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Alabama’s Energen Corp. acquired for $9.2B

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Diamondback Energy of Midland, Texas, is acquiring Alabama-based Energen Corp. for $9.2 billion.

The all-stock transaction was unanimously approved by each company’s board of directors and includes Energen’s net debt of $830 million. It should close by the end of the fourth quarter.

The longtime owner of Alagasco, Energen — one of Birmingham’s largest publicly traded companies — in later years pivoted to oil exploration and production.

Together, the combined company will own more than 266,000 acres in the Permian Basin, a large oil and natural gas producing areas in Texas and New Mexico. The two also will produce about 222,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day.

It will be headquartered in Texas.

The deal may be part of a general push in the energy industry toward consolidation, analysts say.

As the Houston Chronicle notes, it was Diamondback’s second big deal in a week and its third $1 billion-plus acquisition in West Texas in less than a month. A week ago Diamondback bought out Houston-based Ajax Resources for $1.2 billion. Now Diamondback holds about 390,000 net acres in the Permian basin.

By acquiring about 150,000 acres in two weeks, the deals give Diamondback a prime position in the area that supplies almost a third of U.S. crude oil production.

"With most of the best acreage already spoken for, the only option for companies looking to enter or expand in Permian is to buy up other firms," the Chronicle wrote.

An analyst quoted by Reuters said the purchase brings together two companies with holdings in the same areas of the Permian, potentially allowing for longer horizontal wells, shared labor and equipment.

The acquisition came months after fund manager Keith Meister of Corvex Management, along with billionaire investor Carl Icahn, made moves toward buying the Birmingham-based company.

Energen Plaza in Birmingham. The publicly traded energy company is being acquired by Diamondback Energy for $9.2 billion.

File
Activities welcome UA students to campus

Events include festival on the Quad, pep rally at stadium

Staff report

University of Alabama's annual Week of Welcome, a series of events for new and returning students, began last weekend and will continue through Aug. 28.

The events are organized by University Programs and are meant to promote friendship and unity.

The events include:
- Glow in the Dark Skating & Mini Golf at the Ferguson Ballroom from 7 to 9 p.m. Wednesday.
- Spa Night at Tut from 7 to 10 p.m. Thursday.
- Bowl So Hard at AMF Bama Lanes from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. Friday. Tickets required.
- Movie on the Quad showing "Avengers: Infinity War" from 7 to 10 p.m. Saturday.
- Tied With the Tide, Breakfast on the River at River Restaurant, 1650 Jack Warner Parkway from 6 a.m. to noon Sunday, Aug. 19. A representative from the Counseling Center will come and speak to students about ways they can stay stress-free through the academic year. Tickets required.
- Silent Disco at the Ferguson Ballroom from 7 to 10 p.m. Sunday.
- Ripple Effect day-of-service event, starting at 8 a.m. Aug. 20.
- Concert at Coleman Coliseum from 7 to 10 p.m. Aug. 20. Details TBA.
- Yea, Alabama! Welcome Party at the Quad from noon to 2 p.m. Aug. 21.
- T-Town Life Festival at the Quad with food and fun from 4 to 6 p.m. Aug. 21. Convocation and Script A photo, Bryant-Denny Stadium from 6 to 8 p.m. Yea, Alabama! ends with a formal introduction into UA's academic community with convocation, a pep rally featuring UA coaches and cheerleaders, and a freshman class picture taken on the field at Bryant-Denny Stadium.
- Welcome Back Breakfast at the Ferguson Center Plaza from 7 to 9 a.m. Aug. 22.
- Black Faculty and Staff Association Welcome Reception in 205 Gorgas Library from 4 to 6 p.m. Aug. 22.
- WOW Music Glow 5K Run from 7 to 9 p.m. running from Cyber Hall on Aug. 23. Tickets required.
- ONYX at the Ferguson Center Patio from 7 to 11 p.m. Aug. 24. The event will include exhibitions and performances from NPHC Greek organizations and on-campus dance organizations, as well as table information from minority-focused student organizations.
- WOW Amazing Race at the Quad from 4 to 6 p.m. Aug. 26. Students will compete in teams to complete challenges in hopes of being crowned winners of the Amazing Race. Tickets required.
- WOW UpSurge at Trampoline Park from 7 to 10 p.m. Aug. 28. Students will participate in various trampoline activities at UpSurge. Tickets required.

"First of all, part of our vision for honors students is that they engage in the community and understand the significance of giving back," said Alicia Browne, director of college relations for the Honors College. "They are privileged to be here, and we have an important philosophy of giving back and being part of the community."

Katie Jack, an Honors College student who led the Collins-Riverside project, said a big part of cleaning up the school is the idea that the middle school students will take better pride in themselves if they take pride in their school. Collins-Riverside was built in 1957, making it one of the oldest schools in the Tuscaloosa County School System.

"To come in and just repainting parking lines or adding some colors to the gym, making the school more inviting and knowing the students will respond so well to that is very meaningful," Jack said. "We just want everyone to feel like they are
CLEANUP

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important."

Craig Henson, principal at Collins-Riverside, said he and his staff are humbled by the Honors College students who took part in cleaning up the school.

"It builds a strong culture within the school, and it helps them (students) to see that there is value here and we value the students," Henson said.

Jackson Foster, a UA freshman who took part in the Collins-Riverside cleanup, said he got something else out of the project that he did not expect: friends.

"The fact I’ve gotten to find friends in a way I didn’t expect to is tremendous," Foster said. "It’s a great blessing, and I’m glad to be a part of it."

Jack said the first project she was involved in was at Taylorville Primary School, which was positive enough for her to want to continue helping out in the program.

"I love interacting with the people that want to do this program because they have such big hearts," she said. "Just seeing what big changes we can make in such a small amount of time and how we can inspire these students is great."

During the week, other Honors College students took part in other Alabama Action programs that involved community service elsewhere. Health Action involved students helping provide vision screenings to low-income pre-schoolers. Outdoor Action was about students cleaning up Lake Lurleen State Park and Black Belt Action had students travel to Marion to work on different projects.
Building the future

UA basketball coaches excited about plans for facilities upgrade

By Tommy Deas
Executive Sports Editor

When Greg Byrne, Alabama’s athletics director, shared an early rendering of what Coleman Coliseum’s planned upgrade might look like, he says Crimson Tide men’s basketball Avery Johnson took a lap around the office in his excitement.

“Said Johnson, “I think I did two.”

Women’s basketball coach Kristy Curry’s reaction was similar: “I was probably dancing. I have good rhythm,” she said.

Those plans were unveiled Thursday as part of UA’s Crimson Standard athletics facilities upgrade initiative, a total package priced at $600 million over 10 years. The renovation of Coleman Coliseum is priced at an estimated $115 million and could start at the conclusion of the 2021-22 season.

The coliseum, home to Alabama’s men’s and women’s basketball and gymnastics teams as well as coaching offices and weight rooms for several other sports, opened in 1968. That wasn’t lost on Johnson when he interviewed for the job in the spring of 2015.

“Man, how old is this building?” he asked.

“During that process there wasn’t any promises made, but the thought was Coleman will be addressed at the appropriate time,” he said. “And now is the appropriate time. ...

“I’m fired up about it. I’m fired up about what it’s going to do for recruiting, what it’s going to do for fan experience.”

It will also be more intimate. About 4,000 seats will be lost, reducing capacity from around 9,500 or 10,000, according to projections.

“We want to provide the best fan experience for our fans, and there’s going to be a ticket for everybody,” Johnson said. “We’re obviously going to have different levels of pricing, but whether you’re a fan and sit in the nosebleed section or somebody on the court level, we just think we’re going to have a good overall experience.”

The upgrade will use the existing foundation – Coleman Coliseum won’t be torn down, but it will be gutted. The floor level will be raised, seating will be moved 10 feet closer to the floor, a third level of upper-deck seating will be added on each side of the floor, student seating will be placed baseline to baseline on one side of the court and club spaces will be installed on the floor and concourse levels. Additionally, the lobby will be upgraded and the concourse areas will be widened.

“It’s going to be night and day difference what people experience at Coleman Coliseum,” Byrne said.

See COLEMAN, C3
Byrne isn’t sure if Alabama will have to find another place to play for a season while the work is done. He’s hopeful the SEC will accommodate plans by scheduling the Crimson Tide men’s and women’s teams to play on the road for the last two weeks of the season – whether that’s 2021-22 as hoped or later – to allow renovations to begin earlier, and the next season could start with UA playing road games out of conference while work is completed.

How much can we get done, let’s say, in 10 months. We don’t know that answer yet,” Byrne said.

Enhanced lighting and video boards will be part of the new-look arena. Raising the floor will put the fans closer to the curved ceiling of the building. Byrne has a vision of using that to project images on the roof.

“Kind of something different than anyone else has done,” he said.

Byrne said tearing down Coleman Coliseum and building a completely new arena would have cost about $70 million more for basically the same upgrades.

Johnson and Curry can’t wait.

“When you look at who we’re recruiting against and when you look at the fan experiences and you look at the student experiences ... this is what we need as we move into the future,” Curry said. “To compete in all those areas we have to do this, so we’re pretty fired up.”

Said Johnson, “Just give us time. We’re going to make it work and we’re going to do our darnedest to make sure everybody’s happy with what we’re doing at the newly-renovated Coleman.”

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People in Alabama love football. People in Alabama, like other people in other parts of the country, hate change.

If things are going well, as they are for Alabama football these days, then they really hate change.

So when there is a suggestion for major changes in football facilities, a future that will translate, for many ticket-holders, into either different seats or a bigger bite out of their bank account, you can rest assured some people will not be pleased. In case you aren't quite sure how zealously some people prioritize their game experience, consider this: for years now, there have been two small but fierce factions fighting like wild dog packs on the Serengeti that have stumbled upon a freshly-killed gnu. Why? They battle over what country song gets played at the start of the fourth quarter of a home game, and the potential unpleasantness that would come if some college students chimed into the chorus with some naughty words.

Take that battle, and multiply by 100. Then imagine the ferocity of those with long-held seats at stake.

Thursday's roll-out of the new Crimson Standard 10-year plan was great theater. The big names were on hand to give their blessing (and, in Nick Saban's case, his million dollars) to the fund drive, much of which met with acclaim. The gutting and reconfiguration of Coleman Coliseum — closer to what should have been done in its previous renovation — seems popular. The biggest complaint on basketball is that it is part of Phase II of the plan and may not be realized for another four years or more.

Some of the changes at Bryant-Denny Stadium were popular, too. A new humongous state-of-the-art Jumbotron got a good response, as did some projected amenities like broader aisles around the concession stands.
and restrooms. UA Athletic Director Greg Byrne did a strong job of stressing those selling points on Thursday, and will no doubt do so over the next two years. He recognizes renovation and reconfiguration was bound to come sooner or later — that's the current state of intercollegiate athletics — and that raising $600 million, no easy task in any environment, might as well come in the current era. With Saban as the head coach, and marquee home games against teams like Texas and Notre Dame ahead on the horizon, Alabama is as strong as it has ever been.

The concern about the base capacity numbers being reduced didn't seem to be a major theme, at Coleman Coliseum, going down in capacity by as much as a third is a fairly deep cut. On the other hand, it will keep demand high and will allow for more bells, more whistles, more club levels and less of those yawning, cavernous nights when Coleman seemed so cavelike that a sudden flood might trap a boy's soccer team on one of the concourses.

There will also be some decline in football capacity. Byrne didn't give an exact figure but after the work is done, it will probably come in at around five percent. The questions that were raised were about the effects that additional club levels and premium-seat designations will have on the archetypal "family of four" and on fans who have supported the program for many years and face the possibility of being "corporatized" in the name of progress. I asked Byrne about whether fans would be priced out of bringing the kids or seeing the occasional "big game" and he responded that UA would have seats at "price points" that would work for most fans.

The fact is, the sport now demands big dollars. Byrne also noted that he doesn't want to present the Board of Trustees with a deficit if he can help it.

There will be a balancing act between those whose financial power can help assure future success — and those who think that their loyalty has already bought decades of such success and should not be cast aside. The dollars usually win in such cases, supplemented by fans who still want to support the program (especially while it is winning at Saban levels) and feel invested by paying what they must to remain a part of the Saturday experience.

People in Alabama love football. That isn't going to change. And that is what UA is counting out to push through a program that it feels is necessary to compete. A painful program for some — but a necessary one.

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UA announces $600-million plan to upgrade athletic facilities

By: Ben Jones

The University of Alabama has made big strides in athletics facilities in the last 10 years. Now the department is making plans for even bigger steps in the next 10 years.

Alabama unveiled a 10-year, $600 million initiative Thursday to upgrade Bryant-Denny Stadium, Coleman Coliseum, the Mal Moore Athletic Facility and several other athletics facilities. Athletics director Greg Byrne announced the plan at a news conference along with president Stuart R. Bell and football coach Nick Saban. Byrne presented the plan for ‘The Crimson Standard’ after a year-and-a-half of research and study.

“The evolution of the facilities is critical as we continue to move our program forward to support the levels we expect them to perform at and compete for championships,” Byrne said at the news conference. “This is a process that involves our student-athletes, our letterwinners, our coaches, our staff, university leadership and our fans.”

The plan is highlighted by renovations to Bryant-Denny Stadium that will cost more than $250 million. The precise cost of renovations may still change in the years to come, and exact dates for renovations haven’t yet been set. All facilities plans are subject to approval by the board of trustees, and fundraising goals must still be met.

The initiative includes about $5 million in updates for men’s and women’s golf and about $3 million in improvements to softball’s Rhoads Stadium. Coleman Coliseum, the home of men’s and women’s basketball, will receive a major renovation expected to cost about $115 million.

Alabama has already secured commitments for nearly $143 million towards the plan, Byrne said. That included a $1 million pledge from Nick and Terry Saban.

“To reinvest in the players and the programs here to make Alabama’s athletic programs continue to be great in the future is a sacrifice that we all need to make,” Saban said. “We all want to have success. We can’t get complacent about what we’ve been able to accomplish in the past. We have to look forward to what we need to do in the future.”

The 10-year plan will proceed in three phases. The first phase, which is expected to include changes to the Mal Moore building and include some of the renovations to Bryant-Denny Stadium, could begin during the fall of 2019 or after the 2019 football season. The first round of renovations to the stadium are estimated to cost $78 million. It is likely to reduce seating to less than 100,000 from its current capacity of 101,821, Byrne said, but the exact capacity after renovations isn’t known.

Crimson Tide Captial Initiative Press Conference

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It will add a student terrace in the stadium’s south end zone, with a large, new video board positioned over the student section. Byrne said he doesn’t anticipate cutting down on the total number of seats in the student section. The north end zone will also receive two new video boards for those who can’t see the video board in the south end.

“We’re still working with our numbers on what impacts different things we’re moving around,” Byrne said. “The goal, for the students, is to have a net zero on impact for them.”

A field-level club seating area will be added in the north end zone. The west sideline will receive 10 new boxes called the “Founder’s Club,” each at a cost of $5 million. Byrne said eight of those boxes, where the press box is currently located, are already sold. The press box will move to the east side of the stadium.

“We’ve had some incredibly generous people make this a reality for us,” he said.

A new locker room and recruiting lounge will also be added in the north end zone. There will also be a renovation to the tunnel that the team uses to enter the field. The first phase of the plan could be done by the 2022 season, and should be done in time for Alabama’s marquee home game against Texas in 2023.

“Who would have thought that?” Byrne said with a grin.

That phase will also include a renovation of the football locker room at the Mal Moore building, the medical treatment room, add a sports science center and move the weight room out to maintain its current size. The lobby will also be redone.

The investment in Bryant-Denny Stadium and improved fan experience there will weigh heavily in scheduling decisions for the future, Byrne said.

The second phase, which includes the update to Coleman Coliseum, will also include club seating in the south end zone at Bryant-Denny Stadium. That phase will also impact other Olympic sports, though Byrne said those plans aren’t firm yet. Byrne said that phase could begin after the 2021-22 basketball season “if everything goes smoothly.”

The third and final phase of the plan will alter the exterior of Bryant-Denny Stadium, concourses, concessions, and stadium entrances and exits.

“When you walk into the gates on the west side (by Wallace Wade Avenue), there’s all that space underneath that we don’t use a whole lot on gameday once you go in the gates. Then you’re almost immediately faced with a ramp that blocks off the ingress and the egress of the traffic flow. Once you get past the ramp you only have about 18 feet of room to try to move about 30,000 people in and out of that side of the stadium. What we’re going to do is take the concourse all the way out to the street. We’ll go from about 18 feet of ingress and egress to about 81 feet.”

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The estimate for updates to Bryant-Denny Stadium in the third phase is about $210 million. The final phase will also include an updated exterior to the stadium. The target to begin that phase is around 2025-26.

"The goal is to have everyone at Bryant-Denny Stadium have a much better game-day ingress, egress, concessions, restrooms, video experience than what they currently have. One of the things we will always want to be sensitive too is making sure our stadiums, or any of our venues, have a wide variety of price points for people to come to our games. That will still be the case. Then also making sure we have an economic model that works for us."
UA to announce stadium renovations

By Ben Jones
Sports Writer

The University of Alabama athletics department will announce a long-term facilities plan Thursday that includes a major renovation to Bryant-Denny Stadium, The Tuscaloosa News has learned.

The update to the Crimson Tide’s football stadium is expected to reduce seating by a small percentage from its current capacity of 101,821. It includes plans for a new video board in the south end zone and additional luxury boxes.

The long-term plan will also affect Coleman Coliseum, softball’s Rhoads Stadium and other athletics facilities. All facilities plans are subject to approval by the board of trustees. UA is expected to announce a capital campaign to raise funds for the facilities improvements.

An announcement previewing Thursday’s news conference says the athletics department will introduce “The Crimson Standard.” Director of Athletics Greg Byrne, football coach Nick Saban and UA President Stuart Bell are scheduled to speak.

The most recent renovation to Bryant-Denny was completed in 2010. That renovation included an upper deck on the south end zone, increasing seating capacity to its current number. It is one of seven college football stadiums in the nation and four in the Southeastern Conference that currently seats more than 100,000 fans.

Renovations to several college football stadiums around the nation in recent years have decreased capacity. The University of Michigan reduced seating at Michigan Stadium by 2,300 seats before the 2015 season, though it remained the largest college football venue in the nation. Ohio State announced a renovation to Ohio Stadium that will take place through 2020 that will reduce capacity by an estimated 2,000 seats. Florida State completed an update to Doak Campbell Stadium in 2016 that added club seating in one end zone while reducing overall capacity from 82,300 to 79,560.

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Behind the bond sale for stadium project

Maynard Cooper & Gale’s Hobby Presley has worked on a number of significant public bond sales.

But his latest one was particularly close to home.

Presley, a shareholder in the firm’s public finance practice group, was the bond counsel on the Birmingham-Jefferson County Civic Authority’s recent bond issue that generated approximately $313 million in proceeds for the long-awaited stadium and renovation project at the BJCC.

It’s a project many believe will transform downtown Birmingham and the city’s northern neighborhoods, just a few blocks down from Presley’s downtown office in Wells Fargo Tower.

“Without question, I had more knowledge and more questions from the general public than any other deal I’ve ever worked on,” he said. “(There’s) a lot of interest in the community and a lot of pride in this, which is very appropriate.”

The bond sale closed on Tuesday, giving the BJCC access to more than $300 million and paving the way for the project to begin—although some site work is already underway.

In many ways, Presley said the timing worked out well from an interest rate standpoint.

“We held our breath because, during the planning stage, if interest rates had increased significantly from what BJCC was planning for, it would have hurt the budget,” he said. “But the timing was good.”

Both Presley and BJCC Executive Director and CEO Tad Snider said they were pleased with the reception from the investment community.

“We had high hopes and felt like we had a good credit story to tell,” he said, noting many of the bonds were moved to institutional investors that don’t traditionally take on a lot of risk.

Thanks to favorable interest rate movements and credit ratings, Snider said the BJCC realized more proceeds than were initially projected.

With the proceeds in hand, Snider said the $313 million will be invested in accordance with its statutes, which limits investments to U.S. Treasuries and money market accounts backed by the federal government.

“It will earn a significant amount of interest over the construction period,” he said. “It will be more than $313 million by the time all the smoke clears.”

Snider said the closing of the bond deal will allow the BJCC to commit to the necessary contractual and procurement steps to advance both the stadium and renovation projects.

On the stadium front, Snider said utility relocations at the site are already underway, as are program validation and early design activities. Some additional work will start by the end of the year.

Snider said selection of the full design team, and other preconstruction decisions, will be made in the fall, with project delivery method and other construction enabling decisions to be made in late 2018 or 2019.

With the project funding now complete and the proceeds received, the BJCC Authority can now begin to commit to the necessary contractual and procurement steps to begin to advance each project.

Snider said the design team of architects and engineers has been engaged for the Legacy Arena project, as have program management and preconstruction services.

He said more than 30 percent of the design team, calculated by earned fees, is made up of local minority business enterprise, historically under-utilized business enterprise and women business enterprise firms.

Snider said design will continue for some time on the project, since large renovations to older, operating buildings are complex. He said discussions about the bidding of the construction phase won’t occur until 2019.
UAB EYES ANOTHER PROJECT DUE TO INCREASED DEMAND

The University of Alabama at Birmingham has applied for a certificate of need to build out additional space at its Women & Infants Center.

The project would be located on the eighth floor of the center, which opened in 2010 and has already been expanded with other buildouts. It also would expand facilities for its bone marrow transplant and cell therapy service.

UAB officials said the project is in response to increased demand for those services.

"UAB is the only hospital in Alabama with a bone marrow transplant unit and the existing unit is in need of renovation," said Anthony Patterson, senior vice president for in-patient services at UAB Hospital.

The plan calls for building out the shell space on the eighth floor of the Women's and Infants Center, creating 29 new private rooms for the bone marrow unit and 30 new private rooms for the existing hematology-oncology service, which is currently on the seventh floor of the Women & Infants Center.

Later renovation of the seventh floor space will create a 29-bed general inpatient nursing unit.
More than 1,650 UAB students graduate over the weekend

More than 1,650 students graduated from UAB this past weekend with both undergraduate and graduate degrees at Bartow Arena during two separate ceremonies.

A doctoral hooding and commencement ceremony for nearly all graduate programs was held Friday. Students receiving masters' degrees now receive their diplomas with the doctoral candidates. For summer 2016, the UAB Graduate School conferred the university's highest degrees on 98 students from 22 states and eight countries in 46 disciplines.

On Saturday morning, undergraduates received their diplomas at Bartow.

The speaker for the graduate ceremony was Jacqueline B. Vo, of Springville. She earned her doctorate of philosophy in nursing.

The speaker for the undergraduate ceremony was Jamie E. Long of Arab. She earned a bachelor's in nursing. — Joe Songer
Alabama’s state climatologist John Christy rebuts claims of recent fires, heat waves being caused by human activity in in-depth interview

By: Jeremy Beaman

There is one particular word that Dr. John Christy turns to frequently for describing climate science: murky.

It’s a point of view foundational to his own research, and a message underpinning each of his twenty appearances before various congressional committees.

“It’s encouraging because they wouldn’t invite you back unless your message was compelling and not only compelling, but accurate,” Christy, Alabama’s state climatologist, told Yellowhammer News in an interview.

Christy, whose day job involves doing research and teaching as the Distinguished Professor of Atmospheric Science at the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH), has gained notoriety over the years for dissenting from mainstream climate scientists and policymakers who argue that climate change is anthropogenic, or man-made, and that something must be done to stop it.

A “working-stiff” scientist

Dissent has gained for Christy the characterization as a “climate change skeptic” or “denier,” as critics refer to him, but he himself rejects those terms.

“I’m a working-stiff atmospheric scientist,” he said, “as opposed to those who support modeling efforts, those who use data sets that other people create and analyze them, but they don’t build them themselves.”

According to Christy, the result of fewer “working-stiff” scientists contributing to the prevailing climate debate is more frequent misuses of data.

“They’re not aware of what goes into it,” Christy said, referring to the data.

“Here we have a science that’s so dominated by personalities that claim the science is settled, yet when you walk up to them and say prove it, they can’t,” he said.

Christy spoke at length about what can be proven and what cannot in his self-described “murky” field, referring often to principles of the scientific method.

“You cannot prove extra greenhouse gases have done anything to the weather,” he said, responding to claims made by many scientists that more greenhouse gases have caused extreme weather patterns to intensify.

“We do not have an experiment that we can repeat and do,” he said.

Christy outlined another problem with attempts to implicate greenhouse gases: a failure to account for things countering trapping effects.
“We know that the extra greenhouse gases should warm the planet,” he said. “The weak part of that theory though is that when you add more greenhouse gases that trap heat, things happen that let it escape as well, and so not as much is trapped as climate models show.”

**Economics of climate policy**

Though his scientific arguments are primary, Christy also frequently discusses in interviews and testimonies the economic consequences of proposed climate change mitigation policy via carbon reduction.

“Every single person uses energy, carbon energy, and relies on carbon-based energy,” Christy said. “None of our medical advances, none of our technological advances, none of our progress would have happened in the last hundred years without energy derived from carbon.”

Christy contrasts that reality within the modern, developed world with the world he saw working as a missionary teacher in impoverished Africa during the 1970s.

“The energy source was wood chopped from the forest, the energy transmission system was the backs of women and girls hauling wood an average of three miles each day, the energy use system was burning the wood in an open fire indoors for heat and light,” Christy told members of the House Committee on Energy in 2006.

Broad availability to affordable energy enriches countries, Christy said, praising carbon.

“It is not evil. It is the stuff of life. It is plant food,” he said.

**What about the fires and heat waves?**

According to the National Interagency Fire Center, fires were burning in fifteen states as of Tuesday, August 14.

Alaska reported seventeen fires, Arizona reported eleven, both Oregon and Colorado reported ten, and California reported nine.

Much of the news media’s discussion about these fires over the past few weeks has established a correlation between the many fires and anthropogenic climate change, a correlation that Dr. Christy rejects.

Christy argues that exacerbating fires out west, particularly in California, results from human mismanagement. Such states have enacted strict management practices that disallow low-level fires from burning, he said.

“If you don’t let the low-intensity fires burn, that fuel builds up year after year,” Christy said. “Now once a fire gets going and it gets going enough, it has so much fuel that we can’t put it out.”

“In that sense, you could say that fires today are more intense, but it’s because of human management practices, not because mother nature has done something,” Christy said.
Data from the Fire Center indicates that the number of wildfires have been decreasing since the 1970s overall, though acreage burned has increased significantly.

As for the heat, Christy said there’s nothing abnormal going on in the United States.

“Heat waves have always happened,” he said. “Our most serious heatwaves were in the 1930’s. We have not matched those at all.”

Christy continued, “It is only a perception that is being built by the media that these are dramatic worst-ever heat wave kind of things but when we look at the numbers, and all science is numbers, we find that there were periods that were hotter, hotter for longer periods in the past, so it’s very hard to say that this was influenced by human effects when you go back before there could have been human effects and there’s the same or worse kind of events.”

Though Christy didn’t deny that the last three years have been the hottest ever recorded globally, he doesn’t concede that the changes are attributable to anything other than climate’s usual and historical erraticism.
New Elective Gives UAH Students Preview Of The Ups And Downs Of Critical Care Transport Nursing

By: Staff

If the idea of trying to save someone’s life isn’t panic-inducing enough, try doing it in mid-air with limited room to maneuver and the whirl of helicopter blades drowning out any chance of direct communication. For Ron Bolen (MSN, RN, CCRN, CEN, CFRN), however, it’s all in a day’s work. As a combat veteran, Navy reservist, and long-time critical care transport nurse, he knows what it takes to overcome those challenges and save lives. And now he’s imparting that knowledge to a new generation of nursing students in his undergraduate-level Critical Care Transport Nursing course at The University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH). "People look at the glory and the excitement, but there’s an element of danger," he says. "We need to show nursing students the different things involved and expose them early on, so they can decide if it’s right for them."

Bolen, who joined the faculty of UAH’s College of Nursing last year, initially proposed the course as three-day review for students taking the critical care nursing board certifications. But at the urging of Dr. Marsha Howell Adams, dean of the College, it was expanded to a five-week summer elective designed to help students build on the concepts of health assessment, pathophysiology, and critical care nursing and apply them in the stabilization and care of patients in the air, land, and sea transport environment. "As a new faculty member, I didn’t think I’d have the opportunity to do it so soon, but the support from the dean and the administration has been phenomenal," he says. "We’re now one of the few universities – if not the only one – to offer a critical care transport nursing course to undergraduate students."

After receiving "a good amount of interest" from the students, Bolen enrolled nine, all of whom had already completed the course prerequisite, medical surgical nursing.

"The main focus was to improve their critical-thinking skills," he says. But he also wanted them to learn the tangible skills related to critical care transport nursing, including formulating a plan of care, demonstrating a patient assessment, and safely managing a patient by applying the principles of transport physiology to their pathophysiology. "The idea was for them to explore the implications of altitude and atmospheric changes on the pathophysiology of the critical care patient," says Bolen, "and learn how to mitigate those implications through didactic and patient-simulation labs."

Each day’s class comprised a mix of lectures and presentations followed by an opportunity for the students to apply and assess their hands-on skills. "We had a simulator set up in the College’s Learning and Technology Resource Center where we introduced them to operating in a confined space with stressors," says Bolen. "I played an audio recording of the aircraft starting up and air traffic control speaking in the background." A few weeks later, they tested those skills in an

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actual H-60 Black Hawk courtesy of PEO Aviation and defense contractor Yulista Aviation Inc. "We ran through scenarios with the power on in which the students had to communicate through headsets," he says. "It was intense but also confidence building for them.

They were like, 'Ok, this is how it is.' Now they'll have that muscle memory and exposure to specific clinical situations."

But while it would be easy for Bolen to take credit for the students’ success as their instructor, he instead points to the strong educational foundation they’ve received as a result of the College’s commitment to concept-based pedagogy. "I knew they’d do well, but the eagerness of these nursing students and their willingness to learn was incredible – they took it to the next level," he says. "For them to be able to take the concepts and apply them to something they’d never been exposed to before was phenomenal, and it wouldn’t have been possible without that concept-based training. It affirmed for me that it’s the right way to teach."
New charter school at UWA brings integration

By Trisha Powell Crain
Al.com

LIVINGSTON — At 7:50 a.m. Monday, when classes started at University Charter School, students in kindergarten through eighth grade began a new era, hardly aware of the history they were making.

Black students and white students were learning side-by-side in integrated public school classrooms in the West Alabama county. More than half of the school's 300-plus students are black, while just under half are white.

While not fully representative of the county's split — 76 percent black, 24 percent white — no public school in the county has come close to reaching the percentage at University Charter, according to historical enrollment documents.

The implications of the opening of the charter school weren't lost on parents, teachers and school administrators.

"This is an historic day and an historic mission," principal John Cameron said as he directed cars in the student drop off lane. Cameron is native of this area of Alabama.

Kindergarten teacher Brittany Williams, who is one of the school's 20-plus teachers recruited to open the school, graduated from the University of West Alabama in December. She said during last week's open house she was thrilled to teach at University Charter in part because she fell in love with Livingston and didn't want to leave.

Williams sees both the historical significance and the way students' lives can be changed by attending an integrated school.

"For me," she said, "I'm inspired because now students, when they come to this school as a kindergartner, that's all they will know is an integrated school."

Parent Robert Beard walked his first- and fourth-grade children inside the school. Beard said he hopes the school is able to bring everybody together and provide the support to build relationships in the community. "Hopefully we can keep everybody together and provide a great education program," he said. Beard said the quality of teachers and the state-of-the-art offerings are great for the students.

As students were dropped off, families waited with their younger children inside the school. The conference center was jam-packed with students and their families.

Parent Markeitha Tolliver waited with her fourth-grader, Marquez. Tolliver's aunt is a teacher at the school.

The school will work wonders for the community," she said. 'I'm praying they keep going for a very long time.'

When the federal courts demanded Alabama integrate public schools in 1969, 15 years after the Supreme Court decision ending segregation, white students in Sumter County, as in many places across the state, left public schools and created their own all-white private schools.

Sumter Academy, a K-12 school, opened in 1970 with more than 500 students, but by 2016 that number was down to 172, according to news reports. The school closed at the end of the 2016-2017 school year with school officials in part blaming the opening of the charter school.

According to the state, during the 2017-2018 school year, all but 11 of Sumter County's 1,500 students were black. Black students accounted for nearly 100 percent of enrollment in five nearby counties.

As Alabama's first rural charter school, University Charter joins the small but growing number of rural charter schools which, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, are only 11 percent of the nation's 7,000 charter schools. More than 3.2 million students attended charter schools during the last school year.

There are no admission requirements at University Charter, and students enrolled this year are assured enrollment in subsequent years. The school plans to add one grade each year, becoming a K-12 school by the start of the 2022 school year, and a lottery will be held if enrollment next year exceeds capacity.

The school plans to add football in the future, officials said, but will start with a wide array of middle school sports, including boys' and girls' basketball.

The school is housed on the site of the old Livingston High School, now called Lyon Hall, adjacent to the University of West Alabama. The campus became the center of controversy when the Sumter County Board of Education sued the college and the charter school claiming that when the university purchased the building from the county in 2011 they promised not to open a school in the building.

A circuit court judge ruled in the charter school's favor in July, clearing the way for the school's opening.

See CHARTER, B3
Shelton State names new dean

Jason Moore will oversee workforce and economic development

Staff report

Shelton State Community College has named Jason Moore as the dean of workforce and economic development.

"With a long history at the college, Jason enters this position as no stranger to leadership in the institution," said Shelton President Bill Ashley said. "As he prepares to move on from his current position as associate dean of corporate programs, I have the utmost confidence in his talent, and I am excited about his continued leadership within our College and the community."

Moore, a Shelton alumnus with 21 years of varied experience in manufacturing, teaching and college leadership, will begin the new role on Sept. 1.

Moore has previously served as a machine tool technology instructor, associate dean of technical services and associate dean for business and industry training.

As dean of workforce and economic development, Moore will oversee the operation of the Technical Services Division, corporate programs, workforce development and community engagement initiatives relating to developing a workforce.

"I am proud to continue my work at Shelton State," Moore said. "The college has afforded me many experiences over the course of my career, and I appreciate this new opportunity. I look forward to helping move the college forward in the areas of workforce and economic development."
Tide ticket demand tops national rankings

A year after playing a blockbuster season opener, Alabama brings a more balanced portfolio of games in 2018.

For the first time in five years, the Crimson Tide has the most in-demand tickets on the resale market, according to Stubhub.com. It unseated Michigan, No. 1 each of the last four seasons for the top spot. Alabama was third last season and fourth in 2016.

Demand is up 45 percent for Alabama tickets compared to last season, according to StubHub.

That said, none of the home games — except for the Iron Bowl — are sold out. Single-game tickets are available for all games outside of Auburn and Texas A&M. Seats for the Aggie game are still for sale as part of partial-season plans because a portion of the visiting-team allotment was returned.

The average ticket price for the Nov. 24 Iron Bowl is $525 on StubHub. Seats for Texas A&M on Sept. 22 are averaging $300, and the Oct. 13 visit from Missouri is getting $211 a seat.

The lowest average ticket price for any game on StubHub is $88 for the Nov. 17 visit from The Citadel, though face-value seats are selling for $40 through the university.

For the Iron Bowl, tickets start at $289 on StubHub. At SeatGeek, the cheapest is $304.
UA softball gets transfer from Virginia Tech

Staff report

The Alabama softball program announced Tuesday the incoming transfer of infielder Taylor Clark from Virginia Tech. A junior, Clark was a two-year starter for the Hokies. She will be eligible to play next spring.

A native of Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, Clark made 31 starts as a freshman for the Hokies at shortstop and third base and made 35 starts at third as a sophomore last season. She was second on the team with 18 RBIs last season and led the team in batting average (.278), slugging percentage (.528) and on-base percentage (.381) in conference play.

“We are very excited to welcome Taylor to the Alabama softball family,” UA head coach Patrick Murphy said. “We are happy to help Taylor find a home to finish her career.”

Clark is the Crimson Tide’s second Division I transfer this year, joining Hofstra pitcher Sarah Cornell. The two join five other newcomers on the roster: NJCAA national pitcher of the year Krystal Goodman and freshmen Kloyee Anderson, Kayla Davis, Montana Fouts and Skylar Wallace.
Lewis makes it official

New Crimson Tide basketball signee will be eligible immediately

By Cecil Hurt
Sports Editor

HAZEL GREEN — Wednesday was a difficult day at Hazel Green High School but a proud day as well. The Madison County school, placed squarely between Huntsville and the Alabama/tennessee line, saw the best basketball prospect in school history say farewell a year early, but did so while realizing that he is ready for college competition.

Kira Lewis, who would have been a Top 40 basketball prospect in the nation and one of the top two basketball players in the state, officially signed his financial aid papers with the University of Alabama on Wednesday. In doing so, he opted to forego a final season of eligibility. Still, the school magnanimously hosted a well-attended farewell in the cafeteria, featuring speeches by Lewis and several of his former coaches.

"Coach (Avery) Johnson treats you like family," Lewis said. "He is straight with you. (The staff) told me if I come in and work, I can play right away and help me get closer to my NBA dreams," Lewis said. "If I go in, work and do what I can, hopefully God will bless me and I’ll fulfill that dream."

Lewis was the AHSAA Class 6A Player of the Year last season, averaging 28.5 points, 5.9 rebounds, 4.5 assists and 3.9 steals as Hazel Green advanced to the state tournament semifinals in Birmingham. He said he was "leaning" to Alabama after an unofficial visit in June, but made his mind up on an official visit earlier this month.

Johnson and the rest of the Alabama staff could not attend the ceremony or comment until UA received Lewis’ signature, per NCAA rules. Once the signing was complete, Johnson spoke in a telephone interview with The Tuscaloosa News.

"Kira had been talking about the possibility of reclassifying since we started recruiting him because he is very advanced academically," Johnson said. "He has some work to do to meet the qualifications but he had no problems and his mother and father felt like this was the best decision."

At 6-foot-3 and 160 pounds, Lewis projects as a point guard and while his slender frame is obvious, Johnson said it was not a hindrance in elite level AAU competition this summer.

"We’ll get him stronger," Johnson said. "We don’t want him to be Hercules.

"We want him to keep that fifth, sixth and seventh gear that he has in the open floor. He’s as fast, baseline to baseline, as Collin (Sexton, Alabama’s lottery pick point guard last season) so we aren’t worried about making him weigh 240 pounds."

Lewis will be one of five potential newcomers on the UA team in the upcoming season but the roster will not be finalized until the fall semester begins next week.
Ties to Bear Bryant just part of the story for Tide commit

Rainer Sabin rsabin@al.com

The fault line that divides this football-mad state cuts through Hewitt-Trussville's field house.

In one room is coach Josh Floyd, the Gus Malzahn acolyte who once starred for Auburn's head honcho at a small Arkansas high school. In another is Paul Tyson, the budding four-star quarterback better known as great-grandson of Bear Bryant, the patron saint of the Alabama Crimson Tide.

On this day, they are here waiting out a thunderstorm that has disrupted their last practice before the start of school.

Not wanting to waste the moment, Floyd安排s a brief walkthrough session. Tyson lines up in shotgun, goes through the motions and winds his arm as if he were throwing a football.

Junior receiver Dazalin Worsham, a top recruit in the 2020 class, thrusts his hands out as if he is catching a pass and signals a touchdown, celebrating the end result of the mock play.

It was all so very fake. But Tyson, Alabama legacy and all, is the real deal. Despite having played only one year of varsity football, the 6-foot-4, 217-pound high school senior has become a major prospect.

Last season he captained Hewitt-Trussville to an 11-1 record while operating Floyd's breakneck, no-huddle offense. As a junior, Tyson threw for 3,392 yards, accumulated 36 touchdowns, passes and was responsible for only four interceptions.

As his stock soared, he attracted offers from Alabama and 17 other schools — most notably Michigan, Tennessee, USC, Notre Dame and LSU.

It's a list that had the potential to grow even longer if not for Tyson's bloodlines. At Auburn's 7-on-7 passing tournament in June, Malzahn spied Tyson and told Floyd he liked the Hewitt-Trussville quarterback a lot, remarking he was particularly impressed with his deep ball.

In many ways, it sounded like a recruiting pitch.

"But you know, that was never going to happen," Floyd said of the possibility of a marriage between Auburn and Tyson. "Everybody knew it."

Floyd chuckled, acknowledging the absurdity of the idle thought. He also understands why others are bemused by the dynamic that exists at his ambitious high school program, where Floyd's ties to Malzahn and Tyson's Alabama heritage have intersected as they have teamed to try to grab the Huskies' first state title.

"We always joked about this at first, because at one point we had Paul, Dazalin and me committed to Alabama and we had nobody committed to Auburn … and Coach Floyd is an Auburn guy," said Pierce Quick, the team's five-star senior right tackle.

"Tyson, of course, is not. His destiny always seemed to be in Tuscaloosa. It's the town where he spent so many weekends in the fall, hanging out in a froggy-seat behind the end zone of the stadium that bears the name of his famous ancestor. Tyson was born into Tide tradition and some of his earliest memories are iconic Alabama moments, including Terrence Cody's blocked field goal that preserved a victory against Tennessee back in 2009.

Whereas people in this state once had portraits of Bear in their living room, welcoming the image of him into their homes as if he were a family member, Tyson grew up with photos of the Alabama coach around the house because he was a relative.

The connection to Bryant, according to Tyson, became "second nature."

"It's huge honor," he said.

But Tyson subtly makes it clear he doesn't want his identity to be subsumed by his namesake. And in many ways he is nothing like his great-grandfather. Forasmuch as Bear Bryant was gruff and serious, Tyson is easygoing and enthusiastic. He cuts up with his teammates and sways to the hip-hop music that blares during Hewitt-Trussville flex period.

"He's super humble, just a fun guy to be around," Quick said.

Quick and Tyson will be playing alongside each other for years to come. But Quick actually committed to Alabama in a shorter time frame than Tyson did. Tyson let almost four months pass after receiving his offer before he gave his verbal pledge to the Tide back in April.

"I wanted to be open-minded," he said. "I wanted to make sure I was making the right decision."

He determined he did — not solely based on nostalgia or his family connections but more so on the relationships he formed with the players and the coaches, including Nick Saban, this generation's Bear Bryant.

"When it came down to it, Alabama just felt like home and was the place I wanted to be," he said.

Then again, could it have been any other way? Tyson didn't have to answer that. But when asked how much his relation to this state's most famous sports figure factored into his commitment to Alabama, he said, "It was a pretty big influence, I'd say."

Tyson smiled. And a few feet beside him, so too did his coach with the Auburn ties… because how could he not.

Rainer Sabin is an Alabama beat writer for the Alabama Media Group. Follow him on Twitter @RainerSabin
Alabama soccer building off previous success

Crimson Tide begins season tonight against TCU

By Cody Estremera
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

Coach Wes Hart’s first year as Alabama soccer coach was about as rough as a first year could go. The Crimson Tide won just five games in 2015, after winning 10 the previous year. Hart quickly turned the program around in his second year, nearly doubling the win total in route to the making SEC tournament.

In year three, last season, Hart decided to change up the team’s formation to a 3-4-3, and it paid off as Alabama won 12 games, one victory short of the most all-time in program history, and advanced to the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2011.

“The 12 wins was awesome,” Hart said. “It was great for our confidence, it was great for recruiting, great for a lot of reasons, but I think right now it’s how can we build off that? Last year was 12 wins. This year can we win 14 or 15 games?”

Alabama begins that quest Friday night at TCU as it opens the 2018 season.

The big change in 2017 was the formation shift, while this year it’s who is standing in the goal. Alex Plavin, who only saw action in 2017 in a shutout over Ole Miss, is taking over for Kat Stratton, who finished sixth all-time in saves in program history.

Plavin showed her skill against No. 25 Tennessee in Alabama’s lone exhibition match in the fall. Plavin finished with four saves in the 1-0 shutout.

“It felt pretty good (beating Tennessee), because we lost to them 3-0 last year. So that kind of hurt, but this year we have new people and we’re closer than ever. If we continue to high press and buy into what the coaches are telling us to do, the sky is the limit for this team,” midfielder Taylor Morgan said.

The upset showed off the team’s motto for the season: Find a Way. Alabama found a way to win, scoring in the 86th minute after Tennessee hit the crossbar multiple times.

“We really did find a way when we did not think it was going to happen,” midfielder Emma Welch said.

“While the keeper situation is different, Alabama’s front should remain mostly the same. Six of the top seven scorers are back for the Crimson Tide, including Abbie Boswell, who led the team in scoring the last two years.

Alabama’s schedule is ranked as the 12th-hardest in the country and it opens with TCU, which finished 12-7-3 in 2017. Yasmine Ryan, who finished with 13 points in 2017, Karitas Tomasdottir, who scored four goals and keeper Katie Lund return for the Horned Frogs.

Lund saw action in all 22 of TCU’s games and started 19 contests. She finished 11-4-3 while allowing just 13 goals.

“What we’d like to do is not treat TCU or one player any different than any other,” Hart said. “We want to put more of the focus, more of the emphasis, on us as a team and what we’re trying to do.”
School accepts role in player's death

Maryland takes responsibility for mistakes

By David Ginsburg
The Associated Press

COLLEGE PARK, Md. — The University of Maryland acknowledged Tuesday that the football player who collapsed during practice and subsequently died did not receive proper medical care and the school must accept "legal and moral responsibility for the mistakes."

Maryland has parted ways with strength and conditioning coach Rick Court, who resigned in the wake of the death of offensive lineman Jordan McNair. Athletic director Damon Evans acknowledged that "mistakes were made" in the treatment of McNair, who was hospitalized on May 29 after a team workout and died June 13.

The attorney for the McNair family said a preliminary death certificate indicates the cause of death was heatstroke. Court posted his letter of resignation on Twitter on Tuesday. He wrote: "I am stepping down to allow the team to heal and move forward." He had previously been placed on administrative leave.

Head coach DJ Durkin is also on administrative leave, and his future is unclear. McNair family attorney Billy Murphy Jr. has said Durkin should be fired immediately.

Evans said Tuesday the university has "hired an external review team to take a look at this, but as additional information comes forward, we will do what's appropriate."

Dr. Rod Walters, a former college athletic trainer, has been hired by Maryland to investigate the circumstances of McNair's death. A report is expected by Sept. 15, but the school has been providing preliminary findings and sharing some of those in a news conference.

"We have learned that Jordan did not receive appropriate medical care, and mistakes were made by some of our athletic training personnel," Evans said. "Walters found that the emergency response plan was not appropriately followed" and that McNair's symptoms "were not properly identified or treated."

Evans said the training staff did not take McNair's temperature or immerse him in cold water, the suggested treatment for an individual overcome by heat.

University President Wallace Loh said the visit to the McNair home was to apologize personally for the loss.

"They entrusted their son to us, and he did not return home," Loh said. "The University accepts legal and moral responsibility for the mistakes that were made on that fateful day. They misdiagnosed the situation."

Loh is adamant in his belief that the school will take steps to make sure this never happens again.

"I made a commitment to Jordan's parents," he said. "I want to make the same commitment to the parents of all of our student-athletes, and to our entire campus community: We will do everything within our power to ensure that no University of Maryland student-athlete is ever again put in a situation where his or her safety and life are at foreseeable risk."

Later in the day, the law firm of Murphy, Falcon & Murphy, which represents the McNair family, wrote in a statement: "While Marty and Tonya will never get another day with Jordan, Dr. Loh's words were meaningful to them and give them some comfort that he will put the University on the path to change the culture of the program so that no Terrapin family will have to endure the heartache and grief that they feel."

Several members of the football program have come under fire for being mentally and physically abusive to the student-athletes. Loh announced the formation of a commission "to conduct a full and expedient review of the reported allegations of the conduct of the football staff and of the football program climate."

Loh said the reports of "bullying behavior" by coaches of the football team "are totally inconsistent with what we stand for, and our values."
NYU Medical School Makes Tuition Free

BY MELISSA KORN

New York University said it would cover tuition for all of its medical students regardless of their financial situation, a first among the nation's major medical schools and an attempt to expand career options for graduates who won't be saddled with six-figure debt.

School officials worry that rising tuition and soaring loan balances are pushing high-paying fields and contributing to a shortage of researchers and primary-care physicians. Medical schools nationwide have been conducting aggressive fundraising campaigns to compete for top prospects, alleviate the debt burden and give graduates more career choices.

NYU raised more than $450 million of the roughly $600 million it estimates it will need to fund the tuition package in perpetuity, including $100 million from Home Depot founder Kenneth Langone and his wife, Elaine. The school will provide full-tuition scholarships for 93 first-year students—an additional nine are already covered through M.D./Ph.D. programs—as well as 350 students already partway through the M.D.-only degree program.

"This is going to be a huge game changer for us, for our students and for our patients," said Dr. Rafael Rivera, associate dean for admission and financial aid. The school will refund out-of-pocket tuition payments already made for the current year, and return loans students may have taken out.

The move dwarfs efforts by other schools, including Columbia University and the University of California, Los Angeles, to alleviate the financial strain of a medical education. Earlier this year, Columbia's Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons announced it would eliminate loans for all students who qualify for financial aid, while UCLA's David Geffen School of Medicine expects to provide more than 300 full scholarships between 2012 and 2022, based on merit.

The Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine of Case Western Reserve University, with just 32 students a year, has paid full tuition and fees since 2008 in an effort to encourage graduates to pursue academic and research careers.

Nationally, 72% of graduates from the class of 2018 had debt from medical school, with a median of $195,000 in loans, according to student surveys by the Association of American Medical Colleges. More than one-third of medical students also have loans from prior academic programs.

Sixty-two percent of NYU medical school's most recent graduating class had student loans, averaging $171,908 for medical school and $184,000 overall. Most medical students will still need to pay about $25,000 in annual room, board and other living expenses; tuition had been set at $55,018.

The school is worried high debt loads drive students away from primary care, research.

The Wall Street Journal
Friday, August 17, 2018

for the coming year.

"There's really a moral imperative to reduce the amount of debt people have," Dr. Rivera said Thursday, citing concerns that loan burdens are shaping career choices and might even be scaring some prospects away from going to medical school at all.

Schools are also seeking to better reflect the population of U.S. patients in terms of race, ethnicity, gender and socioeco-
With Civil Discourse 101, Colleges Address Campus Climate

By Melissa Korn

Colleges across the U.S. are teaching students, parents and alumni how to talk politics without going on the attack in an effort to counter growing polarization and nastiness in political discourse.

The new Project on Civil Discourse at American University’s School of Public Affairs will coordinate student-led discussions through classes, dormitories and clubs. Students will reflect on their debate styles and talk through hypotheticals like whether to engage or kick out party guests who say hateful things.

Wake Forest University is using an intimate approach: Dinner parties for 10 to 16 people at a time.

The goal is to have participants reveal things about themselves, find connections with others and feel more confident working together, said Brett Eaton, who leads communications at Wake Forest.

With schools criticized either for codding oversensitive young adults or for allowing extremists to spew hate, universities including Butler, Tufts and Duquesne are working to improve civil discourse. They are starting speaker series and courses and even designing skits on how to respond if a roommate hangs an offensive poster.

“The real world is full of incivility,” said Jonathan Zimmerman, a professor of the history of education at the University of Pennsylvania. “To me that’s all the more reason educational institutions have to try to teach a different way of being.”

There are limits to the current efforts.

Dr. Zimmerman said he asked college administrators and faculty at a June workshop whether any had voted for President Trump in 2016. One person raised his hand, then said later that he was joking. “How are we going to create these conversations if we’re conversing within a single ideological band or spectrum?” he said.

In a 2017 survey of more than 3,000 college students from Gallup Inc. and the Knight Foundation, 61% said the climate on their campus stifled certain speech that might be viewed as offensive, up from 54% the prior year. They reported feeling that social-media dialogue less civil than a year earlier, and that people blocked out views they disagreed with.

Administrators say students and faculty need to be exposed to more ideological diversity to revive policy-based debates and reverse a broader societal breakdown of civil discourse. Violent protests against controversial conservative speakers at Middlebury College and the University of California, Berkeley prompted concerns from the right that liberal students were unable to constructively engage opposing views.

Carleton College in Minnesota plans to expand a two-year-old offering that has had roughly a dozen freshmen from different backgrounds live together and study how to engage on topics such as race and income inequality.

“It forced us to have discussions,” said Zachary McCravy, a 19-year-old who took the class last year. Mr. McCravy, who said he was a liberal from a conservative Republican household in Colorado, encourages all first-year students to participate so they encounter a range of opinions.

Tufts University’s Institute for Democracy & Higher Education is using a $100,000 grant to study political polarization on campuses, looking at how other schools handled incendiary speakers and outside extremist groups and offering resources on turning conflict into teaching opportunities.

Azhur Majeed, vice president of policy reform at the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, a nonprofit civil-liberties group, said it is good to see schools teaching about the principles behind the First Amendment, but too often they create policies that require civility, rather than just encourage it.

“It can’t be, ‘You’re only allowed to speak if you’re going to be civil,’ ” said Princeton University politics professor Keith E. Whittington, whose new book, “Speak Freely,” was assigned reading for incoming students at the school. He said civility improves academic scholarship but offensive remarks still have their place in the public square.

Twenty-six private colleges, including the University of Richmond and the conservative Christian John Brown University, gathered in Atlanta in June for a Council of Independent Colleges workshop on diversity, civility and the liberal arts.

The council’s president, Richard Ekman, said he had been disappointed that most schools responded to the 2016 presidential election by trying to comfort students, rather than encouraging them to study underlying factors that fueled Mr. Trump’s victory.

“That was a missed opportunity,” he said.