 and 4 teams.
- Alabama and Florida State are also the two winningest programs in college football since 2010 with 87 and 78 wins, respectively. This is the season it was named the GOAT.
- The Crimson Tide extends it opening-weekend win streak to 16. That's the same number as national championship titles that UA claims. Alabama has never lost a season-opener under Nick Saban (11-0).
- Alabama wide receiver Calvin Ridley is making top-five moves. He is now tied for fifth on UA career touchdown receptions list with 15 and is fifth on the program's career receiving yards chart with 1,806. He's a junior.
- Florida State finished with only 40 rushing yards. Alabama had 173.
- This is the opposite of stellar: Four Alabama linebackers were injured. Saban updated their status after the game. Rashaan Evans has a groin injury. Terrell Lewis hurt his elbow, Christian Miller has a biceps injury. Anfernee Jennings sprained his ankle. All are likely questionable for this week's game.

Obscure facts

- History shows the team that scores first in the Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game ends up winning: 10 out of 12 have proved that. Alabama was first on the board thanks to Andy Pappanastos’ 34-yard field goal with 4:30 left in the first quarter.
- There had never been a blocked field goal or blocked punt in Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game history. Alabama did both. Minkah Fitzpatrick blocked Florida State's 37-yard field goal attempt in the second quarter. Damien Harris blocked an FSU punt in the third quarter.
- In total, Alabama and Florida State scored 31 combined points. That's the lowest in Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game

See GOAT, Co

See next page
GOAT

Continued from C1

history. The prior low was in 2008, with 44 between Alabama and Clemson.
• Saban has only ever lost one game in Atlanta (14-1), and it was an SEC championship matchup against Florida in 2008. He has won every game with Chick-fil-A in its name that he has coached in: Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game (5-0) and Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl (1-0).
• During the second quarter, JK Scott had a 9-yard punt for Alabama. The next drive, Logan Tyler had a 12-yarder for Florida State. Shank begets shank?

Quoting Nick Saban

On the blocked punt...
“Should have scooped it and scored it instead of falling on it, but sometimes freshmen are freshmen.”

Quoting the Crimson Tide

UA linebacker Shaun Dion Hamilton on the new stadium...
“I didn’t know that the Jumbotron did a full 360. I was looking around the whole time.”

Quoting the opponent

FSU coach Jimbo Fisher on quarterback Deondre Francois’ fourth-quarter injury...
“I hugged him and told him I’m sorry he’s hurt, we’ll get the diagnosis and I love him. And we’ll figure out what we’ve got to do from here.”

Name of the game

FSU: Demarcus Christmas
The redshirt junior is a defensive tackle for the Seminoles.

See next page
Alabama wide receiver Calvin Ridley (3) sprints out and is chased by Florida State defenders during the second half of Alabama's win over Florida State, 24-7, in Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta on Saturday.

[STAFF PHOTO/GARY COSBY JR.]

GAME LEADERS

**Top 3 rushers**
1. UA: Damien Harris, nine carries for 73 yards and a touchdown
2. UA: Jalen Hurts, 15 carries for 55 yards
3. UA: Bo Scarbrough, 15 carries for 40 yards

**Top 3 receivers**
1. UA: Calvin Ridley, seven receptions for 82 yards and a touchdown

2. FSU: Keith Gavin, eight receptions for 61 yards
3. FSU: Nyqwan Murry, three receptions for 29 yards

**Top 3 passers**
1. UA: Jalen Hurts, 10-18-0 for 96 yards and a touchdown (sacked twice)
2. FSU: Deondre Francois, 19-33-2 for 210 yards and a touchdown (sacked three times)
3. None.

**Top 3 defenders**
1. FSU: Matthew Thomas, 10 total tackles
2. FSU: Ro'Derrick Hoskins, nine total tackles
3. UA: Shaun Dion Hamilton, eight total tackles (one sack, 3.5 tackles for loss)

**NEXT UP**

Alabama (1-0) hosts Fresno State (1-0) on Saturday in Bryant-Denny Stadium. The game will kick off at 2:30 p.m. and air on ESPN2.
Brown's dad gets a lift from UA; hurricane victims receive aid

By Aaron Suttles
Sports Writer

ATLANTA — Tony Brown's hometown of Beaumont, Texas, is 85 miles east of Houston. His father, who suffered a stroke during his 60th senior season of high school, isn't in the best health, and the flooding from Hurricane Harvey presented problems for the Brown family.

In stepped Alabama.

During his radio show Thursday night, UA coach Nick Saban said the university arranged for a helicopter to take Brown's father to College Station, Texas. But plans changed.

A helicopter couldn't be arranged so UA sent a private plane, which retrieved Brown's father and took him to Tuscaloosa. He is expected to watch the game in either Tuscaloosa or Birmingham.

Multiple people assisted in making the plane happen, including Saban, men's basketball coach Avery Johnson and multiple behind-the-scenes folks at UA.

The UA charitable spirit didn't stop there, with the players collecting 15 bags of food from its official team charter to send to Houston. The UA men's basketball program, spearheaded by Johnson, also sent clothes and shoes to Texas.

This isn't the first time the players donated unopened/unused non-perishable food from charter flights to charity. That food normally goes to Nick's Kids, but was sent to Houston to help those affected by the hurricane.

Bells and whistles

All the new toys of the Mercedes-Benz Stadium have been well documented. From fan-friendly prices to the latest technological advances, including a halo board that encircles the top of the stadium, Atlanta's new stadium is shiny and pretty.

Before the game, a machine sent foam script "A's" and "FSU's" floating to the stadium's roof before evaporating.

Friendly Atlanta

Saban entered Saturday night's game with a 13-1 record (10-1 with Alabama and 3-0 with LSU) in season openers.

The Georgia Dome was particularly kind to Saban, especially at Alabama. In fact, under Saban the Crimson Tide has thrived in domed stadiums. Alabama is 15-2 since 2009 in stadiums with domes.

Rare meeting

The two programs met for just the fifth time in their respective histories. Alabama leads the series 2-1-1.


Injuries

Sophomore running back Josh Jacobs did not dress out for the game. Jacobs was limited during fall practice and the week leading up to the game with a hamstring injury.

Sophomore defensive end Raekwon Davis, who suffered a gunshot wound last Sunday morning, was dressed up and played in the game. However, junior college transfer Isaiah Buggs started in place of Davis to start the game.

Tidbits

Minkah Fitzpatrick, Bradley Bozeman and Rashaan Evans served as game captains. Former UA Heisman Trophy winning running back Derrick Henry served as honorary team captain.

Florida State won the coin toss and deferred to the second half. Former tight end O.J. Howard was at ESPN's College GameDay earlier in the day. It was Alabama's 40th appearance on GameDay.

The officiating crew came from the Big Ten. Former All-American wide receiver and current Oakland Raider Amari Cooper was spotted on the sideline as was former FSU and current Tampa Bay Buccaneers quarterback Jameis Winston.

Reach Aaron Suttles at aaron@tidesports.com or at 205-721-0129.
Seminoles couldn't run, hide from Bama

Even in the first half, when Florida State was having some success moving against the Alabama defense on the strength of Deondre Francis' arm, you could sense something was missing. As the half went on, the feeling got stronger and by the second half, it was obvious. The Seminoles did not think they could run. When you cannot run, you can only hide for so long. And when your kicking game blows up as well, your best bet is to hope.

See HURT, C4
HURT

Continued from C1

the clock runs quickly.
No. 3 Florida State took one of those beatings that you can't hide from on Saturday night. Three kicking-game errors took away their cover — a blocked field goal at the end of the first half denied FSU points at the end of the first half, a fumbled kickoff return and a blocked punt set up 10 Alabama points in third quarter and that was that. The Seminoles, reduced to a single dimension, were harried into errors. Alabama's defense could sense that their only mission was to attack. Francois was pressured into those picks, was hit hard and — most unfortunately — time didn't expire before he was hit trying to avoid another sack. He was injured and FSU's hopes of an Atlanta return in the playoffs may ride on the diagnosis.

Making a diagnosis for Alabama is different. The common analysis going into the contest was that the teams would "learn something" from playing a talented top-five opponent. Sometimes, what you learn is opponents like that can make you look bad. Florida State's defensive line is going to make many offenses look bad — no solace to Alabama fans who expected an instant explosion after a transition from Lane Kiffin to Brian Daboll. Such explosion as there was came rarely. Alabama had a beautiful 53-yard touchdown pass from Jalen Hurts to Calvin Ridley, exploiting a mismatch in the FSU secondary that was disguised for most of the evening by their safety help. Damien Harris had a 34-yard run on Alabama's first drive. Beyond that, Alabama had to fight for yards. "We had some opportunities, whether it was execution or lack of
protection," UA coach Nick Saban said. "First game of the year, you can always find some things that are ugly. A lot of things that could have been very good plays for Jalen didn't happen because we didn't protect him well enough. I thought Brian (Daboll) did a good job."

Because the state of Alabama loves a good quarterback debate even more than smoky spare ribs, some people will try to start one — a debate, not a cookout — this week. Saban doesn't want any part of it. There will be less talk about the Alabama defense which overcame a bevy of linebacker injuries and looked, for the most part, to be very good. There is no sense in getting into the "better than last year" comparisons yet.

For the better part of the month, the promotion of this game as the 'Greatest Opener of All Time' has seemed off-key, maybe even oxymoronic. The polls said yes, but the context said no. Part of greatness depends on how a team develops, not simply on what you can expect from past history. There's still no way to be quite sure how either of these teams will compare against more merely mortal opposition. Assuming healthy quarterbacks, both will make more big plays in the future because they'll play teams with less size, less speed and less ferocity on defense. That doesn't mean the Alabama offense doesn't have lots of room for improvement after one week. Of course it does. No one should have expected anything to be different.

That will have to include balance, and some unpredictability. When you lose that, or it doesn't develop, you risk ending up like Florida State did on Saturday night, with no hiding places left.

Reach Cecil Hurt at cecil@tidesports.com or 205-722-0225.
FOOTBALL
Clemson's Swinney gets raise to nearly $7M a year

CLEMSON, S.C. — Clemson football coach and former University of Alabama football player Dabo Swinney and the Board of Trustees agreed to a new 8-year, $54 million contract Friday that averages out to $6.75 million a year. It includes $3.2 million in signing bonuses in three installments and a $6 million buyout until the end of 2018.

The deal makes Swinney the third highest-paid football coach in the country, behind only Alabama’s Nick Saban and Michigan’s Jim Harbaugh.

Swinney’s new contract pays him $6 million this season with his base salary increasing to $6.6 million in 2024, the last season of the deal. Swinney gets a $1.5 million signing bonus now, a $1 million bonus in 2019 and a $700,000 bonus in 2021. And as reports occasionally pop up around Swinney and other jobs, the deal starts with a $6 million buyout that drops to $4 million in 2019. The deal also has incentives including $250,000 for winning another national title or $50,000 if he is named national coach of the year.
A CRAZY RIDE

DC David Reeves took unconventional route to UAB

Drew Champlin  dchamplin@al.com

David Reeves’ unique journey up the college football coaching ladder will culminate Saturday when he makes his game debut as UAB’s defensive coordinator.

Reeves will be on the sideline, calling defensive plays alongside head coach Bill Clark for the game against Alabama A&M.

The two have known each other for 20 years and coached together since 2013 when Clark was Jacksonville State’s head coach.

Just 12 years ago, Reeves was the defensive coordinator at Athens High School. He talked to Rush Propst at Hoover for a similar position, but was at a crossroads. He called friend Chris Ball, then Alabama’s secondary coach under Mike Shula.

“He said, ‘Do you want to coach college football?’ Yeah, sure, why not,” Reeves said. “Then he said, ‘Being at Hoover isn’t going to get you there any quicker than being at Athens. Let me talk to Mike Shula and I’ll call you back in 10 minutes.’”

Ten minutes later, Ball called back. Reeves was offered the chance to work under defensive coordinator Joe Kines, coaching cornerbacks as a graduate assistant.

He was 35 years old and heading back to school to get his master’s degree. He lived in a one-bedroom dorm at Bryant Hall, essentially serving as a resident assistant for the players on his floor.

“The neat part about that was, I already knew the game a little bit, so I was able to take it all in and use it as a learning experience,” Reeves said. “It was some tough financial times as far as that goes, but there are advantages to both.

“It was all about the football and learning. It was a crazy ride to get here.”

Shula’s staff was fired after the 2006 season, but Reeves had a chance to stay and work for Nick Saban for a few months. He eventually took a job at Southern Arkansas University, a Division II school in Magnolia, Arkansas, coaching there from 2007-11 and serving as defensive coordinator for the final two seasons.

He wore many hats there, coordinating recruiting and camps. He also taught classes ranging from health and theories of fundamental football to management and marketing.

But the toughest part was the fact that his two sons were still in Athens.

“You never take any of that into account,” Reeves said. “They weren’t babies. They were playing rec ball.

“The initial thought wasn’t to stay in Southern Arkansas for five years, but you get caught up in it. That’s when it was really hard because you are eight and a half hours away. You couldn’t just drive home and see them. You had to wait on the right time.

“Both of them said they think I need to stay in college because they think they want to coach one day. That was a big part in my decision.”

It got better in 2012, when Reeves was hired closer to home at Tennessee-Martin. When Clark took the head coaching job at Jacksonville State, he immediately added Reeves to his staff as defensive line coach.

The two had talked about coaching together for years.

“As soon as Jacksonville State happened, it was a no-brainer,” Clark said.

Reeves came to UAB in 2014 with Clark and stayed with Clark after the program was first shut down. He did consulting work at Spanish Fork High School in the spring of 2015, but was back at UAB when the program was brought back that summer.

Reeves was promoted to defensive coordinator in May 2016 after Duwan Walker resigned to pursue private business.

“He knows how I think and what I like,” Clark said. “That’s such a familiarity with how we practice, how we plan and what’s important to me. He’s a worker. The kids love him and he gets a lot out of him.

“From a tough situation losing Duwan, it was an easy choice with David.”

Reeves will be nervous, he said, for Saturday’s opener as UAB makes its return to game action after a two-year absence. But he’s prepared for this moment for more than a year.

“I feel blessed every day,” Reeves said. “The blessing is being around Coach Clark and being able to learn from him. The blessing is being around all of these defensive coaches and what they bring to the table. The blessing is being around these players. They are great guys who are fun to be around and really come to work.

“It’s something I’ll never take for granted. My story is an easy story compared to some, but when you talk about being away from family and stuff like that, it was a very difficult one.

“My ride isn’t everybody’s ride and my journey isn’t everybody’s journey.”
Expectations running high for Tide cross country

By Tommy Deas
Executive Sports Editor

The Alabama cross country teams don't want to end their 2017 seasons at home.

The Crimson Tide will host the NCAA South Regional on Friday, Nov. 10, at the Harry Pritchett Running Park. If the UA men or women finish in the top three at that meet, they will advance to the NCAA Championships a week later in Louisville, Kentucky.

Both the Alabama men and women are ranked No. 4 in the preseason rankings in the South Region.

The men, in particular, have reason to aim high. A trio of Kenyans, two of whom are new to the program, have elevated expectations.

Alfred Chepanga is back as a senior after winning indoor and outdoor All-America honors in distance events with the UA track team last season. He is joined by Gilbert Kigen, who won nine junior college national titles at Central Arizona College, and Vincent Kiprock, who won the NCAA Division II cross country national title last year at Missouri Southern State.

"We have three of the best athletes probably who have ever put on an Alabama uniform in cross country at the same time, so I'm super excited to see how those guys do," said Dan Waters, coach for the UA men.

There is more behind the trio at the top of the lineup.

"Our depth is the best it's ever been," Waters said. "We have the guys in the right roles to be one of those special teams."

Josh Short, a junior from Wisconsin, is one of the key runners providing that depth.

"One thing we're really going to benefit from this year is having experience. We're ready to make some moves this year, definitely."

The UA women have the largest roster in memory, with some 30 runners ready to compete. Nicole Gardner, a junior from Murfreesboro, Tenn., is optimistic that the supersized roster will result in good things.

"We're definitely a deep team," she said. "We're a competitive bunch, for sure. Competing against each other and constantly pushing each other will hopefully push us all up, instead of just a few getting better."

Alabama begins competition Friday at the Strut's Season Opener in Oxford, Ala. UA will be at home on Friday, Oct. 13, when it hosts the Crimson Classic.

Reach Tommy Deas at tommy@tidesports.com or at 205-722-0224.
The defense came out strong just like in their previous game. They held Florida State to just three shots in the first half.

Kayla Mouton, Alabama junior and Florida native, was everywhere on the defensive side of the ball. Late in the first half, Florida State crossed the ball into the box where goalkeeper Kat Stratton had to leave the net for the punch save. With an open net and Florida State getting the ball back, Mouton jumped in front of the goal to block the shot.

Alabama had plenty of shots in the first half, but none of them were able to get past the Florida State goalkeeper. There was no score as both teams headed to the lockers for halftime.

Coach Hart preaches offense to his team. He wants them to shoot a certain amount of shots each game, this game it was 15 shots.

Taylor Morgan, a freshman for the Crimson Tide, made sure she was getting her shots in. She led the team with three shots.

Morgan, who the team calls “Yolo,” finally saw her shot hit the back of the net in the 55th minute. The play started when fellow freshman Casey Wertz took the ball downfield then passed it to Morgan, who scored from the top of the box.

After the game, Morgan talked about how her teammates pumped her up during warmups.

“Before the game everybody was telling me to go get a goal, and I was just telling them ‘OK’,” Morgan said. “When Casey passed the ball to me I got really excited, and told myself, ‘Oh, my gosh, I’m actually going to get a goal.’”

Once Alabama grabbed the lead, they didn’t let go. Their defense remained solid in the second half, and senior goalkeeper Kat Stratton came up with four big saves.

The Crimson Tide will take the pitch again on Friday, Sept. 1 at South Alabama.
Depth not an issue for Crimson Tide

The University of Alabama men’s golf team started formal practice Saturday and the Crimson Tide better be ready to hit the ground running as there are 11 players competing for five travel spots in their first event, Georgia Tech’s Carpet Capital Collegiate, starting Sept. 8.

“We return all five players who played in the NCAAs, add in three talented freshmen plus three other strong returnees. We are very deep and have a very large squad as, for the first time in a few years, we didn’t lose anyone (early to the pros ranks),” the always accommodating and enthusiastic longtime Tide head coach Jay Seawell told me on Thursday.

“With competition at home (in qualifying), you have the chance to be good on the road (at tournaments). “We start the season full of great hope and expectations.”

The week after their season debut Alabama heads to Olympia Fields for Illinois’ tournament, followed, Oct. 9-10, by UA hosting, for the 32nd time, the Jerry Pate National Intercollegiate at long-time host course Old Overton Club.

“There are very few events still being played that have lasted as long as the Pate. It is a legacy of this program to Mr. Pate and the long-standing University of Alabama tradition that he stands for. I’m very proud of the event; it is one of the jewels in our crown and has long kept UA golf relevant.”

Then they conclude the fall by adding a new event for them, over their Fall Break, the Steelwood Intercollegiate in Jlex and hosted by the University of South Alabama.

Things kick off next year, as they usually do, with them flying to Rio Mar Beach for the Puerto Rico Classic. Not a bad spot in mid-February, followed by the Southern Highlands Masters in Las Vegas, the descriptively-named Linger Longer Invitational in Greensboro, Ga., return for the first time since 2013 (when they won it) to Texas A&M’s Aggie Invitational; and then the Mason Rudolph Championship hosted by Vanderbilt, who are coached by former UA assistant coach Scott Limbaugh, who himself is now assisted by former Tide player Gator Todd. This is the Crimson Tide’s final regular season event before the SEC Championship at its perennial home in Sea Island, Ga., before NCAA Regionals and Nationals loom large.

Back to the roster.

“Eleven is a little large. The new world in golf is that more players might leave early to turn pro. You have to be prepared for this and recruit accordingly. This (a player leaving early) was not the case for us this year. We will be back around nine on the roster next year (2018-19).”

Seawell noted that he expects all 11 to contribute, but picked out two guys to watch.

“I am looking at Lee Hodges and Davis Riley to lead us.

“Lee has had a great summer (including third in the Sunnehanna Amateur, making match play in the grueling Western Amateur, and third in stroke play in the U.S. Amateur, before losing in the round of 32 in match play). He has grown as a player this summer and I feel he could have a breakout year for us. He is closer to the consistency needed to become a national name.

“And Davis Riley. I believe he is as talented a golfer as I’ve ever coached. He has the potential to be a First-Team All-American.”

When you think for a minute about some of the players Seawell has coached in his years (he’s entering his 16th year on the Capestone), that previous statement is saying something. Names starting with recent PGA Championship winner Justin Thomas, Bud Cauley, Michael Thompson, Bobby Wyatt, Cory Whitsett, Robby Shelton, Troy Mullinax, Gavin Moynihan, Tom Lovelady, Hunter Hamrick, Mark Harrell, Matthew Swan, Wesley Pate, Clint Provost, Todd, Nick Rousey, Scott Strohmeyer and Joseph Sinkora all come to mind as Seawell-coached players who have gone on to noted success in the pro and/or amateur game, and I’m sure I’m missing some, for which I apologize.

“Lee and Davis played in NCAA Regionals for us, as did Josh Selden, Steven Setterstrom and Jonathan Hardee. These three players can all be very influential on the team.”

Add in “our best freshman class since 2010 of Davis Shore, Wilson Furr and Ben Fuller, who are all good enough to make an immediate impact, plus Alex Green, who just returned from the U.S. Amateur after winning the local qualifier, along with Jake DeZoort and Tyler Hitchner (both Tuscaloosa natives), and it will be very interesting to see how things filter through. I’m very confident in the abilities of all 11 players.”

So, how does Seawell “filter through” his players?

“I like our qualifying to replicate tournament play, so we set it up into two three-round ‘tournaments.’

The winner of each ‘tournament’ will qualify for the Georgia Tech event, as will two players with the lowest cumulative scores on the teams.”

Seawell also reserves one coaches pick.

“You better come in ready to play early or you will get left behind. The guys know this.

“I like the idea of replicating tournament play to see how a guy copes with that pressure, what his decision-making is like under the gun. That way he sees what’s it’s like to be in a tournament on the road. I think this is a good introduction to the PGA Tour, where everyone is always looking to beat you.”

No doubt about that and that’s where the majority of Seawell’s golfers desire to be down the road. He has certainly molded many players before this current crop and will do so for years to come too.

Ian Thompson has been writing about golf in Alabama for over 24 years. His "Mr. Golf" column concentrates on golfers, golf events and people associated with the sport of interest to the Tuscaloosa and Birmingham areas. Reach him with story ideas at thompsonseesoff@gmail.com
How the coach who followed Bear Bryant still has his fingerprints on Alabama

By: Rainer Sabin

Inside a lobby of a downtown Tuscaloosa hotel, the shrill of a phone ring echoes.

A man answers the call. As he's chatting, he raises his hands, and on one of them is a big, diamond-encrusted gold ring. Inscribed on its face is, "New England...A.F.C. Champions."

Seconds later, the conversation nears its end and before hanging up, he grunts, "Roll damn Tide."

He smiles and looks up with those same blue eyes he once used to stare through players.

"I have met so many great people," he says. "And they didn't have to do anything. But they did. And that's why I am where I am, and that's why I have had the little bit of success I've had. That's the reason."

For almost an hour, people walk by Bear Bryant's successor and pay no mind to a person responsible for growing one of football's greatest coaching trees -- one with branches so long it resembles a Southern Live Oak and leads back to the very town where he is on this day.

It's been 31 years since Ray Perkins last walked the sideline at Bryant-Denny Stadium. A generation has passed since his unexceptional four-year tenure at Alabama ended with 32 wins, 15 losses, one tie and three forgettable bowl trips.

Perkins, 75, was one of the faces of the program's dark age that elapsed in the shadow of Bryant's retirement and death. Yet his legacy, which can't be quantified by a rather modest career coaching record, is rich. Improbable as it may seem, Perkins is the living, breathing bridge between the legendary Bear and Nick Saban, the modern-day king of college football. It wasn't supposed to work out this neatly, and few could have foreseen Perkins leaving a lasting mark on Alabama after doing so little to distinguish himself when he was in charge of the program.

"I would definitely say that would have been a difficult prediction to make [back then]," said Alabama radio analyst Phil Savage. "But now that that linkage is sort of out there in some ways, it makes a lot of sense. In this case, it's gone full circle from Ray Perkins to the mid-'80s to where we are now in 2017."

That became even more apparent this offseason when Saban hired his new offensive coordinator, Brian Daboll. Daboll presided over the tight ends in New England, where the framework of a system Perkins helped develop is still used to this day.

Last week, Daboll's former boss, the Patriots' Bill Belichick, explained the foundation of "all of the terminology that we use today" was laid, in part, by Perkins.

"Ray had a huge influence on my life and my career," Belichick says. "I learned a lot from Coach Perkins."

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As head coach of the New York Giants, Perkins also gave Belichick his first major professional opportunity, taking old friend Ernie Adams's advice and hiring the future Hall of Famer in 1979 to oversee the franchise's special teams.

On the outskirts of the Big Apple decades ago, Belichick worked alongside Bill Parcells and Romeo Crennel -- two coaches recommended to Perkins by former Tide quarterback Steve Sloan.

Together, they served as assistants on Perkins' staff, teaching a no-nonsense, rugged brand of football they felt would spur a culture transformation within a proud organization that had fallen on hard times. Belichick remembers Perkins, a former Alabama and Baltimore Colts receiver, as "hard-nosed."

"A real grinder," he adds.

"Having the Coach Bryant influence certainly was apparent. Philosophically, we were very compatible," Parcells tells AL.com. "Ray was tough but fair."

As the Patriots arrived in Houston for Super Bowl week, Bill Belichick told reporters much of his success can be traced to his time coaching with Ray Perkins.

Perkins relished the challenge he had in New York. In 1981, with Parcells as his defensive coordinator, he guided the Giants to the playoffs for the first time in 18 years. Life was good for the Petal, Miss. native making his way in the nation's biggest media market. Perkins proclaimed he had the "best job" in football and was content working for the Mara family that owned the team since its inception in 1925. But at a cocktail party with reporters one summer evening, Newark Star-Ledger beat writer Dave Klein planted a seed in Perkins' head.

Sidling up to Perkins, he said, "Let me ask you a question. What if Coach Bryant decided it was time for him to hang it up in Tuscaloosa?"

Perkins didn't hesitate.

"Dave, I would walk to Tuscaloosa," Perkins responded. "I would walk to Tuscaloosa for that opportunity."

In December 1982, he got the call to come back to the Capstone. Bryant was stepping down and Perkins had been picked to succeed him. Back in the Meadowlands, the Giants chose Parcells to replace Perkins, setting in motion a domino effect of significant coaching moves that would reverberate all the way back to Tuscaloosa many, many years later.

Parcells would eventually appoint Belichick as his defensive coordinator. Then, on the heels of the second of two Super Bowls they won together, Belichick went to Cleveland for his first head-coaching job. Among his first hires in 1991 was a 39-year-old named Nick Saban. Another

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person Belichick considered adding to his staff before choosing a different candidate? Ray Perkins.

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"Six-82-dig," Perkins says, reciting the name of an old play.

The first number signifies the formation and the second the offensive line protection. The last verbal cue describes the route being dialed up for the receivers.

"You didn't have to listen to the whole call," says former Patriots quarterback Scott Zolak. "You knew what you were listening to. It simplified things for each individual group, I think."

And clarity is at the heart of the Erhardt-Perkins system, which was developed by Perkins and Ron Erhardt when both were assistants under New England coach Chuck Fairbanks in the 1970s. Because it is based on concepts for each side of the field, it allows teams to thread together core elements throughout a game plan but disguise them effectively with a slew of formations and personnel groupings.

"It's not overly wordy," says Parcells, who would hire Perkins as his offensive coordinator in New England in 1993. "It has a numerical base and some words off that. It's really -- I think -- a very simplistic way to create flexibility and that's the best thing I can say."

Savage, the former Tide graduate assistant who worked for Belichick in Cleveland, describes the offense as elastic -- giving coaches the wherewithal to fatten and contract the playbook from week to week while interchanging players to create the most advantageous mismatches.

"It gets a lot of guys involved in terms of substitution patterns," he says. "You could expand as much as you want or condense it down as much as you want."

Perkins and Erhardt initially designed the system with the intent of using the run to set up the pass with play-action strikes. Tight ends and running backs were key components, helping to move the ball in the harsh conditions in New York and New England. Over time, the offense has been adapted to the shotgun-heavy, fast-break style that is now commonplace in football. In recent years, Alabama has embraced this highfalutin brand of football. But with Daboll's arrival there is a sense in Tuscaloosa that Alabama may get back to its roots.

"I think there is a possibility we may see more emphasis on more of a traditional style of passing attack," Savage says.

Daboll wouldn't give any real clues when he met with the media earlier this month. But back in 2012, when he was the offensive coordinator for the Kansas City Chiefs under Crennel, Daboll promised to deploy a lot of different personnel groups and cycle through a number of formations in the same way Perkins once did.

"I don't know why I would take credit for that," Perkins says with a bewildered look on his face.

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The notion seemed foreign to him so he changed the subject.

"You know, I met him," he continues, referring to Daboll. "I was up in the office a couple of months ago and and told him I was glad he was there. Still am."

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During his only news conference with Alabama reporters, Daboll brought up an old axiom at the heart of Belichick's philosophy.

"Our mantra is 'Do your job,'" he said.

Mention those three words to Perkins and he smiles almost wistfully as if he is recalling an interaction with a former player.

"We're going to give you something to do, and work as diligently as you can to get that job done," Perkins says. "That's all we're asking. We're not asking you anything out of this world. We know you can do it so do it. That's it."

Soon after Perkins hired Belichick in 1979, he knew he had made the right move. Perkins sat in on a special teams meeting with his young assistant just to get a feel for how Belichick coached. At some point during the powwow, a player interrupted the confab with a stupid question.

Belichick bristled, saying that if something so obvious needed to be asked then he shouldn't be there in the first place.

"He didn't mind standing up to those players," Perkins says.

And Perkins loved that.

"I think Ray brought in guys who had toughness," Zolak says. "All these coaches had an edge to them. He brought in guys who don't take any shit."

Bill Parcells didn't. Neither did Belichick. And then there is Saban, who didn't work under Perkins but has the same bulldog mentality as those football icons who did.

For more than ten years, Saban has made clear he's the boss in this town, making Tuscaloosa his fiefdom. His image is on walls next to portraits of Bryant -- the man Perkins succeeded but never came close to equaling.

Perkins likens Saban to a CEO running a company, and it's an accurate description.

It's also an observation made from the outside.

Despite their many shared connections, the two never met before Saban arrived in Tuscaloosa in 2007 and have only talked briefly on occasion since then.
"But I have a lot of respect for him," Perkins says.

Perkins still goes to the games and follows the Tide. Yet as Saban has built his own dynasty in a similar fashion as Bryant did, Perkins hasn't given much thought to the indirect influence he has had on a program he stopped coaching way back in 1986.

"No," he says. "I will be honest with you. I haven't tried to put two and two together."

Instead, he has let others connect the dots. From Saban. To Belichick. To Parcells. To Perkins. And, yes, even back to Bryant.

At the center of this circle is the Coach Who Followed Bear, a man whose legacy is not defined by wins and losses but rather by the men he's worked around.

"I don't see how anybody can go through life and not look back with a lot of gratitude and a lot of happiness," Perkins says. "I've just had so many great opportunities. I have met so many great people."

And as it turns out he helped bring some of them together, sowing the seeds of a coaching tree that is still blooming in Tuscaloosa after all of these years.
Measuring the gap between Saban and Fisher

Kevin Scarbinsky  kscarbinsky@al.com

It's a fact as unfair as it is fun. None of Nick Saban's former assistants has come back to beat him as a head coach.

Many have tried, four of them to be exact in 10 different games, but none has succeeded. Derek Dooley and Jim McElwain are each 0-3 against Saban. Both Will Muschamp and Mark Dantonio are 0-2.

None of those coaches put a team on the same field that was remotely close to equal to Saban's in terms of talent so sweeping them isn't high on the list of Saban's accomplishments.

That's what makes Saban and Alabama vs. Jimbo Fisher and Florida State different. For the first time, the most accomplished of Saban's pupils will face him with comparable talent. For the first time, the outcome will be decided on game day, not Signing Day.

Guess which FBS coaches have won the most games since Fisher succeeded Bobby Bowden at FSU for the 2010 season: Saban (86) and Fisher (78).

Guess which programs are the only ones in college football that have played in at least five straight BCS Championship Games or New Year's Six bowl games: Alabama (6) and Florida State (5).

Guess which coach has the best winning percentage in ACC history: Fisher at .821.

SEE SCARBINSKY, B3

SCARBINSKY FROM B1

These may not be the best teams Fisher and Saban have constructed, but when they meet Saturday in Mercedes-Benz Stadium, Fisher will stand as close to Saban in terms of the overall health of his program and the substance of his resume as any former Saban assistant ever has.

There will be obvious differences. Saban is 65 years old. Fisher is 51. Saban is about to begin his 21st season as a major college head coach, his 11th at Alabama. Fisher is starting his eighth year as a college head coach, all of them at Florida State.

Saban has coached a team in six national championship games and won five of them. Fisher is 1 for 1 on that score and also led the Seminoles to the first College Football Playoff, where they were rudely dismissed in the 2014 semifinals by Oregon.

As good as Fisher has been, he has miles to go to catch Saban in any number of ways. Perhaps the best measure of the gap between the mentor and his prize protege is this:

Saban is 119-19 at Alabama. Fisher is 78-17 at Florida State. As astounding as Saban's Crimson Tide record is, Fisher has a chance to equal it.

All he has to do is go 41-2 in his next 43 games.
Hurts, others have family in storm’s wake

The eyes of the college football nation will be on Alabama quarterback Jalen Hurts Saturday night, a situation that will require his usual composure and remarkable concentration.

Hurts would have to superhuman not to think of home, though.

The Crimson Tide quarterback is from Channelview, Texas, in the eastern suburbs of Houston, an area that has been inundated by rains from Hurricane Harvey. His old school, Channelview High, is closed this week, serving as a storm shelter. His parents and relatives, whom he speaks to twice a day, are safely above the floodwaters, but are on a sort of oasis, with limited travel options.

“It’s crazy,” Hurts said at Alabama’s Monday media session. “It’s a blessing for me because my house hasn’t really been damaged, my street hasn’t really had a lot of flooding. Everything around it is pretty bad. Woodforest and Beltway Eight and all that, (there’s) just a lot going on. I’ve seen pictures where there is water up to the streetlights, 20 feet up. But my family is good and that’s a blessing.”

“The freeways are dead, so they don’t really want to go anywhere,” Hurts said.

“They’re shut down, a lot of rescue boats (are) out, people on boats. Not good to drive anywhere.”

That may include driving to the airport on Friday. Hurts’ family usually attends all of Jalen’s games that it can and had planned to be at the historic No. 1 versus No. 3 matchup in Atlanta. That’s now on hold.

“We’ll see,” Hurts said of his family plans. “My main thing is for them to be safe. They can watch on television if they have to. They have electricity.”

Hurts said he was

See HURT, C2
HURT

Continued from C1

...dedicating his performance on Saturday to his family and the City of Houston. But he also said that his focus had not been interrupted.

"It’s Florida State week, opening week this week," Hurts said. "(The people of Houston are) in my prayers back home, but we’re focused. As a team, we know what we have in front of us and we have to get ready.”

Hurts isn’t the only Alabama player whose family is in the path of the storm. Kick returner Xavian Marks is also from metropolitan Houston. Deionte Thompson is from Orange and Tony Beaumont is from Beaumont, eastern Texas towns that are in the path of the storm. More than a dozen Alabama players are from Louisiana, which may see catastrophic rainfall as well.

“As of right now, all of our coaches have been in touch with their families and the players,” coach Nick Saban said on Monday. “If anybody is having any issues and we can be of any assistance to them, we’ve certainly let them know that we’re here to try and help in any way that we can. We want our players to feel comfortable that their families are not in any danger or in harm’s way. To this point, we don’t have any significant issues that we have to report.”

All those players will have to balance family and football this week, recognizing that their homes and families are a first priority while still maintaining their attention to the task at hand. They’ll also be a part of what will be a long-term rebuilding effort along the Texas coast, one that will take months and years, not just a week. Hopefully, Alabama — and all its fans — will be able to help with that, with prayers and resources.

Reach Cecil Hurt at cecil@tidesports.com or 205-722-0225.
UA player suffers minor gunshot wound at Tuscaloosa bar

By: Stephanie Taylor

Alabama defensive tackle Raekwon Davis was shot in the leg while at a Tuscaloosa bar early Sunday morning.

Davis, 20, was hospitalized with a minor injury to his leg. Investigators with the Tuscaloosa County Metro Homicide Unit would not identify Davis as the victim, but The Tuscaloosa News has confirmed his identity. Investigators believe Davis may have been hit by a stray bullet.

"The victim told investigators he was standing outside of Bar 17 when he heard several gunshots and realized he had been shot in the right leg," Homicide Unit commander Capt. Gary Hood said. "The victim was uncooperative with investigators."

Bar 17, at 3217 10th St., is just off Stillman Boulevard and has been the site of shootings and a homicide over the last few years. It was most recently called The Playhouse. The bar showed the pay-per-view Conor McGregor-Floyd Mayweather fight Saturday night, according to its Facebook page.

Investigators recovered several shell casings from the parking lot, Hood said. Davis was treated at DCH Regional Medical Center, where investigators who arrived to take a report.

University of Alabama football coach Nick Saban issued the following statement Sunday afternoon: "Our concern at this time is for Raekwon and his health. While this does not appear to be a serious medical situation, Raekwon is still being evaluated."

Davis, who is from Meridian, Mississippi, is projected to be a starter at defensive end this season after playing as a reserve as a freshman in 2016. He played in seven games and recorded four tackles and a sack in 2016.

At 6-foot-7, 306 pounds, Davis spend the off-season heavily invested in the Alabama strength and conditioning program under coach Scott Cochran. That work has shown during fall practice.
COMMENTARY

How will Tide handle the unexpected?

Cecil Hurt

History has its quirks and coincidences, and an odd way of repeating itself from time to time. Maybe it’s trying to say something. Maybe we look too hard for patterns. Maybe we don’t look hard enough.

Fifty years ago, the University of Alabama football team opened its season against Florida State, the same school the Crimson Tide will face in this season’s opener. Alabama had the greatest coach of that era, perhaps the greatest coach of any era. The Crimson Tide has dominated college football for several seasons. Alabama had won three national championships in the previous six years, and the fan base was irate that it had not been four in six years. That dominance had been built on defense, although great quarterbacks (Trammell, Namath, Sloan, Stabler) didn’t hurt — and Stabler was back for the 1967 season.

The similarities weren’t so strong on the Florida State side. In the days before Bobby Bowden built the Seminoles into a regional and national powerhouse, they were lightly regarded. If you scheduled FSU in an opener in those days, you expected a win. Alabama didn’t get one.

Instead, the game was a tie, and not an old-fashioned slobber knocker 0-0 tie played in a driving downpour. Shockingly for a generation of Alabama watchers, the game ended in a 37-37 tie, with only Stabler’s prowess — and a late interception by Bobby Johns — keeping the Crimson Tide from an outright loss.

The final result, even though it wasn’t a loss, was disappointing. The way it happened, with all those points, was harrowing. To put it in perspective: FSU scored 37 points in that game. In the preceding year, the undefeated 1966 Alabama team had allowed 37 points in the entire regular season.

No one knew it then, except Bryant himself, perhaps, but the game was a sign of things to

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come, the beginning of four lean years. It wasn’t quite famine, but given the expectations in Tuscaloosa, it sure wasn’t a feast.

Fast forward 50 years. Some things are different. Alabama fans are confident but Florida State is a Top Five team, and it doesn’t shock anyone when the Seminoles win against any opponent. Second, the two teams can’t tie, although I can’t imagine the heart attack statistics in the new Mercedes Benz Dome if Saturday’s game stands at 37-37 at the end of regulation. The question, though, is what if Alabama doesn’t look dominant. What if a Nick Saban defense allows 37 points, win or lose?

Nothing in Alabama’s preseason practices suggests there is a change in the air. In 1967, Alabama was not recruiting the way it once had. External social factors had something to do with that. Interpret it as you will, but Alabama did not become great again until integration greatly expanded the pool of talented in-state players. Bryant adapted, and made college football history.

This game should be different, a heavyweight slugfest that won’t necessarily reveal much about the winner or the loser that we don’t already know. A dozen or so teams dominate college football these days in terms of coaching and talent. Alabama and FSU are among that group, and will remain there regardless of Saturday’s score.

Of course, the definition of “unexpected” is that an event does not conform to preconceived notions. No one expects the unexpected, as much as Bryant preached that very phrase to his players. So, if it happens, how will the teams handle it? How would Alabama handle it? We may never know — unless history plays another one of its tricks.

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Alabama's consistent success boils down to the man at the helm

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What's the difference between Alabama and other major college football programs? How has the Crimson Tide become the first SEC program in two decades to win three straight league titles and the only program in the nation to reach the first three College Football Playoffs?

How much time do you have?

As Nick Saban begins his second decade as head coach, Alabama has separated itself from its traditional andJohnny Football come lately rivals in more ways than a year has days.

In the interest of brevity, let's cut to the chase from SEC Media Days.

This was Butch Jones on Tennessee's 2016 season, in which the Vols started 5-0 but finished 9-4, were picked to win the SEC East but landed two games back: "I don't view it as a disappointment."

This was Saban on Alabama's 2016 campaign, in which the Crimson Tide was unbeaten and No. 1 in the nation until the final second of the final game: "We don't want to waste a failure."

Alabama and Tennessee are first and second in the all-time SEC standings. They're 1-2 in SEC championships. Their Third Saturday in October rivalry is one of the sport's most storied series.

Yet 10 years ago, Big Al and Smokey took different paths, and that has made all the difference in the SEC and beyond. Alabama fired Mike Shula and hired Saban. Tennessee watched Phillip Fulmer's stellar tenure fade and a series of wannabes fail to live up to his standard.

The Vols haven't beaten the Crimson Tide since. Not many teams have as Alabama has gone 11-9-1 in the last decade.

Unparalleled and unprecedented recruiting success alone doesn't explain Alabama's dominance.

There's been a sea change in attitude as well. Witness the assessments of Jones and Saban regarding their 2016 accomplishments. To the UT coach, 9-4 wasn't a disappointment. To the Alabama boss, 14-1 was a failure.

That helps explain how Alabama could lose the National Championship Game to Clemson and lose seven defensive regulars to the NFL Draft and still start the 2017 season as the No. 1 team in the nation in the Amway Coaches Poll.

The players come and go, as do the assistant coaches. Alabama lost not one but two offensive coordinators from last season as three-year play-caller Lane Kiffin became the Florida Atlantic head coach and playoff temp Steve Sarkisian was snapped up as OC by Super Bowl runner-up Atlanta.

The constant is Saban, the man who built and runs the machine and shows no signs of getting fat or happy. Instead, despite finishing one decade at Alabama and two as a major college head coach, the 65-year-old Saban laments the day he'll no longer be part of a team. Don't hold your breath, Butch Jones.

Of course, Saban does have his "Get off my lawn" moments, but he seems a long way from fossilizing into a coaching dinosaur. A year ago, he started a true freshman at quarterback for the first time, and that quarterback also was a true dual threat, the kind who used to give Saban fits, philosophically and strategically.

It's unlikely that Alabama would've won its first 14 games a year ago and taken the lead with two minutes left against Clemson without Jalen Hurts at the helm.

While Saban is still grinding, consider the career paths of some of his few true peers. Years ago, Urban Meyer left Florida and the SEC and took time off before landing at the safer haven of Ohio State. Steve Spurrier and Bob Stoops left the profession entirely. Stoops, nine years younger than Saban, shocked the college football world when he retired in June.

Meanwhile, Saban is entering season No. 16 in the most
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demanding, suffocating, unforgiving league in the land. No one is lining up to present him with any going-away gifts. Instead he’s busy trying to correct what went wrong in his last game.

That’s the real story here. There’s not another coach in the SEC who wouldn’t trade his last season, or any season he’s ever had, for Alabama’s 2016 season. To Saban, that season ended in failure.

All the more reason to continue the pursuit of one more big ring, which would equal Paul Bryant’s unmatched collection of six. No one will be shocked if Saban gets there this year. More than a few people will be surprised if he stops there.
Bama-FSU loser has real shot to be two-loss playoff team

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When the clock strikes 12 next Saturday night, Alabama or Florida State will be 0-1. One of the teams believed to be on the short list of national championship contenders will be forced to run uphill for the next three months.

That's a sobering thought after a long off-season of two proud programs and two rabid fan bases dreaming big dreams.

All the pre-season hype surrounding the Crimson Tide and the Seminoles won't go up in smoke for the team that comes up short in Mercedes Benz Stadium, but it will suffer some burn marks.

Lose that game, and you may have to run the table to reach the College Football Playoff. For Alabama, that would mean not slipping up against LSU, Auburn or anyone else. For Florida State, it would mean not coming up short against the likes of Louisville, Clemson or Florida.

Given the remaining schedules these teams play, winning 12 straight games — the final 11 in the regular season plus a conference championship game — would be a serious challenge.

It wouldn't be impossible considering these teams have won two of the last four national titles. Alabama lost its third game of the 2015 season, then didn't lose again until the final game of the 2016 campaign. FSU ran the table through the 2013 season all the way until the next year's playoff semifinals.

But playing 12 straight potential elimination games just to reach the playoff is no one's idea of a perfect Christmas present for those other big-time programs.

There's a more optimistic forecast, though, for the team that leaves Atlanta next weekend with a loss. There's a path forward for Alabama or Florida State to lose the opener, lose one more game along the way and still reach the College Football Playoff. Either the Crimson Tide or the Seminoles will become a prime candidate to be the first two-loss playoff team.

Think about it.

What if the Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game is an instant classic? What if Alabama quarterback Jalen Hurts snakes his way to the go-ahead touchdown with two seconds left rather than two minutes? Or FSU QB Deondre Francois does an impeccable Deshaun Watson impression on a final drive?

What if the pre-game suspicion that these are two of the best teams in college football is confirmed over the course of 60 minutes? What if the loser then goes on to drop one white-knuckle in its league but still manages to reach and win its conference championship game?

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SCARBINSKY
FROM B1

An 11-2 SEC champion with close losses to Florida State and, say, Auburn could have an excellent case to be a playoff team. Ditto for an 11-2 ACC champ with tight defeats against Alabama and, say, Clemson.

It's entirely possible that a game billed as perhaps the biggest opener in history, the first opener ever between teams ranked in the top three in the AP preseason poll, will prove that opening games can be only so big.

That'll be the message both Nick Saban and Jimbo Fisher deliver to their teams late Saturday night. Win that game, and you don't get a golden ticket into the playoff. Lose it, and the rest of the season doesn't have to be a consolation prize.
FACT OF LIFE

Tide’s latest No. 1 ranking is nothing new in Tuscaloosa

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There has been one constant during Miller Forristall’s college career. Before every game he has prepared to play at Alabama, the Crimson Tide has been the top-ranked team in the country. Forristall is set to start his sophomore year with Alabama in the same position it was when the tight end’s freshman campaign began — at the apex of the polls.

“I mean it’s kind of cool,” Forristall said.

Then he caught himself.

“We honestly don’t really think about it,” he continued. “You just want to kind of — 1-0. Win the first game and kind of move on from there. We never really look at the rankings, honestly.”

If he did, he’d know the Tide hasn’t taken the field as anything other than the No. 1 team since Jan. 11, 2016. That was the date of Alabama’s national championship victory over Clemson.

The Tigers took the No. 1 ranking back 364 days later with their last-second triumph over Alabama in January. But this preseason both the coaches and media members who decide these things placed the Tide above everyone else in the polls. Consequently, when Alabama faces Florida State, it will enter its 16th consecutive game as the top team in the land.

“Since I have been here, it always seems like we have been in the top five,” said cornerback Anthony Averett. “So, I don’t, if I can say, I’ve gotten used to it, but it’s fun to be that and be in that discussion.”

For Nick Saban, though, being No. 1 creates a dilemma. It’s good because it gives the Tide more leeway to suffer an early-season loss and recover in time to qualify for the College Football Playoff. At the same time, it makes it harder for Saban to keep his team from developing an inflated perception of itself.

On the same day the Amway Coaches Poll was released earlier this month, Saban pooh-poohed the fact the Tide was slotted at the top.

“We’re not going to be in the mood to be making comparisons or making comments on rankings,” Saban said. “It’s flattering that people think highly of our team, but our team needs to understand that they need to prove who they are too by what they do, and this means very, very little.”

Perhaps.

But it does reinforce the notion that Alabama is the best program in college football. The mere fact the Las Vegas bookmakers immediately identified the Tide as the favorite to win the 2017 national title hours after Alabama suffered its excruciating defeat to Clemson last January only underlines that point.

“We can control what we can control,” Averett said. “If they rank us No. 1, we’ll be No. 1 and just try to get better every day. Try not to think about that too much.”

There is not much to consider, after all.

Alabama being No. 1 has become so common, sort of like when USC was the No. 1 in 33 straight AP Polls from Dec. 2003 to Dec. 2005. Come Sept. 2, 600 days will have passed since the Tide entered a game while holding anything other than the top spot.

“You see it, but it’s kind of just like, ‘All right, it doesn’t really matter,’” Forristall said. “It doesn’t really matter. Rankings don’t really matter.”

So says the tight end who has never played in a game when Alabama hasn’t been ranked No. 1.
Yale offers a tutorial in social descent

National Review Online’s Kyle Smith drolly worries that Yale might be perpetuating harmful stereotypes.

If such campus fol-de-rols merely added to what Samuel Johnson called “the public stock of harmless pleasure,” Americans could welcome a new academic year the way they once welcomed new burlesque acts. Unfortunately, the descent of institutions of learning into ludicrousness is symptomatic of larger social distempers that Frank Furedi has diagnosed abroad as well as in America.

Furedi is a professor emeritus in England and author of “What’s Happened to the University?: A Sociological Exploration of Its Infantilization.” Writing in The American Interest, he cites a warning issued to Oxford University post-graduate students about the danger of “vicarious trauma,” which supposedly results from “hearing about and engaging with the traumatic experiences of others.” This, Furedi says, is symptomatic of the “medicalization” of almost everything in universities that strive to be “therapeutic.” Universities are “promoting theories and practices that encourage people to interpret their anxieties, distress and disappointment through the language of psychological deficits.” This generates self-fulfilling diagnoses of emotionally fragile students. They demand mental–health services on campuses that are replete with “trigger warnings” and “safe spaces” to insulate students from discomforts, such as the depiction of a musket. What academics perceive as “an expanded set of problems tracks right along with the exponential growth of the ‘Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.’”

The socialization of children, which prepares them to enter the wider world, has been shifted from parents to primary and secondary schools, and now to higher education, which has embraced the task that Furedi calls “re-socialization through altering the norms that undergraduates grew up with.” This is done by using speech codes and indoctrination to raise “awareness” about defects students acquired before coming to campuses that are determined to purify undergraduates.

Often, however, students arrive with little moral ballast bequeathed by parents who thought their role was, Furedi says, less to transmit

See WILL, A5
values than to validate their children’s feelings and attitudes: “This emphasis on validation runs in tandem with a risk-averse regime of child-rearing, the (unintended) consequence of which has been to limit opportunities for the cultivation of independence and to extend the phase of dependence of young people on adult society.”

The therapeutic university’s language -- students are “vulnerable” to routine stresses and difficulties that are defined as “traumas” -- also becomes self-fulfilling. As a result, students experience a diminished sense of capacity for moral agency -- for self-determination. This can make them simultaneously passive, immersing themselves into groupthink, and volatile, like the mobs at Middlebury College, Claremont McKenna College, University of California, Berkeley and other schools that disrupt ungenial speakers. Hence universities provide “trigger warnings” that facilitate flights into “safe spaces.”

Furedi quotes an Oberlin College student who says: “There’s something to be said about exposing yourself to ideas other than your own,” but “I’ve had enough of that.”

Times do, however, change, as the Yale Alumni Magazine delicately intimated when it said the stone now obscuring the Puritan’s musket “can be removed in the future without damaging the original carving.” And the future has come with strange speed to New Haven.

In a peculiar letter in Tuesday’s Wall Street Journal, a Yale official says the university is removing the stone “that a construction project team had placed on the stonework.” By clearly suggesting, implausibly, that this “team” acted on its own, the letter contradicts the magazine’s report that the covering up was done because the Committee on Art in Public Spaces deemed the carving “not appropriate.” The letter, which says the uncovered carving will be moved to where it can be studied and “contextualized,” speaks volumes about Yale’s context.

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In the heat of the moment, don't rush to take down controversial statues, scholars warn

In the heat of the moment, don't rush to take down controversial statues, scholars warn

Associated Press

By taking monuments down or hiding them away, we facilitate forgetting. It purchases absolution too inexpensively. There is a value in owning our history.

Alfonso Espinoza, a law professor at the University of Alabama who has been studying the issue.

Monuments to Confederate-era figures have been coming down around the country since the 2015 mass shooting of nine black parishioners at a church in Charleston, South Carolina, by a 21-year-old white racist. But after the violence that erupted in Charlottesville, Virginia, last month, during a white-supremacist protest against the removal of a Lee statue, the movement picked up steam.

Over the weekend, the Situational New York City, where he established the first hospital for women in 1853, was vandalized. "XACET," was spray-painted on the Central Park monument, and splatters of red paint were used to deface the statue's eyes and mouth. The city is considering whether to remove the statue, the size of an Aug. 9th protest, as part of a 90-day review of "symbolism of hate" on city property. New York Mayor Bill de Blasio announced last month. The Slaves memorial has been denounced by New York City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, who described its erection as "reprehensible and reprehensible" and a "stain on our nation's history." The New York Academy of Medicine released a statement calling for the statue's removal.

A statue of Lee also stands on the campus grounds in Montgomery, Alabama. In 2003, a painting entitled "Medi- cal Slaves of Alabama" that depicted Slaves and other white men standing over a partially clothed black patient was removed from the University of Alabama at Birmingham's Center for Advanced Medical Studies because of its implications from people offended by it. Protesters in South Carolina, where Slaves was born, have demanded removal of a monument to the doctor on the Cape Grounds in Columbia.

Dr. Vesica Gambrell, a professor at Georgia Washington University who teaches a course on racism in medicine, said of people in the heavily minority East Atlanta neighborhood where the statue stands: "It is not OK. But the fact that she doesn't want to see it hidden away or destroyed because that would be a missed opportunity to educate the public, "It's important to have a conversation about statues," she said. "That's why I hope we'll start to happen in some form of the conversation around the statue gets people to think about racism in the history of medicine." Dr. Blasco has also argued that one of the few City monuments that should go is a plaque to Philippe Petain, a World War I hero later convicted of treason for helping the[V]ichy government in Nazi-occupied France during World War II. Meanwhile, activists in New York and San Juan, California, are targeting statues of Columbus, who is seen as a hero in many, particularly Latin-American, but a murderous conqueror to Native Americans and others. Some question where it will end. If New York's 16-foot Columbus statue is removed, then what about Columbus Circle, where it started? And the Columbus Day holiday?

University, too, are removing statues. Stockton University in New Jersey posted a list of six possible Richard and Stockton, a slave owner who signed the Declaration of Independence. In Boston, an advocacy group wants to rename Franklin Hall. The Columbia meeting place located the "Cra- dle of Liberty," because it was part of the slave trade. In Philadelphia, a city councilwoman is leading the push to take down a likeness of Betsy Ross, the tough-nut crime maven and police commissioner during the Civil War. "The woman was a one-woman army," she said. "In New Mexico, a statue of Spanish conqueror Juan de Oñate in Santa Fe is one of several because he was said to be ruthless in controlling the native population. In Chicago, protesters want to remove a likeness of Ivan the Terrible because it was a gift from Italian dictator Benito Mussolini.

Some historians say the debate itself is a good thing.

"I find it very unsettling and refreshing that America is rethinking its history and questioning just why we honor some people, some events, and not others," said Tom Doyle, a professor of history at the University of South Carolina. "It is a healthy reminder that history is, as the search for under- standing of the past, must always challenge public history as monuments and hero worship in the public sphere."