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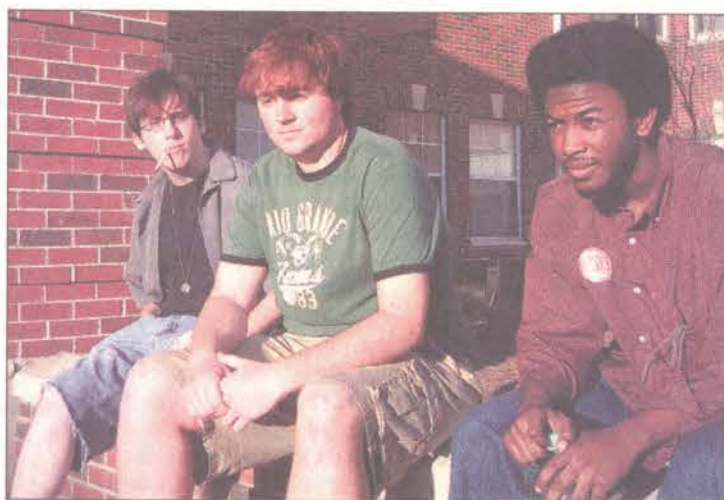
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Smoking ban likely out for bars

Scott Barker, a freshman majoring in chemical engineering; Brandon Heath, a freshman majoring in engineering; and Michael Lucas, a freshman majoring in management information systems sit outside Riverside Wednesday while Barker smokes a cigarette. Barker wants to be able to smoke inside restaurants, but Heath and Lucas support the proposed ban.



CW/ Katie Stallcup

But restaurant ban seems to have support, councilman says

By KATIE STALLCUP
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A proposed smoking ban for Tuscaloosa might pass but will likely be limited to restaurants, said City Councilman Kip Tyner, chairman of the council's Public Safety Committee.

"There seems to be a general support [among committee

members] for the ban on smoking in restaurants but there doesn't seem to be any support for bars," Tyner said. "Then there's another opinion that we should just leave this in the hands of the restaurants."

Tyner said he has not received any calls from restaurants about the proposal. He has, however, had feedback from a group representing the city's bars.

"They would prefer us to stay out of it," Tyner said.

The committee should have some idea of details of the plan by its next meeting to vote on the smoking ban, he said. In

the meantime, the committee plans to meet with local restaurants and bar owners to get opinions.

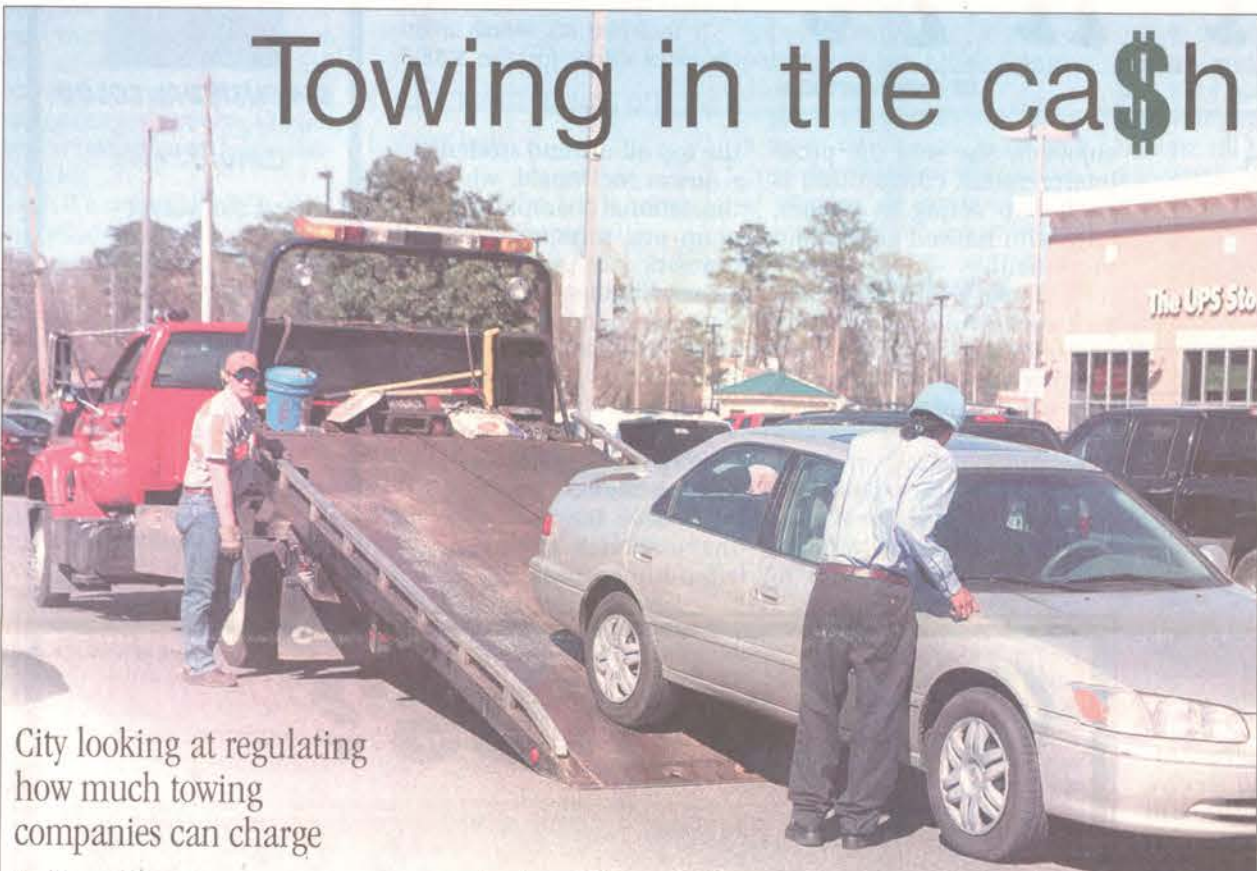
The committee will meet again April 6 to further discuss the restaurant smoking ban.

American Cancer Society officials posed the ban on March 2 at a Public Safety Committee meeting.

Amy Duckworth, ACS' Tuscaloosa health initiatives representative, said the restaurant smoking ban is a start.

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Towing in the ca\$h



City looking at regulating how much towing companies can charge

By KRISTEN TROTTER
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Erin Cooper thought she was parking legally in the lot in front of Sun and Soul Tanning on University Boulevard. But when she walked out of the building 20 minutes later, her car was gone and she had no idea where to find it.

One of her friends saw it being towed, but Sun and Soul had not called a wrecker.

"I had no idea what to do, who to call, where to go or how to find the numbers," said Cooper, a sophomore majoring in nursing. "It was a really confusing process."

She finally contacted Norris Wrecker Service, who had towed her car and charged her \$95 to get it back. When she recovered her car, a large scratch had appeared down the side and the taillight was cracked, she said.

She still does not understand why her car was towed.

"I had parked there before," she said. "I'm still clueless."

Other cities, counties and states have regulated towing not only from public property, but from private as well, and the courts have affirmed their right to do so. They have banned the practice of patrol

towing, in which truck drivers look for illegally parked cars and tow with a request from the property owner. They have also regulated how much towing companies can charge for non-consent tows, in which the driver does not request a tow.

Tuscaloosa limits how much towers can charge when towing from public property, such as along a yellow curb or in a handicapped spot, but it has no price limits for towing from private property and no provisions against patrol towing. Towlers can also drive around looking for cars they think are parked illegally, towing them without informing the property owner or the car owner, and there is no limit to what they can charge to retrieve the car.

An SGA senator plans to introduce a resolution to urge city leaders to regulate towing.

Don Thompson, patrol safety officer at the Tuscaloosa Police Department, has been researching court decisions and federal law to push for Alabama's regulation of non-consent towing so that companies can't charge whatever amount they want to return cars to their owners.

"If you go to Wal-Mart and you don't like their prices, you can leave," Thompson said. "If your car

gets towed, when you go to pick it up you have to pay whatever they ask."

He said a city ordinance would be simple to pass, but he would prefer a state law.

Towing companies are required to report the cars they tow to police within 24 hours to keep stolen vehicle reports from being filed.

But many UA students said when their cars were towed, they had no idea where to go or what to do to get them back. When they finally found their cars, most students were shocked how much they were charged for the tow.

Scott Stevens was recently charged \$200 to retrieve his car, which was parked behind Crimson Café in an apartment lot and towed by Norris Wrecker Service. The price was broken down, he said, into a \$75 charge for the tow, a \$50 winch fee and a \$75 release fee.

"He could have charged me \$100 more if he wanted to, and I would have had to pay," said Stevens, a senior majoring in finance. "They can make up these winch fees and release fees and charge pretty much anything they want."

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TOP: A silver Toyota Camry gets towed away from the parking lot behind Bad Ass Coffee Co. on Wednesday.

ABOVE: Many students have complained about not knowing what to do when their cars are towed. Towing companies keep them in compound lots, such as this one.



CW/ T.G. Paschal

UA forensics team champs yet again

Team will compete in 'big nationals' after spring break

By LORI CREEL
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The Alabama Forensics Council was recognized as the best speech team at a national tournament recently, earning 10 of the 12 individual titles and more than 40 awards at the 2006 Delta Sigma Rho - Tau Kappa Alpha nationals at the University of Houston.

The team receives little fanfare around campus, but it has consistently been one of the best in the nation.

Frank Thompson, UA director of forensics, said the team won the DSR - TKA nationals in 2004 and placed second last year.

"We've been either first or second for about the past 10 years," Thompson said.

The team will go to the American Forensic Association National Individual Events Tournament, which Thompson said is the "big nationals,"

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Courtesy of Treva Dean

The Alabama Forensics Council team poses after recent national competition wins at the University of Houston.

Life without the textbook

Some students borrow, search the Internet to avoid paying hundreds for textbooks

By KATIE BARZLER
Contributing Writer

With a fat load of textbooks always leading to lighter wallets for students, many look for ways to save as much as possible.

Some students, however, have learned how to not spend a single cent on textbooks — they don't buy them.

George Kelley, a graduate student in international relations, said he has avoided dropping cash on books by borrowing them from friends who have taken the classes he is in the semester or year before.

"That's the preferred method, as they already have highlighted notes in them, which makes it easier to extract the high points," Kelley said.

Also, Kelley said some students who take courses with him turn to the library as a resource because many courses have multiple textbooks

available for checkout there.

"I've noticed that several students will check out the textbook from the library and keep it out the whole semester," he said.

Kelley said many of the works studied in certain political science and theory courses are in the public domain and are usually available in their entirety on the Internet.

"I'm all for students going to the Internet, as long as they know they have a legitimate copy of the material," said Laura Bourland, a graduate student who teaches an undergraduate political theory course. "The more expensive it is, the more sympathetic I am to students not buying the books."

Some students, like Geology 101 student Adam LeCroy, said they end up not using many of the books they purchase, but don't find out until it's too late to return the books at full-price.

"I'm upset that our teacher said we would need the book and the lab manual when they're sitting on my desk,

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