David Bransby Receives Award for Excellence
Dear Friends:

As we approach the last quarter of Auburn University’s sesquicentennial, it’s important to recognize Auburn’s long standing commitment to helping people improve their lives through our outreach programs.

From our beginnings in agricultural and mechanical applied research, Auburn’s faculty have built an impressive body of innovative programming and services responsive to the needs of people. Auburn serves the farmer and the engineer, but also the teacher and the business owner. AU advises homeowners, but also government leaders here and abroad. We reach people young and old in both rural and urban areas. True to the land-grant ideal, Auburn extends educational opportunity to all.

At Auburn, we are continually expanding on our base of extension, continuing education and technical assistance services to engage the university’s research and faculty expertise to create practical solutions for the challenges of today and tomorrow. From alternative energy applications to natural disaster response, Auburn outreach is making a difference. It’s exciting work that promises to positively impact quality of life in Alabama and around the world.

Auburn University’s outreach mission has changed significantly over the decades, but our goal remains the same — reach out, serve, make a difference. That’s Auburn’s promise to this and future generations.

Auburn must become an even more integral part of the economic development of Alabama which will involve the positioning of AU’s programs for the next 25 years. I remain confident that in 2031 when AU celebrates its 175th birthday, alumni and supporters will look back at 2006 and confirm that it was indeed a benchmark year.

Sincerely,
ED RICHARDSON
PRESIDENT
AUBURN UNIVERSITY

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ON THE COVER

Switchgrass growth rate measured at an Auburn research site.

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Submit news items and story ideas to Teresa Whitman-McCall, Office of Communications and Marketing, (334) 844-7521, whitmtl@auburn.edu. For more information regarding outreach, contact Ralph S. Foster, Office of Outreach Information and Program Certification, (334)844-4730, fosters@auburn.edu or visit www.auburn.edu/outreach.

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Dear Reader:

Welcome to this inaugural edition of *Beyond Auburn* magazine. Our goal with this publication is to highlight the many ways our communities and state benefit from Auburn University's mission of Outreach. Each issue will include features on faculty engagement and updates on outreach initiatives under way throughout the state, nation and the world.

At Auburn, outreach takes on many forms – extension, continuing education, distance education, clinical practice, technical assistance, service learning, and community-based programs. In addition to a number of dedicated outreach units on campus, faculty in every school and college engage their research and instructional expertise through outreach. The common element among all these varied efforts is the desire to help people and improve quality of life in their communities.

In this issue you will find some great examples of Auburn University’s outreach mission at work. Some of these initiatives, such as the AU Academy of Lifelong Learners, are long standing successes and will be very familiar to readers. Others, such as this year’s Outreach Scholarship Grant recipients, are works in progress which hold much promise for the future. Also, we profile some of Auburn’s finest scholars such as Professor David Bransby, this year’s recipient of the university’s Award for Excellence in Faculty Outreach.

However, there is much of Auburn’s faculty engagement and outreach activities which cannot be covered in a single issue. So, we hope you find this edition of *Beyond Auburn* informative and enjoyable, and encourage you to watch for future issues.

Best regards,

ROY RICKERS COOK
ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT FOR UNIVERSITY OUTREACH
AUBURN UNIVERSITY

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I-85 Corridor Alliance™: Moving Alabama Forward

Alabama is undergoing a renaissance. The state’s economic climate is continually changing as new industries and businesses move into the region. Industries like automotive and wood crafts are relocating to the region and several new product distribution centers are expanding into Alabama. Even the aerospace industry, already established in the state, is growing after being tasked by NASA to oversee the development of their next-generation lunar rocket, a companion cargo rocket, and a new lunar lander.

One of Alabama’s crown jewels impacting economic growth is the I-85 Corridor Alliance. Established as a not-for-profit organization, the Alliance is a regional partnership of government, civic, business, and education stakeholders dedicated to promoting innovation, prosperity, collaboration, and competitiveness along Interstate 85 in Alabama.

Joe Sumners, director of the Economic and Community Development Institute, said that the region is now in the midst of a new phase as the economy is driven by knowledge, information, innovation, and technology.

“We will need strong educational systems, strong universities like we have here at Auburn, community colleges that will train an effective workforce, and an advanced technology and telecommunications infrastructure,” said Sumners. “Then we will need to connect all of these assets and have them working together to make the most of what we’ve already got in the region. And that’s what we’re trying to do with the I-85 Corridor Alliance.”

Since its inception, the Alliance has created a network for more than 190 area chambers of commerce, economic and industrial development entities, city and county governments, universities, and private corporations in Bullock, Chambers, Elmore, Lee, Macon, Montgomery, Russell, and Tallapoosa counties. Auburn University is the hub of the Alliance.

The Alliance reaches across city, county, and political lines to promote value-added development of the region, ultimately creating high quality, high paying jobs, a better quality of life, and increased prosperity for all citizens along the corridor.

The I-85 Corridor Alliance’s objectives and initiatives are:
• Providing a forum among stakeholders, with a goal of creating an overall economic vision for the region.
• Creating development strategies which draw upon the unique assets of the region and its communities.
• Creating a brand identity for promoting the region to outside interests.
• Supporting joint projects of mutual benefit and interest to the region’s stakeholders. Two current projects are:
  o The Auburn University Research Park; a partnership between the university, local communities, and the state of Alabama,
  o The Joint Manufacturing Minor for Non-Engineers; a joint partnership between AU and Southern Union Community College.

The Corridor region boasts a wealth of assets for economic growth.
David Bransby is the 2006 recipient of the Award for Excellence in Faculty Outreach.
David Bransby: Changing the Face of Agriculture and Energy

David Bransby, professor in the Agronomy and Soils Department in the College of Agriculture, was chosen to receive the 2006 Auburn University Award for Excellence in Faculty Outreach. This award was given to Bransby for his meritorious and productive scholarship, especially his innovative work in bioenergy, and was recommended by a faculty committee which reviewed 12 other nominations representing some of Auburn’s finest faculty scholars.

“My work assignment at Auburn University involves teaching and research, but no formal extension or outreach responsibilities,” Bransby said. “The ultimate goal of applied research should be to benefit society, and this goal cannot be achieved without getting involved in outreach.”

Bransby arrived at AU from his native South Africa in 1987 to teach and conduct research in forage and livestock management. Shortly after his arrival, two senior professors in charge of a federal multi-state grant to identify high-yielding, low-input herbaceous plants that could be converted to energy left AU. He was asked by the dean to assume responsibility for the grant program. Bransby agreed, although he did not have any background in the field of bioenergy.

“I insisted that I wasn’t qualified to take over the research because I didn’t know anything about the subject,” Bransby said. “But the response was that nobody else knew anything about it either; renewable energy was a totally new area. I thought it was a crazy idea.”

However, Bransby immediately set out to learn what he could about the production of energy from biomass—at the same time that he was educating himself, as an immigrant, about agriculture in the United States.

“What I saw was that the two could fit together,” Bransby said. “American farmers overproduce the major commodities most of the time, and the government has responded through the decades with farm programs, which have created stagnation in U.S. agriculture by discouraging new ideas and change.”

Fast forward 19 years and, in that time, Bransby has built two research and outreach programs, one in forage and livestock management and one in energy crops and bioenergy, that have received both national and international recognition.

“Over the years Dr. Bransby has maintained an impressive outreach program for the animal grazing industry,” said J.T. Touchton, professor and head of the Agronomy and Soils Department. “His outreach program in bioenergy has included nationwide efforts to promote and educate people on the potential of bioenergy. These efforts have basically established Dr. Bransby as one of the leading authorities in the production of bioenergy.”

Bransby said outreach activities have taught him an enormous amount about the real world environment in which results of his research are applied.

“During the course of these activities I have gathered valuable information that has helped me design more relevant research and improve the content of the classes I teach.”

In the forage and livestock program, Bransby serves a well-established industry, providing information about both the underlying physical processes and the economic consequences of following specific plans. The target audience is livestock producers (mainly beef cattle, but also sheep, horses, and goats).

Harvesting switchgrass as an alternative fuel source.
Bioenergy, by contrast, is an emerging industry in the state and nation. Bransby has done ground-breaking work in this area, building a new program where none existed before and brought an awareness of the potential benefits of bioenergy to the public at large and to policy makers. The target audience is society, but especially elected officials, because the greatest need in developing bioenergy as an industry is enabling legislation.

The impact of Bransby's work at Auburn is substantial. In the forage and livestock sector it has impacted industry, by providing an increased sale of forage seed, as well as the profitability of hundreds, if not thousands, of livestock enterprises across the Southeast. This has been achieved by speaking at meetings and field days, publications in the regional agricultural press, assistance with private company advertisements, and one-on-one interaction with companies, farmers and ranchers.

He has worked closely with several state agencies including the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industry and the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs on a numbers of projects. He has met with government officials and elected representatives, including both of the U.S. Senators from Alabama and U.S. Representative Mike Rogers. He has also met with Richard Lindsey, Chair of the State Appropriations Committee, and Ron Sparks, the Alabama Commissioner of Agriculture.

When President George W. Bush zeroed in on switchgrass in his 2006 State of the Union address as one possible new source of ethanol to reduce America’s dependence on foreign oil, the vast majority of the audience did a double take.

Not Bransby or anybody who has talked with him about his research in recent years. He is convinced that biofuels made from switchgrass and other agricultural crops and byproducts can both reduce the nation’s dependence on foreign oil and strengthen America’s farm economy.

“Energy crops, while not a total solution, would help by giving farmers new markets and reducing their dependence on farm subsidies,” Bransby said.

And he’s hoping that the president’s specific reference to the crop will propel switchgrass from the field to the fuel tank, and that Congress will appropriate federal dollars to build a commercial refinery that would demonstrate the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of biofuels.

“The government has been waiting for private industry to commercialize the technology, but private industry isn’t willing to take that initial risk,” said Bransby. “All it will take is just one federally funded commercial refinery, and industry will take it from there.”

When the U.S. Department of Energy cut funding for Bransby’s switchgrass research program in 2002, Bransby sought and secured funds from the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station to carry on his investigations into growing the crop and pushing for its commercialization.

“I’ve continued because I believe this is really important stuff,” Bransby said. “It’s going to play a major role in our country’s future.”

He also believes that outreach is essential to the advancement of an effective research program.

“Research should not be an end in itself, but the first step in a process for generating and transferring information or technologies that are of value to the communities we serve,” Bransby said. “Outreach is the vital second step in this process. To be effective, the research-outreach process should be as seamless as possible. This is best accomplished by individual faculty being involved in both research and outreach, rather than different faculty having responsibility for each of these functions. Subsequent observation of the benefits derived from your research is extremely rewarding.”

Previous AU Excellence Award winners for faculty outreach include Phil Browning, Wayne T. Smith Professor and head of the College of Education’s Department of Rehabilitation and Special Education in 2005 and P. K. Raju, Thomas Walter Professor in the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering’s Department of Mechanical Engineering in 2004.
AU Journalism Project Gives Voice and Hope to Rural Communities

*The Arrowhead*, the first student-produced newspaper for Loachapoka schools and the surrounding community, was celebrated with a launch party in May 2006.

The inaugural edition of *The Arrowhead* is a culmination of three years of building the Tiger/Cub program, a partnership between the Auburn University Journalism Program and students at Loachapoka.

AU’s Department of Communication and Journalism’s “Real Alabama Project” is giving a voice to rural communities while exposing students to careers in journalism. This outreach and community building effort sends Auburn journalism majors to small towns to write about issues facing rural Alabama and provides much needed mentoring to local high school students.

The project focuses on rural Alabama because of a lack of community newspapers that typically would report on local concerns. These issues are sometimes ignored in the urban media. Additionally, rural schools often lack resources to provide much, if any, career mentoring opportunities. The program hopes to address these concerns while providing journalism majors a chance to gain real-world experience writing about serious concerns such as rural poverty. As a result, communities will gain a voice for local issues and rural students will be exposed to career possibilities which might encourage them to remain in school.

To accomplish these goals, the Tiger/Cub mentoring program was established at high schools in Loachapoka and Notasulga, two communities with large minority populations and high poverty rates.

Nan Fairley, associate professor of AU’s Department of Communication and Journalism, said that neither school offers journalism classes, advanced placement classes, or extracurricular activities beyond sports and band.

“Dropout rates at these schools are among the highest in the state,” said Fairley. “The principals and teachers at both schools hope that the Tiger/Cub program will excite their students about staying in school. We hope it is just the beginning for establishing a regularly published newspaper for the school and community.”

Loachapoka High School (LHS) Cubs and the newest members of the writing squad, sixth and seventh graders in the after-school Young Cub program, wrote stories and took photos featured in the first edition.

“The partnership between Auburn University and Loachapoka High School is one that will lead the students into the future with confidence,” said Loachapoka Principal Jim Wilkerson. “The Loachapoka students involved in this project see themselves as part of something very special and are excited and thankful to have the opportunity. The paper is proof that the partnership is working.”

The Tiger/Cub program at LHS was started by AU instructor Trish O’Kane and continues today under the direction of AU’s Jessica Armstrong, who works closely with Loachapoka teacher Lesleigh Golson. “Our event was a real reason to celebrate the accomplishments of the students at both Loachapoka and Auburn University. Their partnership produced *The Arrowhead* and many other life lessons,” said Armstrong.

Students from Loachapoka schools check out their first student-produced newspaper, The Arrowhead.
The Office of the Associate Provost and Vice President for Auburn University Outreach has awarded more than $100,000 to fund faculty scholarship grants for 2006-07.

Seven projects were funded from the 26 proposals that were submitted for the competitive, faculty scholarship grants.

Assistant Vice President for University Outreach Royrickers Cook said the primary goal of the program is to provide AU faculty members with resources to match their research with pressing needs of the state.

“The Outreach Scholarship Grants Review Committee felt these seven proposals show enormous potential for connecting research to the direct benefit of external audiences,” said Cook, who is also the chair of the committee. “These projects will continue to strengthen Auburn University’s commitment to improving the quality of lives and services for individuals, organizations, counties, and towns throughout the state of Alabama.”

The seven projects selected, the funding amounts, and the principal investigators are:

- **Building a Professional Knowledge Community for Problem-based History Study in the Auburn City School System**, $15,000, John W. Saye, professor in the College of Education’s Department of Curriculum and Teaching
  This project builds upon the Persistent Issues in History (PIH) Network that uses field tested learning strategies and the power of interactive technologies to promote civic-oriented curriculum reform among sixth through 12th grade history teachers.

- **Developing a Viable Retail Food Service Operation at the Rural Heritage Center in Thomaston, Ala.**, $6,233, Robin Fellers, associate professor in the College of Human Sciences’ Department of Nutrition and Food Science
  This project will support the Rural Heritage Center’s efforts to promote consumption of fresh locally grown produce through a retail food service operation.

- **The Twenty Thousand Dollar House, Phase III**, $20,000, Andrew Freear, associate professor and co-director of the Rural Studio, School of Architecture
  The goal of the $20,000 house is to design and develop a range of home plans and prototypes that can be built by local contractors under the USDA’s Guaranteed Rural Housing Loan Program.

- **L.I.F.E. in Science: Leadership Institute for Females Exceptional in Science**, $20,000, Toni Alexander, assistant professor in the College of Sciences and Mathematics’ Department of Geology and Geography
  The program’s goal is to increase the participation of women in the physical sciences
Did You Know?

- AU Outreach has awarded more than $432,000 in faculty scholarship grants during the last 4 years.

- 115 proposals have been submitted by faculty in every AU school and college.

- 24 grants have been awarded for projects involving 35 faculty members.

- Grants have focused on a variety of topics including teaching reform, food service, housing innovation, heritage, science and math education, aging, electronic voting, and arts.

Pepper jelly is displayed at the Rural Heritage Center in Thomaston, Ala. The jelly, along with other locally-produced items, is available for purchase.

at both Auburn University and throughout Alabama by creating a network of women science professionals and students ranging from K-12 to college.

• **Prime III Ushering in a New Age of Electronic Voting, $14,000, Juan Gilbert, associate professor in the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering’s Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering**
The Prime III is a secure, multimodal electronic voting system that aims to address short comings in the election process and will be piloted in Uniontown, Ala.

• **Camp KEMET (Knowledge, Excellence in Mathematics Equilibrium and Technology), $18,000, Kimberly King-Jupiter, associate professor, College of Education’s Educational Foundations Leadership and Technology**
Camp KEMET is a two-week summer program targeting underrepresented sixth and seventh graders from schools in Lowndes County, Loachapoka Elementary School in Lee County, Tuskegee Institute Middle School in Macon County, and Edward Bell School in Tallapoosa County.

• **Supporting the Efforts of the Black Belt Superintendents’ Coalition to Close the Achievement Gap, $16,000, Cynthia Reed, director of the Truman Pierce Institute**
This project will support research efforts, professional development, organizational and leadership improvements, and other efforts focused on assisting school superintendents within the Black Belt region.
Outreach through the years

Auburn’s Outreach Mission has Evolved but Remains Centered Upon the Notion of Relating Academic Knowledge to the Needs of Alabamians

As Auburn University celebrates its sesquicentennial in 2006, a consistent theme throughout the year has been AU’s special role in serving the community. From its inception, Auburn has carried the benefits of its academic research and expertise across the state.

Alabama’s land-grant university at Auburn originated with a mission that included carrying the benefits of applied research to Alabama farmers, businesses, and state agencies. Auburn’s first land-grant presidents, Isaac Taylor Tichenor, David French Boyd, and William LeRoy Broun,

1872 - State legislature charters Alabama’s land-grant college at Auburn
1883 - Agricultural Experiment Station begins with appropriation from state legislature
1887 - Congress provides federal funding for the Agricultural Experiment Station through the Hatch Act
1892 - Charles Cary initiates free veterinary clinics for farmers
1907 - Veterinary Medicine holds its first annual continuing education conference
1914 - Congress provides federal funding for Cooperative Extension through the Smith-Lever Act
1920 - Luther Duncan appointed first full-time extension director
1921 - Cooperative Extension helps establish Alabama Farm Bureau Federation
1925 - College of Education launches teacher in-service courses
1926 - First courses taught off campus
1927 - First correspondence courses offered to off-campus students
1929 - Duncan Hall erected to serve as state headquarters for Extension
1930s - George Petrie conducts lectures on social studies on WAPI radio
1935 - Extension Director Luther Duncan becomes president of Auburn
1940s - Civil pilot training programs initiated
1955 - Auburn Educational Television begins programming as part of Alabama’s new public TV network
1964 - National Extension nutrition initiative begins with Auburn pilot program
stressed the importance of applied research in agriculture and mechanics,” said Dwayne Cox, head of Special Collections and Archives at Auburn.

After the passage of the Smith-Lever Act, Cooperative Extension played a crucial role with respect to agriculture. At the same time, the state’s industries benefited from applied research in mechanics.

Over the years, outreach became increasingly important in all disciplines. Familiar Auburn names helped advance the mission throughout the university. Charles Cary established free veterinary clinics in 1892. Luther Duncan developed Cooperative Extension into a strong statewide institution. George Petrie, beloved author of the Auburn Creed, conducted public lectures on the radio.

Today, Auburn faculty engage in outreach in every school and college on campus, demonstrating the university’s enduring commitment to the simple ideal of extending knowledge to the people.

- Photographs courtesy of the Auburn University Libraries

1969
- The Conference Office is established to offer community and continuing education programs
- AU Montgomery opens Division of Continuing Education

1974
- Office of Public Service and Research opens; renamed Center for Governmental Services in 1976

1976
- Auburn Technical Assistance Center is established

1985
- Center for the Arts and Humanities is established

1988
- AU Hotel and Dixon Conference Center opens
- Economic Development Institute is established

1990
- Engineering conference is first program telecast via satellite from Auburn
- AU Academy of Lifelong Learners organized

1993
- Rural Studio is established
- Distance Learning & Outreach Technology office opens
- Outreach Program Office opens

1995
- David Wilson appointed VP for University Outreach; hosts seven “Partnership with the People” forums around the state

1996
- Birmingham Early Learning Center opens
- Extension Service renamed Alabama Cooperative Extension System to reflect combination of state’s extension program

1999
- AU’s first credit course offered via Internet
- Master of Public Administration (MPA) Department’s election and voter education program receives national award
- University Outreach hosts national symposium on faculty outreach scholarship

1997
- Education’s Truman Pierce Institute launches West Alabama Learning Coalition

2000
- University Outreach organizes Black Belt Community Foundation

2002
- Outreach scholarship definition approved for Faculty Handbook
- Women’s Leadership Institute program is launched
- “AU Online” distance education web service is initiated

2004
- University Outreach organizes I-85 Corridor Alliance

2006
- Ambassador Andrew Young is keynote speaker at Governmental Excellence teleconference
- EDI renamed Economic & Community Development Institute to reflect new partnership between AU and Extension
Three Auburn University Computer Science and Software Engineering faculty members recently received a National Science Foundation grant of nearly $400,000 to increase the number of African-Americans in tenure-track faculty positions and graduate-level programs in computer science and computer engineering.

AU Associate Professor Juan Gilbert led the grant-writing effort, joined by fellow CSSE Associate Professor Gerry Dozier and Assistant Professor Cheryl Seals. AU’s grant was one of the first of its kind awarded by the NSF in a new category called Broadening Participation in Computing.

“We received the grant because of our history - we’ve shown what we can do,” said Gilbert. “Also, the NSF has a national need to bring underrepresented people to our discipline.” Gilbert has been a part of winning three other NSF grants.

African Americans represent a small percentage nationwide of those participating in computer science programs. According to the 2004-05 Taulbee Survey - an annual review of Ph.D- granting departments of computer science and computer engineering - there were only 160 (1.4%) African-American computer science doctoral students in all of North America in fall 2005.

Survey statistics for faculty members show an even greater disparity. Of the 3,950 tenure-track computer science and computer engineering faculty in North America, only 42 are African-American. Also, African-Americans make up less than 1 percent of all associate and full professor faculty members in the U.S. and Canada.

Statistics show a higher percentage of African-Americans in computer-related programs at AU than for the nation as a whole. About 10 percent of Ph.D students as well as two of the eight African-American associate professors in computer-related programs in North America are at Auburn University. Gilbert thinks the African-American presence at AU played a role in the university’s being awarded the NSF grant.

“When you look at those statistics, and they are rather alarming, you can see why they looked at our grant and awarded it to us,” said Gilbert. “If anybody knows how to do this, it’s Auburn.”

To accomplish the overall goal of increasing African-American participation in computer science and computer engineering programs, Gilbert, Dozier and Seals proposed the formation of the African-American Researchers in Computing Sciences (AARCS), a program to broaden the participation of African-Americans as tenure-track faculty and research scientists in computing science.

While the grant has the potential to provide significant outreach to African-Americans, Gilbert says it will also help the United States’ efforts to stay competitive in the global technology race. The AARCS Model has the potential to be replicated at other universities in other disciplines as well.
Each year, Auburn University’s Department of Theatre brings theatre and dance productions to life for audiences of all ages and backgrounds. But when the applause ends, the learning continues through AU Theatre’s commitment to outreach—now, THAT’s entertainment.

Department Chair Dan LaRocque emphasizes Theatre’s role in the larger outreach mission at Auburn University.

“Theatre is by its very nature an act of outreach,” stresses LaRocque. “It cannot exist beyond the context of community and is an important tool in connecting one community to another through its emphasis on shared human experience.”

Auburn University Theatre is busy indeed connecting with its communities. The department produces five to eight productions annually ranging from Shakespeare to the Rocky Horror Picture Show. Thanks to generous support from interim AU President Ed Richardson, Theatre began offering free student tickets in the 2005-2006 season, creating a significant increase in student attendance and a similar spike in overall attendance that has generated a new energy in the department and the audiences it serves.

In collaboration with the Office of University Outreach, Auburn University Theatre has also played host to a number of touring performances by internationally acclaimed theatre and dance companies including the Alvin Ailey Dance Company, The Acting Company’s performance of *The Heart Is A Lonely Hunter*, and dazzling performances by the African Children’s Choir and the African Dance Company, offering audiences an opportunity to experience superb theatre and dance artists in unique performances who also directly engage patrons in master classes or post performance discussions.

Another collaborative venture between AU Theatre, University Outreach and Auburn’s Center for the Arts and Humanities makes matinee performances available for K-12 students from all across the state. These performances bring plays to life for students and introduce many young people to their very first live theatre performance. The student matinee performances have included Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* and Wilder’s *Our Town*. Theatre faculty also routinely offer lectures and demonstrations for the Auburn University Association of Lifelong Learners, Elderhostel classes, and the “Front to Back” series of open lectures and discussions from a variety of academic disciplines conducted in association with many productions.

Shakespeare wrote “All the world’s a stage.” Indeed, for Auburn University Theatre, that stage is Outreach.
Institute Expands Focus on Alabama’s Economic Growth and Community Vitality

Two long-time university-based programs have joined forces in an expanded effort to promote Alabama’s economic and community development interests. In May, Auburn University Outreach’s Economic Development Institute and the Community Resource Development Program of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System merged to form the new Economic and Community Development Institute. Joe Sumners, director of the former Economic Development Institute, was named director of the new partnership.

“I am very excited about the opportunities for this partnership,” said Sumners. “There is a lot that needs to be done to improve economic conditions throughout Alabama, especially in our rural areas. We believe that combining the resources of AU and Extension in a common effort puts us in the best position to make a positive difference for our state.”

As the new ECDI director, Sumners serves as an Outreach director, and as member of the Extension program management team. In this dual role, he leads the combined economic and community development effort for both organizations. Sumners is a member of numerous state and regional economic and community development organizations, including the Alabama Communities of Excellence Board of Directors, the Alabama Development Office’s Community and Rural Development Advisory Board, the International Economic Development Council, the Southern Economic Development Council, the Southern Growth Policies Board, and the Economic Development Association of Alabama.

In June, ECDI hosted a statewide roundtable discussion for state and community leaders about the needs and opportunities in rural development in Alabama. Later in the month, ECDI hosted a regional stakeholder meeting for

The Alabama Communities of Excellence (ACE) was created for the purpose of utilizing the collective expertise of its partner organizations to assist Alabama’s smaller communities as they attempt to become “Alabama Communities of Excellence.” These communities have completed the three phases of the program and have achieved a level of success that approaches the ACE Community Standards.
the I-85 Corridor Alliance, a university initiative focused on promoting economic growth along the interstate from Montgomery to the Georgia state line.

ECDI also promotes institutional cooperation between Auburn and its arch rival in intercollegiate athletics, the University of Alabama. Through ECDI and its Tuscaloosa counterpart, the Center for Economic Development, Auburn and Alabama regularly work together on projects which build partnerships and effectively engaging community leaders across Alabama. The two universities were instrumental in the creation of the innovative Alabama Communities of Excellence (ACE) program, a public-private partnership of 15 organizations that are combining forces to revitalize rural communities throughout the state. Sumners serves on the ACE Board of Directors.

ECDI also published “Supporting Alabama’s Economy,” a resource guide describing more than 60 Auburn University outreach and research units that impact the state’s economic development and quality of life.

“Auburn University is a tremendous economic asset for this state,” said Sumners. “This publication describes many programs and initiatives from a wide range of disciplines that are making a tremendous positive difference in this state and beyond.” The publication can be downloaded from ECDI’s web site at www.auburn.edu/edi.

The pictures above reflect three current publications produced by University Outreach’s Economic and Community Development Institute.
The Auburn University Women's Leadership Institute recently held its second biennial conference, a five-day program designed to develop a new generation of women leaders and offered to 25 outstanding female students from colleges and universities throughout the southeast.

Students attending the conference were nominated by their peers and chosen from a field of 150 of the most promising undergraduate and graduate students. They have diverse backgrounds in various fields of study ranging from aerospace engineering to gerontology and came from colleges and universities in Alabama, Virginia, Georgia, and North Carolina.

The Women's Leadership Institute seeks to identify and cultivate young women who have the potential to become leaders in their professions and their communities. Through the Institute, these women learn about government, the political process, and influencing public policy.

Paula Bobrowski, executive director of the WLI, said the conference is an intense leadership boot camp. “Leadership is more than a trait; it is a set of values and skills that are developed over time through training and practice. During this program these women have clearly demonstrated that they are prepared to go far as the next generation of women leaders,” said Bobrowski. “It is truly an honor to work with so many talented young women.”

This year’s conference curriculum included talks from women leaders serving as mentors and faculty-in-residence, exposure to the political process in action, and hands-on activities such as a team-building scavenger hunt.

AU First Lady Nell Richardson spoke at the opening ceremonies and encouraged participants to stand firmly by their ideas. “Courage is the foremost quality required to translate your ideas and energy into public leadership,” she said.

The WLI is part of AU’s College of Liberal Arts. Anna Gramberg, dean of the college, charged the participants to bring women forward into more leadership roles.

“All aspects of society – business, politics, and education – will benefit as women step forward as leaders,” Gramberg said. “Receiving the training and tools to be an effective leader is crucial, and that’s where the Women’s Leadership Institute comes in. WLI identifies potential leaders and prepares them for success.”

The conference provided professional development, team building and networking opportunities to participants. The highlight of the week included a trip to Alabama’s state capital and Senate chambers in Montgomery. Toby Roth, chief of staff for Alabama Gov. Bob Riley, presented Bobrowski with a proclamation declaring May as Women’s Leadership Month.
Interim President Ed Richardson presented Ambassador Andrew Young with the Auburn University Distinguished Public Service Award at a luncheon in Young’s honor (shown above). The Ambassador was on campus to speak at the Governmental Excellence and Best Practices teleconference. The event brought together some of the nation’s premier experts in areas such as disaster preparedness, management of money, people, and information, and infrastructure issues. Don-Terry Veal, director of the Center for Governmental Services, moderated the event.

David Wilson, long-time Vice President for University Outreach, was named chancellor of the University of Wisconsin Colleges and Extension divisions in May. Wilson is the first person to lead the two institutions simultaneously. He will oversee 13 two-year campuses and 72 county extension offices. Wilson, an Alabama native, served Auburn University for more than a decade as vice president. He led efforts to expand recognition of outreach in tenure and promotion policies, leading to a significant increase of faculty engagement university-wide. AU Provost John Heilman assigned oversight of the Office of University Outreach to Assistant Vice President Royrickers Cook, who will oversee Outreach operations that had been reporting to David Wilson.

Henry Burdg, acting associate dean and director of the Auburn Technical Assistance Center (ATAC) in the College of Business, has been named senior examiner for the 2006 Alabama Quality Award. David Mixson, management scientist in ATAC has been named an examiner. The Alabama Quality Award is modeled after the national Malcolm Baldrige Quality Award recognizing organizations that achieve high performance through continuous improvement. Both Burdg and Mixson will be examining this year’s applicants to the Alabama Quality Award.


The Auburn Technical Assistance Center (ATAC) has been awarded a three-year grant from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) to serve as their University Center for Alabama. ATAC joins seven other University Centers from the southeast to form EDA’s Atlanta Region University Center Program. The program promotes innovation and competitiveness, preparing the southeast for growth and success in the worldwide economy.

The 87th Annual Blue Ridge Conference on Leadership will be held Oct. 17-20. The program is administered by AU’s College of Business. A conference brochure is now available online at www.blueridgeleadership.com.

The Tax Practitioner Seminar is sponsored by the Outreach Program Office in cooperation with the Internal Revenue Service and the Alabama Department of Revenue.
For more than 30 years, this program has provided continuing education for many tax officials, practitioners, accountants, and attorneys. This year's seminars will be held in November and December in Dothan, Florence, Huntsville, Birmingham, Bessemer, Auburn, Montgomery, and Mobile.

John G. Veres III, who served as Auburn University Montgomery Executive Director for University Outreach has been appointed AUM's new chancellor. Assistant Director Kathryn Jackson will head the AUM University Outreach division as interim executive director.

The AU Theatre Department and University Outreach will host dancer, teacher, and choreographer Lula Elzy for a special performance at the AU Theatre in January. Elzy is the founder and artistic director of the Lula Elzy Dance Theatre in New Orleans. Performance dates are Jan. 21 (open Sunday matinee) through Jan. 23 (schools-only matinee and master class).


The Distance Learning and Outreach Technology office is working with the Black Data Processing Association (BDPA) to create a three-course certification program that seeks to raise the level of leadership among their membership. Three specialized online training programs will provide certifications at the Associate, Professional, and Master levels. DLOT will provide course development and implementation logistics and provide services to the certification program’s faculty and students. For more information, visit www.auburn.edu/bdpa.

David DiRamo will conduct a special faculty workshop on building student engagement and a learning community in online courses at the Dixon Conference Center on Sept. 12, 2006. DiRamo will discuss the 13 keys for success in online courses based on his findings from a large-scale research project. The workshop is sponsored by the Distance Learning Office. Contact Prasanthi Pallapu at (334) 844-3103 for more information.

Auburn University’s distance education web site, AU Online (www.auburn.edu/auonline), has seen approximately 35 percent growth in traffic each year since its inception in 2003. This year it is expected that the Auburn University distance education program web pages will receive more than 80,000 visitors who will view the more than 20 programs available from the Colleges of Business, Education, Engineering, and Human Sciences, the School of Pharmacy, and the Independent Learning Program managed by the Distance Learning Office. In addition to the student site, the Distance Learning Office also maintains a web service that provides information, development programs, and opportunities in distance education for Auburn faculty. Visit www.auburn.edu/dl.

Auburn University has partnered with the UN World Food Programme to mobilize universities across the nation and around the globe to create a grassroots student campaign to conquer world hunger and malnutrition. The initiative is led by an AU student committee and the College of Human Sciences. Committee members are collecting donations by selling the War on Hunger Free Trade coffee blend at the AU Farmers Market at Ag Heritage Park through Sept. 28. Visit www.auburn.edu/hunger for more information.
AUALL Offers Haven for Creative Learning

AU Academy for Lifelong Learning Serves More Than 250 in Auburn Area

Organized in 1990 as a project of University Outreach, the Auburn University Academy for Lifelong Learners serves persons who may be retired from their careers, but not retired from their desire to learn. From the core group of a few organizers, AUALL now counts more than 250 members in the local area.

Mary Burkhart, now retired herself, conceived the Academy after attending a 1988 conference on programs for retirees. “Of all the things I have done in my 30-year career in higher education, AUALL is the tops,” said Burkhart, who continues to serve as AUALL’s coordinator through the Outreach Program Office.

AUALL hosts a variety of study groups and lectures around an eclectic collection of subject matter. From Beethoven to biology and watercolor to the World Wars, members develop their own study plans and oversee presentations. The program is supported with membership dues. Members also enjoy other benefits such as library privileges and study trips.

The only entrance requirement for AUALL is a desire to learn. For more information on AUALL, visit www.auall.org or call the Outreach Program Office at 844-5165.

“ Auburn Through the Years” Lecture Series
All lectures held at the Ralph Brown Draughon Library
4:00 p.m. in Special Collections and Archives (unless otherwise noted)

• September 12
AU BURN UNIVERSITY DESEGREGATES, Martin T. Olliff and Harold A. Franklin
• October 12
INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS AT AUBURN UNIVERSITY, David Housel
• October 24
AU BURN UNIVERSITY: A PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORY, Jack Simms
• November 9
AU BURN UNIVERSITY SERVING THE COMMUNITY - J. Wayne Flynt
• December 7 (2:00 p.m., at President's Home)
THE PRESIDENT'S HOME AND AUBURN'S FIRST LADIES, Nell Richardson

The Auburn University Sesquicentennial Lecture Series is sponsored by the Center for Arts and Humanities, the Auburn University Libraries, Auburn University Outreach, and the Auburn University Sesquicentennial Committee.

For more information: www.auburn.edu/150
The Center for Governmental Services at Auburn University is leading an initiative to provide professional services for evaluating and rebuilding New Orleans.

“We are delighted to offer our assistance toward the redevelopment of New Orleans,” said Royrickers Cook, assistant vice president for University Outreach. “Through this outreach initiative, Auburn University faculty are applying their academic expertise to a devastated area and assisting with improving quality of life.”

Don-Terry Veal, CGS director, assembled a team from AU to provide redevelopment support and assistance to the Algiers Economic Development Foundation in Louisiana. During the past year, Algiers became a central point to serve the rest of New Orleans and has been highlighted for its efforts in thinking differently about rebuilding and redeveloping the city.

“We wanted to do something that was manageable and practical,” Veal said. “We are applying our area of expertise in an area that needs it most.”

Other members include Bill Sauser, associate dean for Business and Engineering Continuing Education, John Gaber, associate professor in the School of Architecture and Linda Ruth, assistant professor in Building Science.

“Dr. Veal has assembled a group of highly skilled AU faculty and he is providing solid leadership to this initiative,” Cook said.

A variety of initiatives are being developed with education being the driving force in the redevelopment of New Orleans. The projects will promote the area’s recovery from Hurricane Katrina as well as economic development in the regions.

Focus group meetings, strategic planning and assessment, comprehensive evaluations of physical structures such as select public schools, and analyses of educational programming and capital assets are just some of the projects the group will undertake.

“Projects such as this, where education is a driver for economic development, can serve to benefit not only the New Orleans area, but also AU and the State of Alabama,” Veal said.

AU has partnered with several entities on the redevelopment project. They are New Orleans local elected officials, Algiers Development District, Algiers Economic Development Foundation, Concordia design team, City Planning, Eean McNaughton Architects, Algiers Charter Schools, New Orleans Public Schools, The Neighborhood Council of Presidents and the New Orleans Education Foundation.