

Briefs, cont.

International Space Station.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

*U.S. News loves Huntsville, Madison*

**U.S. News & World Report** recently named Huntsville one of the country's "10 Best Places for Tech Jobs." Huntsville was the smallest city on the list, which included Atlanta, Boston, Houston, New York, Phoenix, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle and Washington, D.C. U.S. News & World Report also recently named the nearby city of Madison No. 2 on its list of "Best Places to Grow Up."

## MANUFACTURING

*Good news for Gadsden, union, Goodyear*

**Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.** workers in September approved a new contract in which the company promises not to close factories in six states, including a plant in Gadsden that employs over 1,000 workers. Goodyear agreed to invest a total of \$600 million in plants at Akron, Ohio; Gadsden; Buffalo, N.Y.; Topeka, Kan.; Danville, Va.; and Fayetteville, N.C. Goodyear had earlier agreed to invest \$125 million in the Gadsden plant as part of the previous three-year agreement.

*Meadowcraft sold on auction block*

In September, Wadley, Ala.-based outdoor furniture manufacturer **Meadowcraft Inc.** was sold in bankruptcy court to Southern Patio of Atlanta, Ga. for \$4.0 million. Meadowcraft's customers include major "big box" retailers, such as Home Depot, Target and Sam's Club, and a network of approximately 1,500 specialty retailers. Its brand names include Meadowcraft, Visions by MWI, Plantation Brands, Arlington House, Salterini and Tommy Bahama Home.

on AAA-rated taxable bonds.

Bond experts are following Alabama's government bond issues closely, looking for premiums paid for uncertainty over Jefferson County's sewer bond financing. They are also monitoring reaction to a state suit against J.P. Morgan Chase & Co., over penalty fees totaling a potential \$120 million, on interest rate swaps backing a 2002 bond refinancing by the Alabama Public School and College Authority. In June, that authority failed to raise an acceptable bid on \$285 million in debt, according to Bloomberg.

## ECONOMIC LIFE BEYOND AUTOMOTIVE: FORMER MERCEDES EXEC

Diversification, especially beyond the focus of major automotive companies, should be the goal of Alabama economic development officials, says the former chief executive of Alabama's first major auto company, Mercedes-Benz US International.

Bill Taylor, who recently retired from Mercedes and took over as president of the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama, told the Decatur Daily, "Believe me, I love auto, but you need to look at other businesses," he explained. "It's a different world we're living in after the recession, and I don't think that will change for a number of years. We need to adapt."

Taylor was in Decatur in October to speak to a Rotary Club. He said the Volkswagen plant in Tennessee provides opportunities in north Alabama for Tier 2 and Tier 3 auto supplier, but added, "The decline right now in auto, it's going to be around for several years in my estimation." He called for industry recruiters to concentrate on light industry, advanced technology and service industries and to invest in technology training such as the state and industry-funded, \$71 million robotics training center that is being built in three phases at Calhoun Community College in Decatur, the first phase opening in 2010.



EDPA President Bill Taylor

## DEMAND IS GREAT FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES; FUNDING NOT



Bishop State Community College

As enrollments continue to grow for community colleges across the country, their state funding is dwindling, according to an annual survey of state directors of community college systems recently published by the Education Policy Center at the University of Alabama.

"I am afraid that if we continue to get cuts at the level we are seeing, we may see a very quiet and disturbing transition from comprehensive, open door community colleges to niche colleges that are not comprehensive in their missions," Steve Katsinas, director of the center, told Insidehighered.com.

Recession-driven cuts in state funding were on a par with those for four-year colleges, the report found, but enrollments at community colleges are growing at a faster rate as students look to more affordable



Calhoun Community College