SPECIAL SECTION:

APRIL 5-6, 2018
BOARD OF TRUSTEE MEETING
Bicentennial monument

Plans considered for a sculpture to commemorate UA's anniversary

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

The University of Alabama board of trustees will consider plans to install a sculpture commemorating Tuscaloosa's bicentennial at the Park at Manderson Landing when it meets Thursday and Friday.

The proposed project would install a 10-foot tall sculpture of Minerva, the Roman goddess of wisdom who is also on the university's seal, symbolically releasing knowledge in the form of an owl to the city, state and world.

The board's committee

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Tuscaloosa facts

- Alabama became a territory in 1817, and the territorial legislature incorporated the town of Tuscaloosa on Dec. 13, 1819 — one day before Congress admitted Alabama to the Union as the 22nd state.
- Tuscaloosa, which served as the Alabama state capital from 1826 to 1846, was originally home to Native Americans, including Chief Tuscaloosa from whom the county received its name.
- Tuscaloosa's history includes Native American legends, Civil War battles, educational and athletic achievement, and a pivotal role in the civil rights movement (George Wallace's "Stand in the Schoolhouse Door").

A black-and-white sketch of the Tuscaloosa bicentennial sculpture was included in the agenda for the University of Alabama's board of trustees meeting. The 10-foot tall sculpture represents Minerva, the Roman goddess of wisdom who is also on the university's seal, symbolically releasing knowledge in the form of an owl to the city, state and world. [SUBMITTED PHOTO]

SCULPTURE

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meetings begin at 2 p.m. Thursday at the Student Services Building on the University of Alabama in Huntsville campus. The bicentennial project is part of the Physical Properties Committee agenda. Agenda items approved by the committees will be considered by the full board on Friday.

The project's budget is $540,050. University funds will pay for $390,050 of the cost with the remaining $150,000 coming from an endowed fund from an anonymous donor who made the gift to the university to support sculptures that are historic or heroic in nature.

The bronze statue would be located atop an arched, 16-foot stainless steel base. The project would also include landscaping, lighting and a walkway, which would include a bronze trace representing the course of the Black Warrior River from Tuscaloosa to Demopolis. The sculpture would be located in the park near the main sign overlooking the river.

The bronze statue would be created by artist Caleb O'Connor in collaboration with UA sculpture professor Craig Wedderspoon. The artists were selected by the City of Tuscaloosa Bicentennial Committee, which is overseeing the official activities for the celebration of the city's bicentennial.

The goal is to unveil the statue by Dec. 13, 2019, for the anniversary of the city's founding, said UA System spokeswoman Kellee Reinhart.
Increases would affect medical, optometry and dentistry schools

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

HUNTSVILLE – The University of Alabama System board of trustees will consider tuition increases of 1-3 percent for students of its medical, optometry and dentistry schools when it meets Friday. The increases, similar to hikes enacted last year, were approved by the finance committee on Thursday. The board’s physical properties and investment committees also met on Thursday.

The increases will help pay new faculty members, boost technology and cope with increased overhead costs in the schools, said University of Alabama at Birmingham Vice President of Financial Affairs Allen Bolton.

"We think the increases were relatively modest and market based," Bolton said.

For medical students in UAB’s medical school and UA’s College of Community Health Sciences, tuition would increase from $27,582 per year to $28,410 for Alabama residents and from $61,848 to $62,714 for nonresidents.

UAB’s tuition rates for instate students is about 5 percent below average for the Southeast region, Bolton said.

Students in UAB’s school of dentistry would see increases depending on their class year. First-, second- and

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TUITION

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third-year students would see increases, but fourth-year students would not. UAB is in year three of a plan to consolidate its rates for the school. Tuition per term would increase from $13,468 to $13,872 in-state residents. Tuition for nonresident dentistry students would increase from $31,196 to $32,132. Fourth-year students' tuition would remain $14,742 per term for residents and $34,363 for nonresidents.

Optometry students would see a 1 percent increase for in-state students and no increase for nonresidents, whose tuition would remain $18,004 per term. Tuition for residents would increase to $8,880 per term.

In other business, the physical properties committee approved increasing the scope of the latest phase of the University Boulevard improvements, preliminary plans for a bronze sculpture at the Park at Manderson Landing commemorating the city of Tuscaloosa's bicentennial and plans to preserve the Bryce Hospital lawn from future development.

The committee approved increasing the budget of the third phase of improvements to University Boulevard by $800,000 to add work requested by the city of Tuscaloosa and the Alabama Department of Transportation, including additional lighting, sidewalks and the replacement of aging water and sewer lines. The city and state have agreed to reimburse UA for the work. The committee also approved awarding a construction contract to GFC Construction Inc. of Tuscaloosa as the low bidder.

The bicentennial monument would be a 10-foot sculpture of Minerva, the Roman goddess of wisdom who is also on the university's seal, symbolically releasing knowledge to the city, state and world. The project's budget is $540,000. The sculpture would be created by Tuscaloosa artist Caleb O'Connor and cast in collaboration with UA art professor Craig Wedderspoon.

The committee approved an amendment to the UA campus master plan to create the Peter Bryce Park Preserve, which would preserve the historic main lawn of the state's first psychiatric hospital as green space. The campus master plan previously proposed a new classroom at the western edge of the lawn. The preserve would prohibit further development in the lawn other than the existing former superintendent's home, which is being renovated.

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University Boulevard work OK'd
UPGRADES

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The phase includes work similar to earlier phases with repaving, new curbs and gutters, replacing storm inlets and landscaping and lighting. The roadway will be four traffic lanes, with either a center turn lane or landscaped median.

The fourth phase of the work from Hellen Keller Boulevard to the Alberta city bridge has yet to be bid.

The tuition increases will take effect in July for students of the University of Alabama System’s medical, dentistry, and optometry schools.

For medical students in UAB’s medical school and UA’s College of Community Health Sciences, annual tuition would increase to $28,410 for Alabama residents and $62,714 for nonresidents.

First-, second- and third-year dentistry students would see increases, but fourth-year students would not. Tuition per term would increase to $13,872 in-state residents. Tuition for nonresident dentistry students would increase to $32,132.

Fourth-year students’ tuition would remain $14,742 per term for residents and $34,363 for nonresidents.

Optometry students would see a 1 percent increase for in-state students and no increase for nonresidents, whose tuition would remain $18,004 per term. Tuition for residents would increase to $8,880 per term.
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Apple CEO Tim Cook sees progress, promise in state that shaped him

By: Roy Johnson

He still says "we."

It's been all-but-a-lifetime since Tim Cook called Alabama home. He was born in Mobile, molded in Robertsdale and higher-educated at Auburn -- as most of us know.

Now, though, Cook is the 57-year-old CEO of Apple, an iconic tentpole in Silicon Valley and the world's most valuable company. Maybe the most intriguing one, too, in part, because of its deep-thinking, approachable, casual-sweater-wearing leader, who traverses the globe as an indefatigable ambassador for human rights and education and the recognizable face of the ubiquitous products most of us can't seem to put down.

Still, ask him about Alabama, about the biggest challenges facing his home state, and Cook talks as if he and his two brothers are still back home being molded by lessons learned from Donald and Geraldine Cook.

"The most important (challenge) is education," he says. "How do we as a state -- I'm not a resident any longer but an 'interested outsider' -- how do we give everyone equal access to a quality education so that everyone can realize the America Dream?"

Cook was in Birmingham last week to participate in events commemorating the 50th year since the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. That same year, U.S. Sen. Robert F. Kennedy was gunned down, and the Vietnam War raged. Cook was just 8 years old -- too young to understand why the two men were murdered or know they would ultimately become the "North Star" guiding his own views on human rights.

"I remember the shock and the horror of the combination of things going on," he recalls. "I had relatives in the Vietnam War that was a dark cloud over America. When Dr. King was assassinated, it was like hope died, then Bobby Kennedy shortly thereafter. I remember snippets of images of the shooting over and over, night after night, on television.

"I didn't understand at the time that people who push are pushing against something that some want to remain the same. So, they have to have unbelievable courage. Those two gentlemen had the maximum amount, because they were willing to give their life for the cause."

Some may deem it oxymoronic that this Son of the South draws upon such a deep connection between his home state and two men who tried to eradicate many of the laws and traditions that were at its core. But to Cook, who displays photographs of King and Kennedy prominently in his office, the convergence is clear.

"Besides the tragedies, there were so many great things about growing up in that period," he said. "Hard work was an expectation. There was an overriding, compelling view that if you worked
hard you would succeed. There might be something surprising along the journey, but the American Dream was real.

"King had the wisdom to see that. He expressed it in various ways at different times, but if you look at the arc of his work -- at the unbelievably big legislation that came out at the time, along with his late move to economic justice, all of that is what America is about.

"A lot of people don't make that connection. They see him as a civil rights hero, and he obviously was also. But I think he was a symbol of America, the American Dream. He was essentially pushing for everyone to have an equal opportunity to realize that dream.

"I'm not sure I would have gotten that had it not been for Alabama."

Code for all

Cook spoke while sitting at a sun-drenched picnic bench on the campus of Lawson State Community College, not long after spending valuable moments with about two dozen students -- including a couple of home-schooled high-schoolers -- in a coding lab that is part of the institution's effort to become one of the state's pre-eminent STEM centers among two-year colleges.

"Are you enjoying it?" he asked one student. "I am," the young man responded. "It's a challenge sometimes, but I like it. Hopefully, it'll get easier." "Easier is harder than hard," Cook said, "because you have to think of something really deeply to make it easy."

Later, as the Lawson baseball team practiced nearby, Cook reflected on his interaction with the students. "I loved the class," he said. "I found the students incredibly engaged by what they're doing and eager to learn coding. They're in different places, but it felt to me like all of them are on a pathway now." In today's world, he said, coding should be as fundamental to curricula at all levels as reading, math and science -- irrespective of whether students want to pursue a tech career.

"Coding by itself doesn't save the world, but it's a key skill in today's world," he said. "Software touches all of us all day long, and people do need to understand what's possible."

During his visit, Cook was particularly struck by a display at the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute showing the differences in resources in segregated classrooms. Cook says he sees "a lot of change" in his home state but feels the systemic disparities in schools that existed in his youth remain today. "The specifics have changed, but in too many cases there is still the reality of that disparity," he said. "That's a systemic issue, and we have to admit a (desegregation) law didn't change that."

Cook confesses the explosion of technology, rather than enhancing education, all but certainly is increasing some of those disparities seen in Alabama. "Technology, because it speeds things up, likely sped up the gap," Cook said. "It grew because the educational change system was not sped
up with technology. Also, technology has been embraced relatively more by younger people, but they're not making (education) policies or setting strategies."

A better Alabama

It's no secret that Alabama, like many states, is seeking to broaden its economic base by attracting, nurturing and retaining tech-based enterprises. But tech hubs like Silicon Valley don't just happen; they're the result of a clear set of resources and conditions, which Cook -- despite the state's quixotic efforts to lure Amazon aside -- believes might exist here.

First, he cited Innovation Depot's Velocity Accelerator program in Birmingham, which incubates emerging tech ventures throughout the year; then, the existence of UAB; and finally, access to venture capital, which Cook believes is more accessible than ever. The wild card? Will Alabamians embrace the kind of global diversity characteristic of thriving tech hubs, even beyond Silicon Valley?

"When you look at Silicon Valley the reasons for its success are: One, it welcomes people from everywhere," Cook said. "You don't have to check your country card at the door. The Valley has this change-the-world mentality that brings out the best in people. ... The Valley also has access to great universities, access to venture capital and a hub for entrepreneurs because entrepreneurs have different issues, challenges and issues in life, and they need that social network.

"I would try to make sure that these lines, if you will, between the incubator and the entrepreneurial community and the university are strong. You do have access to venture capital, which will increasingly become more available outside of the traditional places. I'd give people a free place to work to give it a push. I'm not talking about a handout, but entrepreneurs create jobs. It's OK to do something that is a bit of an investment for today."

As for the most critical challenge facing Alabama, Cook says it's similar to that facing many other states: the widening chasm between rich and poor neighbors. "Work is such an important part of life," he said. "It helps give us purpose and make our contribution to the world."

Solving it, of course, begins, at least to Cook, with education. "We've got to address it first and really commit ourselves to it -- not doing something for one, two or even three years, but committing to long-term fundamental change."

Cook had not been to Alabama since last year's Iron Bowl (which he took numerous opportunities to mention). His mother passed away in 2015; last Christmas, his father joined him at Tim's home in California. Alabama, though, is still home.

"I have extremely fond memories of being here, and I love coming back," he said. "It's a magical thing that you can still walk by someone and they'll look you in the eye and say hello. That may sound trite, but it's not because it doesn't happen very many places in the world."
"If you combine these great characteristics and ensure that everyone is treated with dignity and respect and that the education system reflects that, then the state can have an unbelievable future."
Rep. Williams: I’m innocent

Says he’s staying in Jefferson County Commission race

Mike Cason mcsason@al.com

State Rep. Jack Williams said he’s innocent of charges in an alleged bribery scheme and expects to be cleared.

The Vestavia Hills Republican issued a statement Tuesday, one day after his arrest on an indictment by a federal grand jury.

“I have done nothing wrong, and once the facts are presented, I expect to be found innocent by a jury of all the allegations outlined in Monday’s indictment,” Williams said. “I trust our judicial system and our electoral system; they have both protected individual rights for hundreds of years.”

Also charged Monday were former Alabama Republican Party Chairman and lobbyist Marty Connors, of Alabaster; and G. Ford Gilbert of Carmichael, California.

Williams and Connors made an initial appearance in federal court in Montgomery. Arraignment in the case is set for April 18.

Williams said he plans to finish his term in the Legislature. He had previously announced he was not running for re-election but is running for the Jefferson County Commission.

“I have served honorably in the Legislature for over a decade and will continue to do so until my term expires,” Williams said. “I also will push forth with my campaign for the Jefferson County Commission.”

Williams said the statement would be his last public comment about the case and referred questions to his attorney, Jake Watson.

Williams and Connors are charged with participating in a scheme to support legislation to benefit Trina Health LLC, a company owned by Gilbert.

The indictment alleges Gilbert paid former House Majority Leader Mickey Hammon, R-Decatur, to promote legislation in 2016 to benefit the company and that Williams and Connors knew Hammon was receiving money from Gilbert.

Trina Health operated three clinics in Alabama that offered intravenous insulin treatments. The legislation would have required Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama to cover the treatments.

Williams was chairman of the House Commerce and Small Business Committee and held a public hearing on the bill to help Hammon, according to the indictment. The bill did not pass.

Williams, Connors and Gilbert are charged with conspiracy to commit bribery related to federal programs, conspiracy to commit honest services wire fraud, and honest services wire fraud.

Gilbert and Connors are charged with the substantive offense of bribery related to federal programs. Gilbert is charged with wire fraud, health care fraud, and interstate travel in aid of racketeering.

The most serious charges carry potential sentences of up to 20 years.

Hammon was not charged in the indictment. He pleaded guilty last year to federal mail fraud charges for converting campaign contributions to personal use and was removed from office. Hammon was sentenced to three months in prison and ordered to pay $50,657 in restitution.
MLK Assassination April 4, 1968

Tears of loss, determination

The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was slain 50 years ago, but his legacy never dies

Adrian Sainz, Kristin M. Hall and Errin Haines Whack  Associated Press

Clara Ester’s eyes were fixed on the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. as he stood on the concrete balcony of the Lorraine Motel.

King was in Memphis to support a sanitation workers’ strike, and Ester, a college student, had been marching alongside the strikers as they sought better pay and working conditions.

She and some friends had gone to the motel for a catfish dinner when she saw King chatting happily on the motel’s balcony, not far from where she stood — at 6:01 p.m. on April 4, 1968.

Ester heard the crack of the shot.

“I’m still looking at him,” Ester recalled. “He looked like he was lifted up and thrown back on the (balcony’s floor). Next thing I remember, I was stepping over his body, and I’m noticing that he’s struggling for air.”

The death of Dr. King, as he was commonly called at the time, changed the world and altered the lives of those who lived through it. Some spent the rest of their lives fighting for racial equality and economic justice. Others, including Ester, would struggle to come to terms with what they saw.

‘I AM A MAN’

King had won victories on desegregation and voting rights and had been planning his Poor People’s Campaign when he turned his attention to Memphis, the gritty city by the Mississippi River.

On Feb. 1, 1968, two sanitation workers were crushed when a garbage truck compactor malfunctioned, sparking a strike by about 1,300 black sanitation workers weary of horrible working conditions and racist treatment in the dirtiest of municipal jobs. The words that would come to signify their protest — “I Am a Man” — were not a given with everyone in Memphis at that time.

“We didn’t have a place to shower, wash our hands, nothing,” said Elmore Nickleberry, who at 86 still drives a truck for the department.

King tried to lead a peaceful march on March 28, but it turned violent. Storefront windows were smashed, and police wielded clubs and tear gas.

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KING
FROM A1

King went back to Atlanta but vowed to return to show that nonviolent protest still worked. Criticism mounted in the press. He was suffering headaches and feeling depressed. He met with his advisers, the Rev. Jesse Jackson said, and "talked himself out of the depression."

He flew back to Memphis on the morning of April 3.

Mike Cody was among the lawyers working to persuade a judge to lift an injunction against a new march who met with King in his motel room.

"King felt strongly that unless he could get a success here in Memphis, with these workers using nonviolent, civil disobedience, then he would never get the Poor People's March in Washington that summer," said Cody, 82.

Cody was in the crowd later that evening at the Mason Temple. Though King was ill, the Rev. Ralph Abernathy asked him to address the thousands who turned out despite a thunderstorm.

"It's a tin roof, so that's banging. There's rafters up there above us, and the rafters are blowing with the wind and hitting each other and hitting the walls from the fierceness of the wind and the rain," said the Rev. James Lawson, a prominent civil rights activist.

With little preparation, King delivered a speech that, in retrospect, seemed to foretell his death: "Well, I don't know what will happen now; we've got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn't matter to me now, because I've been to the mountaintop."

When he finished, King slumped into a chair. He looked to Cody like a "toy that had the air taken out of it."

"Ministers, men were crying," Jackson recalled.

Cody went to court the next day with King aide Andrew Young, then dropped Young back at the Lorraine Motel in the late afternoon.

King had spent most of the day in meetings. He asked Young where he'd been and then threw a pillow at him. "Then everybody picked up pillows and beat me up," Young said. "All of us were in our 30s, and we were acting like 10-, 12-year-olds. But it was the happiest I had seen him in a long time."

As dinner approached, King and his friends moved to the motel balcony. King turned to a bandleader who was standing nearby and made a request: Later at a rally, could he play his favorite song, "Take My Hand, Precious Lord?"

Then: "Poo! A bullet," recalled Jackson, pointing to the right side of his own face.

"At first I thought it was a firecracker or car backfiring," Young said.

Jackson ran toward the balcony steps.

"Someone said, 'Doc has been shot,' and 'Get low,'" Jackson said.

Earl Caldwell, a New York Times reporter who had interviewed King on the balcony the previous day, ran out of his motel room in his boxer shorts. "I was thinking, 'It was a bomb. It was a bomb.' Because the noise was greater than a gun," he said.

An iconic photograph captured what happened next — Jackson, Young and others pointing across the street, where the shot came from.

"I remember Rev. Abernathy saying, 'Back up, back up, this is my dearest friend,' Jackson recalled. Then Abernathy pleaded with King: "Martin you can't give up! Don't leave us!"

Ester said she noticed King's tie had been blown off. His eyes were open "with almost a pleasant expression on his face," she said.

SEE KING, A12

"Well, I don't know what will happen now; we've got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn't matter to me now, because I've been to the mountaintop."

Martin Luther King Jr.
MONTGOMERY

State representative, ex-GOP chief arrested

Slapped with federal bribery charges in health care ‘scheme’

John Archibald  jarchibald@al.com

An Alabama lawmaker and the former chief of the state’s Republican Party face federal bribery charges in connection to efforts to force Blue Cross Blue Shield to cover diabetic treatments at facilities owned by a California health care executive.

State Rep. Jack Williams, R-Vestavia Hills; Marty Connors and California health care executive G. Ford Gilbert were arrested Monday in connection to what U.S. Attorney Louis V. Franklin Sr. referred to as a "public corruption scheme."

The charges stem from an effort by Gilbert, the owner of Trina Health, to push a bill through the Alabama Legislature that would force Blue Cross Blue Shield to cover diabetes treatments at centers such as the ones he owned.

Williams and Connors appeared in court Monday afternoon in Montgomery following their morning arrests at their homes. Both men appeared in court in handcuffs shackled to their waists.

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BRIBERY
FROM A1

Neither had a lawyer present as they told the judge they understood the charges against them.

Judge Charles Coody set their bail at $25,000 each and they immediately bonded out. An arraignment is set for April 18 at 1:30 p.m.

Gilbert "made payments to State of Alabama House Majority Leader Micky Hammon in exchange for his efforts on behalf of the bill," Franklin said Monday in a press release. Hammon has since pleaded guilty to unrelated charges, and went to prison in Arizona in recent weeks.

According to prosecutors, Gilbert in 2016 hired Connors, who knew Hammon was being paid by Gilbert. Hammon and Connors recruited Williams, who chaired the Small Business Committee of the Alabama House of Representatives, to hold a public hearing on the bill. Williams also knew of the payments to Hammon - who was in financial crisis.

The effort was concentrated on 2016's HB415, which died in the committee Williams chaired.

The bill would have prohibited any insurance plan that covers intravenous insulin infusion from requiring patients to use a hospital instead of a medical clinic or office, like Trina. It would have made it illegal for insurers to demand a higher deductible or copay for treatment at such centers.

Federal and state investigators have been asking questions about Trina for months, particularly after Hammon pleaded guilty to mail fraud for using campaign contributions for personal gain. He was sentenced to three months in prison on those charges. He is being held at federal prison at Terre Haute, Indiana, records show.

Investigators have also asked about connections to other lawmakers.

Williams, a former Jefferson County tax collector, has said he would not seek re-election to the Legislature, and would instead run for Jefferson County commissioner.

Connors, a longtime GOP lobbyist and former party chief, is well known in the Birmingham area for his support of St. Patrick's Day activities, including the parade.

Attempts to reach lawyers representing the three were unsuccessful.

The three are charged with conspiracy to commit bribery related to federal programs, conspiracy to commit honest services wire fraud, and honest services wire fraud, Franklin's statement said.

The indictment says Hammon was given an ownership in a Trina clinic in exchange for soliciting investment funds from others, finding a location in Birmingham and setting up a space. It was not profitable, though, because BCBS did not intend to pay for the treatment, which it found suspect.

In September 2015, though, a Trina clinic in Hoover opened, and then-Gov. Robert Bentley showed up, at Hammon's request, to cut the ribbon.

The clinic did not prosper, and Gilbert set out to challenge BCBS and change the law. Connors was hired, and he knew Hammon's involvement, the indictment says. The bill was drafted, Gilbert dined with Williams and Williams agreed to make sure the bill was assigned to his committee, and promised to call a public hearing to pressure BCBS.
Who is Marty Connors?

› 61-year-old Alabaster resident has been a fixture in Alabama politics for decades, although often behind the scenes.

› Graduate of the University of Alabama.

› Chaired Alabama Republican Party from 2001 to 2005, leading GOP during the election of Gov. Bob Riley.

› Executive director, Alabama Republican Party, 1985-88.

› Worked on 2008 presidential campaign of Mitt Romney.


› Operates M.J. Connors Consulting.

› According to Alabama Ethics Commission list of registered lobbyists, Connors Consulting listed only itself and Motorola as clients.

› In 2017, Connors Consulting clients were listed as Alabama Independent Insurance Agents Inc., American Blast and Bullet Resistance and CP Homes.

› Active in St. Patrick’s Day events around Birmingham.

› In recent years, appeared as a guest on news shows discussing Alabama politics. In late 2017, he appeared on CNN to defend failed GOP Senate candidate Roy Moore against allegations he had improper sexual contact with teenage girls in the 1970s. After Moore lost, however, Connors called on the former state Supreme Court chief justice to step aside: “My general thoughts — and I’ve been to the wall for Roy Moore in this election — is sit down and shut up. Just take it. Sometimes you win by being gracious.”

— AL.com

Who is G. Ford Gilbert?

› Founder, owner of Trina Health, Sacramento, Calif.-based company operating diabetes treatment centers in 11 states and India.

› Originally a lawyer.

› Gilbert’s company is named for his daughter, who was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes at age 2 in 1984.

› Started nonprofit research institute and his company created a microburst insulin infusion pump for diabetes treatment.

› Daughter now in her 30s and a mother of five.

› Holds degrees in engineering studies from University of Arizona, business from Grand Canyon University, law from the University of the Pacific and medical studies from University of California-Davis, as well as doctorate in health sciences.

› Mother originally from Alabama, he spent time here as a child.

› At one time, Trina operated three clinics in Alabama. However, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama, the state’s largest insurer, chose not to cover artificial pancreas treatments provided by Trina Health or other providers because of lack of “strong clinical and scientific evidence.” Trina said Blue Cross Blue Shield initially did cover the treatments, then began billing members.

› When Trina opened a Hoover clinic in 2015, Gilbert said the clinic’s artificial pancreas treatment signals the liver to produce enzymes, thus improving the body’s ability to metabolize carbohydrates. It is the clinics’ practice to treat diabetes as a disease of improper metabolism, instead of low blood sugar. Gilbert said treatment can prevent and even reverse some of the serious complications of diabetes, including retinopathy, which can lead to blindness, kidney disease, amputations and erectile dysfunction.

— William Thornton

Who is Jack Williams?

› Served in the state Legislature for 14 years.

› Announced in February 2017 he was retiring from state Legislature; few months later announced his run for Jefferson County Commission in District 5.

› In the House, the Republican represented District 47, which includes the cities of Vestavia Hills and Hoover.

› His last session in the House ended last week.

› Running for the District 5 county seat against former Vestavia Hills City Councilman Steve Ammons, also a Republican; no Democrats are running.

› At his May 2017 announcement for the commission, said his skillset is best suited for Jefferson County rather than the state as a whole; said he wanted to focus on infrastructure, economic development, tourism and higher education, as well as combating the “plague of drugs” in the county.

› Was active in the fight to bring back UAB football, rifle and bowling after the teams were abolished in December 2014; was outspoken critic of that decision; proposed legislation to restructure the Alabama System Board of Trustees, which oversees UAB and University of Alabama.

› Before being elected to the House in 2004, served as Jefferson County tax collector for eight years.

› Previously served as executive director of Alabama House Republican Caucus.

› Early in political career, worked with Marty Connors to found Southern Republican Exchange, a political think-tank that provided policy ideas to Republicans elected at the state and local level.

— Erin Edgemon

Sources: Trina Health, TimesDaily, AL.com

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Micky Hammon, former majority leader in the Alabama House, was not charged in Monday’s indictment. Last year, he pled guilty to devising a scheme to commit mail fraud by using campaign money to pay his personal expenses. He is currently serving three months in prison in connection to the charges.

Williams knew Hammon had a financial interest, which makes him party to the crime, according to the government.

When a member of the committee asked Williams why former Speaker Mike Hubbard assigned the bill to the Commerce and Small Business Committee instead of the Health Committee or Insurance Committee, Williams said he (Williams) was trying to "help out" Hammon.

The indictment alleges Gilbert and Connors committed the substantive offense of bribery related to federal programs. Gilbert alone is charged with wire fraud, health care fraud and interstate travel in aid of racketeering. The indictment does not include charges against Hammon because Hammon has already been convicted in federal court of other offenses.

If convicted, each defendant in this case faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison, plus fines and restitution.

Gilbert will be arraigned in federal court in California on April 18.

Gov. Kay Ivey weighed in on the indictments following a speech Monday in Huntsville.

"There’s just no place for corruption in our great state. And so the Justice Department, the FBI, they’ve just got to go ahead and ferret out what needs to be explored because we cannot tolerate corruption," Ivey said.

"I just pointed out (during her speech in Huntsville) that the people of Alabama, the morale was very low because they had been misled by their leader and lost faith in the government. So I’ve tried my best to restore faith and trust in the government and operate an open, transparent administration."

AL.com reporters Leada Gore, Ivana Hrynkiw, Paul Gattis and Mike Cason contributed to this report.
Another self-righteous lawmaker faces charges

Jack Williams is just the latest Alabama lawmaker who has told us how committed he is to his religious beliefs and did his darnedest to make everyone else abide by those beliefs, only to eventually be accused of wrongdoing.

Former Gov. Robert Bentley and former Speaker of the Alabama House of Representatives Mike Hubbard certainly set the standard for that practice, but Williams could eventually get more time than his higher-ranking Republican colleagues.

One year ago, almost to this very day, a public hearing was held in Montgomery on a bill that would have required sellers of computers, cell phones and other devices that access the internet to include a filter to block obscene material. To have the filter removed, consumers would have been required to pay the state a $20 fee. The bill was sponsored by Williams, a Republican from Vestavia Hills. Critics said the bill was unconstitutional and that Williams was grandstanding. It eventually died a quiet death at the end of the legislative session.

On Monday, one day after Easter Sunday, Williams was arrested along with Marty Conners, the former chairman of the Alabama Republican Party, on conspiracy charges. Williams and Conners could soon join fellow Republicans Bentley, who one year ago pled guilty to two misdemeanor charges and resigned his office, Hubbard, who was convicted in 2016 on a dozen corruption charges, former House Majority Leader Micky Hammon of Decatur, who pled guilty in September to mail fraud, and former state Rep. Greg Wren of Montgomery, who pled guilty to an ethics violation in 2014.

To be fair, corruption has not been a partisan issue in Montgomery. Former state Rep. Oliver Robinson of Birmingham pled guilty in September to fraud and bribery charges and former Rep. Terry Spicer of Dothan pled guilty to bribery charges in 2011. Both Spicer and Robinson are Democrats. It’s just that Alabama being a very red state, the odds favor the OOP these days.

Regardless of party affiliation, for decades a seemingly endless drumbeat of Alabama politicians have promised to fight for the citizens of this state only to get into office and pull a Judas-type betrayal.

Williams had already announced he would not run for the House again. Instead, he launched a campaign for the Jefferson County Commission. On his campaign website, not surprisingly, Williams quotes the Bible. He points to Micah 7:8 in the Old Testament as a verse for inspiration: “Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy. Though I fall I will rise; Though I dwell in darkness, the Lord is a light for me.”

We have no way of knowing how sincere any of these men are in their religious beliefs. That’s certainly not for us to judge. History is rife with good men and women who have stumbled and found redemption. Indeed, that is the Christian message behind the Easter celebration. And we hope that Holy Scripture helps guide Williams back into the light of day. But this sordid scenario is yet another reminder about wolves in sheep’s clothing.
NEW YORK — Around the same time “To Kill a Mockingbird” made Harper Lee a best-selling author and Pulitzer Prize winner, she was still fighting for creative control.

“T must say it’s increasingly difficult for magazine articles to be written in any other way than a magazine editor standing over your shoulder telling you what to write. You know how well that sets with me,” the Monroeville, Alabama, native wrote to her New York friend Harold Caufield (affectionately referred to as “Darling Alotch”). The 1961 letter — the year after the book was published — told of Esquire’s turning down a piece she had been asked to write.

“I didn’t confirm to their Image (or the one they wish to project) of the South. My pastiche had some white people who were segregationists & at the same time loathed & hated the K.K.K. This was an axiomatic impossibility, according to Esquire! I wanted to say that according to those

lights, nine-tenths of the South is an axiomatic impossibility.”

Lee’s letter is among six donated to Emory University by a California-based book collector and being made public Monday. The typed correspondence dates from the mid-1950s, when she began writing “Go Set a Watchman,” the precursor to “Mockingbird” that unexpectedly came out in 2015, through the early ‘60s and the release of “Mockingbird.” They touch upon everything from politics and writing to religion and dating. They also describe her caring for her ailing father, Amasa Coleman (A.C) Lee, the lawyer and newspaper man who was the basis for one of literature’s most famous characters, Atticus Finch.

“This correspondence from Harper Lee provides wonderful insight into her life during the critical years when she wrote what would be her only two novels,” Joseph Crespino, an Emory professor and author of the upcoming “Atticus Finch: The Biography,” said in a statement. “They provide a window into her life and her views during a period of tumultuous change in southern political life.”

Lee died in 2016 at age 89. As Crespino writes in his book, she both revered and rebelled against her father, whose hallowed image formed by “To
Kill a Mockingbird” and Gregory Peck’s performance in the 1962 film adaptation was upended by the portrait of Atticus as a stubborn reactionary in “Go Set a Watchman.” Harper Lee had argued with her father about the rising civil rights movement, but remained close to him. In the mid-’50s, she even moved from New York back to Monroeville after A.C. Lee fell ill.

“Daddy is sitting beside me at the kitchen table, fully clothed, and eating his four-o’clock meal. He gets around the house with a walking stick,” she writes to “Dearest H” in 1956. “While thinking of something to say to you I found myself staring at his handsome old face, and a sudden wave of panic flashed through me, which I think was an echo of the fear and desolation that filled me when he was nearly dead. It has been years since I have lived with him on a day-to-day basis, and these months with him have strengthened my attachment to him, if such is possible. If he gets along every day like he has this day, it won’t be long before I’ll be back with you.”

In another letter from 1956, she notes her amazement that she is capable of helping her father.

“Sugar, I guess we all somehow rise to occasions: I’ve done more things for him that I never remotely thought I’d be called on to do for anybody,” she writes. “But I suppose there’s truth in the adage that you don’t mind it if they’re yours. I sho’ don’t: you will discover that your Nelle Harper is a much less squeamish individual. But the one thing I don’t think I’ll get used to if I live to be 100 is a needle. They fed him through his veins for 10 days after he was stricken, and I gagged every time I saw him hooked up to that thing.”

Lee avoided the media for much of her life, but in private spoke her mind. She is candid and irreverent in her letters as she mocks religion, gets a kick out of Elvis Presley and knows well that she stands apart from her home community. In a letter dated “Sunday,” she expresses frustration that she can’t work on her books in Monroeville, and longs to be back in New York, where she has “a chair, a table and a typewriter, and no people.”

In one of her 1956 letters, she notes the romantic interest of a Presbyterian minister, but adds that she’s “just not up to it.”

“Besides, Presbyterian theology is about the gloomiest Protestant dogma I know of, and I don’t trust myself to keep my mouth shut: if I feel moved to express myself thereon, it will get out all over Monroeville that I am a member of the NAACP, which god forbid,” she writes. “They already suspect this to be fact anyway, because I said some strong words to one of our good Methodist brethren about my views on picture shows, dancing, dining, etc., — in short EVERYTHING but worshipping — in a Methodist church. I also told him it would be a good thing if the Methodists seceded again, which damns me.”
Officials say act will bring high-speed internet to rural areas

By Ken Roberts
City Editor

Alabama officials say a bill signed into law last week will help fill the gaps in broadband accessibility for thousands of rural residents in the state.

The Alabama Broadband Accessibility Act authorizes the creation of a broadband accessibility grant program, which will be administered by the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs. The law also creates the Alabama Broadband Accessibility Fund.

"The internet is vital to economic development, health, education, and to be honest, all areas of our modern life," Gov. Kay Ivey said in a news release. "This common-sense legislation will help us attract new broadband to areas that need it most, especially in rural Alabama. It is just another step forward as we improve access to high-speed internet sooner rather than later."

In Alabama, more than 842,000 people lack access to a wired connection capable of download speeds reaching at least 25 megabits per second. More than 1 million people in Alabama have access to only one wired provider and an additional 276,000 people in Alabama don't have any wired internet providers available where they live.

Through the legislation, the state will encourage accelerated private investment in broadband infrastructure by telecommunications companies, cable companies and electric cooperatives in rural areas. Grants awarded by ADECA will be focused on unserved areas.

Kenneth Boswell, ADECA's

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ACT

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director, called the availability of high-speed internet "a critical infrastructure issue in rural Alabama."

"The Alabama Broadband Accessibility Act gives the state a valuable new tool. With Gov. Ivey's support, ADECA will work under this new grant framework to facilitate the expansion of broadband in rural areas of Alabama that currently lack high-speed internet."

The governor said the goal of expanding broadband access to rural Alabama will be further helped by a pilot program, grants and loans from the federal government. Last week, Congress included in the omnibus spending bill a $600 million broadband pilot program, which will enable applicants to finance a project by combining loans and grants to provide broadband to eligible rural and tribal areas.

The newly created federal investment means the government will spend nearly $1 billion on new rural broadband projects across the country.
McGregor made us feel like winners

Michael Kendrick for AL.com

If you consider my first encounters with Milton McGregor, you would guess the odds of us becoming friends would be slim.

I was chairman of the Birmingham Racing Commission; he was a dog track owner submitting a bid to buy the bankrupt Birmingham Turf Club.

I voted against him. I still wanted to give horse racing a shot to succeed in Birmingham, and I thought Delaware North would be a better bet. Just a few short years later, when Delaware North went bust, Milton McGregor was still interested.

Milton proceeded to buy the facility and open the first combination dog/horse track in the country. I stayed on at the racing commission, which ensured our relationship would stay arm's-length for a number of years.

But these early encounters gave me a glimpse of the kind of man Milton McGregor really was — and the friend I would ultimately become to cherish.

Because of our roles at the time, we sometimes found ourselves in opposite corners. Nobody was more tenacious than Milton when it came to his business. But he could be aggressive and assertive without being disagreeable or disrespectful of others.

To the contrary, Milton was a hard-nosed businessman who never lost sight of what mattered most: people.

When it was time to close the deal on the Birmingham Race Course, I sat in the lofty towers of the city's financial district with the president of AmSouth Bank and a sizable contingent of lawyers.

The appointed time came and went. Twenty-five more minutes passed. Finally, Milton arrived.

Only much later did I learn why he had kept the bankers waiting.

On his way to this critical meeting that would give his business a foothold in the state's largest metro area, Milton encountered the bank's maintenance man.

Milton struck up a conversation, and the man started talking about his family.

Milton could have cut him off and told him he needed to be in an important meeting. Instead, he stopped to listen, to show respect for a fellow human being.

It's easy, perhaps, when you just see the photos or read the headlines to make judgments about a man — especially if you have strong feelings about the business he is in.

But I want to share what I learned about the man I once opposed and later came to know as a close, personal friend.

You hear him described as larger than life — a character. And he was that. But behind the character — his signature hair and boundless energy — was a man of true character.

He was honest and dependable. If he told you something, you could take it to the bank.

He was dedicated to his work and family. He drove himself as hard as anyone I know when it came to his business. And yet, I've never known anyone as devoted to his wife, children and grandchildren. Somehow, he gave 110 percent to everyone.

And speaking of giving: The extent of Milton's personal generosity may never be fully known. You may have heard about Milton offering his plane to ferry people to medical treatments. But what you may not have heard is that if his plane was double-booked, he leased a plane to meet the need.

Milton was also a man of deep faith. I never had a meal with him that he did not say grace. Not necessarily a showy prayer spoken aloud, but a quiet, reverent acknowledgment of the God he served.

His faith was manifest in good times and bad. Milton was positive and optimistic. He always hoped, always persevered, always trusted it would all work out in the end.

He never gave up.

These are things I came to fully appreciate after I left the racing commission and could really become Milton's friend.

If you had met him and got to know him, you liked him.

It didn't matter if you were the bank president or the maintenance man, when you met Milton, you felt like a winner, too.

Kendrick is a Birmingham lawyer and former chairman of the Birmingham Racing Commission who served as a pallbearer for Milton McGregor.
BLUE CROSS NAMES NEW CEO

Alabama’s largest health insurer has a new CEO.

Tim Vines has been named president and CEO of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama. As we previously reported, Vines was named president of the insurer in November. At the time, the company said he would eventually become the company’s CEO.

Vines assumes the office following the retirement of Terry Kellogg effective April 1. Kellogg has served as CEO since 2010.

“Tim Vines is an experienced leader who has the vision and commitment to advance the mission of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama,” Kellogg said. “Our company has already made tremendous strides under Vines’ leadership. I am confident he will successfully move Blue Cross forward in an industry that faces constant change.

During his 24-year tenure at the company, Vines has served multiple roles, including president and COO; senior vice president, business operations; vice president special claims operations; and vice president, health management.

In addition to his role at Blue Cross, Vines currently chairs the board of trustees at Samford University and serves on the boards of the Alabama region for the American Red Cross and the Better Business Bureau serving south and central Alabama.

Vines takes the reins at Alabama’s dominant health insurance provider at a time of uncertainty in the medical world, thanks to efforts to repeal or replace various aspects of the Affordable Care Act.

Blue Cross, which is one of Birmingham’s largest employers, is also the only remaining insurer on the state’s ACA marketplace.
He changed Alabama

but not always the way he wanted

John Archibald  jarchibald@al.com

I can’t improve on the great Sam Hodges, who in 1993 described Milton McGregor this way in Mobile’s Press-Register:

The American Dream takes many forms, and a conspicuous one in Alabama these days is a jowly, drawling, workaholic good ol’ boy with an Eighth Wonder of the World haircut and a wallet that’s something of a wonder, too.

He’s Milton Earl McGregor, 52-year-old majority owner of the over-achieving greyhound track in Macon County and the rapidly improving horse and greyhound track in Birmingham.

McGregor also owns a charter plane business, various other businesses and rental properties, a mansion in Montgomery, a luxury condo atop Red Mountain in Birmingham, a 2,500-acre farm in Macon County and his family home place in Geneva County.

Some people say he owns the Alabama Legislature. No bill of sale has surfaced...

That was, without doubt, the Milton McGregor of 1993.

Much changed in 25 years — like the fate of that “rapidly improving horse and greyhound track” in Birmingham. And some would argue a bill of sale never surfaced, but a rental agreement turned up year after legislative year.

So much has been said of the man since his death Sunday at the age of 78, but it seems like there’s much more to say. He was a likable rascal and a formidable foe, an angel and devil who was never fully either one.

He changed Alabama politics — make no mistake about that — if not always in the way he wanted.

McGregor’s power grew and waned over the years, but he was always a man who buzzed with his own energy, who held a vision of towering casinos that could pay for schools and roads and things Alabama needed.

SEE MCGREGOR, A6

Milton McGregor is seen in 2010 at Victory-Land, the casino in Shorter that he owned and made the center of Alabama’s gambling debate. Dave Martin, Associated Press file
In his vision he saw that he, Milton McGregor, would be the man behind the glass in those places, the man rolling wheelbarrows of cash to his very own vault.

He was beloved by those who were touched by him, and the money he spread around as "investment" in his dreams. He was accused at times of being a "reverse pickpocket," a man who might clap a would-be supporter on the back — a friend, as he'd call them — leaving a few bills to be found later.

He was the only person I've ever known who was bestowed with the title "magnate." He didn't ask for it, but he wore it well. He was Alabama's gambling magnate, but he'd have preferred "gaming magnate." It sounded more fun, less morally debatable. He made it sound like sport.

Like politics was to him. McGregor wanted to win, and he knew how to play the game. For years — decades — he picked politicians like a professional GM picks athletes, and he paid them almost as well. He poured millions into Alabama campaigns, funding a Legislature that ensured bills threatening his interests found their way to friendly committees, where they died without a vote.

But he always flew close, close to the sun. Back in 1993, then-Lt. Gov. Jim Folsom — who would become governor after the conviction of Gov. Guy Hunt — took his family to the Cayman Islands on a plane owned by McGregor. It was investigated by then-Alabama AG Jeff Sessions, but no charges were filed.

When McGregor sought changes in the bingo laws, and a domed stadium in Birmingham to go with them, former Mayor Larry Langford became his greatest advocate. At the same time Langford won dozens of jackpots worth hundreds of thousands at McGregor's VictoryLand casino. The odds of winning those jackpots were so long that it wasn't akin to finding two identical snowflakes, one statistician said, but like finding two identical snowflakes that look exactly like your mother.

Neither Langford nor McGregor was charged in that matter. Langford went to trial on unrelated bribery charges as the bingo winnings made news. He was convicted and remains in prison.

McGregor was charged with a different set of crimes. As a McGregor-backed gambling bill neared a vote in 2010 — one that would finally give him the win he wanted — the FBI announced a major vote-buying probe into McGregor and others. The bill died, and a federal grand jury indicted McGregor on charges he conspired with lawmakers and lobbyists to buy votes.

But the feds did not prove their case, and McGregor was ultimately acquitted. Hours and hours of taped conversations showed him close to the line, but not across it. As close as it got was when McGregor met with gambling ally Ronnie Gilley and then Sen. Scott Beason.

In the conversation, taped by Beason, McGregor sought Beason's support.

"Ronnie and I have a bad habit of supporting our friends," McGregor said.

That was McGregor. Smart. You think you know what he's saying. You know you know what he's saying, but you can't prove he's saying it.

He was smart enough to not play it too smart.

When Gilley and others who wound up in prison asked in conversations if he was on his burner phone, McGregor told them no, he had nothing to hide. It was persuasive, and he walked free.

But McGregor after the trial — after the bingo wars with former Gov. Bob Riley forced him to close VictoryLand in Macon County — was a diminished man.

He tried in recent years to reopen VictoryLand, but it never really worked out.

He had long been seen as a funding source for Democrats — though he gave to Republicans too. But without a lucrative casino his reach was limited. Ultimately Republicans found it more convenient to oppose McGregor and quietly accept Indian casinos that competed with him. And their political contributions.

But McGregor was always a force in Alabama. You could never count him out. He kept coming, with plans and ideas and strategies for changing Alabama and wheeling away carts full of cash. He was a character for sure. No matter what you thought of his character.

There is something literary about his passing.

He was a man who for decades controlled the Alabama Legislature, but he never quite got all he wanted.

He was the one who bought and sold Alabama politicians.

But in the end, perhaps fittingly ...

No bill of sale ever surfaced.

Archibald writes opinion columns for AL.com.
How would you fix the many, many problems in our prison system?

I think it first begins with the mental health aspect of it ... the second thing that we have to do is not worry so much about new facilities; going out and borrowing $800 million is not the answer. Dealing with the substance abuse issues, dealing with the mental health issues, dealing with the vocational career technical issues and educational attainment — those are the areas we have to get right within the corrections system.

Who is a governor in our recent history that you admire and why?

You know, that's a very good question. I'm trying to think back through my lifetime of governors. I really don't have one that comes to mind because we've had so many issues over the years. There's certain things about certain governors that I do admire. I certainly appreciate what Gov. Siegelman tried to do in passing the lottery back in the late 1990s. I can appreciate Gov. Riley going to bat early on in the 2000s to say the state was facing a crisis.

What is the one thing you would like people to know about you?

That we're doing this because we care. That we really believe Alabama can be something special with the right leadership.

See all of John Archibald's interviews with the gubernatorial candidates at facebook.com/ReckonAL.
Candidates for governor

Democrat
Sue Bell Cobb
Christopher A. Countryman
James Fields
Walt Maddox
Doug "New Blue" Smith
Anthony White

Republican
Tommy Battle
Scott Dawson
Bill Hightower
Gov. Kay Ivey
Michael McAllister

Independent
Mark Johnston

Election calendar

May 21: Last day to register to vote in primary
June 5: Statewide primary
July 2: Last day to register for primary runoff
July 17: Primary runoff
Nov. 6: General election
Ex-lieutenant
governors: Keep
the office strong

Greg Garrison, ggarrison@al.com

The office of lieutenant governor was once one of the most powerful seats in Alabama. With it came the privilege of presiding over the senate, appointing committee chairs and assigning bills to committees, which meant the power to essentially fast-track or kill a bill.

Many of its duties were stripped away in 1988 by an outgoing Democratic lieutenant governor who had been elected governor and wanted to prevent his Republican successor from exercising the power to kill the governor’s legislative agenda.

Now the office of lieutenant governor has been vacant for nearly a year, and some legislators want to strip it of any remaining legislative power.

Senate Bill 88, introduced in the current legislative session by Sen. Gerald Dial, made the proposal.

"This bill calls for an increased salary,

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but no assigned duties," said Gov. Kay Ivey, who was herself Alabama's lieutenant governor from 2011-17. "I don't think this is a good bill."

In fact, Alabama's seven living former lieutenant governors said in interviews with AL.com that although the office is currently vacant, it's extremely important and its powers should not be diminished.

Dial's proposal is not likely to pass this session. It would have left succeeding the governor, if necessary, as the only major duty of a lieutenant governor.

The lieutenant governor has become governor three times in the past 46 years, most recently last year, when Ivey assumed the office.

- On May 15, 1972, Alabama Gov. George Wallace was shot five times while campaigning for president in Laurel, Maryland.

"The governor had been shot; I did not know it," recalled then-Lt. Gov. Jere Beasley, in office from 1971-79, who was at a convention in Florida. "I flew back. They said come to the Capitol immediately. It was chaos. There were troopers all around. There were rumors. (United Press International) put out an obituary by mistake. I was prepared to do it."

After 20 days, Wallace was still recuperating in a Maryland hospital. Alabama's secretary of state sent a telegram to Beasley, notifying him that he was acting governor.

"I called a cabinet meeting the next morning," Beasley said. "I stayed in the office upstairs. I made sure everybody knew nothing was going to change."

Beasley was acting governor from June 5 to July 7. Wallace got out of the hospital and flew back to Montgomery. He regained his title as governor upon arrival.


On his second day as governor, Folsom learned Alabama was on a list of 30 states being considered for the first U.S. Mercedes plant. He began actively pursuing it.

"By mid-summer we were down to seven states, a couple weeks later down to three states, by September the decision was made," Folsom said. "We felt if we broke the ice and convinced Mercedes to come to the state that would act as a springboard to bring other auto manufacturers." Since then, Honda and Hyundai have built Alabama plants and Toyota-Mazda has announced plans. "I don't think any of us working on that project at that time would think 23-24 years later it would have that kind of impact," Folsom said.

On April 10, 2017, Gov. Robert Bentley resigned amid scandal and Ivey was sworn in as the new governor.

"The office of lieutenant governor is truly an office in waiting," Ivey said in a recent interview with AL.com. "The office of lieutenant governor is designed to preside over the senate, and be elevated to office of governor if there's a vacancy. The lieutenant

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governor needs to be well-informed about what’s going on in the Legislature. The office makes many appointments to boards and commissions."

Beasley suggests that it might be better if governor and lieutenant run together on a slate like president and vice president. Ivey thinks it’s better running separately.

"The people of Alabama ought to have the ability to elect whoever they want to become governor," she said. "When the vacancy occurs, people will want to have a say, rather than a handpicked somebody. You want somebody who has been elected statewide, who is knowledgeable about the process. The people of Alabama ought to have the ability to elect whoever they want to become governor."

Former Gov. Don Siegelman, who served as lieutenant governor from 1995-99, used his position to strip power from his successor, Steve Windom.

"I was governor-elect," Siegelman said. "I was proposing an education lottery. Steve Windom was one of the adversaries opposing the lottery. I had no choice but to vest the important powers in the (Senate) proponent if I had any hope of getting my proposals passed. I had to bypass Steve because he was adamantly opposed to what I ran on as governor."

Even though he was responsible for stripping them away, Siegelman would like to see the powers of the office restored. "I would like to see the powers revert back to the lieutenant governor," Siegelman said.

Windom said Siegelman liked the power when he was the Democratic lieutenant governor, but didn’t want the incoming Republican lieutenant governor to have it.

"He was 100 percent responsible," said Windom, lieutenant governor from 1999-2003. "He had been lieutenant governor and had used the powers delegated to him. The lieutenant governor could appoint chairs of committees. It gave him power of life or death over any piece of legislation — maybe not to get something passed, but certainly to kill any piece of legislation. You could assign legislation to a committee where it would go nowhere. He used it to pursue his agenda. He knew we didn’t see eye to eye, so he took the power away. The vote to make the change passed the Alabama Senate by the narrowest of margins, 18-17.

Although he did not get to make legislative appointments and assign bills to committees, Windom did have one power that is in the purview of the office. "The lieutenant governor approves travel expenses for legislators to go on trips to conferences," Windom said.

Folsom served two different terms as lieutenant governor, 1987-93, before the Siegelman-Windom dust-up, and after, from 2007-2011.

Bill Baxley, who was lieutenant governor from 1983-87, said too much power has been stripped from the office.

"I think it’s unfortunate that they changed it and took a lot of its power away," Baxley said. "That’s turned out to be a serious mistake. I’m very apprehensive that mistakes will be made worse."

The Dial proposal would "make the office not have anything to do with the senate," Baxley said. "I think that’s a serious mistake."

Ivey also finds it alarming that there was an effort in the senate to strip power even further from the lieutenant governor’s office as it lays dormant, and that powers taken from Windom were never fully reinstated.

"None of those powers have been restored," Gov. Ivey said. "They’ve neutered the position as much as they could. They’re trying to take away the power of the lieutenant governor."

But as Ivey found out the day Bentley resigned, giving her three hours notice that she would be governor, the office still matters.

"It’s important when there’s been some kind of emergency," Ivey said. "Anybody can have a heart attack, or have a wreck. I’d say it’s pretty important. It’s the heir apparent to becoming governor. If you don’t know anything about the legislative process, and how it works, how are you supposed to be prepared to be governor?"

Alabama will get a new lieutenant governor this year. Three Republicans are vying for the office — Alabama Public Service Commission President Twinkle Andress Cavanaugh, State Sen. Rusty Glover and State Rep. Will Ainsworth. Will Boyd is running as a Democrat.
Team headed to White House

By Ben Jones
Sports Writer

Alabama football will make another trip to the White House on Tuesday to celebrate its 2017 national championship. The Crimson Tide will fly to Washington, D.C., during a day off from spring practice.

"It's an incredible honor for us to be invited to the White House," running back Damien Harris said. "It's something that comes with being national champions, so we're definitely thankful for the opportunity. There's a lot of young guys that haven't been able to make that trip yet. We're glad we've got guys that can go for the first time and experience it the way that we did when we were young. Obviously all the older guys have been there, and we're looking forward to going back again."

It's the second trip to the White House for Harris, who was also a member of Alabama's 2015 national championship team as a freshman. This will be Alabama's fifth trip to the White House with coach Nick Saban after winning the national championship in 2009, 2011, 2012, 2015 previously.

This will be the first time President Donald Trump has hosted the Crimson Tide at the White House; all four previous championships came during Barack Obama's presidency. Trump attended the first half of the national championship game against Georgia.

The Golden State Warriors did not visit the White House after winning the 2016-17 NBA championship. Offensive lineman Ross Pierschbacher said Saban spoke with the team about the visit to explain why they would be making the trip.

"Coach Saban addressed it and just said, 'Hey, we're doing this regardless of your political thoughts,'" Pierschbacher said. "'We're going just to celebrate this team. It's an honor. And just to be able to say that you've gone to the White House is something that you can cherish forever.' So that was basically the extent of that."

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Alabama defensive back Kyriq McDonald (26) and Alabama defensive back Parker Bearden (43) run drills during spring practice at the Thomas-Drew Practice Fields in Tuscaloosa on Monday. (STAFF PHOTO/ERIN WILSON)
FOOTBALL

Tuesday, April 10, 2018
Army ROTC Rangers will test their military skills in the Sandhurst Competition

By Ken Roberts
City Editor

The University of Alabama's Army ROTC Ranger Challenge team is bound for West Point.

The team will compete Friday and Saturday during the Sandhurst Competition, an international military skills challenge, held at the United States Military Academy.

UA's team earned the right to compete at Sandhurst by winning the Brigade Ranger Challenge Competition at Camp Blanding in Florida in January. The 10-team regional pitted teams at universities from Alabama, Florida, Georgia and Mississippi against each other.

The trip to West Point will mark a return for UA's team: Last year's team qualified for the Sandhurst Competition for the first time in school history.

Cadet David Edwards, the team's commander, said the team won the Brigade Ranger Challenge earlier this year "by a few pushups."

"The biggest pressure we felt this year was to do the same or better by reaching West Point," said Edwards, who is in his first year of competition.

One extra hurdle the team had to face this year was a lack of experience: More than half of the 11 cadets on this year's team are either freshmen or
sophomores.

But Edwards said the inexperience and turnover actually turned out to have a beneficial effect. He said the freshmen cadets aren’t afraid of new challenges posed during the competition and the new team members have blended well with the more experienced members.

“Having that experience is good for soldiering skills, but it can sometimes blind you to thinking through things. Having fresh eyes is helpful,” said Edwards, who is from Glen Allen, Virginia.

“And they’re always here in good spirits if a freshman is in good spirits and working hard, upperclassmen will follow.”

UA will compete at Sandhurst against other regional winners, teams from West Point and cadets from around the world.

The events will include fitness, weapons qualification, a hand grenade assault course and casualty care over a 30-plus-mile-long rugged course while carrying a 40-pound load.

Sandhurst is a more grueling competition than the previous two rounds, Edwards said. State and brigade rounds were revamped to better reflect the Sandhurst competition, including foot-marching to different events, which forces cadets to be more flexible, and think and act quicker, Edwards said.

Edwards said the team has prepared by tailoring training to better simulate the competition formats.

“We do a lot of stress events, heart exercises ... then we try to throw some critical thinking events at them,” Edwards said. “Something as simple as plotting a point on a map, or maybe giving them a situation where they get back from a run and find their rucksack tied in knots with another cadet’s gear, forcing them to work together to figure it out.”
OUR VIEW

Witt’s foresight has had immense impact on area

The Chicago Tribune told its readers this past Friday what those of us here in Tuscaloosa already know. A lot of students are leaving other areas of the country to attend the University of Alabama. Amazingly, Nick Saban and the football team were not the focus of the well-reported story about the “brain drain” Illinois is experiencing as a result of Alabama’s aggressive recruitment of students from other areas of the country.

One doesn’t have to travel far or stay long in Tuscaloosa to witness the transformation. Ride through any parking lot in town, especially the weekend before and after a semester, and you’ll see plenty of cars from all across the nation, many with some UA sticker proudly proclaiming their allegiance to the Capstone. Walk into any public setting around town and you’re just as likely to hear a New England accent as a Southern drawl, even at Dreamland Bar-B-Que in Jerusalem Heights or City Café in Northport. And while many Midwesterners think they’re the only ones with no accents, local folks can pick them out in a hurry.

No doubt, Alabama’s prominence on the football field has had a profound impact on the university’s ability to attract such a surge of students from other areas. Former UA President Robert Witt has often said, correctly, that from a purely financial perspective, hiring Saban was the best investment Alabama made in his tenure.

But winning football games is only a part of the story. While Saban is rightfully praised for his ability to consistently out-recruit his rivals, Witt’s ability to build a juggernaut on the academic side via a first-class recruiting apparatus is often overlooked. His foresight in developing a comprehensive plan to grow the state’s flagship university hinged on an aggressive effort to lure out-of-state students. It’s a shame we don’t have a trophy case for academics, but if we did, Witt’s haul would likely be just as impressive as the one holding all the crystal footballs in the athletic department.

The Tribune noted that the number of students from Illinois enrolled at Alabama has increased ten-fold in the past decade. And Alabama is attracting among the brightest students in that state. More than 700 Illinoisans made the dean’s list at Alabama in the fall of 2017. While universities across the country are dealing with dwindling state funding for higher education, Alabama continues to grow in both sheer numbers and in admission standards.

But the challenge now is trying to find ways to keep more of them here after graduation. Fortunately, there are efforts to do just that. Programs like The Edge Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, a partnership of the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama and the university, are helping many of these transplants find a permanent home here.

Alabama’s student enrollment growth over the past decade is well-documented, as is its dominance on the football field. But there should be a greater appreciation of the impact Witt’s foresight has had on our area, and the impact it will have for generations.
Taylors opinions

We should not give a platform to regressive opinions

The Bill of Rights is intended to

in our society. They are not worth

the time to explain further. How

ever, the government is our

right to freedom of speech is not a
decree. This is the part of freedom
collected understandings, andquot; she said. The

We should not give a platform to regressive opinions

that allow our society to

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We should not give a platform to regressive opinions

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Our position on freedom of speech is that we

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Condo market resurgence reflects UA growth, healthy economy

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

A decade ago, the Tuscaloosa luxury condominium market was stalling out.
A number of development projects that received high-profile announcements had yet to break ground. Very few, it seemed, were ready to pay $500,000 or more for a game-day party pad or housing for their college student.

It now appears things have changed. Driven primarily by enrollment growth at the University of Alabama, the condo market’s resurgence serves as a leading indicator of Tuscaloosa’s economic health. Those condo buyers, increasingly made up of out-of-state students, bring spending power that boosts Tuscaloosa’s bottom line.

“It’s taken a huge leap forward,” said Gerald Ross of Advantage Realty Group about the booming Tuscaloosa condo market.

Tuscaloosa’s economic engine

Ross, who also serves as secretary-treasurer of the Tuscaloosa Association of Realtors, said some units in Tuscaloosa’s 44 or so condo projects don’t stay on the market a week before they’re purchased—sometimes, with cash.

And driving this, of course, is the University of Alabama. With UA’s student

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GROWTH

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enrollment jumping from about 33,000 in 2015 to almost 40,000 in 2017, construction of student housing and apartment projects hasn’t slowed down.

Currently, the development called “My House on the 50” — a 44-units, 155-bed development with four stories of apartments and 2 stories of above-grade parking is under construction at Frank Thomas Avenue and Eighth Street.

And The Hub at Tuscaloosa, a 188-unit, 485-bedroom development that’s expected to reach almost 75 feet in height is now going up on Red Drew Avenue just off the Strip.

The university is in on the action, as well, as work is underway on a $51.2 million, 494-bed dormitory on McCovey Drive near its intersection with Second Street.

Each of these projects are expected to be complete and open in time for fall semester.

Booming market

Despite projects like these, Ross said condo projects nearest the university have become the most popular on the market.

With Alabama’s lower cost of living, it’s sometimes cheaper for parents to pay the out-of-state tuition and buy condos here rather than sending their children to in-state schools.

Ross told of one Illinois family to whom he’d recently sold a condo that shared a similar story. This coincides with a story published Friday in the Chicago Tribune showing

See next page
Condominium sales

2017: 220 condo sold
2016: 187 condos sold
2018: 11 in January; 22 in February; 17 in March

Inventory averages

2017: 158 condos listed each month
2016: 217 condos listed each month
In past 10 years: Condo inventory peaked in 2010 with an average of 261 listings per month

Pricing

$171,413: The median price for condo sales in 2017
Since 2009: The median sales price of condos in the Tuscaloosa area has an average annual growth rate of 4.7 percent

Source: The Alabama Center for Real Estate

that 4.2 percent (1,023) of all UA students in 2017 hailed from Illinois, a sharp increase to the 147 who came here in 2008.

"Just in the past year we’ve had record high sales at at least four condo projects," Ross said, noting that what once was a seasonal sales market has become "year-round now."

According to stats compiled by the Alabama Center for Real Estate, there were 220 condos sold in the Tuscaloosa area in 2017, which reflects a 17.6 percent jump over the 187 condos sold in 2016.

And in this year alone, there were 11 closed condo transactions in January, 22 closed condo transactions in February, and 17 condo sales in March, which make up 8.9 percent, 11.9 percent and 6.9 percent, respectively, of all residential sales in the market during those months.

"Going forward, expect to see condo sales to stay in the 8-10 percent range of all residential sales in the Tuscaloosa area," said Stuart Norton, ACRE’s research coordinator.

And there are more on the way.

‘Good and steady’

Last month, Bill Lunford Construction and Development announced the $5 million “Summit on 7th” at the southeast corner of Seventh Street and 27th Avenue. This three-story building will feature 15 two-bedroom and five one-bedroom units ranging in price from $235,000 to $299,500.

And the City Council recently approved a rezoning on 13th Street to allow for the construction of a new condo project by developer Kenny Short.

While no plans have been submitted to City Hall just yet, the original proposal put the building at 36 bedrooms and the current zoning allows...
the structure to reach to four stories or 60 feet, said Ashley Crites, the city’s associate director of planning.

While few details have been announced, this development he’s calling “Camellia Place” is expected to be high-end. Short is also part of the development team behind three other condo projects in Tuscaloosa, including the Champions Place Condominiums at the corner of Hackberry Lane and 11th Street, where units sell between $600,000 and $2.15 million.

Short said he sees no end to the Tuscaloosa condo market as long as the Alabama Crimson Tide is successful on the football field.

“It’s just a good market with the school and the athletic program being what it is,” said Short, who has been in the condo market for about 12 years now. “That athletic program has a lot to do with everything, but I don’t see it slowing down.

“I like it, I like the market — it’s good and steady — and I like Tuscaloosa. Period.”

**Economics 101**

Last year, the median price for a condo sale in Tuscaloosa was $171,413, marking an average annual growth rate of 4.7 percent, according to the ACRE data.

Driving these prices are the number of units available on the Tuscaloosa-area market.

In 2017, an average of 158 condos were listed for sale each month, which was down 27 percent from the average of 217 condos up for sale each month in 2016.

“Relatively low condo inventory in the area will continue to impact pricing and value in the condo market in the coming months,” Norton said. “During 2018, I expect to see average annual growth rates in the 5-6 percent range, mainly due to low inventory.

“At the end of the day, it is — not surprisingly — all about supply and demand.”

Reach Jason Morton at jason.morton@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0200.
UA football coaches salaries set

By Ben Jones
Sports Writer

Salaries for the six new assistants for the Alabama football program have been set, according to payroll information obtained by The Tuscaloosa News.

Defensive line coach Craig Kuligowski will make about $750,000. Kuligowski arrived at Alabama after spending two years as defensive line coach for the Miami Hurricanes. He will also be associate head coach at Alabama.

Co-defensive coordinator Pete Golding is set to make about $650,000. Golding is Alabama's inside linebackers coach.

Co-offensive coordinator Josh Gattis' deal is worth about $525,000 annually. He'll coach wide receivers for the Crimson Tide. He spent the last four years as receivers coach at Penn State.

Secondary coach Karl Scott will make about $350,000. He spent the last two seasons as secondary coach at Texas Tech and was briefly defensive coordinator at Louisiana-Lafayette before joining Alabama's staff.

Special teams coordinator Jeff Banks' will be paid about $270,000. He's also

See SALARIES, C5
Alabama’s tight ends coach. He coached special teams and tight ends at Texas A&M for five seasons before joining Nick Saban’s staff.

Quarterbacks coach Dan Enos will make about $200,000. Enos’ contract at Arkansas called for the school to pay him $400,000 if he was terminated without cause, though that payout would be mitigated by Enos obtaining another job, according to USA Today and MLive.com. He was set to make $150,000 as Michigan’s wide receivers coach before joining Alabama’s staff this season.

Alabama’s nine assistant coaches were paid a total of $5,995,000 last season before bonuses, according to the USA Today assistant coach salary database. That led the nation.

These six new assistants are set to be paid more than $2.2 million. Combined with Alabama’s four returning assistants, the total salaries are set to be at least $4.6 million. New contracts for Alabama’s returning assistants have not been approved yet.

Outside linebackers coach Tosh Lupoi was named co-defensive coordinator after Jeremy Pruitt’s departure, and wide receivers coach Mike Locksley was named offensive coordinator after Brian Daboll’s departure. Lupoi and Locksley are currently being paid at the same rate as last season, but may receive raises with their promotions.

All employment contracts at the University of Alabama are subject to approval by the university’s board of trustees.

Reach Ben Jones at ben@tidesports.com or 205-722-0196.
OUR VIEW: Diversity is necessary for UA to progress

By: CW Editorial Board

Recently, a SOURCE-registered organization called Students for America First announced that they invited a white nationalist academic named Jared Taylor to campus. They did so in the interest of “ensuring that all social and political views, regardless of how offensive they seem to the general public, are accounted for in the free marketplace of ideas that ought to exist on the university campus,” according to a press release via the organization’s Twitter account. Taylor’s ideas, however, don’t just seem offensive, they are incredibly offensive, and they should be soundly discredited by anyone with a conscience and a basic understanding of science.

The talk has been billed with the subject line “Diversity: Is It Good For America?” Though it is incredibly frustrating and disheartening to live in a time where this must be stated with such frequency, this Editorial Board would like to provide a resounding “yes” to answer Taylor’s question. We wish only to emphatically deny his disgustingly hateful claims that he shrouds in the language of courtesy and academia.

Taylor describes himself not as a white supremacist, but rather, as a “racial realist.” He believes in voluntary racial segregation and that there is a marked difference in the intelligence of the races, with Hispanic people and black people being at the bottom of his totem pole of his pseudo-science. He has directly stated that “when blacks are left to their own devices, Western civilization – any kind of civilization – disappears.”

Diversity benefits each and every one of us at this University in countless, immeasurable ways: it expands our viewpoints, our ability to empathize, and our understanding of the world around us. We come to college to learn and to challenge our existing perspective, which we cannot do if we only interact with people who are like us. A racially-homogenous college experience simply would not be a college experience.

At UA especially, diversity within our student body is a critical component of moving forward as an institution. In a recent email to the student body from President Stuart Bell regarding Taylor’s invitation to campus, Bell stated that “hate and bigotry have no place at The University of Alabama.” Unfortunately, though, this has been disproven time and time again.

Hate and bigotry are alive and well at UA; it seems we have to ask an unabashedly vocal racist to leave the student body at least once a semester. We sit in buildings named after slave owners and eugenicists. Students of color on this campus could tell you the incidents of both casual and overt racism that they have had to endure while enrolled. UA has a long way to go before it becomes the beacon of equality and acceptance that Dr. Bell wants it to be, and recruiting and maintaining a diverse student body is an instrumental part of that journey. How could we move forward without the voices of people actually tangibly affected by racism, anyway?

Jared Taylor’s event will happen, and students should acknowledge the event however they see fit – by not attending, by protesting, by holding a counter-discussion. Whatever we choose to do, though, we should remain united as a student body, sure in the knowledge that Taylor’s views are abhorrent and incorrect. Diversity has made UA what it is today, and we cannot achieve any forward progress without it.
A right to speak; a right to ignore the speaker

François-Marie Arouet died in 1778, just two years after America was founded. He is widely credited, however, with a quote that has been often repeated in defense of one of the bedrock principles of the U.S. Constitution.

Voltaire was the Frenchman’s pen name. The problem is that he likely never said the famous words, which didn’t appear until 1906, when “The Friends of Voltaire” was published. The book was written by historian Evelyn Beatrice Hall under the pen name S.G. Tallentyre. But it really doesn’t matter if Voltaire said it first, or if Hall’s words were mistakenly credited to the subject of her book. It is the spirit of the quote that captured the imagination of common people during a politically turbulent time, and it is that spirit that remains an important part of our society today.

“I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.” According to Hall’s book, that was Voltaire’s reaction to news of a public book burning in France in 1758. When the U.S. Congress adopted the First Amendment in 1791, the spirit of that quote was alive and well. These days, with the cacophony of opinions and political strife in our country blaring at us through various forms of media, we need to heed it more than ever.

In order for democracy to work as it was intended, safeguards need to be in place that allow for ideas and opinions to be shared freely, even those which we may find objectionable or offensive. Ideas and opinions, even those that we inherently know are faulty, or even dangerous, should be shared in the public square and judged, by each listener, like the people who espouse them, on their merit or lack thereof.

That is why we understand that the University of Alabama had little choice but to allow Jared Taylor to speak on campus. He was invited by the student organization Students for America First to come to campus and is scheduled to speak on April 19. Taylor is a controversial white nationalist and editor of American Renaissance, an online publication that makes race its central focus. It is our hope, but not our expectation, that he will come and go with little fanfare and speak his nonsense to a hall of empty chairs.

We’ve seen this play out in the past year at Auburn, at the University of Florida and in Berkeley, Calif. Often the counter-protests against controversial speakers have erupted in scenes much worse than what transpired during the actual speeches. It is our hope that doesn’t happen here.

We understand the natural reaction against the hate spewed by race-baiting white nationalists, but countering hate with more hate accomplishes nothing. We understand that those who value diversity are inclined to let the world know that such speakers aren’t welcome here.

We disapprove of Taylor’s message, but he has a right to share his misguided opinions, just as we have a right to ignore them.
UA distances itself from speaker

The Tuscaloosa News
Saturday, March 31, 2018
Elected officials are moving forward with a series of amendments to the regulations that govern the city's short-term rental market.

All of the options presented last month by the city's Department of Planning and Development Services were advanced Tuesday by the City Council's administration and policy committee.

The changes include Increasing the short-term rental caps for multifamily developments from 1 percent to 10 percent and condominium projects from 3 percent to 50 percent.

The full City Council is expected to vote to adopt the changes next week.

But at the urging of Councilman Matt Calderone, who represents most of the downtown historic residential neighborhoods as part of District 4, the council will vote on an additional change as approved by the administration and policy committee, which also voted to give certain residents automatic permission to rent out their homes for 30 days a year.

In a short-term rental, a property owner or tenant leases a room or an entire living space to someone for a night, a weekend, or sometimes a week or longer.

Various websites — among them Airbnb.com and VRBO.com — act as a liaison between renter and property owner, and in some cases offer to facilitate the payment of state taxes. The Office of the City Attorney said efforts are underway to have these companies collect and remit city rental taxes, which could bring in an additional

See RENTAL, B3
a year. These licensed short-term renters also have the option to seeking permission from the ZBA for an additional 30 days per year.

But that doesn’t mean every resident in the city’s downtown historic districts can rent out their homes. Each historic district is limited to a 10 percent cap on residential properties that can operate as a short-term rental.

This means that no more than 64 homes of the more than 600 parcels in the historic districts – at least 246 of which are owner-occupied – could be rented out to visitors.

Despite these license caps, not every historic district has reached their limit. The Druid City historic district, for example, can have up to 20 short-term rental license holders, but only two property owners have obtained licenses since the regulations were adopted.

Likewise, of the five licenses allowed for Pinehurst, just one has been issued.

And eight historic districts haven’t issued any license, according to City Hall data.

But some, like Audubon Place, have issued all four short-term rental licenses allowed under its cap and four property owners are on a wait list. So, too, has the Eighth Street historic district reached its one-license limit. One property owner is on a waitlist to be considered.

Each license lasts for two years, but city officials are aware that some of these licenses have been granted to “squatters,” or property owners who have obtained the license with no intention of renting out their property in order to prevent others in their neighborhood from doing so.

“There has also been some concern that people were getting licenses to cap out their district,” said Ashley Crites, the city’s associate director of planning.

To combat this, one of the amendments will require those seeking to renew their license to submit to an audit to prove that they are, in fact, using the license as intended.

City staff members also are moving toward the hiring of an outside company to help crack down on violators.

Officials know there are multiple property owners who are renting out their properties without going through the licensing process. Crites said that, to date, the city has received about $5,500 in licensing fees since the regulations were imposed.

“This number could and should be larger,” Crites said.

Short-term rental advocates were on hand to urge the City Council to make the regulation even looser, which they argued would make more people willing to comply with the rules.

Kimberly Roberts of Bama B&B Rentals, a company that oversees the rental of several properties across Tuscaloosa, suggested the automatic rental cap be set at 60 days instead of 30.

Roberts pointed at the city’s ZBA findings that between football season, college graduation ceremonies, University of Alabama events and city-hosted functions, like concerts and athletic competitions, the 30-day limit is reached very quickly.

“If we put it at 60 days, we’re going to get a lot more compliance from people,” Roberts said. “If we don’t make this process simpler, you’re going to keep people underground.

“We need to make it where people can do it and get licensed.”

Others, like Audubon Place resident Kelly Fitts, said the regulations should be tightened for historic district residents.

“We are only trying to protect our neighborhoods,” said Fitts, who also serves as president of the Original City Association, a volunteer group that acts as an advocate on behalf of the downtown’s historic district residents.

She said that by expanding the rental caps for apartment and condominium complexes will relax the demand on the single-family homes in the historic districts.

That, Fitts said, is what should be promoted.

“Let the condos and the apartments house the out-of-town visitors,” Fitts said. “You have selected us as the only areas with single-family residential (homes) to be invaded by out-of-town visitors.”

Reach Jason Morton at jason.morton@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0200.
With complaint, UA gets dose of its own medicine

NBA superstar LeBron James threatened the University of Alabama with legal action this week, alleging copyright and intellectual property rights violations with regard to a video trailer the UA football program posted on Twitter.

James contends Alabama lifted “the ideas, concepts and format” from a program called “The Shop” that appears on Uninterrupted, a digital media platform he co-founded with a business partner in 2015. “The Shop” features James having casual conversations with fellow NBA players, musicians and other guests while they get haircuts at a barber shop.

Alabama recently released the trailer on Twitter for an online program titled “Shop Talk,” which features Nick Saban, former Alabama receiver Julio Jones and other former Crimson Tide players conversing in a barbershop. The trailer promises that the first episode is “coming soon.”

This would be laughable if it were happening to almost any other organization on the planet. But it seems Alabama is getting a taste of its own medicine. After all, the university has set the standard for aggressive protection of its brand, with a history of nitpicking over minor, even doubtful, copyright and trademark infringements.

This is the same university that threatened a Northport bakery with legal action for decorating cookies and cakes with a script “A” back in 2012. This is the same university that sued in 2013 to stop a Georgia business from using a houndstooth pattern.

Club sports teams at UA were told in 2014 even they could not use the script “A” or other UA logos that have traditionally been part of the club’s uniform designs.

And in 2016, UA students competing in the collegiate edition of “Team Ninja Warrior,” a televised athletic competition featuring teams from across the nation, were forced to drop out as they prepared for filming in Los Angeles because the university could not reach an agreement with a unit of NBCUniversal over the use of the script “A” on the program.

Perhaps the most notable instance was UA’s lawsuit against artist Daniel Moore. Moore, who graduated from Alabama in 1976, began painting scenes from great Crimson Tide football victories in 1979. The first print — depicting Alabama’s famous “Goal Line Stand” that won a national championship against Penn State — was hugely successful. It was the first of many paintings by Moore. But by the time he was working on a scene from the 2001 Iron Bowl, Alabama had decided it wanted a cut. That led to the university spending more than a million dollars — maybe as much as $3 million, depending upon whom you ask — and the better part of a decade going after Moore. Ultimately, the courts ruled that Moore’s work was protected by the First Amendment, which should have been obvious to UA from the start.

Similarly, we don’t know whether James has much of a case against UA. But maybe being on the wrong side of a threat might give the university pause when it’s considering playing hardball the next time someone puts a script “A” on a cookie.
LeBron James at odds with UA

Basketball star says UA stole his idea

CLEVELAND — LeBron James believes Alabama's football program is offside. James contends that Alabama has lifted "ideas, concepts and format" from a program on "Uninterrupted," the digital media platform the three-time NBA champion co-founded with business partner Maverick Carter. Last year, "Uninterrupted" aired "The Shop" a forum where James, Golden State forward Draymond Green, retired player Charles Oakley and others have conversations while getting their hair cut in a barber shop.

Alabama recently released a trailer on Twitter for "Shop Talk" that shows Crimson Tide coach Nick Saban and former Alabama star wide receiver Julio Jones in a barber shop setting. The video says the first episode is "coming soon."

On Monday, "Uninterrupted" sent a letter to Alabama, citing "exploitation" and concerns over copyright infringement and intellectual property.

In the letter, which was obtained by The Associated Press, Josh Tarnow, the head of business and legal affairs for "Uninterrupted", tells Alabama he would prefer not getting into a "battle of legal letters" with the school and asks for a copy of the first "Shop Talk" episode to be sent for a review. Tarnow said he hopes the sides can "address Uninterrupted's concerns amicably."

Alabama officials did not immediately reply to a request from AP for comment.

Although James is a huge Ohio State fan, he has attended Alabama games in the past. And every year Alabama has won the national championship since 2010, James has captured an NBA title. It happened in 2012 and 2013 when James played in Miami, and again in 2016 when he guided the Cavaliers to a title, the first for any Cleveland major sports team since 1964.

Alabama won its fifth title under Saban in January.
Alabama workforce requires more preparation

By Shahriyar Emami | Staff Reporter

According to a recently-released survey of Alabama executives, one of the top five issues facing the state are education and workplace training, but students coming out of The University of Alabama don’t feel as ill-prepared as they’re perceived.

Since 2013, businesses have been asked to participate in the Alabama Business Confidence Index survey every quarter to ask the opinions of business leaders about the state and their companies.

Peter Harms, an assistant professor in the Culverhouse College of Commerce, said many organizations in towns like DCH and others have trouble staffing positions in all levels of organization.

“One of the things I’ve noticed since I moved to Alabama is we are fantastic at bringing in some of the best talent in the country to our universities,” Harms said. “At the same time, keeping them here is a big issue.”

This can be chalked up to out-of-state students leaving the state after graduation. Harms said a big challenge for the state is how to keep students here after graduation by showing them what opportunities are available.

“The University loves it when they see our students and they go and work on Wall Street or they go to Chicago, LA, or Tokyo and London,” Harms said. “That’s success for us.”

While this enhances the reputation of the University, something that is neglected is focusing on keeping Alabama graduates in the state. For Harms, this is a “tricky thing” in that the university serves more than one purpose.

“To some degree, that is a symptom of the success of universities,” Harms said. “We tell young people, if you want to be successful in life, come to a university. We’re not telling people become an electrician or a bricklayer or a welder. It turns out, those are the jobs the economy needs almost more than anything else.”

As an Alabama native, when Carter Autrey was in high school, he told his friends that he would leave Alabama. Since attending The University of Alabama, he decided to stay and work in Birmingham where he grew up.

While he might not stay in Alabama long-term, Autrey, a senior majoring in marketing and management, said he is “thrilled” to be starting his job in Birmingham in July.

“It’s really cool to see there’s a lot of growth going on in Birmingham,” Autrey said. “I really want to be a part of that. I’m working with a startup in Birmingham right now. As a business student, something I’m really into is being able to give back to the community.”

For some business leaders from the survey, emphasis from four-year colleges should be shifted to vocational schools. Such schools focus on trade-training and jobs that start at the high school level.

“It’s very difficult to find skilled, educated and dependable employees,” said Viktoria Riiman, a socioeconomic analyst for the UA Center for Business and Economic Research.

Based on the state’s business leaders’ comments in the ABCI survey, a primary concern for the future is workforce preparedness.

It’s very difficult to find skilled, educated and dependable employees.

- Viktoria Riiman

“The economy is essentially a system of workforce and it is all a part of the economy,” Riiman said. “If you have businesses that are struggling to get an educated workforce, that means the businesses are struggling, not running at full capacity and efficiency.”

Autrey said he believes that the University has prepared him to enter the workplace. He said his marketing and management classes have helped him with critical thinking. Having a strong work ethic and drive to learn new responsibilities is something he said is important for people who are starting a new job.

“I definitely think there is a gap between what we’re taught in class and what you’re expected to know and have under your belt whenever you go into a job or workplace,” Carter Autrey said.

Stephen Katsinas, director of the University’s Educational Policy Center, or EPC, said funding contributes to the top issue facing education in the state.

“If Shelton State Community College is so badly underfunded that it cannot produce all of the engineering tech, automotive tech and industrial maintenance graduates that Mercedes and its suppliers need, they will go out of state to find that workforce,” Katsinas said.

Underinvesting in public higher education is limiting for the state’s workforce, especially in a tight labor market. A 2015 EPC study for the Higher Education Partnership of Alabama found that investment in higher education

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produces higher per capita incomes for Alabamians.

Katsinas said this results in more income tax receipts, which produces more funds for all of education, resulting in continuous per capita income increases.

"Just one percent of all state and federal student aid investments comes from our state, ranking Alabama last among the 16 Southern Regional Education Board states," Katsinas said. "The average state investment is 29 percent, but Alabama invests just one percent."

Katsinas said this basically makes Pell Grants the main in-state student aid program.

"In essence, it has affected local well-being and the state's economic well-being," Ritman said.

To make people aware, Alabama can spread the word of labor opportunities, Harms said. An example he uses is an unskilled laborer could get a two-year welding degree. This could result in tripled income since that person is now considered a skilled laborer.

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**STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY**

3% international students

41% come from Alabama

56% come from out of state

Information courtesy of The University of Alabama

Graphic Illustration CW / Rebecca Griesbach
Amy Heatherly is suing the University of Alabama over her pay

By Mallory Moench
The Associated Press

TUSCALOOSA — Amy Heatherly believes she would have been paid at least $50,000 more to do her job over the past five years if she had been a man.

As the only female human resources director overseeing compensation at the University of Alabama's main campus, Heatherly said she knew for years she was getting paid less than three men on a similar management level with fewer years of experience.

She filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in 2014, after receiving a raise that was half of her male colleagues'. In 2016, she sued the university.

"It did not have as much to do with the money but me feeling like I'm paid my worth, or at least paid equitably, like you're being respected and recognized for what you do," said Heatherly, 52, who has worked at the university for 10 years.

The university argues differences in pay are justified because her position is not comparable to her male colleagues. Heatherly says that she is a victim of gender discrimination because she's not receiving equal pay for equal work.

White women in Alabama make 72 cents to a white man's dollar; black women make 57 and Latinas 47, the National Women's Law Center calculated.

Federal law prohibits wage discrimination on the basis of sex for equal work, except where there is a difference in experience or productivity. Alabama and Mississippi are the only two states that don't have equal pay laws.

Rep. Adline Clarke, a Democrat from Mobile, unsuccessfully pushed lawmakers to approve equal pay legislation. Clarke's bill, which failed this legislative session, mirrored federal law but tasked the Alabama Department of Labor with enforcement. She said that would hold employers more accountable.

Lilly Ledbetter, the Alabama woman who lost a lawsuit over being paid less than her male counterparts, is the namesake of the law signed by former President Barack Obama to make it easier for women to sue over wage discrimination. She said people wrongly think

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that pay discrimination does not exist.

"It seems like they all have blinders on," Ledbetter told the Associated Press. "The corporate world in some regards feels that equal pay for equal work is a myth. They think we have it."

The university said in court filings that it explained Heatherly's low raise was because of how she handled an employee complaint and software problems. Heatherly said they never talked with her about disciplinary problems at the time and gave her no performance evaluation.

Heatherly's complaint said that when she sued, she and her three male colleagues all had the title of director, each with unique responsibilities.

"She's the only person in the job, so then can she never be a victim of sex discrimination because there's no comparator?" said Heatherly's attorney Charles Guerrier, who worked for the EEOC for three decades. "If you segregate the jobs and underpay the women, you can't violate law because there are no men doing the same jobs."

The university counters in court filings that Heatherly's role was not comparable because it wasn't system-wide and had different responsibilities.

The university uses a pay grade system that tallies salaries based on the differentials. A statistical analysis by Heatherly's economic expert reported she was paid less than 19 out of 20 men in her pay grade. The expert calculated the university paid female administrators between 5 to 14 percent less.

The university's expert responded that the analysis was "flawed" because jobs can't be compared within the same pay grade. The university said doing so is "ignoring legitimate factors that drive compensation," like type of work and job performance.

Monica Watts, the university's associate vice president for communications, said the university could not answer questions or comment on the ongoing case. In response to an open records request for documentation of equal pay complaints, lawsuits and settlements, the university said they have "no responsive public documents that compile the information."

Federal court records show two University of Alabama at Birmingham professors sued over unequal pay in 2006. One settled and one left the university, according to their attorney.

Heatherly said the lawsuit has dashed her dreams of a promotion. She is her family's breadwinner, currently earning more than her husband at $131,000 a year.

"There are days when I wonder, why do I keep helping a place that's done this to me?" she said, wiping at tears. "If I can help to make it better for other females, and I know I can't change the world, but if I do that I'll feel like I've had an impact."
UAB could build 2 parking decks, ban freshman parking

By: Erin Edgemon

The University of Alabama at Birmingham will have a shortage of 3,500 parking spaces in five years if it doesn't look at its transit system differently, a recent study found.

The urban campus, with little open space to grow, is now attempting to do just that.

UAB has unveiled a five-year plan for improvements to its transportation and parking network as the student population continues to grow.

The university saw record student enrollment last fall of 20,902. The fall 2017 semester was also the first time the university encouraged all its incoming freshmen to live on campus and 80 percent did so.

"We're excited about the growth of our campus, the projected growth of our campus, and this plan allows us to continue to not just grow but actually improve our on-campus transportation system," said James Fowler, director of planning design and construction. "And it helps us continue to move away from being a commuter campus and makes us a part of an urban, vibrant community."

Through a two-year study the university learned that students and employees are excited about UAB moving away from being a commuter campus, he said.

That is going to take a continued investment in other options, including growing the transit system and investing in bicycle infrastructure, Fowler said.

The five-year plan includes managing demand for and improving parking, enhancing transit services and encouraging pedestrian and bicycle traffic.

No freshman parking

As part of this plan, UAB is looking over the next five years to prohibit freshmen from bringing a vehicle on campus. Fowler said this move could save about 700 parking spaces and encourage students to stay on campus.

"We are definitely trying to adjust the culture away from being a commuter campus, so this plan does help reinforce that, he said.

To aid this effort, the university is continuing to invest in its transit system including the Blazer Express buses and partnering with the city to build bicycle lanes, enhanced crosswalks and making on-street parking easier.

Improvements to the Blazer Express transit system will include the number and length of routes, efficiency and reliability.

According to UAB, changes in parking lot assignments and transit routes were made in early 2017 to save time for employees who park in Express Lots or perimeter lots.
These transit enhancements are designed to encourage students to use express parking lots on the outskirts of campus rather than waste time looking for parking in the core of campus, Fowler said.

**Parking decks**

UAB is studying the feasibility of building two parking decks: one for students and one in the medical district, Fowler said.

The first parking deck will contain about 1,100 parking spaces for students and will be located at the corner of 12th Street South and 11th Avenue. This could replace an approximate 200-space surface parking lot.

Another parking deck could be built near Kirklin Clinic at the corner of 5th Avenue South and Richard Arrington Jr. Boulevard.

In two years, UAB will then evaluate whether there is a need to build two additional parking decks.

Parking decks are necessary as well as the campus continues to grow, add new facilities, and reduce surface parking lots in the core of campus.

Stephen Foster, vice president of Five Points South Neighborhood Association, said a student parking deck in the area of 11th Avenue South is amazing news for the neighborhood.

"If you drive around UAB around 11th, 14th and Collum streets, you start to see a number of cars parking on the streets," he said, adding that many residents can't park in front of their homes now because students are parking there.

A parking deck is "going to drastically" reduce that occurrence, Foster said.

Fowler said UAB is interested in working with the city of Birmingham to create an on-street parking permitting system to further address this issue.

City Council President Valerie Abbott is leading the effort at the city. She said council staff is researching best practices in other cities.

Foster said the neighborhood is also partnering with UAB to come up with new ideas to deal with parking issues. One idea is having UAB police ticket students parking on residential streets and requiring students to pay off their tickets in order to graduate.

**Partnership with Birmingham**

UAB has applied for a grant with the city of Birmingham to build bike lanes on 13th Street from 10th Avenue South to 1st Avenue South.

Fowler said this project will connect UAB with Regions Field and Railroad Park in downtown Birmingham.

This year bike lanes will also open along 10 blocks of 10th Avenue South.
Other improvements

- UAB is implementing a three-year plan to convert all decks to LED lighting, which is brighter, more environmentally sound and offers greater security, Parking and Transportation Services Director Andre Davis.

- Bicycle lockers have been installed to provide protection from theft, vandalism and inclement weather.

- Three electric car-charging stations were installed in 2017 and more will open this spring in select employee lots.

- UAB has promoted employee participation in CommuteSmart, which rewards those who carpool, walk, bike or travel by bus.

- Car-sharing program ZipCar launched

- BlazeRide, a van service for employees with limited mobility, has also launched

- UAB updated its policy last year to permit employees or students who work in non-patient care buildings to park their bicycles in private offices.

To help pay for campus-wide transportation improvements, Fowler said UAB plans to raise the price of student and employee parking permits, which hasn't happened in a number of years.

Student parking permits haven't gone up in price since 2012, according to the university. Employee parking permits haven't gone up in 10 years.
UAB to build new medical facility in Hoover

By: Erin Edgemon

The University of Alabama at Birmingham Health System will build a 39,000-square-foot medical facility in Hoover's Stadium Trace Village development.

The facility will include a variety of medical services, including primary care, OB/GYN, oral surgery and other specialties, the university health system released on Monday.

Stadium Trace Village is a mixed-use development along Highway 150 and Stadium Trace Parkway at Interstate 459. The property will feature specialty retail, restaurants, hotels and a new prototype grocery store.

Broad Metro Commercial Real Estate is developing the project.

"Hoover is very excited that UAB has chosen to expand its presence within our city," said Hoover Mayor Frank Brocato. "The new multiservice clinic at Stadium Trace Village will bring much-needed health care options to our growing community. The UAB/Medical West freestanding emergency department has already added immeasurably to the quality of life for Hoover residents, and we are confident the new clinic will have an even greater impact. We look forward to a long, productive partnership between the UAB Health System and the city of Hoover."

The UAB Medicine clinic in Hoover at 2321 Highway 150 will move to the new Stadium Trace Village location when it opens.

Construction is expected to begin in early 2019. The facility should open in early 2020.

"We are committed to providing outstanding health care to Alabamians," said Will Ferniani, Ph.D., CEO of the UAB Health System. "To achieve that aim, we recognize the need to bring our expertise and our outstanding facilities to the places where people work and live. The Hoover medical office building continues our efforts to make it easier for residents of Alabama, especially west Jefferson County, to access the world-class care available from UAB Medicine."

In addition to the flagship facilities clustered in Southside Birmingham, UAB Medicine operates neighborhood clinics in Hoover, Leeds, Gardendale and Inverness, along with an urgent care clinic in Birmingham. Additional facilities include the Heart and Vascular Clinic and the Comprehensive Cancer Center at Acton Road, and Neurosurgery at Greystone.

A new freestanding emergency department and medical office building are under construction in Gardendale to improve services in the northern part of the region. Those facilities are expected to open in spring of 2019.

Medical West is a member of the UAB Health System. UAB also has partnerships with medical providers in Mobile, Montgomery, Anniston, Alexander City, Florence, Demopolis, Camden and Greenville.
"Hoover is the sixth-largest city in Alabama, and along with other communities in south and southwest Jefferson County, continues to experience tremendous growth," Ferniany said. "This facility, in conjunction with the Medical West freestanding emergency department, which opened in 2015, will provide needed access to medical services for this population," Ferniany said.
UAB Highlands shooting
survivor released from hospital

A man severely injured during a shooting at UAB Highlands last month was released from the hospital, according to his family.

Tim Isley, a surgical instrument supervisor and son of Springville Mayor Butch Isley, underwent multiple surgeries after the March 14 shooting. Authorities said Travis Coleman, 31-year-old central sterile supply worker, brandished a gun and opened fire. Nancy Swift, a 63-year-old nursing supervisor, was injured and died a short time later. Coleman was pronounced dead inside the hospital after turning the gun on himself, authorities said.

Tim Isley is recovering at home after being released from UAB Hospital on Tuesday.

"Tim's most recent medical examination provided that he is recovering nicely from common postoperative complications and it is expected that his recovery may be fairly lengthy," Isley's family said in a statement.

"The family continues to thank all of those that have prayed, loved and supported Tim and his family during this tragic event, and ask that you continue to keep Tim and all of those affected in your thoughts and prayers." — Jonece Starr Dunigan
Sports execs: BJCC project could pave way for more events

With a new downtown stadium and upgrades to the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex on the verge of becoming reality, sports executives say the $300 million project could pave the way for the Magic City to lure - or lure back - a number of events.

While there are no certainties, those opportunities could include the return of the NCAA Basketball Tournament, neutral site football games and a number of other events.

Robbie Robertson, CEO of the Colonnade Group, said the project is an exciting one for Birmingham in several ways.

"Progress continues to be made in our city and they sort of proved when they built (Regions Field) and Railroad Park - if we build things, they will come," Robertson said. "The rebuild of Legacy Arena and the football building is enormously positive. I think we will see more of that to come, and we may now see some football or events of that type we could not attract to Birmingham before."

Robertson said the new stadium could pave the way for the Alabama Super Six high school state championship football games to return to the Magic City, which hosted the event for several years before it started rotating between Bryant-Denny Stadium in Tuscaloosa and Jordan-Hare Stadium in Auburn.

He said outdoor concerts are another area of potential created by the new stadium.

Gene Hallman, CEO of Bruno Event Team, is bullish on soccer at the stadium.

"I think the one area that our company will focus on is international soccer events," Hallman said. "The Olympic soccer event that took place in 1996 was very successful, and after that occurred, we hosted seven or eight international friendlies, including a World Cup qualifier and then two women's matches and the women's Victory Tour a couple of years ago (in which) Birmingham finished second in attendance."

Hallman said having natural grass instead of artificial turf will be key to the venue's soccer potential.

He said the World Games is another opportunity.

"Let's assume (the stadium) is done in the fall of 2020, then, it would have time to have World Games sports prior to the World Games, such as lacrosse, and have a national or international competition," he said "It's a window of time to have some World Games
(events), and it would be a big event for the community.”

In terms of other football outside of UAB and the Birmingham Bowl, Hallman said that requires further research.

“We’re doing that every day. We manage the Alabama Sports Council activities, and we are constantly looking for requests and proposals that are being submitted by a wide variety of organizations,” he said. “Given this all just happened so recently, there hasn’t been much time to go over it … there will be lots of research done to figure out the highest and best uses for this facility.”

BJCC Executive Director and CEO Tad Snider has previously told the BBJ that the venue intends to recruit neutral-site football games for the stadium.

The renovation of Legacy Arena also will create the opportunity for new events.

Robertson said it will put Birmingham back in the conversation for events like the NCAA Basketball Tournament. In the past, Birmingham has hosted both opening weekend games and the regionals.

Birmingham hasn’t hosted any opening round games since 2008 or regionals since 1997.

A conceptual rendering of a potential new stadium at the BJCC. The stadium could bring more unique events to Birmingham, according to experts.

Basketball or gymnastics tournaments are also possibilities, he said.

While many events are bid out years in advance, Robertson said he is hopeful the city’s relationships with ESPN – which owns the Birmingham Bowl – can prove beneficial in luring events.

Robertson noted that San Antonio’s improvements helped the city elevate its presence in the sports event world, including hosting this year’s Final Four.

He said a coordinating marketing push for Birmingham to expand the variety of events is important in light of the new facility.
Health giants thinking very big

Alliance creates $4 billion powerhouse, could transform care statewide

Lawrence Specker lspecker@al.com

An alliance between UAB Health System and Mobile-based Infirmary Health clearly has potential to impact health care in Alabama, starting with the sheer throw-weight of a $4 billion-per-year combined budget.

Top executives say that the "strategic and operational affiliation agreement" announced in early March is designed to be a win-win-win deal: UAB and Infirmary Health will gain myriad benefits while preserving their independence, and more of the state's population gets access to more resources.

Potential benefits for patients are new services, access to specialists, and the ability to participate in clinical trials of cutting-edge medicines. For the state at large, it's a big step toward a cooperative, truly statewide healthcare system.

A deeper look at this union shows that it's something more delicate, and probably more complicated, than a corporate merger or acquisition. Either of those would create a common ownership structure, a common leadership hierarchy, a common workforce. This doesn't.

Instead, the goal seems to be creating common opportunities. Identifying those might be relatively easy, but even so it'll

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take time to develop and implement real plans to pursue
them. It may well be years before the full fruits are seen.

Nonetheless, leaders of the two systems say the benefits
could be vast. And they say it could help Alabama brace for
some disturbing trends in healthcare.

"You might not get a reduced bill today, but in the
long run what that should do is slow the rate of the cost
increase," Mark Nix, president and CEO of Infirmary
Health System, says of spiraling healthcare costs.

Dr. William Ferniani, CEO of UAB Health System, says
that by 2025 there could be a shortage of 60,000 doctors in
the U.S. Research released by the Association of American
Medical Colleges pegs that shortfall anywhere from 40,000
to 105,000 by 2030, and Ferniani offers an unvarnished take
on which end of the stick Alabama will get.

"You can be sure it's going to be more acute in Alabama,
and more acute in rural areas," he says. He suggests that
a partnership that helps train more doctors in Alabama
might provide some relief.

'STAYS RIGHT HERE'

Dr. Gerhard Boehm, a Mobile surgeon who spoke at the
news conference announcing the partnership, has a back-
ground that lets him see things from a few different angles.

Boehm earned his degree at UAB in the mid-'70s and
did a residency at Emory before moving to Mobile. Over the
years, he's been the president of the alumni association for
graduates of the UAB School of Medicine; spent a decade
on the Mobile Infirmary board; served as president of the
Infirmary medical staff; and worked as an adjunct profes-
sor at the University of South Alabama, a position he still
holds.

He is unstinting in his praise for the Infirmary, which
has grown to become not just one of the biggest medical
systems in the state but one of the biggest employers in
southwest Alabama, with a combined staff of more than
5,100.

"It's a wonderful institution," Boehm says, "started by a
number of civic-minded ladies over 100 years ago."

The Infirmary was founded as a community-based non-
profit, which it still is. "Our money doesn't leave the area,"
Boehm says. "It stays right here."

For the Infirmary to be swallowed up by a bigger fish
would no doubt be disturbing to many in the Mobile area,
but Boehm says that such fears aren't justified in this
case. He says, "We're not invading them. We're not being
invaded."

Big as it is, the Infirmary can't be all things to all
patients, Boehm says. Some of the cases it sees, such as
some cancer cases, require that the patient be referred to
a facility that can offer advanced or specialized care. UAB
was already an option, but having a built-in relationship
could streamline that process.

Boehm says that, as it stands, cancer patients in the area
may think first of going to MD Anderson in Texas. "There's
really no reason why UAB shouldn't be their first choice,"
says Boehm. "In my opinion they can get the same exper-
tise in Birmingham and travel a lot less."

Says Nix, "From a patient perspective, there are some-
ting like over 100 procedures that UAB does ... that no one
else in the state does." In a way, an alliance puts those pro-
cedures in Infirmary Health's portfolio.

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'THE UAB NAME'

The alliance isn’t just about programs. It’s about people, and on that point both the smaller Infirmary Health and the much larger UAB system have something to offer that the other dearly covets.

UAB educates students who need to serve residencies bridging the gap between medical school and full certification. A relationship with the Infirmary — the state’s biggest nonprofit, nongovernmental healthcare institution — guarantees that a lot of newly minted UAB doctors will have places to start their careers.

Said Ferniany, “We are very excited about working with Mobile Infirmary to enhance the residency programs in the area.”

Boehm says that two of UAB’s biggest programs are internal medicine and emergency medicine. A pipeline of trained emergency doctors would be a big asset to the Infirmary, he says. Emergency doctors don’t just provide immediate care for critical cases: They’re also gatekeepers who make important decisions about who gets treated and sent home, versus who gets admitted.

Nix says that the allure of a UAB connection might also make the Infirmary more appealing to established medical professionals considering a career move. “When we go out and recruit, we can do that under the UAB name,” Nix says.

Mobile already had a medical school and two university hospitals. So what does it mean for the University of South Alabama to have UAB planting its flag in town?

Proponents of the alliance say they have the utmost respect for the USA Health System’s strengths, which they say include trauma care, burn care and gynecological oncology.

Says Ferniany, “This is not about hurting others, it’s primarily about creating opportunities. I want to emphasize this is not targeted at beating up someone else.”

In announcing the alliance, leaders at UAB and the Infirmary said they were open to the possibility of other participants. In an interview, Ferniany reiterated the point, saying that the partners would “love” for USA to join up.

Boehm says that comparing a partnership with USA to one with UAB is apples and oranges. Right now Infirmary Health wants UAB, in part because it’s a whole lot bigger. He says, “UAB is a well-established old medical center that’s got a national and maybe even international reputation.

UAB also brings in half a billion dollars a year in research funds, Boehm says. Infirmary Health wants a piece of that research, and the resulting medicine.
'PART OF THE PLAN'

For patients walking into Infirmary Health hospitals, changes brought by the partnership may be subtle at first.

In the near term, patients may benefit from an increased use of telemedicine, as UAB specialists consult on difficult cases via online conferences that virtually put them in the room with Infirmary doctors.

Cancer patients and those needing transplants may benefit from quicker, smoother referrals to UAB. Nix is also excited about the possibility that patients may soon be able to participate in clinical trials being run by UAB, giving them access to promising new medicines.

"That's part of the plan here," agrees Boehm.

If Infirmary Health seems like the junior partner here, it does bring certain benefits to the table, not the least of which is its buying power, and its leverage to push for favorable prices on a plethora of purchases, ranging from pacemakers to hip implants to MRI scanners. Nix says that Infirmary's budget is around $800 million per year, roughly a 25 percent addition to UAB's $3.2 billion.

As a $4 billion entity, says Nix, "we have a lot more clout."

A relationship with Infirmary Health also helps Fernany advance a goal dear to UAB: building a cooperative network of hospitals throughout the state and even beyond its borders.

The vision is for UAB to sit at the center of a confederation, taking in patients referred by its partners but also providing expertise and services. That would help strengthen those partners in an era when small hospitals and health systems, particularly rural ones, are under pressure.

"We have a lot of affiliates," Fernany says, and those affiliations take different forms and sometimes involve management agreements. They include relationships with Baptist Health Montgomery, Eliza Coffee Memorial Hospital in Florence, Northeast Regional Medical Center in Anniston, Russell Medical Center in Alexander City, Whitfield Memorial Hospital in Demopolis and LV Stabler Memorial Hospital in Greeneville. In February, UAB announced a management agreement with John Paul Jones Hospital in Camden. The 30-bed institution had previously said financial woes would force it to close; local leaders hope UAB's intervention will prevent that.

UAB also works with other hospitals that aren't under the UAB Health System umbrella, Fernany says. "Our goal is to enhance the health of the people in Alabama," says Fernany. "We try to fill gaps." He adds, "We're not there to compete."

Over the months to come, the details of UAB-Infirmary programs will be worked out at meetings and conferences. Over the years to come, leaders at both institutions will have to evaluate whether the relationship is living up to its potential.

Nix says the terms leave some room for adjustments.

This isn't just a deal between two institutions. Nix describes it as a piece of a wider vision, one that's already reaching into Mississippi and the Florida Panhandle. "We want to be part of something bigger altogether," he says.
BJCC project: Taxes, timeline, location

The BJCC is preparing to break ground on a $174 million open-air stadium before the end of the year. The stadium will be built on four blocks adjacent to the existing complex. The BJCC Authority, Birmingham, Jefferson County, UAB and corporate partners are funding the stadium construction, as well as more than $100 million in renovations to Legacy Arena and other improvements at the BJCC. A 3 percent tax on car leases and rentals in Jefferson County will also go toward the project. Populous — a Kansas City, Missouri, design and architecture firm — developed conceptual plans for an up to 55,000-seat stadium as part of the BJCC’s 20-year master plan, which was released in 2016. The group projected then that stadium construction would cost $174 million. The entire project: $300 million. — Erin Edgemon
What happens if the stadium bids or construction goes over budget?

"The team will be purposeful, intentional and make every effort to design and manage construction to a $74 million budget," BJCC Executive Director Tad Snider said in an email to AL.com. "The initial design concepts and budgeting were undertaken with that project cost in mind. Should there be any overruns, the BJCC Authority will be solely responsible for those additional costs."

Why build the stadium now?

Snider said the downtown stadium has been in the planning stage for years. This year is an opportune time to start construction on the stadium as the Alabama Department of Transportation work on Interstate 59/20 "is going to be a disruptive period in the area of the BJCC anyway," he said.

The Central Business District bridges in downtown Birmingham will be closed and removed in the fall. The bridges will be rebuilt over the course of 14 months.

Also, interest rates, which have been at historic lows, are now beginning to increase and are projected to further increase in 2018, Snider said.

"Interest rates weigh heavily on projects such as these and if the projects were going to move forward, securing the most favorable rates are important," he said, adding other influencing factors were the return of UAB football and the hosting of the World Games in 2021.

When will renovations of Legacy Arena begin?

The timeline associated with the renovations of the Legacy Arena are currently being reviewed, Snider said.

"There will likely be overlapping timelines, but they will not start and reach completion at the same time," Snider said.

After securing funding from Birmingham, what happens now?

The BJCC is working to finalize funding agreements with UAB and corporate partners. "There is no timeline established at this point, but we would anticipate that to become much more clear in the next 45 to 60 days," Snider said. In the meantime, he said there is some site preparation work that needs to take place at the stadium site. Design and construction teams also have to be selected. Requests for proposal from parties that will make up the financing team including underwriters are one of the next steps, as well, he said.

What are the obstacles BJCC faces?

"While I would not call them obstacles, these are construction projects and the typical complexities of construction will apply throughout these projects, as well," Snider said. "Managing budgets, architects and engineers, contractors, communicating with the public and stakeholders regarding progress all come into play and will be important to manage well throughout the projects."

What is Birmingham's return on its investment at the BJCC?

Under a 2011 agreement with the BJCC, the city of Birmingham pays the BJCC $5 million a year. This was for costs incurred in the construction of the Westin Birmingham and the start of the Uptown District, according to the BJCC. About 25 years remain on that agreement.

In 2016, the BJCC generated $3.8 million in sales and use tax, lodging tax, rental tax revenues and personal income and occupational tax that were collected by the city. In a funding agreement approved Tuesday by the City Council, the city will pay the BJCC $3 million a year for 30 years for the debt service on bonds for the stadium and other BJCC improvements.

According to studies commissioned by the BJCC, the direct revenues from the project are expected to generate $600,000 a year to the city. The BJCC expansion combined with expected new developments, including two new hotels and an entertainment district, are projected to bring annual revenues to $9.9 million.

Revenues from these projects will be designated for Birmingham neighborhood revitalization. It was unclear Friday what would happen if the estimates fall short of target.

Does the BJCC keep all of the taxes generated on its properties?

The BJCC retains transaction-related fees equal to the amount of sales tax on certain transactions it directly operates, Snider said, adding one example is tax on ticket sales paid by the event promoters. He said those fees are earmarked for capital improvements and pledged in their entirety to the debt service that will be associated with the upcoming BJCC renovation and stadium.
UAB'S FERNIANY NAMED TO HEALTH CARE COMPANY'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The chief executive officer of the UAB Health System has joined the board of directors of Vizient, the largest member-driven, health care performance improvement company in the nation.

Will Ferniany joins a 22-member board of directors that also includes executives and clinicians from academic medical centers, community hospitals and independent organizations from across the United States.

"I am proud to serve on the board of Vizient, an organization that directly serves more than 50 percent of the nation's acute-care hospital systems and medical providers that share the patient-centric values we have worked to advance at UAB," Ferniany said. "I anticipate that my involvement with Vizient will allow me to leverage my experience and expand my career-long focus on improving health care in America. American health care is in crisis on cost, access and quality, and Vizient is at the forefront of helping hospitals improve care to their communities."

Vizient's membership includes academic medical centers, community hospitals, pediatric facilities, non-acute health care providers and integrated health delivery networks. The company supports its members in assisting in optimizing supply operations, improving care delivery evolving strategies to grow and compete in the health care market and maximizing pharmacy performance.

Vizient is headquartered in Irving, Texas.

UAB TO PLAY BIG ROLE IN HELPING ALABAMA'S RURAL HOSPITALS

The UAB Health System's role in boosting the state's rural hospitals could soon grow, thanks to a bill recently passed by the Alabama Legislature.

State lawmakers approved a bill to create a resource center housed at the UAB Health System to provide support for nonprofit, rural public hospitals in the state that are facing severe economic pressure.

The Alabama Rural Hospital Resource Center will be staffed and managed by the UAB Health System and will assist rural public hospitals in areas including purchasing and supply chain, compliance, recruitment, coding, reporting insurance and cost.

Alabama's rural hospitals are facing pressure on a number of fronts, including thin margins and regulatory challenges at the federal and state level. The resource center plan would call for the UAB Health System to add staff to provide advice, expertise and resources to hospitals that request assistance.

The bill has not yet been funded, and the UAB Health System will work to determine interim funding prior to the 2019 legislative session to start providing support to eligible hospitals.

"Many rural hospitals are in crisis," said UAB Health System CEO Ferniany said. "The resource center is designed to help keep those nonprofit, public hospitals operational, so that Alabamians can get medical care close to home when appropriate."
Evonik, new startup bolster biotech scene

From startups to established global players, the past few weeks have been kind to Birmingham’s biotechnology scene, showing that companies are more than willing to invest in the Magic City.

The biggest news came courtesy of Evonik, which has invested more than $50 million over the past four years on its research and development facility in Birmingham.

The German-based drug company has made Birmingham the home of its global competence center for medical devices, which aims to develop new system solutions for medical technology and expand the competencies of Evonik in the biomaterials and medical polymers industry.

The company is also installing a new GMP powder/liquid filling line for its parenteral drug delivery businesses. The new fill line will allow the business to extend offering the development and manufacture of complex injectable dosage forms by adding a commercial scale line capable of filling a variety of vial sizes at high speeds under sterile conditions.

“Evonik’s investments in the Birmingham site reflect its commitment to the medical device and drug delivery business as well as the city of Birmingham and its history of world-class medical research and technology,” said Kel Boisvert, Birmingham site manager for Evonik.

But global heavyweights aren’t the only ones making noise in the local biotech scene.

Robert Shufflebarger, a former president of Birmingham Venture Club who has experience at Atherotech, and Dimitry Vasylyev, a professor of biochemistry and molecular biology at UAB, have formed TriAltus Bioscience.

The company has already licensed a novel protein platform from UAB and is making headway to commercialize the technology.

Financial terms of the licensing deal were not disclosed.

The proteins the company are selling are widely used in life sciences research.

Eighty percent of drugs in development are made of proteins or act on proteins. Industry experts predict the demand for genetically engineered proteins will continue to grow rapidly, yet currently production is inefficient and cumbersome. Isolating that particular protein requires four to five purification steps on average, and most of the protein is lost in the process. The new purification method licensed by TriAltus works by isolating proteins in a single purification step, with ultra-high purity and yields 100 times greater than conventional methods.

“For us I think there was an important discovery at UAB that solved an unmet need in the marketplace and that tools for genetically engineered proteins overall is a half-trillion a year business, which is enormous. Even though there have been breakthroughs there are still bottlenecks and there are huge expensive drug processes for companies, having that ability to add value into that ecosystem may resonate with the market,” Shufflebarger said.

Experts say Birmingham’s concentration of life sciences and biotech assets — particularly in the form of institutional research — is an asset for the region.

“We have access to excellent research universities, UAB and not too far way Auburn and Alabama,” said Nathan Fisher, manager, drug development marketing and proposal team at Southern Research. “There is a lot of new innovations coming out of those places and it tends to foster an innovative environment and from that springs new (business) opportunities.”

As we’ve previously reported, UAB is increasing its efforts to boost commercialization of its research, focusing heavily on entrepreneurship and innovation-based economic development.

“You can’t discount the importance of UAB as an engine of innovation and technologies. There’s also a critical mass of scientists and engineers associated with (UAB),” Shufflebarger said.

Over the next few years, Fisher predicts, there will continue to be larger companies investing in Birmingham and growing, as well as seeing continued success from startups.
Stadium plan signals new era for city, UAB

Joseph Goodman  jgoodman@al.com

Birmingham is beginning to believe. Tuesday’s Birmingham City Council vote to help fund a new downtown stadium and upgrade Legacy Arena did a lot of things for Alabama’s largest city. Most importantly, it sent a message to itself. This town is starting to have a little faith.

Faith in the future.
Faith in cooperation.
Faith in the power of unity.

It’s wonderful that UAB football is going to have a new home. It’s great Birmingham will soon have shiny new things to make it regionally competitive. It’s vital for everyone that the north side of downtown continues to grow. All of those things are important, but they are all ancillary to the most valuable thing that has happened in the past few months.

In sports, they call it teamwork. In politics, they call it compromise. In Birmingham, it feels like a miracle after so

SEE GOODMAN, AG
many years of mistrust, doubts and division. "Progress won today," said Birmingham Mayor Randall Woodfin.

Progress and togetherness and, of course, UAB football.

Think about this: UAB football was dead less than four years ago. killed by its own university president with a blessing from the UA System Board of Trustees. Now it has a $25 million operations center and practice facility, and a new $174 million downtown stadium on the way.

And one could easily argue it all started with a protest on Twitter, #FreeUAB.

Along the way, there was much hard work, sacrifice and donation of time and money put into saving UAB football, especially by people like Tim Alexander and football coach Bill Clark. Alexander was in the front row in the City Council's chambers Tuesday for the official approval of the city's share of the funding.

He's the UAB student who wouldn't let UAB football die.

He protested and prayed and then traveled throughout Jefferson County and beyond, speaking at city council meetings large and small in the hopes of keeping the Blazers' fading fire afloat.

On Tuesday morning, Alexander was waiting outside the chambers at 8:45 a.m. He was the first citizen of Birmingham through the door, and when it was his turn to speak during the public forum he championed UAB just like he had so many times before.

"This is about everyone," Alexander said.

That's the essence of why this moment for the city is so important.

Over the course of a few short months, multiple governments, commissions, councils, legislatures, a university and corporate sponsors have come together to fund a downtown football stadium and upgrade to Legacy Arena. It all culminated with the City Council's 6-3 vote of approval.

"This sends a positive message," Woodfin said. "When we look at other cities and counties, Mobile and Madison being two examples, they tend to get regional cooperation right. It is time we get regional cooperation right. The important thing to note is if we can show that, and which we have shown by today doing this, then it's easier to solve some of our problems."

Some councilors Tuesday were concerned Birmingham's municipal government doesn't have enough people on the BCRC's board of directors. Of the nine board members, Woodfin and Councilor Jay Robinson represent the city.

"That's not even practical," said Councilor Lakindia Scales, who voted against the project.

Maybe not, but that sounds a lot like having faith in your neighbor.

Maybe right now that's more important than having complete control over a project.

Is everyone in Birmingham happy that its city is getting a new stadium? No. Some believe Legion Field should be renovated, and that a new stadium downtown is a waste of money.
Stadium makes for long, strange trip down memory lane

John Archibald
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The Birmingham City Council took six hours Tuesday to decide to pay for a downtown stadium. It was ugly and frustrating. It was gripping and profane and mind-numbing. Of course it was. Because it was about a stadium. In Birmingham. My God, what a long, strange trip that has been, a roller coaster ride of euphoria, subterfuge and disappointment.

You want me to be excited the city council agreed to spend $3 million a year on a stadium? Come on people. I saw them raise taxes and business license fees to pay for a dome they never built.

You want me to be upset that Birmingham agreed to spend $3 million a year on a stadium? Geesh. I’ve seen them spend more than that on lawyers. Perspective, people. Perspective.

I’ve been down this road too long for high emotion about a stadium. Let the UAB football team celebrate. Let the neighborhoods stew and the activists rant. Not me. I’ve seen too much anger, and deceit, and irony in this quest for a stadium.

It has been a full 20 years since all the movers and shakers, the Alabama Powers and the Drummonds and everybody who was anybody in this town, got together to propose the plan that was to forever change Birmingham.

Truth is I’m glad they agreed to spend the money. ... The city has partners in the BJCC and UAB, and it doesn’t need suburban approval to get what it wants.

It was called MAPS, and for a 1-cent sales tax increase it would build a dome and a transit hub and pay for everything from light rail to an aquatic center and a high-tech library system. It was going to prepare Birmingham for the big leagues.

Oh, voters in Birmingham were fine with it. With the highest turnout in years, voters in the rest of Jefferson County came to the polls and beat MAPS with impunity. It was defeated 57 percent to 43 percent, largely by a group of suburban residents who did not trust Birmingham.

They opposed it for opposition’s sake. They stood for doing nothing and called it progress. Like some of those who opposed it Tuesday.

It was those MAPS opponents — the ones who looked at Birmingham politics as a spectator sport while still expecting the city to pay for the zoo and botanical gardens and everything else — who made Larry Langford possible a few years later.

He came to the mayor’s office on a slogan of “Let’s Do Something,” and he got right to it.

It wasn’t long after he was sworn in that he convinced the council to double the city’s business license fees and increase the sales tax by a full penny to build a half-billion-dollar dome, and improve transit, and grant scholarships for all students with a C average or better. The taxes were estimated to raise $72 million a year.

Langford walked out of that meeting and uttered these words: “Dome, done. Scholarships, done. Transit, done. It’s a good day,” he said.

They even had a groundbreaking ceremony for the dome. But it never happened.

Because the money was used to bail out the city he was steering into an iceberg. The people paid the taxes, but never got delivery on the dome.
On Tuesday the council again passed spending for a stadium, over opposition from some activists who argued the money would better be spent on neighborhoods.

I can't help think I've seen it all. Those who were for it are against it and those who are against it are...

Getting old. Doing nothing, as Birmingham should know by now, does not lead to progress.

Truth is I'm glad they agreed to spend the money. It makes a lot more sense than Langford's stadium proposal. The city has partners in the BJCC and UAB, and it doesn't need suburban approval to get what it wants.

We should have done it 20 years ago. We'd have saved two tax increases and a bond deal.

And an ugly, frustrating, profane and mind-numbing 20 years. Not to mention that meeting Tuesday.

Archibald writes a regular opinion column for AL.com.
New stadium cements the survival of Blazer football
GOODMAN
FROM B1

City Council voted 6-3 to help fund a new downtown stadium. The stadium is being funded by the city, the county, UAB and corporate sponsors. It took a collaborative effort.

Birmingham saved UAB football two years ago, and Birmingham gave it permanent new life with this new stadium.

"We couldn't be more grateful," said Mark Ingram, UAB's director of athletics. "We are humbled by it, and we're thankful for everyone who's involved in it."

The stadium isn't just for UAB, obviously, but the Blazers will be the venue's first permanent tenant. UAB is signing a 20-year lease with the BJCC Authority to play there. The Dragon's Den could be completed by the 2020 season, and it will seat between 45,000 and 55,000 fans. The design of the stadium is still being determined, and Ingram is representing UAB on the official design committee.

The size is perfect, he said, for the modern stadium trend of college football — fewer seats and more amenities. If you want people to leave the comfort of their homes and their 80-inch TVs, in other words, then it better be fun, wired for ultra high-speed Internet and hip. Legion Field was none of those things.

"It's hard to see that sometimes where we live in Birmingham, sitting between Alabama and Auburn, who have two of the largest stadiums," Ingram said, "and so that gets to be what's normal because it's normal for us, for sports fans in Alabama, but it's really not the trend nationally."

Baylor's new stadium seats 45,140, for example, and can be expanded to 55,000.

TCU spent $164 million reconstructing its stadium in 2012 and it maxes out around 48,000.

"They bring in Texas and Oklahoma and Oklahoma State every year as part of their regular-conference season," Ingram said.

Funding for the new stadium came together quickly over the last few months, but the planning stages for the project began several years ago. Ingram traveled to Kansas City in 2016 with members of the BJCC Authority to discuss the design of the stadium.

UAB will soon have a shiny new stadium attached to the Uptown entertainment district. Country music star and former UAB quarterback Sam Hunt performed at the site of the new stadium before the Blazers' first season back last year. In hindsight, we all should have gotten the hint. If the stadium design is a winner, its atmosphere could rival some Power 5 schools. That's not an exaggeration.

Here's the craziest thing of all. UAB didn't have to pay for it. When you think about it in those terms, what has happened to UAB football over the course of four years is mind blowing.

It's a college football team subsidized by a municipal government. Every university in the entire country should be envious of UAB today.

"What this does for UAB, by not having to put the entire debt on UAB, what it did was allow UAB more comfort in building the business school and the new nursing school and

See Next Page
the college of arts and sciences and allowed UAB to build the
new intramural field,” Ingram said. “It allowed UAB to start
making plans on another new freshman dorm that I think
will break ground within the next year. It’s just the sleeping
giant over here in Southside.”

In college football, it all comes back to recruiting in the
end. UAB, located in the heart of college football country,
should now be able to do that just as well as any other Group
of 5 team, and probably some of the Power 5 teams, too.

Playing in Legion Field last season, UAB led Conference
USA in attendance, raised $45 million in less than two years,
had the highest ranked recruiting class in the conference
and tied a school record for wins (eight). What’s it going to
do next?

“There is a little bit of a ceiling on where we can go
because we’re not going to be invited into the College Foot-
ball Playoff,” Ingram said, “but doing what Central Florida
did is what we want to do.”

At this point, though, why limit the vision there? How do
you break into college football’s core? Sell out your new sta-
dium and win is a good start. UAB at least now has some-
ting fun to sell to its fans and alumni.

If you think breaking through into a better conference is a
crazy idea, and absurd, and impossible, and ludicrous, then
you haven’t been paying attention. Birmingham didn’t just
reanimate the zombie ice dragon football team this week.
The city gave it a new soul.

Joseph Goodman is a columnist for Alabama Media Group.
He’s on Twitter.
The Birmingham News
Wednesday, March 28, 2018

BIRMINGHAM

City backs stadium project

Council commits to spend $90 million over 30 years

Erin Edgemon eedgemon@al.com

The Birmingham City Council on Tuesday committed $90 million — $3 million a year for 30 years — toward the expansion of the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex, the most noteworthy pieces being a downtown stadium and the renovation of Legacy Arena.

The council approved the funding and project cooperation agreements between the city and the BJCC in a 6 to 3 vote. Councilors Lashunda Scales, Sheila Tyson and Darrell O’Quinn voted against the measure.

The council unanimously approved a resolution that would create a neighborhood revitalization fund.

Mayor Randall Woodfin said the revenues generated from the expansion and new development of the surrounding property will go toward neighborhood revitalization.

SEE STADIUM, A6
STADIUM
FROM AT

in all 99 neighborhoods.

Tuesday's vote came after four hours of public comment and discussion from council members. "This is the right thing to do because it has a full benefit for our entire city," Woodfin said. He said this project is necessary because of neighborhood revitalization, tourism and progress.

"We can support neighborhood revitalization and economic development," he said.

Woodfin said the city doesn't have to choose between a downtown stadium and Legion Field. He said the city can do both with the additional revenues generated by the BJCC expansion.

Birmingham will pay $3 million annually, beginning this year, on the debt service of city-supported bonds for a period of 30 years, according to the funding agreement. The city will pay using proceeds from the occupational tax or another unspecified tax.

The principal amount of the city-supported bonds is an estimated $46.1 million.

The agreement will terminate if the bonds haven't been issued before the end of the year, according to the agreements.

The BJCC's 20-year, $300 million master plan includes the construction of a $174 million open-air stadium, an arena makeover and an outside piazza renovation.

The stadium would have up to 55,000 seats and additional meeting and exhibition space. The Legacy Arena improvements include adding new luxury suites, a club lounge, upgraded concession stands, expansion of the concourse and exterior updates.

The loading docks will also be improved and the locker and dressing rooms modernized.

According to a study commissioned by the BJCC, the expansion of the BJCC will generate just under $500,000 in additional revenues to the city each year. Additional city revenues could reach $9.9 million a year with the BJCC expansion, two new nearby hotels and the former Carraway Hospital being redeveloped into a retail and entertainment district.

Supporters included first UAB football coach Jim Filyer and current UAB football players.

NOT ALL PLEASED

Several residents expressed their frustration to city councilors over the deal.

Susan Palmer, president of Central Park Neighborhood Association, said she has a petition for councilors from residents against the city contributing to the project. Instead of contributing to the BJCC expansion, she asked the city make the 99 neighborhoods, schools and crime the top priority.

Robert Walker, vice president of the Wahoo Neighborhood Association, said the project is wrong for the city. "It doesn't benefit us anything to build the stadium here," he said. "I ask you to do something different. The people don't want it."

Walker said if the city really needs a new stadium, then build it on city-owned property and not BJCC property.

Edna Freeman, of the Druid Hills neighborhood, which borders the BJCC property, said she doesn't support the stadium. "It will need parking. People will have to move," she said.

"When you talk about four blocks to build a stadium, where is the parking? They are going to buy property for parking."

"We don't need a stadium in our neighborhood," Freeman added. "It can go somewhere else. We need our houses developed. We need property where people want to move in our neighborhood, not tear it down."

The Druid Hills Neighborhood Association voted against the project at one of its recent meetings. The association has supported a dome stadium in the past.

The Rev. Gwendolyn Cook Webb said no vote should take place until the people are allowed to be heard.

"The people haven't been heard yet," she said.

"It is like we are going back to the '60s, You do what I say do,' is what I heard this morning."

FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The BJCC Authority is committing $10.7 million to the annual debt service on the project. Jefferson County has committed $1 million a year for 30 years. UAB and corporate partners have committed to a combined $4 million a year for 10 years through a lease agreement, sponsorship and naming rights.

In the agreement with BJCC, UAB football agrees to a 20-year lease at the new stadium.

The Alabama Legislature passed a bill last week to levy a 3 percent tax on auto leases and rentals in Jefferson County to help support the debt service for the project.

The tax has been on the books since 2001, when it was proposed to help build a dome stadium. The tax, though, has never been collected. The bill would start collection of the tax when the BJCC Authority contractually commits to building the stadium.

When asked what happens after Tuesday's vote, Tad Snider, executive director of the BJCC, said the BJCC's agreement with UAB and corporate commitments needs to be finalized.

From there, the BJCC will prepare to go to the bond market and then seek bids to hire engineering, architecture and construction firms and other professionals, he said.

The project cooperation agreement states the project will commence construction no later than Jan. 1, 2019. The BJCC should make all efforts to have the project completed by July 1, 2021.

According to the agreement, the BJCC will give monthly reports to the City Council.
Alabama's connection to the Kubrick classic

Matt Wake  mwake@al.com

Wearing a topcoat, Huntsville space scientist and author Frederick Ordway III walked out of a snowy 1965 New York evening and back inside the Harvard Club to take a phone call. The person on the other line calling for him was film director Stanley Kubrick.

The phone call led to Ordway becoming chief technical consultant and scientific adviser on Kubrick's next film, "2001: A Space Odyssey." In that role, Ordway helped make sure director Kubrick's space-travel themed film was as realistic and scientifically accurate as possible.

Even now, 50 years after its April 3, 1968, release, "2001" remains arguably the greatest science-fiction film ever. And Ordway's work — as well as that of Huntsville artist Harry H.K. Lange, during preproduction in New York and filming in Borehamwood, England — is a key reason why Kubrick's film feels so immersive.

In addition to working closely with Kubrick, who was constantly bouncing ideas off him, Ordway's role included coordinating construction of approved designs (everything from astronaut helmets to space-pod interiors) and gathering relevant information (such as lunar surface details) from an array of esteemed sources (NASA, French Pic du Midi Observatory, University of Manchester's Department of Astronomy, etc.). Kubrick also depended on Ordway to determine if proposed changes in subplots (for example, the film's depicted mission targeting Saturn instead of Jupiter) would impact their already constructed designs.

SEE ODYSSEY, A7

Frederick Ordway III worked with Wernher von Braun at NASA and was a principle adviser to director Stanley Kubrick on "2001: A Space Odyssey."

University of Alabama in Huntsville
ODYSSEY
FROM A1

Ordway was then working with NASA in Huntsville, a close associate of pioneering rocket scientist Wernher von Braun. "I think he was as close to von Braun in the '60s and '70s as anybody might have been at that time," said Ed Buckbee, who worked with Ordway for 34 years at both NASA, where Buckbee was a public affairs official, and at the U.S. Space & Rocket Center in Huntsville, where Buckbee was the first director and Ordway a historian.

Right before Ordway got that 1965 phone call from Kubrick, Ordway and Lange were in New York meeting with publishers regarding a book called "Intelligence in the Universe."

After learning his friend, science-fiction author Arthur C. Clarke, was also in town and staying at the Chelsea Hotel, Ordway, a Harvard University grad, reached out to Clarke about meeting at the Harvard Club. In addition to promoting his book "Man and Space," Clarke was in town meeting with Kubrick regarding a serious, big-budget film about space travel. He and Kubrick were going to co-write the film's screenplay, which would be based on Clarke's 1951 short story "The Sentinel."

After Clarke showed interest in what they were working on, Ordway and Lange shared some writings and artwork they'd done for "Intelligence in the Universe," which overlapped with themes Kubrick wanted to address in his film, including the possibility life might exist elsewhere.

Buckbee recalls Ordway as being "just a walking encyclopedia of rocketry" with "a great sense of humor," and just a "real gentleman" that was "a fun guy to be around." He recalls going to Ordway's Monte Sano area home and seeing "rows and rows" of science and science-fiction books everywhere.

2001 DISPLAY THAT WASN'T

Ordway eventually donated his sizable personal science-fiction collection to the U.S. Space & Rocket Center, the collection arriving there in two batches — the first and larger one in 2001 and a second in 2014. The collection consists of correspondence, blueprints, designs, set photos, memorabilia and other ephemera. Ordway's collection is currently available at the Space & Rocket Center for research by appointment only, although some pieces have been displayed in the museum's past exhibitions.

According to Buckbee, the U.S. Space & Rocket Center almost was home to an amazing "2001: A Space Odyssey" cache.

"When he worked on that movie with Stanley Kubrick," Buckbee says, "Fred had worked out a deal with him to bring those (film) props to Huntsville, and we were going to put them in one wing of our museum here. And would you believe Stanley Kubrick had every one of those props destroyed? I almost cried when I heard that from Fred."
"Kubrick was of the opinion that, 'I don't want anybody to see what I created and be able to investigate it' or pick at it or whatever, so he destroyed every one of those props. You can imagine what those props would have looked like in a museum. We had the space all set aside and Fred was working on getting them and I was working on transportation and lo and behold of Stanley had those damned things destroyed. It was all over."

"2001: A Space Odyssey" opens with an unforgettable, primitive scene and builds to a far-out finale, all accompanied by an avant-garde classical soundtrack. The film also features the monotone-voiced computer "character" HAL 9000 — still in 2018, an eerie vision of what artificial intelligence might someday become.

Buckbee is a fan of the film and has watched it many times. He says while Ordway told him working with Kubrick's relentless pursuit of perfection could be challenging, he was a fan too. "I think Fred was satisfied that it didn't become a Hollywood production where there would be problems believing what would be presented. I think he was pleased that Stanley really paid attention to accuracy and the real world of rocketry and space flight. I really believe he was happy with that."

Kubrick's staggering filimography also includes such works as "The Shining," "Clockwork Orange," "Dr. Strangelove," "Full Metal Jacket," "Lolita" and "Spartacus." He died in 1999 at age 70 after finishing his last film, the erotic Tom Cruise/Nicole Kidman drama "Eyes Wide Shut."

After Ordway completed his work on "2001" for which he and his family relocated to England, he became a faculty member at University of Alabama in Huntsville, from 1970 to 1973. According to a UAH official, he taught physics and aerospace engineering courses there. Ordway also penned dozens of books, including "History of Rocketry and Space Travel," a 1975 tome co-authored with von Braun, and hundreds of articles.

**ALABAMA'S 'GREATEST SALESMAN'**

In a fascinating article that can be found on Kubrick-themed website visual-memory.co.uk, Ordway wrote of working with the legendary director: "I soon discovered that Kubrick had read voraciously on the subjects of science fiction and space science and technology and had developed quite a lingo — he would often surprise me with a new acquisition. He would often suggest a 'systems' approach to this or that problem, ask for parameters, and state that he had just 'locked on' to an idea. He was particularly fascinated with computers of the voice input-output type, and would talk about logic elements, neural nets, central processors, integrated computer networks, heuristic systems, etc."

Ordway also worked with von Braun on plans for a mission to Mars that, Buckbee says, von Braun submitted to Washington officials, including then-U.S. Vice President Spiro Agnew, just weeks after astronaut Neil Armstrong landed on the moon on July 20, 1969.

"Fred thought about the future probably as much as anyone I ever dealt with in those days," Buckbee says. "He had that idea that we must continue to look to the future, we don't need to be satisfied with what we've done. And you didn't normally find people like that in the '50s and '60s. Of course von Braun had that vision all the time, but Fred Ordway was right in there with him."

Ordway, a New York native, died in 2014 at age 87. Buckbee calls him one of Alabama's "greatest salesman."

"When he went elsewhere, whether he was talking to rocket people or just the taxi driver he was always very positive about what we did, especially in Huntsville. I think he had a warm feeling about the German families that came here plus the Americans that engaged with them and created this rocket team."
How the movie did — and didn’t — predict the future

› HAL, the computer with artificial intelligence, interacts with humans just as Siri and Alexa and other voice assistants do today. And HAL’s refusal to follow the astronaut’s command presages our anxiety over AI.

› A character in the movie places a call to Earth on Ma Bell’s Picturephone, a video chat that foresees FaceTime or Skype. But the movie does not anticipate the breakup of the Bell System. And it was the use of communicators in “Star Trek,” which was on the air while “2001” was being made, that sparked the invention of the cellphone.

› “2001” is dominated by white men. Women in the movie are relegated to traditional roles: stewardess, mother, housekeeper — with the exception of a female reporter. And minorities seem nonexistent.

› In 1968, if your airliner had any in-flight entertainment, it was a movie shown on a big pull down screen in the front of the cabin. “2001” passengers on a flight to the moon can watch videos on a flat screen on the back of a Pan Am airline seat. But the filmmakers couldn’t imagine that an iconic U.S. carrier would cease to exist. Pan Am went bust in 1991.

› The movie’s astronauts are on a mission to Jupiter, and we haven’t even made it beyond the moon. And although entrepreneurs are planning commercial space travel, space tourism is still years off.

› Astronauts catch up on current events with the Newspad, just like you might be doing now with your iPad or Kindle.

› The meaning of the movie’s black monoliths has sparked imaginations since the film opened. But on a tragic day in the year 2001, people were reminded of the monoliths when they seemed to appear in New York after the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers. The New Yorker alluded to the monoliths in its famous black-on-black cover that marked Sept. 11.
NASA looks into robot bees for Mars exploration

NASA could get buzzy on Mars as it funds research into building a swarm of Marsbees that could take flight on the Red Planet.

By: Amanda Kooser

The rocky landscape on Mars is hell on rover wheels, so NASA researchers are considering ways to explore the Red Planet by taking flight there instead. The space agency is looking into developing a swarm of robotic bees called Marsbees.

Each Marsbee would be about the size of a bumblebee, but with larger wings the size of a cicada's. The bees would launch from a mobile base that acts as a communications hub and recharging station.

"Our preliminary numerical results suggest that a bumblebee with a cicada wing can generate sufficient lift to hover in the Martian atmosphere," writes Chang-kwon Kang, an aerospace engineer at the University of Alabama, Huntsville.

Kang's team plans to work with a Japanese group that will build and test a robot designed specifically to operate on Mars. The researchers in Japan have already developed what they call a "hummingbird micro-air vehicle" that can fly here on Earth. They plan to test the hummingbird robot in a vacuum chamber to simulate Mars' atmosphere.

NASA announced a round of investments last Friday for 25 early-stage technology projects as part of its NASA Innovative Advanced Concepts program. Marsbees is one of those concepts, which also includes a balloon locomotion idea and self-assembling space telescope swarms.

NASA says it's looking for technologies with "the potential to transform future human and robotic exploration missions." The Phase 1 award amounts to about $125,000 (£89,000, AU$163,000) over nine months and is aimed at refining the concept and studying its feasibility.

With human exploration of Mars a long way off, we rely on robotic surrogates to gather information about the Red Planet. NASA has had great success with its Mars rovers, particularly Curiosity and Opportunity, but they are limited in the amount of ground they can cover. That's where flying robots like the Marsbee could come in. NASA is already considering the idea of a drone-like robotic flying machine for studying Saturn's moon Titan.

The Marsbees idea is still in the very early stages, but it's intriguing. The robotic bees could potentially explore parts of Mars a land-based rover could never reach.
New NASA Plan for Mars Is Moderately-Terrifying-Sounding, Also, Completely-Awesome: Robotic Bees.

By: Victor Tangermann

Mars: It’s far. Costs money to explore. And right now, we’ve got a rover just sitting there doing nothing. So NASA’s got a new plan for mapping out Mars: Robotic bees.

Exploring potential habitats that are tens of millions of kilometers away with the use of a 3,893 kg (8,583 lb) rover is slow, unwieldy, and pricy — NASA’s estimates exhausted its funding reserves with the nearly $2.5 billion rover. But a team of researchers at the University of Huntsville, Alabama recently came up with an alternative that, on paper, sounds like the way we all die at the hands of SkyNet: “Marsbees.”

It’s actually not-at-all terrifying, and kind of incredible.

You get the idea: Marsbees would be a swarm of “bumblebee size” flapping robots that could cover a far greater distance (with a lot less effort) than a rover could. But that doesn’t mean a rover would be left out: a rover would serve as a recharge station and main communications hub for the bees.

One of the Marsbees primary objectives would be to take air samples for the detection of methane emissions (since the Martian atmosphere is mostly made of carbon dioxide, detecting other gases like methane or carbon monoxide is potentially a sign of life, and thus, incredibly exciting). The Curiosity rover previously found extremely low levels of methane on the surface of Mars, but their presence was mostly chalked up to seasonal patterns, not biological processes.

The idea was one of 25 shortlisted proposals submitted to NASA’s Innovative Advanced Concepts program. Other proposals on the shortlist include shapeshifting robots that can roll up into a ball and roll on the surface of Titan, and balloon platforms navigating extreme terrains.

“Our preliminary numerical results suggest that a bumblebee with a cicada wing can generate sufficient lift to hover in the Martian atmosphere,” writes Chang-kwon Kang, Assistant Professor at the Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering of The University of Alabama in Huntsville in a NASA blog post. Since the Mars environment is so thin (only one hundredth to one thousandth that of sea level atmospheric pressure on Earth), there’s not much air for wings to push a flapping robot along. But luckily, gravitational pull is only a third on Mars. NASA scientists are hoping to take advantage of this, and are planning to recoup wasted energy with a sophisticated energy harvesting mechanism.

The advantages of having a rover like Curiosity be swarmed by robo-bees are plenty: a swarm of mobile flapping robots would be far more flexible, and resilient — a single bee getting swept up in a dust storm, in other words, wouldn’t be a big deal. Navigating the rocky, and mountainous surface would also be easier exploring the planet by air. Multiple bees could also form a network of sensors, improving the accuracy of their findings.
The Huntsville team is proposing to link up with a Japanese team of researchers to make the Marsbee a reality, and given the fact that the Japanese team has already developed a hummingbird Micro-Air Vehicle that’s “one of only a few robotic flappers in the world that can fly on Earth,” the swarm might be a reality sooner than you think.

Which means more Mars, potentially, for us. Or at least information about it. Elsewhere, sorry, melissophobia: Your apocolypse is more inevitable than ever before. Enjoy that.
Robotic bees on Mars? NASA's newest plan for the Red Planet

By: Jason Lemon

Two teams of NASA researchers are working on designing a robotic bee to replace modern rovers on Mars.

The initiative is part of the "Marsbee" project, according to an announcement last week.

The space agency has previously sent two rovers to Mars – named Spirit and Opportunity. Both rovers were launched in 2003 and landed on Mars in 2004.

Although NASA initially intended for the rovers to be active for just 90 days after landing, both significantly outlived that time frame. Spirit remained active, relaying data back to earth, until 2010. The second rover, Opportunity, is still active, more than 14 years after landing on the planet.

While the Rovers – which cost hundreds of millions to build, launch, land and control – have contributed invaluable scientific knowledge to researchers back on Earth, they are slow moving and bulky. Scientists behind the Marsbee plan say the robotic bees will be an upgrade and also help cut costs.

"The Marsbee offers many benefits over traditional aerospace systems. The smaller volume, designed for the interplanetary spacecraft payload configuration, provides much more flexibility," Chang-kwon Kang, assistant professor of mechanical and aerospace engineering at the University of Alabama in Huntsville wrote in a NASA blog post.

"Also, the Marsbee inherently offers more robustness to individual system failures. Because of its relatively small size and the small volume of airspace needed to test the system, it can be validated in a variety of accessible testing facilities," he added.

A rover will still be used as a base for the robotic bees, but it will remain mainly stationary as the flying machines travel around Mars, mapping its surface and collecting samples of the planet's thin air. When the bots need to recharge, they will return to the rover.

One of the project’s main goals is to find methane gas, which could be a sign of life on Mars, according to The Guardian.

The plan is actually quite feasible due to the planet's relatively low gravitational pull, meaning Marsbees will have an easier time flying around the Martian surface.

The robots are still in their early stages of development, with Japanese scientist designing the Marsbees and a team at the University of Alabama working on numerical models for the project. NASA described the flying machines as being the size of a bumblebee with cicada-sized wings.

"Our preliminary numerical results suggest that a bumblebee with a cicada wing can generate sufficient lift to hover in the Martian atmosphere," Kang explained.

See next page
According to Live Science, the largest species of bumblebee can grow up to 1.6 inches. A cicada's wings can vary from 1.2 inches to more than twice that length.

The idea for the flying bees to explore Mars came as a proposal submitted to NASA's Innovative Advanced Concepts program. It was one of 25 shortlisted ideas. Other innovative solutions included balloon platforms to navigate extreme terrain and shape-shifting robots that can roll up into balls to explore.
NASA wants to send robot bees to Mars

By: Mike Wehner

We know more about Mars than any other planet besides Earth, and that’s largely thanks to our ability to send high-tech equipment to its surface. Robotic rovers have been cruising around on the Red Planet for years now, and they’ve provided valuable insight into the makeup of the planet, but in terms of scope, they’ve only scoured small sections of the planet. Now, NASA is helping to fund a new tool for Mars exploration, and this time it has wings.

In an new proposal, scientists explain how the use of tiny robotic “Marsbees” could expedite exploration efforts by taking to the skies. With wireless connections to a base station — which doubles as a recharge station to give the tiny bees more power — the winged robots could cover a greater area in much less time, while performing a number of different tasks.

“The Marsbees are integrated with sensors and wireless communication devices,” Chang-kwon Kang of the University of Alabama, Huntsville, writes. “The mobile base can act as a recharging station and main communication center. The swarm of Marsbee can significantly enhance the Mars exploration mission with the following benefits: i) Facilitating reconfigurable sensor networks; ii) Creation of resilient systems; iii) Sample or data collection using single or collaborative Marsbees.”

The proposal was selected as part of NASA’s Innovative Advanced Concepts program, which means its creators get around $125,000 in support from NASA to build on their idea. After the initial phase, if the concept continues to show promise it may be eligible for further support from the agency, and potentially become part of a future mission. The Marsbee idea still has a long way to go before it comes to fruition, but it seems to be off to a fairly promising start.

In the initial proposal, the tiny cube-shaped bots sport insect-like wing structures that are optimized for the Martian atmosphere and would be highly efficient in managing power. In the first phase of development, the team will seek to prove that a pint-sized robot can hover in a Mars-like environment while drawing minimal power. Further work, which will focus on wind compensation, takeoff and landing, and mission applications, will be tackled in Phase II, assuming the concept makes it that far.
Leath pitches bold goals

500 hires in 5 years: New president ready to launch major hiring effort

Lawrence Specker lspecker@al.com

As he was installed Thursday as Auburn University’s 19th president, Steven Leath unveiled a vision that includes hiring 500 new tenure-track faculty members over the next five years.

Leath was hired in March 2017 after a process in which the roster of candidates wasn’t revealed to the public. He succeeded Jay Gogue, who held the post since July 2007 and retired in summer 2017. Leath had previously been president at Iowa State, which set fundraising records and increased research spending during his tenure.

The ceremony was attended by Gov. Kay Ivey, among other dignitaries.

In general terms, Leath said his aim is for Auburn to become “a world-class academic, research and service university in the true spirit of our land-grant heritage.” He said the three core components of that land-grant spirit were the education of its students, the research and scholarship done...
by its faculty, and the pursuit of outreach and
effortful beneficial to the larger com-

We’re doing well in every area, and doing
exceptionally well in some," he said. He said
that "solid" and "sound" performance in
scholarship and research leaves "room for
growth and improvement."

He said an ongoing internal reorganiza-
tion — such as splitting responsibility for
economic development between two vice
presidents — will streamline the univer-
sity’s efforts and help it make the most of its
resources. But it also needs more resources,
he said, particularly when it comes to fac-
culty.

"Quite simply, we need to increase our
faculty and give these new hires and their
peers on campus the resources they need to
succeed," he said. "We intend to transform
Auburn into a top-tier academic, research
and service university by hiring more than
500 tenure-track, research- and scholar-
ship-focused faculty by 2022."

According to information provided
Thursday by Auburn, the net increase in fac-
culty size will be significantly smaller: "The
total number of tenured and tenure-track
faculty is expected to grow from 1,144 in 2018
to an estimated 1,250 by 2022 after account-
ing for typical faculty retirement and attri-
tion patterns."

New facilities including housing and labs
also will be needed, he said. He acknowl-
edged the effort will be expensive, but said
he believes Auburn is "well-positioned" fol-
dowing a recent successful fund-raising cam-
paign. "Sources of funding for new facilities
and expansions of existing facilities will be
considered in collaboration with the gov-
ernor and our development partners as we
flesh out our needs," he said.

He also suggested that marketing would
be a big part of the effort, saying "it’s impor-
tant that we raise Auburn’s profile because
we’ll need that higher visibility" as the uni-
versity recruits new faculty and partners.

"I’m not advocating that we brag or
boast," he said. "I learned quickly that’s not
the Auburn way. But there’s nothing wrong
with Auburn getting its fair share of well-de-
served recognition for our tremendous abili-
ties and accomplishments."

"Ladies and gentlemen, I urge you to
accept this challenge with me," he said.
"Together, we can achieve it."
Jax State students OK not to return to campus

Paul Gattis pgattis@al.com

Students at tornado-ravaged Jacksonville State University have been granted the option to not return to campus for the rest of spring semester.

The university will resume classes April 9, officials said Monday.

The school outlined options for students on its website Saturday — including taking the grades they currently have as their final grades or taking “incompletes” in classes.

The options came two days after school president John Bechler announced the school would complete the spring semester.

The school in northeast Alabama is recovering from an EF-3 tornado that slammed into campus buildings and nearby apartment complexes on March 19. There were four injuries attributed to the storm, according to the National Weather Service office in Birmingham.

The weather service said in its storm survey that the tornado — with peak estimated wind speeds of 150 mph — “affected the entire campus” and that “several buildings sustained significant damage.”

Classes would typically have resumed Monday after students were away last week for spring break.

In a statement addressed to students posted on the website, Timothy King, vice president for student affairs, said the administration “heard your concerns about being able to complete the semester.”

As a result of those concerns, the school is providing students three options:

» Use the current grade earned as the final grade for all classes or for select classes
» Take an incomplete in all or select classes and finish the class(es) through the applicable incomplete procedure.

Complete the semester for all or select classes and complete course requirements.

“Each student’s situation is different; therefore, it is imperative that students make these decisions wisely and with input from faculty and academic advisers who are very knowledgeable about degree and accreditation requirements,” King wrote.

King also wrote the administration still must develop a procedure for students who wish to return to their studies in the spring semester.

The school’s marching band has also announced its annual Honor Band festival, scheduled for May 10-12, has been canceled due to tornado damage on campus.

State tax deadline pushed back in storm-hit counties

Alabamians living in 27 storm-hit counties will have a little more time to handle their state taxes, according to the state Department of Revenue.

Individuals and businesses affected by the storms in the declared emergency areas with returns due from March 20 through April 30 have two months beyond the original deadlines to file without penalties. The extensions do not apply to federal taxes.

The counties included in the state of emergency are: Blount, Calhoun, Cherokee, Clay, Cleburne, Colbert, Cullman, DeKalb, Etowah, Fayette, Franklin, Jackson, Jefferson, Lamar, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Limestone, Madison, Marion, Marshall, Morgan, Randolph, Shelby, St. Clair, Talladega, Walker and Winston.

The new deadline will be Monday, June 18. Taxpayers seeking the extension should write “Severe Weather Relief – 2018” in red ink on any state paper return or report being filed. Electronic filers should contact ADOR for guidance. — Leada Gore
Public Colleges’ Teams Wrestle With States’ Travel Bans

By MARC TRACY

SAN ANTONIO — This year’s men’s Final Four seemed to go off without a hitch, all of its participants — Villanova, Kansas, Michigan and Loyola-Chicago — making it to the Final Four without any issues. Training in the cold and rain of their campuses for the warm Texas sun probably did not bother any of them.

But for some, the newly seeded San Diego State team, and its 11th-seeded Loyola-Chicago team, made an improbable run to the NCAA tournament. These teams, the Aztecs, visit to the Lone Star State might have caused a fuss, and in future years, an even more dire complication could arise. A college team might not be permitted to attend a championship event.

The reason is that several states have enacted laws barring travel to or from states because of legal changes seen as discriminatory, excluding those related to so-called religious freedom or bathroom bills. The states most commonly the focus of roughly half-dates bars are North Carolina and Mississippi. A law in Arkansas bars travel to those states, including several that frequently host college championship events, not only North Carolina, but also Kansas, Tennessee — and Texas.

In response, and with some exceptions, the California law bans the use of state money to pay for travel to those states, a prohibition that generally applies to California’s numerous public universities, including Argüelles, for their sports teams.

San Diego State’s men’s basketball team did, in fact, travel to Kansas last month to play in the tournament’s first weekend (the Aztecs lost to Houston, the first round in Wichita). And last year, UC Santa Barbara, in the third round in Memphis.

California’s public university teams have felt compelled to devise legal workarounds. The men’s basketball committee, which selected the 16 teams that received at-large bids to the NCAA tournament and seeded all 68 in the field, disregarded state travel restrictions, said chairman Bruce Rasmussen, the Greek alphabet director.

That, according to a statement, was not “wholly consistent with our policy where we pay for travel.” And, he said, “we did not pay for travel to those states.”

And in April of last year, a Los Angeles judge issued a temporary restraining order that allowed UC Berkeley to travel to North Carolina.

KANSAS: BANNED STATES

San Diego State does not schedule nonconference road competitions against teams in those states, though Lang said it might consider scheduling California’s in another state if it were to pay for travel to those states. The big difference is that only the NCAA championship events.

San Diego State’s men’s basketball team left in one of several states to which other states ban government-funded travel because of laws that are seen as discriminatory. In the past, the NCAA, has taken a stand in reaction to state laws. It supported the 2014 “religious freedom” law in Indiana, where the association is headquartered.

If any other state with a travel ban, it would not have paid for travel to those states. But the NCAA’s stance was less clear in 2017, with the NCAA’s public opposition played a significant role in the law’s subsequent modification or repeal. With the NCAA’s going on to keep events in those states and scheduled editors:

The NCAA, sends a questionnaire to prospective host states asking how they plan to accommodate all participants or spectators, including those who are gay or transgender. Although the association moved a basketball subregional out of North Carolina last year, it says it recognizes “the extreme difficulty in making plans,” often in advance, around the shifting political priorities of all 50 states, it has members. It states that laws are, and should be, said last year.

"If any state says they’re not going to travel to any other place for some other reason," he added. "We can’t then say, ‘Well, we’ve decided we’re not going to go there because another state has decided it.’"

Several future NCAA championship sites could test this question. The Division I men’s and women’s basketball tournaments alone have scheduled all of several regions and subregions in states on California’s list. Several Division II baseball tournaments, including this year, are planned for North Carolina.

As with many decisions, the travel bans stir complex feelings even among their sponsors. Wofford, which supports travel bans, acknowledged that he believes in a state that takes college basketball extremely seriously, and weighed an flag-ship university make the Final Four this year.

"There are a lot of fans in the LGB or Kansans community who are big-time basketball, and K.U., basketball fans," Witt said.

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Lee on the move again, this time to Tight end
Still plenty of work left to do as Blazers wrap up spring practice

VUS FOOTBALL GREEN & GOLD GAME

The Birmingham News
Sunday, April 8, 2018
Those extra carries in practice paid off as Davis led the Gold team with 71 yards on 10 rushing attempts and 46 yards on two receptions. His brutal running style was on display when hitting the first level and his deceptive speed paid dividends in the passing game for the Blazers.

"We said we were going to run the ball today and that’s what this spring was really about," Clark said. "We threw some, had some balls we should have caught but we wanted to run the ball, see the run game, see the defense stop the run and that’s what spring is about. They got summer to throw more."

Returning 2017 C-USA Freshman of the Year Spencer Brown was limited to only six carries, but had 31 yards for a 5.0 yard average. A bruised foot has limited Brown this spring but Clark said should be an issue when fall camp begins in August.

**OFFENSIVE LINE DEPTH**

The first-team offensive line allowed Brown and Davis to combine for more than 100 yards but the second grouping was just as impressive with Noble, Johnston and Yusupha Foster combining for more than 200 yards on the ground.

Colby Ragland, David Galten, Andrew Smith, Greg Fecanin and Patrick Nuss made up the Green team’s offensive line and even impressed Clark.

"That’s one of the things we went into the
offseason and we knew other than Schleuger who rotated, we knew we had five offensive lineman but no depth,” he said. “We think we almost found somebody at every position who is going to push those guys ahead of them. So to have two-deep at the position; one, you got some guys who are creating competition and two, your going to have depth for an injury situation.”

The returning line lost only one starter from a year ago so the influx of JUCO transfers and backups from last year should give the Blazers a formidable if not arguably one of the best lines in C-USA.

SECONDARY DOMINANT

Vincent said less than half of the offense had yet to be installed and the passing game was the victim in the spring game. Both starting quarterbacks were less than 50 percent for the game and the cornerbacks and safeties were on top of receivers almost every play.

Erdely was hounded most of the day in the live scrimmage but was able to find Collin Lisa on a pass to the corner of the end zone in the second quarter to give the Gold team a 10-0 lead.

Johnston made the most of facing the second team defense but fared as well as Erdely did in the passing game with his lone highlight play being a 79-yard pass to Sederian Copeland that set up Johnston’s go-ahead score two plays later.

“I thought they did well,” Clark said. “There were some 50-50 balls and I thought the DBs did a good job getting those balls out and a lot of back and forth. It wasn’t always GREEN & GOLD GAME STATS

Here are the unofficial stats provided by the UAB athletic department:

**Green Defense**

- Passing: Tyler Johnston III: 7-of-20, 130 yards
- Rushing: Johnston III: 10-75, TD: James Noble III: 14-74, TD
- Receiving: Sederian Copeland: 1-79; Demetrius Davis: 2-19

**Green Defense**

- Craig Kanyangarara: 5 tackles, 2 sacks, 3 TFL
- Chris Woolbright: 6 tackles; Stacy Keely: 4 tackles, 1 sack, 2 PBU

**Gold Offense**

- Passing: A.J. Erdely: 9-of-21, 135 yards, TD
- Rushing: Kingston Davis: 10-71; Spencer Brown: 6-31; Erdely: 2-14

**Gold Defense**

- Thomas Johnston: 7 tackles; Kristopher Moll: 6 tackles, 1 sack, 1 FF; Jamel Garcia-Williams: 6 tackles, 1 TFL, 2 QBH; Keilan Knight: 4 tackles, 1 TFL, 1 PBU, 1 FR (49 yards); Adrienne Talan: 7 tackles

three-and-out but the defense did well. I thought specifically the corners did a good job.”

**FRONT SEVEN STRENGTH**

The first-team defense on the Green team was as dominant as the Blazers were in the 2017 season. The unit combined for three sacks and were led by Craig Kanyangarara who had five tackles and two sacks of Erdely.

“We made the quarterbacks live today to kind of see what both the offensive line could do in terms of protection and the defense as a unit who can control the line of scrimmage,” Clark said. “And I think the way the defense played, it’ll help them going forward. How do you respond to that as a quarterback? But I also think it shows we have a strong front seven who can keep things at the first level.”

Chris Woolbright also made plays from the Mike linebacker position and Stacy Keely was a presence on the edge for the Blazers.

**WORK TO DO**

The weather was uncooperative, the offense was not fully installed and plenty of mistakes were made so the 2018 Blazers are not a finished product in any sense of the word. There are a host of freshmen who will arrive on campus in fall that will boost depth and opportunities, but Clark was adamant that the current roster be accountable and focus on improving throughout the off season.

“I told them, and maybe it sounds hokey, but I said it should be the best May-June-July anybody has ever had,” he said. “That’s the goal, and specifically to UAB and the teams I’ve had but we’ll see. We get done with school earlier than others and a lot of them will be back for the mini-semester which will give them a chance to get stronger and faster and get in great shape for June and July. We’ll see how bad they want it.”
Weekend full of events for Alabama athletics

By Tommy Deas
Executive Sports Editor

Alabama athletics has a busy weekend on campus coming up. The Crimson Tide will be hosting major events in gymnastics, softball, track and field and men's tennis.

The action begins on Friday at the Sam Bailey Track and Field Complex at 3:30 p.m. with the start of the Crimson Tide Invitational. The Alabama men, who won the SEC indoor championship, are ranked No. 6 in preseason outdoor rankings. The UA women are ranked 25th.

Friday's key events include the men's hammer throw, where UA's Daniel Haugh is a favorite, along with the men's and women's 5,000-meter races. Action starts at 9:10 a.m. on Saturday, field events include the men's high jump, where Shelby McEwen is a favorite, the women's 200 meters, where Takyera Roberson is expected to contend, and the men's 200 meters, where Crimson Tide sprinter Kentavious Walter is a standout. Relay events begin around mid-afternoon.

Also on Friday, Alabama men's tennis hosts 20th-ranked Georgia at 6 p.m. The Crimson Tide will host 19th-ranked Tennessee on Sunday at 1 p.m.

UA will host the NCAA Tuscaloosa Regional gymnastics meet at Coleman Coliseum on Saturday at 4 p.m. Sixth-ranked Alabama, No. 7 Michigan and No. 18 Georgia are among the teams vying for two spots at the NCAA Championships.

Alabama softball, ranked No. 16, hosts fourth-ranked Florida in a three-game series that begins Saturday at noon. The series will continue Sunday at 2 p.m., with the weekend's action spilling over into Monday for the series finale at 6 p.m.
Tide garners top-four offensive rankings

By Tommy Heas
Executive Sports Editor

The Alabama softball team ranks in the top four in several major offensive categories after a big weekend at the plate at Kentucky. UA batted .350 over three games at UK with five home runs and seven doubles.

The 10th-ranked Crimson Tide (14-0 overall, 5-4 in SEC play) took two out of three from the Wildcats, scoring 24 runs. Freshman outfielder Kaylee Tow led Alabama, going 7 for 10 with four RBIs and four runs scored. She has had four straight multiple-hit games. Sophomore outfielder Gabby Calaway went 6 for 11, with three doubles and a home run.

In SEC games only, Alabama is second in batting average (.300), slugging percentage (.400), runs (184), doubles (31) and total bases (314), third in on-base percentage (.377), hits (173) and home runs (9), and fourth in RBIs (42).

UA’s top batters in league play are Tow (.414), Merris Schroeder (.391), Reagan Dykes (.375), Calaway (.333) and Sydney Booker (.333).

For a team that was expected to be strong in pitching and defense, Alabama is a surprising seventh in the SEC in team earned-run average (3.34) in conference games and ranks dead last in fielding percentage (.897).

The Crimson Tide is tied for sixth in league standings with Arkansas and Texas A&M.

Alabama will host No. 4 Florida, which leads the SEC with a 7-2 league record (12-4 overall) in a three-game series starting Saturday. The first game is set for noon that day on ESPNU, with Sunday’s game set for 2 p.m. (also on ESPNU) and Monday’s final scheduled for 6 p.m. (SEC Network).

Gymnasts hosting regional

Regionalis week, let’s go.

Alabama gymnastics is still the No. 6 team in the country. Its 197.05 Regional Qualifying Score is final.

Oklahoma remains at the top of the rankings — no surprise there — with a 198.22 RQS. LSU (197.80 RQS) and UCLA (197.84) are second and third, respectively. Utah’s 197.54 RQS keeps it in sixth, while Florida’s 197.39 RQS is just above Alabama in fifth.

For as each event, the Crimson Tide is ranked within the top 10 on three of the four. It’s fifth on the uneven bars, holding a 49.415 RQS and a 49.03 season high. It’s sixth on both vault (49.285 RQS, 40.3 high) and the balance beam (49.30 RQS, 49.169 high). Floor exercise is 11th with a 49.15 RQS and 49.579 high.

Alabama has earned a season-high 197.525 so far. That was a month ago at home in Coleman Coliseum against North Carolina.

Speaking of Coleman Coliseum, Alabama actually competes there one last time this season on Saturday at 4 p.m., in the NCAA Tuscaloosa Regional. The Crimson Tide is the No. 1 seed, while Michigan (seventh nationally) and Georgia (18th nationally) are the No. 2 and 3 seeds, in order. Missouri, Illinois and Central Michigan will also be here.

The Crimson Tide will start on floor before going to vault. It will have a bye and uneven bars, it closes out on beam.

Alabama has a maximum of three meets left, minimum one. Only two teams from each regional can advance to the NCAA Championships on April 20-21.

- Terrin Waskow

Magic number

John McClenny once wore No. 8 as a college baseball player. His daughter, Hayley McClenny, wore No. 8 for four years as an All-American softball player at Alabama.

Walker McClenny arrived at Alabama last year and found that jersey No. 8 was already taken. Senior catcher Tanner DeVinney wore it in 2017.

The McClenneys’ signature jersey wasn’t occupied this year, but Walker is still wearing No. 13.

“I wore 8 in high school and then I wanted 8 this year, but I think they gave it away because (Mitch) Gaspard had it,” Walker McClenny said.

“I couldn’t get it, I kind of wanted to steer away from 8 because I wanted to make my own name, make my own footprint on this program.”

The walk-on center fielder has had a bigger opportunity to do that this year. He’s started 12 of Alabama’s 29 games and is batting .375 with a .440 on-base percentage. Alabama entered the season with five full-time outfielders, and a season-ending injury to Gene Wood has left the Crimson Tide with just four players there.

It’s just midway through the season, but McClenny is approaching his total at-bats posted during the 2017 season. He started two games over the weekend against Kentucky and was 0-6 with three walks.

“I’m just glad for the opportunity to play here and I just made the most of it,” McClenny said.

“I’m excited, blessed to be here where I am today and just keep moving forward, keep working.”

That means preparing for a midweek game against Jacksonville State on Tuesday at Sewell-Thomas Stadium, then a road trip to Missouri this weekend. Alabama had an 11-game win streak against Jacksonville State snapped last year when the Gamecocks won both midweek games. Jacksonville State won 1-0 on Feb. 28, then won 11-8 on April 25.

He might not have the jersey number, but McClenny got the shot he wanted at Alabama.

“Growing up I was a huge Alabama fan,” he said. “When Coach Gaspard gave me the opportunity to be a preferred walk-on, I was going to take it and I was going to run with it.”

- Ben Jones
COMMENTARY

UA trying to pull it all together at regional

Cecil Hurt

Alabama gymnastics fans derive many benefits from hosting an NCAA Regional like the one at Coleman Coliseum on Saturday. The main one is seeing six stellar teams in action. But for the home fans, it is one more chance to see the Crimson Tide in action — and one more chance to see in person if Alabama can finally put together a solid four-event performance.

"Every team coming here has scored a 197," Alabama coach Dana Duckworth said on Tuesday. "But I was asked earlier about who our biggest competition would be and my answer was, "I'd say

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HURT

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ourselves.” We are still trying to become a great team, because great teams can do anything.”

Greatness seemed like a distant goal in January when, due to a combination of inexperience, injury and inconsistency, Alabama was struggling to score above the 196.0 mark. Duckworth and her staff stayed patient and improvement came, gradually. There still isn’t a star all-around performer on the roster — Kiana Winston is probably the closest but rarely competes on the vault — but performances have improved.

“We are such a different team than we were in January,” Duckworth said. “We wouldn’t have done our jobs if we were the same team.”

The improvement has been notable, although there is still room for more. In its last performance at the SEC Championships in St. Louis, Alabama performed at a championship level in three events, only to struggle on the bars, normally a strength for this Crimson Tide team.

The 48.95 score on that apparatus was .450 less than LSU’s score, or more than the eventual difference between first and second place.

The regional field coming to Tuscaloosa, particularly No. 7 Michigan, will present a strong challenge. Back in Alabama’s hazy January, the Wolverines beat the Crimson Tide 196.20 to 195.675 in Ann Arbor, which means Saturday’s regional, at the risk of crowding together metaphors, could be a potential stepping stone — and a measuring stick.

Former Alabama gymnast Ashley Priess-Johnston, now an assistant coach at No. 23 Illinois, will be returning to Tuscaloosa. Add in the presence of Georgia, currently in a transitional phase as it looks to regain powerhouse status but still a traditional Alabama rival, plus the rest of the field, and the event — which will send two teams on to the NCAA Championships — has some fascinating subplots.

Duckworth says she will try to tune that out, as much as possible, for her team.

“You work all year tonight to this point,” she said. “In practice, you’re on autopilot now. You aim for quality over quantity. We are in our Bama bubble.

“But we talked about it last weekend. We said that we only have 21 days together as a team, as this team. That’s like a blink of an eye. I want them to find joy in that.

“It’s the regional meet, the biggest meet of the year so far. We are hosting. We are performing on equipment we know and are comfortable with. We are starting on the floor, which gives our crowd a chance to get excited. So we want to win every moment of it that we can.”

Reach Cecil Hurt at cecil@tidesports.com or 205-722-0225.
Sexton Leaving for the NBA
Nation for helping me make my dream come true," Sexton said. "You all hold a special place in my heart. I will continue to work hard every day and represent the University of Alabama in a way that makes you all proud. I especially would like to thank my teammates and coaches because without them, I wouldn’t be where I am today."

Alabama coach Avery Johnson said that he supported Sexton’s decision.

"While I was at the Final Four last week, my wife (Cassandra) and I went to see the Spurs play Oklahoma (City). At one point, we looked at each other and Cassandra said ‘Collin could play in this game’ and he certainly could.

"If I were a general manager in the NBA and I had anything from about the No. 5 pick on, I wouldn’t let him get past me."

Johnson also dismissed speculation that Alabama might be "better off" without Sexton on the floor next season.

“That’s one of the most ridiculous things...,” Johnson said. “The reason we’re going to be better (next year) is because of Collin Sexton’s year here at Alabama. We are going to have a year of NCAA experience because he catapulted us into the NCAA Tournament.”

Sexton is the first player to attend Alabama for one season before leaving for the NBA since the league added the “one and done” rule before the 2006 draft.

Alabama reached the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2012 and advanced to the second round for the first time since 2006.

If he is selected as expected, Sexton will be Alabama’s first NBA Draft selection since Richard Hendrix was a second-round selection in 2008. Alabama’s last first-round choice was Gerald Wallace (2001).

“We talked about developing NBA players and maybe potentially recruiting players that are one and done,” Johnson said. “But now it’s all reality. I think Alabama will be a destination school for a lot of recruits.”

Sexton finished the averaging 19.2 points per game. It was the third-most points in a single season in Alabama history and the most ever for a freshman. The previous record had been 16.8 points per game, set by James Robinson in 1990–91.

Underclassmen who have not signed an agent can withdraw from the draft until June 11 but Sexton indicated that he would retain an agent.

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Bear Bryant’s great-grandson commits to Tide

By Ehsan Kassim
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

Alabama landed a pair of football prospects for its 2019 class on Thursday, as four-star recruits Paul Tyson and Rashad Cheney Jr. committed to the Crimson Tide.

Cheney Jr., a 270-pound defensive end from Atlanta, announced his commitment via Twitter on Thursday afternoon.

He committed to Alabama over Florida, Georgia Tech, and Penn State, among others.

Cheney, the 17th-ranked defensive tackle and the 265th-ranked prospect in the 2019 class, unofficially visited and received an offer from Alabama on March 10, 2017. His visit to Tuscaloosa this past weekend helped seal the deal.

Cheney decommitted from Georgia earlier this year.

"After a great talk with coach Saban I am 100% COMMITTED to the University of Alabama," Cheney wrote on a Twitter post.

Tyson, the great-grandson of former Alabama legendary coach Paul “Bear” Bryant, announced his commitment to Alabama over Kentucky, LSU, Michigan, and Notre Dame. He also announced his decision via Twitter.

Tyson is rated as the seventh-ranked pro-style quarterback and the 10th-ranked prospect in the state in the 2019 class, according to 247Sports Composite rankings.

The 6-foot-4, 217-pound pocket passer threw for 3,392 yards and 36 touchdowns in 2017, his first season as varsity starter at Hewitt-Trussville.

Tyson received an offer from Alabama on Dec. 15, 2017, the same day he made an unofficial visit to Tuscaloosa.

"I felt the same calling that my Great Grandfather had when he was asked to come home," "Alabama is home and that’s where I want to spend my college career," Tyson posted on his Twitter account Thursday.

The signings of Tyson and Cheney brings the Alabama 2019 class to six commitments, all of them being four star or better. Alabama is ranked as the seventh best class and fifth in the SEC for the 2019 recruiting period.
COMMENTARY

About the ‘timeframe’ for a starting QB - don’t ask

You won’t see it on 30-second sound bytes from a press conference, but Nick Saban does have an understanding side. He knows reporters aren’t asking about the quarterback position simply to be annoying.

He has been in the coaching business for a long time and, except for those rare years when he’s had an established veteran starter, he’s been asked about the competition at that position.

It was probably true at Toledo, Michigan State and LSU, and might very well have been the defining theme of his two years at with the Miami Dolphins.

So Saban knows that at nearly every press conference, some intrepid beat writer will summon up his or her courage and charge the topic full speed ahead.

On the other hand, some words can trigger a slightly testy response from the Alabama head coach. “Depth chart” famously raises hackles.

So does the closely-related “first string.” And then there is “timeframe.” That one, or the synonymous “timetable” can take a press conference from DEFCON 5 to about DEFCON 2 in a hurry, for two reasons. The word “deadline” would probably take things to DEFCON 1, which is “tune into SportsCenter and watch the fireworks” territory.

First, a “timeframe”

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implied there is some schedule out there that might compel an answer before Saban is ready to give one. Which will not happen. Second, experience has proven over and over that Saban is not going making that call in the spring, or even in the first few weeks of August and he may not make it until the Crimson Tide has traveled to Orlando for the season opener. Hence the response to a question—a fair question reflecting the insatiable interest out there for any crumb of information—about Tua Tagovailoa's injured hand and how it would affect "the timeframe" for naming a starting quarterback.

"First of all, I don't have a timeframe so how could it affect it?" Saban said. "I mean, you have a timeframe. I don't."

From your perspective, maybe I should ask you the question, but from my perspective if there's no timeframe, how does it affect it? I can't answer that.

"This is not something we're going to keep score on so when you ask me this question, I can't really give you any answer that's going to satisfy your needs," Saban continued.

He did note that Tagovailoa was limited by the injury, and Jalen Hurts and Mac Jones "both did a nice job" in the scrimmage, particularly considering the uncharacteristically raw spring weather.

There were no statistics available: the days when Alabama would at least release a leading rusher and a leading receiver, much less the prehistoric times when reporters could chart the entire scrimmage, are gone with the mastodons. Tagovailoa played less snaps than the other quarterbacks, if that counts as a statistic.

"I don't think that anytime a player gets hurt at any position that he should be penalized," Saban said.

"Does it give other players more of an opportunity to show what they can do? Absolutely. (Tagovailoa) probably got 15-20 snaps, something like that, early in the scrimmage and did well. Jalen, I thought, started out a little bit slow, but he really made some really good plays as the scrimmage went on."

That's enough information to carry the discussion for another week. That week won't bring us any closer to some sort of spring decision. We'll know next Saturday that the likeliest answer to a timeframe question will be "don't ask."

But we will—because we must.

Reach Cecil Hurt at cecil@tidesports.com or 205-722-0225.
Saban pleased with Lupoi’s transition

First-year defensive coordinator is Alabama’s fourth under Saban

By Aaron Suttles
Sports Writer

Tosh Lupoi will be Alabama’s fourth defensive coordinator in the Nick Saban era, joining Kevin Steele, A-Day Spring Game

When: Saturday, April 21, 1 p.m.
Where: Bryant-Denny Stadium
TV: ESPN

Kirby Smart and Jeremy Pruitt.
Saban did some of his best work in holding onto Lupoi in previous years even as other Power 5 programs made overtures to Lupoi to become a defensive coordinator. Saban worked his recurring magic and retained his star recruiter and outside linebacker coach.

But this season Lupoi takes on the challenge of calling a defense by himself. Saban and See LUPOI, C4

LUPOI

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the defensive coaching staff are working to help make the transition easier.

“Tosh is a hard worker,” Saban said. “He works really, really hard at learning our scheme. And there’s two things that you have to do, you have to learn the scheme and know the scheme, and you also have to know how to apply it, which is what makes you a good signal caller when the game comes. Tosh has never coached the secondary, but that doesn’t mean he doesn’t understand it or doesn’t know it. We are all trying to do as much as we can to help him, and I think he does understand the concepts of what he needs to know to implement the defense. He’s been a coordinator before, which certainly helps. We’re pleased with the people that we have. We might be a bit of a work in progress as we learn how to work together and know exactly how things fit together.”

Harris ready for bigger role

Last season, Najee Harris was a freshman running back finding his way in becoming a collegiate ball carrier and all that came with it.

That is, until the national championship game when he broke out in the second half with a few big runs.

This year, he feels more comfortable and is playing more confidently.

“I think Najee has a little more confidence and knowledge of how to do things, what to do, pass-protection, doing things on a consistent basis,” Saban said. “He works really hard, he plays with great toughness. And I think he has great intangibles as a player. Just the repetitions and the confidence that he has and knowing what he’s supposed to do and how he’s supposed to do it is probably the biggest thing that I see that’s helped his consistency and his performance.”

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Enos plays crucial role on Bama staff

Former Arkansas OC tasked with overseeing spring’s quarterback competition

Michael Casagrande  mcasagrande@al.com

From the offensive line meeting room, Ross Pierschbacher recognizes the new yet unmistakable voice in Alabama’s football complex.

It belongs to a coach who’s been around a time or two. He played at Michigan State when Nick Saban was a coordinator, was once a head coach and now has perhaps the most interesting job with the Crimson Tide.

That high-energy voice belongs to Dan Enos, the ex-Michigan State passer whose career led him to the top job at Central Michigan five years before eventually landing in Tuscaloosa. Now, he’s the Crimson Tide quarterbacks coach hired just as the Jalen Hurts-Tua Tagovailoa competition opened.

"He brings a lot of fire and a lot of juice," Pierschbacher said. "I’m not around him too much, but I hear him."

It’s a reputation Enos brought to Alabama from his last job. The offensive coordinator at Arkansas the last three seasons was known for his intensity while maintaining strong relationships with his players.

Austin Allen, his quarterback the previous two seasons in Fayetteville, remembered Enos getting to the football complex at 5 a.m.

That will play well with his new employer. Enos has a history with the boss dating back to his time in a Michigan State jersey in the late 1980s.

"I don’t know if I’ll remember me," Enos told reporters in Arkansas in 2016, "but Coach Saban was our defensive coordinator my first two years when I was a player at Michigan State. I was actually the scout team quarterback my freshman year. He got after me a little bit in practice every day. I don’t know if I’ll remember that or not."

Evidently he did.

The 400 passing yards Allen logged against Alabama in 2010 certainly stood out in Saban’s mind even if he left Fayetteville with a 49-30 win.

Enos’ name had previously been connected to jobs at Alabama before landing with the program this offseason. It was a notable move when he left the head coaching job at Central Michigan to take the offensive coordinator position with the Razorbacks in 2018.

He went 26-36 in the five seasons in charge at CMU that saw his record peak at 7-6 twice. Quarterbacks at Central Michigan had 3,000-yard seasons in four of the five years he had the pro-style attack in place.

Alabama has had just two 3,000-yard seasons in program history with Blake Sims’ 3,487 in 2014 as the record.

Arkansas had no intention of losing Enos as his contract prevented him from leaving for an SEC school unless for a head coaching job. That, of course, changed when Bret Bielema and his staff were released following last season.

Enos was briefly employed by Michigan before heading back south to Alabama in late January.

The Razorback offense was solid in 2015 (No. 29 nationally averaging 466.5 yards a game) before injuries and attrition took a toll. With Allen hurt for a good part of last season, Arkansas’ offense ranked 94th with an average of 373.4 yards a game.

The quarterback didn’t hesitate when asked what Enos meant to his career.

"Best coach I’ve ever had," Allen told AL.com. "A tough-nosed coach whose main goal is to make you better. I think the guys at Alabama are really lucky, they will learn a lot, really quickly. Especially on the practice field. He’s really going to drill them. He’s going to make them a better quarterback with the drops, feet, eyes, know where to go with the football and things like that."

"He’s no robot, either.

Both Allen and former Razorbacks offensive lineman Frank Ragzone recalled Enos’ commitment to the stair stepper in the Arkansas gym.

"He used to refer to himself as Twisted Steel and Sex Appeal," Ragzone said with a grin. "Act like he’s some good-lookin’ dude.

Enos has a few talented players at his disposal at Alabama. Hurts is 25-2 as a starter and Tagovailoa threw three touchdowns after halftime in a championship-saving performance in January’s national title game against Georgia.

Ragzone remembered Enos for his creativity as a play caller.

"Coach Bielema was definitely a power guy right at you," the center told AL.com. "But then he brought in Coach Enos and he likes to do everything — outside zone, toss scheme, outside zone. I think that was blessing throughout my whole career that I had a pro-style offense with a lot of diversity."

Of course, as quarterbacks coach, it won’t be Enos on the headset calling the plays. Mike Locksley got the promotion to offensive coordinator when Brian Daboll moved on to the Buffalo Bills.

Enos’ appointment marks the first time in the Saban era the quarterbacks coach isn’t also the offensive coordinator. From Malor Applewhite straight through the Kiffin-Sarkisian-Daboll era, the jobs were linked.

Allen, though an outside contender for a face-to-face draft pick, said he wouldn’t have been even in this position without the coaching from Enos at Arkansas.

"He played the position in college so he understands what’s going through a quarterback’s mind," Allen said. "Then, I would say how challenging he is on the practice field. If they miss an out route, it’s not going to be good enough for him. He expects you to be perfect out there, it’s really challenging but it makes you better."

Michael Casagrande is an Alabama beat writer for the Alabama Media Group. Follow him on Twitter @MkCasagrande.
Colleges teach lesson with phishing emails

By Kantele Franko
The Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Thousands of university students and employees targeted by email phishing schemes this year have taken the bait. Fortunately, they were duped not by real scammers, but by their own schools — in simulations meant to make them more adept at spotting real threats.

When Ohio State University did its first student-focused phishing in January — a strategy also used in the corporate world — over 18 percent of the recipients clicked through. The University of Alabama at Birmingham's employee-focused phishing awareness campaign snagged over 7,000 people in March, or about a quarter of the recipients.

Ohio State sophomore Ezequiel Herrera, who prides himself on quickly responding to messages, was caught off
guard twice by the fake phishing emails. The first time, he said, he felt proud his school was taking that kind of educational action. The second time left him frustrated.

"I was sort of like, 'Wow, I'm really, really bad,'" Herrera, 19, said with a smile. Since then, he said, he has become more cautious while scrolling through emails from unfamiliar senders.

The faux phishing messages mimic emails about financial aid, holidays, resetting passwords or other topics but contain signs of potential fraud, such as generic greetings, requests for urgent action or information, spelling errors, and senders from unfamiliar domain names. Recipients who click links in the emails are redirected to tips about good cybersecurity habits and how to spot and report real attempts at stealing passwords or other sensitive information.

"A phishing simulation helps people understand the role that they play in managing security — that it's not up to their IT support or the help desk or whoever that they can sort of blindly walk along," said Helen Patton, Ohio State's chief information security officer. "A lot of what makes an organization secure is what happens between an individual and their keyboard or their phone."

Patton talks about it like a digital vaccination, helping protect individuals and the broader campus community against cyberattacks that could cost far more than the phishing simulations.

Just last month, U.S. prosecutors accused a group of Iranians of hacking the computer systems of about 320 universities in the U.S. and abroad to steal billions of dollars' worth of science and engineering research that was then used by the government or sold for profit. Prosecutors said spear-phishing emails were used to target over 100,000 professors, but they didn't publicly identify those individuals or their schools.

Ohio State has used phishing simulations for employees since 2016. Officials won't disclose exact results for security reasons but say responses have improved since the early rounds when, for example, a message about a second-floor printer was clicked by people in facilities that didn't even have a second floor.

In a hurried, tech-reliant culture in which so many people exchange so much information at their fingertips on smartphones and other devices, Patton said, the battle is getting people to slow down.

The practical, experiential training of fake phishing has proved more effective compared to slideshows, webinars or other common types of training that can get stale, said Joanna Grama, who directs the cybersecurity program at the higher education technology association EDUCE.

The risk, of course, is that folks will feel tricked, so it's important that the training be educational, not punitive, Grama said.

At Alabama-Birmingham, one faculty member decried the phishing simulation as a waste of time, but most responses were positive, said Curt Carver, the university's vice president for information technology, who recalls first hearing about the concept of self-phishing over a decade ago.

Some people report the messages as suspicious, and others send replies like "Ha, you got me!" or "Didn't get me this time!" A few, he said, expressed interest in making it more of a game, wanting to gauge how well they detect phishing attacks compared with others.

"They've realized ... they can be a hero, they can be a person that helps protect everybody else," Carver said.
College Students Learn About Hunger

By: Caitlin Dewey

Caleb Torres lost seven pounds his freshman year of college — and not because he didn’t like the food in the dining hall. A first-generation college student, barely covering tuition, Torres ran out of grocery money halfway through the year and began skipping meals as a result.

He’d stretch a can of SpaghettiOs over an entire day. Or he’d scout George Washington University campus for events that promised free lunch or snacks. Torres told no one what he was going through, least of all his single mom.

“She had enough things to worry about,” he said.

Now a senior and living off-campus, in a housing situation that supplies most of his meals, Torres is finally talking about his experience with the hunger problem on America’s college campuses: a quiet, insidious epidemic that researchers say threatens millions of students every year.

According to a first-of-its-kind survey released Tuesday by researchers at Temple University and the Wisconsin HOPE Lab, 36 percent of students at 66 surveyed colleges and universities do not get enough to eat, and a similar number lack a secure place to live.

The report, which is the first to include students from two-year, four-year, private and public universities, including GWU, found that nearly 1 in 10 community college students have gone a whole day without eating in the past month. That number was 6 percent among university students. Any institution was invited to participate in the survey, though the sample was not designed to be representative of colleges nationwide.

Researchers blame ballooning college costs, inadequate aid packages and growing enrollment among low-income students — as well as some colleges’ unwillingness to admit they have a hunger problem. College hunger is not a new issue, researchers caution. But it appears to be growing worse, and not merely because college is getting more expensive.

"Prices have gone up over time," said Sara Goldrick-Rab, a professor of higher education policy at Temple and the lead author of the report. "But the rising price is just a piece. This is a systemic problem."

Goldrick-Rab’s report is based on data from 43,000 students at 66 schools and used the Department of Agriculture's assessment for measuring hunger. That means the thousands of students it classifies as having "low food security" aren't merely avoiding the dining hall or saving lunch money for beer: They're skipping meals, or eating smaller meals, because they don't have enough money for food.
On top of that, the report found, 46 percent of community college students and 36 percent of university students struggle to pay for housing and utilities. In the past year, 12 percent of community college students and 9 percent of university students have slept in shelters or in places not intended as housing, or did not know from one day to the next where they would sleep.

Measuring college hunger and homelessness is difficult. Researchers depend on universities to distribute the surveys and on a self-selecting group of students to fill them out.

Goldrick-Rab says those constraints make it likely that college hunger is actually more prevalent than her data show. There may also be more variability between different areas of the country or different types of institutions, though several education policy analysts not involved with the survey said they believe this is the best national estimate available.

The numbers align with other recent surveys on the issue. The University of California has found that 40 percent of its students suffer food insecurity. At four state universities in Illinois, that number is 35 percent.

“Not a single university administrator wanted to acknowledge this was an issue five years ago,” said Rachel Sumekh, the chief executive of Swipe Out Hunger, a Los Angeles-based nonprofit. “But the numbers are amazing. It helps us make the case to universities that they need to do something about this.”

Experts say the factors underlying campus hunger are complex. More low-income students are enrolling in college, thanks to expanded needs-based scholarship and grant programs, a move away from standardized test scores as part of the application process, and other initiatives designed to recruit more diverse students.

But once they get on campus, low-income students often find that the patchwork of grants and scholarships they’ve assembled are not enough to cover all of their expenses.

“There has been an uptick in low-income students on campus, but there hasn’t been a corresponding change in university policy to welcome and prepare for these students,” said Anthony Abraham Jack, an assistant professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

In the 2013-2014 academic year, room and board for the average undergraduate totaled $9,929, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, a 50 percent increase over 20 years prior.

Those figures are higher for private and four-year colleges. And they don’t include incidental expenses, from printing and laundry fees to nightly room charges assessed against students who can’t leave for spring break or summer vacation.

On top of that, students have fewer ways to provide for themselves: Competition for low-wage jobs has increased, and strict work requirements for food stamp recipients mean that many

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cannot rely on the federal safety net. Even higher income students who don't have their parents' full financial support can find themselves facing difficult choices.

“We know for some students, even one small financial problem can throw them off course,” said Tim Miller, the associate dean of students in the Division of Student Affairs at George Washington, where Torres is a senior. “That is serious. We want to help students overcome those issues.”

With a 2017-2018 tuition of more than $53,000, and a brand-new food court hawking poke bowls and yogurt topped with rose petals, GWU does not outwardly look like a place where students encounter hunger.

But mixed in among the Canada Goose-clad undergrads are students such as Torres and Emma Montero, a sophomore, who are struggling. Montero works three jobs, including a federal work-study gig designed to help low-income students cover expenses, but neither her wages nor a series of grants, scholarships and low-interest loans have made ends meet, she said.

“I’m not going hungry per se, but there are days I’m just not going to eat,” she said. “Today, I am kind of hesitant to buy food, because I have less than $100 and I need to do laundry. Do I want to do my laundry or do I want to eat today? That is the kind of question I’m dealing with.”

To alleviate these issues, GW opened a food pantry in 2016, stocked with canned goods, produce and day-old bagels, tucked behind an unmarked door in the same food court where students flock for poke. Hundreds of schools have recently launched these sorts of pantries: Membership in the College and University Food Bank Alliance has swelled from 15 in 2012 to more than 600 today.

Colleges are taking other steps as well. Some have altered their dining plans to cover more meals or to offer more low-cost options, or have begun distributing free dining hall vouchers to students who need them. Others have partnered with nonprofits to redistribute unused meals to hungry students.

Michigan State University, the first school to establish an on-campus pantry, has begun screening students for food insecurity during routine visits to its campus health center. In New York, St. John’s University has started advertising an emergency fund that disburses small, one-time grants to students with unexpected expenses.

“This is top-of-mind right now on many campuses,” said Amelia Parnell, the vice president for research and policy at the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators. “When we think about reasons students drop out, financial issues — like the ability to pay for food and housing — are one of them.”

But advocates say higher education is still not doing enough to solve student hunger. There is persistent skepticism about the depth of the problem at some institutions. Others have proven
skittish about opening a food pantry or even surveying students, concerned with the message it will send prospective students and donors.

“All the great hunger efforts underway are not even half a drop in an empty bucket given the scale of this crisis,” said Wick Sloane, a writing professor at Bunker Hill Community College in Boston who has advocated for low-income students. “All of us in higher ed know this.”

Sloane and other advocates have called on the federal government to provide free or reduced-cost meals at colleges, as is already done in primary and secondary schools. This fall, the federal Government Accountability Office is scheduled to release a study on the extent of college hunger, which gives advocates hope that lawmakers are paying attention to the issue.

Advocates would like to see changes to the food stamp program to make it more available to college students. There are also calls to reevaluate the financial aid process, with particular attention to how the government assesses "need."

But unfortunately, those changes will come too late for many. Torres will graduate from GW in May. With little initial support at school, Torres moved off-campus sophomore year on the advice of a friend, renting a room in the home of a middle-aged couple known for helping down-on-their-luck students.

Torres says he hasn’t worried about food since then — and that he feels “blessed every day.” But he hopes future college students will have other, more institutional support to keep them from going hungry.

“We’re in a time where there is going to be a lot of change,” he said. “And I’m pleased with where I see it going.”