SEPTEMBER 11, 2017

ARTICLES OF INTEREST
SEPTEMBER 4, 2017 – SEPTEMBER 11, 2017

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UA students must have a financial strategy

Dollars and sense

University of Alabama students participate in spring commencement exercises in May 2017 at Coleman Coliseum. The university estimates currently it will cost students about $30,000 to $48,600 on average to attend annually, depending on whether they come from Alabama or outside the state, and students employ different strategies for coping with the expenses. [STAFF PHOTO/ERIN NELSON]

Some strike a balance to make ends meet

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

Two weeks into the 2017 school year, University of Alabama sophomore chemical engineering student Daniel Stadler sat behind one of the information desks in the Ferguson Student Center as students made their way to and from the food courts on the other side of the building. The 19-year-old from Orlando works on campus to help cover the cost of his college education. Stadler’s strategy includes a combination of scholarships, help from his parents, loans, and working.

“This year, I’m actually working two jobs and living off of campus,” he said.

For most students, a loan or scholarship by itself likely won’t cover the cost of attending college, and the strategies for tackling the costs vary, predictably, with individual circumstances.

The university estimates currently it will cost students about $30,000-$48,600 on average to attend, depending on whether they come from Alabama or outside the state. Tuition by itself is only about half of the cost of being a student at Alabama. Tuition for out-of-state students like Stadler is more than twice the rate on average than their in-state peers.

“There are multiples of different avenues that a family may take to paying for their expenses here. Many have planned, some have not. Many have options, personal financial options,” UA Director of Student Financial Aid

See COST, A4
Helen Allen said.
With his SAT scores, Stadler said tuition is covered by scholarships. Working and loans help pay for rent and groceries.
The cost of attending UA has steadily grown in the last 20 years as tuition rates have increased each year. The hikes have been justified by university officials who point to declining state funding and growing operating expenses, including providing a richer experience on campus for a student body that has grown to more than 37,000.
"We are very sensitive to being focused on those things that students are attracted to. This campus has gone from a state flagship university to a national flagship university," UA System Chancellor Ray Hayes said.
Hayes and others say they are also sensitive about the cost.
"That is a really, really tough thing we wrestle with," said Finis St. John, a member of the system's board of trustees.
"Another thing that is important to me, at least when we are looking at it, is if we compare that to schools that aren't growing, they cost as much or more, so we are not out of line."
There was $418.2 million in scholarships and financial aid awarded through UA's financial aid office in fiscal year 2016. Stadler thinks UA does a good job of providing aid.
"They give a lot of scholarships," he said.

"Students and parents need to be aware that they need to plan ahead," Allen said.
The federal aid available for UA students includes Pell grants, supplemental education grants, work study programs and student loans. Based on the needs assessment in their application for federal student aid, students can receive as much as $5,500 as freshman, $6,500 as sophomores and $7,500 as upperclassmen. Pell grants provide a maximum of $5,920 annually currently. At UA, the maximum supplemental education grants award is $1,000, Allen said.

UA, which contributes 25 percent, gets a federal match to fund 750-800 students for work study, she said. The awards range from $2,200 to $3,600, Allen said.

Bradford said she enjoyed the amenities of campus as a freshman. The variety of dining options on campus was impressive. But she also estimated life as a sophomore was about $10,000 cheaper.
"As you start to see the cost, you really don't see it as all that important," she said of all the amenities.
Coping with the college experience

How much undergraduates pay is partially related to their class year. Freshman, with some exceptions, are required to live on campus and purchase a freshman meal plan. The requirement is not unique to UA. The residency requirement is common in higher education, as officials argue retention rates and outcomes improve if students spend their first year on campus.

"All of those things help them cope with this new experience because they are still maturing. They are still developing as an individual, so I think that when you look at what the campuses offer for housing and what the kids get, it is more than anything they could get living off of campus," Vice Chancellor of Finance and Administration Dana Keith said.

Taylor understands the argument for the enriched college experience.

"Living arrangements are a big deal that people tend to look for," the 20-year-old said while sitting in the food court of the Ferguson Center.

People want their own space and individual rooms. Parents like the idea that their children will have a space where they are secure, Taylor said.

"Having lots of food is a plus because things aren't monotonous," he said.

He also appreciates a good recreation center.

"It's a work-life balance," he said.

Stadler sees the pros and
cons of living on campus. Everything is within walking distance on campus, but it is cheaper to live off campus and there is more freedom, he said.

"I think all that is pretty good. It forces you to live on campus and make friends," he said of the freshman residency requirement. "Those groups of people you embed with, you take off of campus next year."

But Stadler estimated his rent as a sophomore is about $8,000 cheaper this year off campus, though he noted the cost of living on campus included utilities and food. Based on his scholarship, UA also provided a reimbursement this year since he is not living on campus anymore. The university provided about $13.8 million. Stadler's rent for the year in reimbursements in 2016 is about $8,000. Student residential rates range from $5,714 to $10,800 for the 10-month academic year that runs from August to April. A freshman meal plan is $3,674 annually.

The median gross rent in Tuscaloosa, based on the most recent U.S. Census data, was $785. The figure includes rent, and the estimated average monthly cost of utilities. The most recent data on the Tuscaloosa market from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development reported an average rent of $730.

Quintasia Walters gets help from her family during move-in day on Aug. 18, 2017, in dorms around the Robert E. Witt Residential Campus at the University of Alabama. From left are Quintasia, mother Yolanda, father DaQuincy and brother DaQuincy Jr. Freshmen, with some exceptions, are required to live on the UA campus and purchase a meal plan. [STAFF PHOTO/GARY COSBY JR.]

See next page
The value of college

While the cost has increased, the three still say the benefits of college make it worth the expense.

Stadler is the son of engineers who worked for NASA. He said he was pushed toward college. But he also sees it as part of growing up. He wants to be able to support himself and a family comfortably.

"Going away to college was specifically the investment I made," he said.

He could have gone to schools closer to home, but he chose to leave Florida as part of the experience.

"It really forces you to find yourself and find your interest," he said.

Bradford is in a high-demand field.

"I see the investment," she said.

Whether college was in the future wasn't really a question, Taylor said.

"If I wanted to make use of the potential I knew I had, I needed to come here and get the tools I needed," he said.

—Reach Ed Enoch at ed.enoch@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0209.
Montgomery

Insolvency on horizon for state education agency?

Or is department’s projected budget deficit a paper tiger?

Trisha Powell Crain tcrain@al.com

Alabama’s Chief Education Financial Officer Andy Craig warned state superintendent Michael Sentance last April that the department was on a “path of financial deterioration and insolvency if adjustments are not made.”

The memo, obtained through a records request, outlined what Craig said were “serious concerns” he had about that path and laid out four recommendations he had for a long-term fiscal plan.

Those four recommendations, including a hiring freeze for the state department, were implemented a couple of weeks later, department-wide. The remaining three recommendations were focused on how to contain personnel costs.

State board members began publicly asking questions about the department’s budget earlier this year, concerned about how many positions Sentance added to the department, according to board member Cynthia McCarty, R-Jacksonville.

It’s unclear whether questions about the budget will be used against Sentance, whose job is believed to be in jeopardy.

See Budget, A4

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BUDGET
FROM AL

Board member Jeff Newman, R-Millport, told AL.com in August that a vote could be held to fire Sentance at the next regular meeting, which is Thursday. Gov. Kay Ivey, who serves as president of the board by virtue of her office, will attend the meeting, according to her spokesperson.

Board of education Vice President Stephanie Bell, R-Montgomery, told AL.com in an emailed statement, “Board members have been diligent about asking questions and requesting information. The budget discussion was on the August Special Called work session because board members requested the information for discussion.”

It was at that Aug. 23 work session that the board learned Craig is projecting an $8 million deficit for the department for the coming fiscal year, which starts Oct. 1.

IS THERE A DEFICIT?

Following the discussion, it was unclear whether the $8 million deficit in the department’s preliminary, draft $30.1 million budget was a projection or depicted that way due to accounting methods.

Board members alternately expressed their concern about the department running a deficit.

Craig said that deficit amount depended on a lot of things, and included costs for unfilled positions, not accounted for in the previous year’s figures due to this year’s change in accounting methods.

Craig explained that all positions, filled and unfilled, are on the books at the beginning of the year, just as shown in the proposed budget, but if those positions go unfilled, that money is generally moved to other areas within the department, which is why they aren’t shown in the 2017 numbers.

It is a common practice, Craig said, or else the money could revert to the state or federal government providing the funds.

After the work session, Craig told reporters the deficit isn’t a sure thing. “There are a lot of moving parts to this,” he said.

“We’re in a position to essentially balance (the budget) because we have positions that are unfilled,” Craig said. “If we don’t fill the positions, then we’re at zero basically.”

When asked if the department had run deficits before, Craig said, “In the past, at times, yes.”

In previous years, Craig explained, there were funds available to be spent from a shared services account, which is funded primarily by indirect cost charges to federal and state programs that the department administers.

ACCOUNTING CHANGE

Money from that fund was used to cover department costs, Craig said, but that fund balance has declined in recent years.

Also, Craig said, the way those indirect costs are calculated has been declining through the years, putting pressure on the department’s budget.

“We’ve reached a point in my mind,” Craig told the board, “where the computation of an indirect cost and what would be required to bring into this operations and maintenance fund is not rational anymore.”

That change in the shared services fund accounts for part of that deficit, Craig said. The department is changing its method for displaying those indirect costs, and that accounts for the way the deficit appears, too, Craig said.

Craig told the board he changed the entire chart of accounts for the department effective at the beginning of fiscal year 2017, or Oct. 1, 2016.

The restructuring of the state department put in place recently under Sentance has changed the chart of accounts again, Craig said, making some of the budget documents difficult to follow.

Craig has held the job of chief education finance officer since January 2015, hired by former superintendent Tommy Bice. Craig replaced long-time finance head Craig Pouncey, who has been the superintendent in Jefferson County schools since 2014.

Contacted, Tuesday evening, Pouncey said the department did not run a deficit while he was the chief financial officer.

AL.com has submitted a records request for previous years of the department’s budget documents and has not yet received the documents.

The budget process is continuing, Craig said in a statement to AL.com: “Meetings with department heads are ongoing as we work towards finalizing a starting budget for 2018.”

BUDGET VOTE NEEDED?

Craig said he expects the board to vote on a department operating budget for 2018, something he couldn’t say whether had been done in the past but is required under state law based on research he conducted last year.

The board voted in February to approve the fiscal year 2018 budget, and it’s unclear at this point if a second vote is needed. Craig told board members he plans to bring the 2018 budget back to them for a vote.

Bell told AL.com the board has voted every year on the department’s budget as a part of the request sent to the Legislature for all K-12 appropriations.

A search of official minutes shows no record of a vote for the fiscal year 2017 budget, and only a vote for “budget priorities” for the fiscal year 2014 budget. The board voted to approve a “preliminary budget” for fiscal year 2016.

The board meets again on Sept. 14, but it is unclear whether a vote will be held at that time as an agenda has not yet been released.
Bobby Bowden can always come home

By: John Archibald

Bobby Bowden is best when he talks of his childhood in Birmingham.

He loves the city and always has. It made him who he would become.

Like the way, as a young boy, his house backed up to the Woodlawn High School football field.

"When they kicked field goals they came in my yard," he said. "Some of them."

He recalls, from some of his earliest memories, how he and his dad climbed to the top of their garage to watch the Colonels practice on that field.

It has been more than 80 years, but the memories never fade.

He was five when the family moved from Woodlawn to East Lake just down the road, but there was football there, too. The family lived downhill from the football field at Howard College, which would become Samford. Every day for the rest of his schooling - at Barrett Elementary and Woodlawn High - Bowden walked through that campus on his way to class or to the streetcar.

"It was all I ever knew," he said. "I think it led me into coaching."

The Hall of Fame college coach, who built a name for himself and his employer at Florida State University, was in town Friday to play in the Birmingham Housing Authority's annual charity golf tournament at Roebuck Golf Course.

Bowden sat for a moment - in the Bobby Bowden Room - to talk of memories and life after football. He is so at home here that he might as well be on the sidelines. At 87 he's still quick with a quip, or a hug, or a comfortable and comforting hand.

When the greeter in the Bowden room asked the coach to show his ticket to eat breakfast, an event organizer was quick to intervene.

"This is Bobby Bowden," he explained. "This is the Bobby Bowden room. He doesn't need a ticket to eat breakfast."

Bowden just laughed. And hugged the woman and put her at ease. And I'm pretty sure she would have signed a letter of intent on the spot if he had wanted to sign her up.

Bowden, who still lives in Tallahassee with his wife, Ann, said he comes to Birmingham every chance he gets, and tries to stay a while each summer. His health is still good, he said, and he boasts not of wins or status, but of 68 years of marriage.

His presence at the tournament helps to fund the Housing Authority's scholarship foundation and its Family Self-Sufficiency program, in which participants sign up for a five-year plan of self-improvement. The program has helped graduates find better jobs and eventually move away from public housing and assistance.

See Next Page
I had to ask him a little about football. Does he have advice for FSU coach Jimbo Fisher after the opening day loss to Bama?

"He doesn't need advice because he's so smart," Bowden said. "You know if he was a dummy or something you'd say do this do that. His kids made errors and when you make errors you get beat. That's what happened to him Saturday."

But I wondered if the world could use a coach right now. The team is split, the nation divided in ways that threaten to tear us apart.

"There is too much hate and bitterness between people," Bowden said. "What can pull us together again? If you ask me it would be getting back to God."

And simply taking the time to stop and help others when you get the chance. Like Bowden did Friday.
COMMENTARY

A matter of life and death: Saving Alabama's rural hospitals

Terri A. Sewell

The Tuscaloosa News
Sunday, September 10, 2017

The bad news is that Alabama's rural hospitals are on life support. The good news is that we can save them if we have the will to do so. In order to reverse course, we must make serious changes on federal, state, and local levels.

In August, we learned that after 60 years of serving the citizens of Wilcox County, the hospital there and its two rural health clinics will close if additional funding is not obtained. Approximately 50 jobs will be lost in the Alabama county least-equipped to deal with a loss in employment. Its closure will create a medical desert in the county. Our neighbors in Camden will have to travel more than 40 miles to the nearest hospital if John Paul Jones Hospital closes. The majority of the citizens in Wilcox County do not have the resources to travel that distance to access a hospital or emergency room. Without further assistance, the hospitals in Greene and Sumter Counties will be in similar situations very soon. For my constituents, access to these hospitals is a matter of life and death.

Alabama's rural hospitals have been struggling for years, largely due to inadequate reimbursements, low volume, and high operating costs. With the lowest Medicare hospital reimbursements in the country, reimbursement issues and funding losses are simply insufficient to cover operational costs at these facilities.

In Alabama, these reimbursements mean the difference between our hospitals staying open and shutting their doors for good. Medicare covers the elderly and Medicaid covers low-income children, pregnant women, and the elderly and disabled. The majority of Alabama's hospitals, including big hospitals like UAB and St. Vincent's, serve disproportionate shares of elderly, low-income, and uninsured patients and are therefore largely dependent on reimbursements from Medicaid, Medicare, and the federal government.

As a new member of the Ways and Means Committee in the U.S. House of Representatives, I have been working to address the reimbursement and funding issues our hospitals face. Alabama's hospitals are reimbursed by Medicare at the lowest rates in the country due to a formula known as the Medicare Area Wage Index. This is why I have introduced legislation in Congress to address inequities in the Area Wage Index formula. I will continue fighting for targeted assistance and increased Medicare reimbursements for all of our hospitals and providers, particularly those in rural places.

Our state Medicaid program has the lowest income eligibility caps in the country and covers the least services. Since 2010, 80 rural hospitals have closed nationwide, five in Alabama. Nationally, 80 percent of closing hospitals were in states that, like Alabama, didn't expand their Medicaid programs under the Affordable Care Act. Approximately 60 percent of patients at Children's Hospitals of Alabama hospital are on Medicaid and the program covers more than 50 percent of births statewide. We need more robust Medicaid funding in Alabama if our rural hospitals are to survive.

We need more robust Medicaid funding in Alabama if our rural hospitals are to survive. Until our state invests more resources into the Medicaid program and increases assistance for rural hospitals and providers, our pending closure crisis will only worsen. Alabama must also invest more in reliable, non-emergency medical transportation so patients can access primary and preventive care before their illness becomes an emergency. We could increase the use of telehealth in our hospitals by investing in broadband and, like many states, requiring insurance coverage of telehealth for long-distance health care. There are many steps we can take that have been successful in similar states to improve access, reduce costs, and save our rural hospitals.

Our rural hospital closure crisis is not just a health crisis, but an economic one as well. In many rural communities, the relationship between the existence of a hospital and economic development is critical to the overall success of the community. When the only hospital in a county closes or doesn't exist, it becomes nearly impossible to attract and maintain industry, jobs, and people. Public health is compromised.

If I've learned anything in Congress, it's that none of us can solve these issues alone. Together, we can stop the preventable closure of John Paul Jones Hospital and use it as an opportunity to reverse course and save our rural hospitals.

—Congresswoman
Terri A. Sewell is in her fourth term representing Alabama's 7th congressional district.
ANALYSIS

Special ed test scores have little impact on school scores

Between 1 and 6 percent drop in most schools

Trisha Powell Crain trtrain@al.com

Remarks by a Alabama State Board of Education member in June shined a spotlight on a long-held belief that children in special education drag down standardized test scores overall at a school.

Those remarks only recently came to light and have sparked concern among disability advocates and parents of special-ed children about the consequences of that kind of thinking.

The fear that one group of students might tarnish test scores stems from harsh penalties once associated with the No Child Left Behind Act and measures of "adequate yearly progress," both of which are now history.

SEE SCORES, A2
The Birmingham News  
Friday, September 8, 2017

Impact of special education students’ test scores on overall school proficiency  
In percentage points

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*Only one school in each grade and subject showed that biggest impact

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Number of schools where scores were lowered by ...

- Between 5 and 10 pts, n 95 82 10 36 1 11
- By 10 or more pts, n 22 8 0 3 0 0

| Schools analyzed | 246 245 191 191 166 165 |

Source: Alabama State Department of Education, 2015-2016 ACT Aspire results

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2. How big was the gap in proficiency between special education students and general education students? The bigger the gap, the larger the probable impact.

3. How many students in each particular grade took the test? The smaller the pool, the bigger the effect that scores of special education students might have.

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1. What proportion of students in the testing pool were receiving special education? The larger the proportion, the larger the possible impact.

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2. How big was the gap in proficiency between special education students and general education students? The bigger the gap, the larger the probable impact.

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Ivey makes it official: She’s seeking full term

Governor says she’s ready to steer ship of state

Mike Cason mrcason@al.com

Gov. Kay Ivey finally put it in words Thursday what her actions had said for weeks — she’s running for a full term as governor next year.

"Four months ago, I was sworn in as the 54th Governor of the State of Alabama," she said in a statement. "There hasn’t been a more humbling moment in my life. That so many of you have supported and prayed for me and my team means the world — and it’s our highest honor to serve you.

"I took over at one of the darkest times in our state’s memory. I’m proud to say we’ve steadied the ship. Now it’s time to steer it to continued conservative progress and prosperity."

Ivey had already started taking campaign contributions from some of the state’s most powerful businesses and interest groups and traveled the state on a "listen and learn" tour.

She was in her second term as lieutenant governor when Gov. Robert Bentley resigned April 10. Ivey said then her first priority was to "steady the ship of state" after the yearlong scandal that forced Bentley out.

At a news conference in July marking her first 100 days in office, she said she believed she had accomplished that and talked more about the future. In August, she filed the paperwork to begin raising money and in just a few weeks racked up $1 million.

Ivey joins a race for the Republican nomination that includes Huntsville Mayor Tommy Battle, Jefferson County Commissioner David Carrington, Birmingham evangelist Scott Dawson, state corrections officer Stacy George, state Sen. Bill Hightower of Mobile, Birmingham businessman Joshua Jones and Agriculture Commissioner John McMillan.

Ivey tops $1 million for campaign

Gov. Kay Ivey has collected more than $1 million for her gubernatorial campaign, taking in large contributions from Alabama business interests. Since last week, she has reported $825,000 in contributions. Combined with previous reports, Ivey has now raised $1,003,200, the most of the announced candidates. Huntsville Mayor Tommy Battle raised $180,000 in August and has now raised a total of $868,600 to rank second in fundraising, which began in June. Ivey’s biggest contribution on her most recent reports was $200,000 from Huntsville developer Louis Breland. She received $50,000 from MCG PAC, the political action committee for the law firm Maynard, Cooper & Gale, chaired by lobbyist Ted Hosp and $40,000 from Biscop, chaired by lobbyist Clark Richardson. Two Democrats are raising money as well. Former state Supreme Court Chief Justice Sue Bell Cobb reported raising $47,000 in August for a total of $182,000, Tuscaloosa Mayor Walt Maddox raised $24,000 in August for a total of $30,000, which doesn’t include a $30,000 loan he made to his campaign. In a fundraising letter, Maddox said he would announce his decision on whether to run in mid-January.

— Mike Cason

On the Democratic side, former Supreme Court Chief Justice Sue Bell Cobb is running, and Tuscaloosa Mayor Walt Maddox has formed a committee to raise money and is considering a run.
Coming election year in Alabama shaping up to be one of the best

Folks, our quadrennial gubernatorial election is going to be a doozy. In fact, we are in for one heck of a political year next year. Besides the governor’s race, we have open races for lieutenant governor, attorney general, treasurer and agriculture commissioner, as well as statewide races for secretary of state and state auditor. We have five seats up for election on the state Supreme Court, and one of those will be a hotly contested battle for chief justice. And two seats on the Public Service Commission will be on the ballot.

More importantly, we have local races on the 2018 ballot in all 67 Alabama counties. All politics are local and local races drive the turnout. Offices for sheriff, probate judge and circuit clerk are up for election in every county, and voters also will decide on local judicial seats.

All seven of our congressional seats will be on the ballot, although only two are expected to be in play. Second District Congresswoman Martha Roby is vulnerable and will be challenged and Fifth District Congressman Mo Brooks angered the Washington establishment Republican moneymen power brokers by challenging Luther Strange and he will be in a battle for his political life.

The most important races will be for the 35 state Senate seats and 105 House of Representatives seats. An unprecedented number of senators and representatives will not be running for reelection. Those legislative races will be where most of the special interest money will gravitate. Money follows money. The Legislature appropriates state dollars as well as makes state laws. The governor proposes and the legislature disposes.

I have observed Alabama politics for quite a while and 2018 is set to be the best circus I have seen, and I have seen some good ones. There may have been better governor’s races, but from top to bottom of the ballot, this may be the best.

The governor’s race is always the marquee battle royale in Alabama politics. It will get cranked up immediately after the Sept. 26 Republican Senate primary runoff, which Roy Moore will probably win. Governor Kay Ivey will officially announce soon. She really began her campaign the day she was sworn in earlier this year. One of her first acts made her a player in the 2018 gubernatorial contest.

Robert Bentley had initially called for the open Senate race to be in 2018. However, Ivey had seen polls that revealed that Roy Moore was going to win whatever race he ran for in 2018, whether it was governor or U.S. senator. The vague state Judicial Inquiry Commission made him a martyr and hero when they removed him from his chief justice post. Neither she nor any host of potential horses would have beaten the Ten Commandments judge. However, she knew that the U.S. Senate seat would allure him and, of course, it did.

It was an adroit, brilliant Machiavellian move by Ivey. She has moved into the governor’s office and looks gubernatorial. She is in the catbird’s seat in the race for a full four-year term. Her move to have a special election this year rather than a regular election year not only enhanced her odds for election but also cost the state over $10 million.

Rep. Steve Clouse, R-Ozark, Ways and Means

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FLOWERS
Continued from A6 chairman in the state House of Representatives, has prudently prefilled a bill to clarify the law and clearly state that the election for a vacated Senate seat would be held with the next general election. It will save the cash-strapped General Fund a lot of money in the future.

Even though Ivey will be running as the incumbent in the upcoming gubernatorial fray, her entrance has not deterred some major players. Huntsville Mayor Tommy Battle will be a player. The Republican could run on a platform of saying he can make the rest of Alabama a semblance of Huntsville. Republican Agriculture Commissioner John McMillan has won two statewide races and is in the race.

Several other viable candidates are not scared of the aging Ivey. Jefferson County Commissioner David Carrington, Birmingham evangelist Scott Dawson and state Sen. Bill Hightower, R-Birmingham are already in the GOP contest.

Surprisingly, two Democratic thoroughbreds are poised to run. Tuscaloosa Mayor Walt Maddox and former Chief Justice Sue Bell Cobb are ready to pull the trigger.

PSC President Twinkle Cavanaugh has moved to the lieutenant governor’s race. This is a wise move by the 50-year-old state political veteran. She will be a formidable favorite to win that race. It is purely a name recognition contest and her positive name recognition is very high.

Steve Flowers served 16 years in the Alabama Legislature. Readers can contact him at www.steveflowers.us.
Have Courage, Be Kind
Vigil and march held for Megan Rondini

By Jessa Reid Bolling | Contributing Writer

A University of Alabama student passed away in 2016, and members of the UA community are still seeking justice in her death and honoring her memory.

Megan Rondini, a 20-year-old University of Alabama Honors College student, told police in 2015 that she was raped by Terry Bunn Jr., member of a prominent Tuscaloosa family, after she offered her a ride home from Innisfree Pub, a local bar. After having a case built against her, being diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, and transferring schools, Rondini died by suicide in February 2016, as reported by a Buzzfeed article several months ago.

The story has received national attention, and members of the UA community have taken steps to honor Rondini and make sure her story is the last of its kind.

Supporters have taken to social media, creating pages like “Justice for Megan Rondini” and planning a vigil in her memory.

The vigil, which took place on Friday night, drew a crowd of over 60 people. The mood was somber, but resilient as the group marched through Tuscaloosa.

Starting at the DCH Regional Medical, the group made purposeful stops along the way.

At their first stop, the president’s mansion, the group paused to sing “Lean On Me,” a favorite song of Rondini’s.

The group then stopped at Innisfree Pub and finished at the Sheriff’s Department/County Courthouse.

Robyn Yetter, Rondini’s aunt, and her husband Russ attended the march in place of Rondini’s parents, as Rondini’s mother Cindy is currently fighting stage 4 pancreatic cancer.

Yetter recited several Bible passages that were found in Megan’s car after her passing and thanked attendees for the support that the family has received.

“We have truly been overwhelmed,” Yetter said. “We are humbled to our core by the abundance of love to our family and the shared passion to bring about change so that no one will ever have to experience the obstructions of justice that we have seen in Megan’s case.”

We are humbled to our core by the abundance of love to our family and the shared passion to bring about change

- Robyn Yetter

Rondini’s family believes that she was not properly treated by medical providers and counselors and was not taken seriously by police or the University. Her parents filed a wrongful death lawsuit in July.

Tina Jones, board president of Turning Point, a West Alabama agency for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, announced that a program is being implemented at DCH to create a SANE, Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner program that will provide specialized care and resources for sexual assault victims.

“This will provide in our community in West Alabama, a specific place for someone who has experienced sexual assault to come,” Jones said. “This is a specialized facility where there will be trained medical personnel that are not only trained medically... but they’re specifically trained to help and assist a victim who has been sexually assaulted. There are many parts of that process that are extremely important that they are followed precisely so that things like evidence are not damaged and being able to provide the correct comfort.”

Ross O’Entremont, vice president of Academic Affairs of the Student Government Association at the University, echoed support
for the implementation of a SANE program and said that men must work alongside women to make it possible.

"It’s going to take everyone in the community to work on that and complete this ... and men must play a dominant role in that," D'Entremont said. "They must play in equal partnership with the women who so strongly want to see this program and deserve this program."

Jordan Johnson, a sophomore and theatre major, said that she attended the event to learn more about Rondini after briefly hearing about her case.

"I went because I'm in Kappa Alpha Theta, so I heard about Megan my freshman year, but I didn’t know any specifics about her case so when the Buzzfeed article came out and I learned about more of the specifics, I wanted to be more involved," Johnson said. "I thought it went really well and I thought the support from everyone involved was amazing."

**SEXUAL ASSAULT FACTS**

- The U.S. Department of Justice reported that women ages 18-24 had the "highest rate of rape and sexual assault victimizations compared to females in all other age groups."

- Only 20 percent of sexual assaults and rapes were reported to police by student victims, according to the 2014 report.

- The victim knew the offender in roughly 80 percent of rape and sexual assault cases examined.

Johnson also said that she was glad to learn more about steps that are being taken to combat sexual assault and to better assist those who have experienced it.

"I like the fact that it seems a fire has been lit," Johnson said. "So this (event) was definitely positive. I just hate that it got this far before that fire was lit."
Marchers honor memory of late student

Family of Megan Rondini has filed wrongful death suit

By Stephanie Taylor
Staff Writer

About 60 people gathered Friday evening at DCH Regional Medical Center, where they began a march down University Boulevard through the University of Alabama campus and downtown Tuscaloosa in memory of Megan Rondini.

Rondini was a 20-year-old University of Alabama student in 2015 when she told police she was raped by T.J. Bunn, who had offered her a ride from Innisfree Pub on University Boulevard. Investigators said they didn’t have evidence to prove a sexual assault occurred, and no charges were filed. Bunn, then 34, has denied the rape allegation. Rondini moved to her home state of Texas, where a doctor diagnosed her with post-traumatic stress disorder months before she hanged herself in the bathroom of her apartment.

Robyn and Russ Yetter, Rondini’s aunt and uncle from Texas, spoke at the vigil on behalf of their family.

“We are a tribe, a very strong, connected family,” Robyn said. “And this has just rocked us. We are strong, and Megan had that strong upbringing as well. She had a very strong sense of right and wrong.”

Rondini’s family believes she was failed by the justice system, health providers and the University of Alabama. Her parents, Michael and Cindy Rondini, filed a wrongful death lawsuit in July that is pending in federal court.

Bunn’s attorney, Ivey Gilmore, issued a statement before the vigil, saying “the facts show conclusively that no sexual assault took place” and “the demonstration

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was motivated by an inaccurate and false presentation of the facts."

Her supporters, many of them members of a Facebook group called "Justice for Megan Rondini," organized the vigil Friday that traveled down University Boulevard past the UA President's Mansion, Innisfree and S.T. Bunn Construction, owned by Bunn's father and uncle. The group continued to downtown Tuscaloosa, where they ended the vigil on the lawn of the Tuscaloosa County Courthouse. They spoke out about preventing sexual assault and improving treatment options for those who report it.

Robyn Yetter said that she is encouraged by the proposed Megan Rondini Act, a bill introduced in Congress that would require hospitals to have sexual assault forensic nurses on duty 24/7, or have a plan in place to transport victims to another nearby facility staffed with one.

"There's going to be change. I know there's going to be change," she said. "Megan is not going to be forgotten."

The marchers wore shirts that read "Justice for Megan" and "Have Courage and Be Kind," which Robyn Yetter said was her niece's motto.

The group stopped in front of the President's Mansion and sang "Lean on Me," which Cindy Rondini told organizers was her daughter's favorite song. They ended at the courthouse around 8 p.m.
Game day in Tuscaloosa takes lots of planning, people, and dedication

By Terrin Waack
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

Saying there’s no way to describe it is a cop-out.
Game day in Tuscaloosa is a number of things. It’s saying “Roll Tide” to a complete stranger. It’s dressing up future Alabama fans in mini Crimson Tide No. 16 jerseys. It’s the older folks sharing stories of the Paul W. “Bear” Bryant glory days, while the younger generation argues Nick Saban is better.

It’s hundreds of thousands of people coming together for one event, and not all of them are there for a good time. Many are for work.

A game at Bryant-Denny Stadium is a massive undertaking. Countless hours by an army of workers go into staging each event. As Alabama plays its home opener Saturday against Fresno State, there’s a look at all that goes into a UA home contest.

“The amount of planning it takes to get everything done really is surprising to me,” said Brandon Sevedge, Alabama’s assistant athletic director of facilities. “It’s probably underestimated.”

BEFORE THE GAME

Preparation begins when the rooster crows.

By 6 a.m., Alabama’s game-day operations staff is on campus. It sets up everything parking- and traffic-related, which includes the 150 signs, 400 barricades and 2,000 traffic cones posted around Tuscaloosa. The goal is to make transportation as easy as possible.

“The biggest thing you want is for the fans to have a positive experience when they get here,” said Nick Frenz, associate director of event management and transportation. “Obviously once they’re in the gates at the stadium, we know they’re going to have a blast.”

Facility workers are also starting their day at this point. They arrive at Bryant-Denny six hours before the gates open. All of the larger tasks, such as painting and servicing windows, were done over the summer. Sevedge said there’s really not a whole lot to do on game day itself, but that’s him being humble.
Here’s everything the staff double-checks: that the 643 toilet paper dispensers, 650 paper towel dispensers, and 700 soap dispensers are full; the 47 permanent and 12 semi-permanent concession stands are ready with equipment; the eight water and nine cooling stations are set out; the 18,000 red, chair-back seats are all operable and wiped down. Not a whole lot, right? Divide and conquer. Bryant-Denny is 975,000 square feet. The facility and cleaning crew, which is normally around 250 to 300 people, breaks that up into eight sections to make sure everything gets done in an orderly fashion.

Meanwhile, the Tuscaloosa Police Department stations officers inside and outside the stadium and all around town, both in and out of uniform. Other law enforcement officers are also brought in, from departments including the Tuscaloosa County Sheriff’s Office and Northport Police Department, numbers and assignments are never disclosed for safety reasons.

“IT’s all hands on deck for during the football season,” TPD Lt. Teena Richardson said.

Soon enough, the tailgating begins. Thank-fully for the game-day staff, UA partnered with Tailgate Guys to handle rental packages, setup and breakdown. The Quad and Presidential Park are managed by the outside contractor.

Police monitor the surrounding festivities. Open containers are allowed before and during the game. The Strip is a hot spot.

“In the spirit of the game, they’re enjoying themselves,” Richardson said. “As long as they’re not causing a problem for themselves or anyone else, we pretty much leave them alone.”

**DURING THE GAME**

Everyone working takes a sigh of relief: so far, so good.

By kickoff, roads have been closed for the past three hours. Fans are in the stadium and the focus finally turns toward the field. The game-day staff is still working, but it’s more of a roaming period.

“I like interacting with fans and seeing their excitement to come into the stadium and enjoy the experience of an Alabama game day,” Sevedge said. “That’s what I enjoy the most.”

Outside, the Quad simmers down. Fans can watch at their tailgate, as electricity is provided. When it rains, however, it can be turned off. If there is a lightning strike within 10 miles, buildings on campus will be opened and the Quad will be cleared.

“We have to cut it off and fans sometimes think that’s not like that,” Frenz said. “But to keep it safe for everybody, those are things that have to happen.”

Among all the groups managing game-day, safety is always a priority. That, and ensuring everyone is having a good time. Those are the two constants throughout the years.

“Game day has pretty much always been game day,” said Richardson, who has been with TPD for 25 years and worked game days for about a decade now, “I know officers that were here long before I came and you hear them talk about working Alabama football. It has grown over the years, but it’s pretty much the same.”

Bryant-Denny opened in 1929 and underwent its seventh expansion in 2010. With an official capacity of 101,821 people, it ranks among the nation’s top-10 largest on-campus football stadiums. It has filled up 45 times.

A little over a week ago, Alabama’s head coach, Saban, touted Bryant-Denny as his favorite venue, emphasizing that he was “not saying this to be a homer.”

“It’s because everybody’s for you,” Saban said this week. “That’s what makes it different. I love having the support of our fans. I love the tradition films that we show before the games. I love the passion, the energy and enthusiasm.”

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AFTER THE GAME

As soon as the game clock runs out, a timer begins.

By noon on Sunday, order should be completely restored in Tuscaloosa. Monday is a hard deadline.

At the whistle, Bryant-Denny is a mess and needs to be completely cleaned out. That starts immediately.

"It’s difficult, but I wouldn’t say it’s the hardest," Sevedge said. "The reason it’s hard is when the stadium is full and the concourses are full with people, it’s hard to get stuff in and out, period."

Three of the four spirals have trash chutes, which helps.

Campus, once all the tailgaters are gone, isn’t any easier.

"We stay as long as we can into that early morning to clean," Frenz said. "We’ll go home, take a break and then come right back out."

Still, the worst part isn’t the cleaning: it’s safely getting everyone to his or her next destination. Traffic is even more of a fiasco after the game than before. Directing people is stressful.

Depending on the outcome, people can also get feisty.

"You always have someone who likes to stress their frustration in a lot of different ways," Richardson said. "That’s why we’re out there and doing what we do, to make sure no one gets hurt."

Alcohol doesn’t help.

But police say they aren’t out to get people: They want everyone to have fun but also be safe. If someone needs a cab called, they’ll even do it for the person. All they ask is cooperation.

In fact, now there is a designated area for ride-sharing services, such as Uber, Lyft, cafes, etc. It is near Friedman Hall on West 4th Street by Presidential Park. The university is trying to make game day as easy and organized as possible.

"We know this is a very big deal in the state and for Alabama fans in general," Frenz said. "We want that to be a positive experience for them."

The workers — facilities, operations and law enforcement — are the unsung heroes of game day. They do everything they can to make Saturdays go off without a hitch. It’s a lot of work.

At the end of the day, everything comes full circle.

"You see them when they come back to their cars or when they come back to their designated areas," Richardson said. "You see their expressions, you talk with them, and you know."

The job is done.
New UA diversity officer promotes inclusivity

By Camille Studebaker | Staff Reporter

After uprooting her life and moving cross-country from snowy Lafayette, Indiana to the humid Tuscaloosa, Alabama, G. Christine Taylor became the first vice president and associate provost for diversity, equity and inclusion at The University of Alabama last month.

Taylor has served nearly six years in a similar role at Purdue University. She brings over 20 years of experience seeing campuses work on some of these issues. She said that in most of her professional experiences she was the first woman, first person of color or the youngest person.

"What that has meant is that I have had an astute understanding of what it means to be on the outside of an organization, and I know how much a better organization is when all of the members are included in the process," Taylor said.

Taylor started her career in broadcasting, but when she went to graduate school she became particularly interested in what happens to students in the years they are in college.

"I've got a real passion for making sure that we prepare you for the next phase of your life," she said.

After taking time to experience The University of Alabama's campus, Taylor said one of the things that she has noticed at the University is that there are several programs. There are many activities happening on campus that she thinks are wonderful, but they could be strengthened if they were all tied together in a way that allows the University to maximize its resources.

"So one of my goals for this year really is to understand the campus much better and find ways to tie together all of our initiatives and our efforts so that we can absolutely maximize the investment that is being made, whether it's dollar investment or people investment," Taylor said, "and in that it then ends up having the largest impact possible on the campus."

This position makes important all of the things we've been talking about.

- Kevin Whitaker

In the future, Taylor said that she wants to accomplish four major things for The University of Alabama. One is that she wants to diversify the number of faculty and staff that come to the University and retain them because that is an essential part of diversifying the populace across the nation.

Secondly, she said she wants to increase the number of underrepresented historically marginalized students that come to the University, retain them and help them graduate.

"We want to make sure that everybody who comes here, I don't care where they come from - Dallas, Houston, New York, wherever - knows here with a sense and awareness of the importance of diversity and inclusion," Taylor said.

In a conversation she had with a recruiter, Taylor was told that beyond having the necessary skills, students can best prepare themselves for a career by being able to work with people who are different from them and manage with groups that are different.

Taylor said that this is something that needs to be practiced, and that the University is a great place to do that.

"I want to make sure that we as a campus are preparing our students above everybody else to have the skillset to work competently in an increasingly diverse global environment which they're going to live," she said.

Lastly, Taylor said campus needs to be a place where faculty, staff and students thrive, not just survive.

Taylor is excited due to what she sees as the University's commitment to the same goals.

Coming to Alabama, she knew diversity work needed leadership support within the institution in order to be successful. She said it needed to be a priority of the president and provost in order to happen. Taylor said the University's job description for her position demonstrated how committed the University is to diversity and inclusion.

She said that she is also excited about Alabama's affiliation with football national championships, as well as the warmer weather, which she prefers to Indiana winters. In addition to these perks, she was energized by the students she had the opportunity to engage with when she first visited.

"You've got students, I see are very focused on their classwork, but they're also focused on what's happening on campus and that's a good sign," she said.

I've got a real passion for making sure that we prepare you for the next phase of your life.

- G. Christine Taylor

The search for Taylor's position took about a year, but Monica Watts, associate vice president for strategic communications, said the process was efficient.

She said she thinks the 15-person search committee process used was a good one because it worked very closely with the search firm used, the Desir Group, allowing excellent input from faculty and staff across the University as well as student input.

"And it provided an opportunity to have national outreach to recruit the best candidates for the position," Watts said.

Kevin Whitaker, executive vice president and provost, said Taylor will play an important role in the future of the University.

"This position) makes important all of the things we've been talking about," Whitaker said, "To have Dr. Taylor here shows the commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. And that's not to say they weren't important before, but I think it underscores how important they are. So, having her here, having her interact with students, faculty and staff are a variety of different efforts."

"To Whitaker, Taylor's experience makes her a great fit for the position.

"This is an inaugural position for this campus, so someone that has had that experience that Taylor has and that knowledge is very beneficial," Whitaker said, "It's just going to make, in my opinion, a great place even better."

MORE INFORMATION

With over 25 years of experience, G. Christine Taylor brings a significant amount of leadership to the table.

As the Vice President and Associate Provost for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for the University, Taylor will assist in fostering an accepting campus for all students.
New UA diversity chief sets goals

Boosting inclusion is the top objective

By Ed Enoeh
Staff Writer

G. Christine Taylor, the University of Alabama's vice president and associate provost for diversity, equity and inclusion, is about a month into her new role as the Capstone's first chief diversity officer.

Taylor, who held a similar role previously at other campuses including Purdue University, joined the administration this fall after being hired in the summer. She is tasked with establishing the new Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion as well as developing the campus' strategic diversity plan. She sat down with The Tuscaloosa News to discuss her new role and goals.

How did your experience as a diversity officer elsewhere inform your approach?

A lot of it is driven, in part, by what the institution perceives to be its most important issues related to diversity and inclusion. The first two campuses (where she worked in diversity initiatives), it really did focus a lot on increasing the number of diverse students attending the institution. By the time I got to Purdue, it was a much larger, encompassing way of thinking about issues related to diversity and inclusion. That was a real positive because, to really move the campus forward, you have to look at all aspects, all sectors of the campus. I kind of often think about it like technology because this issue is something that touches every part of the institution. When I think about where we want to be institutionally, I want us to have an office that meets some of the primary metrics that we might identify for the campus.

The ones I am going to offer you now are ones, if you See GOALS, B3
GOALS

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look at anybody's mission statement across the country, you are going to find. How do you increase and maintain the diversity of the faculty? How do you increase and maintain and graduate the diversity of the student body? How do you make sure all of the faculty and staff and students have cultural competencies? And, finally, how do you make sure your campus climate is one that everybody feels like they can thrive and not merely survive?

So you have climate and competencies, you have the numerical presence of different constituents and not just presence but where do they go. How many faculty move to the next level? All of those are parts and pieces. We need different infrastructure to help all of campus move forward.

How will the university's commitment to diversity be implemented in practice?

The first thing you have got to do is look at your data and assess where you are. I am really big on the data. Second, you have really got to understand what has led you to the place you are in. What are the reasons you have not been successful in yielding the diversity, perhaps, you wanted in your first-year class? And once you know all those pieces, it is easier to put together a plan to say, "This is how we are moving toward success." But you have to understand the backside of this. It's not just saying "I wish we had" ... but you have got to understand who are your competitors, what might be the barriers, perceived or real, that keep folks from coming this way, and deal with those pieces.

How will the office be staffed in terms of personnel and resources?

There will be other staff that will be put in place to make that happen. One of the big pieces we are working on now is a report that the president or provost had done, which is a diversity mapping project, which will give us a better understanding of what is happening on campus. But the work cannot be done by one person; it can't be done, particularly, for a campus this size.

That would be like saying (UA football coach Nick) Saban could take us to the finals without a team. It doesn't happen.

Is there a timeline for the strategic plan for diversity?

Not definitively. But I would like to mention that sometime in the spring semester we might be a little closer to that. Again, a big piece of that is going to be seeing what that diversity map tells us about where we are. That really saves a lot of time for me. I will still be having conversations with different groups and different constituencies on campus. Again, it does give us more data about where we are.

(The diversity mapping) is going to be completed and a campus conversation is going to be held on the second of October.

What are your priorities right now?

By the end of the fall semester, I want to have participated in a number of listening sessions and have a better idea of how we are going to build out the area ... and really have an opportunity to prioritize the things that the mapping reveals to us and really get a better sense of where to start first.

My first piece is to really make sure I understand all the pieces that are here and find ways to fundamentally start tying those together. There are some fabulous efforts that are happening

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right now, but they need to be elevated so we all know when different events are happening on campus related to diversity and inclusion.

**What is your vision for your role here?**

Let me answer it with an outcome. The outcome is, that when commencement happens, that all of our students leave here more prepared than everybody else’s students to operate in an increasingly diverse and global society. That is my legacy. That is what I am shooting for: The students that come out of the University of Alabama are more than ready. Because what we are hearing from the majority of employers is that they need students that come to the table with cultural competencies. So here is an example. Once I did a program where I had a bunch of major employers come in and talk about what they were looking for with students. One of the gentlemen said to one of the students, “Listen, we will hire you because we know the quality of the curriculum of what you are studying, and we know what that means. But your ability to move up in our company is going to be based on how well you can work with groups that are not like you.”

So to me, it is to our advantage to prepare our students to do that. And I want to be known as the campus that does it better than anybody else.

**Backs up, what is the role of the vice presidency?**

We are at a point now that the campus is looking to really increase the number of research faculty and how might this area support and assist the different colleges in their recruitment initiatives and talking about best practices and connecting them with different organizations so we can all be very, very assertive in our recruitment of excellent candidates here to the campus.

When we think about what it means to be a supervisor, how does one’s knowledge about issues of diversity and inclusion impact how effective you are as a supervisor? So we can take a look at that in terms of the human resources aspect of campus. We will take a look at what it means for students to be here. Let’s talk about how many people of color are in the freshman class. That has some implications around what we are doing with our recruiting, what we are doing relative to yield initiatives. So I offer those as some example of lots of different ways this area will be connected to other areas on campus.

If you go back to those four pieces...there are lots of steps there. What have we got to do—all those pieces, when you pull those apart, there are many opportunities to be connected across campus. One thing I will say is a lot of people assume just because you have a chief diversity officer, now life is going to change. That is not true. I will be co-laboring with others. I will be presenting the true north, but we have to all collectively be doing this work.

**What about interpersonal engagement with people. How is that important to this role?**

That is really essential. Diversity work is about people. So you need data, you need best practices, you need research, but it is about people. It is about hearing their stories. It is about understanding their experiences, so you have got to be a relational person to get that done.

**Is this an important benchmark? I believe it probably was for the students. It was an important benchmark for them because the university was saying, “Wow, we are not just talking about this, but in fact, it is very important for us as an institution, not for that group, but for us as an institution.” My work, I believe, is for all the students here at the University of Alabama. So it is important to have somebody. Yeah, it is, but part of what I think happens—this probably happens also with our vice president of student affairs—many times you end up being a translator, so you hear people’s perspective and you are able to bring it to the fore and say “OK, please understand this.” Let’s talk about how this impacts people in a particular way. You are able to get a particular perspective. And I think people need to feel safe and have a person who understands that and will advocate when necessary.

One of the things I say to the students—and this is something that if you follow the research not only from the experiences of students of color at predominantly white
institutions — there is often this issue of isolation. You might be the only student of color in a lecture hall of 300. That can be — not always — that can be isolating. I encourage those students to own their seat and be a full participant in what it means to be a University of Alabama student. I think in this area you want to be both supportive of students, but also want them to come here and maximize because this is a great institution. You have got to come here and not stay on the sides.

I use this analogy because I used to live in Houston a number of years ago. They had the major interstate, but they also had these side roads. They run parallel to the interstate. It would take you longer to get where you are going because you were on this side street. Many of the spaces like (intercultural diversity) Center end up being support spaces. But I am interested in getting students into the main of the campus because that benefits everybody.

Yeah, you want things that help you identify ... I am sure there are jogger clubs here or weight-lifting clubs here, so everybody wants to do something that is of interest to them, but I also want to make sure they maximize what it means to be at a university like this. That you are part of the student government, that you are part of the newspaper. Whatever opportunity that a student has that you feel that is an area of interest for you, that you move forward and toward that.

How did you get involved in university administration, particularly diversity work?

My mother once told me, "I think you have been preparing for this for your entire life," because I was one of five children in my hometown that integrated my elementary school. First grade, Five years old. That's me.

So I have been on this path since then. My first career was in broadcast media. That's not a place there are lots of women or lots of people of color. So I spent a whole lot of time being the first and/or only there.

I went back to grad school, I received a fellowship to a graduate program ... and then I stayed for a Ph.D. and I really liked learning. But I also had a chance there to get involved in a pretty progressive campus, and that is where I got really intrigued by what was happening to young people in that four to five-year span they would be an undergraduate.

I had some incredible opportunities to do some incredible initiatives that made substantial difference on the campus, and that is where my passion for this type of work originated when I was working at Ohio University. The board of trustees at the time was very concerned about the fact that we weren't seeing more diversity in the first-year student body, and I even talked to the vice president who I was working with, the vice president of financial administration — it was an odd kind of setup — and I said, "I have some ideas that I would like to flesh out and share with you." He looked at it and said "It sounds great" and when the board members heard the plan, he said, "I want you to present this to the board." So presented to the board, and they gave me the space and the resources to make it work. And we were able to make a substantial difference in our incoming class. But why could we do it? For some time, I had been studying that class, and I knew what our competitors were doing in the state. I understood the data, I had been following the trend of the data, so when I had a chance to go, we were able to make a real difference on the campus.

I would say, in short, I tend to agree with my mama. I have been preparing for this my entire life, and I know what it means to have people from all walks of life who are committed to the issues. I think the human aspects of diversity, what a difference they make, and I have been blessed my entire life with colleagues that came from all different parts of the world, all different races, all different sexual orientations, who want to make higher education a better experience, and that has been very rewarding to me because I have students who come back years later and say, "I finally get it." Or the student who did not believe they had an opportunity, but, because there was a group of folks cheering them on, "You can do this, you can do this," send me a message that says, "Dr. Taylor, I am now an engineer."
Our View: UA should protect Dreamers

On Monday, both President Donald Trump and Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced the end of the Deferred Action for Child Arrivals policy, popularly known as DACA. This Obama-era protection allowed immigrants brought into the United States as children to live and work without the threat of deportation constantly looming over their heads. The end to the program now puts the onus on Congress to either continue the program or pass substantial immigration reform that would create an easier path to citizenship. If they do not reach a legislative solution, up to 800,000 young people stand at risk of being torn away from the only home they have ever known. Trump’s rollout of this repeal has been met with his usual incoherence, and even though he has promised to “revisit the issue!” should Congress not pass any legislation, most immigrants are not hopeful with their fate left in Trump’s hands.

It is a moral imperative that Congress develop some sort of legislative solution so that hundreds of thousands of people are not forcefully deported from a country founded to be a refuge for huddled masses. Allowing DACA to continue is a good first step, but ultimately, the extremely complicated nature of our immigration system needs to be addressed and rectified. More resources need to be devoted not to expanding and arming ICE, as Trump has done, but instead, to expanding the institutions and avenues that allow immigrants to achieve citizenship.

Additionally, as Alabamians, we need to recognize the fact that it was officials from our state that threatened DACA in the first place and then respond appropriately. Our attorney general, Steve Marshall, was one of 12 state legal advisers who threatened to sue for an immediate end to the program if Trump did not act to stop it. We need to put pressure on our state officials and let them know that we do not support Alabama being the driving force behind the removal of hard-working, tax-paying individuals who add so much to our state’s economy and cultural richness.

We must think of the immigrant students whose education here at UA is threatened by DACA’s end. Universities all across the nation have spoken out against the cruelty of forcing students to give up their dreams of a degree simply because of the happenstance of their birthplace. The University of Alabama is not one of those institutions. In an official statement, the University vowed to “work closely with those potentially impacted” and stated that they “support legislative solutions that will allow impacted students to remain valued members of our university communities.” Though the statement is no doubt well-meaning, it does not go far enough. Working closely with students and supporting possible legislative solutions are not the same as actually vowing to protect your students from being the victims of an immoral mass deportation.

If students are threatened with deportation, the University should follow the lead of several states and sue Trump over the decision to end DACA. Though officials from the University project that the number of affected students will be “in the single digits,” even one Alabama student negatively affected by this decision is not acceptable.

It may not be normal for an educational institution to take such a strong stance against the federal government, but these are not normal times. Though it has been painted as such, the end of DACA is not a partisan issue. It is a moral one. Hundreds of thousands of young people are in need of protection from a government that has made it clear they are not welcome in this country simply because of a decision to immigrate that they did not even make themselves.

Our View represents the consensus of the CW Editorial Board.
Miss North Dakota wins crown

By Drew Taylor  
Staff Writer

Two Alabama natives competed Sunday night on the national stage in front of millions of people for the title of Miss America. Jessica Procter and Briana Kinsey were two of 51 contestants from across the United States to compete in the Miss America pageant, which was broadcast on ABC from Atlantic City. Procter, a native of Tuscaloosa, competed as Miss Alabama while Kinsey, a Hoover native, competed as Miss District of Columbia.

During the competition, Kinsey finished as third runner-up for the crown while Procter landed in the Top 10. Kinsey ultimately won a $15,000 scholarship through the pageant for her effort. Miss North Dakota Cara Mund won the crown and became Miss America 2018.

Kinsey, 24, graduated from the University of Alabama in 2015 with degrees in biology and pre-medical studies. She is currently a graduate student at American University in Washington, D.C. During her Top 15 video, Kinsey said she was interested in getting involved in pediatric medicine.

"I know that this is something that I want to do and that I am passionate about, but it was very scary at first," Kinsey said during the broadcast. During the first part of the pageant, the women competed in modeling bathing suits and evening wear. Kinsey wore a yellow dress with a gold top, citing her own personal fashion style. "I love classic lines, but I also am inspired by kW because in DC, you need a fabulous coat and all the coats she wears on scandal are absolutely stunning," Kinsey said.

Procter, 21, is a native of Tuscaloosa and graduated from Northridge High School. She is currently studying music and communications at the University of Alabama.

"It’s been such a dream of mine for so long," Procter said of wanting to become Miss America. "Walking in the Boardwalk Hall for that first day really swept over me."

For her evening wear, Procter picked a white dress, something she had envisioned for herself long before coming to Atlantic City. "I’ve always had this vision of the gown I would wear at Miss America when I got to go because I was determined to get here," Procter said. "I feel like when you see me, I wear the gown, the gown doesn’t wear me."

For her talent, Procter sang a version of “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” from the 1939 film, “The Wizard of Oz.” Procter’s parents are trained singers and are involved in the Alabama Choir School. In fact, Procter noted her father, Doff Procter, as giving her advice for how to give a compelling performance. "If you’re not picturing what you’re seeing and you’re not there, the audience won’t be there," Procter said. "See that rainbow and they will see it too.”

Kinsey also sang during the talent portion of the competition, performing BeBe Winans “Born For This.”

“I chose my song because it’s about being born for this opportunity, whatever it may be,” Kinsey said. "For me, this opportunity was the chance to perform on the Miss America stage.”

The women also answered questions posed by the judges. The first round of questions involved light subjects, such as Kinsey being asked if she would run a red light at 4 a.m. with no one around.

"My dad used to be a police officer, so secretly no, but in DC, I ride the Uber, so it’s their choice," Kinsey joked.

Referencing “Miss America” co-host Chris Harris and his association with long-running reality show “The Bachelorette,” Proctor was asked if she would part in the show if she were asked. Procter said she would not, even though she was a fan of the show. "I love watching the show, it’s really entertaining, it’s not always the b chance of staying with you end up with on ‘I Bachelor,’ looking at what happened recently with (Higgins) and Lauren (Ru nell), who are my people."

Procter said. During the second round of questions, country singer Thomas Rhett asked Kin an a more complex questi she support legis for full-cont would she support legi tion banning full-cont football in elementary high schools, given the debate on prevalence football players suffering from chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or CTE. Kinsey said she would “As someone who want to go into the medical profession, I know how important it is to keep our kids safe so that they can have a quality education and when they get to high school playing these sports, they able to do so at the best using their abilities and they not limited because t chose to play football young age,” she said.
Photo exhibit focuses on people of Selma

Free lecture, reception planned

Staff report

The public is invited to a free Wednesday night lecture at the University of Alabama by a photographer whose latest art exhibit focuses on the people of Selma.

Kathryn Mayo, a UA alumna and a native of Selma, will discuss "We Are Selma: The Selma Portrait Project" at 7 p.m. Wednesday in room 205 in the Amelia Gayle Gorgas Library.

The project began when Mayo took a sabbatical as professor of photography at Cosumnes River College in Sacramento, California. She set up a makeshift studio in Selma, where she created portraits of the city's residents and recorded interviews with her subjects.

"Selmiians live with the ghosts of their past in a way that not many people have to," Mayo wrote in her blog. "There are not many places like Selma -- places that have lived to see a Civil War battle and a civil rights battle. Not many places that have to carry those ghosts with them each day. Part of this project was taking a look at the remnants of what such a storied history can leave behind and to investigate how those wounds do heal over time and how they affect the people that

See SELMA, B5

Continued from B1

are still there."

A free public reception for "We Are Selma" will be held at 5 p.m. Thursday in the Sarah Moody Gallery of Art, 103 Garland Hall.

The exhibit will remain on display at the gallery through Sept. 29.

The gallery's hours are 9 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and 5-8 p.m. Thursdays. Admission is free.
UA will have site for ride-sharing customers, enhanced security

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

Fans can expect no major changes to the tailgating experience as the University of Alabama plays Fresno State on Saturday in the first home game of the 2017 season.
Minor changes including a new dedicated drop-off location for fans using ride-sharing services or shuttles and some security enhancements, such as larger barricades blocking closed streets and pedestrian areas. The alcohol-free tailgating area will be set up again this year at Bryce Lawn.
"The biggest thing we want is the fans to have a positive experience when they get here," said Nick Frenz, assistant director of Transportation Event Management.
Kickoff is at 2:30 p.m. CST
See CHANGES, A7

Gameday Information
On the Web: uagameday.com
Facebook: Search for UA Gameday
Twitter: Follow @uagameday
Instagram: Follow ua_gameday

Fresno State at No. 1 Alabama
When: Saturday at 2:30 p.m.
Where: Bryant-Denny Stadium
Records: Alabama 1-0, Fresno State 1-0

See next page
at Bryant-Denny Stadium.

Frenz expects fewer traffic delays from road construction and said there would be no major changes to the parking experience. The schedule for game-day parking will remain the same with lots on the Quad opening at 7 a.m. There won’t be any new road closings.

Drop-off times for tailgaters on the Quad will be from 6-8 p.m. Friday and 7-10 a.m. on Saturday for most games.

“Things like that haven’t changed at all,” Frenz said.

The university is adding a centralized location for ride-sharing transportation and shuttles near Friedman Hall on West Fourth Street by Presidential Park.

The clear bag policy that was implemented last year will be in effect this season, he said. The university will again provide clear gallon-size plastic freezer bags for fans who don’t have a clear bag.

There will be some security enhancements, such as more officers for games and more substantial barricades to block roads, he said. The barricades are in response to attacks worldwide where pedestrians were targeted.

“We do realize that there are things that aren’t as protected previously,” he said.

The university is also considering adding metal detectors at the stadium in the future, he said.

The alcohol-free tailgate on the Bryce Lawn added last year will continue to grow organically, Frenz said, as the university adds to the events as demand grows. This year, there will be autograph sessions and merchandise sold by the SUPE Store. The tailgate opens four hours before kickoff.

“We are looking to build off of our successes in 2016,” he said.

Reach Ed Enoch at ed.enoch@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0209.
Experts expect slight job growth

State to create between 25,000 and 30,000 jobs in 2017

By Ken Roberts
City Editor

Job growth in Alabama will increase slightly through the end of the year, according to economists at the University of Alabama.

The state is expected to create between 25,000 and 30,000 new jobs this year, according to the latest economic outlook from the Center for Business and Economic Research in the University of Alabama’s Culverhouse College of Commerce. That would represent a job gain of around 1.5 percent, compared to 1 percent in 2016.

The state’s main economic drivers for the second half of 2017 are transportation equipment and wood products-related manufacturing, said Ahmad IJaz, director of the center.

Other major drivers are finance and insurance, professional, scientific and technical services, administrative support and waste management, health care and social assistance, and accommodation and food services.

The forecast for Alabama’s real gross domestic product -- GDP, or the real value of total goods and services produced in the state -- stayed unchanged at about 1.9 percent in 2017, above the 1.3 percent rate of growth seen in 2016.

IJaz said the United States’ GDP is expected to grow by 2.8 percent for the second half of 2017, compared to 1.9 percent in the first half. Overall growth rate is expected to average 2.1 percent for the year as a whole.

While Alabama’s economic growth is lower than the national projections, IJaz said its rate is similar to states with similar populations. States like Texas and California account for a significant percentage of national growth, which can sometimes skew national figures, he said.

Additionally, Alabama is still feeling the transition in its manufacturing profile and a lag in population growth.

“We were, at one time, very heavy into non-durable goods manufacturing, which were labor intensive with lower wages,” IJaz said. “Now, we’re more into durable goods, and I think it’ll take some time before we see the same kind of income growth as the rest of the country.”

See GROWTH, B5
Design excellence? You’ll find it here, says Birmingham AIA

Mary Colurso
mcolurso@aia.com

The Birmingham chapter of the American Institute of Architects recently announced the recipients of its Design Awards for 2017, honoring 11 projects for their excellence.

A panel of five architects from Washington, D.C., made the selections. Winners that ranged from a Mountain Brook home to a live/work space to the Hill Student Center at UAB.

Look at the photos and you’ll see an exacting attention to detail, an admirable sense of style and the overall idea that a house — or an office, or a public building — can be beautiful as it meets the needs of its owner.

Here’s the winners announced by AIA Birmingham:

Awards of Honor:
- ADS Environmental Ceiling, Appleseed Architecture.
- High Cotton, Williams Blackstock Architects. (Also winner of a special Juror’s Award.)
- Nike showroom, Williams Blackstock Architects.
- Shingled farmhouse, Jeffrey Dungan Architects.

Awards of Merit:
- 20 Midtown, CCR Architecture & Interiors.
- Abbey Road, Nequette Architecture & Design and Jeffrey Dungan Architects.
- Lewis Communications, Williams Blackstock Architects.
- Mountain Brook home renovation, Christopher Architecture & Interiors.
- Studio Goodlight live/work, CCR Architecture & Interiors.
- UAB Hill Student Center, Herrington Architects.

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The Hill Student Center at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, designed by Herrington Architects, won an Award of Merit for excellence in design from AIA Birmingham. Sam Fentress photo

A shingled farmhouse along Shades Creek, designed by Jeffrey Dungan Architects, earned an Award of Honor, the highest level of recognition, from AIA Birmingham.

Emily Fowill and Jean Alsopp

"ADS Environmental, a wastewater management company, relocated their company from an old warehouse facility in Huntsville to a new space at Bridge Street Town Centre," says the entry for AIA Birmingham. "The new space was programmed with an open concept plan and natural lighting." Brian Moats
WHY THE TIMING IS RIGHT FOR NEW STADIUM AT THE BJCC

On Sept. 2, more than 45,000 fans came out to Legion Field to see the return of UAB Football.

It was a banner day for pride in the Blazers and for Birmingham. Clearly the revived UAB Football program has some momentum and buzz, and that’s a good thing for the Magic City, because it could lead to bigger and better things down the road for our region.

One of those things is a new stadium at the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex.

While UAB would be just one of many tenants at a new stadium, officials from the BJCC and local leaders have said the energy surrounding UAB Football’s return has created an opportunity to transform the long-discussed project from dream to reality.

But the successful return of UAB Football is just one of the reasons why many believe the timing is right to finally do what Birmingham has talked about for years: build a football venue at the BJCC.

The I-20/59 bridge project is another big factor. The controversial bridge replacement project will disrupt traffic flow on the northern side of downtown Birmingham for the foreseeable future. The worst disruption is expected to occur in late 2018, when the interstate bridges are taken offline completely for replacement.

BJCC officials are viewing those challenges as an opportunity when it comes to the stadium project, which would also disrupt the normal traffic flow. They said it would be preferable to work on the massive projects at the same time to decrease long-term disruptions.

While it would require a very aggressive schedule to finish a stadium before the bridges are expected to be completed in 2020, BJCC CEO Tad Snider said completing the most disruptive stadium construction work is a realistic goal. That would avoid having two back-to-back projects that would disrupt traffic for years.

Snider said the BJCC has been in regular discussions with ALDOT about the project and its relation to the bridge replacement work.

Beyond the bridge issue is financing.

While the exact cost of a stadium is yet to be determined, previous estimates put the figure at $174 million.

If Birmingham ultimately decides to pass on the project for now and punts it down the road as it has done in the past, that number is likely to rise due to escalating construction costs and other factors.

Officials interviewed by the Birmingham Business Journal say it’s critical to get the stadium built in conjunction with the expected renovation of the Legacy Arena, rather than making the stadium part of a second phase project. Efforts to finalize a financing plan are underway, but there is currently no timeline.

The project will certainly face critics. Many will argue stadium projects aren’t “economic winners” in the sense that the revenue they generate won’t cover their costs.

People said the same thing about Regions Field, and you could say the same about any number of public works projects that don’t generate revenue at all. But projects like Regions Field and Railroad Park, for example, have raised the quality of life for many in the area. By increasing our ability to land more marquee events, bringing in new visitors and expanding development opportunities in northern Birmingham, a stadium would do the same.

If the public and private sectors work together, there is a way to build the facility without breaking the bank of our local governments. We’ve done it before, and the timing might not be as right five years from now.
BIRMINGHAM

ProAssurance donates $1.5M to UAB School of Medicine

One of Birmingham’s corporate giants has announced a $1.5 million donation to UAB. ProAssurance has given the money to establish the ProAssurance Endowed Chair for Physician Wellness, an academic chair that will support a research team to address stress and pressure issues that physicians face.

"Physicians have always been subject to the high levels of stress from a variety of factors such as society’s expectations for successful outcomes, the threat of litigation and the effect of their professional obligations on the quality of their lives, and their families’ lives," ProAssurance Chairman and CEO Stan Starnes said. "As medicine evolves to address the changing dynamic of health care in America, we must find ways to address these pressures."

ProAssurance has also announced plans to make an additional $500,000 donation to fund initiatives to support physician wellness, as well as another donation to the UAB School of Nursing. —

Kelly Poe
He beat cancer, now Slive fighting to end it

Former SEC commissioner, now namesake of foundation, working to cure disease

Kevin Scarbinsky  kscarbinsky@al.com

It was Ed Meyerson's idea. His father had battled prostate cancer. So had his friend Mike Slive. Meyerson, a Birmingham attorney, had spent years working with UAB's Comprehensive Cancer Center, and he'd seen the success of the very public fight against breast cancer.

He wondered: "Why are we not doing the same thing for men?"

Meyerson had five more reasons to start a research foundation to attack the second-leading killer of men behind skin cancer. He has five grandsons. He doesn't want them to have to fight that same fight.

So Meyerson asked Slive if he would be willing to help. Naturally, the retired SEC commissioner said yes.

They were going to call it something like the Prostate Cancer Research Foundation of Alabama, but that sounded cold and clinical. It made more sense to put a name and face on the fight.

Who fit that bill better than the man who launched the SEC's expansion to 14 members as well as the SEC Network and oversaw the conference's growth into the powerhouse it remains today? Slive isn't just one of the most prominent and powerful men of the modern era in intercollegiate athletics. He's a prostate cancer survivor, a prostate cancer victor, himself.

Now, at his friend's urging and with his family's support, he's the namesake of the new Mike Slive Foundation for Prostate Cancer Research. The battle against a disease that affects an estimated 1 in 7 men has a powerful ally.

SEE SCARBINSKY, B3

See next page
"When Ed came to me, it felt like the right thing to do," Slive said. "The idea that I had a tough go with cancer, that I survived, it's what I would want for anyone in my position. So this gave me an opportunity to devote my retired life to something that was beyond me. I just expanded the fight for the benefit of others."

Meyerson and Slive are both former Yankees, Slive from upstate New York, Meyerson from the Bronx. When Slive moved to Birmingham, they shared a temple and a love for sports. Meyerson witnessed first-hand his friend's battle with prostate cancer. "Everyone in Birmingham knew he was fighting for his life," Meyerson said. "It takes a special person to put your life story out there for everyone to use as a role model."

Some people might want nothing more to do with a disease that took them and their family to hell and back. Slive's daughter, Anna, said her father has another side to his personality beyond his well-earned rep as her daughter Abigail's doting grandfather. Anyone who's sat across the table from him in a tough negotiation can attest.

"He's a fighter," said Anna Slive Harwood, the chief marketing officer of the Colonnade Group. "What he went through would've killed you or me. At 70-something years old, to have two major spinal surgeries, to have radiation and chemo, all within a year?" The month they launched Slive's baby, the SEC Network, in August of 2014, the commissioner was undergoing his first major spinal surgery. After a summer of unexplained pain in his midsection, he learned that his prostate cancer, first detected and treated in 1996, had returned with a vengeance, metastasizing on his spine. In his words, "The tumor was squeezing my spine."

One day, they did an MRI, which revealed the tumor. The next day, UAB's Dr. Mark Hadley was removing as much of the tumor as possible while preserving Slive's ability to walk by inserting two titanium rods in his back. That was just the beginning of Slive's battle. He underwent radiation, then participated in a clinical trial involving two FDA-approved chemotherapy drugs. His daughter described it as a "horrible" ordeal for her dad, her mom, Liz, and the entire family. It fuels their desire to use the foundation primarily to fund research into a disease that men like to discuss less than they like to ask for directions.

Anna Slive Harwood and her husband, Judd, serve on the foundation's board along with Slive, Meyerson and other heavy hitters. "Prostate cancer is where breast cancer was 25 years ago," Anna Slive Harwood said. "People don't talk about it. Men really don't want to talk about it. One of our objectives is to change that dialogue."

The work has already begun. The foundation has two presenting sponsors in Regions Bank and Medical Properties Trust. There's a website at www.mikeslivefoundation.org. There will be a launch party Thursday Sept. 14 at the Alys Stephens Center on the UAB campus. The SEC Network's Paul Finebaum, a personal friend of Slive's, will serve as MC, and Slive will say a few words. Dignitaries such as the athletics directors and basketball coaches at UAB, Alabama and Auburn are expected to attend. Anna Slive Harwood said her dad "never complained" during his fight, although "he did demand they get the SEC Network into UAB Hospital" during his recovery from his first surgery.

"Anna's right," Slive said. "I never felt put upon. I never felt, 'Why me?' I never had any doubts I would win the fight. That's what you learn from being in athletics all your life." The Slive family learned something from that harrowing experience. The more Slive told people he had prostate cancer, the more people shared their own personal and family experiences with the disease.

"It demystified it," his daughter said.

That's another part of the mission of the Mike Slive Foundation for Prostate Cancer Research. To demystify it. To take it out of the shadows. To beat it with research so young men today, such as Meyerson's five grandsons, never have to deal with it later in life.

Slive and his daughter said they're in this fight for the long haul. "This is just the beginning," Anna Slive Harwood said, sharing the foundation's mission and slogan. "The beginning of the end of prostate cancer."
What’s the status of the stadium project at the BJCC?

On Sept. 2, the revived University of Alabama at Birmingham football program will return to Legion Field for the first time since 2014. But the aging stadium may not be the Blazers’ long-term home.

Conversations are still ongoing about building a new stadium at the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex that could serve as a home for UAB Football, the Magic City Classic, the Birmingham Bowl and a number of other nonfootball events.

As we previously reported, the Birmingham-Jefferson Civic Center Authority engaged Populous, an Arizona-based architecture firm, to update its master plan. Along with a major renovation of the Legacy Arena and the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex, the updated plan also included concepts for a new football stadium.

Tad Snider, executive director and CEO of the BICC, said his organization has continued to work with stakeholders, including the city of Birmingham, Jefferson County and the private sector about a stadium and what a financing plan would look like.

“We’ve made a lot of progress toward that,” Snider said. “I think it’s top of mind for everyone to try to get this deal put together sooner rather than later. That’s what we’re working toward — trying to finalize that funding model.”

Snider said it’s important to get the BICC renovation and the stadium completed at one time, rather than separating them into multiple phases from a funding standpoint.

One reason is the Alabama Department of Transportation’s massive project to replace the Interstate 20-59 bridges downtown.

Snider said building the stadium or making major renovations to the BICC concurrently with the bridge replacement project could offer a benefit.

“If there’s an opportunity to complete some of these things within that same time window, where we don’t come out of the impact of road construction and undergo more construction — if there’s a way to make those things align — that’s a goal,” Snider said.

While Snider said it would probably be an aggressive goal to complete a new stadium prior to the completion of the bridge project, he said completing both projects in 2020 could offer a benefit.

He said the BICC has been in contact with ALDOT about the potential stadium project and how it would relate to the bridge project.

The new downtown bridges are currently estimated to be completed in 2020, but Snider said there is not currently a timeline for when a stadium could be completed.

Much of the timeline will be dictated on finalizing the financial plan.

One early estimate put the cost of a 50,000- to 55,000-seat, open-air stadium at $174 million, while Legacy Arena renovations would cost $123 million.

The cost for the project could change depending on what type of stadium facility is ultimately pursued. There has been public discussion of both open-air and covered options from local elected officials.

Snider said the funding model will speak to the type of facility that ultimately moves forward.

From the BICC’s perspective, Snider said a municipal bond offering is a likely funding approach.

“We’re still trying to figure out the best way to structure that debt piece to get the maximum yield for the amount of pledged revenues,” Snider said.

A naming rights deal is another potential source of funding. Snider said the BICC has a good idea about revenue potential from a naming rights sponsor, but said actual discussions with potential sponsors would likely intensely down the road.

Both the city of Birmingham and Jefferson County are widely expected to participate in the project.

Ultimately, Snider said having a stadium at the site could be transformative for both the BICC and the surrounding areas.

On the events front, he said the stadium would have an impact that stretches beyond football games.

He said it would open up Birmingham to host events like outdoor MotoCross, monster trucks and extreme sports.

But beyond events, Snider said the project could boost development opportunities in the surrounding areas, such as the potential redevelopment of the former Carraway Hospital. A stadium could also pave the way for another phase of the Uptown entertainment district that would add additional retail space.

“Anything that begins to develop further on the north side of the interstate ties it much more cohesively with the rest of downtown,” Snider said.

-Ty West
Climate Change Unlikely to Top Democratic Issues in 2018 Elections

By: Dan Perkins

This is possibly the worst summer box office at the movies for Hollywood, perhaps in history.

With numbers down over 70 percent, The New York Times declared Al Gore, starring in “An Inconvenient Sequel,” “one of the most compelling characters” in this summer’s movie lineup. The Independent Sentinel reported on August 7, “Al Gore’s Documentary Bombs! An Emoji Toon Movie Makes 25 Times More!” The documentary grossed less than $1,000,000 the first week after initially opening in only four cities. After five weeks Box Office Mojo showed that it was playing on 127 screens, down 327 the previous week. Apparently, even the global warming fanatics are not going to see the movie. Can it be so terrible?

The Washington Times reported on August 22, “It was a tough weekend for Al Gore. Not only did ‘An Inconvenient Sequel’ continue its nosedive at the box office, but the climate change documentary also drew a scathing rebuttal from a leading climate scientist. As stated above, by the fifth week, it was not only down to 127 screens, but it was averaging only $661 per screen.”

The critics came out and they were not just movie critics, but reputable scientists. Climatologist Roy W. Spencer, the principal research scientist at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, released an 81-page e-book on Amazon titled “An Inconvenient Deception: How Al Gore Distorts Climate Science and Energy Policy.” Mr. Spencer went on to say, “After viewing Gore’s most recent movie, ‘An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power,’ and after reading the book version of the movie, I was more than a little astounded.” Mr. Spencer said on his blog, Global Warming, “The new movie and book are chock-full of bad science, bad policy, and factual errors.”

Science Daily reported as far back as April 19, 2011, that “Most Americans now agree that climate change is occurring. But many still disagree on why, with opinions about the cause of climate change defined by political party, not scientific understanding.” This was according to new research from the Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire.

We were all manipulated about the melting of the polar ice caps and polar bears dying. Look at this image below from NASA of the polar ice caps between 2012 and 2014. Do you see something different rather than the rhetoric coming from the climate change crowd? Remember Mr. Gore’s prediction that the polar ice would be gone by 2013? Look again and see if you can figure out the truth in size of the polar ice cap?

It seems to me that just the opposite has happened and the Democrats can’t explain why. More and more Americans have come to understand that climates have always changed. If you live north of the Mason-Dixon line, the southern border of the State of Pennsylvania, you know the weather changes every year, and it always has as long as you have lived. Your simple guess is that it will continue to change; some years will have more rain or snow or heat or cold. The lack of climate changes not meeting the degrading forecasts from people like Al Gore, who are sure man is causing the problem, are finding their followers dropping by the wayside. This story has run out of gas. There are people in America who are probably working on new technologies that

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may well eliminate all CO2 emissions. Don’t look for climate change to be high on the Democratic list of issues for the 2018 mid-term elections. The global warming fanatics will be very angry with the party over its abandoning of the issue. But there is more to this hoax on the people of the world.

The part of the issue that is more damaging to the global warming cause is the polar bear and its possible extinction. Susan J. Crockford, of the Department of Anthropology, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, published a report on March 2, 2017, that said, “Both assessments predicted that significant population declines of polar bears would result by mid-century as a consequence of the summer sea ice extent rapidly reaching 3-5 m/km2 on a regular basis: the IUCN predicted a >30% decline in total population, while the USFWS predicted the global population would decline by 67 percent (including total extirpation of ten sub-populations within two vulnerable ecoregions).” She went on to say, “As a consequence, the hypothesis that repeated summer sea ice levels of below 5 m/km2 will cause significant population declines in polar bears is rejected, a result that indicates the ESA and IUCN judgments to list polar bears as threatened based on future risks of habitat loss were scientifically unfounded.”

At least two generations of children in America and around the world have been falsely brainwashed to believe that the polar bear will disappear in their lifetime. The ostensible reason for the loss of the polar ice cap and in turn the eradication of the polar bears has been CO2 emissions. These children will spend the rest of their lives living with an ingrained lie that they will not be able to reject as false. Teachers will continue to spew this false science, because the falsehood that their parents are responsible for the death of the polar bear and so will they if we don’t stop climate change now.

I find it interesting that with the United States withdrawing from the Paris Accord and the global warming movement losing trillions of dollars in funding from the United States that concern in that area is waning no other nation has stepped up to take over the American funding. We have the responsibility to reverse these falsehoods by teaching our children, regardless of their age, the truth. Unfortunately, the Democratic Party will not do this and the lie continues. The Democratic Party owes the world an apology for its deception, but as the old saying goes, “Hell will have to freeze over first” before the Climate Change people admit they were wrong.
Women’s equality program an inspirational slam dunk

By: Amy Guckeen Tolson

When she heard the words, “You’re not going to be able to play here,” Andrea Lemmond knew she had a choice to make – give up or fight harder.

The University of Alabama in Huntsville women’s basketball head coach chose to fight harder.

“I always say you’ve got to figure out what you want. You’ve got to figure out how bad you want it. And then you’ve got to fight for it, relentlessly,” Lemmond said. “There may be a few people along the way that don’t believe in you or don’t believe right away – make ‘em a believer.”

Lemmond shared her triumphs and struggles as a women’s basketball player and coach as the keynote speaker for the Team Redstone Women’s Equality Day observance Aug. 30 at Bob Jones Auditorium. The event paid tribute to the accomplishments American women have made, while celebrating the fact that in the Army, there are no limits to what women can do.

“Women make up 51 percent of the American population – 51 percent,” said Col. Mark Olin, commander of the 2nd Recruiting Brigade, and host of the observance. “What society wouldn’t have the wisdom to tap into the potential of 51 percent of its people? American women have proven time and time again that they are the most dynamic, the most stalwart, the most innovative leaders in every field and endeavor. It just makes sense that we tap into and unlock the full potential of American women.”

Lemmond was 12 when she was handed a basketball and encouraged to play. While that first day she felt awkward on the court, as she grappled with feet that she felt were too big for her body, the sport quickly became her dream, a dream she was excited to see realized as a student at Samford University.

The night before her first collegiate basketball game at the University of Alabama, over the moon with the opportunity to play college ball, during one of the last plays of practice Lemmond tore her ACL and was out for the season. Seven games into her second season at Samford she tore her other ACL. Over the course of the some 28 games and 1,000 minutes of play her third season, Lemmond only saw five minutes of action.

Having never missed a single game before joining the Bulldogs, Lemmond was not accustomed to injury or hardship on the court. And she never imagined that she’d hear the words from her coaches at the end of her third season – she wasn’t good enough, she was losing her athletic scholarship for her senior year, and she had to choose whether or not she wanted to remain on the team.

Not a quitter, Lemmond chose to stay on the team, and in her fourth season, in a game against Jacksonville University, with several injured teammates out, found herself back on the court. “Ready” and “hungry,” the team not only went on to win the game, but Lemmond had her first collegiate career double-double. The next day she found out her fifth year would in fact be paid

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for, a season that saw the team break records for the school, and that her coaches were impressed with her tenacity and perseverance.

After graduation, Lemmond went on to coach at Samford, as well as Huntingdon College in Montgomery, before joining UAH. This fall marks her fourth season leading the Chargers.

“You have to surround yourself with those that believe in you, that love you, that encourage you, that push you to never quit, but you can’t forget about the ones who maybe didn’t see it right away, didn’t believe right away, because those are the ones that are going to light a fire under you,” she said. “Those are the ones that are going to push you to work harder than you’ve ever worked before to accomplish the things that you set out to accomplish in the first place.”

In addition to remarks from Lemmond, the observance included elementary school student Renae Graves singing “Imagine,” and recognition of the winners of the essay and display contests. Essay winners included Sylvesta Lee, first place; Sgt. 1st Class Tawana Young, second; and Jennifer Chrissis, third. The Corps of Engineers, Huntsville Center, took first place in the display contest, with the Army Contracting Command coming in second, and the Space and Missile Defense Command in third.

As he closed the observance, Olin pointed to the courage that Lemmond spoke of in her remarks, and how it plays a role in continuing to strive for equality for all.

“It’s not the women in our lives or in our nation who need to show the courage,” Olin said. “They’ve been doing that since we stepped off the boat at Plymouth and Jamestown. It’s the rest of us that need to show courage to change how we think and change how we act. The Army is doing that. The Army has done that by opening the door to every job in the Army. Now we just have to have the courage to get out of the way and unleash the power of American women.”
Al Gore Outsold On Kindle By An E-Book Debunking ‘An Inconvenient Sequel’

By: Michael Bastasch

Former Vice President Al Gore’s new book is lagging in sales, and, in fact, is being outsold on Amazon Kindle by an e-book debunking many of the claims made in “An Inconvenient Sequel.”

Climatologist Roy Spencer authored an e-book, “An Inconvenient Deception,” to critique the “bad science, bad policy and some outright falsehoods” in Gore’s latest movie and book, which were released in August. Now, it’s ranked higher in Amazon’s Kindle store.

“There are three big weaknesses in Gore’s new movie: science, economics and energy policy,” Spencer, a noted skeptic of catastrophic global warming, told The Daily Caller News Foundation.

Gore released the sequel to his widely popular 2006 film “An Inconvenient Truth” in August, embarking on a media tour to promote the book and film. But so far, ticket sales have lagged, and even left-wing reviewers have harshly criticized the film.

The e-book published to accompany Gore’s film is ranked #51,031 for purchases in the Kindle Store, according to Amazon.com. Spencer’s book is ranked #1,201 for Kindle Store purchases.

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On the media circuit, Gore repeatedly said “every night on the network news is like a nature hike through the Book of Revelations.” His movie points to extreme weather events as evidence of man-made global warming, including the drought in Syria.

“It’s wrong because everything Gore shows in the new movie happens naturally,” said Spencer, who’s been studying Earth’s climate for decades.

Spencer even appeared before Congress for the first time in 1990 before a committee chaired by Gore. He currently compiles satellite-derived global temperature data with Dr. John Christy at the University of Alabama in Huntsville.

Gore also points to regular flooding in Miami as evidence that human activities are currently driving more destructive natural disasters. One scene in the film shows Gore and Miami Mayor Philip Levine wading through flooded streets, which is tied to melting glaciers.

“It’s kind of hard to pump the ocean,” Gore says in the film.

“Sea level has been rising steadily at about 1 inch per decade for over 150 years, long before CO2 emissions could be blamed,” Spencer said, noting one of Gore’s most egregious deceptions in the film.

“In Miami Beach, the rise is double because the buildings were built on reclaimed swamp, which is now sinking,” Spencer said. “Video of glaciers calving and Greenland melting is another

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example, it happens every year, just as it has for thousands of years, and 2017 was a huge snow accumulation year with little melting.”

Probably one of the most notorious scenes in “An Inconvenient Sequel” depicts the 9/11 memorial site flooded during Superstorm Sandy in 2012.

In his 2006 film, Gore predicted the 9/11 memorial site would flood due to glacial melt, which he said would raise sea levels 20 feet. Gore used the one-time flooding event as proof that his global warming predictions came to pass.

“The movie mentions one prediction he thinks he got right, the flooding of the 9/11 memorial,” Spencer said. “But that was due to storm surge, not sea level rise. So in the new movie he lied about the storm surge explanation being mentioned in the first movie.”

Gore also claims in the movie that corn and wheat yields in China have been declining because of rising global average temperature.

“Agricultural yields around the world have continued to increase, with no sign of negative effects from global warming,” Spencer said. “His claim that corn and wheat yields in China have decreased in recent decades is, quite simply, false.”
AUBURN SOFTBALL

School: Title IX office ‘unable to confirm’ initial allegations against former coach Corey Myers

James Crepea  jcrepea@al.com

Auburn University’s Title IX office launched an investigation into former associate head softball coach Corey Myers after anonymous allegations were submitted in September 2016, but was “unable to confirm it because the individual involved denied the allegations,” according to a statement from the school.

Myers resigned on March 30. Auburn’s statement confirmed “improper text messages” between Myers and a player led to his departure.

In his first interview since the Aug. 23 announcement of head coach Clint Myers and Aug. 26 reports by ESPN and AL.com detailing allegations of abuse and sexual harassment of softball players, Auburn athletic director Jay Jacobs told AL.com the university’s Title IX office led the investigation “from the very beginning.”

“Auburn investigated an anonymous report,” but “was unable to confirm it because the individual involved denied the allegations. We understand the reluctance of the student-athlete to initially go on record given the circumstances surrounding the allegation,” the university’s statement read.

“In this case, the combination of an anonymous report, the individual’s denial, and absence of other corroboration made verification very difficult. No University can or should take action against someone on the basis of an anonymous report, especially one that is denied by the individuals involved.

“On March 30, 2017, we became aware of improper text messages between an assistant coach and a student-athlete. The assistant coach left the program the same day.

“Throughout this matter, Auburn Athletics and the Title IX office took this seriously and acted promptly. As soon as the facts were known, action was taken. The two coaches are no longer on our staff.

“Make no mistake — this matter was handled immediately when the facts were obtained. It was handled with the best interest of the students in mind.”

Neither Jacobs nor an Auburn athletic department official would address the status of senior women’s administrator Meredith Jenkins, who on March 30 told players they were risking arrest if they did not delete photos of text messages between a teammate and Corey Myers, according to ESPN and AL.com reports. The text messages, purportedly showing evidence of an inappropriate relationship, were obtained from their teammate’s phone.

AL.com spoke briefly with Jacobs on Friday.

Asked why Myers was allowed to return to the team in September 2016, Jacobs confirmed the Title IX investigation and said: “I’ve got complete confidence in our Title IX office and I think they did a thorough investigation, and when they developed the facts, action was taken and Corey was no longer part of the team. I just have confidence in them. They started the investigation and they’re going to finish it. I just have confidence in them. So, the results are the facts.”

AL.com also asked specific questions about Jenkins’ role.

AL.com: “Regardless of whether it’s worded as a threat or a warning... why is a senior women’s administrator speaking to the legality or illegality of anything? Why is it not a lawyer or law enforcement official speaking to that?”

Jacobs: “I’m just like you, I wasn’t there. I know that that’s been reported by some and everybody has their opinion of what went on but I don’t have anything to speak to about that. I wasn’t there.”

Asked if Jenkins’ job responsibilities had changed in light of the softball investigation, Jacobs said he would not talk about personnel.
MR. GOLF: Strong players on All-State Junior team

By: Ian Thompson

The Alabama Golf Association recently announced their inaugural All-State Junior Golf Teams for 2017. They make for some impressive reading.

Boys first-team members are Ethan Hagood, JP Cave, Austin Coggin, Turk Pettit, and Padraic Sim.

Hagood, committed to play for UAB next year, was named State Junior Male Player of the Year. A senior at Spain Park High School in Hoover, he won the prestigious Southern Junior Amateur this summer.

Cave, who is a sophomore at UMS-Wright Preparatory School in Mobile, has committed to play for the University of Alabama in 2020.

Coggin, a junior at Vestavia Hills High School, has committed to play golf for Auburn University in 2019.

Pettit of Opelika is a freshman golfer at Clemson. He is a former State Amateur and Southern Junior champion.

Sim is a senior at Spanish Fort High School, the reigning State Junior champion and has committed to play golf for the University of Washington next year.

Boys second team: Connor Reid, Connor Newton, Thomas Ponder, Ryan Eshleman and John Hilliard Catanzaro.

Reid is a senior at Lee-Scott Academy in Opelika. He has committed to play golf for Samford University next year.

Newton is a senior at Auburn High School.

Ponder of Dothan is a junior at Providence Christian School. He won the prestigious Future Masters in his hometown this summer and has committed to play golf for UA.

Eshleman is a sophomore at Vestavia Hills High School and has committed to play golf at Auburn.

Catanzaro of Gadsden is a freshman on the golf team at the University of Georgia.

And Boys third team: Andrew Graves, Ike Alexander, Ford Clegg, Nick Dunlap and John Racciatti Jr.

Graves is a senior at Mobile’s UMS-Wright Preparatory School.

Alexander of Florence is a freshman on the golf team at Troy University.

Clegg is a senior at Mountain Brook High School and won the AHSAA 7A championship.
Dunlap is the youngest junior on any of the All-State teams at just 13 years old. He is an eighth grader at Berry Middle School in Hoover, finishing T-11 in the State Amateur Championship this summer.

And Racciatti of Fairhope is a freshman on UAB’s golf team.

Girls first team: Michaela Morard, Sophie Burks, Virginia Green, Brooke Sansom and Jordan Susce.

Morard of Huntsville is a rising sophomore at Randolph School. She won the Girls State Junior, was named the State Junior Female Player of the Year and has committed to play golf for UA starting in 2020.

Burks of Montgomery is a freshman on the golf team at Middle Tennessee State University.

Green of Fairhope is a freshman golfer at Vanderbilt University. Her brother Alex is on UA’s men’s golf team.

Sansom of Pike Road is a senior at Park Crossing School. She has committed to play golf for Auburn starting next year.

Susce of Birmingham is a freshman golfer at the University of Louisville.

Girls second team: Ally Williams, Anna Claire Little, Stephenie Fowler, Allison Howard and Mary Katherine Horton.

Williams is a junior at Athens High School.

Fowler of Tuscaloosa is a freshman on the golf team at UAB.

Little is a senior at Auburn High School and has committed to play golf for Troy University.

Howard of Newton is a junior at Providence Christian School.

Horton of Birmingham is a freshman golfer at Samford University.

Girls third team: Karlee Allen, Mychael O’Berry, Carson McKie, Julie Baker and Sarah Utley.

Allen of Berry is a junior at Northside High School.

O’Berry of Hoover is a freshman on the golf team at Auburn.

McKie is a senior at Hoover High School.

Baker of Hoover is a freshman golfer at the University of Southern Mississippi.

And Utley of Hampton Cove is a sophomore at Huntsville High School.

Matthew Swan qualifies for the U.S. Mid-Amateur
Qualifying is ongoing across the country, but news that former UA standout Matthew Swan, who is from Montgomery and now lives in Atlanta, recently qualified for the U.S. Mid-Amateur Championship, which will be played Oct. 7-12 in his hometown at the Capital City Club and Atlanta National Golf Club.

The U.S. Women’s Mid-Amateur will be played on the same dates at Quail Creek CC in Naples, Fla. In the field are Linda Jeffrey of Prattville and Stacy Quilling of Birmingham, both of whom qualified at Shoal Creek.

Susan West of Tuscaloosa is first alternate from the Indianapolis qualifier, while Laura Yates of Birmingham is the first alternate from the Shoal Creek qualifier, and former Auburn golfer Jessica Lovell of Atlanta is the second alternate from the same site.
5 in a row for UA soccer

By Zach Fidel
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

The University of Alabama soccer team defeated Tennessee Tech, 1-0, on Sunday night. The team has now won five straight games.

Five minutes into the match Alabama scored, but it was no ordinary goal. Crimson Tide senior midfielder Celia Jimenez Delgado pushed the ball upfield, and when she crossed the ball into the box, it ricocheted off a Tennessee Tech defender for an own goal.

Alabama redshirt freshman Chloe Maize led the team with 4 shots. She netted her first goal of her career against Kennesaw State last week. Maize was a little bit more familiar with Sunday's opponent since she grew up in Tennessee.

"I played little league soccer with some of the girls on their team when I was growing up," Maize said. "It's always fun playing against the people you grew up with, it's a little more competitive."

Once again the Crimson Tide defense had a strong performance. As halftime was drawing close, Tennessee Tech had a chance to score but the Alabama defense quickly swarmed to the ball and denied a chance for a shot on goal.

In the second half Alabama outshot Tennessee Tech 5-2, but none of those shots could find the back of the net. The Crimson Tide ended up winning 1-0, but coach Hart said there was something the team was lacking throughout the game.

"In general, I thought this was one of our flatter performances in terms of our energy level," Hart said. "I don't know if it was the football home weekend or if it was fatigue but it has to be better for next game."

One player who did not suit up for the game was freshman sensation Taylor Morgan. Coach Hart said Morgan was suspended one game for breaking a team rule.

Alabama will open up SEC play at seventh-ranked South Carolina on Friday night.
Some irony amid college football buzz?

Cecil Hurt

The talk of college football on Monday was UCLA’s comeback win against Texas A&M. The Bruins may have ruined the Aggies’ season right out of the gate (shades of the 2000 season) by erasing a 34-point deficit in the final 20 minutes in an amazing performance by quarterback Josh Rosen. Meanwhile, mentions of Alabama’s 17-point win over No. 3 Florida State stressed how mundane it all was, just another game in which the Alabama anaconda squeezed another unsuspecting foe to suffocation.

Now, I love entertainment and the UCLA comeback was wildly entertaining. But along with the buzz, is there the slightest hint of irony, too? Isn’t the angst among Aggie faithful, right up to their Board of Regents, based on Kevin Sumlin’s team being unable to do exactly what Alabama did in stifling FSU?

Assigning a single thought to a unified mass of “Alabama fans” is a mistake. Like any large group, Alabama fandom is made up of diverse individuals whose opinions range from the logical to the laughable. There are some, though, that wanted the weekend results to look like this: Crush the opponent the way A&M did in the first half, then guard the lead. (Can you imagine the Chernobyl meltdown if Alabama blew a 34-point second half lead against anyone, including the New England Patriots?)

Oh, and by the way, the quarterback needs to look like second-half Josh Rosen in the process. To put it another way: Some fans love to play high-profile, big-name opposition like Florida State — but only if UA proceeds to beat them like they were Florida International.

That’s not to say Alabama and quarterback Jalen Hurts can’t improve. Avoiding turnovers and managing a game against the FSU defense are one thing, but Nick Saban himself said Monday that the Crimson Tide left “money on the table” by failing to execute on makeable big-play opportunities. At the same time, Saban tried to gently tap the brakes. “Look, it’s the first
HURT

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game," he said when asked about Hurts' performance. "I'm not here to protect the player. I think he would tell you that there's things that he could do better. I also think there were good plays that he made that we need to build on. (There are) definitely some things that we could do better as coaches to help the players, and the players could do better to technically execute what they need to do so that we can make more explosive plays. We had several opportunities to make explosive plays, and whether there was a breakdown in protection or aborting the play too quickly, we weren't able to make those plays. When you do that, you leave a lot of money on the table.

"I don't think that, (with the) field position and opportunities that we had in this game, we could ever walk away saying we were satisfied with the points that we scored."

The point, though, is that Saban understands that Alabama is 1-0 after Week One, and improvement can actually occur — for the quarterback, for the offensive line, for the new offensive coordinator. Things in Tuscaloosa are not what they are today in College Station. Still, there are worries that some opponent down the line will have a quarterback like Rosen — and a running attack — and a decent defense — and then there will be trouble. That opponent might not come until after Christmas, but it's best to get your holiday fretting done early and beat the rush.

Meanwhile, if that isn't enough to set off a panic, there is also a good chance that we'll all see the backup quarter-back this weekend and that he might, against a very different opponent, look good. So you might think you've heard teeth gnashing so far — but just add that to the mix, and Heaven help us all.

Reach Cecil Hurt at cecil@tidesports.com or 205-722-0225.
Crimson Tide still in the classroom

There is the football team that Alabama, at the moment, actually is. There is the football team that Alabama, for a number of reasons, is expected to be. Saturday's game was not ideal. The team Alabama is, right now, is very good but not unbeatable. A persona is frequently imposed on this team, one that's built in part on real estate claimed by previous Nick Saban teams. That image is reinforced by recruiting rankings which create the illusion Alabama has an unlimited supply of players that, having completed high school, need merely to wait out a three-year stint before heading to the NFL, no seasoning needed. There's no sense worrying about that team. It's not real. Saturday was real, and that's what Saban has with which to build a finished product.

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HURT

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For instance, Jalen Hurts did not look like Tom Brady against Fresno State. Why? Probably because he’s not Tom Brady. He’s not going to become Tom Brady or Aaron Rodgers or Brett Favre. If your plan is to watch games for the rest of the season waiting for that to happen, save yourself the frustration and binge-watch Mr. Roboto instead. Hurts will be who he is -- a quarterback that is a deadly threat in the running game, and one that manages the passing game the way Nick Saban, more or less, wants it managed.

When Saban said after Saturday’s game he thought Hurts played well, he wasn’t kidding. Anyone who thinks otherwise is judging by a different standard, one in which “looking like an NFL quarterback” is the sole measuring stick.

Hurts, on the other hand, looks like a college quarterback, or at least a fair number of successful college quarterbacks. He makes Alabama difficult to defend.

He also allows Alabama to get ample use out of its talented running backs, a group that may get more talented if Josh Jacobs can return next week.

The offense can improve, clearly.

The offensive line was better than it was in Week One but that may be a function of playing Fresno State rather than Florida State. If one had to pick a side of the ball to worry over, one might choose the defense -- a worry that hasn’t nagged at anyone watching Alabama for the better part of a decade.

No one is arguing Alabama’s defense was “bad.” Fresno State coach Jeff Tedford, given limited resources, designed a great plan.

Saban called it “nickel-and-dimers,” a phrase that isn’t usually used as a compliment but was meant that way in this case.

Alabama’s recent defenses, though, have usually found a way to blow up nickel-and-dimers and scoop up the loose change. The old linebackers were missed on Saturday -- Reuben Foster, Ryan Anderson.

So were the new ones in street clothes -- Rashaan Evans, Terrell Lewis. You could sense their absence even if you spent the entire game with your eyes closed. Alabama had a couple of hits that drew a prolonged “oooh” from the crowd, one by Shaun Dion Hamilton, another by Ronnie Harrison. In the average game of recent vintage, you’d hear a half-dozen of those “ooohs” or more.

None of that suggests gloom and doom for the offense or the defense. Saban seemed almost professorial after the game, glad to have a day to perform some experiments, eager to use the results as teachable moments.

That’s where Alabama is at the moment -- still in the classroom. There’s no reason to think that they should look like graduates yet.

Reach Cecil Hurt at cecil@tidesports.com or 205-722-0225.
COLLEGE FOOTBALL

The Benz was a blast, but give me on-campus any day

Kevin Scarbinsky
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First things first. Mercedes-Benz Stadium = wow. That place is an engineering marvel. Walking to it and through it and spending an evening inside it called to mind a George Lucas-inspired Intergalactic transport that landed next to the poor, doomed Georgia Dome.

It's as if AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas, and the University of Phoenix Stadium in Glendale, Arizona, had a son, and he turned out to be bigger, stronger,

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SCARBINSKY
FROM B1

smarter, better-looking and more athletic than either of them — right out of the womb.

The Halo Board, a 360-degree, 63,800-square-foot video screen circling the ceiling, is a miracle of modern technology. It's a massive improvement on the hanging, distracting video boards in Jerry World.

The floor-to-ceiling Window to the City offers an amazing view of the Atlanta skyline if you get bored with the action below, which happened in the fourth quarter Saturday as Alabama began to squeeze the life out of another unfortunate victim.

All things considered, The Benz was a terrific setting for the postmodern avatar of regular-season college football, the Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game, which now comes in duplicate.

Alabama's defense and special teams sucked the air out of the occasion and Florida State on Saturday. Tennessee and Georgia Tech took the buzz to the limit Monday with a double-overtime thriller in which the Vols, against all logic, reason and metric calculation, survived by a skinny point.

Kudos to everyone involved. Now get off my lawn.

Given the choice between an indoor neutral-site classic between top-5 teams staged in a 30-story death star on a surface known as FieldTurf Revolution 360 and a true home-road clash between top-15 teams complete with real grass, blue skies and fresh air, there is no choice.

As Auburn legend Shug Jordan once said, "College football is meant to be played on campus and on grass." Which is how Week 2 of the college football season is more compelling than Week 1, at least in anticipation.

No fewer than three members of the top 15 will play true road games on the campuses of three more members of the top 25.

By the numbers, the marquee national matchup takes No. 5 Oklahoma to visit No. 2 Ohio State. Of more concern to you and me, No. 13 Auburn travels to its sister school with a lake, No. 3 Clemson.

No. 15 Georgia will take the trip every major program and every college fan should take at least once when it plays No. 24 Notre Dame at the home of the Gipper.

That's six major programs doing something that's becoming as outdated as the Georgia Dome, taking a risk to play a football game on the campus of someone your own size outside your own league.

Auburn and Clemson could play in neutral Atlanta, as they did in the 2012 Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game. Instead the Tigers and Tigers will meet for the fifth time overall since 2010 with four of those clashes taking place in one of their picturesque back yards.

The two home-and-home series haven't exactly held back either program. In 2010, Auburn beat Clemson in overtime in Auburn and went on to win the national championship. Last year, Clemson survived not one but two Hail Marys to beat Auburn in Auburn and launch its journey toward its own national title.

A successful September trip to Norman, Oklahoma, last season helped make Ohio State's resume playoff-worthy even though the Buckeyes didn't win the Big Ten and did lose to eventual conference champ Penn State.

So kudos to the College Football Playoff committee for recognizing the value of playing a marquee non-conference opponent and the added value of doing it on that opponent's home field.

Kudos to Auburn, Clemson, Oklahoma, Ohio State, Georgia and Notre Dame for scheduling true home-and-home series beyond the rugged home-and-road games mandated by their conferences. Or, in Notre Dame's case, by its tradition and ACC affiliation.

Sitting in a climate-controlled spaceship to watch two of the better teams in college football can be an out-of-this-world experience, but it's no substitute for walking across a college campus to witness the same spectacle where Touchdown Jesus, Knute Rockne and Vince Dooley intended it to be.
Tide, ’Canes to open 2021 season

By Aaron Sutlles
Sports Writer

Fresh off a trip to Atlanta for the Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game, Alabama is headed back to the game again in 2021.

As previously reported by The Tuscaloosa News, Alabama will square off against Miami to begin the 2021 season. The date and television network that will broadcast the game have yet to be determined.

The Crimson Tide last met Miami in the 1993 Sugar Bowl, a de facto national championship game for the 1992 season. Alabama defeated the Hurricanes 34-13 to capture the program’s 12th national championship.

“We look forward to returning to Atlanta for what will be Alabama’s seventh appearance in the Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game,” UA Director of Athletics Greg Byrne said. “As we experienced last weekend, the city of Atlanta coupled with the atmosphere of Mercedes-Benz Stadium makes for an incredible bowl-like event for both teams and fans, and we are honored to be a part of it.”

UA is also scheduled to appear in the 2019 Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game against Duke. The team opens against Louisville in Orlando in 2018.

Alabama and Miami have met 17 times with UA holding a 14-3 edge in the series.

“We are pleased to have the opportunity to open another season in Atlanta for the 2021 Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game,” Tide head coach Nick Saban added. “Our team and our fans have always enjoyed playing in Atlanta, and Mercedes-Benz Stadium is a fantastic competitive environment. This event always has the feel of a bowl game, and the Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl staff has made it a first-class event. We have a lot of respect for Coach (Mark) Richt and the Miami program, and we look forward to a great game in 2021.”

Reach Aaron Sutlles at aaron@tidesports.com or at 205-722-0229.
FSU vs. Alabama Nets 12.5M Viewers; Most-Watched CFB Kickoff Weekend Game

By: Tyler Conway

Saturday’s marquee college football matchup between Alabama and Florida State drew 12.5 million viewers on ABC, making it the most-watched kickoff weekend game on record.

According to a press release sent out Monday by ESPN, this is the third straight year ABC’s prime-time Saturday game drew a record number of viewers. Alabama-Florida State drew 1.4 million viewers than last year’s Texas-Notre Dame clash, which previously held the top mark.

The Crimson Tide earned a 24-7 victory over Florida State, holding the Seminoles scoreless in the second half. ESPN’s press release stated the peak was at 14.1 million viewers in the 9-9:30 p.m. ET block of programming, which would have been during the first half.

Florida State kept the game close for the first 30 minutes, going into halftime down 10-7. The Seminoles offense struggled in the second half, finishing the game with 1.5 yards per rush. Quarterback Deondre Francois also threw two interceptions, and it was clear by midway through the third quarter that Alabama was in control.

Alabama has defeated a ranked opponent to begin each of the last three regular seasons.
What DACA decision means for Alabama

The state of Alabama is home to more than 4,000 recipients of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals – or DACA – program, and the Trump administration’s plan to end the program – barring action from Congress – will have a substantial impact on both those individuals and their employers.

The DACA program gives legal protection, including work authorization, to immigrants who have lived continuously in the United States after entering the country illegally as children prior to mid-2007.

The White House’s decision means immigrants who are eligible for DACA will not be able to apply for the program anymore, but current recipients will have a chance to apply for a final two-year DACA renewal if their protections expire before March 5, 2018 – as long as they apply by Oct. 5, 2017.

“What happened (Tuesday) isn’t going to immediately, currently affect you if you have DACA,” said Jessica Vosburgh, executive director and attorney at the Adelante Alabama Worker Center. “But it makes your life incredibly uncertain.”

The Trump administration has put the ball in Congress’ court to determine DACA’s future, giving lawmakers six months.

“I would be afraid,” said Kira Fonteneau, attorney and partner at 5 Points Law Group. “After the (DACA) status is revoked, there will be wholesale terminations.”

Fonteneau said employers who find that one of their employees no longer has the right to work in the United States will have no other choice but to terminate that employee.

“If they don’t, the company will be subject to fines, and individual managers who make those decisions can be subject to jail times and fines,” she said. “To cover themselves, if they have Dreamers in their workforces, they need to make plans for what they’ll do when that status is revoked.”

A number of CEOs around the nation, including many in the technology industry, have spoken out against the DACA decision.

American employers are required to have their employees fill out an I-9 form to ensure that they are documented, and Alabama law requires businesses to ensure workers can pass the federal E-Verify system.

Fonteneau said some employers have responded to the DACA repeal by offering their affected employees legal counsel.

“Good employers who have valuable employees may want to see if there is a way that they can help facilitate their employees to getting the type of visas that would allow them to work,” she says.

There are worries about the long-term effects that DACA repeal will have on the economy.

A report by the Cato Institute found that the program’s repeal will cost the nation more than $60 billion in tax revenue and result in a $512 billion GDP loss over the next 10 years.

Alabama, in particular, would face a $1.182 billion total loss, with a $258 million tax revenue loss and a $924 million GDP loss.

Of course, those losses might not materialize if Congress takes action to save the program or keep elements of DACA in place.

Vosburgh said revoking DACA status means these immigrants “are not going to invest in education or the local economy,” while giving employers more power over workers.

“What having more people in the economy who are not documented does is force more people into situations in which they have to work in the illegal economy, and they get paid less, and that actually drives wages down,” Fonteneau said.

“Having people who have (legal) status raises wages for immigrants as opposed to lowering it.”

Fonteneau said having more undocumented workers also opens the door up for abuse of immigrant workers by paying less than minimum wage, refusing to pay overtime or subjecting them to long hours.

“We probably, at any given time, have two or three lawsuits where we’re suing an employer who’s taking advantage of an immigrant. All the time,” Fonteneau said.

-Dannial Budhwani
Dreamers belong here; Congress should move quickly to protect them

The Trump administration’s announcement that the Deferred Action on Childhood Arrivals program will be rescinded should prompt needed congressional action to protect young immigrants whose sole offense was being brought here by their parents.

Giving the Congress six months to act before DACA permits begin to expire, President Trump issued a statement criticizing President Obama for “making an end-run around Congress and violating the core tenets that sustain our Republic” by creating the program.

“There can be no path to principled immigration reform if the executive branch is able to rewrite or nullify federal laws at will,” he said.

While the details of any possible future immigration reform effort remain to be hammered out, it is imperative that DACA recipients are finally given the sort of permanent protections that can only be achieved through the legislative process.

Approximately 800,000 young immigrants, mostly in their 20s, are currently protected by DACA, with many more potentially eligible.

Far from an open-borders policy, the DACA program responsibly limited eligibility to undocumented immigrants who entered the country before their 16th birthday, arrived here prior to June 2007 and have lived here ever since.

Eligible applicants must either be in school, have graduated from high school or have been honorably discharged from the U.S. military.

Under the program, young immigrants are eligible to have deportations deferred and may legally work in the United States, with renewals required every two years.

For all intents and purposes, these immigrants are as American as native-born Americans, with many having no memory of or any meaningful connection to the country in which they were born. To punish young people for having been brought to the United States as children by their parents, beyond their control, would be an unconscionable disregard of people who have done nothing wrong.

Clearly, the DACA program, which only provided temporary protections by way of an easily discarded, legally shaky executive action, was not a viable long-term solution.

With President Trump’s decision to allow Congress six months in which to act, Congress must not allow the future of potentially over one million young immigrants to be thrown into turmoil due simply to political inertia.

Fortunately, bipartisan legislation has already been introduced, including the DREAM Act of 2017 (S.1615), sponsored by Republican Sens. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, Jeff Flake of Arizona and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, and Democrats including California Sens. Dianne Feinstein and Kamala Harris. The proposal would provide a path to citizenship for young, law-abiding undocumented immigrants.

It is vital that Congress not perpetuate needless confusion and harm by allowing our currently dysfunctional immigration laws to become a weapon against young immigrants. The Congress must act quickly to bring certainty and dignity to the Dreamers and allow them to live as the Americans they already are.

This editorial first appeared in the Orange County (Calif.) Register.
Trump rescinding DACA

Sessions announces end of program for immigrants, calls it 'an unconstitutional exercise of authority'

By Jill Colvin and Sadie Gurman
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Tuesday began dismantling the government program protecting hundreds of thousands of young immigrants who were brought into the country illegally as children. Attorney General Jeff Sessions declared the Obama administration’s program “an unconstitutional exercise of authority” that must be revoked.

New applications will be halted for President Barack Obama’s Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which has provided nearly 800,000 young immigrants a reprieve from deportation and the ability to work legally in the U.S. in the form of two-year, renewable work permits.

“I’m here today to announce that the program known as DACA that was effectuated under the Obama administration is being rescinded,” Sessions announced.

But the administration is giving Congress six months to come up with a legislative fix — “should it choose to,” Sessions said — before the

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government stops renewing permits for people already covered by the program.

According to Department of Homeland Security officials, people with permits whose renewals are set to expire between now and March 5, 2018, will be able to reapply — so long as their applications are submitted by Oct. 5, 2017, one month from Tuesday. No permits will be revoked before their existing expiration dates, and applications already in the pipeline will be processed, they said.

Trump, in a statement, said the change would be “a gradual process, not a sudden phase out.”

“Thus, in effect, I am not going to just cut DACA off, but rather provide a window of opportunity for Congress to finally act,” he said. He said he did not favor punishing children for the actions of their parents. At the same time, though, “we must also recognize that we are a nation of opportunity because we are a nation of law” and “young Americans have dreams, too.”

His action drew swift criticism from many immigration advocates and Democratic lawmakers.

House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi called Trump’s decision “a deeply shameful act of political cowardice and a despicable assault on innocent young people in communities across America.”

Some Republicans objected, too.

Sen. John McCain of Arizona said Trump was taking “the wrong approach,” and he added: “The federal government has a responsibility to defend and secure our borders, but we must do so in a way that upholds all that is decent and exceptional about our nation.”

Trump’s announcement came the same day as a deadline set by a group of Republican state officials who said they would challenge DACA in court unless the Trump administration rescinded the program. Administration officials argued the program might not hold up in court — and said that allowing the lawsuit to proceed would throw the program into far more chaos than the move they chose.

White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said the president had been given a choice between the “likely sudden cancellation of the program by a judge” or “an orderly wind-down that preserved the rule of law,” and made the best decision in light of those options.

Trump has spent months wrestling with what to do with DACA, which he slammed during his campaign as illegal “amnesty.” Many of his closest advisers, including Sessions, policy adviser Stephen Miller, and former chief strategist Steve Bannon argue that the program is unconstitutional and have urged Trump to follow through on his campaign promise to end it.

But Trump has repeatedly expressed sympathy for the young people protected by the program.

“I think the Dreamers are terrific,” Trump said last week, using a term popularized by supporters of the program, which was created in 2012 as a stopgap as the Obama administration pushed unsuccessfully for a broader immigration overhaul in Congress.

His approach — essentially kicking the can down the road and letting Congress deal with it — is fraught with potential peril for his own party. Trump’s decision to take a harder line on young immigrants unless Congress intervenes threatens to emphasize deep divisions among Republicans who have long struggled with the issue.

House Speaker Paul Ryan said in a statement he hoped the “House and Senate, with the president’s leadership, will be able to find consensus on a permanent legislative solution that includes ensuring that those who have done nothing wrong can still contribute as a valued part of this great country.”

“Congress writes laws, not the president, and ending this program fulfills a promise that President Trump made to restore the proper role of the executive and legislative branches. But now there is more to do, and the president has called on Congress to act,” he said.

But Congress has repeatedly tried — and failed — to come together on immigration overhaul legislation, and it remains uncertain whether the House would succeed in passing anything on the divisive topic.

Sanders, however, dismissed concerns that Congress would not be able to act and said the president was looking to sign “responsible immigration reform,” not just a bill legalizing Dreamers’ status.

“If they can’t, then they should get out of the way and let somebody else take their job that can actually get something done,” she said.

Florida Republican Sen. Marco Rubio appealed to the White House for more clarity about what Trump is willing to sign.

“Congress now has less than six months to deal with this the right way, through the legislative process,” he said, adding: “We have no time to waste on ideas that do not have the votes to pass or that the president won’t sign.”

Trump’s expected move has sparked protests, phone banks, letter-writing campaigns and other efforts across the country urging him not to act.

Mario H. Lopez, the president of the conservative Hispanic Leadership Fund, said that while he disagreed with the way Obama went about DACA, he worried that six months wasn’t enough to come up with a better plan.

“It just doesn’t seem like there’s a great window to get this done, and we’re concerned that the president didn’t really commit to any kind of Dream Act,” he said. “He just sort of dropped it in Congress’ lap.”
ARLINGTON, VA,

DEVOS DECRIES
‘FAILED SYSTEM’

Education Secretary: ‘One person denied due process is one too many.’

Washington Post

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos spoke of the need to replace the “failed system” of campus sexual assault enforcement Thursday, to ensure that such procedures are fair to all students.

DeVos spoke to about 100 invited guests at George Mason University, where protesters had gathered outside, worried that she would announce changes to the way sexual violence cases are handled on campuses across the country.

“One rape is one too many,” DeVos said. “One assault is one too many…”

“One person denied due process is one too many.”

She said the department would go through a formal process seeking public input in order to replace the current system with a more effective and just system.

DeVos, one of the most visible and controversial members of President Donald Trump’s Cabinet, has been telegraphing for months that she would take action on sexual assault. And she made clear that she believed the system was broken for all students — not just students who survived assault, but those wrongly accused of assault, whose voices she said had too often been silenced in the national debate over campus rape.

“Their stories are not often shared,” she told reporters in July, after “emotionally draining meetings” with survivors, accused students and college administrators. “No student should feel like there isn’t a way to seek justice, and no student should feel that the scales are tipped against him or her.”

Survivors’ advocates decried DeVos’ emphasis on wrongly accused students as out of step with reality, saying only a fraction of rape reports are found to be false.

For years, victims and advocates complained that university officials would prefer to ignore allegations of rape and sexual assault to avoid either bad publicity for the institution or getting mired in complicated, difficult-to-prove cases.

The Obama administration pushed colleges to do better — to respond more quickly and more comprehensively, resolve the complaints and protect students who reported sexual assaults. And it did so with real force: The threat of withholding federal funding to schools that did not comply.

Advocates were relieved that traumatized victims had recourse without having to go through a criminal trial; they could press to have their attackers expelled from campus, and file a Title IX complaint if administrators weren’t responsive enough.

But critics warned that the push went too far, creating makeshift courts on campuses ill-equipped to judge such cases, adding rules that make it difficult to ensure a fair hearing for both sides.

“No student should feel like there isn’t a way to seek justice, and no student should feel that the scales are tipped against him or her.”

Education Secretary
Betsy DeVos
DeVos to Replace Obama-Era Sexual Assault Guidelines

By: Andrew Kreighbaum

Education secretary says department will replace "failed" guidance on campus sexual assault, praised by many survivors' advocates, with temporary compliance "information" before soliciting comment and issuing new regulations.

ARLINGTON, Va. -- The U.S. Department of Education said Thursday it will replace Obama-era federal guidelines on campus sexual assault, with Betsy DeVos, the education secretary, describing the guidelines as a "failed system" that has done a disservice to all sides.

DeVos, in a speech at George Mason University's Antonin Scalia Law School, announced plans to launch a public comment process that will precede the release of a new federal regulation.

The department did not say how or when the current guidelines would be replaced. But the department will issue new "information" about how colleges should handle sexual assault complaints before new rules are in place, a spokeswoman said, by making "clear to schools how to fulfill their current obligations" during the rule-making process.

Department officials had said before the speech that there were no plans to announce changes to current federal guidelines. But the spokeswoman said in an email afterward that the 2011 guidance from the Obama administration would be replaced. And in an interview with CBS Thursday evening, the secretary said, of changing federal guidelines, "it really is a process, not an event. But it is the intention to move beyond that and to go move toward a better way."

The "interim" information could be released by the department soon, possibly as early as next week, according to a person involved in conversations within the department. It will include details on how the department's Office for Civil Rights will enforce Title IX violations until a final regulation is in place.

The Obama administration issued those guidelines -- frequently referred to as the Dear Colleague letter -- six years ago, making clear to colleges and universities their obligations in preventing and handling campus-based sexual harassment and violence. While case law had previously established sexual violence as an issue of gender-based discrimination under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the 2011 letter and follow-up guidance in 2014 pushed colleges to do more to meet those obligations. The previous administration acted after women and survivors complained for years that colleges ignored or mishandled allegations of sexual assault, and that many colleges protected athletes and others who committed assaults.

Advocates for victims of sexual assault have lauded the Obama guidelines. But they have come under attack from congressional Republicans (who call them an example of executive overreach) and representatives of accused students, who say they don't do enough to protect due process for the accused. Some colleges also have complained that the federal guidelines were both too onerous and lacking in clarity.
DeVos has deliberated on a decision regarding the guidance for months, facing pressure from critics to rescind it outright and from advocates for sexual assault victims to keep it in place. In her speech Thursday, she didn’t announce specific plans to pull the guidelines but declared that an era of “rule by letter” is over.

She said a public comment period, known as a notice-and-comment process, will allow the department to better incorporate insights from various stakeholders into a new regulation. That would be significant, because a regulation, as opposed to a guidance document, would have greater force in establishing the obligations of campus officials.

DeVos in her remarks called acts of sexual misconduct “reprehensible, disgusting and unacceptable” and said they must be confronted “head-on.”

“Never again will these acts only be whispered about in closed-off counseling rooms or swept under the rug,” she said. “Not one more survivor will be silenced.”

She credited the previous administration for bringing the issue “into the light of day.” But “good intentions alone are not enough,” DeVos said.

“Here is what I’ve learned: the truth is that the system established by the prior administration has failed too many students,” she said. “Survivors, victims of a lack of due process and campus administrators have all told me that the current approach does a disservice to everyone involved.”

‘Failed’ System

Many advocates for victims of assault would say the current guidelines have in fact served survivors of assault and sex-based discrimination well. Having the Dear Colleague letter in hand, they say, empowered them to seek substantive improvements to their campus environments.

But DeVos in her speech pointed to the stories of individual students she says have been failed by the current system to make her case that serious change is needed.

In one instance, a college student who made a sexual assault allegation against a classmate was told by her campus she would have to prosecute the case herself, DeVos said. In another case, according to her remarks Thursday, a college athlete who engaged in “playful roughhousing” with his girlfriend was dismissed from campus after a mistaken abuse report from a witness -- despite his girlfriend’s insistence that no abuse had occurred. Another student, at a historically black institution, was barred from his campus weeks before graduation. He only found out through a Freedom of Information Act request that he had been accused of sexual harassment, but he could get no further details about the suspension.

“It is no wonder so many call these proceedings ‘kangaroo courts,’” DeVos said. “Washington’s push to require schools to establish these quasi-legal structures to address sexual misconduct comes up short for far too many students.”

Advocates for survivors of sexual assault said DeVos used loaded language favored by opponents of campus protections to mischaracterize what the 2011 Dear Colleague letter
requires. In each of the cases the secretary cited, campus administrators failed to fulfill their obligations to students. DeVos and her team argue those failures occurred because of weak due process protections in the DCL. But Alexandra Brodsky, a fellow at the National Women's Law Center, said the practices DeVos described were expressly forbidden by the federal guidelines.

"Either the department hasn't done its homework or it is purposefully misrepresenting the current state of law for its own ideological ends. And that's a huge shame," she said. "It doesn't help anyone to roll back guidance that articulates robust rights for both survivors and accused students."

Brodsky and other advocates for survivors argue the 2011 DCL and subsequent guidance make clear that the same opportunities should be afforded to all parties involved in campus-based proceedings.

The speech was lauded by organizations that advocate for the rights of accused students on campuses. Cynthia Garrett, co-president of Families Advocating for Campus Equality, said DeVos's remarks had given hope to families whose children have faced proceedings resembling a cat-and-mouse game.

The secretary recognized, she said, that "Title IX disciplinary processes have not uncommonly devolved into an effort designed to satisfy [the department's Office for Civil Rights] rather than search for the truth."

DeVos also pointed to what department officials call a “broken” relationship between the Office for Civil Rights and the colleges and universities. The secretary said OCR has “run amok” and intimidated campus officials who are too nervous to ask about potential investigations to seek advice.

“Instead of working with schools on behalf of students, the prior administration weaponized the Office for Civil Rights to work against schools and against students,” she said.

While she has promised a more collaborative relationship between the department and colleges, it wasn't exactly clear to many who work with those institutions what DeVos's speech means for procedures on campus.

Scott Schneider, a New Orleans lawyer who frequently works on institutional responses to sexual assault, said the government issues Dear Colleague letters to provide institutions with some degree of transparency about how it will judge whether they're in compliance with the law. The comments from DeVos so thoroughly trashed the 2011 DCL, he said, that colleges may not be comfortable consulting it in making policy decisions.

"I don't know how they could keep the Dear Colleague letter in place based on what she said," Schneider said.

Terry Hartle, senior vice president for government and public affairs at the American Council on Education, said that, for now, higher ed institutions should operate as if the current federal guidelines remain in place.

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"Until the department informs institutions differently, the conservative legal choice is to assume the Obama administration guidelines remain in effect," he said.

**Advocates Outraged**

While DeVos has sought input from a variety of individuals and stakeholder groups through letters, individual conversations and forums like a July Title IX summit, her department has continued to encounter skepticism from advocacy groups who have doubted the secretary’s commitment to protections against campus sexual assault.

The involvement of groups accused of minimizing the problems of sexual assault and domestic abuse -- and some deemed "men’s rights" organizations by advocates -- created negative headlines for DeVos and the department before the long-planned Title IX summit had even happened. In an interview with The New York Times before the event, Acting Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights Candice Jackson suggested that 90 percent of campus assault allegations are a result of regrets over sex or both parties being intoxicated. The comments created an immense backlash and have continued to dog Jackson, whom Democrats demanded DeVos fire.

Alyssa Peterson, a policy coordinator with Know Your IX, said the tone of DeVos's comments and her decision to embark on a formal, legalistic process showed she wasn't listening to survivors. Know Your IX and other groups have urged the department to undertake a listening tour, as the Obama administration did before issuing the 2011 guidance.

"The power imbalance between resourced schools and survivors is really immense," she said. "They're creating this process that will be very hard for people they claim to care about to participate in."

During Thursday's event, survivors' advocates rallied outside the law school lecture hall where DeVos gave her address, chanting, "Stop protecting rapists!" and "Stand with survivors!" as attendees of the speech filed out.

Activists from Know Your IX, the National Women's Law Center, End Rape on Campus and other groups showed up at the Education Department Wednesday to deliver petitions with tens of thousands of signatures urging the secretary to maintain the guidelines. They were joined by elected officials including Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, a New York Democrat.

Other Democratic officials blasted the DeVos speech Thursday. Senator Patty Murray, the ranking Democrat on the Senate education committee and a top critic of the secretary on Capitol Hill, said DeVos had decided to continue a pattern of undermining survivors' rights and showed a lack of understanding or empathy for millions of students who have experienced sexual violence on campus.

"Let's be clear: Secretary DeVos just made an open invitation to colleges to once again sweep this national epidemic under the rug, which could discourage women and men on campuses across the country from reporting sexual assault and deprive survivors of the justice they deserve," Murray said in a statement. "Colleges must continue to take campus sexual violence
seriously, and I urge Secretary DeVos to reconsider this harmful step backward, and instead start supporting survivors and working to combat this national crisis."

Catherine Lhamon, the chair of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and a former assistant secretary for civil rights at the department, has also been a frequent critic of the secretary’s handling of civil rights issues. Lhamon said DeVos's decision to pull back the Dear Colleague letter made students less safe.

"We have more than 7,000 colleges and universities in this country, and we have very wide variability across those campuses," she said. "A core goal for the Department of Education is to share information about what the law is and how to comply with it to make sure all of those institutions actually satisfy students' rights."

Input Sought by Department

Despite criticism from Democrats, department officials have said a reconsideration of federal guidelines shouldn't be a politically polarized process. And they point to efforts to seek input from faculty members with experience in law as well as university administrators and advocates for accused students. As the department has deliberated overhauling the current federal guidelines on Title IX sexual assault protections, it's reviewed letters from law faculty critical of current guidelines as well as recommendations from task force reports addressing campus-based sexual harassment and assault.

A letter from 16 University of Pennsylvania law professors in 2015 argued the current approach from OCR “exerts improper pressure upon universities to adopt procedures that do not afford fundamental fairness.” A separate statement DeVos cited, from Harvard law faculty in 2014, argued the university had rushed to appease federal officials in developing its own sexual harassment standards.

Other law professors, although not cited by the secretary, have argued the standards were proper. University of Pittsburgh law professor Deborah Brake, a participant in the Title IX summit, has argued in defense of the “preponderance of evidence” standard, for example, and against raising standards of evidence for campus-based proceedings.

DeVos specifically cites recommendations from an American Bar Association task force as well as an American College of Trial Lawyers task force among “important perspectives” that would “be helpful as we pursue a better way.” The ABA report had encouraged campuses, where appropriate, to examine alternative models to traditional adjudication, including restorative justice, among other recommendations. The trial lawyers, meanwhile, called for raising the standard of proof for campus-based proceedings.

Another proposal cited approvingly Thursday by DeVos, from attorneys Gina Maisto Smith and Leslie Gomez, argues for the creation of regional Title IX centers to investigate and adjudicate assault and harassment investigations in the place of campus officials.

A senior department official argued that the Obama guidelines inarguably mandated new rules for colleges to comply with and should have gone through a public comment period before they
were issued. A new rule-making process would address that problem and the due process concerns with the guidelines, they said.

"Those are two items we can fix," the official said.

Peterson, of Know Your IX, said her organization and other advocacy groups will take part in the public comment process. They'll also pressure leaders of colleges and universities to maintain protections against sexual harassment and assault on campus.

"We are well practiced working under a government not concerned with our rights," she said. "We're committed to pushing colleges and universities to hold them accountable, even if the government won't."
Charlottesville poses new civil rights test

Sadie Gurman  Associated Press

Jefferson Beauregard Sessions, a son of the segregated South who was named after leaders of the Confederacy, faces a tough new test of his commitment to protecting civil rights as he oversees the Justice Department's investigation of the deadly violence at a rally of white nationalists in Virginia.

Sessions' political career has been dogged by questions about race, including during his confirmation hearings. In his six months as attorney general, he has worked quickly to change how the department enforces civil rights law, particularly in the areas of police reform and voting rights.

Yet Sessions was also quick to forcefully condemn the car attack at the neo-Nazi rally in support of a Confederate statue in Charlottesville. His response stood in contrast to that of President Donald Trump, who drew equivalence between the white nationalists and those protesting their beliefs. Sessions denounced racism and bigotry and called the driver's actions an "evil" act of domestic terrorism worthy of a federal civil rights investigation.

Observers say the real test will be in what Sessions does next, given the legal limitations he faces. Federal hate crimes law may not cover the killing even if it was motivated by hate. Federal criminal law has no specific, catch-all charge for acts of domestic terrorism. Sessions may decide that the murder charges already leveled against James Alex Fields Jr. in state court are sufficient for justice.

"It's my hope that with the degree of national and international scrutiny, that this department will do the right thing," said Kristen Clarke, a former hate crimes prosecutor and president of the liberal Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. "This is a case that the world is watching."

For Sessions, leading the Justice Department is the capstone of a decadeslong political career. He has faced questions about his treatment of minorities along the way.

As a federal prosecutor in the 1980s, Sessions charged black community activists, who were swiftly acquitted, in a voter fraud case that along with allegations of racially charged comments cost him a federal judgeship. As a Republican senator more than 20 years later, he opposed expanding the federal hate crimes statute to protect people based on their sexual orientation and gender identity.

Clarke said Sessions' comments in the days after the Charlottesville attack made her optimistic, but his history has her concerned. Sessions promised to "advance the investigation toward the most serious charges that can be brought, because this is an unequivocally unacceptable and evil attack that cannot be accepted in America." But he also acknowledged that deciding whether to bring federal charges won't be quick or easy.

Hate crime cases are often challenging because the government must prove that a suspect was primarily motivated by hatred of the victims' race or religion, as opposed to their political views. The victim, 32-year-old Heather Heyer, was white. That means investigators will have to prove Fields was targeting minorities when he plowed into the crowd, not just anti-racism protesters.

Prosecutors can argue that a suspect committed a crime not because of the race of the victim but because of the race of the people on whose behalf she was protesting, said William Yeomans, an American University law fellow and former high-ranking official in the Justice Department's civil rights division. But that interpretation of the hate crimes law has rarely if ever been used, he said.

"It's a challenge, but I don't think it's entirely impossible or shouldn't be explored," Yeomans said. "The real measure of (Sessions') commitment and his success in this case will be the thoroughness of the investigation" even if the case remains in state court.

Fields faces a long sentence if he is convicted in Virginia, so a federal charge could be seen as largely symbolic. Former Attorney General Loretta Lynch said she brought hate crimes charges in a massacre at a black church in South Carolina because that state has no hate-crimes law, and federal charges were needed to adequately address a motive rooted in racial hate.

The latest case is being investigated by career prosecutors and FBI agents, who will make recommendations to Sessions. The FBI would not describe the scope of the resources it has devoted to the investigation, but there are signs it is a priority. Agents were looking for clues in Fields' hometown in Ohio the day of the attack. Sessions has said prosecuting hate crimes is a priority of his civil rights division. Yet he is reshaping the unit in other ways that make advocates nervous.

Under Sessions, the department has expressed support for a strict Texas voter ID that a federal judge last month found discriminates against minorities; backed off court-enforceable improvement plans for troubled police agencies; and told local school districts they no longer must allow transgender students to use the bathrooms of their choice.

The department declined to comment further on Sessions' thinking about the Charlottesville case.