MAY 25, 2018

ARTICLES OF INTEREST
MAY 19, 2018 – MAY 25, 2018

FOR SPECIFIC NEWS STORIES, SEE THE FOLLOWING PAGE NUMBERS:

NEWS ABOUT

TRUSTEE/SYSTEM INFO 2
STATE ISSUES 3
UA CAMPUS ISSUES 22
UAB CAMPUS ISSUES 31
UAH CAMPUS ISSUES 36
SPORTS 40
NATIONAL NEWS 56
Leadership group graduates 35th class

Members learned about challenges facing community

Staff report

The 35th class of Leadership Tuscaloosa graduated Thursday night after nine months of issues-based class sessions and extensive networking.

The program was created in 1982 by the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama and designed to educate each participant about the challenges and opportunities facing the community.

This year’s class included 41 members of diverse professional and personal backgrounds. Since September, they have learned about education, health care, public safety, economic development, state government and more through direct interaction with the area’s experts in those fields.

The 2018 class also spearheaded a fundraising campaign for Secret Meals for Hungry Children and ultimately collected more than $15,000 for the Tuscaloosa nonprofit.

The graduation ceremony was Thursday at Smith Hall’s Museum of Natural History. State Rep. Bill Poole of Tuscaloosa delivered the keynote address.

Class members for 2017-18 included:
- Scott Anders, Tuscaloosa County Commission
- Charles Bailey IV, Pritchett-Moore Inc.
- Benjamin Bickerstaff, University of Alabama
- Na’Tasha Black, The Tuscaloosa News
- Tacy Bolling, University of Alabama
- Stephanie Buffaloe, Home Instead Senior Care
- Brandon Chalmers, Tuscaloosa’s One Place
- Elizabeth Cochrane, Cadence Bank
- April Coleman, DCH Health System
- Allyson Cooper, University Medical Center
- Stephen Dethrage, The Tuscaloosa News
- Nicole DuBose, Shelton State Community College
- Amy Ford, DCH Health System
- Scott Gaddy, Nucor Steel Tuscaloosa Inc.
- Kenneth Gaddy, University of Alabama
- Jerran Hill, University of Alabama
- June Holmes, Capstone Bank
- Gloria Horton, Mercedes-Benz U.S. International
- Dennis Horton, BF Goodrich/Michelin
- Eric Hull, Black Warrior Brewing Co.
- Katie King, University of Alabama
- Madelyn Kirby, Matrix LLC
- Christopher Lanoux, Parker Towing Inc.
- Crystal Lovorn, Renaissance Bank
- Joseph McAbee, McAbee Construction Inc.
- Rebecca Minder, University of Alabama
- Jennifer Naves, BBVA Compass
- Scott Nichols, McAbee Construction
- Susan Poole, Westervelt Co.
- Jasmine Rainey, Tuscaloosa Tourism and Sports
- Michael Scott, Mercedes-Benz U.S. International
- Edmund Sexton Jr., McAbee Construction Inc.
- Jennifer Sherman, Sickle Cell Disease Association
- Jennifer Stripling, Jamison Money Farmer
- Jennifer Taylor, city of Tuscaloosa
- Zach Ward, Ward Scott Architecture
- Jillian White, Rosen Harwood
- Avis Williams, Inc.
- Brian Wysock, TTL Tuscaloosa City Schools

The Leadership Tuscaloosa class of 2018 held a graduating ceremony Thursday night at Smith Hall on the University of Alabama campus. (Photo by the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama)
Huntsville lands $750 million high-tech data center

By: Paul Gattis

The city of Huntsville has scored another major economic development, a $750 million data center that will enhance the Rocket City's high-tech reputation.

The facility will create at least 50 high-paying jobs, according to Shane Davis, the city's director of urban and economic development.

The city council voted unanimously at Thursday night's meeting to approve a project development agreement between the city and Starbelt, a limited liability company formed last year. Starbelt was formed by the company bringing the data center to Huntsville.

The identity of that company has not been revealed but a formal announcement of the development is expected next month.

It's the second major development in Huntsville announced this year - preceded, of course, by the Mazda Toyota Manufacturing USA project that will include a $1.6 billion investment and create 4,000 direct jobs.

Davis told the council that Starbelt has agreed to purchase 340 acres at $8.5 million in North Huntsville Industrial Park and will be next door to Aerojet Rocketdyne - a 2017 economic victory for the city that will create about 700 jobs - as well as the Toyota Motor Manufacturing facility.

Details were sparse about the project in the presentation to the council and Davis declined to comment further after the meeting.

Under the code name Project Cricket, Davis told the council it was a competitive industrial development project that considered several locations. Starbelt "would construct and operate a large-scale data center campus for the purpose of storing, processing and serving customer-based data needs."

The data center has similar characteristics to the Google Data Center in Bridgeport in northeast Alabama. The Google facility is being built on about 500 acres in Jackson County and will employ about 75 to 100 people.

The Starbelt data center also holds an option to purchase an additional 203 acres in the industrial park at $25,000 per acre.

The jobs at Starbelt will pay at least $80,000 per year, Davis told the council. He said he expected it would be a mixture of out-of-state and local employees filling those jobs.

See next page
Huntsville landed the project, Davis told the council, by meeting key project site considerations:

- Development-ready site
- Reliable utility infrastructure
- Educated and available workforce
- Pro-business environment
- Community quality of life

The city of Huntsville will provide about $6.6 million in non-direct incentives, Davis told the council. Those incentives include the waiving of permitting fees, a $2 million value, as well as various infrastructure work with a price tag of about $4.6 million.

Other incentives for the project will come the Madison County Commission, the Huntsville/Madison County Chamber of Commerce, TVA, Huntsville Utilities and the state of Alabama, Davis said.

The return on investment for the city of Huntsville, Madison County and the city and county school systems over 20 years, Davis said, would be about $165 million.

The data center represents the type of economic development the city of Huntsville is "actively recruiting," according to the resolution approved by the council.

"The city has been actively recruiting major data centers as part of its efforts to market and bring high tech, cybersecurity and other 'internet of things' enterprises to the city," the resolution said, "to continue the diversification of the city's economic, employment base and corporate citizenry and to grow the city's national and international reputation as a hub for sophisticated, high-tech engineering, research and development, 'internet of things' and advanced manufacturing enterprises."
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Amazon considering Bessemer for massive fulfillment center project

BY TY WEST AND INGRID SCHNADER
Staff

The Birmingham Business Journal has learned Amazon.com Inc. is considering a site in Bessemer for a fulfillment center.

The facility would employ at least 1,500, with the potential for up to 3,000, making it the largest economic development win for metro Birmingham in decades.

While numerous local elected officials and economic developers have repeatedly declined to discuss any specifics or information related to the project, the BBJ has confirmed Amazon is the target of Project Bluebird, also referred to in public zoning documents by the code name Crowne Development Plan.

Amazon declined to comment on the potential of a project in metro Birmingham, citing its longstanding policy of not commenting on speculation.

The project would be located on U.S. Steel property off Powder Plant Road near Bessemer High School and Alabama Splash Adventure. Representatives of U.S. Steel also declined to comment.

At this point, the project is not yet finalized and Bessemer is only under consideration for the fulfillment center, which would be part of the e-commerce giant’s rapidly expanding logistics network. Birmingham is currently the largest metro in the nation without an Amazon fulfillment center, according to BBJ research.

According to public records, the project would be approximately 855,000 square feet, which is the exact size as a host of other recent Amazon facilities – including one confirmed this week by the company in West Jefferson, Ohio.

The estimated minimum employment of 1,500 also matches those facilities – although many of those sites have increased employment beyond that total over time.

State and local officials declined to discuss incentive plans for Project Bluebird at this time – although they are expected to be discussed at Bessemer City Council and Jefferson County Commission meetings in the coming weeks. But last year, a joint project by The Business Journals, parent company of the BBJ, found Amazon has been awarded more than $1.2 billion in incentives as it grows its network across the nation.

According to public records, construction

The site under consideration is a U.S. Steel-owned property off Powder Plant Road in Bessemer.

See next page
could begin as soon as June 2018 and could be complete by July 2019. If Bessemer is chosen for the project, it could be open by the 2019 holiday season.

As we’ve previously noted, it’s not surprising Amazon would consider Bessemer for a project of this magnitude.

Logistics experts have previously identified the area as one that would be attractive to Amazon, due to its location, proximity to interstates and other factors. Metro Birmingham, in general, is well-positioned for major logistics operations due to its four interstates and abundance of railroads.

Bessemer is already home to multiple distribution centers, including a CVS facility and a Dollar General facility, and nearby McCalla is home to both an intermodal facility and a Publix distribution center.

But the potential Amazon project would be the biggest win yet for the city in western Jefferson County, which has been hit hard by manufacturing job losses over the decades, but has experienced a number of recent successes – including a major expansion by Milo’s Tea.

Multiple local governments and entities have worked together on the project, with one common goal of making it a project that can create opportunities for residents of all socioeconomic backgrounds.

The fulfillment center would have close ties to Bessemer High School, which is located near the property.

While declining to comment on the name of the company, local officials have said training opportunities would be provided to students at the high school – as well as chances to participate in various career development programs offered by Amazon. Some of those programs provide college tuition and scholarship funds for workers – even if they choose a career path outside of Amazon’s business model.

In addition to a connection with the school system, the project is also expected to include direct bus service to several Bessemer neighborhoods to allow those without access to an automobile a chance to work at the center.

Wages are expected to be at least $14 per hour – a figure that lines up with Amazon fulfillment centers in many other areas.

While local officials, citing nondisclosure agreements, have remained tight-lipped about any specific details of the project, including the company name, some have provided some general comments to the BBJ about the scope and potential impact of the project in conjunction with related items coming up on public meeting agendas.

Those items include a vacation of property and a required rezoning by Bessemer to allow for a distribution center at the site.

“An investment of this nature, where there is a possibility of creating thousands of jobs in Bessemer, would represent the largest single investment in our city’s history,” said Bessemer Mayor Kenneth Gulley. “This will provide jobs and opportunity for our residents and will help them and their families look to a brighter future.”

Gulley said numerous partners, including the state, Jefferson County and Alabama Pow-
er, have worked for more than six months to make the project a reality. The potential project comes months after metro Birmingham’s #BringAtoB campaign, which drew considerable national attention, even though Birmingham wasn’t ultimately selected as a finalist.

He said the city isn’t prepared to discuss incentive numbers at this time, but said the benefit it will produce for the Bessemer school system would reach into the millions of dollars and provide students with great opportunities.

Jefferson County Commission President Jimmie Stephens, who has also declined to discuss any specifics, said the project would be a true game-changer for the area due to the scope of the project and the opportunities it would create.

He also noted the high level of cooperation among the city, county and other entities that came together to make Project Bluebird a possibility for the area.
State wins presidential award for exports

By: William Thornton

Alabama has gotten national attention for its international trade relations.

The Alabama Department of Commerce today received the President's "E" Award for Export Service, the highest recognition for contributing to the expansion of U.S. exports.

U.S. Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross today presented the award to representatives of the state commerce department, following a year when Alabama exported a record $21.7 billion in goods and services to 189 foreign countries.

"The department's contributions to the export growth of Alabama companies through international trade missions were also particularly notable," Ross said. "The Alabama Department of Commerce's achievements have undoubtedly contributed to national export efforts that support the U.S. economy and create American jobs."

Alabama exports are up 50 percent over the last decade. Alabama Commerce Secretary Greg Canfield said receiving the recognition is a great honor.

"Alabama companies are creating good-paying jobs as a result of exporting their products throughout the world, and exports of goods and services continue to be an economic engine that spurs job creation and economic investment," he said.

Hilda Lockhart, director of Commerce's Office of International Trade, and Beau Lore, an international trade specialist in the Office of International Trade, attended a ceremony at the U.S. Department of Commerce's Herbert C. Hoover building in Washington D.C., to receive the award.

Lockhart said some of the credit should go to Export Alabama Alliance, which works to help Alabama companies expand around the globe.

"The Alabama International Trade program has proven to be a tremendous resource for the state's small and medium-sized companies," Lockhart said in a statement. "Assisting them in finding international markets for Alabama-made products is the key to growing exports and jobs at home. Receiving this prestigious award validates the hard work that all members of the Export Alabama Alliance have accomplished since it was formed in 2004."

There were 43 U.S. companies and organizations this year receiving the President's "E" Award. Nominations come through the U.S. Commercial Service, part of the department's International Trade Administration (ITA).
Pickens hospital earns $2M grant

See Pickens, BP

See next page

The Tuscaloosa News
Sunday, May 20, 2018
and workforce recruitment and retention with the goal to:

- Improve financial position and increase operational efficiencies
- Implement improvements that support an evidence-based culture for improved health outcomes
- Address workforce recruitment and retention needs
- Increase use of telemedicine to fill service gaps and access to care
- Ensure access to and availability of emergency medical services
- Integrate social services to address socioeconomic challenges
- Enhance coordination of care and develop a community care coordination plan
- Strengthen the local health care delivery system to position for population health

U.S. Sen. Richard Shelby said he was proud to hear that the Pickens County Medical Center has been chosen to participate in the Delta Regional Community Health Systems Development Program.

"This three-year partnership will allow for much-needed improvements to the facility and will foster a better environment for addressing and identifying health care needs across the board. I am confident that these improvements will positively impact the community and surrounding area," Shelby said.

Launched in August 2017, the program enhances healthcare delivery in the Delta region through intensive, multi-year technical assistance to providers in rural communities, including critical access hospitals, small rural hospitals, rural health clinics and other healthcare organizations.

Pickens County Medical Center is a 56-bed hospital that provides a range of healthcare and services, including surgical, intensive care, therapy and imaging services and a 24-hour emergency department. The hospital also offers clinics in gastroenterology, urology, oncology, ophthalmology, podiatry, orthopedics and dermatology.
At Salem’s Diner, remembering ‘Commish’

Bob Carlton  bcarlton@al.com

Two or three days a week, this is where Mike Slive came for his morning coffee and conversation, and always a lot of laughs.

His usual order was either an egg-white omelet with tomato and onion — no cheese — or a piece of French toast and a single slice of bacon.

At Salem’s Diner in Homewood, the longtime boss of the most powerful conference in all of college football was just one of the regulars.

He was Mike. Or, more affectionately, “Commish.”

“He loved the place; the place loved him back,” Wayne Salem, the proprietor of the

See next page
SALEM’S

FROM AI

little greasy spoon that bears his name, said Thursday morning as he sat in Slive’s favorite booth. “I think with Mike, the biggest thing about here was he came in (and) nobody was looking for a job, nobody was looking for a raise, and nobody was here kissing his butt.’’

When the news started to spread late Wednesday afternoon that Slive, the beloved commissioner of the Southeastern Conference for 13 very successful years, had lost his battle with cancer at 77, the tweets and tributes began pouring in from around the country.

Almost all of them mentioned Salem’s Diner, which became Slive’s sanctuary toward the end of his career at the SEC and remained so after he retired in 2015.

USA Today’s George Schroeder, who often met Slive at Salem’s whenever Schroeder was in town to cover the SEC, filed a loving memorial to the commissioner and his favorite breakfast spot last Wednesday night.

“A few days ago, Slive and I traded text messages and tentatively made plans to get together when I traveled to Birmingham,” Schroeder wrote. “We never set a date; I know now he was ailing, and in and out of the hospital over the last couple of weeks as his health suddenly declined. But we were meeting for breakfast, and there was only one destination. Salem’s will feel empty without him.”

Thursday morning, Greg Sankey, who succeeded Slive as SEC commissioner, stopped by the diner to pay his respects.

“I made a stop by @Salem’sDiner to thank Wayne for being such a great friend to our friend Mike Slive,” Sankey tweeted. “If you can, stop by Salem’s and see the photo of Mike and Liz Slive with Wayne that is behind the cash register.”

As great a friend as Salem was to Slive, though, the commissioner was just as good to Salem’s Diner.

Tucked away in the Old Curve Shopping Center just off the main drag in downtown Homewood, Salem’s Diner got a few minutes of national fame in 2007, when comedian and late-night host Craig Ferguson visited the diner and proclaimed its Philly cheesesteak “the best Philly cheesesteak sandwich I’ve ever tasted — and I’m including Philadelphia.”

But that was nothing compared to the press Slive helped generate.

When sportswriters came to Birmingham for SEC Media Days, they often convened with Slive at the diner, and their visits to Salem’s often weaved their way into their stories.

“He has been so good to this place, put me in so many articles nationally,” Salem said. “USA Today, Bleacher Report. Lara Anderson wrote something on us. He included me and the diner in everything.”
And when ESPN filmed one of those day-in-the-life documentaries on Slive, the commissioner told them where they needed to go.

"He said, 'If you want to do that, you can find me at Salem's Diner,' " Salem recalled. "Here comes like eight guys from Bristol, Connecticut, with cameras. We started filming at 3 o'clock in the morning. It was a big to-do."

'EVERYBODY KNEW WHO HE WAS'
The commissioner discovered Salem's Diner about five or so years ago, Salem said, after it was recommended to him by his personal trainer and by some of the guys who worked with him in the SEC headquarters here in Birmingham.

He fit right in, though, from the first morning he walked through the door.

"Everybody knew who he was," Salem recalled. "He just picked up the coffee pot and started walking around pouring coffee."

Over the years, Slive became close friends with a group of a half-dozen or so regular customers who meet at the diner at 6 o'clock every morning for coffee, a group Salem simply calls "the coffee club."

"We are a pretty social group," Mitch Nelson, one of the members of the group, said Thursday afternoon. "It's not a barber shop, but you could get clipped, if you know what I mean. And (Slive) just loved that. He would laugh from his belly.

"We didn't spare him any punches, either," added Nelson, the administrative director for the department of surgery at UAB. "He really enjoyed just being one of the guys, nobody wanting anything from him. Let's just have fun and drink coffee."

Sometimes before a big SEC game, Salem and some of the regulars at the diner would quiz the commissioner to try to get him to tell them which team he might be favoring.

"We would go, 'Hey, Commish, who are you pulling for today — Alabama or Auburn?' " Salem said. "He would say, 'Go, officials.' He wanted the officials to have a good game. He wouldn't abuse his fiduciary duty."

Slive was so crazy about all the new friends he made at Salem's that when the SEC threw a big retirement party for him at the Hyatt Regency in Atlanta three years ago, he made sure they all came, along with their spouses.

"We all got engraved invitations, and he told us weeks before that he really wanted us to come," Nelson said. "We all went to
Atlanta, and he treated us just like we were the athletic director from the University of Alabama.

"He was introducing us around, and then the next morning, we got up and met him downstairs for coffee, just like normal."

'THIS WAS HIS COMFORT ZONE'
The walls of the cozy Homewood diner are strewn with sports memorabilia, including photos of Salem's father, Ed Salem, an All-American at Alabama in 1950 who later opened Ed Salem's Drive-In in Birmingham.

The back booth where Slive frequently held court has a gold plaque on the wall above it declaring it "Mike Slive's Booth," which Salem said was the suggestion of a customer.

Surrounding the plaque are several photos of Slive sitting in that same booth with visiting sportswriters and athletics directors.

"This was his comfort zone, right here," Salem said, slapping his hands on the tabletop. "And he would sit right here," Salem added, pointing to the back seat closest to the wall.

If, however, Slive walked in and found somebody already sitting in his booth, he just grabbed a seat at the counter.

"They would look over and go, 'Do we need to get up?'" Salem said. "He'd say, 'Oh, no, we're charging you.' Just cutting up with 'em."

Sometimes, Slive came with his wife, Liz, or his daughter, Anna, or his granddaughter and his pride and joy, Abigail.

"On Saturdays, it was a tradition," Salem said. "Abigail would come here for either French toast or pancakes, or she would go get doughnuts at Krispy Kreme. That was their Saturday. That was a big thing."

The Commish was particular about his coffee. He started with a half-cup of regular combined with a half-cup of decaf, but after that first cup, he switched to all decaf. He sometimes would go through a couple of pots.

"And once you poured his coffee, you had to put it in the microwave for a minute," Salem said. "He wanted it steaming hot."

After he got sick, Slive sometimes didn't have much of an appetite, but he made time to stop by the diner anyway, Salem said.

"I could tell when he wasn't feeling good, so I had him some peanut butter and crackers," he said. "A lot of mornings, he would eat just that. I don't even carry peanut butter, but I did for him."

Slive last visited the diner a couple of weeks ago, on his way home from the hospital, Salem said.

"They went in to have some tests done," Salem said. "This was his first stop when he left the hospital."

Thursday morning, Nelson and the other regulars gathered for coffee at Salem's Diner, just like they always do.

But they were missing their friend Mike, the Commish.

"It was very somber," Nelson said. "We all told Commish stories and just talked about how we had lost a really good buddy and friend."
Slive leaves behind a legacy of unification

Former SEC commissioner helped transform a league in disarray into the top conference in the nation

Rainer Sabin  rsabin@al.com

When Mike Slive was appointed the commissioner of the Southeastern Conference 16 years ago, the league was in the throes of turmoil. In-fighting among the members occurred, shady practices prevailed and the future of its best programs was cloudy with a handful of schools either on probation or in the crosshairs of the NCAA.

“The league was in disarray,” said Alabama’s Nick Saban, who coached at LSU back then. “The SEC’s image was really terrible...He cleaned it up.”

He did more than that. During the next 14 years before he retired in 2015, he transformed the SEC into a sports powerhouse, carrying it to the mountaintop of college athletics by increasing its exposure and filling its coffers with the kind of financial windfall no one could have foreseen.

During his tenure, annual revenue grew from $96 million to $455.8 million and the conference formed a lucrative partnership with ESPN that led to the creation of the SEC Network. There was also expansion as the arrival of Texas A&M and Missouri stretched the footprint of the league beyond this region and into bigger markets outside the South.

The success on the balance sheet was only surpassed by the SEC’s dominance in the most-watched sport of all — football. Slive, who succeeded Roy Kramer, presided during a time when conference teams won seven consecutive BCS championships.

It was no wonder then that SEC luminaries from both past and present made the pilgrimage to Temple Emanu-El in Birmingham last week to pay respects to Slive, who died Wednesday at 77. Saban, Kentucky basketball coach John Calipari and Tennessee athletic director Phil Fulmer were among the dignitaries who attended Slive’s memorial service. They celebrated a man who made his greatest impact in the last stages of his life.

“From a Biblical standpoint I want to compare him to Abraham because he was the father of many nations,” said Auburn basketball coach Bruce Pearl. “His job was leading the SEC and all those tribes and leading them so very well. Mike’s a mensch.”

SEE SLIVE, B5
SLIVE
FROM BI

A Jewish lawyer and former judge from Utica, N.Y., Slive seemed a curious choice to
be the caretaker of the SEC — a conference
made up of academic institutions that clung
to its Southern traditions and remained
intensely prideful of its history.

But Slive’s moral rectitude and wide breadth of experience in college athletics
made him ideally suited for the position. He
governed the Great Midwest Conference and
Conference USA. Before that, he represented
universities facing NCAA sanctions.

Upon arriving in Birmingham, Slive
demanded the SEC change its culture of
rogue behavior, and a former Arkansas athletic
director Jeff Long put it, “do things the
right way, within the rules.”

It seemed wishful thinking to skeptics
who had a front-row seat to the ruthless,
no-holds-barred competition that existed
within the league.

“Not long after he got here, he said the
SEC would be probation-free in five years,”
said ESPN personality Paul Finebaum. “I
ridiculed him on my show. I said this guy
doesn’t know what he’s talking about.”

Slive invited doubt because of his status
as an outsider. But the perception of him
quickly changed as raised the prestige of the
SEC. In 2004, an undefeated Auburn team
was left out of the BCS championship game
—a slap in the face for a conference that con-
sidered itself the most competitive one of all.

Merely three years later, a two-loss LSU
team played for the title and won it. An avid
reader with a calm demeanor who admired the
Winston Churchill and his art of diplomacy,
Sfilme worked his magic behind the scenes.

He’d build consensus and squash dis-
cord — once brokering a detente between
Lane Kiffin and Urban Meyer when the
two coaches were feuding in 2009 by sim-
ply telling them to stop. In turn, the affili-
sated schools suddenly began to celebrate the
accomplishments of the other members.

Chants of “SEC! SEC! SEC!” echoed in sta-
diums from Texas to South Carolina.

“You heard it a lot more with Mike here,”
said current SEC commissioner Greg Sankey.
Sfilme worked to extend the brand, using his
perspicacity to peer into the future and his
patience to assess all factors before acting.

That was seen most during the period preced-
ing the development of the SEC Network that
is now beamed across the country and trans-
mited to 52 nations around the world.

ESPN and the conference first partnered
in 2008, striking a $2.25 billion deal. But six
years passed before a channel exclusively
devoted to SEC sports was launched as Slive
and SEC television consultant Chuck Gerber
evaluated the viability of the Big Ten Net-
work and witnessed the near-disastrous cre-
atation of the Longhorn Network that almost
sank the Big 12.

“I think he was very strategic,” Long said.

“He waited and watched and then he part-
nered with the best in the business — ESPN.
And I think that has helped build our brand
tremendously. It’s given our conference a tre-
menous advantage. I think you see it playing
out right now. Now you’re seeing the full
breadth of it. You’re seeing what is every
softball team in the championship, every
baseball team hosting. You see the national
championships in football that are going to
continue.”

Alabama won the last one — prevailing in
the College Football Playoff for the second
time in three seasons. Slive was a proponent
of the CFP, lobbying for an expanded post-
season that would feature the best teams
and not just conference champions.

This past January, the Alabama-Georgi-
a national title tilt — an all-SEC matchup
played in Atlanta at the site of the league’s
championship game — was a testament to
Sfilme’s rich legacy. After all, it was a four-
hour infomercial touting the supremacy of a
league once in chaos when Slive came to Bir-
mingham 16 years ago to save it from its own
self-destruction.

“He made everybody do what’s right in
terms of running the programs and I think
that fundamentally helped this league ele-
vate its image, which ultimately made the
league what it is right now, which I think is
one of the strongest, most powerful based on
all the individual institutions,” Saban said.

“But a lot of that came from Mike Slive’s lead-
ership and bringing everybody together...
He was a great leader for our league. I don’t
think you can spend enough time talking
about all the things that Mike did.”

Rainer Sabin is an Alabama beat writer for
the Alabama Media Group. Follow him on
Twitter @RainerSabin

The Birmingham News
Sunday, May 20, 2018
HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS

Lawsuit: AHSAA classification rules putting athletes at risk

Ben Thomas  bthomas@al.com

St. Paul’s Episcopal School in Mobile filed a federal civil lawsuit Thursday afternoon against the Alabama High School Athletic Association, alleging a new AHSAA rule penalizes some private school sports teams for being successful, and puts their athletes in harm’s way.

The suit calls on the court to abolish the so-called “competitive balance” rule and order the AHSAA to pay St. Paul’s legal fees.

If the suit prevails, it could cause turmoil statewide in scheduling for the 2018-19 high school sports season. A substantial number of private and parochial school teams compete against public school teams under the AHSAA administrative umbrella.

The 56-page filing describes the new AHSAA rule as “arbitrary, discriminatory and dangerous,” labels AHSAA conduct in the matter as “arbitrary and reckless,” and says the rule was “motivated by a bare desire to harm and disadvantage a politically unpopular group.”

SEE SUIT, A6
SUIT
FROM A1

Named as defendants are the Montgomery-based AHSAA and its executive director, Steve Savarese. Reached by telephone Thursday, Savarese said he hadn’t seen the lawsuit and would have to review it with the association’s legal representatives.

In a letter to the St. Paul’s community Thursday, Blair Fisher, St. Paul’s head of school, said the St. Paul’s Board of Trustees voted unanimously to move forward with the legal challenge.

“St. Paul’s has been a proud member of the AHSAA for decades, but our students’ safety, along with our promise that we will never let our students be treated unfairly, is our top priority,” Fisher said.

The AHSAA’s Board of Control approved the new rule in November. Basically, the rule requires private schools that achieve a certain level of success in certain sports to be reclassified for athletic purposes so they play against schools with significantly larger enrollments.

The St. Paul’s lawsuit maintains the rule heavily tips the balance in favor of public schools, while hamstringing private schools for winning. Moreover, it opens the way for “greater risks of injury for private school students participating in contact and collision sports,” said Russel Myles, a lawyer with McDowell Knight Roedder & Sledge, the Mobile-based firm representing St. Paul’s.

In Alabama high school sports, teams are placed into classifications based on enrollment, for the most part. Schools within the various classifications compete against one another, in their various regions or areas.

Private schools, however, already have an extra hurdle: For classification purposes, the AHSAA counts each private school student as 1.35 students. This “multiplier,” enacted in 1999, compensates for a perceived advantage that a private school might have in facilities and staffing and by virtue of its ability to draw students from a larger area.

By actual 10th- through 12th-grade enrollment, St. Paul’s would be classified a 4A school in Alabama’s seven classifications, according to the lawsuit. But with the multiplier, St. Paul’s plays in 5A. Now, with the competitive-balance rule, 15 of the Saints’ athletic teams in nine sports (girls and boys) are scheduled to play in 6A beginning this fall. This includes the football team, which won its third 5A state championship in four years in 2017.

In fact, during the 2017-18 school year, St. Paul’s also won AHSAA state titles in boys swimming, girls indoor track, girls outdoor track and boys golf. The five state titles tied for second-most, trailing only Homewood High and equaling the five won by American Christian, Auburn and Hoover high schools.

“We are deeply concerned our students will now lose the opportunity to fairly compete in athletics and, more importantly, we believe the new rule creates significant, undeniable safety concerns in collision sports, like football,” Fisher said. “This action by the AHSAA is fundamentally wrong no matter how you look at it.”

The lawsuit doesn’t ask for monetary damages, only “equitable relief” from the classification rule.

“The double penalty applied to only private schools is unprecedented,” Myles said. “No other state in the nation imposes both a student multiplier and a success test.”

At least 75 private-school teams are scheduled to play in a higher classification during the 2018-19 and 2019-20 academic years strictly because of the competitive balance rule. Two of those are football teams — St. Paul’s from 5A to 6A, and Madison Academy from 4A to 5A.

As a 6A football team, St. Paul’s will be in the same region as public school powers Spanish Fort, Saraland, Daphne and Blount. Steve Mask, St. Paul’s football coach and

See next page
director of athletics, declined comment on the suit.

According to the lawsuit, several physicians spoke to the AHSAA and explained the dangers of forcing smaller schools to play much larger schools in contact and collision sports. The St. Paul's lawsuit quotes Juan Ronderos, a neurologist specializing in spinal injuries and neurological disorders, telling the AHSAA: "As a medical professional who has treated high school and college athletes for over a decade for concussion and CTE (chronic traumatic encephalopathy), I urge you to consider the fact that you will be placing our students in harm's way if this measure passes."

The AHSAA reclassifies its schools every two years. For the 2018-2020 cycle, enrollment in Class 4A ranges from 297.7 students to 377.45. By contrast, the enrollment in 6A schools — where St. Paul's is slated to play football — ranges from 605.7 (B.C. Rain) to 1,045.6 (Albertville). St. Paul's enrolls about 320 in its 10th-12th grades.

PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE

Tensions between public and private schools have arisen in recent times as rural schools have struggled to win state titles, while private schools and well-financed city schools have thrived. Rep. Ritchie Whorton, R-Owens Cross Roads, even proposed a bill in the Legislature that would mandate separate championships for public and private schools.

Savarese and the AHSAA created a task force, composed of public and private school members, to study the issue and offer solutions. The task force suggested five possibilities: sticking only with the 1.35 multiplier, increasing that multiplier to as high as 2.25, placing all private schools in separate classification, barring private schools from AHSAA membership and instituting the competitive-balance rule.

"The task force looked a lot of options," Savarese said in November. "Increasing the multiplier was debated, but that would have done more damage than good. Some schools could have been moved up as many as three classes by raising it. With competitive balance, we were able to look at the schools who have the most resources and have had the most successes and advance them when needed."

In the competitive-balance system, private schools earn one point for a quarterfinal appearance, two points for making the semifinals and four for a championship game appearance in each sport. For the single-gender sports of football, baseball, softball and volleyball, teams that score more than six points are required to move up a classification from where they were in the most recent classification period. For sports tied together for scheduling purposes, like basketball, the point total is higher.

St. Paul's asked the AHSAA Board of Control to reconsider competitive balance this winter and presented its case against the rule at the quarterly meeting Jan. 31 in Montgomery. On March 13, according to the lawsuit, the AHSAA invited St. Paul's to register an official appeal. That appeal was denied the next day, according to the suit, citing the Board of Control's "power to classify member schools into two or more divisions for the purpose of athletic competition."

Myles said his law firm has asked the court to set a hearing in 20 days to consider the civil action.

"Our focus has been getting the complaint filed," Myles said. "We'll now turn our attention to working with the court to get a hearing scheduled as soon as possible. Beyond that, all I can say is that I believe the Board of Trustees has taken the right course of action under difficult circumstances."

Fisher said St. Paul's did not contact any other private schools before filing Thursday's suit, but said it "anticipates that we will have broad support from the independent school community and believe this message will also resonate among many public schools."
"Further, we can confirm that at no time has The Hawthorn Group ever engaged Crowds on Demand, nor any similar firm, on behalf of Alabama Power," he wrote.

Hawthorn once had an office inside Alabama Power's corporate headquarters in Birmingham, but closed it about a year ago, according to Hammelman.

Alabama Power paid the company more than $7.8 million from 1996 to 2001, according to reports filed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, about $1.3 million per year on average. Those reports document funds the company spent on "certain civic, political and related activities."

After 2001, Alabama Power was not required to itemize those expenses, or show which firms it was paying under this category. In each year from 2010 to 2017, Alabama Power spent between $18 million and $23 million per year under the broad category of civic and political activity, which also includes work with civic groups.

**ENTERGY CUT TIES WITH HAWTHORN**

The controversy in New Orleans involving The Hawthorn Group occurred after The Lens, a nonprofit news organization in New Orleans, reported actors said they had been paid to attend New Orleans City Council meetings held for public comment on a proposal from the utility Entergy New Orleans to build a new $210 million natural gas power plant called the New Orleans Power Station.

The council OK'd the plant by a 6-1 vote.

After the allegations of hired actors surfaced, Entergy conducted an internal investigation. Entergy said it had hired The Hawthorn Group to "assist with organizing local grassroots support" for the New Orleans Power Station project, asking them to recruit 75 attendees and 10 speakers for the October meeting and 30 attendees and 10 speakers at the February meeting.

Hawthorn in turn hired California-based Crowds on Demand, which hired actors to appear at those meetings. Hawthorn initially denied attendees were paid, telling Entergy, according to the utility's investigation report, "Apparently their evidence is one person who is dilusional [sic] or lying."

Crowds on Demand CEO Adam Swart said in an emailed statement to AL.com that the company seeks to provide genuine supporters for their clients, but often provides compensation for people who attend meetings.
Haney makes friends, and that makes us worry

Kyle Whitmire
kwhitmire@al.com

A poor man works for his money, they say. A rich man lets his money work for him.

Franklin Haney is a very rich man, and his money is hard at work in Alabama, in Washington, and maybe even the Middle East.

And now, according to the Wall Street Journal, the Chattanooga, Tennessee, developer has the help of President Donald Trump’s personal lawyer and political fixer, Michael Cohen, with designs on bringing online a nuclear power plant in northwest Alabama.

Two years ago, when I first wrote about Haney’s dream to buy a half-finished nuclear power plant, I didn’t take his plans seriously for a couple of reasons.

Even if Haney could convince the Tennessee Valley Authority to sell him the Bellefonte plant, even he — a billionaire — probably couldn’t afford to finish it. Haney’s own projection was that the project would cost about $13 billion. By most accounts, including Haney’s company’s website, he is worth less than that.

And even if he managed to finish it, there was no way the federal government would allow him to turn the thing on, right?

The logistics and regulation of nuclear power make it nearly impossible to stop a project and then restart it again, which was a big reason TVA never finished the job.

Stephen Smith, the executive director of the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy, said then that Haney’s plans for Bellefonte were delusional.

“The first concrete was poured in 1974,” he said. “That reactor is approaching 50 years old. Do you think the Nuclear Regulatory Commission is going to give a license for a reactor that has been sitting around for 50 years?”

But Haney didn’t give up.

Once a door-to-door Bible salesman, Haney became a self-made billionaire through working as the government’s landlord. He acquires and develops property, which he leases to local, state and federal agencies.

And he makes connections through major political donations. He’s donated to Democrats and Republicans. Bill Clinton and Barack Obama have benefited from his largess, as have Republicans, including former Alabama Gov. Bob Riley.

When Haney set his mind to developing the Bellefonte plant, he used his money to open doors again, first in Montgomery. In 2014, he donated about $300,000 to then-Gov. Robert Bentley, making him one of Bentley’s biggest contributors. Bentley later encouraged TVA to sell the plant, and he hosted Haney in a meeting in his office, with executives from Alabama Power and TVA, among others.

Some of those same people later testified before a state grand jury in Montgomery, but the grand jury did not bring any charges against Bentley.

TVA agreed to sell the power plant to Haney, but he still had those two hurdles left — regulation and capital.

Enter Donald Trump.

After the president’s victory in 2016, Haney donated $1 million to Trump’s inaugural fund, and last summer Bloomberg reported that Haney had bragged about dining with Trump about a dozen times during the president’s first six months in office. Haney could have had those opportunities because he’s a member of Trump’s club, Mar-a-Lago.

And it turns out, the Wall Street Journal reports, Haney had another connection, too. He is a client of Michael Cohen, who appears to have turned his proximity to the president into a lucrative business opportunity.

According to the Journal, Haney hired Cohen to help him solicit investments for the Bellefonte project, and in April, the two met in Miami with Sheikh Ahmed bin Jasim bin Mohammed al-Thani, the minister of economy and commerce of Qatar and the vice chairman of the Qatar Investment Authority.

Previously, Cohen had solicited $1 million from Qatar for access to the Trump administration. The Washington Post reported last month. The Qatar government declined that solicitation.

It’s unclear whether the meeting was fruitful for Haney, but what is clear is that current law might not allow a major foreign investment in the Bellefonte project.

But laws change, especially when men with money need them changed, and if the Trump administration has shown anything, it’s that it cares little about regulations, environmental protections and foreign influence in domestic affairs.

Haney’s hurdles are still high. They are still there. But his money is working harder than ever to tear them down.

And anyone who cares about the safety of northwest Alabama should take him very seriously.
Alabama earns high APR scores

By Ben Jones
Sports Writer

Alabama’s latest APR scores reflected well among their Division I peers, according to NCAA data released on Wednesday.

Eight of the 19 Alabama sports with APR scores improved from their score a year ago while seven more remained steady. Four programs saw their averages decline in the last year. Of the 19 programs, 14 posted higher scores than the average for that sport among their Division I peers.

The most recent Academic Progress Rate scores reflected a rolling four-year average from the 2013-14 school year through the 2016-17 school year.

The football program set a school record with a 984 APR score. Only Vanderbilt’s 994 was better among SEC teams. The football program’s APR score has improved every year since 2012-13. Its APR score was also well above the FBS average of 968.

Men’s basketball finished tied for sixth among SEC schools with a 985. That’s an improvement from last year’s 979 and well above the Division I average of 967.

Four programs had perfect APR scores of 1000 for the four-year period: men’s cross country, softball, women’s golf and gymnastics.

Women’s swimming and diving was tied for the best score in the SEC with a 998 average. Volleyball posted a 995 average. Men’s swimming and diving was tied for second in the SEC with a 994 average.

Baseball was also a strong performer, with its 990 average finishing second in the SEC to South Carolina’s 995. Other programs that finished over 990 included women’s cross country, women’s tennis, and women’s track.

Men’s golf, women’s basketball, men’s tennis and men’s track were the four sports that finished below the average of their Division I peers.

None of those programs is in danger of sanctions because of its APR scores.

The Academic Progress Rate measures the eligibility, retention and graduation of student-athletes competing on every Division I sports team. It also serves as a predictor of graduation success. The NCAA’s Division I Board of Directors set a score of 930 (out of 1,000) as a threshold for teams to meet or face possible immediate and historical sanctions.

An APR of 930 translates to approximately a 50 percent Graduation Success Rate (GSR).

Reach Ben Jones at ben@tidesports.com or 205-722-0196.
Video touts UA's successes in 2017-18

School president points to record enrollment, athletic achievements

By Ken Roberts
City Editor

The University of Alabama has posted an online video retrospective of highlights from the 2017-18 year.

In an email sent May 16 to alumni and friends, UA President Stuart Bell touted record-breaking enrollment and the awarding of more than 5,000 degrees at spring commencement as "tremendous accomplishments" to what he called "the University of Alabama's academic year."

Once again, our students, faculty and staff have distinguished themselves, and our athletic teams continue to excel at the highest level as we won national championships in football, as well as men's wheelchair basketball and wheelchair tennis," Bell said in the email. "It is an honor for me to lead this great university ...

Here's a summary of events and accomplishments cited in the video:

- Fall 2017 enrollment was 38,563, the largest number of students in UA history.
- Students, faculty and staff gathered on the Quad on Aug. 21, 2017, to witness the first total solar eclipse since 1979.
- In 2017, UA launched a $15 million campaign for performing arts center on the north side of the historic Bryce Hospital building.
- In April, the Black Student Union marked 50 years on campus.
- The Marillyn Hewson Data Analytics Lab opened in Bidgood Hall in September. The lab, named for UA graduate Hewson, the chairwoman, president, and CEO of Lockheed Martin, supports education and research in business-data intelligence and cybersecurity.
- UA graduate student Joshua Williams, a Tuscaloosa native, in September was named world's best French horn player during an international competition held in Colorado.
- In September, a historic marker at Graves Hall was dedicated to honor Atherine Lucy Foster, the first black student to attend UA.
- UA welcomed two high-level administrators: Christine Taylor who was named vice president for diversity, equity and inclusion, and Matt Fajack

See VIDEO, B6
who was named vice president of financial affairs.  
- On Dec. 8, snow fell on last day of fall semester, leading to a big snowball fight on the Quad.

- At winter commencement, 2,077 students received degrees.
- On Jan. 8, UA earned its 17th national championship in football by defeating the Georgia Bulldogs, 26-23, in overtime in the final game of the College Football Playoff at Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta.
- On Jan. 10, UA celebrated the completion of Stran-Hardin Arena, a $10 million multi-purpose facility for the adapted athletics program.
- In February, the UA Dance Marathon raised $341,000 for Children’s of Alabama hospital in Birmingham.
- In March, the UA men’s basketball team returned to the NCAA Tournament for the first times since 2012, losing to eventual champion Villanova.
- The inaugural Bama Blitz, an online fundraising effort, generated $1.8 million. The Bama Blitz lasted one day, eight hours and 31 minutes in honor of UA’s founding year.
- UA marked 125 years of women at the Capstone: In 1893, Anna Adams and Bessie Parker became the first women to enroll at UA.
- In the spring, UA’s adapted athletics teams earned titles in wheelchair tennis and men’s basketball.
- In September, renovations to Little Hall, built in 1915 were completed. The building began as UA’s first standalone gymnasium but now serves as home to the School of Social Work.
- About 5,700 students received degrees at spring commencement.
Grave relocations are required for road project

Work will optimize traffic on McFarland Boulevard corridor

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

Before the Alabama Department of Transportation can proceed with a project to add lanes, eliminate median crossovers and optimize traffic flow along the McFarland Boulevard corridor, it must first deal with the relocation of some unmarked graves.

David Kemp, preconstruction engineer for ALDOT’s West Central region, told the Tuscaloosa County Road Improvement Commission on Monday that officials now were working to relocate the graves next to the former Bryce Hospital.

“We will do that as part of the process, but it doesn’t stop us from proceeding with our design,” Kemp said.

Last year, ALDOT contracted with the University of Alabama’s Office of Archeological Research to survey the property along the McFarland Boulevard corridor and identify any potential locations of gravesites.

Using ground-penetrating radar, the UA crew located several graves in the old Bryce Hospital cemetery north of Jack Warner Parkway.

It wasn’t clear Monday where the relocated graves would go, as the ALDOT officials in Montgomery who had those answers were not available, said ALDOT West Central Region spokesman John D. McWilliams.

But some graves from this cemetery, the oldest of the four on the mental health department property with graves dating to the 1860s, were moved to other cemeteries on grounds owned by the Alabama Department of Mental Health when it was disturbed in the 1960s by the construction of Jack Warner Parkway, known then as River Road.

And on the southern side of Jack Warner Parkway is another cemetery with more than 2,000 graves.

The overall McFarland
See PROJECT, A5

Grave relocations needed

Alabama Department of Transportation officials said Monday that graves found within the old Bryce Hospital cemetery must be relocated before a project to widen the Woolsey Finnell Bridge can proceed.
PROJECT

From Page A1

Boulevard Corridor project will upgrade the roadway between Rose Boulevard in Northport and Jug Factory Road in Tuscaloosa.

Kemp said these upgrades are meant to build on the traffic-streamlining project that began last year to upgrade intersections and traffic signals, close certain median cut-throughs and extend turn lanes to add capacity.

This latest project is part of a statewide effort to eliminate unnecessary median cut-throughs, Kemp said. The McFarland Boulevard corridor alone has 75 median crossovers within an 11-mile span.

“That is a lot,” Kemp said, noting these crossovers are considered “conflict points” by transportation engineers.

“When you can eliminate conflict points, you can reduce the possibility of accidents,” Kemp said.

The project also will add lanes and a bike and pedestrian pathway to the Woolsey Finnell Bridge. This work will add one traffic lane in each direction by building two new spans on either side of the existing bridge that was named for Woolsey Finnell, a World War I veteran who served as Tuscaloosa County’s probate judge, the city of Tuscaloosa’s engineer and the state director of highways.

Finnell died in 1955, and the bridge was named in his honor when it opened in 1961.

Reach Jason Morton at jason.morton@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0200.
Alabama basketball standout George Linn dies at 84

By Tommy Deas
Executive Sports Editor

University of Alabama basketball standout George Linn passed away Monday at age 84 at his home in Dothan.

Linn, born in Columbus, Ohio, was a captain of the celebrated Rocket 8 team that won the Southeastern Conference championship by going undefeated in league play in the 1955-56 season. He averaged 22.2 points on a squad that finished 21-3 with a No. 5 national ranking.

"On that team he was one of the leaders," said Jack Kubiszyn, who was a sophomore on the championship team. "George was a good guy. I learned a lot just by watching him.

"When we beat Kentucky, he's the one who stole the ball with probably 20 seconds to go in the game and got a layup for the 101st point. He was a terrific player, one of the best in the league."

Linn also had the distinction of making what was, at the time, the longest shot in college basketball history. He heaved an 84-foot, 11-inch shot at Foster Auditorium, where the spot on the floor was marked with an X embedded into the north end of the court.

"Threw that thing against North Carolina," Kubiszyn

See LINN, B4

Former Alabama standout George Linn was a starter on the famed 1956 "Rocket 8" team. Linn, a first team All-American in 1956, averaged 22.2 points per game during his All-America season, the fifth-highest scoring average in program history.

[UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA]
LINN

From Page B1

said.

Linn earned first-team All-America honors and was tapped last year as an SEC Basketball Legend. He was an alternate on the U.S. Olympic team that won the gold medal in 1956 in Melbourne, Australia.

Linn served as vice president of legislative affairs at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in Washington, D.C., until his retirement and worked many years as an alcohol and drug counselor for the city of Columbus, Ohio.

He is survived by two children, Elizabeth Holimon Planz of Dothan and George Drury Flowers of Huntsville, as well as a grandson and sister.
Alabama Boys State begins Sunday on UA campus

Program includes mock government, community service projects

Staff report

The 2018 session of Alabama Boys State on the University of Alabama campus will be from Sunday through June 4.

The annual weeklong program for rising senior high school boys from across the state offers hands-on learning that emphasizes leadership, citizenship and service. The students participate in mock government and elections, community service projects and get the opportunity to explore different areas of interest.

The boys who participate are chosen based on their leadership, hard work, strong morals and motivation in school and community activities.

Speakers during the week include Attorney George W. Andrews III, Birmingham Mayor Randall Woodfin, UA President Stuart Bell, state Rep. Bill Poole, Col. David J. Mollahan, Lt. Gen. Ed Daly and former congressman and UA System Vice Chancellor for Economic Development of Jo Bonner, according to the schedule.

Debates for the Republican and Democratic gubernatorial candidates are also scheduled. The Republican debate is scheduled for 7:15 p.m. May 29, and the Democratic debate is scheduled for 7 p.m. May 30.

Alabama Boys State is a program of the American Legion.

The 2018 session of the American Legion Auxiliary Alabama Girls State will be on the UA campus from June 10-15.
Blue Cross, UAB launch plan to tackle primary care shortage

Two of the heaviest hitters in Birmingham's health care scene have launched a new initiative to boost access to primary care physicians.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama plans to make available $3.6 million in scholarships to train 60 primary care physicians over a five-year period at the UAB School of Medicine.

The scholarship is for medical students agreeing to practice as primary care or behavioral health physicians in underserved areas of Alabama. The scholarship recipients will be selected this summer.

Alabama, like many other states, is facing shortage of primary care physicians - particularly in rural areas - as many doctors choose a specialty for a career path.

But at the same time, many experts believe access to primary care physicians represents a key factor in lowering health care costs and improving the overall health of the state.

"It is very important for us to invest in primary care because our members need access to primary care," said Tim Vines, president and CEO, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama. "We recognize when our members have access to primary care. The long-term health benefits and long-term outcomes are much better when they have access to primary care, so it is important for us to collaborate with UAB."

Scholarship recipients will be required to practice in the counties where they are placed for three years after their residencies, in hopes they will remain in the counties at the end of their commitment.

Blue Cross said it chose to partner with UAB, which is the state's largest employer, due to its training programs and size.

"They are one of the big medical centers, obviously in the state. They run one of the biggest training programs in the state and always have, so we wanted to make sure that they were going to be a part of our long-term scholarship, primarily because of the resources they have, the training capabilities they have and, frankly, the large volume of students they have, because you need kind of a large pool willing to take a scholarship opportunity," said Dow Briggs, chief business officer at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama.

Briggs also said Blue Cross has partnered with the Alabama College of Osteopathic Medicine in Dothan.

According to the Alabama Rural Health Association, 54 of Alabama's 56 rural counties are either entirely or partially classified as primary care shortage areas.

There are 4.1 primary care physicians per 10,000 residents in Alabama's rural counties compared to 7.9 for more urban residents. Thousands of Alabamians lack access to primary care doctors, and all of the rural counties are classified as mental health care shortage areas.

Will Fernany, CEO of UAB Health System, said the deal is a step in the right direction to alleviating rural health issues, but that it is a small step.

"So much more is needed," Fernany said. "I believe that we need to do (a) different way to pay hospitals for rural care. I believe we need different licensure categories for rural hospitals. I believe we need to have our rural hospitals work and cluster together, and I think overall we need to recognize that rural medicine is really important and a responsibility to all of us to make sure that it's there."

The deal is also indicative of UAB taking an even more active role in the state's rural health care scene, where multiple hospitals have faced closure in recent years due to thin margins, funding challenges and other factors.

UAB has aligned with a number of rural hospitals and health care providers to improve medical access.
Property sold ahead of apartment project near UAB

A site near the campus of the University of Alabama at Birmingham has sold to an Illinois-based developer.

Public records show an entity called BHM 5th Ave. S. Holdings LLC purchased 1300 Fifth Ave. S., Lots 11-17 Block 155. The purchase price was $1.95 million. Lon Shannon of Shannon Waltchack represented the seller in the deal.

BHM 5th Ave. S. Holdings LLC is registered to the same address as developer Next Chapter Properties. The company specializes in on-campus and off-campus housing.

A proposal to build a new apartment building geared toward student housing on the site has already gained preliminary approval from the Design Review Committee. The early proposal included one-, two-, three-, and four-bedroom layouts, with two levels of parking below the five levels of living space.

Next Chapter Properties has not yet responded to requests for comment from the BBJ.

Another Illinois-based firm, Mode 3 Architecture, designed the project proposal.

Several real estate experts have said UAB's growing student body is creating numerous student housing opportunities for developers. The university recently moved ahead with a plan for a new $60 million on-campus dorm that would house an additional 720 undergraduate students.

UAB has said it expects to have 24,000 students by the year 2021.

The new building is another sign that UAB's days as a commuter campus are long in the past. Together, with a large-scale master plan that addresses everything from facilities to parking to streetscape design, real estate brokers say they wouldn't be surprised to see more properties on the periphery of campus become the newest off-campus student housing buildings.

A 17-story apartment tower also geared toward students was proposed for 20th Street in Five Points South last year, but that project appears to have stalled.

The project at 1300 Fifth Ave. S. would also add another component that helps connect the UAB campus with the Parkside District, something many in Birmingham's commercial real estate community have been working toward for a few years.

The new apartment development could also represent a shift in the multifamily market in the city center of Birmingham.

Beginning after the economic downturn, developers pumped millions into building high-end apartment communities targeted at a growing demand for urban living. Projects like LIV Parkside, Venue at the Ballpark, 20 Midtown, Flats on 4th, Iron City Lofts and several that brought luxury apartment units to redeveloped buildings like the Pizzitlo and Thomas Jefferson Tower are examples of this trend and attracted residents of all ages from young professionals to retirees.

But with many of those developments leasing up and in-town apartment development slowing nationwide, many experts have said student housing-oriented development may see lots of growth in coming years. In addition to UAB, developers have also announced significant projects near Auburn University and other schools in the state.
ON THE MOVE

NEW DEAN NAMED FOR UAB SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

UAB has named the next dean of the UAB School of Public Health, Paul Campbell Erwin. Erwin currently is the professor and head of the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, Department of Public Health, College of Education Health and Human Sciences. He will begin the role Aug. 1 and succeeds Peter Ginter, who held the interim dean role.

"I can give many reasons for my interest in the UAB School of Public Health," Erwin said. "Chief among those reasons are UAB's reach — from bench science to communities across the state, the South and the world; its reputation — because of the accomplishments of stellar faculty, staff and students; and its familiarity — a place known and comfortable to me."

Erwin earned his bachelor's degree from the University of the South, his medical degree from the UAB School of Medicine, a master's in public health from Johns Hopkins University and a doctorate in public health from the University of North Carolina.

Erwin's research interests include evidence-based public health and health disparities, particularly in rural areas. Prior to joining the University of Tennessee, he was director of the East Tennessee Regional Health Office for the Department of Public Health, overseeing 15 county health departments, mostly in the rural Appalachia region.
UAB asks for 20 papers by former professor be retracted from medical journals

By: Erin Edgemon

The University of Alabama at Birmingham has requested 20 papers authored by former associate professor Santosh Katiyar be retracted from medical journals.

"Certain published images within those papers were not substantiated by available data, or the scientific conclusions of the publication were not supported," UAB Assistant Vice President for Research, Research Integrity Officer Pam Bounelis said in a statement.

Katiyar's employment at UAB was ended on May 1, 2017, she said.

Katiyar is the UAB professor who made headlines for publishing studies linking green tea to preventing breast and skin cancer.

In an emailed statement Bounelis said: "UAB and Birmingham VA Medical Center worked jointly on the review of research papers authored by Santosh Katiyar.

A journal notified UAB of concerns about Katiyar's work in October 2012. The university began analyzing the work in accordance with its scientific misconduct policy that same month, according to UAB.

Efforts by AL.com to reach Katiyar were unsuccessful prior to publication of this story.

The Scientist magazine reported Katiyar had received $5 million in grants from the National Institutes of Health during his career. Five of his articles, which were on alternative methods to treating skin cancer in animal models, have been retracted since March 30, 2018, the magazine reported.

Four of those recently retracted articles were published in the journal Carcinogenesis. Another of Katiyar's articles was retracted from the same journal in 2012 for "an error in presentation of data," The Scientist reported.

Retraction Watch reported that Katiyar's paper claiming a "grape seed compound might have anti-prostate cancer effects" was retracted in 2012 after the Carcinogenesis's editor-in-chief Curtis Harris was notified by a reader about potential issues with an image in the paper. Harris and two other scientists suspected image manipulation and contacted Katiyar. Katiyar responded that there was "an error in presentation of data" and requested that the paper be retracted. Carcinogenesis didn't contact UAB, according to the Retraction Watch report.

Katiyar's study that suggested green tea could prevent UV radiation-induced skin cancer made Birmingham area news in 2005. Katiyar claimed the anti-inflammatory and antioxidant qualities in green tea helped prevent the creation of skin cancer cells. His findings were published by the Amer

See next page
According to the Journal of Clinical & Experimental Dermatology Research, Katiyar was a professor of dermatology and environmental health sciences, senior scientist at the Comprehensive Cancer Center and Nutrition Obesity Research Center at UAB.

Katiyar's Facebook page states he previously worked at Case Western Reserve University.

UAB couldn't immediately confirm Katiyar's work history.

According to Ommega Online Publishers, open access publishing group of peer reviewed journals, Katiyar has published about 200 original articles in highly peer-reviewed journals.

Katiyar completed his post-doctoral fellowship in the biochemistry department at Allahabad University, Allahabad, India in 1979-1982, according to one journal. He earned his doctorate in chemistry at Bundelkhand University, Jhansi, India in 1979. He earned his master's degree in chemistry at Kanpur University in Kanpur, India in 1975.
From fish to pharmaceuticals, UAH biology major reaps rewards after pursuing research opportunities

By: Diana LaChance and Matthew Byrne

Zeina Sleiman couldn’t have predicted she’d end up waist-deep in the icy waters of Estill Fork when she took a job in the chemistry stockroom at the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH) as a freshman. But that’s exactly where the junior biology major found herself last spring, collecting fish specimens from Jackson County’s Flint Rock river system as part of her research on the reproductive biology of the striped darter in response to gill parasite infections. "The field collections were so fun," she says. "We would all meet up and take a two-hour drive into the country with no cell signal." After that, the students would don high, waterproof boots and wade out into the swift-moving water. "Two would hold a big net, while others would kick and dislodge rocks to agitate the fish and get them into the net," says Sleiman. "We would identify the ones we wanted to keep and collect them in a bucket."

Sleiman initially sought out hands-on research opportunities after her mentor, UAH alumnus Thomas Reyes, encouraged her to do so. "I had wanted to go into medicine, but it just hit me that I didn’t want to go to medical school," she says. "I could go to graduate school and do research!" Despite having no previous experience, Dr. Bruce Stallsmith welcomed her to his lab, which focuses on aquatic ecology research. "I started volunteering with him about a year ago, and then I was in his RCEU program," says Sleiman, referring to UAH’s Research or Creative Experience for Undergraduates (RCEU) program. By the end of the summer, however, she was hooked, so Dr. Stallsmith tasked her with researching the Etheostoma kemnicotti, a poorly studied species of fish found in streams in Tennessee, Ohio, Kentucky, Illinois, Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi, and characterized by a black bands, or stripes, on its fins.

"The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not parasitic infection would result in fecundity compensation within the species," says Sleiman, who was paired with fellow UAH undergraduate Corinne Peacher. Triggered in response to parasitic activity, fecundity compensation is a nonimmunological defense mechanism results in smaller, but more numerous eggs – a process considered to be less work for the body than mounting an immune response. "There has not been any extensive research done on this particular species," says Sleiman. "So first we had to calculate their gonadosomatic index by extracting their gonads, weighing them, and then dividing that weight by their body weight. That’s how we learned that their peak reproduction period is from March through May."

The next step was to determine the percentage of infection during this time period. "We extracted the gills, and then we extracted the parasites using needles to count them," she says. "We found that the males had a larger amount of parasites, but that the females were more likely to be infected." They also discovered that parasitic load appeared to have the same reproductive period as the darters, with the highest percentage occurring in March and decreasing into May. "This can be explained by the combined variables of optimal water temperature and host reproductive conditions, enabling the infection to peak and then slowly decrease as water temperatures increase," she says. And while she adds that further research is needed, such a close

See next page
association between reproductive timing suggests there is a correlation. "It can be concluded that the parasites have matched their reproductive patterns to their host to enhance higher success in parasitic infection due to the energy costs of reproduction within the host."

With encouragement from Dr. Stallsmith, Sleiman and Peacher wrote up the results from the study last fall and headed up to the Southeastern Fishes Council Annual Meeting in Chattanooga to present them. "Writing for research is completely different from English or high school writing," she says. "We pulled multiple all-nighters working on the paper and the poster!" The effort was more than worth it, though, when their paper was published in the spring 2018 issue of "Perpetua: The UAH Journal of Undergraduate Research," and their poster took third place in the undergraduate science category at the 2018 Research Horizons Day. And it's even more impressive when you consider that Sleiman was doing all of this work on a volunteer basis; a few months previous, she'd signed on to help Dr. Joseph Ng with his research into the molecular mechanism and action of specific hyperthermophilic proteins. "It was pretty much my child at the time, so I wanted to see the conclusion," she says of the darter project.

Not surprisingly given her love of research, this summer looks to be just as busy for Sleiman. Along with fellow UAH students Brianna Graham, Katelyn Miller, and Alexander Moss, she was selected for HudsonAlpha's prestigious Biotrain internship program. Hosted by the HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology, the nine-week program offers students the opportunity to connect coursework with real-world job experience and gain skills and knowledge that will prepare them for careers in biotechnology and related fields. "I'll be a chemistry intern with Serina Therapeutics, which does drug discovery," says Sleiman, referring to one of the for-profit companies located on HudsonAlpha's campus. As part of her job, she will learn about not only simple polymer chemistry properties in relation to synthesis, conjugation, and performance, but also the analytical methods and tools necessary to characterize these compounds. "I want to work industry, so working in a biotechnology company is exactly what I need for the summer," she says.

Despite her accomplishments, however, Sleiman is quick to credit others with helping her get to where she is, whether its her mentor Reyes, who originally encouraged her to pursue research; Dr. Stallsmith, who gave an inexperienced freshman the chance to do so; or David Cook, UAH's student research coordinator and the founder and organizer of Research Horizons Day. "You should be doing well in your classes, but you learn critical thinking and problem-solving skills through research," she says. "And the opportunities for students at UAH are always expanding, so there's no excuse not to seek them out." Even, she adds, if that means fording fast-flowing waterways in the middle of winter.
Earth system science major finds flood of undergraduate research opportunities at UAH

By: Diana LaChance

It wasn’t hard for Angela Burke to narrow down her choices when she set out to earn her bachelor’s degree in a science, technology, engineering, or math (STEM) field. "Nothing in STEM held my interest except meteorology!" she says with a laugh. "I thought it was the coolest sounding option." Now, the Earth system science major is in her third year at The University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH) and rapidly making a name for herself in her chosen discipline. "I didn’t know much about it when I started, but I’ve been doing research in the field for three years now," she says. "That’s not what I was expecting, but Ryan Wade, my advisor, told me from the beginning that there are a lot more opportunities than students!"

Her freshman year, Burke was selected to work on the Sally Ride EarthKAM project, a NASA program that uses a camera attached to the International Space Station to take high-resolution photographs of the Earth. "Rob was a guest lecturer in one of my classes, and I liked his presentation," she says, referring to assistant professor of atmospheric science Dr. Robert Griffin, who manages the science and operations portion of the EarthKAM mission. "I asked him afterward if he had any openings, and he suggested that I come in and interview for EarthKAM the following week." That stint lasted through the fall and spring, after which she applied and was accepted to UAH’s Research or Creative Experience for Undergraduates (RCEU) summer program.

"For the RCEU, I worked with Rob to create a set of Earth Science lesson plans to use with EarthKAM images, and since I was already at working at UAH over the summer, Ryan offered to let me start working on a research project for him as well," says Burke. "He had a backlog of high-resolution aerial imagery of the Hackleburg-Tanner tornado of April 27, 2011, and needed an undergraduate to start going through it." That effort ultimately yielded a research poster entitled "Detailed Tornado Damage Assessment using Integrated Aerial and Radar Observations: April 27, 2011 Case Study," which she presented at the 2016 Wernher Von Braun Memorial Symposium and at Alabama’s 2017 Higher Education Day in Montgomery, and another entitled "Analyzing Tornado Debris Signature and Damage Path Characteristics by Integrating Aerial Imagery and Polarimetric Radar Data in GIS," which she presented at the American Meteorological Society’s annual meeting in Seattle and its Conference on Radar Meteorology in Chicago.

By her sophomore year, Burke had landed an enviable spot with NASA’s Short-term Prediction Research and Transition (SPoRT) Center, which shares observations and research capabilities with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the National Weather Service. "With SPoRT I went to the American Geophysical Union’s fall meeting in New Orleans and presented my research on using satellite data to observe nighttime lights and to track power outages after a disaster event," she says. The following spring, she was awarded a NOAA Ernest F. Hollings Undergraduate Scholarship, which provides up to $9,500 a year in academic assistance for two years of full-time study as well as a 10-week, full-time paid internship at a NOAA facility. "Rob and Ryan encouraged me to apply, and I found out in May that I got it," says Burke, who is only the second student and first female from UAH to receive one. She’ll
complete her internship this summer, conducting satellite remote sensing under the mentorship of research scientist Dr. Dan Lindsey at NOAA’s Cooperative Institute for Research in the Atmosphere in Fort Collins, Colo.

Burke’s junior year, meanwhile, has been spent both working as an undergraduate research assistant with SPoRT and continuing her severe weather research with Wade. Building on their previous research into the Hackleburg-Tanner tornado, the pair first assessed the aerial imagery gathered during the tornado to outline a damage path. They then merged the outline with gridded polarimetric radar scans and land cover classifications to analyze the characteristics of the tornado debris signature associated with the tornado. "Traditional non-polarimetric radar can only show us areas of rotation and high reflectivity, which can be associated with both a tornado on the ground doing damage and a rotating column of air that hasn’t touched down yet," she says. "By contrast, this signature is used to confirm that a tornado is on the ground and lofting debris. It’s called remote tornado detection, and its primary purpose is to improve tornado forecasting techniques in operational settings."

As she had the past two years, Burke submitted her poster on this research to the Council on Undergraduate Research’s Posters on the Hill, a competitive event wherein only 60 students from across the nation are selected to present their research to members of Congress. Only unlike the past two years, however, this time she was chosen. "I was the only student from Alabama," she says. "I think it was being a Hollings Scholar that put me over the edge this year." Upon being notified, she immediately reached out to Dr. Griffin. "I left my math class to go call him, because he’d encouraged me to apply every year," she laughs. "He was very happy for me, and I was very excited!" Her presentation took place on April 18 in Washington, D.C., where she met with representatives from both Senator Richard Shelby’s office and Representative Mo Brooks' office. "I talked to them about newer radar technologies that we’re studying," she says. "They were excited to hear about all of the good work we were doing, and I was incredibly honored to represent UAH."

Now Burke is planning to turn that research into her senior capstone project. "We don’t have to do one, but because I want to get this published, doing the capstone would be a good way to set aside enough time," she says. She’s also applied to UAH’s Joint Undergraduate Master’s Program, which allows undergraduate students to take graduate-level courses that count toward both degrees, with an eye toward either pursuing her Ph.D. or a professional career in the field. Either way, she’s confident she’s made the right choice in pursuing meteorology – and in coming to UAH to earn her degree. "I learned a lot of new stuff I wouldn’t have otherwise, and it’s good for my resume, having done this much research already," she says. "The undergraduate research community at UAH is very unique in that way. I wouldn’t be where I am without Rob helping me get started in EarthKAM and Ryan helping me get started in research."
UA football opens 2020 season with Southern Cal

By Ben Jones
Sports Writer

Alabama will open its 2020 season against Southern California in the Advocare Classic at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas, it was announced Wednesday.

“This is another fantastic season-opening matchup that will give our team and our fans a bowl-like experience coming out of the gates,” said Alabama Director of Athletics Greg Byrne in a news release. “We’ve played in some incredible games at AT&T Stadium over the last few years, and we look forward to what will surely be another one in the 2020 Advocare Classic.”

The Crimson Tide will face the Trojans in a rematch of the 2016 season opener. It’s the fourth time Alabama has played in the Advocare Classic since it began in 2009. Alabama is 3-0 in those games, beating Michigan in 2012, Wisconsin in 2015 and Southern Cal in 2016.

“We are thrilled to have the opportunity to open another season at the Advocare Classic in 2020,” Alabama head coach Nick Saban said. “Our team and our fans have always enjoyed playing in North Texas and AT&T Stadium is a fantastic competitive environment. This event has always been a first class with the intensity of a bowl game. We are also pleased to have the chance to once again face USC, and we look forward to a great game.”

Alabama won the 2016 meeting 52-6 and is 6-2 overall against Southern Cal. The Trojans haven’t beaten Alabama since a 24-14 win in Birmingham in 1978.

Alabama will play in neutral site openers against nonconference opponents through the 2021 season before playing a home-and-home series with Texas in 2022 and 2023.

That will end a decade of Alabama playing nonconference openers at neutral sites from 2012-21. Alabama is undefeated in those games.

Alabama’s season openers at neutral sites

2012 – Michigan (Arlington)
2013 – Virginia Tech (Atlanta)  
2014 – West Virginia (Atlanta)
2015 – Wisconsin (Arlington)
2016 – Southern Cal (Arlington)
2017 – Florida State (Atlanta)
2018 – Louisville (Orlando)
2019 – Duke (Atlanta)
2020 – Southern Cal (Arlington)
2021 – Miami (Atlanta)
No more neutral-site games for UA? Not really

With Wednesday’s announcement that Alabama would open its 2020 football season against Southern Cal in Dallas, a sequel to the 2016 game that the Trojans hope won’t turn into “Titanic 2: Return of the Iceberg,” a flurry of UA scheduling announcements is probably going to slow down for a while.

This matchup wasn’t a big surprise to anyone — it has been talked about in Tuscaloosa for a few months now, even as the i’s were being dotted and the t’s being crossed on the contract.

The official announcement now has Alabama set for nonconference games until 2024. There is a four-game run of neutral-site games (Louisville in Orlando, Duke in Atlanta, USC in Dallas and, in 2021, Miami in Atlanta) and then the just-announced home-and-home series with Texas begins.

So does that mean the end of an era? Will the neutral-site games, an important thread in the Nick Saban Era beginning with the 2008 win against Clemson that announced “Alabama Is Back” as clearly as a blast from the Angel Gabriel’s horn, disappear? (For the record, yes, there was the double-vacated Alabama-Florida State game in Jacksonville in 2007, although I think both sides have signed a non-disclosure agreement and will never discuss that day in public ever again.)

After that Clemson game, the nonconference games became a fixture for Alabama. There would be a win, followed by a solid ranking in the polls and a nice paycheck, all in one tidy package. Those are good things.

There are some staunch advocates of home-and-home series, including myself, but that doesn’t mean you can’t recognize the value of those neutral-site games. Plus, they may not be gone entirely. The time was right for bringing big games to Bryant-Denny Stadium, both economically (especially for those loyal season-ticket holders) and competitively. But if the big
cities with big stadiums are still writing the big checks in the middle of the decade, the Crimson Tide will be back to cash them. Whether the change will be met with a new way of viewing strength of schedule remains to be seen. The College Football Playoff selectors certainly didn't reward Ohio State for playing (and losing at home to) Oklahoma in 2017, but there were four factors in play. First, they most certainly did reward Oklahoma for going on the road and getting that win. Second, the loss to the Sooners in Columbus, could also have happened in a neutral site, presumably. Third, the general consensus is it wasn't the Oklahoma loss but the blowout loss to Iowa that cost the Buckeyes most heavily. Fourth, Ohio State hasn't seen any reason to change its way of scheduling going forward.

My guess, although we are looking so far into the future that I may never know if it is right or wrong, is that Alabama will schedule predominantly on a home-and-home basis from 2022 on, particularly if the Texas series is a success. But I don't think the neutral sites will disappear entirely. Alabama has built strong relationships with both the Peach Bowl and Cotton Bowl organizations and would like to maintain those. No one has a crystal ball that can accurately reveal if Alabama will still be the sport's dynastic juggernaut in a decade, but maybe it won't be quite so hard to find opponents, which has been a bit of an obstacle.

Wednesday's Alabama-USC announcement, expected or not, creates a fascinating matchup. It will be interesting when, or if, the next neutral-site game beyond 2021 will appear on the horizon.

Reach Cecil Hurt at cecil@tidesports.com or 205-722-0225.
Matchups set for SEC/Big 12 Challenge

By Cecil Hurt  
Sports Editor

The University of Alabama men's basketball team will play at Baylor in Waco, Texas, as part of the sixth annual SEC/Big 12 Challenge in January. The challenge features 10 games on Saturday, Jan. 26, 2019, in a matchup of two premier college basketball conferences.

Alabama defeated Oklahoma in a marquee game in last year's Challenge.

All 10 of the Big 12's teams and 10 of the SEC's 14 member institutions will participate in the event. Each of the 10 SEC teams that participated in the 2018 Challenge are a part of the 2019 event.

The SEC is coming off a 6-4 win in the Big 12/SEC Challenge after a 5-5 tie in 2017.

A record eight SEC teams participated in the 2018 NCAA Tournament and excitement for the 2019 season is building.

See MATCHUP, C3

See next page
MATCHUP

From Page C1

with 19 of ESPN.com's Top 100 recruits having signed with SEC schools. In all, the SEC boasts six of ESPN.com's Top 25 incoming recruiting classes.

This will be the fourth year a bye in the league schedule for participating teams was created to accommodate the single-day format. The four SEC teams not participating will play each other in conference games the same day. The first two years of the Challenge were played over several days in November and December but the 2019 event will be consolidated to one single day in January.

Four of the 10 games will be televised on ESPN, four on ESPN2 and two games will air on ESPNU. All 10 games will also be available on the ESPN app. ESPN's College GameDay Covered by State Farm – the Saturday roadshow that discusses the top storylines of the college basketball season – will originate from one of the Challenge games.

"The Big 12/SEC Challenge is a unique opportunity to showcase our basketball programs. Playing the event on a single-date in January puts our programs in the college basketball spotlight," SEC Commissioner Greg Sankey said.
Alabama loses playoff to Arizona in national championship match

By Cameron Jourdan
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

STILLWATER, Okla. – Lakareber Abe’s putt fell below the hole, her teammates behind her gasping and the red-clad fans in the crowd sighing.

Minutes earlier she almost chipped-in from a greenside bunker for an eagle. The ball narrowly skirted past the hole, and after her missed birdie putt, Arizona’s Haley Moore knocked in her 3-foot birdie attempt to clinch the Wildcats’ third women’s golf national title.

Alabama fell 3-2 to Arizona in the championship match of the NCAA Championships on Wednesday at Karsten Creek Golf Club. The top-ranked Crimson Tide struggled against the Wildcats, who became the first No. 8 seed to advance past the quarterfinal round in match play.

Abe sent the day’s final match into a playoff after squaring her match with Moore on No. 18. Abe knocked her second shot on the par-5 hole within 12 feet of the hole and made birdie to force the playoff.

Lauren Stephenson began the day for Alabama, and she garnered a lead after the first hole but struggled when she made the turn.

Stephenson trailed for the first time in match play after a double-bogey on the par-4 No. 4 hole, but quickly made the match all square after her par on No. 7.

The putts stopped falling on No. 10 and Arizona’s Yu-Sang Hou caught fire.

See GOLF, C3
The Tuscaloosa News
Thursday, May 24, 2018

GOLF

From Page C1

winning four straight holes to take control. Every putt went her way, Hou often fist-pumping whenever the ball rattled at the bottom of the cup.

Hou defeated Stevenson 4-and-3, giving Arizona an early 1-0 advantage.

“She was just a little off for some reason,” Alabama coach Mic Potter said of Stevenson. “She wasn’t as precise with her driver, and that’s tough out here.”

The Women’s Golf Coaches Association announced Wednesday before the start of the match that Stephenson won the Golfstat Cup, given to the collegiate player with the lowest stroke average.

Stephenson set a school record with her 69.76 stroke average while tallying two wins and 11 top-10 finishes in her 11 starts.

Stephenson, a member of the U.S. Curtis Cup and Palmer Cup teams, received All-American honors along with junior Cheyenne Knight and sophomore Kristen Gillman. Stephenson recorded 19 rounds in the 60s and 26 rounds of par or better in 33 rounds played this season, both of which lead the team.

Gillman didn’t struggle in her match. A sophomore, she won the lead with a birdie on the first hole and never looked back. She made the turn 3-up and made another birdie at No. 10 to take a four-hole advantage.

Gillman’s won her match on No. 15, as well, defeating Arizona’s Gigi Stoll 4-and-3 to give Alabama its first point.

Shortly after, Cheyenne Knight, who was Alabama’s most consistent player throughout the week, added another point with her 4-and-2 victory against Blanca Pagdanganan. Knight was down 1 when she took the No. 10 tee, but the shots began to fall. She won three consecutive holes to get a 2-up lead heading to No. 13.

Pagdanganan made a 25-foot eagle putt on Arizona’s final hole Monday to put them in a playoff with Baylor for the final match play spot. After defeating the Bears, Arizona knocked off top-seeded UCLA and Stanford to advance to the match play final.

The Wildcats tallied their second point when Sandra Nordaas defeated Crimson Tide freshman Angelica Moresco 1-up. Moresco was down 2 heading to 17, but a birdie on this week’s toughest hole helped give her one last shot, but she was unable to square the match.

“We’ve all gotta realize if you play competitive golf at this level, you’re going to lose sometimes,” Potter said.

“Tiger (Woods) won under 25 percent of the time when he was at his peak, so you just don’t win all the time. (Arizona) got the job done today.”
Bama’s NCAA tournament run ends in Sweet 16

Crimson Tide men’s tennis team loses to Texas A&M

Staff report

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. – The Alabama men’s tennis team’s historical season came to an end in the Sweet 16 of the NCAA Tournament after falling to No. 5 Texas A&M, 4–0, on Friday night at the Wake Forest Indoor Tennis Complex. The Crimson Tide (20–13) finishes the season with the most wins since 2009, and marks only the 10th time in program history the Tide has finished with 20 wins or more.

“It was an exciting run,” head coach George Husack said. “This is our standard now and this is where we want to be. Today we got beat by a better team, but the remaining courts were right there. Overall, I’m really proud of the team and the new standard they’ve set for the program.”

In doubles play, Texas A&M took the first point of the match after Rinderknech/Catanzariti defeated sophomores Thibault Cancel and Alexey Nesterov, while No. 3 Aguilíar/Arconada bested No. 26 sophomore Edson Ortiz and junior Mazen Osmana, 6–3.

In singles competition, the Aggies continued to extend the lead after No. 48 Jordi Arconada pushed past Cancel, 6–3, 6–3. Texas A&M closed out the match with back-to-back wins after No. 12 Arthur Rinderknech moved past freshman Patrick Kaukovalta, 6–4, 6–1, and No. 72 Valentin Vacherot earned a win over Ortiz, 6–4.

See TENNIS, C5

UA advanced to the quarterfinals of the SEC Tournament after defeating No. 25 Kentucky to secure its 18th bid in the NCAA Tournament. Alabama earned a No. 3 seed in the Tallahassee Regional as the second-to-last team to make it into the tournament.

Alabama took advantage of the opportunity in the NCAA Tournament after cruising past No. 23 Tulane, 4–1, and then defeating host No. 11 Florida State, 4–2, to earn its fourth-ever trip to the Sweet 16 and first since 2007. The Round of 16 berth was the first-ever by a No. 12 seed in the SEC Tournament.

The NCAA Singles and Doubles Tournaments will be played from May 23–28 in Winston-Salem, N.C.

Alabama Results
Singles
1. No. 18 Mazen Osmana vs. No. 5 Patrick Kypson, 3–6, 6–3, unf.
2. No. 12 Arthur Rinderknech def. Patrick Kaukovalta, 6–4, 6–1
3. No. 48 Jordi Arconada def. Thibault Cancel, 6–3, 6–3
4. No. 72 Valentin Vacherot def. Edson Ortiz, 6–4, 6–4
5. Juan Carlos Aguilíar vs. Alexey Nesterov, 7–5, 3–6, unf.
Doubles
1. No. 3 Aguilíar/Arconada def. No. 26 Osmana/Ortiz, 6–1
2. Catanzariti/Rinderknech def. Cancel/Nesterov, 6–3
COMMENTARY

UA baseball headed in the right direction

Cecil Hurt

The season ended as it did last year, if one didn't look deeply. The Alabama baseball team wrapped up another year with a loss in its final regular-season game. For most teams in the Southeastern Conference, postseason play - a trip to Hoover, probably an NCAA berth as well - lies ahead, so the last game on the schedule isn't an ending at all, just a transition into another phase of the season.

For the Crimson Tide, after a 10-8 loss to a strong Ole Miss team meant handshakes and hugs for teammates, some of whom have put on an Alabama uniform for the last time.

There was a different air after the final game of 2018, though. There was still disappointment, certainly. Alabama is a proud program and while a 9-21 record reflected some improvement, it is by

See HURT, C3
no means acceptable to the players or coaches, any more than it is palatable to the fans.

But the 2017 season ended in doubt and confusion. Although no one knew it at the time the final out was recorded, a coaching change was imminent, the final straw in a season that wore on the players and seemed to have sapped their fighting will at the end.

This year, while there was no sense that the program was near its destination, there did seem to be confidence that the journey is headed down the right road under new coach Brad Bohannon.

"From Day 1, it was organic," said Alabama junior infielder Coby Vance. "It's tough to say that when the wins and losses don't show it but we never gave up. "Last year, we would get down and then we would hit the panic button. This year, we had a lull at mid-season but we kept on competing and we were playing cleaner baseball down the stretch. With what is coming back and what is coming in, I think it's something people can look forward to."

Bohannon, for his part, wasn't ready to break down the 2018 season piece by piece, not after an emotional loss that saw Alabama rally on four different occasions — and bring the potential winning run to the plate in the bottom of the ninth — before finally falling 10-8 to the Rebels, a likely NCAA Regional host.

How emotional was it?

"I told the team that I hope I'm the head coach here (at Alabama) for 25 years, but this will always be my first team," Bohannon said. "I told them I really appreciate their effort. They gave us everything they had."

The rebuilding process won't be instantly finished in 2019, either. Alabama loses some experienced seniors and, as is the nature of the sport, will lose more players in the June draft. Vance, for one, will evaluate his draft status before making a final decision on whether to return. There is young talent on the way but, as Bohannon noted, the SEC experience will be missed.

There is, however, a new atmosphere that will carry over among the players.

"We had our ups and downs," Vance said. "But from Day 1 with the new staff, it felt like family. They made us feel important."

The next step, maybe in one year, maybe in a couple, will be for that feeling to reflect itself in the standings and have everyone else, including its conference opponents, feel like Alabama is important once again.

Reach Cecil Hurt at cecil@tidesports.com or 205-722-0225
Larry Davis announced retirement as coach

Larry Davis announced retirement as coach
Bob Welton joins Tide staff

Former Tennessee director of player personnel takes same position at Alabama

By: Ben Jones

Alabama has hired former Tennessee director of player personnel Bob Welton to the same position, the school announced in a news release on Tuesday. Welton served in that position for the Volunteers from 2013-17 before briefly going to Nebraska earlier this spring.

“We are excited to add Bob Welton to our staff as the director of player personnel,” coach Nick Saban said in the release. “Bob has a lot of experience in this role and a reputation for being very organized and an excellent talent evaluator. He has worked at all levels of football, serving as an NFL scout, a player personnel director at the college level and a head coach in high school. Bob is a great fit for this role, and we are happy to welcome his wife Laura and their children to the Crimson Tide program.”

Welton will be tasked with organizing Alabama’s recruiting efforts. That includes organizing camps, clinics, on-campus events and helping the compliance department with initial eligibility issues.

He was a college scout for the Cleveland Browns from 2004-13 before going to Tennessee. While in Knoxville, the Volunteers signed top 25 recruiting classes all five years, including a pair of classes in ranked in the top 10 by 247Sports.

“I am very appreciative for the opportunity to work for Coach Saban and the Alabama football program,” Welton said in the release. “Alabama has been the standard for program excellence in college football for a long time. I am excited and humbled to be part of it, and I look forward to doing my part to continue the tradition of success.”

Welton began his career as a high school football coach in Michigan for seven years before joining the Browns. He graduated from Adrian College in Michigan, where he was a quarterback for the Bulldogs.

Welton replaces Jody Wright, who had been director of player personnel at Alabama since 2015. He left earlier in May to be offensive line coach at UAB.
In SEC, flying hot dogs among many perils of playing on the road

Informal poll suggests Bryant-Denny, Death Valley are toughest stadiums in the conference for opposing teams

Michael Casagrande mcasagrande@al.com

Defining the hardest place to play in the SEC is in the eyes and ears of the players is debated, measured and debunked yearly.

So, while doing the media circuit at the NFL combine in March, we set out to pose this question to as many SEC players as we could. It's not exactly an orderly process and it was impossible to hit everyone. In the end, 19 answered.

Of the 28 votes cast by the 19 players, Alabama and LSU tied for the most with seven apiece. Auburn had four and Georgia three.

Scientifically, the poll was imperfect, and there were more participants from West Division schools in Indianapolis that week. That skewed the numbers slightly, but there were some classic stories that came from their answers.

Former Auburn running back Kamryn Pettway had a classic from the 2016 Iron Bowl.

"I had somebody throw a hot dog at me at Alabama," he said with a grin.

Did it connect?

"No, it was close, though," he said, noting the healthy use of mustard. "I looked up in the stands and they shot me the bird."

He laughed it off as a failed attempt "to get my all-white uniform dirty" on a night Alabama won 30-12.

Former LSU quarterback Danny Etling had a unique perspective on it. He listed Alabama, Texas A&M and Auburn among the most difficult places to play in the SEC. Before playing for the Tigers, the Indiana native transferred from Purdue. He explained the differences in atmosphere between the SEC and Big Ten.

SEE STADIUMS, B3

Flying hot dogs aside, opposing teams must deal with the enormous crowds at Bryant-Denny Stadium. More than 100,000 typically show up on gameday. Getty Images file
STADIUMS
FROM B1

"It depends on where you go," Etling said. "In the Big Ten there are some ones that rival it. I got to play at Penn State, and that was a loud stadium. In the SEC, I think there's probably more depth and more passionate (fans) with how loud it will be in the stands but there are definitely a lot of places in the Big Ten that can rival it."

Auburn's Carlton Davis explained his vote for Tiger Stadium at LSU.
"Death Valley, it just has something different," he said. "The fans are ruthless. We always play during the day when it's hot, and it's a hard place to play."

Arkansas quarterback Austin Allen picked Auburn because it "is probably the loudest place I've played in."

TOUGHEST ROAD TRIP IN SEC?
The responses of the 19 players interviewed for this story with their pick and their reasoning:

**Jordan Wilkins, Ole Miss**
**Pick:** Alabama.
**Why:** "The crowd is always rocking. We beat them two times while I was there, so they were ready for revenge."

**John Kelly, Tennessee**
**Pick:** Florida.
"I feel like their stadium keeps a lot of the noise in and it was swampy in there. I know why they call it the Swamp. It was all muggy and whatever, but a lot of those fans, they get to sounding the same. Regardless if you're doing good or good, you're going to hear them."

**Kamryn Pettway, Auburn**
**Picks:** Alabama and LSU.
**Why:** "It's just the crowd. The fans are really into it. I had somebody throw a hot dog at me at Alabama."

**K.J. Malone, LSU**
**Pick:** Mississippi State.
**Why:** "Because they have the cowbells. It gets a little annoying."

**Toby Weathersby, LSU**
**Pick:** Alabama.
**Why:** "That's a stadium, they have great fans there. It's like the Gridiron Game. That's one of the hardest to play in because there's never a second in the stadium where it's a dull moment. The fans are roaring. It's a competition game. I remember a lot of the things that I can't say because it wasn't the nice things when you're getting off the bus. You're pulling in and they're beating on the bus and shaking the bus, so it's a crazy experience."

**Rod Taylor, Ole Miss**
**Pick:** LSU.
**Why:** "The fans and the stadium is so loud. You can barely hear the dude right beside you."

**Martinas Rankin, Mississippi State**
**Picks:** LSU and Georgia
**Why:** "LSU is known for having a great fan base and great pride in their games. Also, Georgia as well. We were playing Georgia in somewhat of a big-time matchup and their fans showed up. Our fans came, too, but Georgia fans were loud."

**Frank Ragnow, Arkansas**
**Picks:** Tennessee, Auburn and Alabama.
**Why:** "What isn't tough? Tennessee, when they returned the opening kickoff one year, that was
pretty loud. Auburn is pretty loud, Alabama is pretty loud. It's hard to choose just one."

**Isaiah Wynn, Georgia**  
**Pick:** Auburn.  
**Why:** "Their fans. They get involved in the game."

**Will Clapp, LSU**  
**Pick:** Alabama.  
**Why:** "It's just a loud stadium. Their fans get pretty hyped. It's hard hearing on the road and definitely communication needs to be stepped up when you play there."

**Austin Allen, Arkansas**  
**Picks:** Alabama, Auburn and LSU.  
"Auburn is probably the loudest place I've played in. LSU fans just say whatever is on their mind when the opposing team walks in."

**Danny Etling, LSU**  
**Picks:** Alabama, Texas A&M and Auburn.  
"Texas A&M is very loud. They do the chants, so it's kind of like in unison. Then Auburn, when you get down in the red zone, they were very loud. At Tennessee, I felt like I got gypped out of the experience because it was a monsoon, and there weren't as many people out."

**Braden Smith, Auburn**  
**Pick:** Mississippi State.  
**Why:** "If Mississippi State's winning the game at Mississippi State it's because of all the cowbells. That would probably be the hardest place in my opinion. Luckily the last time I was there we were up a substantial amount that I didn't hear too much ringing in my ear."

**Robert Foster, Alabama**  
**Pick:** Texas A&M.  
"The atmosphere. They have a good, loud crowd. It was one of my games that I didn't have the best game that I had. It wasn't that it got in my head. I just wasn't mentally prepared for it."

**Da'Ron Payne, Alabama**  
**Pick:** Georgia.  
**Why:** "They had the crowd rocking. That was a tough place."

**Da'Shawn Hand, Alabama**  
**Picks:** LSU or Tennessee.  
**Why:** "Aww, man well from Tennessee when the offense was on third down that third down for what thing they do, oh they get loud every time, throughout the whole game until we're up a couple of touchdowns. But the past couple of times have been a blowout, so yeah."

**Anthony Averett, Alabama**  
**Pick:** LSU  
**Why:** "It was crazy. That was my favorite game. It was a close game — I think we only won 10-0. It was 0-0 the whole game, and Jalen (Hurt) scored and the atmosphere was crazy."

**Carlton Davis, Auburn**  
**Pick:** LSU.  
**Why:** "Death Valley, it just has something different. The fans are ruthless. We always play during the day when it's hot, and it's a hard place to play."

**Jamarcus King, South Carolina**  
**Pick:** Georgia.  
**Why:** "Because the fans were really into it. When we played them, that was really the first week they were the No. 1 team. The fans were there and loud."

*Michael Casagrande is an Alabama beat writer for the Alabama Media Group. Follow him on Twitter @ByCasagrande.*
Florida wins GateHouse Media’s SEC All-Sports Award again

By Pat Dooley
GateHouse Media

Florida didn’t make it a clean sweep again, but the Gator athletic program did keep its streak alive.

For the 12th consecutive academic year, Florida won the SEC All-Sports Award presented by GateHouse Media.

What was a close race turned into a rout when Florida won the SEC in baseball and men’s and women’s track and field on the same weekend. UF finished with a score of .76442 to second-place Georgia’s .68632.

“It’s always a credit to the talented student-athletes and coaches,” said Florida athletic director Scott Stricklin. “Florida is typically really good in the spring sports and this year we were as strong as ever. It’s a recipe that’s worked pretty well for the Gators.”

Georgia kept Florida from sweeping all three awards by taking the women’s title. The Georgia women edged Florida by .0051.

But the UF men easily outdistanced the field, beating second-place Texas A&M .8152 to .6630.

In the overall standings, Texas A&M finished third, Arkansas fourth and South Carolina fifth. Auburn was sixth and Alabama ninth. It wasn’t a good year for the “M’s” in the conference with Mississippi, Mississippi State and Missouri finishing in the last three spots.

Florida won six SEC titles this academic year—baseball, softball, men’s and women’s track and field, men’s swimming and diving and volleyball.

Florida has now won 240 SEC titles in its history (women’s lacrosse, where UF won the Big East title, is not scored because it is not an SEC sport).

The final standings are determined by awarding points based on the number of competing teams in a sport (e.g.—14 teams compete in SEC baseball, giving the winner 14 points, second gets 13, etc. Four teams compete in equestrian, awarding four points to the winner). A program’s points total is divided by the total number of teams competing in the sports the school fields to create a final score.

The sports of cross country, indoor and outdoor track & field are combined. A program’s outdoor track finish makes up half, while the remaining two quarters are based on the cross country and indoor finishes.

This is the fourth year GateHouse Media, which owns The Gainesville Sun as well as dozens of other publications around the country, awards the overall, men’s and women’s SEC All-Sports trophies.

The Halifax Media Group awarded the 2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14 trophies. The New York Times Regional Newspaper Group gave the awards from the 1994-95 through 2010-11 seasons. Prior to that, the league tabulated the SEC All-Sports totals.
Colleges Bend the Rules for More Students, Give Them Extra Help

*With an influx of students classified as disabled, schools move to accommodate their needs*

**By: Douglas Belkin**

As many as one in four students at some elite U.S. colleges are now classified as disabled, largely because of mental-health issues such as depression or anxiety, entitling them to a widening array of special accommodations like longer time to take exams. Under federal law, students can be considered disabled if they have a note from a doctor. That label requires schools to offer accommodations depending on the student’s needs. A blind student, for example, would have access to specialized software or a reader for an exam.

The rise in disability notes for mental-health issues has led to a surge in the number of students who take their exams in low-distraction testing centers, are allowed to get up and walk around during class or bring a comfort animal to school, among other measures. “At Pomona, we have extremely talented bright students with very high expectations who are coming in with a good level of anxiety and are highly stressed,” says Jan Collins-Eaglin, the Claremont, Calif., college’s associate dean of students for personal success and wellness. “Our job here is to help them really thrive.”

At Pomona, 22% of students were considered disabled this year, up from 5% in 2014. Other elite schools have also seen a startling jump in disabilities, according to data from the federal government and from the schools. At Hampshire, Amherst and Smith colleges in Massachusetts and Yeshiva University in New York, one in five students are classified as disabled. At Oberlin College in Ohio, it is one in four. At Marlboro College in Vermont, it is one in three.

Small, private schools have the greatest concentration of students with disabilities. Among the 100 four-year, not-for-profit colleges with the highest percentage of disabled students, 93 are private, according to a WSJ analysis of federal data.

Public schools have also seen a significant uptick in test accommodations. From 2011 to 2016, the number of students with special accommodations increased by an average of 71% among 22 flagship state schools, according to data obtained by The Wall Street Journal.

The most common accommodations come during testing. Students who receive extended time may get twice as long as their classmates to take an exam.

Some professors question how this affects the fairness of exams.

“If you grade on a curve, does it disadvantage the rest of the class?” asks Ari Trachtenberg, a professor of electrical and computer engineering at Boston University who is critical of the rise in accommodations. “There’s no calibration between how much extra time they want me to give and any sense how that would actually affect the exam.”

See next page
Lila Manstein double-majored in chemistry and math at Amherst and will graduate this year with a B+ average.

She was given 50% more time than her classmates on exams because she was diagnosed with reading-comprehension difficulties and Attention Deficit Disorder.

A classmate once told her she would have had a 4.0 GPA if she, too, had extended time. “I told her it wasn’t the sort of thing I would have if I didn’t really need it,” Ms. Manstein says. “That shut her up.”

Psychologists have many theories to explain the rise in mental-health diagnoses among college-age students, from social-media habits to less stigma around mental illness.

At the University of Minnesota, a test center for students entitled to low-distraction environments or extended time on exams administered 9,681 tests last year, nearly double the number in 2013. The growth has forced staff to give up their offices during finals to make room for students. This past year, the school rented out an additional 10,000 square feet of space in a nearby hotel.

At the University of Kentucky, a dozen students at time took finals inside cubicles in a room in the testing facility with carpeted floors and dim lights. Blue painter’s tape covered door latches so they open and close silently. Students being tested on computers each sat in a private room so the click-clack of the keyboards wouldn’t disturb classmates. The facility administered 7,827 tests in 2016-17, up from 853 in 2007-08.

“We’re seeing a lot more requests for private rooms,” said David Beach, director of the school’s disability resource center.

More than a decade ago, the College Board, which administers the SAT and PSAT among other tests, stopped alerting colleges when students received extra time, and the numbers who requested it began to increase. From 2010-11 to last year, the number of accommodations requests jumped 171%, while the number of people taking the exams increased 22%. Last year, 94% of those requests were approved.

The extra time allows students to use various strategies to reduce stress levels so they can overcome their disabilities, administrators say. Without them, many wouldn’t graduate, says Monique Burgdorf, the assistant dean of students and interim director of disability resources at Oberlin.

“If I have anxiety and get panic attacks during exams, extended time will give me a chance to check in with myself and calm myself down,” Ms. Burgdorf says.

Miriam Kurtzig Freedman, an attorney who has represented public schools in special-education and disability law and has written several books about accommodations, said that giving some test takers extended time on the SAT is “like lowering the basket from 10 feet to eight feet; you’re changing the game.”
"The reason we pay all this money for the test is so that we can compare someone from South Dakota to someone from California," she says. "If the test is no longer standardized, then what are we paying for?"

The ACT, which has seen a similar uptick in requests for extra time, said this past week it would limit the additional time students can take on each section. The company said it made the change "to improve fairness for all examinees."

Wealthier students are more likely to receive accommodations than poor students, Ms. Freedman said.

Other expensive liberal arts colleges with high percentages of disabled students include Pitzer in California (18%), Vassar in New York, Reed in Oregon and Mount Holyoke in Massachusetts (all three at 16%) and Haverford in Pennsylvania (15%).

Among the nation’s most elite institutions, those with the highest percentage of disabled students were Stanford (14%), Brown (12%), Yale (11%) and Columbia University (8%).

Public flagships with the highest percentages include the University of Vermont (16%), University of Massachusetts, Amherst (10%) and University of Arkansas (10%).

The rise hasn’t impacted the academic rigor of the school, says Jodi Foley, Amherst director of accessibility services. "The academic profile of Amherst’s student population continues to increase as it continues to diversify."
EDITORIAL

Ruling on sports betting opens a Pandora's box

The Supreme Court ruling allowing New Jersey (and any other state) to legalize sports gambling may make legal sense, but the 6-3 decision opens a Pandora’s box of thorny issues that could undermine the integrity of sports and lead to increased gambling losses and addiction — especially among people who can least afford it.

Of course, the ruling will also increase the over-reliance on gambling revenues by state lawmakers in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and elsewhere who have become addicted to funding budgets by enticing residents to lose money playing casino games.

Lawmakers take an oath to protect citizens, not to enact regressive measures that prey on individuals. Yet, through the rapid expansion of casinos, lotteries — and now sports gambling — states have enacted public policies that systematically strip wealth from people and lead to increased social costs, including bankruptcies, suicides, and divorce.

In a little more than a decade, for example, Pennsylvania’s addiction to gambling has made it second only to Nevada in gaming. Since 2007, casino revenue in the state — that is, the money lost by players to slots machines and table games — is more than $30 billion.

Meanwhile, despite this activity, the state budget has not exactly remained immune to deficits.

Supporters argue that legalized sports betting will remove it from the shadowy underworld and allows for better regulation and oversight. But the legalization of casinos and lotteries has not stopped illegal wagering on numbers and other games of chance. Many may continue to use illegal bookies for sports gambling as well, out of habit, better odds, or easy credit.

See next page
The bigger problem of legalizing sports gambling is that it will open the industry to a bigger, more mainstream audience that will be bombarded by sophisticated marketing schemes designed to attract and keep individuals gambling.

The other problem for gamblers and sports lovers is how legalized betting will impact the integrity of athletics as the flood of money has the potential to influence the outcome of games.

In the NCAA, 26 percent of male student-athletes already bet on sports, according to a 2012 study. The study found one in 20 Division I men’s basketball student-athletes reported having been contacted by gamblers seeking “inside” betting information.

College and professional sports have been littered with betting scandals going back years, including point-shaving incidents at Northwestern, Boston College, Tulane, and other schools. Major League Baseball players from Pete Rose to Denny McLain to “Shoeless Joe” Jackson have also been ensnared in betting scandals.

Supporters argue that legalized sports gambling in Europe has not impacted the games there. But a 2013 European police intelligence investigation found widespread fixing of some 380 soccer matches involving hundreds of players and officials in 15 countries. Meanwhile, a 2016 BBC report found widespread match-fixing in professional tennis over the last decade.

Legalized sports gambling will lead to more financial losses and addiction for individuals, and more pressure on players to fix games. This court ruling is a very bad bet.

A version of this editorial first appeared in The Philadelphia Inquirer (TNS).