A national program to interest teens in technology-based careers is moving its headquarters to Auburn with an Auburn engineering administrator as its executive director.

The governing board of BEST Robotics Inc. has appointed George Blanks, director of K-12 engineering outreach in the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering, to lead its national program, which began in Texas in 1982 and will now be headquartered at Auburn.

An acronym for Boosting Engineering, Science and Technology, BEST is a non-profit, volunteer-based organization whose mission is to inspire middle and high school students to pursue careers in engineering, science and technology. To help these students realize that these careers can be interesting and fun, BEST volunteers invite them to participate in science- and engineering-based robotics competitions at the local level and beyond.

The BEST program at Auburn has evolved into one of the most prominent BEST programs nationally under the leadership of Blanks in Engineering and Mary Lou Ewald in the College of Sciences and Mathematics. Ewald is also a member of BEST’s board of directors.

“George Blanks and Mary Lou Ewald have been the driving force to develop BEST hubs east of the Mississippi, and I could not be more pleased that their efforts have been rewarded by George’s appointment to the executive director position and the relocation of the headquarters to Auburn,” said Larry Benefield, dean of the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering.

Benefield added, “BEST is a critical component of our K-12 outreach activities. Participation in this activity helps students understand what engineering is all about and provides us with a wonderful opportunity to bring students from around the country to the Auburn campus.”

Each September, through local leaders of the national program, more than 700 middle and high school teams from 15 states receive kits of standardized parts along with details of the year’s game. The 2008 game, Just Plane Crazy, challenged the teams to design a robot that can assemble aircraft in a simulated manufacturing plant using Lean Manufacturing and Just-in-Time Inventory production strategies.

Teams of high school students design and build small robots for head-to-head competition in BEST-sanctioned events around the nation. The national program is moving its headquarters to Auburn with an Auburn engineering administrator as its executive director.

(BEST, continued on page 5)
Message from the President

Dear Auburn Alumni and Supporters,

The economic downturn is having a dramatic impact on businesses, families and government. The same is true at Auburn University and all of higher education.

Because of the sluggish economy, cuts to the Auburn budget are substantial. Support to Auburn from the Alabama Education Trust Fund was reduced this year by almost $69 million, the steepest cut in our history, and we expect lean budgets again in the future.

Auburn is fortunate in that sound financial management through the years has put us in a position to thus far avoid severe cost-cutting measures such as employee furloughs or hiring freezes. Some of the ways we are cutting expenses is by slowing the pace of hiring, reprioritizing capital expenditures, improving the way we pay for goods, services and travel, and reviewing ways to decrease healthcare costs.

We also see ways in which Auburn will excel during these tough economic times. For example, we are reviewing our internal procedures, looking for ways to do more with less, and embracing sustainability practices, helping to both protect the world around us and cut costs.

Through it all, a key objective guiding our actions is Auburn’s commitment to providing first-class education. Our budget decisions will minimize impact in the classroom as we instead cut expenses primarily from administrative and non-instructional areas of campus.

In other news, we welcome Dr. Mary Ellen Mazey as Auburn’s new provost and vice president for academic affairs after a national search to replace Dr. John Heilman. She has an extensive background in teaching and administration, most recently as dean of the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences at West Virginia University. Dr. Mazey brings to Auburn a vision in higher education administration, and her expertise in strategic planning will help us achieve the ambitious goals we have laid out for our future.

On the subject of Auburn’s strategic plan, we are making good progress. If you have not read the plan, it is available on our Web site at www.auburn.edu/strategicplan. In the upper right corner of that page is a link to a “report card” detailing the progress that is being made in each of the initiatives covered in the plan.

Although we face economic obstacles, the strategic plan will keep us focused on enriching our academic environment, building the foundation for a larger and stronger research enterprise and expanding the impact of our outreach activities.

War Eagle!

Jay Gogue
Faculty In The News

**Bill Buskist**, Distinguished Professor in the Psychology Department in the College of Liberal Arts, is the recipient of the 2009 Charles L. Brewer Distinguished Teaching of Psychology Award, an award given annually by the American Psychological Foundation.

The award is widely regarded as a lifetime achievement award and is the most prestigious award given to teachers of psychology in the United States. This award recognizes the significant career of contributions of a psychologist who has a proven track record as an exceptional teacher of psychology.

Two faculty members and one graduate student from the College of Education’s Department of Kinesiology were honored at the annual meeting of the Southeast Chapter of the American College of Sports Medicine. **Peter Grandjean**, an associate professor of health promotion and director of the TigerFit program, was elected president of the Southeast chapter, and **Bruce Gladden**, a Humana-Germany-Sherman distinguished professor in exercise physiology, received the organization’s Service Award. Meanwhile, Lindsey Schreiber received an award in the SEACSM Master’s Student Presentation Competition.

**Bruce Berger**, head of the Department of Pharmacy Care Systems, Harrison School of Pharmacy, has been named the 2009 recipient of the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy’s Robert K. Chalmers Distinguished Pharmacy Educator Award. The 2009 award cites Berger for excellence as an instructor, outstanding achievements as a researcher and scholar and overall impact on pharmacy education and the profession.

The USDA’s Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service has recognized **John Liu** for his contributions to the National Animal Genome Research Program and for his service as coordinator of the program’s Aquaculture Genome Committee.

Liu, who has served as the associate dean of research for Auburn’s College of Agriculture and assistant director of the

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Message from the Provost

To the Auburn family,

In just a few short weeks on the Auburn University campus, I have had the opportunity to meet and talk with a number of students, faculty, staff and administrators. The sense of positivism that I heard during the provost search process continues to resonate. As I begin to discuss the implementation of the strategic plan and our future goals with all of Auburn University’s dedicated students, employees, alumni and friends, I sense there is a willingness to work together to further the institution.

During this academic year, we have had a number of task forces working diligently to address the critical issues of the strategic plan. The task forces on Graduation Rates, Honors, Internationalization, Writing and Distance Education have already completed their work, and now we will need to determine how we will implement their recommendations. Two other task forces — one on the general education curriculum and the other on service learning — will be completing their work in the near future. The time and dedication that has been put into the recommendations means that we must now analyze how best to move forward on each of these very important issues. If you are interested in reading the task force reports please go to www.auburn.edu/academic/provost/.

Implementation of our strategic priorities will allow us to work together to position Auburn University for its place in the 21st century. Everyone has an important role to play by working with each other as we will build relationships that can make our vision for Auburn a future reality. Auburn University will be recognized as a national and international leader in its academic programs, with its research agenda, and through its outreach mission if we all collaborate and cooperate.

I look forward to working with each of you individually and with everyone collectively throughout the coming years.

War Eagle!

Mary Ellen Mazey
More Students Taking Advantage of Auburn Abroad

Despite a worldwide economic recession, Auburn students are signing up at a record rate for international study.

If projections hold through the summer, approximately 885 Auburn students will study beyond the borders of the United States this year, compared to 712 in 2007-08.

This year’s expected increase is part of a larger pattern. The number of Auburn students participating in international activities has tripled over the past decade as the university has stepped up its programs to encourage students to develop skills necessary for success in a global economy.

Deborah Weiss, assistant director for Auburn Abroad programs in the Office of International Education, said the worldwide economic recession seems to have had little impact on fall and spring enrollment in study abroad programs. With summer enrollment under way, Weiss said it appears that most of the faculty-led programs abroad will meet or exceed last year’s enrollment numbers.

More than 80 percent of Auburn students who study abroad do so in faculty-led programs. Noting that students and their parents are carefully considering their family budgets, Weiss said some have found good deals in international travel and travelers are finding that the buying power of the dollar against the euro and other major currencies has improved.

Changing economic conditions do affect students’ decisions, yet most who participate in study abroad programs look beyond the immediate future, as do their parents, Weiss said.

“At one time, students made the decision to spend a summer or a semester studying abroad after they got to college, but now they are coming in as freshmen with international study as part of their educational plans,” she said.

In many cases, the students’ parents are pushing them to participate in Auburn’s faculty-led studies abroad. “A lot of parents recognize the importance of studying abroad with faculty, and they consider it a necessary part of the total educational package,” Weiss said.

This academic year, more than 260 students have been studying in other countries during fall and spring semesters. With registration in the early stage for most summer programs, Auburn’s colleges and schools are preparing for more than 600 students in faculty-led study abroad programs this summer. In addition, more than 150 Auburn students are expected to participate in study-abroad programs sponsored by other universities and private organizations, which offer niche opportunities beyond those in Auburn’s faculty-led programs.

The Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures — with summer programs in Austria, France, Italy, Spain and Mexico and fall and spring programs in several countries — has the largest mix of Auburn Abroad programs and the largest number of participants. Based in the College of Liberal Arts, the department makes the programs available to all Auburn students and does not require students to have previous knowledge of the host country’s language. Language instruction is in the host country and ranges from basic to advanced, depending on individual needs. The programs, meanwhile, focus heavily on the history and culture of the host countries, as does the London-based Regents College program led by faculty in the English Department.

The Human Odyssey program in the Honors College also draws students from throughout the university. Students do not have to be in the Honors College to participate, but they do have to sign up as entering freshmen during Camp War Eagle for the following summer. The program, which limits enrollment to 20 students, will extend its study of Western Culture to five countries this summer.

The College of Human Sciences has one of Auburn’s larger individual programs, with up to 50 students during the year at its campus in Ariccia, Italy. The college also has a summer program in Nutrition and Food Sciences that reaches across several European countries.

The College of Business, which has the largest number of exchange programs for undergraduate students, will expand its London summer internship program to include Dublin in 2010. Also, following the success of the study abroad phase of the Executive M.B.A. program, the college has begun requiring M.B.A. students to study abroad; M.B.A. options include China, Argentina-Chile and Eastern Europe.

The College of Architecture, Design and Construction also has a wide range of Auburn Abroad programs for its majors and has the university’s second-largest participation rate, behind Liberal Arts. Expanding activities in CADC this year include a Building Science study abroad program with several locations in China, and an Industrial and Graphic Design program in Hong Kong.

Among new programs, the College of Education has an Eco-Adventure program in Costa Rica open to all Auburn students this summer and programs in Australia and South Korea for students in certain fields, while Engineering will offer a Global Perspectives in Engineering program in Pamplona, Spain.

Several other colleges and schools have new or expanding programs in Central or South America. These include Agriculture, with a new program in Chile; Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, with a new program in Brazil; and Nursing, which has 24 students in Ecuador. Meanwhile, Sciences and Mathematics teams with Duke University to send students to Costa Rica and South Africa on the Organization for Tropical Studies programs.
A prominent design journal has recognized the Auburn University College of Architecture, Design and Construction, naming the college as one of its partner schools. Places: Forum of Design for the Public Realm recently expanded its group of six partner schools to 10, adding Auburn University to its highly prestigious group which includes the University of California, Berkeley, MIT and Georgia Institute of Technology.

The 10 partner schools each provide a representative to serve on the editorial advisory board for the journal, which features writings from fields in design, the arts and social sciences. “We are honored to have been asked to join the group of 10 nationally prominent partner universities who provide guidance and support to Places,” said CADC Dean Dan Bennett. “This journal is the premier forum for ‘Design for the Public Realm’ through discussions of multiple voices from a variety of design disciplines. This recognition is further evidence of the expanding reputation of our college and its influence upon design and construction education at a national level.”

Karen Rogers, Associate Dean for External Affairs in the college, will represent Auburn on the board, which is responsible for developing content and overseeing the quality of the journal. The board meets several times a year to plan, review, and update editorial calendars, and to guide the editorial and peer-review processes, working closely with the Board of Directors of the Design History Foundation in long-range and strategic planning for the journal.

The CADC offers degree programs in Architecture, Interior Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Community Planning, Building Science, Industrial Design, Graphic Design and Design-Build. The components of the CADC are annually regarded and ranked nationally among the best in their respective disciplines for quality of education and quality of students.

BEST (continued from page 1)

The teams have six weeks to design and build a robot for head-to-head competition at their local competition hub. A second part of the competition tests the ability of teams to market their creations using presentations, notebooks, displays and t-shirt designs. The top six teams from each of these competitions advance to one of three regional championships. The BEST program pairs an experienced engineer with each team. These mentors advise the students and faculty advisers. For many students, it is their first face-to-face experience with an engineer.

“They are often surprised to find out that we are normal people who love our jobs, lead interesting lives and earn a good living,” said Dave DeBaets, vice president of the North American Operation Engine Power Products Group for Briggs and Stratton. “This program is hands-down one of the best we have seen for helping students understand that careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics are exciting and fulfilling.”

Next fall, BEST will operate 39 competition sites in 16 states, including five sites in Alabama. Nationally, more than 750 schools and 12,000 students will participate in the program. From Auburn, the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering and the College of Sciences and Mathematics co-direct two competitions — War Eagle BEST for schools in Central Alabama, and Tennessee Valley BEST for schools in North Alabama. Also, each December, Auburn hosts South’s BEST, one of the national organization’s three regional championships.

In 2008, more than 200 Auburn faculty, staff and students volunteered at these annual events.
Auburn, AUM to Help Chambers County Improve Reading Skills

Students and educators in the Chambers County school system will soon receive assistance in reading education from faculty at Auburn and Auburn University at Montgomery.

The assistance is coming through the Strategic TIPS in Reading project involving faculty members in Auburn’s colleges of Education and Liberal Arts, Auburn Montgomery’s School of Education and the Alabama Reading Initiative.

The program will expand the Alabama Reading Initiative professional development model, a statewide K-12 initiative whose goal is to improve reading instruction and achieve 100 percent literacy among public school students. The Strategic TIPS in Reading project will serve Chambers County educators in 2009-10 and, if funding is available, will be available to Tallapoosa County the following year. Both school systems have been identified by the U.S. Department of Education as high-need local education agencies.

Faculty

(continued from page 3)

Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station since January 2008, is also alumni professor in the Department of Fisheries and Allied Aquacultures and director of Auburn’s Aquatic Genomics Unit.

The American Society for Public Administration has selected Paul Harris, associate director for national prestigious scholarships in the Honors College at Auburn, to receive the 2008 Best Article Award from Public Administration Times for his article, “Dalton, Georgia’s Response to Immigration.” Harris co-authored the article about the efforts of a small city to not just face, but benefit from, the challenges created by immigration.

James Groggia of the Biggio Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning and the College of Education at Auburn conducted a workshop on Supporting Faculty Innovation and Change for the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and the chief academic officers of the 19 Tennessee Board of Regents colleges and universities.

Edna Brabham, an associate professor in the Auburn College of Education’s Department of Curriculum and Teaching, said the Strategic TIPS in Reading program will initially reach 50 teachers, paraprofessionals and principals from public and private schools in Chambers County.

“We are working with research-proven methods that have been around for some time, but these teachers may not have had the opportunity to experience them in active, hands-on ways or to really put them into action in their classrooms,” Brabham said. “We hope that there will be additional funding through the Alabama Reading Initiative and other sources to make this happen in many more middle schools and high schools. There is an effort now to put more funds in those directions and to improve adolescent literacy instruction and achievement across the content areas.”

Other individuals involved in the collaboration include Alyson Whyte, an associate professor of English language arts education; James Ryan, an associate professor in the Department of English; Connie Buskist, an assistant professor of reading education at Auburn Montgomery; and Jennifer Hall, an ARI education consultant.

The program will be aided by a $98,000 grant from the Alabama Commission on Higher Education and $25,768 of in-kind support from Auburn.

The ACHE grant will enable the project to focus on four major goals:

- Providing resources to support a professional learning community in which educators build knowledge and skill for using literacy and inquiry as tools for teaching English language arts.
- Engaging teachers and administrators in hands-on experiences with activities, materials and technologies proven to be effective in improving student learning of core content and text comprehension.
- Increasing student learning in core academic subjects and improving performance on state-mandated reading and writing tests.
- Providing participants with options for involvement that will support and extend adult learning and collaboration

College of Architecture, Design and Construction faculty members David Hinson, Christian Dagg and Rebecca O’Neal Dagg received awards at the recent inaugural American Institute of Architects Montgomery Chapter Design Awards Gala. Hinson + Dagg Architects received the Merit Award and Members’ Choice Award for the “House on Turtle Creek,” a new private residence in Auburn.

Valentina Hartarska, an associate professor in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, is a visiting faculty member for 2008-09 with the School of Economics and Management at the University of Mons-Hainaut, Belgium, and the Center for European Research in Microfinance at the Free University of Brussels, Belgium.

During fall semester, Hartarska traveled to Brussels to teach in the European Master in Microfinance program. This spring, she will teach Ph.D. seminars to doctoral students in the management program.

Philosophy Professor Richard Penaskovic received the Academic Freedom Award for 2009 in March from the Auburn chapter of the American Association of University Professors. Penaskovic accepted the award from David Carter of History, who cited his advocacy for stronger academics and support for faculty interests while serving as chair of the University Senate and later as faculty adviser to the Board of Trustees. Carter noted that Penaskovic was instrumental in gaining administrative support and board approval for a professional improvement leave policy at Auburn.
The new Spirit of Auburn credit card featuring the WorldPoints® program contributes to Auburn’s scholarship fund while building rewards for you, too. By using this card for all your everyday purchases, you share the Auburn spirit by benefiting students who most deserve academic scholarships—at no additional cost to you—and you ultimately help shape the future of Auburn. And cardholders will be rewarded when they redeem all the points earned for travel, merchandise or cash rewards. This is the only card that directly supports your alma mater. For more information about the card, or to apply, go to www.auburn.edu/spiritcard.

AAA Invites Faculty, Staff To Join Its Membership

The Auburn Alumni Association cordially invites all faculty and staff of Auburn University to join its membership. You need not be an alumnus of Auburn University to join. Members receive Auburn Magazine quarterly; discounts on auto/home insurance; online shopping discounts such as Target, Kansas City Steaks and FTD; and free entrance to the Alumni Hospitality Tent on home football game days. We are also adding to our local benefit list as well, just for residents of Lee County. To join or find out more, contact us at 844-2960 or online at www.aualum.org.

Support AU With Spirit of Auburn Credit Card

College of Agriculture Dean Richard Guthrie is one of three Alabamians recently inducted into the Auburn University Agricultural Alumni Association’s Hall of Honor, a prestigious award that recognizes individuals who have had a significant impact on Alabama agriculture and agribusiness.

Guthrie, who was inducted in a Feb. 24 ceremony in Auburn, is also director of the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station and an Auburn alum. He came to Auburn in 1958 on a football scholarship and played end for the Tigers from 1958 to 1961, also lettering in track in 1959. He earned his bachelor’s degree in agronomy and soils from Auburn in 1962 and his master’s in soil science three years later, then received a Ph.D. in soil science from Cornell University in 1968.

In 1983, after working for several years with the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Soil Conservation Service, he returned to Auburn as professor and head of the Department of Agronomy and Soils. He was appointed as acting dean of the College of Agriculture in 1985 and, in 1988, was named associate dean of international programs, a position he held until his first official retirement in 2003. Two years later, he came out of retirement to assume his current positions as College of Ag dean and AAES director.

The west side of campus is changing rapidly as construction progresses on The Village student housing, a new dining hall and the new arena. These new photos present an aerial view of the three developments and a close-up of the new student housing. The eight residence halls for 1,600 students are scheduled for occupancy next fall and will be Auburn’s first facilities designed around a learning communities theme. In the above photo, the dining hall takes on a blue hue as it awaits a brick exterior. In its present stage of construction, the arena looks like a smaller version of Jordan-Hare Stadium in the background, but the building’s appearance will change when it gets a roof.
Signs of the Times

Winter took a final, parting shot at the South on March 1, with a rare storm that dumped five inches of snow on the Auburn University campus. Within a few days, temperatures were back in the 70s and daffodils were in bloom, signaling the start of spring.