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Walt Maddox unveils lottery plan

Howard Koplowitz hkoplowitz@al.com

Standing outside the elementary school he attended, Tuscaloosa Mayor and Democratic gubernatorial candidate Walt Maddox detailed his state lottery proposal that he said would generate $300 million in revenue for education.

"I am 45 years old, and my entire life we have been 45th, 46th, 47th and higher in everything that matters, including education," Maddox said of the state outside of Northtong Elementary School, where he was among the first class of kindergartners to attend the school and his mother taught for 24 years.

Dubbed the Alabama Education Lottery, the plan would fund college scholarships, provide workforce development opportunities, fund statewide universal pre-K and buoy underperforming schools, Maddox said. He called the initiatives the "four cornerstones" of his proposal.

"This plan will have a transformative effect on the future of Alabama," he said.

If elected, Maddox said one of his first acts would be to call an executive session of the Legislature to consider a constitutional amendment to allow the lottery. If such a measure passes, voters would decide the lottery's fate.

Maddox said the scholarship and workforce development component of the plan would prepare students for careers.

"We know that the coming jobs war is here, and we must have Alabama students ready to compete," he said.

Maddox said the lottery proceeds would also be used to expand the state's pre-K program to include every child by 2024. Currently about 70 percent of children don't have access to the program.

Underperforming schools would benefit from the lottery, according to Maddox, by being able to apply for "community innovation grants" that would give wraparound support, such as public health or counseling, to the whole feeder system.

"We can't ask any more of our educators," he said. "It is time as a state address these problems from the very beginning."

Maddox said the $300 million projection was a low estimate based on an academic study.

"As mayor I've had one of the most conservative budgets in Alabama, and so I can assure you as governor that's not going to change," he said. "We are going to be fiscally responsible."

Maddox's major primary rival, former Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice Sue Bell Cobb, also has a plan to institute a lottery to fund education.

Republican gubernatorial candidate Scott Dawson on Monday panned such proposals, arguing they prey on the poor and are not a surefire way to bring in revenue.

"Democrats want to bank the future of our kids on a game of chance and that is not something that I'm willing to risk," Dawson said in a statement. "A lottery keeps Alabama in the past and preys on those who can least afford it with math that fails to add up and leaves states like Illinois unable to pay their winners. With responsible budgeting, rewards for hard work, and common-sense initiatives in our classrooms, we will launch Alabama into (the) future where everyone can win."
Alabama exported a record $21.7 billion in goods overseas

By Ken Roberts
City Editor

Powered by a thriving automotive industry, Alabama exported a record $21.7 billion in goods during 2017, according to the state Department of Commerce.

"With much of the world's purchasing power located outside the U.S., Alabama companies are looking at markets beyond our borders for growth opportunities," said Hilda Lockhart, director of the Commerce Department's Office of International Trade, in a news release. "Exports enhance the quality of life for all Alabamians and elevate prosperity in the state. Creating jobs through exports for the state's citizens is key to accelerating Alabama globally."

Exports of Alabama-made goods and services increased more than 6 percent from 2016's total of $20.5 billion, the state's previous annual record. Alabama exports have increased 21 percent since 2011 and 50 percent in a decade, according to the commerce department.

Transportation equipment remained Alabama's No. 1 export category, rising nearly 2 percent to $10.9 billion in 2017. Motor vehicles represent the largest part of Alabama exports in this category, but the total also includes overseas shipments of auto parts, and aircraft and spacecraft components.

Tuscaloosa County played a key role in Alabama's emergence as a transportation

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production hub: Twenty years ago, Alabama lured Mercedes-Benz to build a plant in Tuscaloosa County, sparking the birth of auto production in the state.

In September 2017, Mercedes-Benz U.S. International said it would invest $1 billion to expand its Mercedes-Benz plant in Vance to start building electric sport-utility vehicles there from about 2020.

Alabama is also home to assembly plants operated by Honda Motor Co and Hyundai Motor Co. A Kia Motors Corp assembly plant operates near the Alabama border in Georgia.

Other top Alabama exports in 2017 included:
- Chemicals, $2.3 billion
- Primary metals, $1.9 billion
- Minerals and ore, $1.3 billion
- Paper $1.1 billion

Exports of minerals, primarily coal, rose 158 percent last year, while primary metals and paper each rose about 28 percent.

Alabama ranked No. 22 among the 50 states in export volume in 2017, moving up one spot from the previous year, Lockhart said. Alabama’s increase of 6.3 percent last year was in line with the overall U.S. gain of 6.6 percent.

In 2017, Alabama business exported goods and services to 189 countries.

The top five markets for Alabama exports were:
- Canada, $4.14 billion
- China, $3.62 billion
- Germany, $2.94 billion
- Mexico, $2.9 billion
- Japan, $682.6 million

Exports to China and Mexico both grew by 10 percent, while shipments to Japan jumped 30 percent, according to the commerce department.

“Exporting is a fundamental economic pillar that supports growth in our state, and increasing demand for Alabama-made products around the globe underscores the success of our dynamic manufacturing sector,” said Greg Canfield, secretary of the Alabama Department of Commerce. “Growing export activity contributes economic vitality and spurs job creation across the state.”
Bentley, Strange, Trump: Their shadows fall on the GOP race for AG

BARNBURNER IN THE MAKING

John Sharp jsharp@al.com

Alabama's crowded gubernatorial race will be the most watched political event ahead of the June 5 party primaries. But for pure political intrigue, it's the Republican contest for attorney general that rivets the early attention.

In the field are: incumbent Steve Marshall, who was appointed to the position in February 2017 by soon-to-resign Gov. Robert Bentley; Alice Martin, a former top federal prosecutor who served as chief of staff to Marshall's predecessor, Luther Strange; Troy King, the state's attorney general from 2004-11 who was beaten by Strange when he tried for a third term; and Chess Bedsole, the 2016 campaign chairman in Alabama for President Donald Trump.

Feb. 9 was the filing deadline for statewide candidates to qualify to run under the Republican and Democratic banners.

Marshall's incumbency might seem to give him an edge, but he's been on the job for only a year, and his attachment to the scandal-plagued Bentley could be a ball-and-chain. Bedsole, thanks to a $300,000 loan, leads in the GOP foursome in fundraising at the moment.

"Right now, if you asked me to pick the most competitive race, it's the Republican AG's race," said Jess Brown, a retired political science professor from Athens State University who's long tracked the doings of the state's candidates and campaigns.

King, according to Brown, is the one with the most name recognition. "He has friends," Brown said of King. "He'll have his enemies. He'll have money."

But some of that name recognition might hurt rather than help. King's re-election defeat in the 2010 GOP primary came amid lingering reports and scuttlebutt that King's office was under investigation for alleged connections to gambling interests. SEE RACE, AS
RACE
FROM AI

According to those same reports, Martin, the then-U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Alabama, was overseeing the probe.

If there was a King-Martin duel then, the outcome isn't known. But perhaps they'll duel again, one-on-one, in another arena very soon.

Steve Flowers, a former Alabama GOP lawmaker who writes a popular political column, expects King to be the top vote-getter June 5. And, he added, "I would say the person who gets in the runoff with him will be Alice Martin."

On the Democratic side, the two candidates for attorney general carry interesting names: James "Chris" Christie, a Birmingham lawyer who's been involved in criminal and civil trials for three decades; and Joseph Siegelman, a Birmingham lawyer who's the son of former Gov. Don Siegelman.

'A CLEAR CHOICE'

Another hot race flying under the radar thus far is the GOP battle for chief justice of the state Supreme Court. Chief Justice Lyn Stuart, who was appointed to the position last April by Gov. Kay Ivey, is matched against Associate Justice Tom Parker.

The specter of Roy Moore gives the race a special twist. A twice-ousted chief justice, a hero to many Biblical conservatives, Moore became an internationally known last year in his failed bid for the U.S. Senate. Besieged by allegations that he'd sexually quested after teenage girls in Gadsden as a lawyer in his 30s, Moore lost to Democrat Doug Jones. It was the first time that a Democrat had won a statewide race in Alabama since 2008.

Said Brown: "That's a clear choice between Chamber of Commerce Republicans and lifestyle conservatives. Parker is clearly an ally of Judge Moore. He came into politics with essentially the same base of voters who supported Judge Moore."

Said Flowers: He will have the Roy Moore organization on his side. Stuart will have the Business Council of Alabama. It will be classic Roy Moore vs. the BCA."

The winner will take on Democrat Bob Vance in the November general election. Vance, a judge in Jefferson County, nearly defeated Moore for the chief justice seat in 2012.

The Republican lieu-
Siegelman Christie

"FRESH FACE"

As for the gubernatorial race, Ivey is pegged as the favorite for now. She's easily ahead of her GOP opponents in campaign fundraising, with $2.1 million in the bank. The next-closest gubernatorial hopeful is Tommy Battle, the Huntsville mayor, who ended January with $1.2 million cash on hand.

According to Morning Consult, a Washington-based research and polling firm, Ivey is the third most popular governor in the U.S.

Political observers generally rate Battle as Ivey's strongest GOP foe. Others in the GOP field are Birmingham youth pastor Scott Dawson and state senators Bill Hightower of Mobile and Michael McAlister of Troy.

There are five Democrats running for governor, the best known being Tuscaloosa Mayor Walt Maddox and former Alabama State Supreme Court Chief Justice Sue Bell Cobb.

Said Brown, "For both Maddox and Battle, their message has to be that they are a fresh face. They have to paint Ivey and Cobb as career insiders, 'If you like what's going on in Goat Hill, vote for them.' ... That's what they have to run with.”

Richard Fording, a political science professor at the University of Alabama, believes Cobb is better positioned than Maddox to win the Democratic primary. "My sense is she is viewed positively among Democrats in this state and that she is someone whom people respect for the position that she held," Fording said. "He has an uphill battle. It seems like she has a more statewide network from her history in the state. That's going to be tough for him.”

If it is Cobb vs. Ivey, that will mark an Alabama first: Two women as their parties' gubernatorial nominees.
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

‘More like Alabama?’

Success makes state a model for some

William Thornton  wthornton@al.com

A California businessman has penned an op-ed asking his state’s elected officials to be more like Alabama.

Yes, you read that right.

“As the state legislature returns to Sacramento for a new session, my hope is that they’ll choose to be less like themselves — and more like Alabama,” writes Tom Manzo, president of Timely Industries in Pacoima and founder of the California Business and Industrial Alliance. “The future of our state’s small and midsized businesses (and the people they employ) depends on it.”

Manzo’s words appeared in the Orange County Register. They were inspired by news of Toyota-Mazda’s decision to build a $1.6 billion auto plant in Huntsville, employing 4,000 people.

Manzo said 15 states sought the plant, but California was not one of them.

“California has a well-earned reputation of being business unfriendly, and according to one analysis has lost over 1,700 companies in the past decade. It really is not difficult to figure out why, given that we have some of the highest minimum wages, tax rates, and workers compensation rates in the nation. Our state’s workers compensation loss adjustment ratio is twice as high as Alabama’s, meaning we are paying more due to litigation and permanent disability claims.”

He also mentions Aerojet-Rocketdyne’s decision last year to leave California for Alabama, as Alabama has the third-most technical workforce in the country.

Manzo goes on to sing the praises of Birmingham’s culture and food scene as magnet for young workers.

Why does Manzo care so much about Alabama? Because his company manufactures prefinished door frames, he writes, and the home of his biggest competitor is Alabama.

“Many Californians would bristle at the notion of being bested by Alabama. But employers aren’t so picky,” he says.
Our View

Cybercrime lab will help battle internet thieves

Robbing and stealing just isn't what it used to be. As we move to a more “cashless” society, greenbacks and coins are harder to pinch. Banks and convenience stores have less cash on hand as more people choose to pay at the pump, swipe their card or use an app on their smartphone.

But criminals have adapted. Those who have honed their craft have traded in a revolver for a keyboard. And they're obviously getting much better at taking what is not rightfully theirs. Just last year, cyber-criminals stole about $5 million in data from Montgomery County, home to the state's capitol. Using what is known as “ransomware,” a stealthy form of malware that locks up digital files, criminals behind a keyboard squeezed the county for $45,000 in ransom money so that the county could restore the data and get its systems back online. The ransom was paid in bitcoin, a type of online currency that operates outside of the normal regulations managed by governments and banks.

It is a scenario that plays out with an increasing frequency. Like Montgomery County, many businesses, from small to very large, opt to pay the ransom because there is little that can be done and the only alternative is to cease operations. Ransomware attacks have exploded in recent years — thousands of attacks are launched every day — and are now costing hundreds of millions of dollars annually, according to the FBI.

But ransomware is just one of many paths criminals can take in the digital age to rip us off. Identity theft is another illicit avenue on the internet that provides criminals a seemingly limitless number of potential victims. And we all know by now that the online world is teeming with sexual predators.

Law enforcement at all levels has the authority to go after these new faceless outlaws, but it seldom has the expertise or resources to even begin to put a dent in the rapidly growing problem. That is until now.

Secret Service, FBI and Homeland Security officials were in Montgomery on Wednesday with Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall to announce a new cybersecurity lab that will serve as a resource for local, state and federal law enforcement efforts.

Marshall announced that his office has also launched a new website for law enforcement to report debit and credit card skimming devices, which are often installed on gas pumps and at ATMs to steal card information.

According to the Associated Press, Marshall said agents in the attorney general’s office who are skilled in combating cybercrime assisted more than 30 law enforcement agencies in the past year. With this new cybersecurity lab, that number should grow significantly in the years to come.

Without a doubt, criminals have gotten much more sophisticated in their approach, and because of the nature of the internet their reach is well beyond their local community. It is a good thing that law enforcement is working to keep pace in their efforts to protect us.
Longtime columnist dies at 68

Ben Windham was from a family ripe with storytellers

By Mark Hughes Cobb
Staff Writer

Teenage DJ Amasa Ben Windham Jr. knew segments of his audience didn't like the raucous songs he played on late-night shifts.

Well, not so much the songs on radio as the singers, back in mid-'60s Selma.

"He used to play African-American music," said longtime friend Shelly Rosenzweig of Windham, who died Sunday at the age of 68. "And he'd get phone calls complaining, but he'd play the records anyway."

Windham grew into Yellow Dog Democrat status naturally, born into a line of them, a family ripe with storytellers and journalists — newspaper work was the family disease, he'd say — including his beloved mother, folklorist Kathryn Tucker Windham. When asked about the titular character of his mom's bestselling "13 Alabama Ghosts and Jeffrey," whether he believed a poltergeist inhabited their home, Ben crafted a standard reply: "Jeffrey put me through college."

"Jeffrey put three of us through college," said his sister, Diley Windham Hilley, laughing: siblings Ben, Kittie and Diley. Mom's ghost stories helped ease Ben's way to Birmingham-Southern College, where he wrote for the See WINDHAM, A5

See next page
school newspaper, and shared a dorm room with Tommy Stevenson, an odd couple by appearances, Ben soft-spoken, polite and smiling, Stevenson a long-haired more classically gregarious student of the times.

"I would go out and go to parties, and get back in: Ben would be sitting reading, listening to music," Stevenson said. Bonding over love of music — they traveled to Memphis for their first Bob Dylan concert, mid-'70s, and attended more than 30 incarnations of the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival together — the roomies eventually worked together for decades, at the Decatur Daily and later The Tuscaloosa News.

"I feel like I've lost a brother," Stevenson said Monday, on hearing Ben had died Sunday at his home, five days before what would have been his 69th birthday. "Fifty-two years, the way I figure it."

Ben's pursuit of education spanned a lifetime, chronicled in thousands of column inches published over the years. After retirement, he continued to craft his Southern Lights column for The Tuscaloosa News, considering Howlin' Wolf, Amy Winehouse and all musical points in between, from the obscure to the famed to the local and undiscovered; scrabbling through the muck of Civil War battlefields for Minié balls, digging for flint arrowheads, uncovering fossilized sand dollars, oysters and Coal Age plants; on quieter days walking his Corgis, who filled a place carved out by the late Labrador Rufus; luxuriating with headphones and probably TV on, multi-tasking overstacks of books and music, in the "annex," a storage room attached to their carport.

"Sometimes I would walk into the room and it'd be something I couldn't even recognize as counting as music," said his wife, Susan Rains Windham. Even through headphones, music — or something — spilled out. "It was anything and everything. If it exists, he listened to it."

Ben's record collection — vinyl, CDs, reel-to-reel tapes — is widely regarded as one of the finest private collections existent, a four-walled cornucopia the Windhams tried to catalogue once, years ago, but gave up, under its immensity. Weekends, he'd haunt estate and garage sales, thumbing stacks of wax for that one dusty, buried jewel. No travel was complete without stops in thrift stores or consignment shops, and, of course, the internet was a boon to such a seeker.

"He was a very big fan of Amazon; Amazon will miss him," Susan said, laughing. "Today I'm going to have to get on his computer; he'll have ten hundred emails. He'd email with people who were
also interested in music, and they’d send each other crap: bootlegs.” Like his mother, he was a bit of a hoarder.

“For any one thing he gave away, there were probably two new things that came around.”

He did give, though, including the world’s finest mixtapes: Shelly’s wife, Marianne, remembered him Monday, riding around listening to a Neville Brothers live compilation Ben had bestowed on them. For Christmas, Stevenson received a collection of rare Hank Williams tracks.

“You just never know what’s going to be on there, from Redd Foxx to Sousa,” Diley said. “It was just the most brain-straining. You never knew what was going to happen next.”

Ben once made a cassette of music their father used to play at home, for his little sister.

“I was 3 when our father died, so there was very little I remembered,” she said. “(Ben) said, ‘I want you to know about it.’”

That’s not to say he was a childhood saint.

“Ben was hell to grow up with. He was such an older brother. He would just do terrible things to me,” Diley said, laughing. “He would dream up these magic acts that would have me holding up a glass to a ceiling with a broomstick, and then he would leave.

“I stood there until my arms gave out, then the glass would drop on the floor and break, and I’d get in trouble for it.”

Before she could read, Ben would compile stacks of official-looking documents, and flourish them for his 3- or 4-year-old little sister:

“ ‘These are your adoption papers. You’re the only one who doesn’t belong in the family.’ And I would cry and cry.”

Ben was a tough act to follow; he always had more — including an off-limits-to-sisters room of reel-to-reel music, which of course Dilcy sneaked into, whenever possible — and absorbed more.

“His nephew, my son, from the time he would talk, would say, ‘Uncle Ben knows everything,’” Diley said.

When friends gathered, should a question turn esoteric, folks would look to Ben, Susan said. “And he’d usually know the answer.”

And his blood ran Crimson.

“That was one of the things I learned early on in our relationship, when we went to an Alabama game together,” Susan said. “Wow, he was this mild-mannered, even-tempered guy ... good grief. He would be loudly and very actively involved, and was not very tolerant of anybody’s errors.”

Their son inherited more than just love for music from Ben, traveling along on consignment-store quests.

“He informed me the only reasons he would ever disown me was if I ever came home an Auburn fan or a Republican,” David said.

In 2004, he attended a speech by the “national treasure” — he enjoyed teasing his mother about that — at the annual assemblage of the Alabama Academy of Honor in the state’s Capitol. Nelle Harper Lee made the introduction, the two old friends having cooked up an excoriation of power brokers, rather than the homespun homilies the elite crowd was probably expecting. Ben wrote:

“No one outside our family knew of her plan, except for Harper Lee. It was with a mischievous twinkle in her eye that she made her introduction, perhaps with a view of setting
“She has taken that great talent for speaking and turned an oral tradition of Alabamians into an art, which is the art of telling stories,” Lee said. “She has taken the front porch, sit-in-the-swing on a moonrise of an evening when stories are told and has made it her very own earth. Kathryn, tell us a tale!”

His mom unwound a story he’d heard all his life, about Ben’s grandfather taking her to eat with a poor family, who’d invited them into their bare, impoverished house, no wall décor, no books; a raw kitchen table split by long benches. The family washed up in an enamel pan on the back porch, where they left their shoes, before coming in to dine on peas and cornbread, as flies buzzed in from unscreened windows.

When they left, Ben’s grandfather turned to his mother and said: “I want you to remember one thing. We had dinner today with some good people. And you are not one bit better than they are. You are just used to better things.”

You can practically hear the glee as he recounts how his octogenarian mother then flat-tore that assemblage up, over how the state lets the greedy rape and pillage and pollute our beautiful lands, how the powerful fail to attack poverty and lack of education, how the state channels money into prisons rather than museums, schools or libraries.

He wrote: “I watched her, slightly stooped and white-haired, as she took her measured steps from the podium, back to her chair and the dinner table. I found myself thinking of the many times that Julia Tutwiler had come to this same building to speak to the powers-that-be, trying to prod, shame or inspire them to action.

“I also thought of the many times that my mother’s accomplishments have filled me with pride. Sometimes I tease her, calling her a national treasure.

“This time, it was no laughing matter. I have never been prouder of her than I was on this August afternoon, when she spoke from her heart to the Alabama Academy of Honor.”

“He was a son of the South. His mom had a lot to do with that,” Stevenson said. “He idolized his mother; he really did.”

In a column from Feb. 5, 2017, Ben wrote about the Japanese word tsundoku (letting books pile up without being read):

“Later this month, I will be 68 years old. There was a time in my life when that age was unimaginably old. I envisioned someone at 68 with moss on the face, foam on the lips, seated in a wheelchair, wheezing. Now I see that it isn’t at all like that.

“Still, I wonder sometimes before I drift off into sleep. Life just isn’t long enough.”

He wrote of indulging passions: music, books, news, the Corgis. Aspects of growing old are nice, he said: People tend to respect, and perhaps better, excuse you. Memories become creatively selective.

Ben wrote: “Still, there’s this nagging thing about going horizontal.

“The books are absorbing. The music is enveloping. And even with the sound off, the TV news is interesting.

“And the aging?”

He then quoted from William Faulkner’s “Absalom, Absalom,” in which a character is asked why he hated the South:

“‘I don’t. I don’t!’

“I don’t hate it! I don’t hate it!”
The University of Alabama owes the black community the human decency of a real apology. Progress coming through the slow-moving wheel of Alabama’s bureaucracy cannot occur if we don’t start at the basics. The first step to recovery is admitting you have a problem, and the University needs its own intervention. UA’s extensive addiction to the exploitation of black bodies must be realized and accepted.

As members of the community at The University of Alabama, we walk on the graves of slaves every day, be it when you’re in your fraternity house, on the quad or even Bryant-Denny Stadium. Many students of color realize this as a constant reality, and simultaneously, are well aware of the University’s deafening silence. This silence leads us to ask, “Whose campus is this, anyway?” For Black students, the answer is clear.

Tour guides parade Civil War memorial sites – The Round House and the Civil War memorial on the quad — but conveniently disregard the history that made such sites possible. The lives wasted away to build the President’s Mansion; the sweat that dripped into the soil students study upon; the families who only knew what it was like to work under their master — this University.

At a campus which often aims to become the “Harvard of the South” or a “Southern Ivy”, it is necessary to take a look at some of the campuses the Capstone would like to mirror.

Campuses like Brown University have physical memorials at the hearts of their campuses recognizing their dark history in which slavery played a role. Even our fellow SEC campus, the University of Mississippi, has begun to carry out similar actions. Now, there is some form of recognition of slavery on campus — two vaguely placed grave markers, placed in the shadows of a biology lecture hall. Out of sight, out of mind.

Saying that this isn’t enough is an understatement. A physical reminder of this poignant past exists feet away from where the University president resides — slave quarters, or “storage” as this institution refers to it. If someone entered my ancestor’s former home and used it as a storage unit, it would be akin to spitting in my face. In the same vein, UA is spitting in the face of its black students every day it fails to recognize the existence of its former slave quarters.

What a beautiful image it is to imagine what a museum or memorial within those walls would look like. If only Capstone Men and Women were detailing and honoring the lives who were made to provide labor without consent to make possible what UA is today.

In addition, The University of Alabama owes reparations. The Capstone stole from black folks something that could never be fully repaid. Locating the descendants of slaves owned by UA and its first professors is possible, and offering them scholarships and opportunities to excel can be the beginning of true healing and progress.

True healing and progress also mean recognizing who this institution has chosen to honor by emblazoning their names onto buildings. This includes Morgan Hall, named after a KKK leader, and Nott Hall, named after a physician who contributed to the racist philosophy of eugenics that provided false scientific evidence that black folks were inferior. Regardless of how this recognition is carried out, whether through new plaques on these buildings or a complete renaming, doing so in some form should be non-negotiable.

This, in addition to truly and properly memorializing the slaves who were here are not recommendations or “initiatives,” but rather, moral obligations. UA cannot truly make progress on race with its foot tied to the dragging weight of ignoring its racist past.

It is time for this institution to push for serious reforms in how it reflects on its history, because black history at The University of Alabama didn’t just start with Autherine Lucy.

Ruben Tarajano is a sophomore majoring in public health. His column runs biweekly.
Supporting Team Green

By: Terrin Waack

With one hand on each concrete post, Mackenzie Brannan lifts herself upside down into a handstand. She makes it look effortless, a glimpse of her future as a University of Alabama gymnast. Her legs are straight, toes pointed.

Her older half brother, Brian Roberts, looks on.

“Well,” he said, “I think I can do that.”

There’s a nine-year difference between Mackenzie and Brian, but on this day they’re playing together like little kids. That’s how it has always been with these two.

Brian successfully gets up on another pair of pillars right next to his still-balancing sister. While Brannan remains tall and strong, Brian’s legs bend and flail as he tries to stay upright.

The view, for anyone else wandering around that San Antonio plaza near the Alamo, is comical.

“My form is pretty good,” Brannan said. “His is little iffy, probably like a 9.2.”

The duo’s mother, Debi Brannan, snapped a photo, capturing a memory that is still cherished today, seven years later. Those were the easy, carefree days. It was before Mackenzie left for college, and well before Brian received news that would forever change the Brannan family’s life.

On Nov. 17 last year, Brian was diagnosed with stage four hepatosplenic T-cell non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma (HSTCL), a very rare and aggressive type of cancer.

“It stops you in your tracks,” Debi said, “and makes you realize how important just sitting on the back porch, sharing a glass of tea with your kid is.”

The diagnosis

The first cancer scare came when Brian was 18 months old. His day-care provider noticed he wasn’t doing well and notified his mother. Debi took him to the pediatrician, where she was ultimately told her baby boy might have leukemia. He was immediately taken to the hospital. Tests were done, including a bone marrow aspiration and biopsy.

Results came back negative.

But days after his 30th birthday, Brian was not as fortunate.

“To have your son lay in a bed pretty much unconscious — not able to wake up enough to talk — you look at him and it’s hard to not see them as your baby, as the one-and-a-half-year-old kid that I had at the children’s hospital 29 years before,” Debi said. “It was really not any different. It’s not any different as a mom.”

See next page
Only there was no sweet relief this time.

Debi got the call in a parking lot, waiting to pick up Brian’s dinner with his 2-year-old son. Brian had been in and out of the hospital already, sick with a fever, cough and night sweats. He felt miserable, but cancer was the last explanation Debi expected.

“It’s one of those things where time really stands still,” Debi said. “I remember every step I took for the rest of the day.”

She took her grandson home with the food. Brian was sitting on the couch, overwhelmed with shock and fear.

Mother and son packed a bag and went back to hospital for a few days. Brian underwent his first round of chemotherapy. Debi was by his side the whole time.

“I was just thinking wow, we’ve done this before,” Debi said. “Maybe it’s going to be OK.”

The reunion

Of the family’s four kids, Brian is closest to Mackenzie in age. He’s who she grew up around, played with and tattled on when fighting.

So when Mackenzie, now a senior at UA, found out about her brother’s cancer diagnosis more than 700 miles away, it was hard not to go back home to Austin, Texas. The separation didn’t last long. She returned for Thanksgiving about a week later.

“I was just happy for him to be right in front of me, for me to get to hug him,” Mackenzie said. “To just spend time with him, I was excited. It was an emotional time, just to be back with my family.”

Debi didn’t want to waste any of this time together under one roof. She didn’t cook: They ate takeout, sat around and enjoyed each other’s company.

It was simple. Perfect, really, especially with Mackenzie back on break.

“That’s special whether your family is going through something or not,” Debi said. “There’s nothing — nothing — like the bond of a sibling, just to see them sit on the couch together or chat, share a memory and laugh about something.”

They did the same for Christmas.

Brian’s stocking was stuffed with a personalized note from Mackenzie. In it, she shared her favorite memories: playing Super Mario Bros. on an old Nintendo, learning how to play soccer, being schooled in basketball and watching him attempt gymnastics. The more he read, the more they both cried.

“When they were hugging and saying goodbye, they probably were really wondering what the future looks like,” Debi said. “It was emotional. It was hard to hug him and tell him goodbye.”
The fight

Brian learned how to make stained glass about five years ago. The hobby has come in handy now that he’s on break from work and allowed only to do so much.

His first piece back was a green ribbon, which is the HSTCL awareness color. The plan was to shatter it immediately.

“I loved the symbolism of that,” the mother said.

It was meant to prove he can beat this. He can beat cancer.

Lying in his hospital bed the day he was diagnosed, Brian turned to his mom and planted the first seed of hope.

“I'm going to fight like hell,” he said. “This is not going to get me.”

That turned into the tagline of his road through treatment and to recovery. Fight like hell. It’s even a hashtag, one he started on Facebook that family and friends have embraced.

Every time it’s used, that hope grows. It remains at a patient speed. This isn’t something to push.

“There are days you don’t see a real strong ‘I'm going to fight like hell,’ ” Debi said. “Some days, I'm going to fight like hell just means laying down, taking care of yourself and doing whatever’s next on the list to get there.”

That strength — that fight — is an inspiration to his sister.

Mackenzie wears a grey rubber wristband that has “Fight like Hell” inscribed in green on one side, her brother’s initials on the other.

“It's on my wrist every day,” Mackenzie said. “I keep it on my wrist when I compete, I put it under my leotard, and I look at it right before I go compete. I’ve taken on his mantra this season.”

The miracle

Soon after Mackenzie learned about Brian’s cancer, she walked into Alabama gymnastics coach Dana Duckworth’s office emotional but determined. The senior gymnast asked if she could wear a green ribbon in her hair during meets this season in honor of her brother. Maybe even the whole team could.

Six meets in and that request has been met by every member of the Crimson Tide.

“That's not just support for Brian,” Debi said. “These girls don’t know Brian. They know and love Mack and they’re doing this for her just as much as they’re doing it for him.”

And that’s obvious.
“Whatever it takes,” Duckworth said, “we’re going to be there through thick and thin for Mack, for Brian and for the Brannan family.”

Said teammate Ari Guerra: “I know Mack, she’s such a fighter and her brother is such a fighter. We’re here for her.”

Echoed teammate Abby Armbrecht: “We know what she’s going through and we’ve got her back.”

The support is endless and much needed.

To overcome HSTCL, Debi said her son will need an allogeneic stem cell transplant. That will require getting him into remission after chemotherapy, asking the insurance company to approve everything and finding a matching donor. The transplant process would then keep him in the hospital for about a month, and the hope is in that time he’ll start to make his own new stem cells and be cancer free come April.

It’s going to be a lot, but Brian knows he will never be alone. He has an army of supporters. All fighting like hell.

“When I hear Brian say, ‘I can really feel it. I know I’m loved,’ ” Debi said, “what more could you ask for in these circumstances?”

There is one more thing.

“I’m asking for a miracle,” Debi said.
UA English professor receives writing award

Tuscaloosa native Trudier Harris honored for nonfiction writing

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

Award-winning author and University of Alabama English professor Trudier Harris has been named winner of the 2018 Clarence E. Cason Award in Nonfiction Writing.

Harris, a Tuscaloosa native, received an undergraduate degree from Stillman College and a doctorate from Ohio State University. She is the author or editor of more than two dozen books as well as the recipient of multiple awards in writing and teaching.

“Dr. Trudier Harris is an eloquent writer who paints a compelling portrait of African-Americans growing up in the South,” said Cory Armstrong, department chair for journalism and creative media. “Her impact to both the writing and academic communities has been significant. She is a deserving candidate of this honor.”

Earlier this month, Harris received an honorary degree from the College of William and Mary, where she was the first tenured African-American faculty member.

Cason founded UA’s department of journalism in 1928. The University of Alabama bestows the honor on a recipient each year with a strong connection to Alabama whose writing has made a critical contribution to the journalism and literature of the South.

Tickets are $35 for a luncheon honoring Harris for earning the Cason award. The luncheon will begin at 11:30 a.m. March 2 in the Embassy Suites hotel, 2410 University Blvd. To order tickets, phone Sheila Davis at 348-4787 by Tuesday.
Educators of distinction

Two Tuscaloosa residents will join UA's Education Hall of Fame

By Drew Taylor
Staff Writer

Two Tuscaloosa residents will be honored this weekend for their contributions to education in Alabama.

Sandra Ray, a longtime member of the Alabama State Board of Education, and Barbara Rountree, director of The Capitol School and co-founder of Children's Hands-On Museum, will be inducted into the Education Hall of Fame at the University of Alabama. The ceremony will take place Saturday at the North River Yacht Club in Tuscaloosa.

In addition, longtime Auburn University professor Jane Moore will also be part of this year's induction class.

"I come from a long line of family members who have been involved in education," Ray said. "I was really surprised (by the honor)."

Ray's father, Revis Hall, served as assistant principal at Brookwood High and principal of Holt High in the 1950s before becoming superintendent of Jefferson County Schools in 1968, a position he served in for 14 years.

During her career, Ray served on the Tuscaloosa County Board of Education from 1982 to 1988. She worked with her children's school in parent-teacher groups before deciding to run for her district's seat on the Alabama State Board of Education.

"Sometimes, you don't think your area is represented the way it should be," she said. "I felt strongly that Tuscaloosa needed to be represented."

Ray said she was proud of what she was able to accomplish while on the board, such as being part of the beginning of the Alabama Reading Initiative. Ray also served as a liaison for the Alabama Association of School Boards from 1995 to 2008.

"For Ray, education will always be a big part of her life and something she will always be an advocate for. "Education is not a row boat; it's a battleship," she said. "It's going to take some time to turn around."

Rountree was working in the UA College of Education when she and others began planning to start a new school to cater to the creative needs of children. That project became the Capitol School, which opened in 1993.

Rountree said the concept for the school came from the idea that children could have the potential to learn many different things if they started early enough.

"It's not what you're born with, but what opportunity you have to learn," Rountree said.

In addition, Rountree was also one of the co-founders of Children's Hands-On Museum, which gives children the opportunity to see, touch and experience different aspects of history, nature and other subjects. The museum first opened on UA's campus in 1986 before moving to downtown Tuscaloosa.

"It was a really special time that we got to create that," she said.

Rountree said she still gets the same satisfaction out of education that she did when she first started.

"It's like a ripple effect," she said. "You touch someone's life and they carry it on."
Like mismatched puzzle pieces, her symptoms just didn’t fit. Until one doctor put it all together.

By: Lisa Sanders

Her mother had fallen and was too weak to get up, the kind voice on the phone explained. The call from the young woman’s aunt sent her hurrying to her mother’s home, just a town away in rural Alabama. The 68-year-old woman was back in bed by the time her daughter arrived.

Although the mother had been sick for several years, it was still shocking to see the pale, wasted shadow she had become. She’d been to the E.R. of the local hospital many times. She had even seen specialists in Tuscaloosa. But no one seemed to have a clue what was wrong with her.

As the E.M.T.s loaded her mother into the ambulance, the daughter asked if they could drive all the way to Birmingham. When she was pregnant with her triplets the year before, she’d traveled the 50 miles to see specialists at the University of Alabama Hospital in Birmingham. Maybe the doctors there could help her mom.

The doctors in the emergency room in Birmingham gave her mother some fluids to bring up her blood pressure, and she perked up a little. More important, they persuaded the older woman, and her daughter, to follow up at the university’s outpatient clinic.

Nightly Misery

Dr. Jori May, an internist in her second year of training, introduced herself to the thin, pale woman and her two daughters a month later. They offered May a thick stack of medical records they’d brought, and she put them aside to look at after. First, she needed to understand what had happened.

It started years earlier, the older woman told her. Almost every night, she would get these crazy fevers. First came bone-rattling, shaking chills; she couldn’t get warm even under a pile of quilts. Then suddenly she would be roasting hot, with sweat pouring off her. Her temperature would spike to 102 or 103. And her whole body would hurt, right down to her bones. She popped Tylenol constantly just to keep her fever down.

Then an hour after the fever hit, she would start to feel sick and throw up until she had nothing left in her. This happened almost every night.

During the day, she felt weak and tired, and her bones hurt. It made any movement painful. Her doctors called it fibromyalgia. She also had a rash. Hives, the doctors told her. It didn’t itch, but no one could figure out why she had it. And, her daughters added, she had no appetite. The very thought of food made her want to vomit, the older woman told May. She’d lost over 80 pounds this past year.

A Deep Dive Into the Records
May could see how the patient’s clothes, eyes and even skin looked a couple of sizes too large. Otherwise her exam was uninformative. She didn’t have a fever, and she didn’t have a rash. May told the patient she would go through the stack of records and come up with a plan.

Reviewing them, May saw that the patient had a persistently elevated white-blood-cell count. Normal is under 10; the patient’s was at nearly 20 — and had been for a couple of years. CT scans showed enlarged lymph nodes throughout her body. These findings could be from a chronic infection. Or from a cancer. But her hometown doctors found neither.

**Overlooked Possibilities**

May decided to think about illnesses that her first doctors hadn’t tested for. The woman needed to be checked for H.I.V.; patients over 55 are thought to make up a quarter of all cases — diagnosed and undiagnosed — and they are much less likely to be tested for it. Another possibility was syphilis, called the great imitator for its variable presentation. And given her persistent gastrointestinal problems, May would look for celiac disease. She also sent off a test to look for a type of blood cancer called multiple myeloma, which attacks the blood and bones and is seen in patients over 50.

May waited anxiously as the results came back. It wasn’t H.I.V. It wasn’t syphilis or celiac disease. The patient didn’t have multiple myeloma either, though that test, which measures levels of one part of the immune system known as antibodies, was abnormal; one antibody, known as IgM, was high. May referred the patient to an infectious-disease specialist, who found no infection. The oncologist found no cancer, And the dermatologist merely confirmed what May already knew — the patient had hives, and it wasn’t clear why. She presented her puzzling patient to every smart doctor she knew when she walked down the hospital hallway and at educational conferences. Yet after seven months of testing and referring and discussing, May was no closer to a diagnosis than she was on Day 1.

**A Doctor Puts It Together**

It was part of May’s weekly routine to check the patient’s chart for any new consultant notes or test results. One afternoon she was surprised to see an 11-page note from a pathology resident who, as far as she knew, was not involved in the case. It was a meticulous summary of all the patient’s symptoms as well as the many tests performed so far. He went on to suggest that she had a disease May had never heard of — Schnitzler syndrome. It was, as the resident described it, a rare and poorly understood immune disorder.

In Schnitzler syndrome, according to current thinking, the most primitive part of the immune system — a type of white blood cell known as the macrophage — goes wild and instructs the body to act as if it is infected. The body responds with fever and chills, a loss of appetite, flulike body aches, hives and high levels of one specific type of antibody: IgM. Exactly why and how this occurs is still unknown.

The disorder was first described in 1972 by the French dermatologist Liliane Schnitzler, who subsequently identified five patients with hives, episodes of prolonged fever, bone pain and
enlarged lymph nodes. These symptoms, plus an elevated level of IgM, Schnitzler proposed, defined a new disease.

**Curious About Unsolved Cases**

May didn’t know the resident who proposed the diagnosis, Dr. Forest Huls, but she’d heard of him. Huls, although still in training, had a reputation for finding cases that stumped others and figuring out the diagnosis. “When I see people suffering and I know that if I took the time and effort, I could figure it out,” he told me, “then I have to do something.” He looks for unexplained pathological findings — in this case, the high level of IgM.

Huls hadn’t heard of Schnitzler syndrome, either. He came upon it by using the database PubMed to look for a disease that matched the patient’s symptoms. He made a list of her symptoms and abnormalities. To get the full picture, he combed through her earlier electronic medical records, now archived in an old electronic warehouse, and found that her symptoms had started maybe a decade earlier. Then he looked for a disease that fit. It took hours before articles on this strange disorder began to appear. As he read, he suspected that she had it.

**Making the Case**

After reading Huls’s note, May looked up Schnitzler syndrome. Doctors’ descriptions of patients with the disorder matched her patient exactly.

It was an important diagnosis to make, in part because there is now a very effective treatment. When the woman’s insurance company refused to pay for the new and very expensive drug, May appealed to the manufacturer, which agreed, after several months, to provide it. Once she started taking it, the shaking chills and fever disappeared. So did the nausea and vomiting, the hives and bone pain.

Looking back at her life with this illness, the patient can barely recognize herself. Before her illness, she’d prided herself on her get-up-and-go and her disinclination to sit still. All those years stuck on the sofa and ultimately in bed, too sick, too weak and in too much pain to move, seemed like a chapter in someone else’s life.

As for Huls, he is finishing up his fellowship at the hospital this summer. Wherever he ends up, he is certain he will find new cases to challenge his curiosity, cases he hopes to solve.
The Birmingham City Council passed a resolution of intent to make efforts to financially support the construction of a new stadium at the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex.

The resolution itself doesn't finalize the city's funding, which still must be approved by the council at a later date.

Last week, Birmingham Mayor Randall Woodfin recommended the city commit $90 million to the project over 30 years.

The resolution is subject to the "satisfaction of certain conditions." According to the mayor's office, those conditions include the Alabama Legislature taking action to allow a dormant car rental tax to help fund the project.

"We're going to make sure this is done right to the best of our ability," Council President Valerie Abbott said.

Abbott and several other councilors spoke in favor of moving ahead with the resolution of intent to allow the council to work out the exact details, get answers to questions and ultimately decide whether to move forward with the financial commitment.

Councilor LaShunda Scales, who abstained from the vote, was the most critical of the project, focusing on the potential impact on Legion Field and questioning why Birmingham was being asked to contribute so heavily to the project.

In addition to the city ($3 million per year for 30 years) and the car rental tax (a projected $3.5 million per year for 30 years), the financial plan for the project includes contributions from the BJCC Authority ($10.7 million per year for 30 years), the Jefferson County Commission ($1 million per year for 30 years) and UAB ($4 million per year for 10 years in the form of sponsorships or naming rights).

UAB also would be a long-term tenant at the facility with lease terms comparable to other Conference USA teams, according to the BJCC.

Woodfin once again reiterated his support for the project, and said the revenue generated by the project will go toward neighborhood revitalization efforts across Birmingham.

The project itself is more than just a new open-air stadium that would seat 45,000 and up to 55,000 for special events. It would include significant upgrades at the BJCC and its Legacy Arena – upgrades supporters have said are needed to make Birmingham more competitive in the sports and event hosting world.

-Ty West
Birmingham hires Rhodes Scholar, UAB leader to head up office of economic development

The city of Birmingham has hired Josh Carpenter to lead up economic development for the city.

Carpenter, a Rhodes Scholar, has been named director of the city of Birmingham's Office of Economic Development. Carpenter will start his position March 5. He currently serves as director of external relations for the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

"Josh brings dynamic experiences, a strong analytical mind and a spirit of collaboration to our economic development efforts in Birmingham," Mayor Randall Woodfin said.

During his time at UAB, Carpenter helped secure a $6 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to train nearly 1,000 young people from in-demand tech jobs in metro Birmingham.

That program, the Innovate Birmingham Regional Workforce Partnership, is already producing graduates who are joining Birmingham companies.

He joins the city at a time when Birmingham is experiencing a downtown building boom and seeing a number of headquarters and offices returning to the city. But outside of downtown and a handful of other areas, many of the city's neighborhoods have not experienced the same level of success.

Woodfin has said one of his goals is making sure that development spreads to all of the city's neighborhoods.

Woodfin said Carpenter will help advance his vision for inclusive economic growth by working with startups, small businesses and corporate partners to attract quality jobs to Birmingham.
Sen. Orr’s bill to create Alabama School of Cyber Technology and Engineering in Huntsville passes Senate, moves to House

By: J. Pepper Bryars

A bill to establish the Alabama School of Cyber Technology and Engineering for grades 7-12 in Huntsville unanimously passed the State Senate on Thursday.

Students from across the state will be able to apply for one of the 300 spots in the public school when it opens in 2020, according to the legislation.

“Our goal is to establish the best cyber engineering high school in the nation,” said the bill’s sponsor, Sen. Arthur Orr, R-Decatur. “And Huntsville is the perfect location: the Tennessee Valley has one of the highest rates of engineers per capita in the country, and there are dozens of brilliant engineering faculty members and graduate students at the University of Alabama in Huntsville.”

The proposal was mentioned prominently in Governor Kay Ivey’s State of the State address in January.

The Huntsville school will join the Alabama School of Math and Science in Mobile and the Alabama School of Fine Arts in Birmingham.

“With the Marshall Space Flight Center and Redstone Arsenal, Alabama is at the forefront of engineering and technological research,” Ivey said in a statement. “The Alabama School of Cyber Technology and Engineering will position Alabama as a leading education hub for cyber research and engineering in America.”

Orr’s proposal now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration.
By: Courtney Crown

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. - One hundred nursing students from the University of Alabama in Huntsville and three faculty members boarded buses bound for Montgomery on Wednesday. They left before sunrise with hopes of making a difference in the lives of patients with Alzheimer's and dementia.

"It's an opportunity to help people and that's what nurses do," Student Dawn Brown said.

Dozens of UAH students and a few faculty members took their support of the Silver Alert to Montgomery.

"It's HB 247 which is the Silver Alert Bill," Amy Hunter, Clinical Associate Professor at the College of Nursing, said. "That's just like an Amber Alert but it would be put in place for senior adults, or adults of any age that are affected with cognitive impairment in an instance that they were to go missing."

These students are members of Nursing 312, an independent gerontology course at the college.

"We are currently talking about Alzheimer's, dementia, and this is something we felt would be a good professional advocacy for us to participate in," Hunter said.

The Silver Alert bill would push for more training for law enforcement officers, and anyone, who helps search for a missing person with Alzheimer's and dementia. That's important to students like Rachel Snider.

"They get out at home and they wander away, and sometimes they're less than a mile from home, but the outcome is so terrible because we didn't find them quick enough," Snider said of the worst-case scenarios.
Sharon Spencer, University of Alabama in Huntsville Nursing Faculty Member, Receives 2018 Lamplighter Award

By: Christina Morgan

University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH) College of Nursing faculty member Sharon Spencer, DNP, RN, has been nominated as a recipient of the Alabama League for Nursing Lamplighter Award for exemplary contributions to the nursing profession. Spencer will be awarded at an awards banquet in early March.

Spencer has been a clinical assistant professor in the UAH College of Nursing since 2010, serving in educational and academic roles with a focus on excellence in teaching, academic student advising, and mentoring new faculty and graduate teaching assistants.

Dr. Marsha Howell Adams, UAH Dean of Nursing, tells UAH.edu, “Dr. Spencer is very deserving of this award. She is a master clinician with a specialty in critical care who works tirelessly to position nursing students for success. She is a mentor and professional role model to students.”

Spencer is an expert in critical care nursing with a research interest in nursing leadership, education, and mentoring programs. She has been actively involved in the UAH Nurse Educator Teaching Certificate Program, The University of Alabama System Scholar’s Institute, and Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society.

Prior to her tenure at UAH, Spencer worked as a clinical nursing faculty member at the Delgado Charity School of Nursing in New Orleans and as an RN at Tulane Medical Center. She received her BSN and MSN degrees from Loyola University and her DNP from UAH.
Huntsville NASA scientist wins top astronomy prize

By: Staff Writer

Huntsville, Ala. native and NASA astrophysicist Dr. Colleen Wilson-Hodge and the Fermi Gamma-ray Burst Monitor (GBM) team have been awarded the 2018 Bruno Rossi Prize, the top prize in high-energy astronomy.

In August of 2017, the Gamma-ray Burst Monitor on NASA’s Fermi Gamma-ray Space Telescope detected something that scientists have suspected for decades; that a collision of two neutron stars would produce gravitational waves and create “short” gamma-ray bursts.

Gamma-ray bursts are the most powerful explosions in the cosmos, and this particular burst was quiet abnormal. Wilson-Hodge and her team have given the world the first ever detection of light from the same source as gravitational waves, which according to NASA are “ripples in space and time.”

“When we built GBM and launched it on Fermi in 2008, we designed it to detect gamma-ray bursts well,” Wilson-Hodge told NASA. “Back then, it was only slated to fly for five years. Today, GBM is at the forefront of an entirely new type of science, ushering in this new era of multi-messenger astronomy.”

Tyson Littenberg, a member of the LIGO Scientific Collaboration, the team that helped GBM realize the significance of their discovery, explains the encounter this way; “This new way of learning about the universe is kind of like gaining a new sense. It’s as if we’ve been watching the news for all of human history, but the T.V. has been on mute, now with gravitational wave detectors, we’re finally able to turn on the sound.”

“Discovering the first unambiguous gamma-ray burst associated with a gravitational wave has been an extremely exciting discovery,” said Wilson-Hodge. “It would not have been possible without the incredible dedication and amazing scientific contributions of the entire Fermi GBM team.”

Wilson-Hodge earned her Ph.D in Astrophysics from the University of Alabama in Huntsville, her love for the cosmos began in Elementary school, and only grew from there.

In college she became a NASA co-op student, and met Jerry Fisher, he was working on the Burst and Transient Source Experiment at the Compton Gamma Ray Observatory at the time. His excitement for the project and for gamma-ray bursts were “infectious” to Wilson-Hodge, “this was something that was discovered almost within my lifetime, and I was just really excited and wanted to be a part of that.” she said in an interview with UAH.

Wilson-Hodge has been on the forefront of many new discoveries in the cosmos, in 1999 she discovered two new kinds of pulsar called an X-ray pulsars, and in 2012 she discovered unexpected changes in X-ray emissions from the Crab Nebula.
Bechtel Executive Elected to National Academy of Engineering

By: Bechtel

Bechtel senior vice president Barbara Rusinko has been elected to the 2018 class of the National Academy of Engineering, the organization has announced. Rusinko becomes the first female Bechtel employee to receive the honor and the 17th in the company’s 120-year history.

Rusinko is currently president of Bechtel’s Nuclear, Security & Environmental global business unit, with responsibility for more than 5,000 employees at more than a dozen project sites in the U.S., UK, Australia, and other locations including complex, first-of-a-kind megaprojects.

"Barb has been a great example for an entire generation of engineers in this company," said Brendan Bechtel, chairman and chief executive officer. "She is an exceptional engineer and mentor throughout Bechtel. We are all very proud of her for receiving this outstanding recognition."

In an announcement earlier this month, the Academy said "Election to the National Academy of Engineering is among the highest professional distinctions accorded to an engineer. Academy membership honors those who have made outstanding contributions to engineering research, practice, or education... and to the pioneering of new and developing fields of technology, making major advancements in traditional fields of engineering, or developing/implementing innovative approaches to engineering education."

The academy now has 2,293 U.S. members and 262 foreign members.

Learning in the field

Crediting her experiences in construction, engineering and project management for establishing the credentials she needed to work in the field of nuclear security and environmental cleanup, Rusinko said, "Being on the ground and seeing the construction work as it was carried out was particularly valuable. So, too, was working in multiple business lines, which broadened my understanding of different ways of thinking and problem solving. It's now up to us as leaders to share our experiences and inspire a new generation of engineers."

During her more than 30 years working in the industry, Rusinko has held senior engineering management roles on complex technical projects including the national nuclear waste repository project at Yucca Mountain in Nevada, the Savannah River site in South Carolina, and the Hanford Waste Treatment Plant in Washington state. She also has held senior project managerial positions on an oil refinery project in Thailand, a coal seam gas to liquid natural gas plant in Queensland, Australia, and roles in construction field engineering on a variety of nuclear power projects.

Rusinko is vice-chair of the board of governors of two U.S. national laboratories.
Rusinko is a registered professional engineer and Six Sigma champion with a master's degree in engineering from The University of Alabama – Huntsville and a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from the University of South Carolina. She serves on the corporate partnership council of the Society of Women Engineers. Rusinko was elected a Bechtel principal vice president in 2009 and a senior vice president in 2012.
Concerns mounting over proposed NWS cuts

By: Lindsay Connell

The proposed White House budget could cause stormy conditions for the National Weather Service.

Cuts are on the table, including forecaster positions. Officials say it could impact local offices, including Huntsville.

It would eliminate hundreds of jobs at the agency. Union officials for the National Weather Service say their mission is to help save lives and further cuts to their workforce would impact their ability to do that.

The proposed White House budget includes cutting the National Weather Service’s budget by about 8 percent. It also recommends eliminating more than 355 jobs.

The National Weather Service Employees Organization, a labor union, says it could impact local offices, including Huntsville, and jeopardize the reliability of forecasts and warnings.

“You’re going to lose that local Huntsville expertise. We’re coming up on tornado season... It’s adopting an untested idea. It’s going to cost lives, it’s going to cost the economy. Forecasts are going to be worse,” Dan Sobien, union president.

According to Sobien, NWS is already down more than 600 employees and more budget cuts would bring the shortage to more than 1000 workers- a big percentage of their workforce.

“The only way they’re going to be able to do this is to close offices or at least close them for parts of the day. Offices like Huntsville might be closed at night,” Sobien said. “These are the people that are issuing the tornado warnings, putting out the freeze forecasts and they’re just not going to be there. They’re not going to be there in offices like Huntsville in the middle of the night or some other key time. The forecasts are going to have to come from somewhere else and it’s going to be people who are not familiar with the Huntsville area.”

At SWIRLL, the severe weather institute at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, officials say forecasting severe weather in north Alabama is difficult and requires those who are familiar with the atmosphere, surface characteristics and humidity that can cause variabilities.

“Unless a forecaster really knew the area and quirks of the meteorological conditions and the evolutions of weather systems over northern Alabama, they could have a difficult time in producing accurate forecasts over this region,” said Dr. Kevin Knupp, professor of atmospheric science.

“We have a lot of different things going on that make our atmosphere really variable in space and time. That includes topography, variation in surface roughness and surface characteristics. The higher humidity that makes clouds which in turn can produce variabilities in the atmosphere which are difficult to detect but they’re important in making the weather that we have around here, including tornadoes,” Knupp said.

See next page
Sobien says NWS’s mission is to help save lives and further cuts to their workforce would impact their ability to do that.

There are additional proposed cuts at the Weather Service, part of a $75 million reduction overall for fiscal 2019.

It comes on the heels of the costliest year on record for weather disasters, with economic damages exceeding $300 billion in the United States.

The justification for the proposed reductions is the 2016 Weather Service Operations and Workforce Analysis that found “there is a mismatch in some areas between workforce and workload” and “that the current distribution of staff across the country can evolve.”

The president’s proposal directs the agency to reduce staff to increase “flexibility within NWS’ operating model” and “begin implementing a series of operational reforms aimed at increasing staffing flexibility to best match service demands with available resources.”

The costs savings of such cuts would total about $15 million.

Additional proposed cuts at the Weather Service include:

- A $15 million cut in the surface and marine observations program, which includes data points that provide information on ocean cycles such as El Nino.
- An $11 million cut to the agency’s tsunami warning program.
- A $14 million cut to its science and technology integration activities, which would decrease investments in weather and water modeling and some supporting evaluation.
Society provides networking, mentoring for young professionals

By: Amy Tolson

When it comes to inspiring wonder, there is strength in numbers.

Young aerospace engineers looking to further their career and get involved in their community can do so as members of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics Greater Huntsville Section, which provides young professionals age 35 and younger with opportunities for networking, mentorship and professional development.

“When you graduate college there’s a time where you’re interested in doing something more than just your 9 to 5 job,” said Young Professional Director Tammy Statham. “Most people that go into aerospace, they like their industry, they went in there for a reason, so it’s another way of contributing outside of your normal job.”

Young professionals involved with AIAA can expect a chance to present their work, networking events, monthly luncheons, opportunities to hear from leaders in industries, social activities like a Paint Night or Space Trivia, and an annual symposium just for them. The group even celebrates Engineers Week, pairing up with other professional societies for an awards banquet, and hosting STEM events, like the AIAA UAH student chapter's paper airplane contest for kids. It’s all designed to not only strengthen the young professional’s career, but build the fields of astronautics and aeronautics as a whole.

“No matter where you are in your career, whether you’re technical or not, it’s very important to have a strong network of people,” Statham said. “AIAA will definitely provide that for you. AIAA offers technical development that your work might not offer – like classes where you can learn how to program a microcontroller, or we’re trying to do a composite course. We’re trying to do these different courses that can help you grow.”

Statham, who has been a member of AIAA since she was an undergraduate at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, is a guidance navigation and control systems engineer for the Jacobs Space Exploration Group.

“I’ve met a lot of people in industry I wouldn’t have normally met, and people know me for my technical work because of AIAA,” Statham said.

Statham won best technical presentation in the category of Guidance, Navigation and Control at the 2017 AIAA YP Symposium at UAH, which featured a keynote address from Lt. Gen. James Dickinson, The two-day annual symposium includes technical sessions, industry speakers, mentorship round tables and themed panels.

“It’s nice to have a conference where young professionals can meet each other, know what each other does, and have that opportunity to present their work,” Statham said.

Originally from Kentucky, Statham got hooked on space after attending Space Camp in Huntsville at the U.S. Space & Rocket Center as a second grader. She would return to Space Camp four more times before turning 18, and today, is realizing her dreams working at NASA.

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where she is a trajectory person for the Space Launch System, helping define the path for where the rocket goes.

“I’ve always been a big nerd, just a space geek,” Statham said.

She offered this advice for students wanting to follow a similar career path.

“Work hard,” Statham said. “When you go to college, one of the most valuable things for me was to do an internship and get that experience; it helps define what you want to do. Also, be involved in professional societies like AIAA, ASME or IEEE when you’re a student. Whether you’re an electrical engineer, mechanical engineer, aerospace engineer, they even have conferences for students specifically to attend. It’s never too early to start getting involved in a professional society and start looking for those internships.”
Concordia College, HBCU in Selma, closing

By: Leada Gore

Concordia College in Selma will close at the end of the spring semester, officials said.

The decision was made with "heavy hearts and deep regret" and comes amid continued financial struggles. Earlier this year, the board had been attempting to identify an investor to stave off closure.

WSFA reports current students, faculty and staff will receive assistance through the transition.

No additional students will be admitted after the current semester, school officials said.

Established in 1922, Concordia currently has about 400 students and around 100 employees. The private school is the only Lutheran Historically Black College in the nation. The college is a member of the Concordia University system, a group of 10 college administered by the Lutheran Church in 10 states, including Alabama.
Isaac McCoy served in Obama administration's commerce department

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

Stillman College welcomed a new dean of its business school last fall. Isaac McCoy, a former senior adviser for business development at the U.S. Department of Commerce's Minority Business Development Agency under President Barack Obama, is among the new leaders brought to campus by Stillman President Cynthia Warrick as she has sought to reverse the private college's enrollment decline and financial woes.

McCoy, whose background includes business development and nonprofit organizations, described his vision for the school in an introductory message after his appointment. The strategy focuses on entrepreneurship and innovation, technology, accreditation, fundraising, globalization, and civic engagement and responsibility.

McCoy sat down with the Tuscaloosa News to discuss his plans for the school.

Q: What is your vision for the school of business?

A: On a very macro level ... one of the things I was looking at when I came to Stillman was what is the value add to the greater society? What is that? And that was something that someone couldn't really give me an answer (about).

So for instance, if I said if you came out of Georgia Tech in a certain discipline, individuals understood the value add. If I came out of Harvard Law School, University of Chicago law school, University of Illinois' engineering, you understand their value add.

That is one of my overarching goals, one of my purposes is to define what that value add is (for a student with a Stillman business degree). What I see it as is this intersection of inclusion, innovation and social impact.

On a very macro level, what I envision for the school of business is that when an individual sees a student with a degree from the school of business from Stillman College, they are going to understand this inclusive mindset that (Stillman graduates) have.

Isaac McCoy, dean of the school of business at Stillman College, speaks to the Tuscaloosa News Monday, Feb. 5, 2018. (GARY COSBY JR./STAFF PHOTO)

Online
See the full Q&A with Stillman College business dean Isaac McCoy at www.tuscaloosanews.com.

The other part is this innovative mindset. I am not saying we are going to have all these entrepreneurs and these businesses started, but you are going to get a student
(who is) going to think a little bit differently, they are going to agitate systems. They are going to push the status quo in their departments, in their companies. They are going to use data as a reference and as a baseline for a lot of things they do. But at the same time, you are going to have individuals who are socially and environmentally conscious.

You are going to have someone who is socially and environmentally conscious and then with a global mindset too so it is not just regionally but also globally. You are going to be getting someone who is innovative, entrepreneurial, inclusive, and has a social impact. And I think that is something that I can see as a defining value add.

I would consider those almost like cultures. How do you have cultures of entrepreneurship and innovation, civic engagement and responsibility, a culture of globalization, a culture of technology, and how does that permeate, not just in title, not just in the classroom, but throughout their student experiences. I think those things, once we create those cultures, individuals will see that value add.

Q: How will you innovate?

A: We want some different thoughts, but we are going to control the flow so it is manageable, so it is incremental change. Obviously, we have things we have to adhere to for our accreditation but in this, how do we bring different individuals to the table fast with more influence to create this innovation in academics? This is not to say I devalue what has
happened or what could happen, but it is to say we need to innovate. We need to show or create environments for students to be innovative. What does that do? It means you have to show them how to allow different thoughts into the room. As an academic, a career academic, if you are saying, “No, I don't like these practical guys or it doesn't have relevance here,” you are not creating this inclusive environment. But if they now start seeing they are academics working with practical guys and then creating something, now you are creating an environment where people are like, “Oh, I can go and talk to someone in psychology or life sciences, because it is not just about business, it is about this experience of bringing different thoughts.”

It's a culture; it is not just a product I am looking for, but it is an environment and culture that needs to be embraced of inclusion, innovation, diversity. And I think the staff and the faculty have a role in that asking how do I do that? What can we do differently and still add value?

Q: We have talked quite a bit about a vision of innovation in the college. How do you achieve that in the context of Stillman's financial reality of the past few years?

A: This is like a startup to me. Even with the history, this is like a startup. In the startup culture, faculty or employees or colleagues are totally key. Bringing on the right person at the right time is key ... be it an investor and/or employee. Those things are what matter in a startup. If you bring on the wrong person at the wrong time, that can doom an organization. I don't care how good your product is, how much momentum you have — that is really, really key. That goes back to how do I build out the faculty? This is a startup culture. I am being really mindful of the culture, the place we are in, who can succeed at those times.

Looking at the financial part, there are a couple of things. I will hit micro, then come back to macro. One of the things I do respect about Dr. Warwick is how we are looking at budgets internally. In the past, it was almost like you ask and you shall receive. Not only do I know what I am working with now but I can project in 2018-2019 either based on students, based on different formulas, based on a budget allocation. That is one that is critical in how I move forward, so that I know what I am working with so that it is not, hey, if I make the request

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faster than my colleagues, I might get the money but they won't. The debt overall is something Dr. Warrick is directly focused on. So a lot of her efforts around raising capital, changing policy, is looking at the overall health of the institution. I am helping out with that a little just because of my background and connections. Then also, hyper-focusing on the school of business. If I can make it self-sustaining, then it frees up some of the other dollars we have for other departments.

Back to how do I find the investment for (vision). I think I mentioned before, once again, as a startup, you have to find the right investors. That is usually what we consider high-risk investment. So in the context of Stillman, local investors consider it extremely high risk just based on its fiscal history over the last several years.

But when I am talking about development or long-term investment, outside, even internationally, they are extremely interested because they don't see the extreme high-risk. What they see is a value-add proposition.

So looking at regional and more national contacts, and globally contacts for the long-term investments is where I would say probably our initial dollars are going to come from and staying connected to our local investors and stakeholders to show them we have viability for the future.

For more of our conversation with McCoy about his plans for the faculty, seeking outside investment and his thoughts on his tenure as dean, visit www.tuscaloosanews.com.
New member appointed to college board

Matthew Woods named community college trustee

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

An alumnus of Bevill State Community College has been appointed to the District 4 seat on the Alabama Community College System board of trustees.

Matthew Woods was sworn in at the board’s regular monthly meeting on Wednesday. District 4 includes the northern half of Tuscaloosa County.

“As a successful businessman who is familiar with the important work being done at our community colleges, I’m confident Mr. Woods will make an excellent board member,” said system Chancellor Jimmy Baker in a statement released by the system office. “Mr. Woods, much like Alabama’s community colleges, is committed to improving our state by ensuring Alabamians are receiving the education and training they need to pursue

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Ivey, was unanimously confirmed by the Alabama Senate on Feb. 8 to complete the remaining year of Caldwell’s term. Trustees serve four-year terms.

Woods is the manager of Jasper Auto Sales and an executive board member of the Walker County Chamber of Commerce, according to the system office. He received an associate degree from Bevill State and a bachelor of science in business administration with a focus in aviation management from Auburn University.
Inside Auburn’s Secret Effort to Advance an Athlete-Friendly Curriculum

By: Jack Stripling

The new batch of data was unambiguous. Half of the students in one major were athletes. One in three black players on Auburn’s football team was enrolled in the program.

Rather than question how this might have happened, the university’s provost instead offered a plan: Create more programs like it.

"The following report points to the need for more majors that have enough elective courses etc.," Timothy R. Boosinger, the provost at the time, wrote in the late winter of 2015 to G. Jay Gogue, who was then the president. So many athletes concentrated in one major — public administration — can attract controversy, and it did. Offering more programs with similarly flexible requirements would, Boosinger implied, solve the problem.

The provost assured the president that those other programs were in the works, and that he had met with Jay Jacobs, who was then the athletic director, "to discuss the new offerings that are in the pipeline."

The email and other communications obtained by The Chronicle suggest an openness among Auburn’s academic leaders to tailor a curriculum for the specific benefit of athletes, privately discussing the creation of new majors that would best serve a small but high-profile segment of the student body. These discussions demonstrate the power of athletic interests at universities with big-time sports programs and the quiet ways in which they put pressure on the academic enterprise.

The athletics department’s interest in public administration was first reported by The Wall Street Journal in 2015. Faculty committees had voted to discontinue the program after its centrality to the department’s educational mission was questioned. But Auburn kept the major after a lobbying effort from athletics officials, who at one point offered money to keep it afloat.

Auburn officials say that no money came from athletics. In response to questions from The Chronicle, the university said that the athletics department does not unduly influence curricular decisions.

"The shared governance system at Auburn serves as a type of internal watchdog, guarding against the very type of situation at the center of your questioning," C. Michael Clardy, a university spokesman, wrote in an email. "We as an institution are committed to the integrity and rigor of our academic programs."

"All academic decisions," he continued, "are driven and led by academic administration and faculty leadership."

Nevertheless, the university has allowed difficult questions to persist about how the athletics department exerts influence on academic matters. The blanket assertion that faculty control the curriculum, while accurate as a matter of policy, skims over the manner in which athletics...
officials at Auburn have advocated for the department’s parochial interests, even when doing so defied what professors said was in the best interest of students.

The story behind Auburn’s debate over the fate of a single major provides a striking example of the intractable tensions that exist between academics and athletics on a campus where sports reign supreme. What happened after the public-administration program was exposed shows an arguably deeper problem: Little came of it.

From the moment that Auburn’s faculty started a process that would discontinue the public-administration major, Gary L. Waters surmised what was at stake: The academic fortunes of one of the nation’s premier college athletics programs, including those of its storied football team.

Waters, an accounting and finance professor, had developed close ties with the athletics department during his years as Auburn’s faculty athletics representative, a position charged with ensuring that members of the National Collegiate Athletic Association maintain an appropriate balance between academics and athletics. In 2011, he joined the athletics department as senior associate athletics director for academic services, a position from which he retired in June.

When Waters joined the athletics department, there were just six football players majoring in public administration, documents show. That number quadrupled after his first year on the job, and, in emails, Waters described the program’s proposed elimination in desperate terms. He wanted to take the issue straight to the president, he told Jacobs, the athletics director. Perhaps, Waters suggested, he could lead an unrelated committee about football tickets, which would be an opportunity to "serve the provost" they sought to persuade.

"Rest assured," he wrote to Jacobs, "that as chair of this group my primary responsibility would be to facilitate a discussion on this topic."

Working on multiple tracks, Waters at one point asked Patricia A. Duffy, the chairwoman of the University Senate’s Academic Program Review Committee, whether some extra money might help to keep the program open.

"The Athletics Department," Waters wrote, "would welcome the opportunity to make an investment in the academic side of the university."

When Duffy asked if she could share this offer with her fellow committee members, Waters demurred.

"In the past, when we have made investments of this type, it has not been publicized," Waters wrote in January of 2013.

Even as Waters worked behind the scenes to save the program, he recognized that cajoling and offering money might not be enough. The plan to phase out public administration, which an external review team of three professors had suggested might not add value to graduates on the job market, was moving through the necessary academic committees. Boosinger, the provost, had already signed off on a plan to close the relatively unpopular major, where less than 1 percent of Auburn students were enrolled. There was still time, however, to stack the program with more players.

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A few days before Christmas, in 2012, Waters wrote to Jacobs, "As you and I have discussed, there is currently no policy preventing students from transferring into the program, and any students who are in the program when it closes will be able to finish their degrees."

Waters did not respond to phone messages or emails sent to his university account.

The athletics department’s attempt to stack the program with athletes before it was closed, which has not been previously reported, was a source of considerable tension.

Waters had been told explicitly by Gerard S. (Gerry) Gryski, chairman of the political-science department, where public administration is housed, that it was "not a good option" to place students in a major that was on the chopping block. But Waters persisted.

The football team in particular flocked to public administration, reaching a peak of 33 players in 2013, or 40 percent of scholarship athletes, documents show.

Frustrated, Gryski wrote to colleagues that the program was now "compromised" with students "who were never envisioned as being the principal constituency for this major."

"That’s a disservice to that core group of students and the faculty who teach in this major," Gryski wrote.

Those concerns fell on deaf ears. Boosinger, who stepped down as provost in January, let two months pass before responding to a final faculty committee’s vote to suspend admissions into the program. When Boosinger did finally respond, it was to announce a shocking reversal: The program should stay put, at least until a new dean had a chance to evaluate it.

Boosinger declined interview requests.

Professors and administrators in the College of Liberal Arts were stunned by the provost’s decision, emails show. But their communications also suggest a grudging acceptance of business as usual. Athletics had gotten its way.

"My guess here is that they need some place to put low-performing students who the institution has an interest in keeping academically eligible," Daniel LaRocque, who was then associate dean for academic affairs, wrote to his colleagues.

Anne-Katrin Gramberg, who was dean at the time, replied, "Aha!"

The public-administration episode would quickly have faded from memory if not for Michael L. Stern.

Stern, chairman of Auburn’s economics department, was the first to openly raise concerns about the number of athletes majoring in public administration — a trend that one of his colleagues had noticed while watching a Tigers football game. During a University Senate meeting, in 2014, Stern challenged a report from Mary K. Boudreaux, who was then Auburn’s faculty athletics representative, for her assertion that there was no clustering happening at Auburn, a transcript of the meeting shows.
When pressed by Stern about public administration specifically, Boudreaux responded, "I have no problem with public administration. Sounds like a good major to me. But anyway, thank you."

At the time, Stern had no sense of the larger story of the athletics department’s behind-the-scenes lobbying to keep the major in place. But he quickly realized he had touched a nerve. The following night, Joseph A. Aistrup, the dean who had retained the program, fired off an email to Stern.

"My most favorite chair," Aistrup wrote. "Did you miss that lecture on diplomacy? I hope I don’t need to explain to someone as gifted and as smart as you that you could have made your point about Athletic Advisors without mentioning any department at the Faculty Senate meeting, especially in our college.

"I know you were trying to beat up on Athletic Advisors, but your remarks did cause collateral damage on PA, in a very public way. They are up in arms, and I don’t blame them.

"Would you consider an apology to your colleagues in PA?"

"I highly recommend it and would appreciate it."

Aistrup declined interview requests.

Impolitic though Stern’s approach may have been, he prompted the provost to look into the situation — a little bit. But when Boosinger learned from Waters that more than half of the major’s students were athletes, the conversation quickly turned to where they might direct athletes next.

"As we move forward with the plans for adult education, criminology, and Interdisciplinary Studies/Sports Management, the number of student-athletes enrolled in Public Administration is expected to decline," Waters wrote in February 2014.

Who was "we"?

What were the "plans"?

When the provost was later asked those questions before the University Senate, he said the email was innocent shorthand. Waters and the athletics department, Boosinger said, were not in the business of developing new majors.

"I think he is using ‘we’ in the broadest sense," he said.

None of those programs were created, Auburn officials said. But the trio of majors discussed appears less than random. Two of them, criminal justice and adult education, had existed in the past and were closed around 2006, following a New York Times report that professors in those programs had taught unusual numbers of independent-study-style classes that helped some Auburn football players remain eligible.
UA football completes coaching staff

By Aaron Suttles
Sports Writer

Alabama announced the completion of its 2018 coaching staff Thursday afternoon, identifying new roles for all 10 assistant coaches, including two new assistants.

UA officially announced the hiring of Dan Enos (associate head coach/quarterbacks coach) and Craig Kuligowski (defensive line coach), as The Tuscaloosa News previously reported.

With the two additions, the Crimson Tide’s assistant coaching staff is as follows:

- Mike Locksley, offensive coordinator; Brent Key, offensive line; Enos, Josh Gattis, wide receivers; Joe Pannunzio, running backs; Jeff Banks, tight ends/special teams; Tosh Lupoi, defensive coordinator; Pete Golding, inside linebackers; Kuligowski; Karl Scott, defensive backs.

Pannunzio takes over as running backs coach for Burton Burns, who transitions into an off-the-field role of assistant athletics director for football. The Tuscaloosa News previously reported Pannunzio was moving off the field.

Burns was the lone assistant remaining from Saban’s first year at Alabama in 2007. Strength and conditioning coach Scott Cochran and athletic trainer Jeff Allen are also original members.

“it is a privilege and an honor to join Coach Saban’s coaching staff at The University of Alabama,” Enos said via press release. “I have an incredible amount of admiration for the rich tradition of football success at Alabama. I am really excited to be part of this program, and I can’t wait to get out on the field and get started.”

Enos, who has SEC See FOOTBALL, C4
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experience as an Arkansas assistant, is thought of as one of the best offensive minds in the conference. Working with Alabama’s young quarterbacks, Enos has plenty of weapons at his disposal.

“We are pleased and happy to have Dan Enos joining our coaching staff at The University of Alabama,” Saban said. “He brings a wealth of knowledge with five years of head coaching experience and numerous stops as an offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach. Dan is a bright football mind and an outstanding recruiter who will strengthen our coaching staff and give our players the best chance to be successful.”

Kuligowski comes to UA after a season at Miami. He is widely regarded as one of the best defensive line coaches in the country.

“I have known Craig for a long time, going all the way back to my first head coaching job at Toledo when he was one of our starting offensive tackles,” Saban said via press release. “He is an outstanding football coach who will bring great energy to our program. Craig does a tremendous job of developing players and has proven to be an exceptional recruiter.”

Kuligowski spent 15 seasons at Missouri as an assistant.

“I played my senior season at Toledo for Coach Saban, and I am thrilled to have the opportunity to work on his staff at Alabama,” Kuligowski said. “Coach’s program is the model of consistency and I am looking forward to helping continue that tradition of success with an exceptional group of players and coaches.”

Reach Aaron Suttles at aaron@tidesports.com or at 205-722-0229.
Alabamas locks in changes to coaching staff

Longtime RB coach Head gets new role

The transition on the coaching staff has been a fluid process for Alabama, with the departures of several assistants and the additions of new talent. Longtime running backs coach Robert Nix Jr. will now assume a new role.

"I am excited for this new opportunity," Nix said. "Being able to bring my experience and knowledge to a new position will be a great challenge."

Nix has been with the Crimson Tide for 17 years, working with some of the best players in program history. His departure marks the end of an era for Alabama's offensive line.

"I want to thank Coach Nick Saban for giving me this opportunity," Nix added. "He has been a tremendous mentor to me throughout my time at Alabama."

Nix's new role will focus on developing the team's depth chart and preparing players for the future. With the departures of several key players, Nix will need to find new leaders and establish a strong foundation for the team's success.

"This is a new chapter for me," Nix said. "I am looking forward to this challenge and I know the players will too."

Nix's transition comes as Alabama continues to build for the future. With multiple players opting out of the 2020 season, Nix will need to find new leaders and prepare the team for the next few seasons.

"It's a big responsibility," Nix said. "But I am excited for this new challenge. I know the players will be ready to accept it and I am looking forward to being a part of Alabama's future success."
Alabama hires Kuligowski as defensive line coach

By: Aaron Suttles

Less than two weeks since losing its defensive line coach, Alabama has its replacement. UA has hired veteran assistant coach Craig Kuligowski to serve as the Crimson Tide’s new defensive line coach, The Tuscaloosa News has learned.

SportsIllustrated.com first reported the hiring Monday evening.

Kuligowski replaces Karl Dunbar, who left Tuscaloosa to head back to the NFL as the defensive line coach of the Pittsburgh Steelers.

Kuligowski comes from Miami, where he spent two seasons in the same role. Previously he coached the position for Missouri, where he mentored and developed five first-round defensive lineman, including Shane Ray and Sheldon Richardson.

Miami released the following statement Monday: “The University of Miami announced Monday night that assistant head coach/defensive line coach Craig Kuligowski is leaving the program to pursue other opportunities. Kuligowski coached two seasons in Coral Gables after spending the previous 15 years as the defensive line coach at the University of Missouri.”

That opportunity is at Alabama, where he reunites with with Saban for whom he played at Toledo in 1990. Kuligowski interviewed with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers before accepting UA’s offer.

Alabama’s defensive line returns one starter from its 2017 top-ranked defense in Raekwon Davis, although Isaiah Buggs played a significant portion of the snaps. However, there is young talent on hand in Quinnen Williams, LaBryan Ray among others.
The Tide has turned, and Alabama's hockey season has entered a new phase. The Crimson Tide, who started the year ranked 14th in the nation, has climbed to their highest ranking yet. "We're excited to see where we end up," said head coach Scott Sweeton. The team has been on a roll, winning their last three games.

This season, the Tide has faced challenges, but they've come out stronger on the other side. "Our players are learning how to play an overtime game," said Sweeton. "We've been working on our penalty kill and special teams, and it's paying off." The Tide's recent success has led to a new. "We're looking forward to the rest of the season," said Sweeton. "We're playing our best hockey yet and we're ready to take on the next challenge."
Camille Wright Cook was school's first female tenured professor

Staff report

The University of Alabama School of Law’s first female tenured faculty member, Camille Wright Cook, has died. She was 93.

"I write, in sadness, to let you know that Camille Wright Cook died yesterday. Her son (and fellow alumnus) Sydney Cook reported this morning that she passed away at home, surrounded by family, listening to Frank Sinatra," Dean Mark E. Brandon wrote in a statement released Wednesday by the college.

Cook, the John S. Stone professor emerita of Law, was a 1948 graduate of the college and taught for 24 years before retiring in 1993. She served a variety of roles at UA, including administrative assistant to the dean, assistant dean and professor. She became the first tenured female member of the faculty in 1976 and the first woman to hold an endowed chair in 1992 when she was named the John S. Stone Chair of Law.

Cook’s awards included UA’s Distinguished Alumna Award, UA’s Outstanding Commitment to Teaching Award, the Award of Special Merit from the American Law Institute, the Walter P. Gewin Award for Outstanding Service to Continuing Legal Education, the Award of Merit from the Alabama State Bar, and the Sam W. Pipes Distinguished Alumna Award from the School of Law. The plaza in front of the college is also named in her honor.

In 2009, Cook was named one of the Pillars of West Alabama, an annual honored bestowed by the Community Foundation of West Alabama. The Pillars program honors people whose impact and influence have made a significant and lasting difference in the development and quality of life in West Alabama.

A memorial service will be at 2 p.m. Friday at Christ Episcopal Church, 605 Lurleen B Wallace Blvd N. in Tuscaloosa.
Tide's Williams named SEC Player of the Week

By Drew Hill
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

Ashley Williams finished with back-to-back double-doubles last week, pushing the Crimson Tide to two key victories as it searches for an NCAA Tournament bid. On Tuesday the Southeastern Conference recognized her efforts by naming Williams SEC Player of the Week for women's basketball.

Williams, the Crimson Tide's only fifth-year player, was also named the SEC's player of the week once during the 2014-15 season, and freshman of the week twice during the 2013-14 season.

Referred to as "Mother Hen" by her teammates, Williams is both the vocal leader and most experienced player on Alabama this season. She is the only player that has been with coach Kristy Curry since she took the Alabama job five years ago.

The senior scored 16 points and grabbed 10 rebounds in Alabama's first-ever win at Tennessee on Thursday, and she followed that up with a 17-point, 10-rebound game against Auburn three days later.

Williams will play her final regular-season home game against No. 21 Georgia on Thursday night.
Senate OKs budget with prison funding boost

State system would get $51M finance hike in October

By Kim Chandler
The Associated Press

MONTGOMERY — The Alabama prison system would get a $51 million funding increase in October, under a budget approved Tuesday by the Alabama Senate, as the state attempts to comply with a federal court order to improve mental health care to inmates.

Senators voted 26-2 for the proposed general fund budget. It now moves to the Alabama House of Representatives.

U.S. District Judge Myron Thompson ruled last year that

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mental health care in state prisons was "horrendously inadequate" and ordered the state to improve conditions. Gov. Kay Ivey said Tuesday morning that the funding increase, as well as an additional $30 million proposed for this year, was critically important to complying with the order.

"The court has ruled quite clearly that we need more staff and correctional officers. We need better mental health care and mental health professionals. The judge is dead serious about getting this situation corrected," Ivey said.

The Senate has not yet voted on the additional $30 million for this fiscal year.

Southern Poverty Law Center attorney Maria Morris, who is representing state inmates in the lawsuit over prison health care, said the additional money for this year is a "first step to address needed facility upgrades, staffing increases, and the cost of prisoner healthcare." But she said it was unlikely to "fully address unconstitutional staff shortages or the provision of care."

She also said the discussion on the ADOC budget and how taxpayer money is spent should be accompanied by a discussion of sentencing reform.

Targeted and evidence-based sentencing reform will ensure we are not unnecessarily incarcerating non-violent Alabamians who pose no threat to public safety or Alabamians who need treatment for mental health issues or substance abuse," Morris added in the emailed statement.

Senators delayed a vote on a proposed three percent pay raise for state employees. While state employees have seen merit raises, they have not had an across-the-board increase since 2008.

Senate Finance and Taxation Committee Chairman Trip Pittman said there are ongoing negotiations because some senators also want a cost-of-living increase for state retirees. Pittman, R-Montrose, said he had concerns about the affordability of expanding the raise to retirees.

"If you want to do something, you need to give a one-time bonus," Pittman said.
UA gymnast Brannan out with injury

By Terrin Waack
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

Alabama senior gymnast Mackenzie Brannan ruptured her Achilles tendon during Sunday’s practice and will be out for the rest of the season, ending her career, The Tuscaloosa News has learned. The All-American will undergo an MRI on Monday morning to confirm the initial diagnosis. Surgery has already been scheduled for Wednesday.

“Today’s injury is unfortunately one of those things that happens in sports,” Brannan said. “I was practicing my floor routine when it happened, working to get out there on another event.”

Brannan has competed in all but one of Alabama’s meets this season on the uneven bars. The only meet she missed was the opener due to being ill. She most recently posted a season-high 9.925 last weekend against Kentucky in Coleman Coliseum.

The Austin, Texas, native has a career-high 39.575 all-around score. Her other career highs consists of a 9.95 on vault, a 9.85 on the balance beam, a 9.925 on the floor exercise and a 9.975 on bars. She was the 2016 SEC vault champion and 2016 NCAA Tuscaloosa Regional uneven bars champion.

“While no one wants to end their competitive career like this, I have no regret.” Brannan said. “I am thankful for the support of my teammates and coaches and will be back cheering my sisters on as soon as possible.”

Alabama competes at Auburn on Friday. There are four regular-season meets left before postseason starts with SEC Championships in St. Louis.