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The University of Alabama's Board of Trustees named Dr. Gregory B. Thompson, professor in the department of metallurgical and materials engineering, a University Research Professor earlier this month.

Trustees can appoint the title in recognition of extraordinary, internationally recognized scholarly attainment in an individual field.

Thompson serves as director of UA's Central Analytical Facility and director of the materials science doctoral program. He joined the University as an assistant professor in 2003, received tenure and a promotion to associate professor in 2008 and became a full professor in 2012.

During his time at UA, Thompson gained global recognition as a leader in the study of the mechanisms that underlie structural phase transitions in materials.

On campus, Thompson has been honored with the Hackney Leadership Award by the College of Engineering in 2018 and the UA Blackmon-Moody Outstanding Professor Award in 2014.

He earned his bachelor's degree in physics from Brigham Young University in 1996 and went on to earn both his master's and doctorate in materials science and engineering from Ohio State University in 1998 and 2003, respectively.
Investing in opportunity: Bham’s path to a more inclusive economy

Birmingham’s economy is a Tale of Two Cities. Recently, our city was designated as both a “Smart City” and a “Rise of the Rest City,” and homegrown startup Shipt sold to Target for $550 million. In 2015, Birmingham was named a TechHire city, posting the second-fastest IT job growth in the country as a percentage of its IT workforce. Out of this designation emerged Innovate Birmingham, a workforce training program preparing 925 of our young folks for high-demand, high-wage IT jobs. Our city has among the highest per-capita concentration of health care jobs, and we continue to thrive as a hub for automotive manufacturing.

However, this positive momentum does not tell the full tale of the Birmingham economy.

America’s 182 largest cities were recently ranked according to how easy it was to find a job. Birmingham ranked 178th. Though the unemployment rate is reported around 4 percent statewide, more than 40 percent of adults in Birmingham have left the workforce because they cannot find work. Thirty percent of our citizens live in poverty – 42 percent of families with children. Nearly 60 percent of the city’s households have an income of less than $40,000 per year, which is well below Birmingham’s estimated livable wage of $62,380.

This is the tension where we dwell: On the one hand, we have momentum in the innovation economy with strong capabilities in the automotive sector and emerging promise in the life sciences sector. On the other hand, poverty and unemployment distress many neighborhoods in our community.

In early March, I began my term as the director of the Mayor’s Office of Economic Development, which recently incorporated as the Department of Innovation and Economic Opportunity (IEO). I accepted the call to serve in this position because I know that as a city we can be a model for progress, producing evidence-based solutions to some of the country’s most persistent economic problems.

IEO understands that “putting people first” is much more than Mayor Randall Woodfin’s campaign slogan; it’s a strategy to govern. Our team wakes up every day to work on co-designing an economy with our citizens and our business leaders that allows our residents to create their own economic futures, grow their companies and find their purpose.

Our vision is to make Birmingham a hub for qualified and diverse talent and a premier destination for small businesses, startups and businesses looking to expand – propelling shared prosperity through inclusive growth. In order to execute this vision, we are engineering innovative tools, programs and policies to invest in people through a relentless pursuit of talent development, retention and attraction.

In the constellation of our competition for talent, Birmingham has some unique selling points, particularly for people who want to create, build and innovate. We believe that the city’s next generation of builders and social innovators can find inspiration in a place where children marched for equality in Kelly Ingram Park, where Fred Shuttlesworth fought injustice from the pulpit and where Dr. King outlined a vision of unity from a jail cell.

We have spent the last few months designing a strategic plan that outlines key objectives in our mission to invest in opportunity. This plan has been informed by small business owners, entrepreneurs, citizens, nonprofits, foundations, the corporate community and national best practices from thought leaders such as the Brookings Institute, the Aspen Institute and Bloomberg Philanthropies. Our strategy is anchored in the understanding that a diverse and qualified workforce is the critical engine to power Birmingham’s future economic growth that is more inclusive and sustainable.

Birmingham has a history that reminds us that progress starts with believing that when given a fair shot, people can thrive and communities can flourish. “Putting people first” means pursuing results, not rhetoric. The path to an inclusive economy will involve difficult decisions and the recognition of hard truths that upend the status quo. The IEO will remain committed to a simple truth: talent is distributed equally in our community, but opportunity is not. We are working to change that.

Josh Carpenter is director of innovation and economic opportunity at the city of Birmingham.
Alabama, Georgia companies merging

$3.6 billion media merger would create third-largest TV station group in US

The Associated Press

ATLANTA — Gray Television Inc. and Raycom Media Inc. are announcing a merger that would create the third-largest television broadcast group in the United States.

Georgia-based Gray and Alabama-based Raycom said Monday that they’ve entered into an agreement to combine the companies in a $3.6 billion deal.

The combined operation would have more than 140 television stations serving 92 markets, the companies said in a statement. The communities range from large TV markets such as Cleveland and Tampa-Sarasota, Florida, to small markets such as Ottumwa, Iowa, and Presque Isle, Maine.

"Combining our company with the excellent Raycom stations and the superb Raycom employees will create a powerhouse local media operation," said Hilton Howell Jr., Gray's chairman, president and CEO.

Pat LaPlatney, Raycom Media’s president and CEO, said, "We are thrilled to be joining Gray Television as we share the same core values of

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journalistic excellence and community service." Raycom subsidiary Community Newspaper Holdings Inc. is not part of the deal, as Raycom has begun the process of selling or spinning off CNHI, according to the statement.

CNHI operates more than 100 newspapers in 22 states. CNHI has retained a newspaper brokerage firm to explore selling the company, according to a statement posted Monday on CNHI’s website.

"We are looking for a transaction or transactions that will carry on CNHI's rich tradition of public service through award-winning journalism," CNHI president and CEO Donna Barrett said in the statement.

Gray is a publicly traded company on the New York Stock Exchange. Raycom and CNHI are financed by the Retirement Systems of Alabama, which manages state employee pension funds.
Jeff Bezos, we all owe you a debt of thanks

Ford Wiles  for AL.com

Dear Mr. Bezos,

You have no idea what you’ve done.

Over the last year, you have done something so astounding, so dumbfounding that even you — a disruptor by nature and a pioneer by calling — may not have fathomed its repercussions.

Right now, we are facing an intensely divided America. Our differences and our divisions are at their highest point in over a century, as our social echo chambers do little but reinforce our preconceived and insulated beliefs; and yet your company has somehow broken through. It has created a point of harmony and alignment that no political party, religious organization, cause or event has been able to achieve. You have gathered and coalesced seemingly disparate forces, entities and ideologies in cities across America and compelled them to willingly align over a simple yet powerful idea: opportunity.

When every civic leader in this country — in a quiet moment of anticipation — imagined what would happen if their city was home to 50,000 high-paying jobs, it created a moment of clarity that the status quo simply does not allow. All of them saw hope in their city in areas that were intellectually cordoned off due to politics and turf. But when roughly $5 billion in new salaries is a possibility, it caused those barriers to evaporate. When nothing was off the table, everything was possible. You encouraged us, challenged us to think big. Big like Walt Disney. Amelia Earhart. Martin Luther King Jr. For once, we all knew what it must have felt like to have a challenge so big and so exciting that it got everyone moving in one direction — and it didn’t have to be war.

Sure, this might sound like optimism run amok or wild-eyed idealism, but I was in the rooms where these things happened. I am part of the team that submitted a noisy but intensely collaborative bid from Birmingham, Alabama. And here, like in many cities across the continent, the unthinkable occurred. City and county officials, public and private companies, Democrats and Republicans, nonprofits, educators, health care institutions and even creative professionals like me, dreamed together. Absent from our vocabularies were words like “can’t,” “won’t” and “never.” And in their place, came words like “can,” “might” and “what if?” What if they came here? What if we reimagined our transit system? What if we overfunded our school system? What if we eradicated income inequality? Because the beauty of “what if” is that it can ultimately turn into “why not?”

Even though the Birmingham area didn’t make the short list for Amazon’s HQ2, we were fortunate enough to land a fulfillment center. That in and of itself is huge win for our community and a powerful proof point of what is possible when we all work together. That’s 1,500 jobs that would not have been created if we refused to dream.

Today, 20 cities are left on your list, and for the 19 remaining cities that don’t get HQ2, they will all have gotten the chance to experience first-hand the rare experience of something else even more valuable: hope in each other.

So, thank you, Mr. Bezos. Your customer-obsessed company may have just delivered to the doorstep of America the thing it needed most — a new belief in what is possible if we simply work together.

Wiles is chief creative officer for Birmingham-based Big Communications.
Amazon opts for Bessemer center

Tech giant’s new fulfillment center stands to bring 1,500 new full-time jobs to area

Howard Koplowitz and Erin Edgemon
AL.com

Amazon confirmed Friday it will build the 855,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art fulfillment center on 133 acres already being cleared for construction.

According to Amazon, employees will work alongside innovative technology created by Amazon Robotics, and pick, pack and ship small items to customers such as books, household items and toys.

“We are thrilled to bring our first fulfillment center to the state of Alabama, creating 1,500 full-time jobs,” Mark Stewart, Amazon’s vice president of North America customer fulfillment, said in a statement. “Alabama has a talented workforce and we look forward to making a positive economic impact in a state where we are committed to providing great job opportunities and an exceptional customer experience.”

Employees will receive full benefits on day one and an average wage of $14.65 an hour.

The number of employees could eventually grow to 3,000, Jefferson County Commission President Jimmie Stephens said.

*WORDS CANNOT TRULY EXPRESS THE EXCITEMENT*

The Bessemer site met two criteria Amazon was looking for early on: 100 acres of land and easy interstate access, yet not too close to Atlanta. The location is situated around Interstate 20/59, I-495 and is near I-65.

As Amazon had a consultant on the ground doing a real estate search, the company came to view the high school as a benefit. The school, went Amazon’s thinking, would provide a talent pool for the company’s jobs averaging $14.65 plus benefits. And the school would also create synergy with Amazon’s workforce development program.

“Words cannot truly express the excitement this announcement has brought to our city,” Bessemer Mayor Ken Gulley said, noting the $325 million deal represented the largest single investment in the city’s history.

“Amazon is bringing jobs and opportunity to our residents and students,” he said. “I am particularly proud of the educational incentives Amazon will offer our young people: get your high school diploma, work one year and receive $3,000 the next four years toward furthering your education.”

There were still some minor issues with the site. The existing road needed to be vacated and the property rezoned to allow Amazon to build a four-story facility — conditions Bessemer quickly fixed when its City Council approved a variance for the property; the city also pledged to install a Birmingham-Jefferson County Transit Authority bus stop at the site to ease commutes of prospective workers.

Amazon was also lured with incentives from Bessemer, Jefferson County, Alabama Power and the state of Alabama.

The Bessemer City Council approved incentives that include reimbursing Amazon for a portion of its capital investment by making quarterly payments to the company.
over a 10-year period. The payments will be based on the number of Amazon's full-time employees, and the occupational tax collected by the company from these employees and remitted to the city of Bessemer.

**ECONOMIC IMPACT**

Gulley pointed out the project would result in an economic ripple effect, boosting restaurants and other industry in the area that would be patronized by the Amazon workers.

"What we're looking at is a total change of landscape in that part of the city of Bessemer and we're just thankful and grateful about that," he said.

Rick Davis, senior vice president for economic development at the Birmingham Business Alliance, said the economic impact will not just be felt by Bessemer and the Birmingham metropolitan area, but the state as a whole because of the logistics of Amazon moving its products.

"They'll have rail, they'll probably bring product in through the Port of Mobile — the impact on Alabama is going to be not just on this central Alabama area, it'll be all over the state," he said.

Annually, $122.7 million will be added to Jefferson County's GDP, $44.8 million of which is earnings to households for 1,523 direct and indirect jobs, according to the local analysis; and $137.3 million will be contributed to Alabama's GDP annually, $79.6 million of which is earnings to Alabama households for 2,630 direct and indirect jobs.

The Alabama Department of Commerce released its own analysis on the financial impact of Amazon over the next 20 years:

- Total new payroll: $1.25 billion (construction, plus permanent jobs).
- Total new state revenue: $136 million.
- Return on investment to state: 216 percent.

U.S. Sen. Richard Shelby said Amazon's decision to build in Bessemer is "evidence of our state's excellent workforce.

"This project gives us the opportunity to partner with one of the most successful, widely recognized companies in the world to promote economic growth and development throughout Alabama," he said. "I am proud to be a part of this great announcement and am thrilled to welcome Amazon to the greater Birmingham area."

Gulley couldn't agree more.

"I always get accused of not smiling or not laughing ... (but) you can get a lot of smiles out of me today because this is a great day for the city of Bessemer," he said.
Amazon to locate $325M center near Birmingham

The Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM — A $325 million Amazon facility being built near Birmingham will initially employ 1,500 people fulfilling orders, and the workforce could swell even more, the online retailer and local officials said Friday.

A statement by the Seattle-based company said the 855,000-square foot facility would be located in Bessemer just west of Alabama’s largest city. Workers will pack and ship small items to customers including books, household items and toys, the company said.

Jefferson County Commission President Jimmie Stephens told news outlets the operation could eventually employ as many as 3,000 people. Employees will receive full benefits and an average hourly wage of $14.65.

"By choosing to locate its Amazon Fulfillment Center here, Amazon is making the largest single private investment in the city of Bessemer’s 131-year history," Mayor Kenneth Gulley said in a statement. "Amazon is bringing jobs and opportunity to our residents and students."

Birmingham is one of the last U.S. cities its size without an Amazon facility to fulfill orders. The region previously submitted a proposal for Amazon’s new headquarters but wasn’t selected.

The Amazon project, which will include advance robotics that are used to handle packages, matches the state’s strategy to lure tech jobs, said Commerce Secretary Greg Canfield.

“We’ve made recruiting technology-focused jobs a priority, and Amazon’s presence in the state will help us advance toward our goal,” he said.

Amazon already has a sorting and shipping center on the Gulf Coast at Mobile. That facility, valued at $30 million, has more part-time and seasonal workers than the operation being built in Bessemer.
Automotive supplier to expand

Unipres in St. Clair County will create 70 jobs

Staff report

Unipres, an automotive supplier specializing in stamping technologies, has announced a $40 million expansion that will create 70 jobs at its production facility in Steele, Alabama, according to the St. Clair County Economic Development Council.

The expansion will include adding a new hot stamping process meant to enhance production and allow the company to further and better supply automotive manufacturers including Nissan and Honda. This is the facility's second expansion -- they added 55 jobs in 2015.

"Unipres has found a home in Steele, Alabama, and this new business investment will help us meet customer demand through leading-edge manufacturing processes to meet light weighting vehicles," said President Kiyotaka Kawashima. "We look forward to continued growth in the community as St. Clair County and the Town of Steele have given us very strong support."

Gov. Kay Ivey welcomed the Unipres expansion.

"Unipres' decision to expand its St. Clair County manufacturing facility is great news because it means that the company is finding success in Alabama," Governor Ivey said. "This expansion is a testament to the Unipres workforce and the support the company has received for its operation in Steele."

Steele Mayor Roger Adams said assistance from the Alabama Department of Commerce, AIDT and the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs helped make the expansion possible.

"Steele is proud to count Unipres as one of our great industrial companies," Adams said. "They are one of our largest employers, and we congratulate them on their continued growth and success."
Mercedes Alabama SUVs caught in China trade war

Craig Trudell and Ma Jie  Bloomberg

Daimler became the first prominent company to cut its profit outlook because of escalating trade tensions between the U.S. and China, saying Chinese customers will now buy fewer cars after Beijing slaps tariffs on U.S. auto imports.

Shares of the Mercedes-Benz manufacturer dropped the most since April after it said late Wednesday its full-year earnings excluding some items will be slightly lower than last year.

Many SUVs are built in Alabama and shipped to China. Those vehicles are now caught up in retaliatory tariffs announced in China in response to President Donald Trump’s levies on $50 billion in Chinese goods.

With the rising prospect of an all-out trade war, few industries will be spared and more companies may have to follow Daimler, said Nicholas Smith, a strategist at CLSA Securities in Tokyo. MillerCoors, the maker of Miller Lite and Coors Lite, warned last week that U.S. tariffs on aluminum imports could result in a $40 million hit to its bottom line.

"Taking the cynic’s view, I think there will be a lot of companies needing to cut sales forecast and this will be an incredibly convenient reason to blame it on," Smith said. "The Europeans will take a hit on this, the Chinese are going to find this very bumpy, and it’s in the nature of a trade war that everyone loses."

The rising tensions threaten to upend a global production system built over decades amid falling trade barriers and the rise of China and other low-cost producers.

Trade flows are so complex that large companies will be challenged to quickly adapt to a shifting political climate.

"Remember, for those following from a Trump/global free trade perspective, this is now a German car maker, warning on the profits coming from their Alabama-made SUVs, which are then sold/exported into China — a complicated situation indeed!" wrote Evercore ISI analyst Arndt Ellinghorst.

Daimler and BMW are among carmakers most affected by China’s additional tariffs against American-made cars — more so than U.S. auto manufacturers, according to Evercore. Daimler and BMW will ship more than 100,000 vehicles to China from the U.S. this year, Evercore estimated in April — almost $7 billion worth of goods.

"Fewer than expected SUV sales and higher than expected costs — not completely passed on to the customers — must be assumed because of increased import tariffs for U.S. vehicles into the Chinese market," Daimler said in its statement. The company called this "the decisive factor" in its revised outlook.

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Daimler’s competitors were less eager to draw conclusions, and some analysts suggested its warning might be premature. A Volkswagen AG spokesman said the company’s 2018 profit targets remain unchanged. BMW AG said that although it is monitoring developments, it too stood by its outlook.

The Munich-based company, second to Mercedes among luxury carmakers, last year exported more than 100,000 sport utility vehicles to China from the U.S.

Although that number will decline this year with BMW moving to produce its X3 SUV in China, it’ll continue to export the high-end X5. BMW is exposed to a potential operating-earnings hit of $115 million to $232 million, according to analyst Juergen Pieper at Bankhaus Metzler.

The tariffs announced by Trump, and China’s in-kind response, may just be a start in the escalating conflict. On Monday, Trump said he had instructed the U.S. Trade Representative’s office to identify $200 billion in Chinese imports for additional tariffs of 10 percent. He said the U.S. would impose tariffs on another $200 billion after that if Beijing retaliates. The range of products that could eventually be taxed by Trump is approaching the value of all U.S. imports from China last year — about $505 billion.

On Thursday, a Chinese commerce ministry spokesman reiterated that China is “fully prepared to meet the challenges.”

Daimler also slashed expectations for a series of other metrics for the year, citing several other factors. The manufacturer now sees operating profit at its vans unit being significantly below last year’s level, compared with a previous guidance for only a slight drop. The company attributed the shortfall to a recent recall of diesel vehicles.

Earnings for the buses division probably will be in line with last year, Daimler said, revising a previous prediction for slight improvement amid declining demand in Latin America.

The profit warnings cap a difficult month for Chief Executive Officer Dieter Zetsche, who was summoned to Berlin several times in recent weeks to explain to the government the existence of alleged defeat devices in some engines. Daimler was ordered earlier this month to recall 774,000 vehicles in Europe, though the company dodged having to pay any fines.

The diesel scandal and mass recalls have weighed on Daimler and other German carmakers since the fall of 2015, when Volkswagen AG admitted to mass manipulation of engines. Daimler shares have lost about 15 percent this year, making them the worst-performing autos stock on Germany’s benchmark DAX index.

With assistance from Bloomberg’s Jamie Butters, Benedikt Kammel, Christoph Rauwald and Oliver Sachgau.
Business Council Searching for new CEO

By: Mike Cason

Business Council of Alabama Chairman Perry Hand said the organization hopes to have a new chief executive in place by Sept. 1 after several of BCA's most powerful member companies withdrew this week over dissatisfaction with leadership.

The BCA executive committee met by conference call today and launched the process to find a replacement for President and CEO Billy Canary, Hand said.

Also, BCA board First Vice Chairman Michael Kemp has resigned, Yellowhammer reported. In a resignation letter dated Wednesday, Kemp wrote that the BCA failed to meet its standard of "unwavering integrity in communicating with and managing the resources of our membership." Kemp did not cite any specifics.

Kemp was chairman of the BCA's political action committee, Progress PAC, a major contributor to Alabama political campaigns. Kemp is president and CEO of Kemp Management Solutions in Birmingham.

Alabama Power Company, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama, Regions Bank and PowerSouth all announced their withdrawal from the BCA this week, saying they were dissatisfied with the performance of the BCA and its leadership.

Hand said the effort to find a replacement for Canary begins immediately.

"Our goal is to have somebody by September 1 and no later than January 1," Hand said.

Canary will remain in place until his replacement is found, Hand said. In a statement released by the BCA, Hand said Canary "has provided great leadership for the organization in his 15-year tenure."

Alabama Power wanted Canary replaced sooner.

Earlier this week, Hand responded to Alabama Power CEO Mark Crosswhite's letter of resignation from the BCA, saying that the BCA could not meet Alabama Power's deadlines of replacing Canary by May 1 or June 1.

Hand said today the BCA will consider changing its by-laws so that large companies don't have too much influence. He said the BCA could do that by putting a cap on dues paid by member companies. He said there is currently no cap and that Alabama Power was paying more than $100,000 a year.

In response, Alabama Power released a statement saying the amount of its dues were not a factor in BCA's problems.

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"Given the recent, multiple departures from BCA in the last few days, it is astonishing that this organization continues to blame Alabama Power rather than acknowledge its failures," the company said. "The level of our dues obviously had no impact, or else BCA would have responded to our repeated suggestions about the need for new leadership and a thorough review of its governance practices."

Hand, who is chairman of Volkert Inc., in Mobile, said he's "100 percent confident" the BCA can survive and remain a strong organization. He said the organization has about 4,000 members and $6 million in the bank.

"Our bread and butter is small business," Hand said.

The BCA, formed in 1985, has built considerable clout in the Alabama Legislature and is a significant source of campaign dollars for office-seekers through Progress PAC.

But it has been rocked by the series of high-profile withdrawals by Alabama business powerhouses this week.

Alabama Power CEO Crosswhite wrote in the resignation letter that the BCA has "needlessly alienated federal and state officials, failed to communicate with its own members, squandered our collective corporate goodwill, allowed its financial health to decline, and become a divisive force in our State."

Hand said today's actions by the executive committee are a continuation of a transition and succession plan adopted a month ago.

"There have been significant press stories this week regarding this transition and the several companies that have chosen to withdraw from the organization due to their disagreement with this process and timeline," Hand said in a statement. "It is unfortunate that this disagreement played out in the public arena the very week that our Executive Committee was already scheduled to adopt these plans.

"We have worked diligently to address the concerns and issues raised by these companies; however, we could not in good conscience meet their demands because it would be detrimental to the organization given BCA's stature as a statewide association representing the issues and concerns of nearly 4,000 businesses of all shapes, sizes and sectors as well as BCA's role as the affiliate partner of the Washington D.C.-based United States Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers.

"We will move forward with the transition and succession plans with great diligence, order, and respect, and we are hopeful that all of Alabama's business community will recognize this work and coalesce for the betterment of Alabama and its business climate. We believe that the BCA will be an even better organization because of the process and changes being implemented."
Summit focuses on student safety

Law enforcement joins school leaders to discuss issue

By Drew Taylor
Staff Writer

In a change from past years, Thursday’s education summit organized by the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama centered on a crucial point of nationwide concern: student safety.

After remarks by Superintendents Walter Davie and Mike Daria on the state of the Tuscaloosa County School System and Tuscaloosa City Schools, respectively, the focus of the program shifted to school safety. During the discussion, Chamber Board President Blake Madison moderated a panel involving the superintendents and law enforcement.

In addition to Davie and Daria, those who took place in the panel included Tuscaloosa County Sheriff Ron Abernathy, Tuscaloosa Police Chief Steve Anderson and Northport Police Chief Gerald Burton.

Madison prefaced the panel discussion by acknowledging national events that had occurred, most notably the school shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, in February, where 17 people were killed inside the school by a gunman.

In the wake of the shooting, Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey created the Securing Alabama’s Facilities of Education (SAFE) Council to come up with ways to better protect students. Last month, Ivey announced the start of the Alabama Sentry Program, a voluntary program that would allow schools without school resource officers to be able to maintain firearms.

When asked about how the school system would use the program, Davie said neither he or his staff had received any guidance from the state on how this program could work.

"Between now and August, there will not be any meaningful opportunities to do this," Davie said. "We have to see more about that before we make decisions."

Daria echoed the same sentiment, saying the focus now is on maintaining strong relationships with local law enforcement. This past spring, Tuscaloosa City Schools had one school resource officer or contract officer in every elementary, middle and high school in the city, a change accomplished in partnership.

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"We can respond to those schools in less than a minute," Burton said.
Likewise, Abernathy said that school resource officers rotated daily to different schools in the system and were able to respond quickly to any incidents.

"Regardless of where you are, you’re going to have a small proximity to respond," Abernathy said.

Social media was also a focus of discussion. For example, in March police investigated a message on Instagram about a shooting that was supposed to being planned at Central High School. Although the school was placed on a soft lockdown, the investigation later turned up nothing going on at the school.

"There are so many incidents we’ve had and things that we’ve dealt with and the problems that come in the school doors that are not as they seem," Davie said. "Believe it or not, but some things going around on Facebook and other social media may not be true."

Regardless, Anderson said TPD and other law enforcement take every threat seriously.

"We always do an investigation to determine the credibility of a threat," Anderson said.

Abernathy agreed with Anderson.

"The key thing is we have to take the key information that we have," he said. "That one time, it may be real. We cannot afford to take one lightly, so be sure to pass that information along to law enforcement."

Reach Drew Taylor at drew.taylor@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0204.
Reward offered for Moundville artifacts

More than 40 items were stolen from the park in 1980

By Stephanie Taylor
Staff Writer

It's been nearly 40 years since someone broke into Moundville Archaeological Park and managed to pull off the largest antiquities theft recorded in the South. More than 250 Native American pottery vessels and artifacts dating eight centuries were stolen from the Erskine Ramsey Archaeological Repository in March 1980. The boxes of jars, bottles, bowls, ornaments and jewelry were estimated at $1 million at the time, which would be around $3

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million today.

"The magnitude of the theft has left an alarming gap in Alabama's Native American heritage," said Jim Knight, UA professor emeritus of anthropology.

Thirty-eight years have passed and none of the 264 artifacts have turned up during that investigation that involved local agencies and the FBI. Now, the University of Alabama Police Department and a group called Associates for the Return of Moundville Artifacts are hopeful a $15,000 reward will encourage someone with information to come forward.

"With the availability of the internet, it is now possible to distribute these photographs much more widely than was previously feasible. Also, Native American pottery vessels are now routinely sold in internet auctions," Knight said. "These can be monitored by a public aware of this 40-year-old crime and the need to reunite these rare artifacts with the citizens of Alabama and the South.

"The reward, together with advancements in technology that allow for the rapid dissemination of information by news outlets and social media, offer new hope in an effort to recover the artifacts."

At the time, the stolen items represented about 70 percent of the museum's exhibit-quality artifacts and 20 percent of the entire Moundville vessel collection that was curated by the Alabama Museum of Natural History. Experts believe the thieves were knowledgeable about the artifacts because they targeted the highest-quality pieces.

Excavated in the 1930s, the artifacts are high-quality engraved or painted ceremonial pots and bowls, some which held food offerings that were buried with the dead. Others were ordinary cooking pots, bottles and shell jewelry. Many of the vessel engravings depict supernatural creatures, such as the flying serpent, which would guard a person's passage into the afterlife. Flying serpents have the bodies of snakes, with deer antlers and wings. The designs were highly distinctive of Moundville, which is considered a world heritage site. The Mississippian Indians settled in what is now the Moundville area at the beginning of the 11th century. The area reached its peak activity and population around the year 1300 when it had about 1,000 residents. About 10,000 resided in the entire Black Warrior Valley floodplain at the time.

The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act makes it illegal to sell human remains or cultural artifacts of Native Americans unless a person legally owns the item. Collectors pay millions of dollars for antiquities such as the Moundville vessels, Knight said in a 2003 interview with The Tuscaloosa News.

To view the missing items, visit the UA Office of Archaeological Research website.

The Alabama Museum of Natural History has established a tipline at 205-348-2800 that will allow those with information about the thefts to leave confidential messages or information.

For more information, including photographs of the artifacts, visit museums.ua.edu/oas/stolenartifacts.
UA paces nation in Academic All-Americans

Staff report

For the fifth consecutive year, the longest streak in the country, at least 10 Alabama athletes have been named to the Academic All-America list selected by the College Sports Information Directors of America.

UA's total of 11 athletes on the list for 2017-18 also leads all NCAA Division I schools. Over that five-year span, no school has placed more athletes on the list than Alabama's 56. Stanford's 45 ranks second.

"Our commitment to excellence in all aspects of the collegiate experience serves as the foundation of our overall success at the University of Alabama," UA Director of Athletics Greg Byrne said. "Our extraordinary record in terms of Academic All-America honors is a testament to the drive, determination and discipline of our student-athletes and the support provided by our coaches, faculty and staff. ... That kind of sustained excellence is truly impressive."

CoSIDA compiles individual lists for football, basketball, baseball, softball, track and field/cross country, men's and women's soccer and women's volleyball. It also puts together an at-large list that includes athletes from 14 women's teams and 12 men's teams.

Emma Welch (soccer) and Leah Lawrence (volleyball)

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ATHLETES

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were named to their respective teams in the fall. Bailey Hemphill (softball) and Josh Short (track and field/cross country) joined them in the spring.

Alabama's seven at-large honorees were swimmers Laurent Bams, Robert Howard, Luke Kaliszak and Temarie Tomley, gymnast Mackenzie Brannan, tennis player Andie Daniell and golfer Kristen Gillman.

It was the third Academic All-America honor for Brannan, the second for Kaliszak and the first for the other nine athletes.

The 2017-18 school year was the 11th consecutive year that at least one softball player has been selected, the ninth straight year for track and field/cross country, the sixth straight for gymnastics and the fourth straight for women's volleyball.
UA exhibit celebrates women

Museum marks achievements of 125 years

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

An exhibit showcasing women whose contributions and achievements have had an impact on the University of Alabama will open Friday at the Gorgas House Museum on campus.

The “Women of the Tide: 125 Years of Women at The University of Alabama” exhibit will be on display through Sept. 28 at the Gorgas House Museum. The exhibit is part of UA’s 125 Years of Women, a yearlong celebration to honor women on campus through awareness, education, service and special events. The celebration marks the quasquicentennial of women’s admission to the university as students in 1893.

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Women of the Tide

When: 9 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays through Sept. 28

Where: Gorgas House Museum, 810 Capstone Drive

Admission: General admission for the public is $2, but free to UA students, faculty, staff and members of the National Alumni Association. For information on parking or additional questions, call Angi Jones at 205-348-7551.

Online: Join us Friday at noon on the Tuscaloosa News Facebook page for a live chat with Katherine Edge of University Museums about the “Women of the Tide” exhibit.

Online

For a video of the “Women of the Tide: 125 Years of Women at The University of Alabama” exhibit, go to www.tuscaloosanews.com

Doug Killough, marketing director for the University of Alabama museums, views pages about different fashions of dresses that were worn by students and faculty throughout the 20th century during a media viewing of the Women of the Tide exhibit at the Gorgas House on Wednesday, June 27, 2018. The exhibit opens to the public Friday, and will run through Sept. 28. [STAFF PHOTO/ERIN NELSON]
women on campus through an array of materials, including the first diploma awarded to a female student, athletic and social memorabilia, clothing, and documents and other items from women in leadership roles.

"The Women of the Tide exhibit is a fascinating collection of artifacts depicting the significance of women throughout the 125 years that they have attended The University of Alabama," said Elizabeth McGiffert, member of the exhibit advisory committee, in a statement released by UA. "This exhibit represents inclusion, progress and hope for the future."

Women featured in the event include education advocate Julia Tutwiler and Judy Bonner, the campus' first female president, and civil rights figures Antherine Lucy Foster and Vivian Malone Jones.

UA's department of clothing, textiles and interior design will provide a fashion archive for the exhibit. The pieces, some of which date back to the 1930s, will spotlight fashions worn by students over the years, including Mary Harmon Black Bryant, wife of legendary UA football coach Paul W. "Bear" Bryant.
Lurleen Wallace Boulevard project will stretch into 2019

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

A $23.7 million project to improve Lurleen Wallace Boulevard is set to start next month and snarl traffic for at least two football seasons.

James Brown, West Central Region Engineer for the Alabama Department of Transportation, said Monday that the jointly-funded project by ALDOT and the city of Tuscaloosa could last until late December 2019.

"Yeah, we're going to impact another football season," Brown said during Monday's monthly meeting of the Tuscaloosa County Road Improvement Commission.

The construction contract was awarded last week to Tuscaloosa-based S.T. Bunn Construction Co. Inc. and is planned to take at least 18 months to complete, but it has a "drop dead" date of Dec. 15-20, 2019, ALDOT officials said.

The contract was expected to be awarded in April, but a billing mishap between ALDOT and City Hall delayed the contract's approval and, subsequently, the construction for a couple of months.

The work always was planned to start after the 2017-18 school year finished and was going to affect travelers for the upcoming
college football season, but the delay now has caused motorists to be slowed for the 2019 season, too.

"We're going to enjoy some more orange cones," said Tuscaloosa County Probate Judge Hardy McCollum, who chairs the Road Improvement Commission.

When complete, Lurleen Wallace Boulevard North and South will resemble a downtown Tuscaloosa street—like University Boulevard or Greensboro Avenue—while being capable of handling interstate-like traffic, ALDOT officials have said.

More than 70,000 vehicles per day use Lurleen Wallace Boulevard, an increase of 9,000 since 2013, making it the most popular roadway in west Alabama.

About $5.2 million in city funds will go toward decorative streetlights and traffic signals as well as utility relocations and upgrades.

ALDOT, meanwhile, is contributing $18.5 million. This will fund the actual construction of the new roadway surface as well as the installation of the new lights and traffic signals funded by City Hall.

Both the city and ALDOT will contribute funding toward sidewalk improvements, landscaping and walking path extensions intended to keep pedestrians away from one of West Alabama's busiest roads when walking to downtown entertainment areas.

The renovations also will remove 139 parking spots on Lurleen Wallace Boulevard North and South and replace them with turning lanes. However, 113 spots will be added on crossing streets, leaving the overall loss of spaces at 26.

In other roadway news:
• ALDOT officials are conducting a value engineering study for the planned flyover bridge and road improvement project for Alabama Highway 69 South. This examination, which is looking for possible cost saving

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TRAFFIC

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measures associated with the estimated $60.2 million project, is set to be complete by mid-July.
• The $3.7 million work to improve Bear Creek Cutoff Road's confluence with Old Montgomery Highway and McFarland Boulevard near the Coca-Cola Bottling Plant is all but complete, said Brad Darden, preconstruction engineer for the ALDOT's West Central Region. New traffic signals are in place and permanent striping has been added to the project that installed small concrete islands and new traffic routing measures that began in January 2017.
• It is expected to take another three weeks to finish the installation of turn lanes at Martin Road's intersection with Alabama Highway 69 North, county officials said. This $650,295 construction contract was awarded to Price McGiffert Construction Co. in January.
• A project to improve traffic flow on U.S. Highway 43 North at Bone Camp, Lary Lake and Paul Howell roads is expected to be finished before school starts in August, ALDOT officials said. This $250,000 project includes the construction of northbound and southbound left turn lanes at Highway 43's intersections with Bone Camp, Lary Lake and Paul Howell roads, while adding a northbound left turn lane at Hunters Pointe Drive and a southbound left turn lane at Smith Landing Road.

Reach Jason Morton at jason.morton@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0200.
Business incubator to move into new larger facility

By Stephen Dethrage
Staff Writer

Like so many of the small businesses it has helped develop since its inception in 2012, the Edge Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation has outgrown the space it’s housed in.

The center opened six years ago in a 9,000-square foot building owned by Regions Bank on 22nd Avenue in downtown Tuscaloosa.

Jim Page, the president and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, said ground was broken on a new dedicated facility for the entrepreneurial incubator at 2627 Tenth Ave. last June, and that Harrison Construction anticipates finishing their work thereby the end of October.

Operations are slated to begin in January, and Page said that will bring about fundamental changes in how the center works.

“At the Edge, we partner with the University of Alabama right now and we kind of serve the managing entity and they partner with us on programming and marketing,” Page said. “When we

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GROWTH

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get in the new building, our roles are largely going to reverse -- they're going to be the managing entity, and we're going to just support them from a programming and marketing standpoint."

Management of day-to-day operations will fall to Theresa Welbourne, a professor of entrepreneurship at the University of Alabama and the executive director of the Alabama Entrepreneurship Institute.

Welbourne said the plans for the Chamber to turn over operations to UA have been underway for two years, since she moved to Tuscaloosa from Ann Arbor, Michigan.

"The way it's worked, contractually, is that the Chamber runs the day-to-day of the building, overseeing the lease, tenant relations and the like," Welbourne said. "We have a team and we really focus on the programming, the learning content, but we've been doing things to transition that. When we move into the new space, we'll take over those operations."

Page said the lion's share of the cost of building the $11.6 million facility is covered by a 2013 grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration, and the city of Tuscaloosa will pay for the rest. Page said this will allow the new location to launch with no debt, a huge advantage for the incubator.

The new building will bring several major upgrades to the Edge's efforts to aid entrepreneurs. Their current home is 8,700 square feet with seven offices and 12 shared space workstations. The new facility will be more than 26,000-square feet and feature 25 office, 100 workstations, training rooms, a conference room and a lounge.

"The new facility is coming out of the ground right now is truly going to be a game-changer because it will add significant capacity to what has already been successful," Page said. "I think the sky's the limit in terms of what can be offered at the new facility, whereas we're severely handicapped in the facility we're in now."

Welbourne said her team is in the process of preleasing the new space, and that any interested entrepreneurs can reach out and see if the Edge is right for them. The phone number for the Edge is 722-5166.

The Edge has primarily served as an incubator for entrepreneurs, where small businesses can lease all-inclusive office space for a nominal price and focus on developing their ideas or growing their staff instead of fretting over the overhead cost of rent and utility bills.

Welbourne said the new center will allow the Edge to also serve as an accelerator. These accelerator programs will allow new or established businesses with entrepreneurial ideas to spend 8-12 weeks in a more formal, structured environment that offers training, mentoring and coaching about the small-business world. At the end of each accelerator program, Welbourne said, participants can demonstrate the ideas they've developed and seek funding from interested investors.

"When we talk about incubation and acceleration, the emphasis is often on new companies but we will be working with established companies as well, because many of them are still very interested in being entrepreneurial," Welbourne said. "We're really hoping this will be a hub for both established businesses and people who are just starting up, as long as they all are interested in entrepreneurship and innovation."

Page said improving the Edge will also advance one of the Chamber's top priorities -- to create jobs for students passing through the University of Alabama, Stillman College and Shelton State Community College and keep those young professionals in the Tuscaloosa area.

"Anecdotally, I've talked to countless students over the years that come to the university and fall in love with the campus and the community, the quality of life, the low cost of living, and they have a real interest in staying here, but a lot of them don't feel like they are going to have the job opportunities to stay here so they leave," Page said. "We lose untold numbers of students every semester to other communities because they don't feel like we have jobs available for them to stay."

Page stressed the need to develop the availability of rental space, counseling and mentoring, workshops, training programs, networking, collaborative opportunities, access to capital and more in the Tuscaloosa area.

"All of that collectively forms the 'economic ecosystem,'" Page said. "We want to be known as a community that, if somebody has a great business idea, whether it started at the university or just in the community, that there's an ecosystem here to support them, nurture them and give them every resource and opportunity to grow and be successful."

Both Page and Welbourne praised the strong spirit of collaboration that allows the Edge to be successful.

"The great thing about the Edge is that it is a true public-private partnership, a community initiative between the university, the city and the business community through the Chamber," Page said. "It's what makes our business incubator unique and I think it's what will make it successful in the long-term. It's something the whole community can proud of and it's accessible to the whole community."

Reach Stephen Dethrage at stephen.dethrage@ tuscaloosanews.com or 722-0227.
UA professor to direct episode for drama

Episode of TV show, created by Ava DuVernay, to air this fall on OWN

By Ken Roberts
City Editor

A University of Alabama professor will direct an episode of a drama that will air this fall on Oprah Winfrey’s television network.

Rachel Raimist, a UA professor of journalism and creative media, will helm an episode of “Queen Sugar,” which films in New Orleans.

The show, which focuses on three siblings who inherit an 800-acre sugarcane farm from their recently deceased father, was created by Ava DuVernay. DuVernay directed the 2014 historical drama “Selma” and this year’s “A Wrinkle in Time” for Disney.

“Episodic television is a particularly difficult medium to ‘break in’ to as a woman of color director,” Raimist said in a UA news release. “To be called by Academy Award winning filmmaker Ava DuVernay and be invited to direct an episode of her show is a career defining moment for me.”


Directing the episode means Raimist will become a member of the Directors Guild of America, which represents 17,000 members worldwide.

Winfrey serves as the award-winning show’s executive producer. “Queen Sugar” has featured all women directors over its three seasons. According to Women and Hollywood, women represented 32 percent of first-time episodic directors this television season, a sharp increase from last season’s 19 percent and nearly three times the number of the 2009–10 season.

Kat Candler, producer of “Queen Sugar,” said the show has played a role in creating this trend.

“So many of us knocked on countless doors trying to get every door shut in our face,” Candler said. “Come back when you have an episode under your belt,’ they’d say. But not until Ava ripped the hinges of those doors, built her own house and invited us all in did things in this industry start shifting.

She’s revolutionary in that way. People try to ask us, ‘What do we do how can we change things?’ They come up with all these panels, programs ... to try and fix things when it’s pretty simple, ‘Just hire us.’”

PROFESSOR

From Page B1

wedge our way into TV directing work only to

The Tuscaloosa News
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Mercedes awards
$100,000 to startups

Two startups will receive $50,000 after their pitches in the Mercedes-Benz U.S. International Innovation Challenge last week.

The event pitted nine companies putting forward ideas to improve efficiency at Mercedes-Benz’s Vance manufacturing plant. The winners were Automap LLP, which pitched an idea to improve Mercedes’ on-site vehicle tracking systems for the hundreds of thousands of vehicles built each year at the plant; and doks Innovation GMBH, LLC, a German company, for a drone-based inventory tracking and recording system.

The two companies also will get a shot at supplying for Mercedes-Benz and its parent company, Daimler.

In April, MBUSI, partnering with Huntsville-based startup accelerator Urban Engine, Startup Autobahn and The University of Alabama, announced the challenge, aiming for solutions using business strategies, software development and technology.

More than 100 individuals registered and 29 submissions were made. A panel of judges reviewed the pitches in an event Tuesday at Vance. MBUSI initially planned to award up to $50,000, but the decision was made to recognize two groups and award $100,000 after seeing the presentations. — William Thornton
BJCC stadium: Private-sector fundraising effort reaches key goal

BY TY WEST
twest@bizjournals.com

The final pieces of the planned stadium and renovation project at the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex are coming into place.

The private-sector effort to raise $4 million per year over 10 years - one of several components of funding for the $300 million project - has reached its goal.

In addition to the $500,000 secured from UAB through its lease and marketing agreement, Hatton Smith - the longtime CEO of Royal Cup who has spearheaded fundraising efforts for UAB Athletics - said the other $3.5 million has been raised from the corporate community through suite leases and undisclosed naming rights deals.

"It was a wide coalition of businesses - more than 15 businesses combined," Smith said. "What was so gratifying was that the commitment to the suites was really a commitment to the city, even more so than just for UAB Football. That's been a common thread throughout this campaign."

Smith said the commitments will help deliver a first-class stadium and a major renovation of the BJCC. He said it will position the city to host bigger events.

Smith said it has been great to see the wave of positivity building among the citizenry about Birmingham and its future.

A look at an early conceptual rendering of the planned stadium at the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex.

Work on the final design of the stadium is just starting.

The private-sector support, in addition to funding from the city of Birmingham, Jefferson County, a car rental tax and the BJCC Authority, were all critical parts of the funding plan for the project. He said it was a tremendous example of regional cooperation.

"This is the best example of our disparate governments coming together to coalesce on a significant project," Smith said.

Tad Snider, executive director and CEO of the BJCC, said the BJCC Authority on Wednesday approved a resolution allowing the financial advisers and underwriting team to proceed toward a sale of the municipal bonds in the next couple of weeks, likely the week of July 9.

"There remains some finalizing steps in a few key areas, but overall, we are right where we hoped to be at this stage in preparing to execute the financing for the project," Snider said.

Snider said the private sector funding component has been very successful.

"Corporate pledges, the lease with UAB and an agreement for naming rights of the stadium are all coming together very well," he said.

The BJCC has not yet disclosed the naming rights partners.

Snider said design work is already underway on the arena and just starting for the stadium project, but the BJCC has not determined when packages will be ready for bidding on the project.

He said there could be some construction overlap between the stadium and the arena project, but they will not start at the same time or finish at the same time.
BJCC takes another step towards downtown stadium

By: Erin Edgemon

The Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex completed another big step towards making the downtown stadium a reality.

The bond issue to finance the $300 million expansion of the BJCC including the construction of a downtown stadium received quality grades from rating agencies Moody's and Standard and Poor's.

The bonds will likely hit the market to be sold the week following the Fourth of July holiday, said Rush Rice, of Rice Advisory Group, BJCC's financial advisor.

Tad Snider, executive director of the BJCC, said he is very happy with the ratings. "We expected a lot and these are right inline with what we expected," he said.

Construction on the $174 million downtown stadium is projected to start by the end of the year and be open in 2021.

The stadium is a part of a $300 million BJCC expansion project, which is being funded by the BJCC, Birmingham, Jefferson County, UAB and corporate partners and a 3-percent tax on car leases and rentals in Jefferson County.

The bond issue includes fives series of bonds named: A, B, C, D and E. They are divided based on the sources of repayment.

Snider said A, B and C will be repaid by different revenue streams from the BJCC while D is being paid by Birmingham and E by Jefferson County.

Bonds are given a grade to indicate their quality and help investors determine their credit risk. Bonds are rated from C to 'AAA. The higher the rating the less risk for investors.

Here are the ratings of the BJCC bonds:

Standard & Poor's:
2018-A: AA-
2018-B: A+
2018-C: A+

2018-D: AA (Birmingham)
2018-E: AA (Jefferson County)
Moody’s

2018-A: Aa3

2018-B: A1

2018-C: A1

2018-D: Aa2 (Birmingham)

2018-E: A3 (Jefferson County)

All of the bonds are stable, Rice said.

In the two weeks before the bonds are sold, they will be promoted and pre-marketed to fund managers, he said. The bonds will be priced in one day, and the executive committee of the BJCC board will have to convene to approve the pricing.

In April, the BJCC board of directors selected four firms to serve as the underwriters for the bonds.

Raymond James and Stifel, Nicolaus & Co. are to serve as the co-senior managers and Loop Capital Markets and Securities Capital Corp. to serve as managers. The book running manager is Raymond James.

Underwriters purchase the bonds and then resell them to the public or other investors.
Veterans invited to experience book club

By: Katie Davis Skelley

A new book club is bringing military members together through a shared love of reading.

The “Literature and the Veteran Experience Book Club” kicked off last week at the Downtown Huntsville Library. The book club meets every other Tuesday at 6 p.m. and is open to active duty service members and veterans of all service branches.

“We had a good mixture of people – but no Navy yet,” said organizer Brandon Morris, security and logistics coordinator for the library and an Army National Guard veteran himself.

The group is led by University of Alabama in Huntsville professor Dr. Tom Reidy, who teaches courses in history at the university. The book that the group is currently reading is “The Things They Carried,” a collection of short stories about the Vietnam War by Tim O’Brien. Books are provided and a catered meal will be served at every meeting.

Although the club has already met once, they still welcome new participants.

“It would not take them long to catch up if they are a fluid reader,” Morris said.

The idea for the book club was spearheaded by Director Laurel Best, whose husband is a Vietnam War veteran, Morris said. With support from the Alabama Humanities Foundation, Reidy came on board and Morris started planning the first meeting, which was catered by Taco Mama.

The first meeting brought a wide range of ages and military experiences, from twentysomethings to seniors. Conversation flowed freely with the veterans sharing about their personal experiences.

“For me, it brings back one of my favorite things about the military which was camaraderie,” Morris said.

Although the club is 11 sessions, Morris said that if the interest is there, it will continue past November. He expects to finish the current book about midway and the group will tackle another military-themed book for the last half of the sessions. He welcomes all service members and veterans to attend the next meeting July 3.

For more information about the “Literature and the Veteran Experience Book Club,” contact Morris at 532-5948 or bkmorris@hmcpl.org.
3-D Printing Offers Quick, Cost-Effective Solution To Help Train Aspiring Nurses

By: University of Alabama Huntsville

As a regular attendee of conferences on healthcare simulation around the world, Dr. Lori Lioce was already well aware of the growing trend of using 3-D printing to create task trainers – clinical simulators that allow nursing students to repeatedly practice a specific skill in preparation for providing healthcare in the real world. What she needed was access to the technology.

So the clinical associate professor in the College of Nursing at The University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH) turned to Norven Goddard, a research scientist at UAH’s Systems Management and Production (SMAP) Center, for help. "Norven mentioned that the SMAP Center has six 3-D printers," says Dr. Lioce, who also serves as the executive director of the College’s Learning and Technology Resource Center. "So I gave him a long list of what we needed and a bag of samples, and we collaborated on what he and his students could print."

They decided to start with a cricothyrotomy trainer, which is used to teach nurses how to perform an emergency procedure to clear the airway when more traditional methods are ineffective. While the procedure is not typically part of the undergraduate nursing curriculum, the trainer is one of the few whose digital design files are available on the open-source platform Thingiverse.

"These models cost more than a thousand dollars, but we wanted something that would save money, be cost effective, and use the university’s resources," says Goddard. "We asked ourselves, how cheaply can we do this?" To help, Goddard recruited a dream team of 3-D printing specialists made up of the Center’s undergraduate student interns: engineering majors James Tovar, Marquis Myler, Nicholas "Gage" Swinford, Martavia Lucious, and Andrew Farris, and computer science major Matthew Daigle.

After the students downloaded the necessary digital design files for the cricothyrotomy trainer, Dr. Lioce says she worked with them "to get the right texture and strength." Three prototypes later, she beams, "we got the right one!" The total price? $15. "Now we are using four of them in our class, with a savings of $6,000," she says. She’s also integrating the team’s 3-D printed vein finders, portable devices that use LED lights to help nurses locate difficult-to-find veins. Normally hundreds of dollars, Goddard says they were able to build them "for $6 using open-source design files."

Next up is an onychectomy trainer. Used to teach nurses how to remove a thumbnail, the team’s 3-D printed version will directly save $33 for each nurse practitioner student in the program. After that, they plan to tackle an injection pad, which is used to simulate injections. "With that
we’re going one step further – we’re looking at injection molding," says Goddard, adding that all of the students are involved in at least some part of the processes used to create these trainers. "We’re trying to cross-pollinate so everyone knows how to 3-D print, injection mold, solder, use the software, and do whatever else is needed." Another idea they’re "toying with," he says, is converting MRIs to 3-D models to help surgeons prepare for and practice operations. "We sit down with Lori every once in a while and ask, what’s next?"

Dr. Lioce, for her part, is thrilled about what they’ve already accomplished. "We’ve been able to substantiate a significant cost savings," she says." Now she’s hoping the collaboration between the College and the SMAP Center can be formalized and expanded, for two reasons. First, it offers a quick, cost-effective alternative to purchasing expensive, brand-name task trainers. And second, it benefits the students involved by exposing them to completely different fields of study, improving communication between fields and creating a synergy that can, in turn, lead to more advances.

"Diversity of thought and science stimulates needed growth and solutions," she says.

"It’s precisely because we think differently that we are innovative together."
OUR VIEW: Facebook brings more good news to Huntsville area

By: Staff

The Huntsville area got another chance to celebrate — and puff out its chest — last week when Facebook announced it will spend $750 million to construct a new data center there.

That announcement comes five months after Toyota and Mazda chose a Limestone County site, just over the Madison County line, for their joint $1.6 billion plant that will have the capacity to manufacture 300,000 vehicles a year and employ 4,000 workers.

Facebook bought 340 acres in the North Huntsville Industrial Park, according to city officials, and has an option on more land.

Company officials said the project has been percolating under the radar for about a year and expects the new center to go online in 2020. The 970,000-square-foot facility will employ only 100 people, but those employees will be paid large — an average of $80,000 annually.

As you might imagine given the traffic it gets — according to the company’s first-quarter statistics for 2018 reported by Zephoria Digital Marketing, 1.45 billion people log on every day and are considered “daily active users” — Facebook needs much server capacity. It launched its first dedicated and company-owned data center in 2011, now has centers not just in the U.S. but in Sweden and Ireland, and has stepped up its expansion plans in the last year.

So why are we acknowledging this other than to say “congratulations” to our neighbors to the north?

Well, just as with the auto plant, anything that economically significant is likely to bring some benefits to the surrounding areas, and Etowah County is not that far from Huntsville. Facebook may not have the need for external parts suppliers like Toyota and Mazda, but there will be some economic multiplier impact.

More importantly, we welcome the object lesson for other places intent on economic development — like Etowah County, for instance — that the concept of “industry” carries a different definition in 2018 than it did 50 years ago.

A Facebook official during the news conference announcing the data center said the company settled on Huntsville because of its strong talent pool and its availability of clean and renewable energy.

StateTech, an online aggregator of business news, citing a study by ZipRecruiter and Payscale, said Huntsville was the top-ranked city in the U.S. in tech industry job growth in 2017, with a growth rate of 309 percent. It always has had that image given the Marshall Space Flight

See next page
Center’s prominence in the space race and UAH’s longtime status in science and technology (a Payscale survey in 2015, cited by BusinessAlabama, found its graduates drew the highest starting salaries of any state postsecondary institution).

However, the city’s educational and governmental systems have emphasized STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) to the point where nearly 17 percent of its residents work in that field, according to the ZipRecruiter/Payscale survey.

That is the road map — the future — in Alabama and elsewhere. We’ve said this before, but it bears reinforcing: No matter what any politician of any party or at any level tells you, the old-school smokestack mills where someone with a high school (or less) education, a strong back and a good work ethic could hire on and support a family and retire after decades on the job are gone for good.

Facebook may be a social media platform where people provide TMI and share silly memes and cat photos, but the data center in Huntsville will be as tangible as any steel mill, and so will the high-paying jobs it provides.

Those with megasites to fill shouldn’t ignore “outside the traditional box” options.
Alabama researchers working on portable probe to identify germs

By: Lee Roop

The Department of Defense is investing $1 million in a device developed in Alabama to diagnose infection sources in remote places like military battlefields. If it works, researchers say it could also be used from schools to airports and beyond.

GeneCapture, a resident associate company at the HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology in Huntsville, said today it has received two-year small business technology funding. The company is working on a "gene signature matching platform" to screen for hundreds of disease-causing germs in less than an hour.

The platform could also be used in places such as schools, urgent care clinics, doctor's offices, nursing homes, veterinary clinics, cruise ships and airports, the company said.

"It has been a dream of mine to bring this technology to market so that critical diagnostic decisions can be made quickly, which will save lives," said Dr. Krishnan Chittur, chemical engineering professor emeritus at the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH) and co-founder of GeneCapture. The original discovery was patented at UAH and exclusively licensed to GeneCapture.

The technology works by using a probe to capture the "signature" of the germs, Chittur said. An optical scan identifies which germ is present in about 45 minutes.

"It's a completely new technique that would have been impossible without the advances in genetics and genomics discoveries of the last decade," he said. "That is one of the reasons we are located at the HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology – the research that's happening here is cutting-edge."

GeneCapture is also collaborating on the contract with Birmingham-based Southern Research, a nonprofit research organization.
Ex-USA QB Davis lands at UAB

Former South Alabama quarterback Dallas Davis enrolled at UAB as a graduate transfer, AL.com confirmed.

Davis, who left the Jaguars two days before the spring game, is listed on the Blazers' official preseason roster. A UAB spokesman confirmed that Davis will be eligible to play for the Blazers this fall but couldn't immediately confirm if Davis is on scholarship or is a walk-on.

The 6-foot-2, 215-pound Davis started 16 games the last two seasons at South Alabama, including six in 2017. He had emerged as the Jaguars' presumptive starter for 2018 during spring practice prior to his departure.

At UAB, Davis will be reunited with offensive coordinator Bryant Vincent, who held the same position at South Alabama from 2015-17.

Davis' path to playing time this fall at UAB is unclear. The Blazers return senior starter A.J. Erdely and highly regarded redshirt freshman Tyler Johnston, among others, at the quarterback position.
Johnson confident in next season of Tide basketball

By Ben Jones
Sports Writer

Avery Johnson has more NBA draft experience than most third-year college coaches. After spending more than two decades in the NBA as a player and a coach, he had reason to be back at the draft last week.

Collin Sexton became the first player under Johnson to be chosen in the NBA draft when the Cleveland Cavaliers picked him eighth overall. His college coach was there with him in the green room. That experience had Johnson more nervous than he had ever been as an NBA coach or player.

“He’s like one of my sons and he’s going to hear his name called,” Johnson said on Thursday. “He’s representing Alabama basketball. All the time you spent behind the scenes honing his craft and all of the hard work he put in on his own, he comes from a really solid family.”

Sexton was the highest draft pick in school history and the first Alabama player chosen in the lottery since Antonio McDyess went second overall in 1995. The one-and-done star was also drafted higher than any guard in school history.

His one-year impact included an NCAA tournament appearance, but Johnson hopes that Sexton’s legacy in Tuscaloosa extends beyond the season. He said he and his assistant coaches are reminding recruits of the success Sexton had.

“We can’t mention any names, but we continue to roll up our sleeves and work hard,” Johnson said.

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“That’s really been nothing but a positive for us. Especially as we’re trying to spread the word a little bit, not only in the state of Alabama but further in the footprint. It’s a positive for us. … That means a lot. Kids are watching, families are watching.”

Sexton was the first of seven SEC players chosen in the draft. Among Alabama’s top five players by minutes played last season, Sexton is the only one that won’t be back for the Crimson Tide.

Several other SEC schools have top players returning for the 2018-19 season as well but Johnson was sanguine about his team’s outlook.

“We’re excited about where we’re going,” Johnson said.

“We’re going to be a much more experienced team this year instead of being the fourth-youngest team in the country. We are adding two guys to our team this year that have experience in Tevin Mack and Riley Norris. I’m just thrilled about our potential and what lies ahead for Alabama basketball.”

Reach Ben Jones at ben@tidesports.com or 205-722-0196.
Johnson: SEC ‘not just a football conference’

Michael Casagrande mcasagrande@al.com

With the NBA draft over, the transition of basketball seasons took another ceremonial step last week.

In Tuscaloosa, they’re in full 2018-19 mode after seeing Collin Sexton hit the NBA lottery last Thursday in Brooklyn. The idea is to ride that wave into Avery Johnson’s fourth year.

Johnson on Thursday touched on a few topics during the summer media teleconference with SEC coaches. On the subject of recruiting momentum in the wake of Sexton’s No. 8 pick, Johnson said there’s no doubt there seeing an impact.

“Especially when you’re trying to spread you wings a little bit, not just in the state of Alabama but further in the footprint,” he said.

The tailwind of SEC basketball programs also came up Thursday. The conference sent eight teams to the NCAA Tournament last season — Alabama included — and Mississippi State played for the NIT title.

“The league overall is so deep,” Johnson said. “Tennessee basically has their whole entire team back, and Auburn is going to be good. Kentucky is always good. Florida is always good. You can never underestimate (Texas) A&M and coach (Bill) Kennedy. Mississippi State, they had a great run in the NIT, which gave them a lot of experience last year. They’re basically bringing all of their guys back.”

Johnson said the SEC could have as many as 10 teams make the NCAA Tournament in 2019.

“We’re not just a football conference anymore,” he said. “We’re really serious about basketball, and I’m glad to see some progress.”

Alabama went 20-16 last season and won its first NCAA Tournament game since 2006. It lost Sexton (19.2 points per game) and Braxton Key (7.0 ppg) but gain Texas transfer Tevin Mack and got a fifth year for Riley Norris.

Looking back to his arrival in 2015, Johnson said was asked to recall the biggest factors in his success. He traced things back to retaining assistant coach Antoine Pettway from Anthony Grant’s staff.

“A guy that not only coached at Alabama but played collegiately at Alabama and is one of the most recognizable players in Alabama’s history,” Johnson said. “He was part of that Elite 8 and Sweet 16 team (2004). So, he was a big key to it.”

That lead to establishing relationships with high school coaches and bringing players in for camps. Sexton was a lightly recruited player out of Georgia who was among those who went to Johnson’s first camp in 2015.

“You know if you never get them on campus they are never going to come and commit to Alabama,” Johnson said. “Antoine Pettway had a lot to do with how I had to adjust to college and that transition from the NBA to college and specifically with getting to know a lot of the student athletes that were in the state of Alabama.”
Alabama landed the commitment of 2020 quarterback Carson Beck on Tuesday.

Beck is a 6-foot-3.5, 214-pound, pro-style quarterback from Jacksonville, Florida, playing at the Providence School.

The rising junior does not have a prospect or star ranking on 247Sports. Last season Beck threw for 994 yards and 16 touchdowns in just four games.

"I want to thank my family, friends, and all coaches that have helped to develop me and make me better not only as an athlete, but a person," Beck said via twitter. "After talking to my family and talking to Coach Saban, Coach Enos, and Coach Key I am beyond blessed to announce that I will be committing to the University of Alabama."

In addition to playing football, Beck intends to go the Keith Holcombe route and also play baseball for the Crimson Tide.

Beck is the fourth commitment in the 2020 class.

Cameron Greenwood
Transfer rule won't affect Saban's QB decision

There have been few interviews with the University of Alabama's prospective quarterbacks for the 2019 season recently and while Tua Tagovailoa may or may not speak at the Manning Passing Academy this week, it appears Jalen Hurts has already indicated he will not be doing any interviews.

Don't count on hearing from either one at SEC Media Days, either. The odds of either one making the trip to Atlanta (it is still odd not to say 'Hoover') are lower than those of Jonah Williams switching over from tackle and winning the job.

The biggest reason is probably this quote from Nick Saban a few weeks ago, when he spoke following his charity golf tournament.

"I think that both players need to know that they need to win the team, that's what they need to do," Saban said. "And the best way for them to do that is stay focused on what they need to do, and I think anything that they do that brings attention to themselves, probably erodes the opportunity for that to happen."

I would not say that was an "edict" from Saban, but I would rank it as something more than a "powerful hint."

In the past couple of weeks, though, there has been a development that would be intriguing to discuss with the quarterbacks, most especially Hurts. The

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game changed, perhaps slightly, perhaps dramatically, two weeks ago when the NCAA Division I Council passed a new redshirt rule, effective immediately, that will allow players to appear in as many as four games without losing a year of eligibility. There has been some talk about it in relation to Alabama, but no answer yet on how it might affect — or prolong — the quarterback decision that Saban insists is still being made.

Assuming — and hoping — that no injury scenarios come into play, things might work out something like this:

First, a redshirt year holds little value for Tagovailoa. We are almost two years and a million mock drafts away from the NFL’s 2020 Draft but most of the experts who project that far see Tagovailoa as a first-rounder. Even if Team Tua, he and his family, chose not to leave school after three years, he’d certainly be gone after four. (It also makes a transfer, never a likely option for Tua, superfluous.)

For Hurts, though, things are different. He certainly has personal goals. He should make his own choices. But for the moment, he is not regarded as a surefire NFL prospect. So how might the redshirt rule play out for him? Does it give him extra time — including, perhaps, the first couple of games of the 2018 season to compete, or, in Saban’s words, “to win the team?” Does it make staying at Alabama through the 2018 season more plausible?

Look at it this way: if the Hurts family felt like a transfer was the best option, which would be the best option? To leave before the season, sit out a year in residence (since he would not be a grad transfer) and then have two years to play two at a new destination beginning in 2019? Or to stay through the season, having played in four games, graduate in December (or May) and then have immediate eligibility — and two years to play — at another school, SEC (which no longer restricts grad transfers) or elsewhere?

The new rule won’t impact Saban’s decision (unless it gives him a couple of extra games to make one, or to announce it.) That decision will come down to which quarterback is best for the team. Maybe he already knows, but will not tell.

Neither will Hurts, as long as he isn’t taking questions. So we will wait — maybe a little longer, maybe not — and see.

Reach Cecil Hurt at cecil@tidesports.com or 205-722-0225.
Cleveland bound

Alabama's Collin Sexton taken eighth overall by Cavaliers in NBA Draft

By Cecil Hurt
Sports Editor

Former University of Alabama guard Collin Sexton became the first Crimson Tide player selected in the first round of the NBA Draft in 17 years when the Cleveland Cavaliers chose him with the eighth pick of Thursday night's draft.

Almost as soon as the choice was announced, Sexton began fielding questions about the possibility of playing with LeBron James. The Cavalier superstar is expected to decide next week if he will return to Cleveland or opt for another team in free agency.

"LeBron, let's do it," Sexton said on the ESPN draft broadcast. "I see you need a few pieces. Let's do it."

Sexton becomes the 15th Alabama player to be chosen in the first round and is the fourth top-10 selection in program history, joining

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Antonio McDyess (No. 2 overall in 1995), Derrick McKey (No. 9 overall in 1987) and Leon Douglas (No. 4 overall in 1976).

"I'm very excited. I'm glad the Cavs picked me at No. 8," Sexton said. "When I was working out for them, I felt like that was one of my better workouts, probably one of my best workouts actually. So I'm very excited to be a part of the organization."

With his selection, Sexton is the first Crimson Tide men's basketball player selected in the NBA Draft since Richard Hendrix was chosen in the second round in 2008 and the first Alabama player since Gerald Wallace in 2001 (No. 25 overall) to be selected in the first round.

"It means a whole lot just because he's one of the best players to ever play basketball," Sexton said of having LeBron James as a teammate. "Just being able to come in and learn from him, it'll be big for me and big for my growth."

Sexton was chosen as co-Freshman of the Year in the SEC for the 2017-18 season. He scored 632 points and led Alabama with 10.2 points per game. It was the third-most points in a single season in Alabama history and the most ever for a freshman. The previous record had been 16.8 points per game, set by James Robinson in 1990-91. He also finished the season with a team-high 119 assists, good for 3.6 per game.

He was second in school history with 252 free throws attempted in a single season and set the school record by making 196 of them. He scored 40 points in a loss to Minnesota on Nov. 25, the eighth-most scored by a single player in a game in school history.

Alabama basketball coach Avery Johnson was in New York for the draft, and Sexton spoke about what it meant to have Johnson, an NBA veteran, as a mentor.

"Man, he taught me a whole lot on the court as well as off the court, but on the court he taught me how to run the pick-and-roll, also how to make sure my teammates and everybody was in the flow of the game," Sexton said. "Off the court, he always just told me be respectful to everybody, and also just make sure that you're aware of your surroundings because you never know what's happening around you."

Alabama NBA Draft picks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Round</th>
<th>Pick</th>
<th>Player</th>
<th>Team</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Collin Sexton</td>
<td>Cleveland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Richard Hendrix</td>
<td>Golden State</td>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Jeromeo Davidson</td>
<td>Golden State</td>
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<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Mo Williams</td>
<td>Utah</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Rod Grizzard</td>
<td>Washington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Gerald Wallace</td>
<td>Sacramento</td>
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<td>1997</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Eric Washington</td>
<td>Orlando (to Denver)</td>
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<td>1996</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Roy Rogers</td>
<td>Vancouver Grizzlies</td>
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<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Antonio McDyess</td>
<td>LA Clippers (to Denver)</td>
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<td>1995</td>
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<td>Jason Caffey</td>
<td>Chicago</td>
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<td>1993</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>James Robinson</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>1987</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Bobby Lee Hurt</td>
<td>Golden State</td>
</tr>
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Editorial

Harvard admissions suit will have repercussions

To students vying for a spot at an elite university, there is little as mysterious or unpredictable as the admissions process. How much, or how little, weight college officials give to factors including a student's race, income, test scores or extracurriculars is a closely guarded secret sauce at selective schools.

Grades and teacher evaluations count, but students also seek to create compellingly hilarious, or inspiring, or zany, or erudite essays or videos, and to impress in personal interviews. But what happens when Candidate A, who is admitted, rates virtually identical on paper and in person to Candidate B, who is not admitted?

Answer: a lawsuit.

Since 2014, Harvard has been battling a legal claim that the school systematically discriminates against many Asian-American candidates. The suit, filed by a group called Students for Fair Admissions, says Harvard artificially limits the number of Asian-Americans accepted — imposing a so-called soft quota. The alleged result: Less-qualified white, black and Hispanic candidates gain admission over better-qualified applicants of Asian descent.

In a batch of recently unsealed papers, the plaintiffs' group says its analysis shows that Asian-Americans rated higher than any other racial or ethnic group on admissions measures such as test scores, grades and extracurricular activities, The New York Times reports. But they were ranked lower on personal traits: “positive personality,” likability, courage, kindness and being “widely respected.” Those lower ratings cut their chances of admission.

Harvard defends its admissions process, calling such allegations misleading and inaccurate, in part because they underplay critical factors such as personal essays or teacher recommendations. The university argues that it has significantly increased Asian-American acceptances in the last decade, although the overall percentage of Asian-American students has stayed fairly steady.

Reality: There is no such thing as a completely objective admissions process. Students are selected on the basis of criteria created by human beings, whose innate and sometimes intentional biases can affect their evaluations. Not everyone with top grades or a long resume of extracurriculars gets into his or her first choice.

Every university, private and public, grapples with a collision of values as it fills its classes. One value is equal opportunity. The schools say they aspire to give every candidate a fair shake, not just based on grades and scores, but on character and other intangibles. That's fine, provided the last Asian-American candidate is judged exactly the same as the first. Limiting any group's size would mean the school in effect has unfairly downgraded some applicants before opening their applications.

But another value is in play. Schools seek to create a diverse student body. They want the freedom to accept candidates who bring something unique or otherwise compelling — even if that means rejecting applicants with better academic records.

We're not predicting how this will turn out. We admire both of those conflicting values. The plaintiffs will attempt to prove that Harvard has a racial quota system that cheats gifted Asian-Americans. Harvard will attempt to prove that its system is fair and legal. The outcome will have repercussions in college admission offices nationwide.

A version of this editorial first appeared in the Chicago Tribune (TNS).
More community colleges offer bachelor’s degrees

Four-year universities don’t welcome the competition for scarce state resources

By Elaine S. Povich
Stateline.org (TNS)

WASHINGTON — Starting in fall 2019, students at Ohio’s Sinclair Community College will be able to enroll in a four-year degree program in unmanned aerial systems, also known as drones.

They’ll learn mission planning, maintenance, laws, data analytics and more. Working on drones is a new field, and the college is eager to expand its program to meet the growing demand for graduates.

Just up the road, Youngstown State University offers a somewhat similar four-year degree, in mechanical engineering technology — but tuition there is double Sinclair’s.

Sinclair is one of a growing number of community colleges that have embraced the practice of two-year schools conferring four-year degrees.

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As college costs rise and state officials look to accommodate nontraditional and low-income students, more are turning to community colleges to develop programs for industries with a lot of need — sometimes irking officials at four-year universities in the process.

About 90 two-year colleges are offering about 900 baccalaureate programs across the country, according to Beth Hagan, executive director of the Community College Baccalaureate Association, a Florida-based trade association.

But officials at four-year universities are balking at what they see as community colleges encroaching on their turf, and competing for scarce resources from the state. Many officials would rather partner with the two-year schools than compete with them.

Ohio is one of 15 states that allow at least one two-year college to offer a four-year degree, and a half-dozen states could be moving in the same direction. Most community colleges in those states can offer only baccalaureate programs that are narrowly tailored, rather than offering many programs across a wide swath of disciplines. The community colleges still offer associate degrees and other certificates to students who want to complete their studies in two years, but those who want a bachelor's degree stay for four.

"These are very much niche degrees when there is a local to success. That's why it's a big deal."

She said she will have spent about $2,000 a year to go to the community college. Tuition and fees at Loma Linda cost more than $33,000 a year, according to College Factual, a website that tracks college costs.

Tuition at San Diego Mesa was also a factor for Linda Bredeson — but so was the commute. Bredeson, 34, works at a hospital about a 20-minute drive from her home in San Diego. School is 10 minutes from work. Getting to Loma Linda, she said, would take 90 minutes.

"It's a hop and a skip away, which makes going to school very easy," Bredeson said, adding that she has gained confidence simply by attending the classes, and got a promotion in January.

In Ohio, Republican Gov. John Kasich's fiscal 2018 budget has cleared the way for two-year colleges to offer four-year degrees. The governor has long advocated conferring four-year degrees at community colleges as a low-cost pathway to a higher degree.

"Community colleges are doing this to serve the students-and-employers community we serve now," said Adam Murka, chief of staff for Sinclair Community College in Dayton. "We are not trying to be universities."

Murka pointed out that the Ohio Department of Higher Education had to approve the school's application to confer four-year degrees, and that one requirement was that the degree was not already available at other institutions in the

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local economic importance. It’s an area of tremendous growth over the coming decades.”

But representatives of universities say there’s more to a traditional four-year college education than a diploma, and they don’t welcome the competition.

“We live in a state with limited resources for higher education,” Youngstown State’s provost, Martin Abraham, said. “We’re continuously cutting back — not increasing funding — for higher ed. It doesn’t make a lot of sense to set up a competing system for the same set of funds.”

While the Sinclair program may not compete directly with Youngstown State, Abraham said the four-year school has a mechanical engineering technology degree that provides similar training. Purdue University, in nearby Indiana, also has a degree in drones.

Average in-state tuition at a four-year public college in Ohio was close to $7,000 for the 2016-17 school year, according to CollegeCalc, a website that compares college costs using Department of Education data. Sinclair averaged just above $3,000, while Youngstown State came in close to $8,000.

“There’s a reason the tuition structure is different at a four-year university versus a two-year university,” Abraham said. For example, he said, Youngstown State’s career fair attracts 70 companies to campus every year.

“That’s economy of scale; it drives up the cost of our education, but it also provides significant value to our students that is not easily replicated on a community college campus offering one of two baccalaureate degrees.”

And C. Todd Jones, president and general counsel of the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Ohio, said the argument that baccalaureate degrees are unaffordable is a “red herring.”

“Financial assistance makes degrees affordable, particularly for low-income individuals in our state,” he said. There’s no reason in terms of costs for creating a community college baccalaureate degree, he said.