

# University of Alabama trustees approve deal to buy 118 acres of Partlow grounds

*By Ed Enoch  
Staff Writer*

*Published: Friday, September 12, 2014 at 1:00 p.m.*

The executive committee of the University of Alabama board of trustees approved a deal Friday to buy roughly 118 acres of the former Partlow Developmental Center property in Tuscaloosa from the state Department of Mental Health for \$32 million.

"I think it is a win-win for the whole state," said David Jackson, the mental health department's chief operating officer.

The agreement will give the university access to new buildings and property on the east side of McFarland Boulevard and help defray some of the department's maintenance costs while maintaining the new Bryce Hospital, which opened this spring with a staff of about 500 and an operating budget of around \$32 million.

The trustees met Friday via conference call.

Under the deal, which is still being finalized, the university will pay \$3.2 million annually for 10 years. The first \$3.2 million is due at closing, UA President Judy Bonner said. No closing date has been set, according to Jackson and university officials.

"I am personally really excited about this. I think it is a good move for Mental Health and a way to support their programs, but from a long-term standpoint for the University of Alabama, I think it is an outstanding move," board President Pro Tem Paul Bryant Jr. said.

## Bryce Hospital Land Deal

*Tuscaloosa News*

The campus of the former Partlow Developmental Center and location of the new Bryce Hospital Friday, Sept. 12, 2014. The Executive Committee of the University of Alabama board of trustees approved a deal Friday to buy 118 acres of the former Partlow Developmental Center property in Tuscaloosa from the Alabama Department of Mental Health for \$32 million. Under the deal, which has yet to close, the university will lease 42 acres and the new Bryce Hospital, opened earlier this year, back to the state for \$1 a year as part of a 99-year lease. The university will also maintain the hospital facility under the agreement. Michelle Lepianka Carter | The Tuscaloosa News

The agreement would allow UA to devote the "immediate core of our campus" for student-centered activity, Bonner said.

The university may initially relocate auxiliary services such as grounds, fleet services, fuel services and garage services to the property, according to the agreement summary released by UA after the vote.

"This additional land so close to our campus will give us additional flexibility with how we provide support services and means we can devote more of our core campus to academic and student life activities," Bonner said in a statement released after the vote. "We look forward to continuing the very positive relationship we have developed with the Department of Mental Health during the construction of their new hospital."

UA purchased the historic Bryce property in 2010, paying nearly \$77 million for the 168-acre property and another \$10 million for environmental cleanup and historic preservation. The Capstone also agreed to manage construction of the new \$81-million hospital.

The agreement approved Friday includes the old Partlow buildings and the new 268,000-square-foot, 268-bed hospital.

As part of the deal, the university will lease back 42 acres of property along University Boulevard to the state at the rate of \$1 a year for the operation of Bryce Hospital. Under the 99-year lease, the university will maintain the hospital with the department of mental health reimbursing UA for the expense, Bonner said. The department of mental health will be responsible for the daily housekeeping and information technology functions of the hospital, Jackson said. UA will maintain the rest of the facility and the grounds.

"They are extremely familiar with all the major systems and everything," Jackson said, noting UA's management of the construction.

The arrangement will allow the state to keep the hospital in a "high state of function," he said.

"The whole point is to try to keep the new hospital as pristine and new as it was the day we moved in," Jackson said. "Over the years, if you run into a budget crunch, maintenance goes first because you have to care for the patients."

The state will also get continued use of a warehouse on the north side of the property for five years, according to the agreement. The agreement does not include the

cemetery on the Partlow grounds, which will remain the property of the state.

Discussion of the possibility of an agreement to purchase Partlow began as early as 2010 with the purchase of the old Bryce property but did not begin in earnest until after the state closed the facility in 2011, Jackson said.

As part of the 2010 Bryce agreement, the university was required to preserve the historic main building. No similar provision exists for the buildings on the north side of Ruby Tyler Parkway, according to Jackson, who added the historic Partlow admissions building was incorporated into the new hospital.

"We don't have the same historical significance," Jackson said of the remaining Partlow buildings.

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