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TUSCALOOSA

Fraternity alumni chapter accuses restaurant of discrimination

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A predominantly African-American fraternity in Tuscaloosa has filed a racial discrimination lawsuit against Tuscaloosa restaurant Cypress Inn.

The Tuscaloosa Alumni Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi filed the complaint last week, claiming two counts of racial discrimination after being barred from renting Cypress Inn’s pavilion. The complaint says the fraternity was denied the same services as similarly provided to white customers.

A representative from Cypress Inn said the allegations of discrimination are “completely untrue.”

The Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity is requesting compensatory damages, punitive damages and for a judge to impose permanent injunctions barring Cypress Inn from engaging “in illegal discriminatory conduct.”

According to the complaint, the Kappas attempted to rent the Cypress Inn’s Annex Pavilion around Dec. 15, 2017, for a social event planned for Feb. 23, 2018. The fraternity paid a $1,500 reservation fee to book the venue, the lawsuit states.

A representative of the fraternity met with one of Cypress Inn’s employees on Feb. 6, 2018, to solidify plans for the event when the student was told the group could not rent the facility, according to the lawsuit. The complaint states the Cypress Inn representative said they were not aware the Kappas were an “all-black group.”

Cypress Inn cited insufficient security personnel as a reason for not proceeding with the event, the lawsuit states. According to the complaint, the fraternity offered to provide security at its own expense, provided proof of insurance, offered the option of a security waiver and provided photos of past events and was met with a refusal to rent.

The complaint states the owner of Cypress Inn was contacted and stated that Cypress Inn had encountered problems with the Kappas’ “kind” in the past. The reservation fee was then refunded, the lawsuit states.

According to the Cypress Inn statement, they look forward to presenting “the complete facts to the court.” “We are confident we will prevail,” Cypress Inn said.
GOVERNMENT AND INFLUENCE

BCA faces exodus of Bham heavy hitters

Three of Birmingham’s business heavyweights have withdrawn from the Business Council of Alabama.

Alabama Power Co., Regions Financial Corp. and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama each announced their withdrawals from the organization, which has long been the most prominent business lobbying organization in the state. The withdrawals come amid unrest over the leadership and direction of the organization, which has been led by William Canary since 2003.

In a letter to BCA Board Chairman Perry Hand, Alabama Power CEO Mark Crosswhite called for new leadership for the organization and said the BCA has “needlessly alienated federal and state officials, failed to communicate with members, squandered collective corporate goodwill, allowed its financial health to decline and became a divisive force in the state.”

Hand responded in a letter noting the BCA’s executive committee adopted a transition and succession plan on May 21. Hand said the executive committee will meet June 21 to approve details with a goal of having a new CEO installed by Jan. 1, 2019.

He said Alabama Power and others had tried to convince the executive committee to remove Canary by May 1 or June 1—a request the executive committee did not concur with.

“We have worked diligently to address the concerns and issues raised by these companies; however, we could not in good conscience meet their time requirements because it would be detrimental to our organization,” Hand said in a statement. “The BCA is a statewide association representing the issues and concerns of nearly 4,000 businesses of all shapes, sizes and sectors – not just these companies.”

Hand also left the door open to the companies returning to the BCA.

The changes could have significant ramifications at the intersection of business and politics in Alabama. The Business Council of Alabama-affiliated Progress PAC ranks as the state’s largest political action committee, with $734,000 in receipts for 2016, according to the BBJ’s most recent List.

While experts interviewed by the Birmingham Business Journal say it’s possible some companies will rejoin the BCA once a new leader is in place, other experts have speculated corporate leaders could form a new organization.

In a statement, Alabama Power said it is considering all options.

“There is an obvious need to unify the business community and address the important issues of the state, such as growing jobs and economic development, as well as a need to fill a void in business leadership,” the company said in a statement.

Natalie Davis, a political science professor at Birmingham-Southern College, said there are several factors at play in the situation, including the state’s evolving political world.

When the BCA was founded, she said it was envisioned the organization would compete with the Alabama Education Association for influence. But, in recent years, the AEA’s power has waned as Republicans took control of Montgomery.

“So you would think that the BCA would be the influence in terms of special interest in the legislature. Well, the leadership simply hasn’t made that happen, and I think the frustration, particularly with Alabama Power, is clear in its letters and communication with BCA,” Davis said.

Davis said the situation is probably more indicative of a struggle over power and leadership than any long-term loss of influence for business interests in Alabama.

Many of the BCA’s largest members have their own governmental affairs operations and are also members of trade groups or regional organizations that lobby state or federal officials.
Alabama Power’s profits challenged by rural utilities

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Groups representing small electric utilities in Alabama and Mississippi have filed a formal complaint alleging that the Southern Company and Alabama Power are making too much profit delivering power to rural areas of both states.

The smaller utilities argue that Southern Company’s returns should be lowered and refunds issued to the approximately 570,000 customers they serve.

The Alabama Municipal Electric Authority along with Cooperative Energy filed the complaint with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission against Alabama Power, Georgia Power, Gulf Power, Mississippi Power and parent group Southern Company.

The AMEA has 11 member groups, which are the municipal electric utilities in Alexander City, Daphne/Foley (Riviera Utilities), Dothan, Fairhope, Lafayette, Lanett, Luverne, Opeilka, Piedmont, Sylacauga and Tuskegee.

The complaint argues that the company’s 11.25 percent return on equity for transmitting electricity to the distribution companies is "unjust and unreasonable," although it was approved by federal regulators in 2003.

Electric rates for individual customers of Alabama Power are set by the Alabama Public Service Commission, but wholesale power rates from large producers to smaller electricity providers are set by the FERC, which determines how much profit power providers are allowed to make on their investments.

The Alabama Municipal Electric Authority submitted testimony from Brandon T. Mac Mathuna, a financial and regulatory analyst for an energy policy firm in Atlanta, stating that an 8.65 percent return is more in line with current industry trends. In his testimony, Mac Mathuna detailed a "Discounted Cash Flow (DCF)" model study he performed backing the lower return rate.

The complainants estimate in their filing that the difference between 11.25 percent and 8.65 percent could save them a total of $266.5 million per year, or roughly $464 per customer of the complaining utilities.

Southern Company filed a formal answer to the complaint on behalf of the respondents, arguing that the analysis performed by Mac Mathuna was "flawed and deficient," contained errors, and that the existing agreement was within the normal and acceptable range of utility transmission agreements.

Southern also argued that the complainants had not met legal barriers required to prove that the returns have become unreasonable since they were previously approved by federal regulators.

Southern Company asked the Commission to dismiss the complaint.

According to the nonprofit Energy and Policy Institute, the Alabama authority’s 11 member groups serve more than 146,000 customers in Alabama, while Cooperative Energy represents 11 rural electric utility companies in Mississippi with more than 427,000 customers. The largest swath of Alabama customers is along the eastern shore of Mobile Bay, in Daphne, Foley and Fairhope.
RICK BRAGG

TALES FROM POSSUM TROT’S WOODS
The Pulitzer Prize-winning author, who lives near his mother in Alabama, rescued her stories and her recipes.

Rick Bragg, 58, is a Pulitzer Prize-winning writer and the author of 10 books, including “All Over But the Shoutin’,” “My Southern Journey” and his latest, “The Best Cook in the World: Tales from My Momma’s Table” (Knopf). He spoke with Marc Myers.

To keep me from getting underfoot as a toddler, my momma used to sit me down in a wild strawberry patch behind our house. That patch was my babysitter. From there, I'd pick and eat berries, and watch her wash clothes on the back porch.

Momma knew if there was some food handy, I'd sit in place. After she ironed and hung sheets to dry, the wind would make them pop like sails. Those are my earliest memories of my mother, Margaret.

For most of my childhood, we lived at my Grandma Ava's house. It was in what had been Possum Trot, Ala. Possum Trot was once a real place, but it was gone when I came along. Now it's just a sign where two roads meet.

The tiny two-bedroom, wood-frame house was about 10 minutes from Jacksonville, where we went to the doctor and dentist. Our bathroom was out back.

Momma was almost 6 feet tall and blonde, like a Viking shieldmaiden. She slept on a couch in the living room while my grandmother lived in one room and I lived in the other with my brothers.

My father, Charles, had been a Marine in the Korean War. Daddy was haunted by the war, but he was more haunted by liquor. When he was sober, he was bored. When drunk, he was mean. Either way, he was rough. So rough that when I was 6, momma gathered us up and left him. He was fine with that. I saw my father maybe two dozen times my whole childhood. Eventually, he drank himself to death.

My brother Sam was three years older than me, and Mark was three years younger. We fought a lot. Sam was incredibly strong. Mark was just mean. I'd always rather fight Sam. After he pinned you, it was over. Mark would wait days to get even.

Momma was a cook at Red's, a roadside restaurant about a half-hour south of us. For extra income, she took in laundry and ironing, cared for older folks and cooked meals for people. She also picked cotton.

Momma was loving and caring. When Sam did something wrong, he ran. But she could run him down. Before she reached him, though, he'd fling himself to his knees and start praying. Momma would walk away disgusted. "How can you beat a child when he's trying to get right with God?" she'd say aloud.

I learned to tell a story listening to my many relatives. They'd invent stories from the woods. All their stories involved possums and rabbits and bears.

We didn't have anything in common with some kid in lederhosen running from a troll. But we knew what a possum and a bear looked like. There was always a lesson in those stories.

My mother was a great storyteller. Her ability hinged on timing and plenty of heart. She also understood irony. You have to hear what you tell, she'd say.

She never wrote down her recipes. Many of them date back before the Civil War. She cooked using what she witnessed. She cooked for ghosts and had their memories at her elbow.
I never helped my mother cook in our kitchen. My brothers and I were too nasty to be allowed in there. We were usually covered in red dust and swamp slime from playing outside. My mother also didn’t like an audience in the kitchen. She’d sing country songs she had learned from her parents’ record collection.

Several years ago, I decided to ask her to tell me as many stories about our family as she could remember. I also asked her to share her recipes. That was hard, because she didn’t talk in terms of tablespoons, cups and pounds.

I learned there’s a difference between a dab and a dob. “A handful” and “a good handful” are different, too. And “just some” has its own meaning. All of which had to be translated.

Through the process, I learned that her cooking, like her stories, was about patience and knowing instinctively when something is done.

Today, I live near my momma in Calhoun County. My house is a red-cedar cabin on the land where my grandfather used to make moonshine.

I wanted to care for momma after she had a bout with cancer. I bought her 40 acres with a redbrick house on a hill. She’s 81 now, and someone is always looking after her.

The thing I treasure most of hers is a grocery list she gave me. I’ve bought her groceries for the past four years. The list includes rag bologna, fatback, collard greens, turnips and “a decent tomato.” At the very end, she wrote, “Get me some candy. And God bless you.”

I keep that list in my desk drawer at home. I don’t even like to think of a world without my momma in it.
Engineered to help

By: Ed Enoch

Inverness Elementary School student Bailey Harris could barely wait to climb into his new car. The buildup to the moment he finally climbed into the driver’s seat in May had stretched for months as a team of University of Alabama engineering students worked to custom fit the battery-powered Audi toy car to allow the Shelby County student more mobility.

Bailey was born without arms or knees and has shortened limbs.

“He can walk, but his stamina is not good,” said his teacher, Debbie Slawinski.

He uses a custom wheelchair in school, but the custom car provides mobility outside.

“We took the cover off the car and within seconds, he was trying to get in and drive it,” said Michael Outlaw, a recent UA graduate who was on the team that built the car. “It was a treat to see that reaction. He is such a special kid.”

Slawinski said the teachers had tears of joy as they watched their student take his first drive.

“This gave him some independence. Bailey is so smart, he is remarkable with what he can do,” she said. “The car offers some sense of normalcy. It’s not a giant wheelchair, it is a fun car he can ride in. He is just so appreciative of everything they did for him.”

In his new wheels, Slawinski said Bailey led the parade during the school’s field day.

Last year, UA engineering students took on a similar project, modifying another battery-powered toy car for a 5-year-old student at Rise School who was born with a condition that shortened his arms and legs, limiting his mobility.

Slawinski was unaware of the previous project when she contacted the university in November to see if they could help. Slawinski and her fellow teachers sought something Bailey could drive and manipulate himself that would provide independence on the playground.

“We were trying to figure out what we could get for him,” Slawinski said.

The team showed her the car built for the Rise student the year before.

“I thought it was incredible (learning about the car),” she said. “I just think it is something the university should publicize a lot more because there is a lot more need out there.”

The vehicle built for Bailey drew on the experiences from the previous project to build the car in months rather than a year. Using the base knowledge developed with the previous car project, the team of students began to tailor the controls for Bailey, Outlaw said.

“We drove up there at least once a month to have these fittings and to take measurements,” Outlaw said.

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The experience of watching the engineering students work through the design process was a powerful lesson, according to Slawinski. Her students have STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and music) centers in the classroom.

"It was a great introduction to show how what we are doing in the classroom can lead to in the future," she said.

Bailey, who can feed himself and draw with his feet, controls the car with his feet, Outlaw said. The team designed a cockpit with a left-foot joystick that controls steering and acceleration and a right-foot button that toggles between forward and reverse.

Within moments getting into the car, Bailey was performing three-point turns, Outlaw said.

"It was a big relief to see he was able to use that car so effectively and so quickly," he said.

The project during his senior year was the first time Outlaw had engineered as community outreach.

"This was really one of the projects I worked on that I felt that I was applying what I learned in school to something applicable to something in the real world," Outlaw said. "It was really cool to see this come together and come to life to work with other engineers and affect this kid's life."

Outlaw graduated in May with a degree in electrical engineering. The 22-year-old has a job lined up in Birmingham with a company that designs and builds 911 call centers.

"Given the opportunity in the future, a project like this is something I would take up," he said.

The car was one of a few outreach projects this year by UA’s Astrobotics Team, which competes in NASA competitions modeled on Mars rovers and other projects. Outlaw said he was not a member of the team but participated in the project with team members.

Kenny Ricks, an associate professor in the department of electrical and computer engineering, said he is unsure if the cars for students with mobility issues would become an annual outreach project, but the department is definitely expanding outreach efforts and changing them to include more actual engineering and fewer demonstrations or show-and-tell activities.

During the last academic year, the Astrobotics Team also built an electronic stimulation station for Rise School students and a buzzer system for use during an elementary school game show trivia challenge, Ricks said.

"These types of projects will become more commonplace for the team as we move forward. They give our students more engineering experience, and they help the community to see some tangible benefits of engineering and its many applications," Ricks said.
Exhibit features art inspired by ‘Black Panther’

Students examine paintings at the University of Alabama’s Paul R. Jones Gallery of Art on Sixth Street in downtown Tuscaloosa in this 2014 file photo. “BAM! Black Panther and the Black Arts Movement in the Paul R. Jones Collection” will be on display at the gallery beginning Friday and continuing through Aug. 31. [STAFF FILE PHOTO]

Staff report

The University of Alabama’s Paul R. Jones Museum will feature a new exhibition, “BAM! Black Panther and the Black Arts Movement in the Paul R. Jones Collection,” beginning Friday.

The exhibition, curated by Emily Bibb and Wendy Castenell, UA assistant professor of art and art history, was inspired by the recent blockbuster action movie “Black Panther.”

The movie, based on the Marvel comic book, follows the exploits of the king of Wakanda, whose sovereignty is challenged by an adversary who plans to abandon the African country’s isolationist policies and begin a global revolution. The movie has grossed more than $1 billion at the box office worldwide.

“The proudly African aesthetics of ‘Black Panther’ from the costuming to the sets, were inspired by cultures throughout the continent,” Bibb said. “Those same cultures and their aesthetics influenced American and diasporic artists looking to express black power from the 1960s and 1970s and into the present day.”

Bibb and Castenell brought together works from the museum’s collection that share themes with the film.

The exhibition will display 30 works, including sculptures in wood and stone as well as photographs. The pieces will include those from the museum’s collection of African cultural objects, reminiscent of the traditional pieces in Wakanda, as well as pieces from the 1960s and 1970s Black Arts Movement. Artists include David Driskell, Romare Bearden and Emma Amos.

The exhibition will be open through Aug. 31. An opening will be from 5:30-7:30 p.m. Friday at the museum. Both are free and open to the public.

The Paul R. Jones Museum is at 2308 Sixth St. in downtown Tuscaloosa. Museum hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and the first Friday of every month from noon to 8 p.m.
The Tide coach’s steely, no-nonsense persona has been cultivated over years, but is that veneer starting to crack?

By: Rainer Sabin

Nick Saban had a confession to make.

"I've gotten soft around here," he said in March.

A smile spread across his face as laughter filled a campus barbershop where former Alabama stars Julio Jones, Ryan Anderson and Eddie Jackson were in his midst.

It was a surprising admission by a man who had long cultivated a serious, steely, unforgiving persona. It was also rather meta for the intensely guarded coach. After all, Saban made the remark during the first installment of Bama Cuts -- a video series distributed through the football program's Twitter pipeline showing the coach buoyantly chopping it up with Crimson Tide alums living their NFL dreams.

Here was Saban taking everyone behind the ramparts of Alabama's kingdom and revealing a different side of himself, the ruler.

When the scene shifted to his chateau on Lake Tuscaloosa in late May, cameras captured Saban and his current players having fun in the water. The coach made a cameo on Snapchat after the fuel pump in his boat malfunctioned, setting in motion the kind of high jinks that can cause a social media post to go viral. Elsewhere, the university's videographers spliced together a montage of the leadership team-bonding activity featuring Jalen Hurts, Tua Tagovailoa, Terrell Lewis and more riding along on Saban's vessel and cruising on jet skis.

"I know Nick Saban gets a rap of being a no-nonsense guy, and a guy that doesn't like talking to the media, and doesn't like being out in public," said former Alabama offensive lineman Mike Johnson. "But what Nick Saban likes even more than that is winning and having talent and doing all those things. For him to step out behind that shadow, I think this is another step in the evolution that is Nick Saban."

It is a calculated move by persnickety coach to alter the perception of his program as a grim football factory belching out robotic players who suppress their personalities in the name of "The Process."

After the Tide experienced a disappointing recruiting cycle this past year, fell to sixth in the national rankings, and lost its firm grip on the top spot it held for seven straight years, Saban initiated a course correction. He overhauled his coaching staff, ushering in a wave of younger assistants who have their fingers on both their mobile devices and the pulse of a generation raised in an Instagram age of selfies, hashtags and commitment videos.

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"That's one thing you've got to give Coach Saban credit for is that he is not one of those old dogs you need to teach new tricks," said former Alabama linebacker Cory Reamer. "For as much as success as he's had, he could have easily been that way. Recruiting is now such a production. And he realizes while it may not be his favorite thing to do, he has to be able to relate to these kids to whatever means are comfortable with, which is social media."

In an SEC that now features a group of coaches who once served as assistants for Saban, the 66-year-old is not stubborn enough to concede an advantage to his chief competitors. But he will go only so far to match them.

Saban doesn't have a Twitter account. Instead, he has both participated in university-produced content and encouraged others connected to the program to market Alabama on his behalf.

Take, for instance, Scott Cochran. The gravelly-voiced, adrenaline-fueled Crimson Tide strength and conditioning coach first appeared on Twitter in February, which surprised Johnson.

"Is this a fake account or are you joining the Twitter scene?" Johnson texted Cochran.

"No," Cochran replied. "That's me. We want to give people a different look at what's going on."

Since his debut on the social media platform, Cochran has posted a slew of clips with current and former players lifting heavy weight, offering a glimpse at what it is like to train with the Crimson Tide. For jocks who aspire to be groomed at Alabama, it's a visual feast.

More so than Saban, Cochran is able to capture the essence of what the Tide is trying to sell to prospects because he fits the bill as a hard-nosed coach who also has a good time.

"I just think that there's some myths about Alabama football that we sort of fight all the time in recruiting," Saban said. "Things like: It's no fun, it's all business. That's not true at all. I think Minkah [Fitzpatrick] said it best: He said 'I didn't come to Alabama to have fun, but I had more fun than I had at any time in my life.' So I think we just try to show the other side. Our players do have a lot of fun. They have a lot of togetherness, a lot of camaraderie in what we do. Alabama is a special place and I think when you go there, you find that out and you relate to it. You have a lot of pride in it. We're just trying to show that side of the program a little bit more."

That is evident to Saban's former players who saw him at the dawn of his tenure in Tuscaloosa, when he was trying to resurrect the Crimson Tide. Back then, several social networks were in their infancy and Saban was busy instituting the strict, buttoned-up, football-obsessed culture that launched a dynasty but now doesn't have the "cool" factor it once did. Still, even in those days, Saban invited his players out to the lake and joked around with them. He just didn't publicize it -- doing his best to stay in character by being the autocratic coach who scowls on the sideline and barks at reporters.
"He did build the persona of being a hard-ass," Reamer said. "I still think he is... As [social media] has become more prevalent in today's society, he can show the side the media never saw and most people never saw that he actually does have time and he has a light side to him."

For so many years, Saban didn't see the benefit of broadcasting that aspect of his personality to the masses. Now he does because of the positive impact it could have on recruiting.

The change in approach, Johnson said, is a result of "self-scouting" and Saban's willingness to adapt.

"It's not a different Nick Saban," Johnson said. "The players know that guy and that's why they love them and that's why he's always known as a players' coach. I just think Nick Saban has always been so guarded and so calculated in terms of the image he puts out. I think this is a way for Nick Saban to say, 'Look, you can get to know the real me and I can also be in charge of what you're seeing.'"

But will he ever relent and create a Twitter account to disseminate that message?

Reamer thought about it for a beat.

"No," he replied. "I don't think he's necessarily going to go to that extent."

The Alabama coach may have softened, but there is a limit to how much he'll bend.
The love of the game is something that gets lost in athletics a lot these days.

For Alabama's Special Olympics College Unified football team, the love of the game is alive and thriving.

As the team began practice Friday afternoon, laughter and high-fives were abundant. The team is preparing for a shot at the gold in this year's Special Olympics in Seattle, Washington. Play begins Monday.

Unified Sports is a burgeoning, inclusive sports initiative in which teams must have at least 50 percent young adults with intellectual disabilities (athletes) and the offset from students (partners), with the local players enrolled at the University of Alabama. Special Olympics College has more than 20 area athletes from the Miracle League and the Special Olympics who partner with UA students to compete in football, basketball and volleyball.

Kemondre Taylor, who has racked up medals in a variety of sports including golds in basketball and softball, will play for the Alabama team. He will do his best to imitate Julio Jones when he lines up at wide receiver in hopes of bringing home another medal.

"This team, it means a lot, they are my best friends," Taylor said. "We practice hard, we get to know each other, have fun and cheer each other up."

Taylor, 27, has never been to Seattle, but he's very excited for this year's trip.

Another excited member of Alabama's team is partner Ivan Bailey, president of UA's Special Olympic College.

"Coming into the University of Alabama I had never really worked with adults with intellectual disabilities," Bailey said. "Coming to this has completely changed my life. I changed my major and I'm out here all the time with these guys."
WOMEN'S GOLF
5 named to WGCA All-American Scholars List

The entire starting lineup of Alabama women's golf was named to the Women's College Golf Association's All-American Scholars List on Tuesday.

Senior Lauren Stephenson, junior Kristen Gillman and sophomore Angelica Moresco join recent graduate Lakareber Abe and Cheyenne Knight, who turned professional in May, on the list of 1,011 student-athletes.

Student-athletes with a cumulative GPA of 3.50 or above who compete in at least half of their team's tournaments are eligible for the honor.

It was Abe's fourth time on the list, Knight's third, Stephenson and Gillman's second, and Moresco's first.

These five honorees brought the total to 40 Alabama women's golfers named to the All-American Scholars List since coach Mic Potter was hired in 2005.
NASA doubles UAB contract

Erin Edgemon  edgemon@al.com

NASA recently doubled its contract with the University of Alabama at Birmingham to $50 million to provide and maintain cold-stowage units for the International Space Station.

The contract is with the UAB Engineering Innovation and Technology Development research group, which is made up of 40 engineers and technicians led by School of Engineering Professor Lee Moradi.

According to UAB, this group has played a key role in NASA ISS research for more than a decade. NASA extended its contract with UAB in 2015.

The group has designed and built a series of freezers capable of maintaining temperatures as low as negative 160 degrees Celsius. Each line of freezers meets specific cold-stowage demands, from storing scientific samples to serving as galley refrigerator/freezers for the ISS crew.

During their use on the ISS, the individual units are monitored by EITD personnel from their Remote Operations Command Center on the UAB campus.

According to UAB, no specific reason was provided for the increased contract amount, but the announcement comes at a time when EITD is expanding its involvement with NASA projects.

In recent months, the group received a five-year contract with the Center for the Advancement of Science in Space, and a $3.6-million project to develop two different rapid-freeze technologies for use on the ISS. The first rapid-freeze technology is near completion and is expected to be launched later this year. In 2017, EITD received a contract worth $6.2 million to design and build a new set of negative 80-degree Celsius freezers to support the increased needs for cold stowage on the ISS.

"These contracts are evidence of the quality of personnel we have in our group," Moradi said. "Our engineers and technicians have an impeccable reputation that has been built over decades, and we have been able to recruit extremely talented young engineers and software developers, including several top UAB students, both graduate and undergraduate."
BIOTECH FIRM'S PRODUCT SEES POSITIVE RESULTS IN UAB TEST

A recent trial by researchers at the University of Alabama at Birmingham yielded positive results for a Birmingham-based biotechnology company's product. UAB researchers successfully used Circulogene's molecular testing to identify multiple mutations in advanced ovarian cancer patients following chemotherapy and surgery.

The trial's results, according to Circulogene, could lead to better and more targeted treatments in late-stage ovarian cancer and other hard-to-treat cancers.

"Researchers discovered significantly more gene mutation in blood biopsy compared to standard next generation sequencing of solid tumor samples," said Circulogene Chief Scientific Officer Chen-Hsiung Yeh. "This research demonstrates the utility of our cell-free DNA testing and its ability to noninvasively identify mutations present at the time of tumor recurrence to help guide therapy."

According to the company, Circulogene had no role in the UAB study design, support or control of that data and information submitted for publication.

Mike Mullen, CEO of Circulogene, said additional research is needed, but said the UAB trial represents a positive step for the company and its bid to improve cancer testing and diagnostics.

"As personalized medicine advances, it will be important for oncologists and pathologists to have access to profiling panels such as Circulogene's testing, which rapidly captures and identifies a variety of potentially actionable mutations in real time without invasive procedures," Mullen said.

Mullen said the company's relationship with UAB is strong as it has been since the company's founding in 2015.

Experts have said forging tight bonds between Birmingham biotech firms and UAB could help boost economic and job growth in the area, particularly in the
Drones Take Flight for Local Government

By: Ben Miller

Once a bulky, powerful tool mostly used in the armed forces, drones have finally reached the hands of average people and the local governments that serve them.

And they have a lot of ideas: Use drones to gather intelligence during rapidly evolving public safety situations. Fly them above fires to get better information on how to put them out. Send defibrillators to people having heart attacks.

Drones would be doing all those things, except that the Federal Aviation Administration’s regulations make them impractical. Operators can’t fly drones above groups of people, at night or beyond their line of sight without getting waivers that can take months to receive.

So the FAA has set out to relax those restrictions. The administration is running a program, called the Unmanned Aerial System Integration Pilot Program, where local government and private partners will run tests doing exactly the kinds of things they can’t currently do. The idea is that the FAA will observe the tests and use what they learn to rewrite the rules.

The 10 test sites they selected in May — the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma; San Diego; Herndon, Va.; Kansas; North Dakota; the Mosquito Control District in Lee County, Fla.; the Memphis-Shelby County Airport Authority; North Carolina; Reno, Nev.; and the University of Alaska Fairbanks — will become important locations in influencing the future of drone use in the U.S., especially as it concerns state and local government.

But in running the contest, the FAA gathered ideas from a lot more places than it chose. In all, 150 different communities applied. The list of people who signed up as interested parties is even longer — more than 2,500 people from all across the country, and some from other countries, contacted the administration.

In reviewing that list, Government Technology found that there are some places in the U.S. that look like particular hot spots for public-interest drone use. In fact, some of them were sparsely populated areas that exhibited more interest than major cities.

The four that really stood out were Huntsville, Ala.; the Washington, D.C.-Northern Virginia area; Denver; and the state of Montana.

In the end, only one of those areas — Northern Virginia — featured a winning applicant. But the four areas, being diverse and geographically distant from each other, hold a lot of insight into how drones might become important for government in the future as they become easier to operate in more situations.

DENVER AND COLORADO

The restriction probably holding back drones the most is the prohibition on flying beyond the operator’s line of sight.

See next page
Ben Miller, director of the Colorado Center of Excellence for Advanced Technology Aerial Firefighting (and of no relation to the author of this article), knows first-hand why that’s important. He used to fly drones for the Mesa County, Colo., Sheriff’s Office.

“I flew drones on guys with guns,” he said. “I would’ve loved to be farther away from them.”

There are a lot of reasons Denver, and Colorado in general, might be a hot spot for drones. Miller points out that there’s a history of aviation in the state — the U.S. Air Force Academy sits just outside Colorado Springs. And there’s a thriving tech industry in the Denver area.

Mark Edson, a deputy sheriff in the Arapahoe County, Colo., Sheriff’s Office, thinks the weather might have something to do with it, too.

“I would say having 300 sunny days a year is beneficial to drone flight,” he said.

Edson and Nate Fogg, the Sheriff’s Office’s emergency manager, have several ideas for how they would use drones if restrictions were relaxed.

The county they protect has some unique challenges. It’s shaped like a long rectangle, more than 70 miles from end to end stretching from the southern suburbs of Denver to the grassy fields out east. It’s a long trek from one side to the other.

They have a lot of things to monitor in that rectangle — particularly fire. All that grass is good fuel for a blaze. Then there’s the matter of regular explosions nearby.

“We have a former bombing range … for the Air Force from the end of World War II up through Vietnam,” Fogg said. “The Army Corps of Engineers is still doing all the work of the unexploded ordnance out there, and it’s not uncommon to have a fire.”

Sending a fire truck and crew out to see whether a column of smoke is a blaze or just a run-of-the-mill detonation isn’t a good use of resources. For that matter, neither is sending a truck out to a reported fire only to find out that it wasn’t needed.

Flying a drone would be better. But if an operator isn’t able to fly beyond their line of sight, they would have to travel along with the drone.

There’s also the matter of flooding. In 2013, Arapahoe was one of several counties in the area overwhelmed with water during an intense storm. In responding to those kinds of situations, emergency officials need to know where the damage is and what kind of situation they’re headed into.

“Landscape changes,” Fogg said. “We had … channels changing, roads that disappeared, that sort of thing. So we can get good images, use that for disaster planning [and] financial reimbursement through the federal government if it’s available.”

MONTANA

Montana had a particularly bad fire season last year, with blazes sweeping across more than a million acres of land.
“Last year, our fire season ran pretty late. It ran through September,” said Jennifer Fowler, director of autonomous aerial systems at the University of Montana. “So then the land managers are automatically going, ‘What do I need to do for restoration? We’re talking about logging operations, do I need to be out there planting trees and when do I do that?’”

Fire is one reason Fowler thinks her state showed so much interest in the FAA’s drone program. She also pointed out that the state doesn’t have a very dense population or a lot of airports — which means there’s a lot of more-or-less unrestricted airspace. In other words, it’s an easy environment to test in.

“Our certificates of authorization tend to be much less complicated because our air space is much easier to work in,” she said.

There are a lot of ways drones might help firefighters. Operators could use them to get a better view of where a fire has spread to, which could give them a better idea of how to fight it. As crews move into areas that have been burned, drones mounted with thermal cameras could point out hot spots on the ground.

Fire departments are already starting to do these things. But it’s fairly hard to do while complying with the rule to not operate the drone beyond visual line of sight.

“Particularly in western Montana, the pilot could be on one side of a mountain and the drone could be on the other side,” Fowler said.

Drones could also help perform work to prevent fires from getting so bad; more efficiently so if they could be flown beyond the operator’s field of vision. Land managers can use them to do studies of forests — how many trees there are in which places, what the moisture conditions are, how much fuel there is for a blaze.

And it’s not just FAA regulations preventing some of these things from happening. Fowler can tick off a host of questions she has that will affect when and where drones are actually practical for government to use — how long do the batteries last? How fast can a drone deliver its data to a user? What about in places lacking a good Internet connection?

“What’s the maximum size of a fire that a UAV can actually fly, get the information, process it and get it back to a manager so they can actually do something with the information?” she said. “And depending on how many pictures you’re taking, doing photo barometry, it could take up to 24 hours just to process the information and then you’ve missed your deadline.”

HUNTSVILLE, ALA.

Huntsville, population 180,000, is perhaps one of the most disproportionately technology-heavy cities in the U.S. It’s home to a public university, a NASA space center that was instrumental in the 1960s Space Race, and the U.S. Army Aviation and Missile Command.

See next page
And Dave Arterburn, director of the Rotorcraft Systems Engineering and Simulation Center at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, thinks it’s a great place to test drones. That’s because of the diversity of its air space — in addition to all the military aircraft around, Huntsville is an inland port with rail and truck service as well as an airport. It has an urban core, suburbs and lots of surrounding rural areas.

“We have all types of air space related to specific issues in air operation,” he said.

Arterburn is particularly interested in package delivery, and the ability of drones to streamline the whole process.

“We’re talking about the range of delivery, all the way down from cargo to personal delivery,” he said.

But there are a lot of other ways he could see drones being helpful with relaxed restrictions. One of them is studying the weather and improving forecasting models.

With balloon launches, weather forecasters can get a lot of information. But balloons have a tendency to drift. Drones go where they’re told.

Specifically, that means scientists could use them to move up and down vertical columns of air with all the sensors they need to gather good data. To do that, they would probably need to fly up high enough that operators on the ground couldn’t see them anymore.

“If you can gather all the same [information] but for columns of air ahead of the front … those models become much more accurate,” Arterburn said.

Finally, he has an interest in studying ways to help drones navigate on their own when an operator isn’t directly controlling their movements. In particular, he said, the government can use buildings as markers to help drones orient themselves.

That could free them to draw their own routes, keeping out of restricted air space and dangerous areas while traveling to where they can do something useful for a public agency. Or, perhaps, deliver a package.

“My building at UAH isn’t going anywhere, so why not let the UAS use that as a highly accurate point of navigation that doesn’t cost the city a lot?” Arterburn said.

GREATER WASHINGTON, D.C.

Most people interviewed for this article pointed to one particular driver of drone use and development in the U.S. — the military.

So it makes sense that the nation’s capital city, home to the Department of Defense, would be a key area for drone use. John Coffey, a retired naval aviator, is well familiar with it.

“Watching over the past 10 years how the market’s transitioned from pretty much military-only use for unmanned systems into the commercial space and now the consumer space is very, very exciting,” he said.

See next page
Coffey is now executive director of unmanned systems with Cherokee Nation Technologies, which acted as a private-sector partner for multiple applications in the FAA’s drone program (it’s part of the successful Alaska proposal). He pointed to a common understanding of the three Ds of drones: dull, dirty and dangerous work.

“Going out and surveying a farm or surveying a forest, which is just a boring mission … that very same forest that you just surveyed that was healthy and doing well catches on fire, and now you’re going from a very dull mission to a very dangerous mission surveying wildfires,” he said.

Thomas Zajkowski, a program manager for Cherokee Nation Technologies and also a flight operations manager at North Carolina State University, sees sort of a backward relationship between D.C. and state and local government when it comes to drones.

That is, a lot of those governments rely on the federal government to provide drone operations when needed. If a fire or some other incident is too small to merit federal attention, they might not have access to drones.

But if the FAA lowers the bar for operation and those governments can use drones more easily, that might not matter as much.

“That gives them information they need quicker that they wouldn’t have had unless they had a bigger response,” he said. “They would have had to wait for the federal government to get there.”

The winning proposal from the area was from the Center for Innovative Technology in Herndon, Va., close to Washington Dulles International Airport. That proposal is broad, but will include urban and rural package delivery, mapping technology, radar and more.

**READY FOR TAKE-OFF**

There’s a whole constellation of other possible uses for drones among state and local governments. They might use drones to inspect infrastructure. They might use them to deliver supplies to disaster victims. They could send them out to spray mosquitos with pesticide. They could grab quick imagery of a crime scene. They could map nature trails or search for missing hikers.

In fact, local governments are already doing most of those things.

The key to the future, according to Miller, is expanding their ability to do those things. If government operators can use drones above people, at night and in remote places, they could do all of those better, faster and at more convenient times.

“The benefit of UAS is mobility,” he said. “You’re giving mobility to things that had limited mobility before.”

And as costs come down and operating restrictions get rolled back, Miller said he has a fourth D to add to the list.

“I might say dull, dirty, dangerous and democratized,” he said.
South Alabama pushing for on-campus football stadium

The Associated Press

MOBILE — University of South Alabama officials are asking for $15 million to help build an on-campus football stadium.

The university is asking for $10 million from the city and $5 million from taxpayers, WALA reported. There was no vote to approve the contributions during a meeting with about 250 supporters last week, but it could happen after a meeting on July 10.

"A lot of students ... just don't like to make that drive and they would rather have it on campus," senior football player Collier Smith said.

University officials estimate the stadium would cost about $75 million.

"Over the years, supporters of South Alabama football have been vocal about their desire to see an on-campus stadium. We now have an opportunity to make that desire a reality," University of South Alabama Athletic Director Joel Erdmann said.

South Alabama students, staff and administrators showed their support of the football stadium during the meeting to county and city leaders. But some question if the on-campus stadium would be in the best interest of Mobile financially.

South Alabama football home games are being played at the 70-year-old Ladd-Peebles Stadium, about 8 miles southeast of campus. The new stadium would be built at the current intramural field on campus, near the practice facility under construction.

"I have no problem (with South Alabama having its) own football stadium, but I do question if this is in the best interest of Mobile to financially support it," said Ann Davis, chairman of the board for Ladd-Peebles Stadium.

If the city agrees to provide $10 million toward an on-campus stadium, the university would provide the city with $2.5 million for turning Ladd into more of a high school stadium.

"You are offering us the best proposition we're probably going to see yet," Mayor Stimpson said.
Crowd cheers on stadium project

South Alabama’s AD, president state case for city, county funding

Greg Stephenson  cstephenson@al.com

Mobile's Government Plaza Auditorium was awash in red on Tuesday. More than 250 University of South Alabama students, staff members and supporters — the majority of them clad in school colors — traveled downtown for the Mobile County Commission and Mobile City Council meetings. Dominating both meeting agendas was a discussion of the university's plan to build an on-campus football stadium, and requests to both the city and county for help with funding.

South Alabama athletics director Joel Erdmann, President Tony Waldrop and national alumni association leader Doug Whitmore spoke at the meetings. Dozens of others, including first-year football coach Steve Campbell and a number of Jaguars football players, were also on hand.

SEE STADIUM, A4
STADIUM
FROM A1

"I think it shows the sincere and deep interest and love of what we’re doing by our students and our fan base," Erdmann said. "It was a little orchestrated, but they would have been here anyway, I believe. We wanted to make sure we made the right impression, and I think we did."

Nevertheless, neither the commission nor the council voted on the request, which calls for $5 million from the county and $10 million from the city. The total cost of the stadium, which the university hopes to open for the 2020 season, is estimated at $73 million.

District 3 County Commissioner Jerry Carl showed enthusiasm for the project, playing to the crowd by exclaiming "Go Jags!" into the microphone as he sat down to begin the meeting. He later told Erdmann, "You have my full support."

The other two commissioners — Merce- ria Ludgood of District 1 and Connie Hudson of District 2 — were more hesitant, expressing concern about the future of city-owned Ladd-Peebles Stadium. The Jaguars have played home games at the aging Midtown stadium since the university launched football in 2009.

The Reese’s Senior Bowl, Dollar General Bowl and Gulf Coast Classic also play their annual games at Ladd-Peebles, but have been invited to move to the campus stadium rent-free once it’s ready.

Mayor Sandy Stimpson on Tuesday reiterated his backing for the university’s project, noting that upkeep on Ladd-Peebles will cost $33 million over a 20-year period, as opposed to a one-time $10 million allocation for the campus stadium.

Stimpson said that the 70-year-old Ladd-Peebles would be converted into a high school and middle school sports venue, with parking lots becoming green spaces and playgrounds. The university would contribute $2.3 million toward the transformation effort.

"Simply put, this is a $100 million challenge that the city and the county have," Stimpson said. "If we have to build a new stadium to replace Ladd, the estimate would be $100 million. ... At some point, stadiums outlive their useful life."

The mayor said that the university "is offering us the best proposition we are likely going to get."

District 4 Councilman John C. Williams said that a vote on the request may not come until the meeting on July 10.

"This is the first time that we have had this proposal before us, so it’s our opportunity to begin discussions," said Councilwoman Gina Gregory, whose District 7 takes in the university.

"I think all you can do is provide as much information as you can in a logical and factual way, to the best of your ability. They have to make the decisions after that. As long as we work hard declaring our case, we can sleep at night."

Joel Erdmann, South Alabama athletics director

A handful of audience members rejected the idea that Ladd-Peebles is outdated and that an on-campus stadium offers citywide benefits. Ann Davis, chair of the Ladd-Peebles board of directors, said that the university ought to have to "show donor and sponsor support" before asking for local government dollars.

Timothy Hollis, a community activist, questioned the expenditure of public funds for the stadium project.

"USA has more than $350 million in assets," said Hollis, a former radio personality who has in the past run for City Council. "Nine Division I colleges have built stadiums without the help of their cities and counties in the last decade. ... If the city thinks that they’re going to vote and give my money that I pay in taxes to South Alabama, we’ll boycott and we’ll protest."

The university rents Ladd-Peebles at a cost of $30,000 per home game, with additional fees for using the parking lot and installing a video replay board as required by the NCAA. The university also bears the costs of ferrying the team, band and others back and forth from campus to Midtown. All told, the school spends approximately $500,000 per year to play at Ladd-Peebles.

Erdmann said he feels "confident" that the university will reach its fundraising goals outside of any money provided by the city and county, though he declined to say how much has already been promised from donors and sponsors.

Of Tuesday’s presentations, he said, "I think all you can do is provide as much information as you can in a logical and factual way, to the best of your ability. They have to make the decisions after that. As long as we work hard declaring our case, we can sleep at night."

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Council pledges care on USA stadium deal

Lawrence Specker lspecker@al.com

At the end of a day in which University of South Alabama supporters flooded Mobile County Commission and Mobile City Council meetings, a much smaller, far quieter committee meeting might well have set the course for a pivotal stadium discussion.

The council is giving itself plenty of time to make up its mind on a proposal for the city to chip in $10 million to USA’s new venue and redevelop the site of its aging Ladd-Peabodys Stadium. Council members haven’t said what way they’ll vote or even when. But the five present demanded no compromises, listed no deal-breakers and drew no lines in the sand.

Instead, they made clear that because so much was at stake, they were going to very carefully consider the pros and cons before making a long-term commitment with far-reaching ramifications.

“This is really our first opportunity to ask questions and look at the proposal,” said Councilwoman Gina Gregory, who chaired the ad hoc subcommittee on economic development. “It’s a first blush. It may require more than two weeks. Because again, there are a lot of questions that we need to answer before we are really in a place where we can vote.”

USA’s leadership has decided it’s time to build an on-campus football stadium for the Jaguars. That’s likely to cost $75 million, and the university is seeking some support from the city and county.

Mayor Sandy Stimpson has presented the council with a letter of intent which, if approved, would commit the city to give USA $1 million—$500,000 a year for 20 years—to help with debt service on the project. When USA’s stadium is ready for use, it would award the city a lump sum of $2.5 million to redevelop Ladd-Peabodys.

Stimpson, at Gregory’s invitation, spoke at length about the reasoning behind the deal. He said he was looking for a “win-win-win.” The city could escape the cost of keeping up Ladd-Peabodys, which he says needs millions in deferred maintenance; USA could enter a new era with an on-campus stadium; the Senior Bowl, the Dollar General Bowl and the Gulf Coast Classic could stay in Mobile but move to the new stadium; and the community around Ladd-Peabodys would benefit from a redeveloped venue better suited to high school games and featuring recreational amenities.

Stimpson said he was convinced that helping USA was the most practical, economical way to go. If the city opted to leave the university to its own devices and stick with Ladd-Peabodys for another 20 years, he said, it would spend far more and end up with a near-century-old stadium on its hands.

The question of Ladd-Peabodys’ fate, and that of the neighborhoods around it, clearly was an issue of some concern. Councilman C.J. Small said that major events at Ladd-Peabodys bring some wholesome excitement to a disadvantaged area, and make it possible for residents to walk to events that they might otherwise have difficulty reaching.

Stimpson said he’d encourage the community to envision a redeveloped Ladd-Peabodys comparable to the Archbishop Oscar F. Lipscomb Complex built by McGill-Toolen Catholic High School: A playing field and parking area, with new grandstands suitable for high school games, surrounded by new recreational features.

“The city and community will end up with a much more robust facility that can be used for multipurpose reasons and bring vibrancy back to what is the Ladd and Maysville community today,” he said.

Council members said they would like to allow some time for Stimpson and his administration to communicate that vision, to ease the concerns they’re hearing from their constituents.

An undercurrent of the discussion, and the evident source of some public concern, was the question of whether the redevelopment of Ladd-Peabodys would be a teardown or an act of preservation. USA Trustee Jim Yance introduced some different terminology. It was better to think of it as “downsizing,” he said: The field and its history would remain, and the community wouldn’t just be left with a crater.

“My understanding, from what the mayor said, and what I’m all for, was not only downsizing— not tearing up Ladd, I played football there—but downsizing Ladd, but also [adding] a recreational facility on that property.”

Yance said he reckoned that USA’s $2.5 million payment to Mobile would be enough to cover the removal of the old grandstands, the erection of new ones, plus new lighting and a scoreboard, and still leave enough to at least partially fund “a very nice facility for those people in that neighborhood, who I agree need it, and should have it. And we’re willing to provide that.”

Near the end of the meeting, Councilman Fred Richardson reiterated a point Gregory had made near the beginning.

“We’re going through this slow,” he said. “There are those who’d like us to speed, we’re not doing that. We’re going to ask all questions. In the end, we want the people we represent to have a clear understanding of what we’re going to do and how it will benefit them.”
ON THE MOVE

AUBURN NAMES NEW DEAN FOR HARBERT COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

Auburn University has selected Annette Ranft as the eighth dean of the Harbert College of Business. She will start the role on Aug. 1. Ranft joins the Harbert College of Business from North Carolina State University's Poole College of management, where she had served as dean and chair since July 2016. She succeeds Bill Hardgrave, who became Auburn University's provost and senior vice president for academic affairs in January after more than seven years as dean.

Ranft was named to the Wall Street Journal's 2012 list of top female business school administrators.

One of Ranft's immediate priorities, according to Auburn University, will be to participate in an alumni listening tour that will enable her to meet key stakeholders.
Georgia woman says daughter was raped by JSU athlete

By: William Thorton

A Georgia woman says her daughter was raped last year on the campus of Jacksonville State University by an athlete at the school, according to a report by the Anniston Star.

The woman also says that school officials helped prevent the case from being prosecuted, the newspaper said in a story published today. The university has denied the allegation.

The paper's months-long investigation also stated that JSU's police chief, Shawn Giddy, is no longer employed by the school. That was confirmed by University spokeswoman Buffy Lockette.

According to the paper, a female Georgia resident whose name is not given in the story, says a male JSU athlete forced her to have sex with him in a dorm room on July 22, 2017, while she was on campus for a summer program for prospective freshmen.

The family further claims that a grand jury heard the allegations last year and returned an indictment. That indictment, however, was rescinded and the case was placed before a second grand jury which did not indict him, they said.

The woman who made the allegation, according to the Star, decided not to attend JSU.

Lockette told the Star the university has not protected any student from prosecution. The university released a statement today saying it "strives to provide a safe learning environment for our diverse population of students.

"All credible reports of misconduct are investigated and, if criminal activity is suspected, the matter is referred to local and state authorities," the statement reads. "Once referred, we cooperate fully and in no way interfere or request specific results. The university has not deviated from this commitment and practice."

Calhoun County District Attorney Brian McVeigh, without commenting directly on the case, told the Star there is no statute of limitations on rape cases, meaning the matter could possibly come before another grand jury with new information.
Football program ranks No. 1 in Tuscaloosa News annual rankings of Alabama sports programs 5th time in 8 years

By Tommy Deas
Executive Sports Editor

Football continues to reign supreme at Alabama, with the Crimson Tide football team winning another national championship and again topping the annual rankings of UA athletic teams by The Tuscaloosa News sports department staff.

The Alabama football team was rated as the top team on campus for the 2017-18 school year, marking the fifth time in the last eight years that football has topped the rankings.

Men's and women's golf, which both lost in the match-play finals at the NCAA Championship to finish second nationally, were ranked second and third, respectively. Men's track and field, fresh off a top-five finish at the NCAA Outdoor championships, placed fifth and was the only team to win an SEC championship in the school-year cycle, claiming the conference indoor crown.

Baseball and women's tennis were the bottom two teams, as they were last year.

RANKING THE TIDE

1. FOOTBALL

Coach: Nick Saban
Record: 13-1
SEC record: 7-1
SEC finish: Second in Western Division
National finish: College Football Playoff champion
2. MEN'S GOLF

Coach: Jay Seawell
SEC finish: Second in match play
National finish: Second at NCAA Championship

3. WOMEN'S GOLF

Coach: Mic Potter
SEC finish: Semifinalist in match play
National finish: Second at NCAA Championship

4. MEN'S TRACK AND FIELD

Coach: Dan Waters
SEC finish: First indoors, fourth outdoors
National finish: Ninth at NCAA Indoor Championships, fifth at NCAA Outdoor Championships

5. GYMNASTICS

Coach: Dana Duckworth
Record: 7-4
SEC record: 5-2
SEC finish: Second
National finish: Eighth at NCAA Championships

6. SOFTBALL

Coach: Patrick Murphy
Record: 36-20
SEC record: 12-12
SEC finish: Eighth
National finish: No. 14 ranking/NCAA super regional

7. MEN'S CROSS COUNTRY

Coach: Dan Waters
SEC finish: Second
National finish: 14th at NCAA Championships

See next page
8. MEN'S SWIMMING AND DIVING
Coach: Dennis Pursley
Record: 2-3
SEC record: 0-2
SEC finish: Eighth
National finish: 13th at NCAA Championships

9. MEN'S BASKETBALL
Coach: Avery Johnson
Record: 20-16
SEC record: 8-10
SEC finish: Ninth
National finish: Second round of NCAA Tournament

10. MEN'S TENNIS
Coach: George Husack
Record: 20-13
SEC record: 2-10
SEC finish: Quarterfinals of SEC Tournament (12th in regular season)
National finish: Round of 16 at NCAA Championships

11. SOCCER
Coach: Wes Hart
Record: 12-8-1
SEC record: 4-5-1
SEC finish: Seventh
National finish: First round of NCAA Tournament

12. WOMEN'S CROSS COUNTRY
Coach: Dan Waters
SEC finish: Seventh
National finish: Ninth at NCAA South Regional

13. WOMEN'S BASKETBALL
Coach: Kristy Curry
Record: 20-14
SEC record: 7-8
SEC finish: Eighth
National finish: Quarterfinals of Women's NIT

See next page
14. WOMEN'S SWIMMING AND DIVING

Coach: Dennis Pursley
Record: 4-2
SEC record: 1-1
SEC finish: 10th
National finish: 30th at NCAA Championships

15. VOLLEYBALL

Coach: Ed Allen
Record: 18-14
SEC record: 6-12
SEC finish: 10th

16. WOMEN'S TRACK AND FIELD

Coach: Dan Waters
SEC finish: Ninth indoors, ninth outdoors
National finish: 45th at NCAA Indoor Championships, 46th at NCAA Outdoor Championships

17. ROWING

Coach: Larry Davis
Big 12 finish: Fifth*
*Rowing competes in Big 12; the SEC does not sponsor rowing as a sport

18. BASEBALL

Coach: Brad Bohannon
Record: 27-29
SEC record: 9-22
SEC finish: Seventh in Western Division

19. WOMEN'S TENNIS

Coach: Jenny Mainz
Record: 15-15
SEC record: 2-11
SEC finish: 13th

See next page
Here is a look at how Alabama athletic teams have been ranked, on average, against each other by the sports staff of The Tuscaloosa News over the last eight years, with each program’s highest and lowest ranking in that period:

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Here is a look at how Alabama fared against the other 13 SEC teams in dual, head-to-head competition in the 2017-18 school year:

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Total          | 32-49 | 40-58-1 | 72-107-1 |

Winning percentage: .395 .409 .402
Former UA gymnast joins coaching staff

Staff report

Aja Sims, an All-American on two events as an Alabama gymnast, has joined the Crimson Tide coaching squad as a volunteer assistant coach.

Head coach Dana Duckworth announced Sims’ addition to the staff on Tuesday.

“I am beyond thrilled that Aja has accepted the volunteer assistant coach position at the University of Alabama,” Duckworth said. “She loves this university with all of her heart and she is an extraordinary example to our recruits and current team. She will be an amazing asset to our ladies not only because of her positive attitude but her infectious personality and passion to achieve competitive greatness that fits with everything we stand for at Alabama.”

Sims, who graduated in December 2017 with a degree in exercise science, was a balance beam and floor exercise All-American and was a member of two teams that won SEC titles and four that reached the NCAA Super Six.

“I am so excited to be a part of the staff this year and have the opportunity to give back to a program that has given me so much,” Sims said. “To be able to continue to be a part of Alabama gymnastics’ championship legacy is such an incredible honor. I love Tuscaloosa and having the opportunity to be a part of the Crimson Tide family every day.”

Alabama’s Aja Sims reacts after dismounting from balance beam in a meet against Iowa State at Coleman Coliseum in Tuscaloosa Friday, March 10, 2017. [STAFF FILE PHOTO/ERIN NELSON]
SEC competition mostly outperformed UA

By Cameron Greenwood
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

Despite having several teams compete for national championships in the 2017-18 school year, Alabama athletics did not perform well against SEC competition, going 72-107-1 in head-to-head, dual competition.

The Crimson Tide had a winning record against only one school, Vanderbilt, going a combined 4-3 against the Commodores in both men’s and women’s sports.

As for rivalry matchups, Alabama posted records of 10-15 against Auburn, 6-10 against Tennessee, and 6-7-1 against LSU, with the draw coming in a midseason soccer match.

Unsurprisingly, football posted the best record and winning percentage against SEC opponents, going 8-1 for a winning percentage of .888, including the thrilling overtime victory against Georgia in the national championship game.

Dana Duckworth led the Crimson Tide gymnastics program to a 6-2 record against SEC opponents for a .750 win percentage, second-best at Alabama in the past school year.

Alabama’s head-to-head dual record overall wasn’t helped by the fact that some of its best teams – men’s and women’s golf and men’s and women’s basketball – play few if any dual competitions, with golf only going head-to-head against SEC opponents in match play at the SEC Championships.

Men’s swimming and diving lost both of its head-to-head matchups in conference last season, technically posting the worst SEC winning percentage, but most of UA’s competitions in this sport are meets with three or more teams competing. The Alabama men finished 13th at the NCAA Championships.

Women’s tennis had the worst actual SEC record, going 2-12 in conference play for a .142 winning percentage.
COLLEGE FOOTBALL

NCAA preparing minority assistants for the next step

Stephen Whyno  Associated Press

OXON HILL, MD. — Camera lighting made beads of sweat emerge from Tony Elliott’s forehead as he fielded questions ranging from football philosophy to something he could share about his private life.

The Clemson co-offensive coordinator paused, smiled and couldn’t hide his joy about riding an all-terrain vehicle through the woods. The walls broke down as Elliott made a human connection with mock interviewer Jon Oliver in the best possible preparation he can get for a head coaching job.

Despite helping the Tigers win a national title, Elliott has never interviewed for a head coaching job.

"Two phone calls," Elliott said. College football as a public entity can’t institute a Rooney Rule like the NFL, which compels teams to interview minority candidates for head coaching jobs. So instead of focusing all of its efforts on the schools, the NCAA is putting some of its rising coaching candidates through its Champion Forum to better prepare them for the interview process.

It is an effort to increase the diversity in the Power Five conferences and across the country.

"You can’t shame people into hiring people," said Oliver, a former University of Virginia athletics administrator who now works with the Champion Forum. "You can’t tell (schools) what they need to be doing. But what we can do is make sure (the candidates) are ready."

Minorities make up only 19 percent of Division I head football coaches and less across the Power Five conferences: the ACC, SEC, Big Ten, Big 12 and Pac 12. In contrast, 61 percent of Division I players are minorities.

The Champion Forum has helped Penn State’s James Franklin, Vanderbilt’s Derek Mason, Stanford’s David Shaw, Arizona’s Kevin Sumlin and others get head coaching jobs, with the aim of pushing along the next generation.

Elliott, Michigan assistant head coach Pep Hamilton, LSU defensive coordinator Dave Aranda, Florida State defensive coordinator Harlon Barnett, South Carolina offensive coordinator Bryan McClendon and Navy offensive coordinator Irvin Jasper are all part of the latest class. Picked by their conferences and schools to go through the program, they’re all in Phase

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FROM BI
2, which includes one-on-one mock interviews, conversations with search firms and information about contracts and what to expect from being a head coach.

"It's just the knowledge of what goes into becoming a head coach, what athletic directors look for, what search firms look for," said Jasper, who has been a candidate for jobs at Georgia Southern, Yale and Rice during his time at Navy. "Having those tools in our toolbox now and know what people look for, now we can address those issues and work on getting better at it."

Jasper and Elliott had back-to-back mock interviews with their wives seated a few feet away. Oliver played the role of the interviewer for a job at a fictional Atlantic University in Florida, firing questions at each coach about a head job and asking if they had any questions of their own.

Afterward, Oliver critiqued them on everything from how fast they were talking to what they shouldn't have said. Oliver has seen coaches go from not being able to finish answers to having a better idea of what to expect the next time the phone rings about an opening.

"Had I not gone through this process, I wouldn't have known what I was getting into," Elliott said. "I wouldn't have been encouraged to go prepare in the areas where I needed to prepare to ultimately be successful. Because at the end of the day, it's not just becoming a head coach, it's being a successful head coach and building a successful program."

The success of coaches like Franklin helps because Oliver is well aware that minority coaches who don't succeed are less likely to get a second chance. In his eight years running the Champion Forum, director of NCAA leadership development Curtis Hollomon has seen progress with more minority coaches being in the mix for openings.

"What we've seen is the awareness of these coaches," Hollomon said. "That's one of the main things that we're trying to do: let them know that these coaches are out there, they're in these positions and they're ready when the opportunities present themselves."

The program includes two steps of interview training, video clips to show strengths and weaknesses, and an in-person follow-up by former Washington Redskins general manager Charley Casserly and other officials. This year, the NCAA invited the coordinators' wives to sit in on the program and welcomed their input.

"It made me realize how much he has grown," said Elliott's wife, Taneka. "Just watching him grow and seeing his transition and seeing how he has to interact with more people than he was used to interacting with -- not just the player and the family. Now you've got the AD and fundraisers, stuff like that."

Jasper learned from his Rice interview to have questions prepared, and Oliver told Elliott not to broach a topic but to expect it to be brought up by the interviewer. Recognizing they're getting plenty of help from the process, coaches also understand they have to do their homework and earn the jobs they're being prepared for.

"It's a great initiative in what they're doing in giving guys an opportunity to just be considered," Elliott said. "And then from there, we've got to do our part. We've got to go get the job, we've got to be the best person for the job and then when we get the job we've got to be successful."
Savage steps down as UA radio analyst

By Cecil Hurt
Sports Editor

Phil Savage, who served nine years as the color analyst for the University of Alabama football radio broadcasts on the Crimson Tide Sports Network, will not return for the 2018 season.

Savage said via social media that he is stepping down from the post to devote more time to his new job with the Phoenix franchise in the Alliance of American Football.

"Coach Mal Moore and the Crimson Tide Sports Network gave me an opportunity to audition during the 2009 A-Day game," said via his Twitter account. "Little did we know that one game would turn into nine incredible years as the color analyst alongside Eli Gold. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time spent focused on college football, at the Reese's Senior Bowl and with the University of Alabama, but am looking forward to being back in professional football as the General Manager of the Phoenix franchise in the new Alliance of American Football league, in addition to continuing my other football-related pursuits. Thank you to Jim Carabin and the entire CTSN team for your constant support, to Coach Nick Saban, all of the coaches, players and staff members for making this such a memorable experience and to all of our listeners across the state, nation and around the world for tuning in each and every Saturday. Roll Tide!"

Savage, 53, replaced the late Kenny Stabler in the broadcast booth alongside play-by-play announcer Eli Gold, bringing a more analytical, but still popular, style to the broadcast. He had written a book about his experiences, "4th and Goal Every Day," in 2017.

Prior to coming to Alabama, Savage had served as general manager for the Cleveland Browns of the NFL. He was also named executive director of the Senior Bowl in 2012 but left that position last May in what he described as a "mutual parting of the ways."

Carabin, the general manager of CTSN, was not immediately available on Thursday to discuss the timetable for Savage's successor in the UA booth.

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

See SAVAGE, C3
Recruiting fireworks for Bama

Tide football lands 19th commitment, basketball gets first 2019 commitment

Staff report

The hour was late but the news was good for the University of Alabama football program on Tuesday night.

The Crimson Tide received its 19th commitment for its 2019 recruiting class just before midnight as Byron Young, a 6-foot-4, 275-pound defensive end from West Jones High School in Laurel, Mississippi, announced he would sign with UA in December, choosing Alabama over Georgia and Mississippi State.

"After much consideration, I have decided to commit," Jones said on his Twitter account on Tuesday night. "I'd like to thank every school that has shown interest in me, large or small. I'd like to thank my coaches for believing in me even when I didn't believe in myself and for pushing me beyond the limits I set for myself. I'd like to thank all my teammates for pushing me at practice and for all the great times we've had so far over my football career."

"I also want to thank my friends that have been there for me even before I was being noticed for football (especially Abby and Jon-Micah.) I'd like to thank my family for all the sacrifices they've made to put me in the position I'm in today. From my mother to my sister they have all pushed me academically and physically to places beyond (where) I ever thought I'd be.

"Last but not least I'd like to thank the man up above for giving me the talent and the ability to play this sport I love. With that being said I'd like to announce my commitment to the University of Alabama. Roll Tide Roll."

Jones was rated the No. 9 prospect in Mississippi by the Jackson Clarion-Ledger and was recently rated as a Top 150 player nationally by Rivals.com. He is the second player from the state of Mississippi to commit to Alabama's 2019 class, joining wide receiver/defensive back Brandon Turnage of Oxford. UA also continues to recruit that state's No. 1 prospect, five-star linebacker Nakobe Dean of Horn Lake.

The Alabama men's basketball program received its first commitment for the 2019 class as 6-foot-7 forward Diante

See TIDE, C3
Smith of Choctaw High School in Ft. Walton Beach, Fla., announced on his Twitter account that he had chosen the Crimson Tide.

Smith, who took an unofficial visit to Alabama on June 18, also considered Florida, Auburn, LSU, South Florida and other major programs. He is ranked as a 4-star prospect and the No. 120 prospect in the USA by the Rivals recruiting service. He averaged 17.5 points and 6.8 rebounds for Choctaw last season.

He has drawn comparisons to Alabama sophomore Herb Jones because of his athleticism and versatility with the ball.

"I think he will find a lot of success on the next level, the kid is a big time playmaker with the ball in his hands and he knows how to play without it," 1Family Co-Director Darryl Hardin told Zag's Blog, a New York-based recruiting blog. "He is a dog on defense and can guard multiple positions."

Alabama is continuing to recruit several prospects for the upcoming November signing period including top in-state prospects Kira Lewis, a point guard from Hazel Green, and Mountain Brook forward Trendon Watford.
Alabama finishes 14th in Director’s Cup, best in school history

Ben Jones
Sports Writer

Alabama's athletic department hit a new high-water mark, finishing 14th nationally in the 2017-18 standings for the Learfield Director's Cup.

The previous best for the program was 15th: UA finished there both in 1993-94 and 1994-95. It was the second straight year Alabama has improved, from 36th overall in 2015-16 to 25th in 2016-17. The Crimson Tide finished fourth among SEC schools.

The Director’s Cup awards points throughout the school year based on athletic programs finish in NCAA championships. It has been awarded annually since 1993-94.

“What an outstanding accomplishment for our athletics department,” UA Director of Athletics Greg Byrne said in a news release. “We are so proud of our student-athletes, coaches and support staff and certainly want to commend them all on a job well done. To lead the nation in Academic

"What an outstanding accomplishment for our athletics department. We are so proud of our student-athletes, coaches and support staff and certainly want to commend them all on a job well done."

Greg Byrne,
UA Director of Athletics

All-Americans and now to have our highest finish in the Learfield Directors' Cup shows the level of commitment, not only from athletics, but also from our University leadership, to succeeding in all areas of the student-athlete experience.”

Byrne receives a $110,000 bonus in addition to his $900,000 salary for 2017-18 thanks to Alabama's finish. That's the maximum bonus he can receive for the school's finish in the Director's Cup, with any finish in the top 18 kicking in the top tier of bonus level.

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FOOTBALL

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Byrne can also receive a bonus for meeting goals related to Alabama's graduation success rate.

Alabama finished the 2017-18 year with 913 total points in the standings. Its national championship in football provided 100 points and national runner-up finishes by men's and women's golf each brought in 90 points. Men's track and field brought in 74.25 points after finishing fifth at the NCAA outdoor championships in addition to 69 points from its finish at NCAA indoor championships.

Stanford won the 2017-18 Director's Cup with 1,442 total points thanks in part to winning national championships in four sports. It had 12 programs finish ranked in the top 10 of their sports this school year. The Cardinal has won the Director's Cup for 24 consecutive years after finishing second for the award in its inaugural year in 1993-94.

UCLA finished second overall with 1,326 points, while Florida finished third with 1,216 points to lead all SEC programs.

Reach Ben Jones at ben@tidesports.com or 205-722-0196.
Alabama lands commitment from top in-state 2020 prospect

Calera defensive tackle Jayson Jones is the No. 1 player in the state in his class

By Cameron Greenwood
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

Alabama reeled in a commitment from one of its top 2020 football targets on Monday morning. Calera defensive tackle Jayson Jones, the No. 1 player in the state in his class, committed to the Crimson Tide.

Jones is ranked as the No. 3 defensive tackle and the No. 55 overall player in the 2020 class in the 247 Composite rankings. He picked Alabama over Georgia among many other offers.

Jones committed to the Crimson Tide via a YouTube video released on his Twitter account.

In a later tweet, Jones thanked UA offensive line coach Brent Key, defensive line coach Craig Kuligowski and 2019 commit Pierce Quick, who has been active in recruiting for Alabama since his commitment in early March, for “being the best people and recruiters.”

Jones checks in at 6-foot-5 and 322 pounds.

He picked up his offer from Alabama in March and took an unofficial visit to Tuscaloosa earlier this summer before committing.

Jones is the Crimson Tide’s fifth commitment for the 2020 class, and the third in-state commitment in the class. Alabama has three of the top five in-state prospects for 2020 already committed.
Minshew: Passing on Tide was 'so tough'

Grad transfer committed to Alabama, but ultimately landed at Washington State

“The goal since I’ve been a kid is to play in the NFL. That’s what I’ve got to do. I’ve got to chase that dream.”

Gardner Minshew

“It was so tough (passing up the Alabama opportunity),” Minshew said at the Manning Passing Academy. “I have so much respect for that staff. I do want to get into coaching eventually, and it’s like going to Harvard school for coaching. So yeah, that was tough to turn down. And I have so much respect for Coach Enos, who recruited me mostly, and Coach Saban. But I think I have a great opportunity at Washington State and I’m looking forward to that.”

For Alabama, Minshew would have primarily been insurance in case one of the Tide’s current quarterbacks transferred before the season.

He realized he would probably never be the Tide’s starting quarterback.

It’s different at Washington State, which needs a new starting QB.

“Ultimately, I’m a player and I have a little bit of time left to play and I’m going to give it all I’ve got,” said Minshew, who started five games as a junior at East Carolina last season. “My goal since I’ve been a kid is to play in the NFL. That’s what I’ve got to do. I’ve got to chase that dream. And the coaching, it will be there.”

Alabama wasn’t the only SEC school that Washington State beat out for Minshew.

Tennessee recruited Minshew. There was also late contact from Arkansas and LSU.

“It was a whirlwind,” said Minshew, who left East Carolina in late January. “But I’m very fortunate to take the path I’ve taken. I’ve met a lot of people, made a lot of great connections, but I’m ultimately so glad to be where I’m at. I think I’m in a great place.”
You Graduated Cum Laude? So Did Everyone Else

BY MELISSA KORN

Nearly half of students who graduated from Lehigh University, Princeton University and the University of Southern California this year did so with cum laude, magna cum laude or summa cum laude honors, or their equivalents. At Harvard and Johns Hopkins, more got the designations than didn’t.

Anyone with a grade-point average of at least 3.4 is granted Latin honors at Middlebury College; the number of students graduating with honors has risen in recent years, the school says, and was north of 50% this spring.

"I'd say that it's time to reconsider our eligibility criteria," said Middlebury Interim Provost Jeff Cason.

Honors designations have become close to the norm at many top schools, according to a Wall Street Journal review of the criteria for earning honors and the percentage of the senior class that got the designation at schools in the top 50 of the WSJ/Times Higher Education ranking.

The share increased to 44% from 32% in the past decade at USC, which requires a GPA of at least 3.5 for the lowest honor, cum laude, and to 44% from 39% at Lehigh, where students need at least a 3.4.

"A 4.0 does signal something significant, that this student is good," said Stuart Rojstaczer, a former Duke University professor who has studied grade inflation for years. "A 3.7, however, doesn't. That's just a run-of-the-mill student at any of these schools."

Research from an administrator at the College Board and a doctoral student at the University of Georgia found that 47% of high-school students graduated with an A average in 2016, up from 39% in 1998. Students keep earning the high marks in college.

At Wellesley College, 41% of this year's graduating class completed their degrees with Latin honors, which means a GPA of at least 3.6 at the Massachusetts school. That share has risen in the past two years, after being roughly one-third for much of the past decade. A spokeswomen said the school hasn't pinpointed the cause.

Meanwhile, nearly 59% of seniors who graduated from Johns Hopkins this spring did so with what the school refers to as "general honors" by achieving a GPA of at least 3.5. A decade ago, nearly 46% did.

Rushabh Doshi learned of his honor after seeing his name on a list in the Johns Hopkins graduation program this spring. Then he noticed the list was four pages long.

Mr. Doshi, who majored in public health and is heading to Oxford University to study medical anthropology in the fall, said he was proud of his academic accomplishment. But, he said, "It's not something that holds too much weight."

Spokesman Dennis O'Shea said the school hasn't studied the trend and so can't provide an explanation for the rise. He called its students "bright" and "committed."

Most elite schools cap the share of the graduating class that can receive academic honors. But the caps vary widely, from 25% at Columbia University to up to 60% at Harvard.

Harvard's number hit 91% in 2001, as highlighted at the time in a Boston Globe article about generous honors policies. Soon after, the school revised its selection process.

The GPAs required for honors at the University of Michigan and Case Western Reserve University this past spring were the highest in at least a decade.

Academic researchers say that uptick is a sign of grade inflation, not of smarter students.

"Moving the whole bar upward creates a problem where people learn they can do very little and get a grade-point average that looks very respectable," said Richard Arum, dean of the University of California, Irvine School of Education.

A handful of schools, including the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, have tried to rein in the awards.

Beginning with the class that graduated in 2017, Georgetown University started distributing honors based on the relative performance of students, rather than a fixed 3.5 GPA cutoff. Roughly a quarter of the class now gets one of the three Latin honors; before the shift, according to the student newspaper, more than half of the students within some undergraduate programs received those designations.

The school says it now uses percentiles "in order to ensure that Latin honors represent a mark of distinction."
Biologist Quits After Harassment Inquiry

By CORNELIA DEAN

Francisco J. Ayala, one of the world's most eminent evolutionary biologists and a major benefactor of the University of California, Irvine, has resigned his position there after a months-long investigation into allegations of sexual harassment.

In a sharp rebuke, the university said it would remove his name from its School of Biological Sciences and its science library, as well as from graduate fellowships, endowed chairs and other programs, many of them started or nurtured with his funds.

In a letter sent Thursday to university employees, Howard Gillman, the chancellor, said Dr. Ayala was leaving the university as of this Sunday without "emeritus" status and that he "will abstain from future campus activities."

In effect, the university has cut off one of its most generous donors and a star professor, an action one faculty member said left her "floored."

In response to an email to Dr. Ayala's office, his longtime assistant, Denise Chilcote, said he was out of the country.

She forwarded a statement in which he said he regretted that what he thought of as "the good manners of a European gentleman" — compliments and kisses on the cheek — had made colleagues uncomfortable.

"It was never my intent to do so," wrote Dr. Ayala, who was born in Spain and is 84 years old. "Nor do I wish to put them, my family, or this institution through the lengthy process of further investigation, hearings, appeals and lawsuits."

But Michal Liberty, a lawyer representing three of the four women whose complaints prompted the investigation, which began in November, said there is "a marked difference between gentlemanly behavior and sexual harassment in the workplace. We would not be here if we were talking about manners and gallantry."

At issue, she said, were "inappropriate comments and other kinds of behavior," including unwanted touching.

"This was a widely known problem," Ms. Liberty added. "There were conversations people had, like stay away from him, don't be alone with him, don't be in an elevator with him."

She said that despite earlier complaints, "the university had failed to curtail this behavior," and that she and her clients are exploring "every potential legal option and avenue."

The university identified the four women as Kathleen Treseder, who holds the Ayala Chair in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology; Jessica Pratt, an assistant professor in that department; Benedicte Shipley, an assistant dean in the biological sciences school; and Michelle Herrera, a graduate student in ecology and evolutionary biology.

Sexist hostility and crude behavior have long been acknowledged in science, but the problems have been met by decades of inaction, according to a report issued last month by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine.

The report found that women often respond to this harassment by declining leadership opportunities, leaving their institutions or even abandoning research altogether.

Some of Dr. Ayala's colleagues expressed shock at the allegations against him. Apart from his many scientific honors, including the National Medal of Science, which he received in 2001, "he is a good human being," said Virginia Trimble, an astrophysicist at the university. "I don't know how else to say it."

She said she was "floored" by the chancellor's letter to the university community, and her first action on reading it was to send Dr. Ayala an email whose subject line read "I don't believe a word of it."

A number of other faculty members spoke in Dr. Ayala's defense, saying they were troubled by the fact that the wider university community had not yet been able to read the report that led to his ouster.

"I have no facts, no information," Donald Saari, a professor of mathematics, said in an email. "I do not even know what are the charges. But all of this is upsetting because it runs counter to everything I know about Dr. Ayala."

People on both sides of the matter accused the university of acting in bad faith.

Ms. Liberty said that administrators had not taken earlier action on complaints against Dr. Ayala, because he had donated millions of dollars to the university.

Protecting Dr. Ayala "was more profitable to them and more important to their reputation than was the security and safety of their female graduate students and professors," she said.

At the least, it is clear that many universities are not faring well in the #MeToo movement, said Kristen Monroe, a professor of political science at the university who is finishing a book on gender equality in the workplace, and whom Dr. Ayala called as a character witness during the recent investigation.

"I am concerned that universities do not know how to deal with the due-process issues that come up," she said. "Transparent, open procedures — we don't have this."
Tenn. cheer coach on paid administrative leave

The Associated Press

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. — Tennessee spirit coordinator Joy Postell-Gee is on paid administrative leave as the school reviews complaints she engaged in "inappropriate conduct and unsatisfactory work-related behavior."

Senior associate athletics director Donna Thomas sent a letter to Postell-Gee last week announcing the investigation. Postell-Gee isn't authorized to perform any university duties, contact students or visit campus while on leave.

Thomas' letter doesn't specify the nature of the complaints, but Postell-Gee's personnel file shows a 2017 report from the Office of Equity and Diversity indicates she made "several instances of racially and ethnically insensitive remarks" to school spirit squad members.

The Knoxville News-Sentinel first reported the complaint.

Postell-Gee received a final written warning Jan. 29. She went on paid administrative leave earlier this year but was reinstated June 8. She's now back on leave.

Postell-Gee's personnel file includes a February letter in which she agreed that "this is a beyond serious matter" and added that she's "seeking your guidance and expertise as to what constitutes being verbally and mentally harassed, demeaning and insensitive comments and mistreatment."

In the February letter, Postell-Gee expressed concern that allegations had "apparently been accepted at face value." She referred to herself as a "very dedicated and loyal employee of 25 years."

Postell-Gee was hired as cheerleading coach in 1992. Her responsibilities as coordinator of Tennessee's spirit squad include overseeing the year-round activities of the school's cheerleaders, dance team members, mascots and spring sports ambassadors.