Richardson: AU Faring Well in Academics

In State of the University remarks to the AU faculty in March, interim President Ed Richardson cited several positive indicators and a couple of cautionary notes for Auburn’s future.

Richardson noted that Auburn is faring well in academics, athletics, enrollment, financial management and state funding, and he said the university is poised to conduct a successful presidential search by the end of the year.

He cautioned, however, that the university must prepare for shortfalls in state funding that inevitably follow periods of prosperity. And, Richardson warned that the presidential search could be impeded by a trustee’s lawsuit over the length of terms on the Board of Trustees.

Among the success stories, he noted, is Auburn’s ranking as the nation’s top public institution among BCS schools in graduation rates for athletes. Richardson said the ranking is as much a sign of success for academics as for athletics.

Another sign of academic success, he said, is the pressure on enrollment from large numbers of high school students seeking admission to Auburn. “Enrollment pressures are as high as they have ever been,” Richardson said. While a final cutoff has yet to be set, Richardson said he would like the limit of new freshmen next fall set at 4,000, approximately 200 fewer than the record number in 2005. The Provost’s Office has requested a still lower number to reduce pressure on core curriculum courses.

Financially, the university is managing its resources conservatively in anticipation of slower growth in state appropriations later in this decade. One thing that could ease the pressure for future cuts at Auburn, he said, is AU’s alliance with the University of Alabama that enables the state’s two largest universities to present a united front to the Legislature. If the alliance holds, he said, both institutions should be able to fend off future pressures to divert funding from the research institutions to other areas of education.

Referring to recent recommendations on university governance from higher education analyst James Fisher, Richardson said he expects the Board of Trustees to focus on items with direct bearing on the upcoming presidential search when the board meets on April 14. A search committee could be formed by the end of spring semester, and that committee could complete the bulk of its work by the end of the year, he added.

Richardson said he still would like to see his successor chosen by the end of 2006. “My sole criterion for success,” he said, “is that my successor has a long and distinguished career at Auburn University.”
Message from the President

Dear Auburn Alumni and Supporters,

Add Barbara Meyer, a retired schoolteacher from Gulfport, Miss., to the list of Auburn’s biggest supporters.

Meyer, whose home was severely damaged by Hurricane Katrina, has a new home now, thanks to graduate students in Auburn’s College of Architecture, Design and Construction’s Design/Build program. On March 8, the students delivered Meyer’s home, a converted storage container custom-built for her needs, to Gulfport. From all accounts, Meyer, who also received a brand-new orange Auburn t-shirt, was impressed with and excited to receive her new home.

Meyer’s home is just one way Auburn is continuing to make a difference in the lives of people — not just in the Southeast, but around the world. Also in March, Auburn hosted Sen. Jeff Sessions, Rep. Mike Rogers and Assistant Secretary of Energy Douglas Faulkner in a demonstration of alternative energy possibilities. The event, held at the E.V. Smith Research Center near Tallassee, focused on AU Professor David Bransby’s research on switchgrass as a source for ethanol. Auburn is also active on other alternative energy fronts, and you’ll hear more about that activity in the near future.

In athletics, Auburn continues to do well both in the competitive arena and in the classroom. By now, I’m sure most of you know that our men’s and women’s swimming & diving teams, led by Coach David Marsh, again captured NCAA titles. The men’s title was the program’s fourth consecutive while the women won their fourth title in five years. Both accomplishments are amazing, regardless of the sport.

In the classroom, we were pleased to learn recently that our football program posted an impressive multi-year academic progress rate of 981, which ranks in the 90th-100th percentile nationally, according to the National Collegiate Athletic Association. Only three other Bowl Championship Series schools – Boston College, Duke and Stanford – can claim that distinction. Not only is Coach Tommy Tuberville winning on the field, but off it, as well.

Finally, I would be remiss not to mention our success in this year’s session of the Alabama Legislature. For the second consecutive year, we received a record budget allocation from the state. The $288.02 million appropriation for Fiscal Year 2007 is an increase of $42.5 million over last year’s appropriation of $245.5 million and represents a strong commitment to higher education. This allocation will enable us to fund established priorities and to create a reserve for leaner budget years. This budget would not have been possible without the strong support of the legislative leadership, particularly the help of Rep. Mike Hubbard. The results speak for themselves.

War Eagle!

Ed Richardson

An article by Alex Simonian, an associate professor in the Department of Mechanical Engineering, was named to ScienceDirect’s TOP25 Hottest Articles list.

Titled “Nanoparticle-based optical biosensors for the direct detection of organophosphate chemical warfare agents and pesticides,” the piece was included in the journal Analytica Chimica Acta in April. The article details a strategy for the detection of pesticides and chemical warfare agents using gold nanoparticles and fluorescent beacons.

To determine its TOP25, ScienceDirect tracks the number of times scientific articles are downloaded from its informational Web site.

Visit Auburn Alumni’s Online Community, Join The AAA

The Auburn Online Community is a service allowing alumni and friends to log in securely and access online services such as updating address information, finding friends from Auburn University, enabling a permanent e-mail address and more. Check www.aualum.org for more information.

Members have been vital to the Auburn Alumni Association throughout its 109-year history. To learn about the benefits of being a member, visit www.alumni.auburn.edu.

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Auburn COMMONS

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AU Launches Largest Fundraising Campaign

Auburn University publicly launched the largest fundraising effort in school history in February with the announcement of the $500 million “It Begins at Auburn” campaign. The quiet phase of the campaign began on Oct. 1, 2001. The campaign expects to conclude in early 2008.

More than 500 prominent alumni and friends gathered for the celebration that announced Auburn has already raised more than $345 million – or 66 percent – of its campaign goal.

The campaign encompasses all colleges and schools on campus as well as the library, athletics, Auburn University Montgomery and the Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art. Endowments for students, faculty, programs and unrestricted dollars make up 58 percent of the campaign’s goal.

“Endowments are vital to the future of any university. They are what sustains the university in the long term,” said Sam Ginn, an AU trustee and the campaign’s co-chair.

In addition to endowments, the campaign seeks $124 million for facilities, equipment and campus beautification. The remainder will benefit research and current operations.

“This campaign and the donors that support it will be remembered for years to come,” said Bob McGinnis, AU vice president for Development. “It will be the foundation for this university’s future.”

On March 16, AU publicly launched the first of 31 regional campaigns. The regional campaigns are part of the larger campaign.

More than 200 prominent Birmingham alumni and friends attended the launch. Birmingham’s goal is to raise $3.8 million from individuals who have not already made a contribution to Auburn since the “It Begins at Auburn” campaign began. Other goals of the regional campaigns across the country include keeping alumni engaged and developing leadership and volunteers for AU.

“The regional campaigns will expand the number of alumni giving to Auburn,” said McGinnis. “They will unite the Auburn family in a common cause to support our students, faculty, research, facilities and programs.”

Alumnus Gives $1 Million to Vet Medicine for Professorship

Retired veterinarian Bruce Pratt of Beaufort, S.C., has donated $1 million to Auburn University’s College of Veterinary Medicine to fund an endowed professorship.

The gift will help recruit and retain top faculty in the Department of Clinical Sciences, which consists of both large and small animal teaching hospitals and a radiology section.

“I appreciate Auburn and the veterinary education I received,” said Pratt, a member of the class of 1953. “I have met and shaken hands with five of Auburn’s six veterinary deans, all except the first one. Dean (Timothy) Boosinger has continued the excellence and I’m confident my gift will be put to good use and will help future generations.”

Officials with the college recently presented Pratt with a commemorative, engraved chair and announced the formal naming of the Bruce G. Pratt Distinguished Professorship in Veterinary Medicine.

“Private gifts, such as the one by Dr. Pratt, leave a legacy for all future veterinarians,” Dean Boosinger said. “Endowed professorships are becoming more and more important for educational institutions. They make the difference between having good programs and great programs.”

Pratt, who moved to Beaufort, S.C., from Wisconsin when he was 7 years old, completed high school in Pottstown, Pa., and then served in the U.S. Air Force for three years before entering Auburn. Upon graduation from Auburn in 1953, he returned to Beaufort and operated Holly Hall Animal Hospital until 1993. He inherited the $1 million he donated from his grandparents. His grandfather was one of the founders of Feenamint, a laxative firm, which ultimately joined Schering-Plough, a pharmaceutical company. Pratt’s grandmother founded the Rockland County, N.Y., Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Pratt said his classmate, Peter Muller, encouraged him two years ago to join the College of Veterinary Medicine’s Centennial Club, a group devoted to raising support for the college. “I wanted to support Auburn even more, which led to this gift,” Pratt said.
AU Container Housing Unit Providing Temporary Homes for Katrina Victims

A temporary housing unit designed by students in Auburn's College of Architecture, Design and Construction was moved in March to benefit a family in hurricane-ravaged Gulfport, Miss.

The innovative, weather-resistant housing unit was made from a shipping container and transformed into a residence by graduate students in the college's design/build program. It was loaded on a flat-bed tractor-trailer at AU’s Carolyn Draughon Village for transport to the Gulf Coast.

“Students in our program had the idea of using these shipping containers, which exist in abundance, to provide more stable housing for displaced disaster victims,” said D. K. Ruth, director of the program and co-founder and director emeritus of AU’s heralded Rural Studio.

Ruth's students partnered with undergraduate students in AU’s social work program, who researched and identified coastal residents in need of the housing. The team selected Barbara Meyer, a 67-year-old woman who lived in Gulfport for six years before losing her home to Hurricane Katrina.

Meyer, a volunteer with the Area Agency on Aging, is a former special education teacher with a bachelor's degree in social services. She has three children, two grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. She said dealing with the destruction and devastation brought about by Katrina has been tough.

“I keep thinking I’m going to wake up and everything is going to be OK,” she said. “I am trying to stay positive and know that God is going to take care of everything. I am really looking forward to my new home.”

Meyer's new home is designed to make maximum use of natural light and ventilation and includes a wall air-conditioning unit, ceiling fans and a small refrigerator. It was also built to accommodate standard FEMA-distributed five-gallon potable water containers. The container was modified for approximately $2,500. Ruth noted that there is a surplus of the containers in the Southeast and throughout the United States. The containers are typically 8-feet wide, 40-feet long and 9-feet high. They are designed to be weatherproof, withstand harsh environmental conditions and support loads of up to several tons. They are easily stackable for transport.

Ruth and his students refer to the units as “pirogues,” a term used to describe a special dug-out canoe used to maneuver through the swamps of southern Louisiana.

“A pirogue is used as a safe refuge in the swamp and that is what we are trying to do – provide a safe refuge,” Ruth said. ♡

Chicago Couple Establishes Endowed Professorship for College of Business

David and Meredith Luck of Chicago have established a $300,000 endowed professorship in the College of Business at Auburn.

The professorship will be awarded to a professor who exhibits a strong commitment to students and offers high quality instruction, research and outreach service. The professor must use the funds to strengthen and enhance his or her program for the college and must serve as a role model for students.

“By providing an endowed professorship as David and Meredith Luck have done, we will be able to recognize and reward faculty achievement,” said Paul Bobrowski, dean of the College of Business. “Retaining and attracting good faculty is the key to building great programs.”

After David Luck’s graduation from Auburn in 1971, he accepted a position as a manager trainee for the retail division of Firestone Tire and Rubber Company. In 1992, he was named president and chief executive officer of the 1,550-store Retail Operations Division of Bridgestone/Firestone Inc. After retiring from Bridgestone/Firestone in 1998, he became president, chief operating officer and director of American Builders and Contractors Supply Company.

The Lucks’ gift is among the latest new endowments in the “It Begins at Auburn” campaign to attract $500 million in additional private support for the university between October 2001 and the end of 2008. The campaign seeks additional funds for all colleges and schools at AU, the library, art museum, athletics and AU Montgomery. ♡
AU Horticulture Research to Yield New Azaleas

As harbingers of spring, no plants have enjoyed as prominent a spot in the Southern landscape as azaleas.

In recent years, however, the reliable ornamentals have waned in popularity, as home gardeners and landscape professionals alike have grown disillusioned with azaleas’ brief bloom times and the lack of different cultivars available to choose from.

But a study by AU horticulturists should bring a plethora of new colors and new and improved azaleas to the market soon.

The research project, headed by AU horticulture professor and Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station scientist Gary Keever, was launched in 1999 in response to Alabama nursery growers’ increasing concern over weakening markets and declining prices for what had been mainstays of their industry.

“The aim of this long-term azalea evaluation is to identify and then promote new, superior azalea selections that will take Alabama’s azalea industry beyond ‘Coral Bells’ and ‘Formosa,’” Keever said.

Coral Bells is the familiar compact, salmon-pink azalea and Formosa is the tall-growing, often gangly, magenta-colored cultivar so prominent traditionally in lawns and gardens in Alabama.

Included in the study are some 900 cultivars not widely available in the commercial industry.

“We take cuttings of cultivars from nurserymen and other sources around the country and propagate these at the Ornamental Horticulture Research Center in Mobile,” Keever said. The young shrubs then are planted at a 16-acre test site at an AES research substation located in Tallapoosa County’s Camp Hill community.

The azaleas are being rated on everything from rooting success and growth rate to flowering time and cold hardiness.

“It’s exciting because we’re finding a large number of cultivars that offer much-improved blooms, more compact size, denser growth and overall greatly enhanced landscape appeal over what we have available today,” Keever said.

Some of the first cultivars from the evaluation could be on the market within two years, Keever said.

Meanwhile, to view the blooms of select cultivars in the study online, go to http://www.ag.auburn.edu/hort/landscape/CampHillAzaleas.html.

White Moon (Robin Hill)

Kochan Joins Effort to Improve K-12 Teacher Quality

College of Education Dean Frances Kochan was recently appointed to the Teacher Certification and Licensure Committee, part of the Governor’s Commission on Quality Teaching in Alabama.

The committee is composed of practitioners from every area of education—all with the common goal of improving education in Alabama.

“The state has pulled together such a great cross-section of people from both business and education backgrounds to implement this program,” Kochan said. “We’re going to look at all aspects of teacher quality to create more successful students.”

The committee is part of a five-year effort that will focus on ensuring that teachers are adequately prepared for the classroom by examining how teachers are prepared, recruited and licensed, as well as how professional development is provided within schools.

“Alabama is fortunate to have many high-quality teachers, but we’re already experiencing a shortage of teachers that will only increase in the future,” Kochan said. “It is a national problem, and this committee will help solve the problem in Alabama.”

AU Enters Pact With Korean University For Research, Academic Collaboration

Auburn has reached an agreement with a university in South Korea for academic exchange and research cooperation between AU’s Center for Governmental Services and Samcheok National University’s Center for Management Innovation.

Under the agreement, the two centers will encourage collaborative research and academic endeavors involving faculty from both institutions. Part of the collaboration involves training for elected officials and administrators in South Korea and assistance with economic development in East and Central Alabama.

Don-Terry Veal, director of the Center for Governmental Services, said South Korea’s economic presence in Alabama, particularly with automaker Hyundai, has led to increased interest in Alabama by South Koreans and in South Korea by Alabamians.

Veal said the academic partnership will help strengthen social, governmental and business ties between Alabama and South Korea.

In South Korea, Samcheok merged with Kangwon National University on March 1, but details of the partnership will remain the same. For information, contact the Center for Governmental Services at 844-4781.

Carolyn’s Day (Harris)

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AU Beats UA in Marketing Competition

A team of students from Auburn bested their counterparts from the University of Alabama in a six-week academic challenge to create a marketing campaign for their client, Snickers.

The teams were charged with creating an event on campus that tied Snickers brand into the tagline “Snickers Satisfies.” Executives from Snickers chose the winner after each team made a presentation.

The competition was filmed as part of the show “Quad Squads,” which airs on mtvU, a television network for college students that broadcasts to more than 700 college campuses across the country.

Quad Squads pits two teams of students against each other to take what they’ve learned in the classroom and apply it in real-world scenarios. Their work is featured in four episodes.

The AU team includes Vincent Harris, a mass communications major/marketing minor from Birmingham; Megan Moore, a marketing major from Auburn; Lance Ingram, a public relations major from Huntsville; and Tracy Miller, a marketing major from Opelika.

The four AU students were selected following a casting call in December and they received their assignment to prepare a marketing campaign for Snickers on Jan. 22. The team only had two short months to perform research, plan and execute their event before making their final presentation March 19. The final episode of Quad Squads aired April 3.

After surveying more than 500 students, the Auburn team decided to create a stand alone event called Snickerfest that featured interactive games and creative displays. The event was held on the concourse beside the eagle’s cage on Feb. 28. The games included a pie toss called the Snickers Pie Smash, a football throw called the Snickers Toss and a basketball throw called the Snickers Shot.

The team also held a dessert competition involving local chefs who created desserts featuring Snickers. Some of the AU football team’s coaching staff served as judges for the competition.

Students from AU’s graphic design department created ads featuring Snickers. Some of the AU football team’s coaching staff served as judges for the competition.

The association presented its Minority Achievement Award for 2006 to Curtis Jolly, interim chair of the Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, citing his leadership in attracting, retaining and improving graduation rates of minority students in the College of Agriculture.

Jolly has worked extensively abroad to help bolster Auburn’s international agricultural programs since he was appointed to the faculty in 1980. The award recipients were nominated by alumni, students, faculty colleagues and administrators, and each nomination was seconded by an academic dean.

Brock, who earned her Ph.D. at the University of Alabama, teaches physical education. High school physical education teachers, who were Brock’s former students, cited her rapport with students, innovative teaching methods and efforts to create extracurricular opportunities for students.

Peek, who teaches interior design, holds a master’s degree in art from Auburn. Nominators cited the Human Sciences faculty member for her classroom skills, personal attention to students and success in helping prepare students for careers.

Gibson, who teaches logistics and supply chain management courses in the College of Business, earned his Ph.D. from the University of Tennessee. Nominators cited Gibson for his quality of research and teaching and recognized him as a “multidimensional” teacher who uses a variety of creative methods in his teaching.

Five faculty members were also named to five-year terms as Alumni professors. They are Patricia Duffy of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, Mona El-Sheik of Human Development and Family Studies, George Flowers of Mechanical Engineering, Guofu Niu of Electrical and Computer Engineering and Isabelle Thompson of English. ❧

Debbie Shaw of Alumni Affairs presented the Auburn Alumni Association’s Minority Achievement Award to Curtis Jolly of the College of Agriculture in March. In addition, three faculty members won awards for undergraduate teaching, and five were named to Alumni professorships.
Auburn University Faculty in the News

**Business Professor Co-authors Book**

Sharon Oswald, Privett Professor and head of the Department of Management in AU’s College of Business, has co-authored the book *Designing and Executing Strategy in Aviation Management*, recently published by Ashgate Publishing.

**DiRamio Wins National Award**

David DiRamio, a first-year faculty member in the AU College of Education, has won a national award for his dissertation on student retention in distance learning.

An assistant professor of educational leadership, DiRamio received the Melvine D. Hardee Dissertation of the Year Award of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators.

**NSF Gives Grant to Boost Diversity**

The National Science Foundation has awarded a nearly $400,000 grant to AU’s Samuel Ginn College of Engineering to support targeted diversity efforts in the college.

Three Computer Science and Software Engineering faculty members developed the program to increase the number of African-Americans in tenure-track faculty positions and graduate-level programs in computer science and computer engineering. Associate Professor Juan Gilbert spearheaded the effort, and he was joined by Associate Professor Gerry Dozier and Assistant Professor Cheryl Seals.

**Two Win Awards From NSF**

Engineering faculty members Mario Eden and Willie Harper recently received CAREER awards from the National Science Foundation.

Eden’s project, “Targeted Approaches for Integrated Process and Product Design,” focuses on finding better methodologies for chemical process and product design.


**Gupta Edits Book In Nanomedicine**

Ram Gupta, Alumni professor of chemical engineering in AU’s Samuel Ginn College of Engineering, is the editor of a new textbook on the emerging science of nanomedicine.

Published in January, *Nanoparticle Technology for Drug Delivery* presents issues concerning the manufacture and biological application of nanoparticles, tiny particles at the forefront of medical technology.

**Barth Co-authors Banking Book**

James Barth, Lowder Eminent Scholar of Finance in AU’s College of Business, has co-authored the book *Rethinking Bank Regulation: Till Angels Govern*, which was recently published by Cambridge University Press.

**AU Authors Contribute To Book**

A leadership development book that includes a chapter penned by three AU administrators has been named an Outstanding Academic Title for 2005 by the American Library Association’s *Choice* magazine.


**Spencer Edits French Volumes**

Samia Spencer, Castanoli Professor of French in AU’s College of Liberal Arts, is editor of the recently published two-volume series *Writers of the French Enlightenment*.

The series includes essays by leading scholars of French literature, including Spencer, on the most influential French writers of the 18th century.

**Lamke Wins National Teaching Award**

Leanne Lamke of AU’s College of Human Sciences recently received a national award for excellence in teaching in her discipline.

Lamke, a professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies, received the 2005 Ernest G. Osborne Award for Excellence in Teaching Family Studies from the National Council on Family Relations. The award recognizes career-long leadership and excellence in the teaching of family studies.

**NASA Awards Grant to AU, Tech**

Researchers at AU and Georgia Tech will share a NASA grant for studies that could lead to the next generation of computer chips for the nation’s space program.

Wayne Johnson, Guofu Niu and Fa Foster Dai, faculty members in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering in Auburn’s Samuel Ginn College of Engineering, are collaborating with researchers at Georgia Tech in a NASA Exploration Systems Research and Technology Program grant. The research team is working on mixed-signal circuits that will improve the way electronic systems function in extremely cold temperatures.

Faculty in the Harrison School of Pharmacy began teaching classes in the new education and clinic wing of the W.W. Walker Building this semester. Featuring the latest technology, the 45,000-square-foot addition facing Thach Avenue provides a new auditorium, classrooms, offices and expanded clinical facilities.
Evening brings a sense of serenity to the grounds of the Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art, left. Works by faculty in the Art Department in AU’s College of Liberal Arts are on display at the museum through May 14. The exhibition by 17 faculty members includes ceramics, sculpture, paintings and drawings, such as “Bird in Cage,” below, by Ray Dugas, a member of the department since 1974.