Engaging Designs

David Hinson Earns 2010 Auburn University Award for Excellence in Faculty Outreach
ON THE COVER
David Hinson
the 2010 Award for Excellence in Faculty Outreach recipient

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The recent release of the 2010-11 college rankings by U.S. News & World Report brings up an interesting point; for the more than 4,000 freshmen beginning their college careers on the Plains this fall, Auburn University has always been one of America’s top 50 public universities.

Auburn has earned that honor 18 consecutive years based on indicators that prospective college students value, such as reputation and quality of faculty.

A critical component of recruiting quality students and maintaining an exceptional student body is the availability of scholarships, which is why we’ve begun the Auburn Scholarships Campaign. These days, recruiting top students is becoming just as competitive as recruiting top student athletes for universities around the nation. The scholarships campaign is dedicated to generating the necessary funding to support current students and compete for top future scholars.

The campaign comprises Spirit of Auburn Scholarships for in-state students and Academic Scholarships for out-of-state students; both are making profound differences in the lives of recipients. David Harris of Hoover is one example. David is a Spirit of Auburn Presidential Scholar majoring in chemical engineering. He says his scholarships helped him take advantage of Auburn’s many resources, including providing him with the funds for a summer program at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.

Endowed funds are paired with current scholarships and given in the donor’s name. This is one very personal way our donors can have a lasting impact on the quality of education provided at Auburn. You can learn more about this initiative at www.auburn.edu/scholarshipcampaign.

Auburn is also working to improve academic support at the high school level. In September, the senior class at Loachapoka High School received HP netbooks as part of a partnership between the school and Auburn University’s Outreach office. The initiative provides academic support and mentoring to help students enter and perform better in college, and ultimately qualify for better jobs. Funding for the netbooks is part of a grant from the State Farm Youth Advisory Board to develop this college prep initiative.

Another reason future students choose Auburn is the quality of our faculty, which play a vital role in the future of this university. Their knowledge, enthusiasm, and commitment provide a foundation for all learning central to Auburn students’ success.

In August, Auburn selected 50 of our faculty to be awarded as endowed professors as part of a strategic initiative to recognize the exceptional merit of existing Auburn faculty. Endowed professorships acknowledge the important roles our professors play in helping Auburn retain faculty of the highest caliber. During a targeted one-year campaign, the goal to fund 81 professorships was exceeded by more than 17 percent, with a total of 95 professorships being funded.

Above all, an Auburn education remains an exceptional value: strong quality with tuition that remains below regional and national averages. When it comes to maintaining that value, competing for quality students and enhancing our academic standing, I believe we should all adopt the philosophy found in the university’s famed fight song: “ever to conquer, never to yield.”

War Eagle!

JAY GOGUE
PRESIDENT
AUBURN UNIVERSITY
In these introductions to *Beyond Auburn* magazine, my goal is to offer an institutional perspective to the theme of the issue, or highlight some interesting element within. Recently, Auburn University honored one of its own exemplary faculty members for his outstanding outreach scholarship. Auburn itself has also received banner national recognitions of its quality and effectiveness of its outreach mission.

David Hinson, whose accomplishments are outlined in the feature article of this issue, received the university’s Award for Excellence in Faculty Outreach at the university awards ceremonies in late September. David’s innovative DESIGNhabitat program in Architecture is engagement at its best – faculty and students working in collaboration with community partners to make a real difference in the quality of life in our state, and beyond. We congratulate David on his award; he is truly an outstanding scholar and a fine person who represents both his profession and Auburn University well.

On the institutional level, Auburn received three very significant validations of its excellence as an engaged university. First, we were very excited to learn that the U.S. Department of Commerce had chosen Auburn University Outreach to receive $4.6 million for a rural library and school broadband technology initiative. The initiative will be administered in our Center for Governmental Services, in collaboration with Auburn University Libraries, Harrison School of Pharmacy, Samuel Ginn College of Engineering’s Wireless Engineering Research and Education Center, Office of Information Technology, the state’s Public Library Service, and Tuskegee University. The Department of Commerce also awarded $1.2 million to the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs for technology training initiative in conjunction with our Economic and Community Development Institute. These significant grants are a wonderful affirmation of Auburn’s engagement capabilities.

We received a second bit of great news in the announcement by the Bernard Osher Foundation that they had awarded a $1 million endowment to our Osher Lifelong Learning Institute program in the Office of Professional and Continuing Education. Again, another testament that Auburn’s outreach programming stands among the best in the nation.

Finally, at its October meeting of National Outreach Scholarship Conference, I was pleased to represent Auburn University as it was installed as one of the founding members of the Board of Trustees of the new National Outreach Scholarship Consortium. Auburn joins the leading institutions in the engagement movement – Michigan State, Penn State, Ohio State, Wisconsin, Georgia and others – in launching what promises to be one of the most prestigious scholarly organizations in the academy. Our inclusion in this elite group demonstrates that Auburn is recognized by its peers as worthy of consideration as one of America’s premier engaged institutions.

Our efforts extend beyond America’s shores as well. Over the last few months, it has been my privilege to be Auburn’s envoy to a number of international universities in Africa, including several in Uganda and the prestigious American University in Cairo, Egypt. These global engagement initiatives are an important facet of Auburn’s overall expansion of international programming.

Indeed, we have much to be proud of – our faculty and our initiatives. You, too, can be part of what we can truly say is a leading outreach program.

*Join us in making a difference.*

War Eagle,

ROYRICKERS COOK  
ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT  
FOR UNIVERSITY OUTREACH  
AUBURN UNIVERSITY  

Carla Jackson Bell (CADC Director of Multicultural Affairs) and Royrickers Cook with area high school students attending the Academic Success Action Program (ASAP) in the College of Architecture, Design, and Construction. ASAP is designed to help students develop their academic skills in trigonometry, physics, drawing and sketching. Scholarships aimed at increasing participation of minorities and females in Architecture, Design, and Construction enabled students to attend.
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David Hinson’s nationally-recognized engagement is transforming the architectural profession and student learning as well as the lives of people who have found a home through DESIGNhabitat.

A leader in architectural education, David Hinson, School of Architecture head and associate professor, was recently honored as the recipient of the 2010 Auburn University Award for Excellence in Faculty Outreach. Hinson’s dedication to outreach is exemplified in his award-winning DESIGNhabitat program, an on-going collaboration between the School of Architecture and Habitat for Humanity that focuses on innovative strategies for affordable housing design and construction.

“David Hinson certainly is the model for faculty engagement not only here, but also within his own discipline,” said Royrickers Cook, assistant vice president for University Outreach, in announcing the award. “As head of the School of Architecture, Hinson has been instrumental in making the school one of the most respected professional degree programs in America. Hinson earned bachelor’s degrees in architecture and environmental design at Auburn University and a master of architecture from the University of Pennsylvania. Hinson is a registered architect in Alabama. Prior to becoming a full time educator, Hinson practiced for 15 years in Philadelphia. His work in the Philadelphia community earned him a Kellogg National Leadership Fellowship in 1991 and the Philadelphia Young Architect Award in 1993.

In addition to heading the School of Architecture, Hinson has taught upper level design studios, lecture courses in professional practice, and seminars on leadership and collaborative practice. Hinson, who has been at Auburn since 1997, is actively engaged in research into the evolving challenges of architectural practices and how to best prepare students to succeed as professionals and community leaders.
Outreach is a natural component of architecture for Hinson. “Architecture is a service discipline,” said Hinson. “We work to make the human condition better by helping our clients and our communities envision and create better environments for living, working, learning, and all the other activities of our lives. My first duty as an architectural educator is to prepare our students for this role, and outreach and community engagement are critical tools in our tool box.”

Hinson’s signature project, DESIGNhabitat, is the embodiment of this principle. From its inception in 2001, the partnership has been a vehicle for applying the energy and talents of the School of Architecture to the challenge of designing and constructing high-quality, affordable housing across the state and region. The program began via a request that the School of Architecture help address the problem of community resistance to the construction of Habitat for Humanity homes in some older neighborhoods in Alabama. Hinson worked with the Alabama Association of Habitat Affiliates to expand the focus of the program to include developing design strategies that build stronger neighborhoods, improve energy performance in Habitat homes, and provide for the exploration of new building materials and construction methods. The partnership with Habitat has evolved over the last nine years to address new challenges faced by affiliates, using the talents of the School of Architecture to test new ways of designing and building Habitat homes.

The program is now in its fourth round of collaboration with Habitat for Humanity. DESIGNhabitat 1 focused on developing a prototype home aimed at improving the cultural and climatic “fit” of new Habitat homes built on sites within early 20th century neighborhoods in communities across Alabama. In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, DESIGNhabitat 2 and 2.1 centered on the incorporation of prefabricated construction strategies. Currently under way, DESIGNhabitat 3 incorporates the insights of the first two phases and gives added emphasis to advanced energy modeling and green building strategies.

Hinson’s outreach efforts have had a significant impact. For the Habitat affiliates, the program has increased their understanding of the relationship between design and energy performance. Consequently, they approach the design and construction of Habitat homes differently than they did prior to their partnership with Auburn. The designs developed by the DESIGNhabitat program have served as exemplars of best practice standards in design and construction for Habitat affiliates and have established Energy Star standards as the performance benchmark for new Habitat homes.
The program also serves as an example to architectural educators of how service learning and design-based research can be incorporated into professional design education. For the past nine years, this methodology of “learning by doing” has afforded architecture students the opportunity to gain insight and understanding into the challenges of creating high-quality, affordable housing and experience, first hand, a powerful model for professional engagement and action in a field of practice where their talents and passion can have tremendous impact.

For Hinson, this opportunity to expand students’ academic experiences by inclusion in the design and construction of Habitat homes is vitally important to the education of these future architects. “My outreach experiences have really helped me understand where the biggest gaps are in our traditional approaches to professional education. For example, feedback from student teams working on the Habitat projects and on projects at our Rural Studio program have highlighted the need to do a better job preparing our students for the experience of working in teams, to teach collaboration as a skill set. It has also made me more conscious of the need to teach students how to explain their ideas to non-architects - how to translate the code that professionals develop to communicate with each other back into lay terms that mean something to their community clients,” said Hinson.

Feedback from students indicates the program has had the desired impact on their personal and professional development. Paul Kardous, a former student, said, “Not only has the program helped the owners and Habitat for Humanity Affiliates across the state, it helped to ignite a public service awareness in scores of students who have participated in DESIGNhabitat. We were exposed for the first time to collaborative practice having architecture and building science students working together from the very beginning bringing our specific knowledge to the table. This mirrors what we do now as architects on a daily basis working with consultants and contractors.”

Hinson’s contributions in academia and design have been recognized with support from numerous grants totaling more than $338,000 for Auburn University and the Alabama Association for Habitat Affiliates. AAHA received one of eight Home Depot Foundation Partners in Sustainable Living grants awarded nationwide for 2009-2011, and credits the track record of collaboration with Hinson and the School of Architecture for their ability to win this grant.

Likewise, Hinson’s efforts in the studio and classroom have earned him regional and national acclaim, including the ACSA/AIA Housing Education Award in 2010, election to the AIA College of Fellows in 2008, the AIA Education Honor Award in 2008, the AIAS National Educator Honor Award in 2007, the ACSA Collaborative Practice Award in 2002 and 2007, a national AIA Housing Award in 2007, an AIA Alabama Honor Award in 2006, and a HUD Secretary’s Silver Award for Excellence in Affordable Housing in 2002.

The outreach scholarship generated by Hinson has provided for broad dissemination of the best practice illustrations and teaching methods associated with the DESIGNhabitat program. Hinson has published professional reports for Habitat affiliates and architecture schools nationwide and numerous articles in peer-reviewed journals and proceedings. Additionally, Hinson has delivered several presentations on his work to academic audiences including lectures at the University of Mexico and Carnegie Mellon University.

Beyond his engaging designs, Hinson has other interests and hobbies including sailing, cycling, and gardening. Ultimately, his favorite activity is spending time with his wife, Annie, and his two kids, Abby and Sam, proving the old adage “home is where the heart is.” And for many, many other grateful families, home is a DESIGNhabitat house, the heart of David Hinson’s scholarly engagement.
Jordan’s Gate, Opelika, Wins National Award

Jordan’s Gate of Opelika, winner of the Rural Housing category of the 16th Annual Charles L. Edson Tax Credit Excellence Awards, was recognized at a Capitol Hill luncheon ceremony in June. The Affordable Housing Tax Credit Coalition, or AHTCC, presented awards to the most outstanding low-income housing tax credit properties in six categories, celebrating the best in affordable rental housing development. This year, the AHTCC Coalition received 40 applications from 22 states. A panel of five judges selected six first-place finishers and 9 honorable mentions.

Jordan’s Gate, conceived and developed through a faith-based partnership between the Greater Peace Community Development Corporation and the Bennett Group, and with the strong support of the City of Opelika, and equity financing and expertise provided by Enterprise Community Investment, Inc., is a breakthrough in affordable housing.

Jordan’s Gate is a community of 48 single-family rental homes created for families earning 60 percent or less of area median income. The 26-acre development is located in Jeter, an area of Opelika targeted for redevelopment. A $9.3 million development, Jordan’s Gate was financed with low-income housing tax credit equity and loans from Enterprise Community Investment, Inc. and a Section 4 grant from Enterprise Community Partners along with a construction loan from Troy Bank & Trust. Residents of Jordan’s Gate will have an option to purchase their homes at the end of the tax credit compliance period.

The development features three- and four-bedroom, craftsman-style homes, each with two full bathrooms, nine-foot ceilings, and carports. They also include all-wood kitchen cabinets and granite cabinet tops.

Jordan’s Gate also includes a clubhouse with a fitness center, a meeting area, a kitchen a laundry, and offices for property managers. The development has outside recreation available: a fully-equipped playground with picnic tables, outdoor grills, and a large open grassed area for sports. Another amenity is free community-wide wireless Internet access.

Members of the Greater Peace Community Development Corporation include Auburn University employees Arturo Menefee, president; Jackie DiPofi, past president; William Sauser, secretary; and Jim Jackson, member. Menefee said, “Jordan’s Gate changed [residents’] lives and gave them hope. Several people outside the community have been inspired to try to better their housing and themselves because of Jordan’s Gate.”

The Affordable Housing Tax Credit Coalition represents syndicators, developers, lenders, institutional investors, nonprofit groups, public agencies, and other allied professionals (including accountants, lawyers, and compliance specialist) concerned with the housing credit program. The coalition, a nonprofit corporation chartered under the laws of the District of Columbia, is governed by an elected board of directors.

For more information on this innovative program, contact the Greater Peace Community Development Corporation at 334-749-9487.
Nicholas Christensen, a senior at Wetumpka High School in Wetumpka, Ala., has been involved in COSAM’s outreach efforts for several years, including the BEST or Boosting Engineering Science and Technology Robotics Competition, which is co-sponsored by the College of Engineering. This year, as the business captain for Wetumpka High School’s BEST team, Christensen led the group to a first-place finish in the local War Eagle BEST competition, as well as at the regional South’s BEST competition. In April 2010, the team competed on a national scale in Dallas, Texas, where they won third place in the BEST Award category. The BEST Award is the highest honor that any team can receive, and it is given to teams that best embody the spirit of the BEST program. Wetumpka High School also finished in fourth place in the Robotics Competition, and was the only team to place in both the Robotics and BEST Award categories.

“As team captain I am in charge of the business side of our team. I manage the team spirit, project engineering notebook, table display, Web site, and oral presentation. Before I was involved in BEST, I wasn’t really a social person,” says Christensen who points to his high-frequency hearing loss as an example of why he found socializing difficult. “Now, because of BEST, I am social. I like being around like-minded people who are interested in science and technology. I guess we are ‘nerds,’ so to speak, but we carry that name proudly.”

Although Christensen’s hearing loss once deterred him from seeking social situations, he does recognize that there are blessings associated with his disability. For example, it is because of his hearing loss that he developed an award-winning science project that he presented in 2009 at the Intel Science and Engineering Fair, an outreach event that is co-sponsored by COSAM and the College of Engineering. For the fair, Christensen created a new type of hearing aid that helps people like him who have high-frequency hearing loss. He even has a patent pending on his new device.

“Last year was the first time I presented my project at the Auburn Intel Science and Engineering Fair and I won the Greater East Alabama Region,” says Christensen. “Winning the region propelled me to the Intel International Competition in Reno, Nev., where I won second place in the computer science division. I was competing against more than 1,500 projects from all over the world, and that number had been narrowed down from the starting number of more than 2 million projects.”

Because of his second-place win in the International Intel Science Fair, Christensen was chosen as one of 40 Intel Science Talent Search finalists in the U.S. and had the opportunity to travel to Washington D.C., where he met some of the most influential scientific and technological minds in the country.

While COSAM’s outreach events have offered Christensen many once-in-a-lifetime opportunities, in the immediate sense, he has also received direction for his future. “The first year I participated in BEST I was on the engineering side, and I realized quickly that engineering is not for me, so BEST helped me decide what kind of path I want to follow as a career,” says Christensen. “I think I want to double major in computer science and pursue a PhD in high-level computer science research.”
Farmers Markets Conferring Many Advantages on Growers and Consumers

Homegrown production is changing the American commercial and dietary landscape in ways scarcely imagined only a few years ago.

Few people better appreciate this than Jimmy Jones, coordinator of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System in Henry County. As chairman of his local farmers market committee, Jones has helped foster the growth of Headland's local market primarily as a way to assist local vegetable growers and area businesses.

And it’s working.

“It really is a win-win scenario all around,” said Jones, who stresses that, contrary to popular opinion, markets don’t undermine businesses or local retail grocery outlets.

“It actually augments them,” he said, adding that the local grocers have actually cited enhanced business from consumers who purchase grocery items to go along with the fruits and vegetables purchased at the farmers market.

“It’s keeping money in local circulation and it’s also helping small-town America.”

But it’s sparked something even bigger.

Kerry Smith, the Alabama Cooperative Extension System’s home grounds co-leader, says the emerging statewide presence of farmers markets is also fostering a change of mindset — making food more valuable in a way she and other gardening experts scarcely imagined.

“It’s increasing the value of food but not necessarily in terms of its dollar value,” she said. “It’s driving home the reality of food — where it comes from and that there are people out there equipped to grow it for consumers.”

Smith believes farmers markets and the home-gardening phenomenon in general also have the potential of instilling healthier eating habits.

“Often in retail environments, people tend to walk past fresh produce,” she said. “But, with farmers markets, you get a person behind the produce who can talk about it.”

“Consumers often come away with a deeper appreciation of how the produce affects them, but equally important, they’re also provided with a better grasp of the whole value behind fresh-grown fruits and vegetables,” she said.

For Smith and Jones, that’s why the issue is complicated — the value of fresh-grown produce expresses itself in so many diverse ways, they say.

Jones worked with other Headland community leaders to secure a Rural Community and Development Grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to cover some of the costs of building and marketing the farmers market.

“As Extension educators, I see our main expertise in forming collaborative relationships with city council members and chamber of commerce officials to build these markets,” he said, adding that Extension professionals are involved in almost every facet of farmers market planning and execution.

Jones said he and other Extension educators throughout the state have worked with producers and local civic leaders to experiment with different approaches to markets.

His committee established a rule from the outset that only produce and products grown within the Wiregrass region could be sold at the Headland market. Headland is one of about 8 to 10 markets functioning throughout the Wiregrass region.

Also, as a standard practice to avoid undercutting, the markets coordinate times among each other. Headland’s market is currently open Fridays from 3 to 7. Others open Saturday and at other times during the week.

“Most people in Headland are hourly workers, who typically get paid on Friday — the reason we decided to open our market on that day,” he says, adding that stay-at-home and working mothers concerned about wholesome food for their family have also emerged as avid customers.

“A lot of thought already has gone into this, and it’s as much about serving consumers with quality produce as it is about providing a place for small vegetable growers to sell their products,” Jones said.
Auburn University’s DesignSeed program was recently recognized with a 2010 Innovator Award by Southern Growth Policies Board, a regional economic development think tank. DesignSeed creates businesses in rural and distressed areas of Alabama based on innovative product designs created by Auburn’s industrial design students. The 2010 Innovator Awards were chosen from creative initiatives designed to help communities recover from the recession.

DesignSeed is a collaboration of Auburn University’s Office of University Outreach, Auburn Technical Assistance Center, or ATAC, and industrial design program. The first step in the DesignSeed process is seek input from community leaders, stakeholders, citizens and workers to identify natural resources and community assets around which to build business ideas. The next step is to provide assistance in identifying and supporting entrepreneurs who can launch the resulting products.

The award for DesignSeed was accepted by Auburn assistant vice president for University Outreach, Royrickers Cook, ATAC management scientist David Mixson, and Mark Smith, director of DesignSeed’s Enterprise Creation Lab. The awards were presented at Southern Growth’s Chairman’s Conference, June 7-8, in Lexington, KY.

“DesignSeed is a great example of Auburn’s comprehensive interdisciplinary engagement with the community working together to stimulate sustainable economic development,” said Cook. “I’m excited that the program has been recognized by such an influential group as Southern Growth Policies Board.”

Smith, an Auburn alumnus, developed the concept while a graduate student with Tsai Lu Liu, assistant professor in the Department of Industrial and Graphic Design. A grant from University Outreach helped bring the DesignSeed concept into operation. Innovator Awards are presented annually to one organization in each of Southern Growth’s 13 member states in recognition of initiatives that are improving economic opportunities and quality of life in the region.

Southern Growth Policies Board serves Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia. Its mission is to help improve the economy and quality of life in the South through dialogue and collaboration among a cross-section of the region’s policy and program leaders. Its research focuses on the major drivers of economic prosperity: innovation and technology, globalization, workforce development, and community development.
Kid Check

Through a $25,000 grant from the Verizon Foundation, researchers in the Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering are teaming up with the School of Nursing to improve a program that provides health screenings to kids in poor rural communities.

Nursing’s Kid Check program allows Auburn nursing students to conduct health screenings of K-12 children in Lee, Limestone, Lowndes, and Bullock counties. The free health assessments identify children at risk for chronic health issues and diseases and provide them with health education to modify the identified risk factors as well as referrals to area physicians.

One of the hurdles to the efficiency of screenings and security of patient information has been the paperwork each nurse uses to record patient data. Under the direction of CSSE faculty member Richard Chapman, wireless engineering students have proposed a system that will automate data gathering during the Kid Check assessments. Through the use of portable wireless devices, the system will permit instant statistical analysis of the data by Auburn nurses and students in order to recommend appropriate referrals, lifestyle changes, and other information for the children who need them.

“This is a nice opportunity for the two colleges to be involved in an interdisciplinary project,” said Chapman. “This project gets the developers and designers out of the vacuum and working with the professionals who will really use the technology.”

While the primary focus is the accurate, confidential and instantaneous analysis of data in the field, the automated data collection system will also make important health data accessible to public health professionals, as well as state policy makers, while maintaining patient privacy. The system was used by nursing students to conduct Kid Check during fall 2009 and spring 2010.
AMSTI Brings Science to Life for Coosada Kindergarten Students

The Alabama Mathematics, Science, and Technology Initiative or AMSTI is a state-funded, K-12 education program, sponsored by the Department of Education to initiate improved, state-wide mathematics and science teaching and learning. AMSTI personnel provide professional development opportunities, equipment, supplies, materials, and in-school support throughout the year to teachers in participating AMSTI schools around the state. The goal is to provide students with math, science and technology curricula that utilize a hands-on, activity-based approach to learning.

Recent support offered to a Coosada Elementary School kindergarten class by AMSTI Specialist Denise Dark, provides an example of the outreach efforts AMSTI is known for throughout Alabama. Dark led Danna Freeman Beale’s kindergarten class in a wind activity project entitled “The Energy of Wind,” where students explored how many blows of air it would take to move various objects across a given space.

“Everything she did with the students perfectly captivated their minds, even immediately after lunch,” said Beale. “I truly enjoyed their discovery process. I especially loved that she brought the material down to earth with such discussion topics as: ‘What are some things that you enjoy doing on windy days?’ ‘What are some things that we should not do on windy days?’ and ‘Why do you think so?’ They were thinking, they were problem solving, and they were motivated!”

Beale also notes that Dark was clear in her directions, handled student questions gently, and inspired the kindergarteners to wonder and think about a variety of interdisciplinary topics and learning levels.

“We are fortunate to have AMSTI as a part of our lives, and I feel especially fortunate to be able to delight in watching science and discovery come to life for my children,” said Beale.

The interactive teaching techniques utilized by AMSTI have resulted in significant improvements in
student achievement, as measured by such standardized tests as the Stanford Achievement Test and the Alabama High School Graduation Exam. Auburn University’s College of Education in partnership with the College of Sciences and Mathematics supports an AMSTI site, which provides service to 45 schools in the region.

“If students are introduced to inquiry-based learning and problem solving at an early age, imagine what they can accomplish as middle and high school students. If we nurture students’ curiosity and ability to work together to solve problems, we can sustain their interest in math and science even when those subjects become more challenging,” said Auburn University AMSTI Director Beth Hickman.

For more information on AMSTI, visit the Web site at www.amsti.org.

Loachapoka High Students Receive HP Netbooks as Part of Auburn Outreach Initiative

The entire senior class at Loachapoka High School is receiving HP netbooks as part of an innovative partnership between the school and Auburn University’s Outreach office. The initiative provides academic support and mentoring to help students enter and perform better in college, and ultimately qualify for better jobs.

The distribution of the netbooks, coordinated by Auburn’s Office of University Outreach with the Lee County School System, is being conducted for the first time this school year. Funding for the netbooks are part of grant received by University Outreach from the State Farm Youth Advisory Board to develop this college prep initiative. The mini-laptops are part of a wide range of educational enrichment opportunities now available to the students at Loachapoka.

“These laptops are part of the ‘Advanced University Experience’ component of the initiative,” says Christiana Russell, outreach coordinator for K-12 Initiatives. “They will not only enrich the students’ learning process for their remaining year of high school but will also help prepare them for post-secondary education.” ACT test preparation and development of technologically-based research skills for college are some of the major goals of the initiative.

Initially, the senior class will use the devices to compose their senior writing project. However, the netbooks will help students build their computer and technological skills, while increasing their competencies in math, reading, and writing. Netbooks will also support new academic programs, such as an online math enrichment course currently under development by Auburn’s College of Sciences and Mathematics.

The overall partnership between Loachapoka High School and Auburn University is part of a strategic initiative launched last year by the University Outreach office. “Building high-quality, high-impact partnerships between Auburn and school systems in Alabama is a key objective of the university’s strategic plan,” notes Royrickers Cook, assistant vice president for University Outreach. “Our goal is to help the students increase their academic performance and, more importantly, expand their view of the possibilities of college and career.”

The initiative is supported by a number of internal and external partners. In addition to University Outreach, Auburn’s Truman Pierce Institute in the College of Education, and the College of Sciences and Mathematics will support program development and administration. Verizon has agreed to partner with the project for technological support. The Lee County School System and Loachapoka High administrators will oversee the involvement of students in the program.

When fully implemented, the partnership will offer a variety of mentoring, tutoring and academic development programs, service learning experiences, family counseling, and other support services for students and their parents. Auburn University is also exploring partnerships with other nearby school districts using its experience at Loachapoka as a model.

For more information on this initiative, contact Christiana Russell at hmr0003@auburn.edu.
Josiah Greene never has been one to get caught up in all the hype surrounding college football recruiting, but this year, the Auburn University animal sciences major and ardent Auburn fan got hooked. From his U.S. Army Reserve quarters at Camp Bondsteel in Kosovo, the 25-year-old Greene cruised the Internet on his laptop almost daily as national signing day 2010 approached, keeping up with the latest rumors on which high-school football standouts were leaning toward Auburn.

Greene, a sergeant in the Reserve, was in Kosovo on a peacekeeping mission, and the college-football recruit watch was a morale booster that connected him to home and the Auburn Family.

Among the recruits he had his eye on was Shon Coleman, a 6-foot 7-inch, 285-pound five-star recruit out of Olive Branch, Miss., and when, on Feb. 3, Coleman signed with Auburn, Greene let go a mighty “War Eagle” into the Kosovo night.

Not two months later, Coleman was in St. Jude Children’s Hospital in Memphis undergoing chemotherapy after having been diagnosed with leukemia. Never one to sit on the sidelines, Greene was determined to do something to show Coleman that members of his newly acquired Auburn Family were behind him 110 percent. From 5,500 miles away, Greene established the Shon Coleman Tribute Fund at St. Jude’s.
with all donations going toward cancer research at the world-class hospital.

Greene posted information about the fund on Auburn message boards, and by the first day’s end, it topped $2,000. When, in response to an e-mail from Greene, ESPN The Magazine senior writer Bruce Feldman related the story on his April 29 blog, the fund shot past its original goal of $10,000. By the time Greene landed back in the States on July 18, the total was at $16,196 and rising.

As for Coleman, his progress has been nothing short of amazing. Fifteen days after entering St. Jude the last week in March, he tested 100-percent cancer free. He now is in the midst of the 120-week-long third and final round of chemo and, family members say, intends to start classes at Auburn summer semester 2011.

Greene is back in classes this semester as a junior in animal sciences, and as word of the Shon Coleman fund continues to spread, the donors list keeps growing. Tax-deductible donations to the Shon Coleman Tribute Fund can be made online at stj.convio.net/goto/wareagleshon.

College of Liberal Arts Student Honored by Town of Oak Grove for Unique Summer Learning Experience

Hunter Morgan, a junior majoring in public administration in the College of Liberal Arts, participated in a unique 2010 summer internship in the town of Oak Grove, Ala., and received a resolution in his honor from the city for his efforts.

Coordinated by the David Mathews Center for Civic Life and the Community and Civic Engagement Initiative in the College of Liberal Arts, Morgan coordinated Comet Grove, the town’s new community garden, where he helped manage the day-to-day operations and recruit and develop volunteers. Former Mayor Bloise Zeigler donated a 20-acre field for the project, and current head of the parks and recreation department Carolyn Zeigler and other volunteers led its first planting. Comet Grove is named for Hodges Meteorite, the world famous extraterrestrial object that crashed through the roof of an Oak Grove house in 1954 and wounded resident Ann Elizabeth Hodges.

“The intent [of the garden] is to grow food for the needy of Oak Grove and the outlying communities,” said current Mayor Charles Merkel. “Once those needs have been met, we offer fresh-grown vegetables to all at low prices.” The internship had as much to do with civic growth as it did with raising vegetables, however, and Morgan, who lived on-site in a refurbished barn apartment, was able to live and learn about civic life with Oak Grove’s most important asset—its residents.

“Working at Comet Grove gave me a great understanding of how communities form, work, and prosper,” Morgan said. “My hope is that as the garden begins to fill a gap in the community and people see the tangible results, engagement of the community will rise and participation will increase for weekly garden meetings and daily garden upkeep, and that with that growth, people will see why a public administration major spent his summer at Comet Grove.”

The Mathews Center sponsored the project to provide a community learning experience for an undergraduate and understand the role of community gardens in democratic civic life. “Hunter’s internship experience was a groundbreaking project for us,” wrote Christopher McCauley, director of operations for the center and College of Liberal Arts graduate. “Whether engaged in manual labor or facilitating town hall discussions, Hunter’s experience illustrates an internship that went far beyond disengaged projects and repetitive tasks. He truly became a part of the community, and will be greatly missed by the residents.”

At the end of the internship, the town organized an appreciation dinner for Morgan and prepared a meal using vegetables from the garden. Mayor Charles Merkel presented Morgan with a public resolution. “The support of the David Mathews Center for Civic Life and the tireless efforts of Hunter Morgan through working at the garden, conducting food distribution, facilitating meetings, volunteer scheduling, group discussions and speaking to local organization about ‘Comet Grove’ have made this year’s garden a success far beyond our expectations,” the resolution read in part.
One fascinating but scarcely known fact about Alabama's native floral landscape is how little of it remains in the 200 years since people first began settling the state.

River cane is a case-in-point. Traveling through Alabama in the 19th century, American naturalist William Bartram offered a series of vivid descriptions of what he encountered—a seemingly endless wilderness of “cane meadows,” with some of the stalks as “thick as a man’s arm, or three or four inches in diameter.”

As a matter of fact, much of what is now known as Alabama was covered in this native bamboo, and even today the term “canebrake” is still closely associated with the five counties in southwest Alabama that overlap the fertile bottomlands adjoining the Alabama and Tombigbee rivers.

So what happened? Cotton, for the most part. In only a few years following settlement, the vast cane meadows of which Bartram and other travelers spoke with a measure of awe were almost entirely supplanted by sprawling cotton fields.

As it turns out, river cane, despite the blows it sustained from cotton cultivation and other human activities in the 19th century, is not endangered. But the habitat the vast prairies of river cane once provided for some 55 species has been virtually wiped out—almost 95 percent gone, according to some estimates.

At Auburn University, Mark Smith, an Alabama Cooperative Extension System wildlife specialist and assistant professor of forestry and wildlife sciences, is seeking ways to restore this lost habitat.

The immediate challenge is finding a cost-effective way to propagate river cane.

“The cane flowers only once every 20 or 30 years, so collecting seeds isn’t a viable option,” said Smith. However, Smith is working with Brian Baldwin, a Mississippi State University professor specializing in alternative crops, who is developing effective ways to propagate the species.

Baldwin has concentrated on removing plants from the wild into greenhouses, then growing the plants out so that the rhizomes can be removed.

“This really brings us closer to a mass production level that will enable us to reestablish river cane stands on a wide scale,” Smith said. “Right now, we’re able to produce several hundred sprigs at a time, but we want to advance to the point at which we can end up with as many as 30,000 sprigs.”
The next step will be establishing what amounts to a beachhead for river cane throughout the state. Smith perceives three federal conservation programs — the Wetlands Reserve Program, the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program — as the most effective venues through which an enthusiasm for river cane can be generated among landowners. All of these programs provide incentives for landowners to plant environmentally friendly flora, such as river cane. In addition to providing excellent wildlife habitat, the cane’s dense root system also helps stabilize river banks.

After that, Smith sees other challenges, such as developing adequate land-management practices for river cane.

“It may just be a simple matter of planting it and walking away, but we’re not sure yet,” Smith said. “You still have the challenge of competing vegetation.”

While this problem is typically controlled through occasional controlled burnings, there is still the question of how often these burnings should occur.

“If you burn too frequently, you get too much damage, but if you don’t burn frequently enough, you may end up with too much competition from other plant species.”

Through research over the next few years, Smith hopes to provide straightforward answers to many of these questions.

Smith is under no illusion that cane prairies will ever regain the preeminence they once commanded throughout the state. Even so, he believes river cane ultimately may fill a valuable niche, not only affording scenic splendor but also providing habitat for a cluster of native species, especially birds, and a safeguard against soil erosion.

**East Alabama Medical Center launches “EPIC” Journey to Continuous Improvement**

East Alabama Medical Center, or EAMC, in Opelika, Ala. has partnered with the Auburn Technical Assistance Center, or ATAC, at Auburn University to launch a long-term initiative to implement Lean Continuous Improvement throughout the hospital operations.

Dubbed ‘EPIC’ – EAMC Performance Improvement Culture -- EAMC’s program represents its commitment to instilling and sustaining a culture of problem solving, standardization, and improvement as its standard operating practice.

Lean Continuous Improvement is based on the production process so effectively employed by Toyota in the automotive manufacturing industry, and is widely used among manufacturing and other industry. Its approach, focused on eliminating or reducing waste and non-value-added activities from a process, is readily transferable to other processes. A number of well-known hospitals, such as Virginia Mason Medical Center in Seattle, Wash., are implementing Lean into healthcare and achieving some extraordinary results in cost reductions, patient care improvements and satisfaction, overall efficiency, and boosts in employee morale.

EAMC began working with ATAC in 2007 when personnel from its process and quality organizations began participating in ATAC’s open enrollment courses. When EAMC administration determined that there was value to be gained by spreading Lean Continuous Improvement throughout the hospital organization, ATAC was selected as a training provider and implementation facilitator.

ATAC Lean specialists have visited and studied Lean implementation at Virginia Mason and at other healthcare facilities and have tailored the training and facilitation programs being conducted at EAMC to healthcare. ‘EPIC’ includes introductory training in Lean Continuous Improvement for various employee groups, coaching, and facilitation in conducting multi-day Rapid Improvement Events focused on a variety of EAMC processes; and strategic planning with EAMC’s administrative team in rolling out the programs hospital-wide.
Lowell Geoffrey Martin

Lowell Geoffrey Martin, a native of Silver Springs, Md., enrolled at Auburn University in June 2008 to pursue a doctoral degree in higher education administration. Martin is actively engaged in service on his job and in his personal life.

Martin joined the staff of the Office of Public Service in June 2009. As a graduate assistant, he has worked with numerous projects including Food for Fido, Green for Life, Green Fork Park Revitalization, and The Big Event.

The programs offered vary across university disciplines, including architecture, building science, industrial design, engineering, social sciences, computer science, leadership (a partnership with the Truman Pierce Institute), and veterinary medicine. The camps provide participants an enriched learning experience, exposure to the programs offered by Auburn University, and information about fields they may be interested in pursuing as a career.

David Hinson, head and associate professor in Auburn’s School of Architecture, sees the camps as valuable tools for introducing students to potential career partnerships
paths. “The architecture summer camps at Auburn give us a great opportunity to introduce young people to the exciting career paths that are open to them in architecture and the related design professions, and many campers use the experience to figure out if architecture is the right path for them.” Hinson adds, “The camps are a great recruiting resource for the profession, and we see many campers returning to enroll in our program, or an architecture program at another school.”

Each program offers hands-on instructional activities, which keep the participants engaged throughout the week. The Engineering program, for example, provides an overview of all the departments and fields of study within the College of Engineering. The veterinary medicine program provides students with a broad range of information on veterinarians in general and their role in public health and food safety. Programs within the College of Architecture, Design and Construction, give participants exposure to the respective fields as students learn basic principles while designing small-scale projects. The World Affairs Seminar and the 21st Century Leadership Academy focus more on social and cultural interactions between the individual participants and the faculty instructional leaders involved.

“Summer Experience

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“We want each program to be a rewarding and memorable experience for each young person who visits our campus during the summer. We prep our counselors to be ambassadors of the university and encourage them to share their own college experience story with the campers throughout the week,” says John Freeze, associate director of OPCE. “We want Auburn University to resonate in the minds of each participant as a great place to learn and meet people—and hopefully this equates to considering Auburn University when they begin the college application process.”

The one-on-one interaction with Auburn University’s faculty is one of the main goals of each of the programs. Another goal is to give bright and motivated high school students a chance to experience various aspects of Auburn’s campus and a sample of college life in general. While participating in the programs, the participants live in campus housing, eat at various dining locations, ride the transit system, and enjoy campus recreation facilities.

The OPCE staff welcomes the opportunity to discuss ideas for additional programs. For more information on new or existing programs, contact John Freeze at 844-5100 or john.freeze@auburn.edu.

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University and Tuskegee University students. “It made me realize that people, especially young people, are willing to be a part of the solution and not always the cause of the problem.”

Caitlin Clark

Caitlin T. Clark, a native of Sylacauga, Ala., is a senior majoring in building science. Since she enrolled at Auburn in August 2007, Clark has found service an integral part of the Auburn experience. “At Auburn University, faculty and staff not only encourage students to give back to our great university but also to the surrounding communities. Finding several ways to give back to the plains has been a big goal of mine while I have been a student at Auburn because the university and community continually give me so much,” said Clark.

Clark has participated in numerous organizations that provided her the opportunity to engage in service projects. She was the assistant director of the Aubie Committee, assistant director of publicity for the Auburn dance marathon, counselor for Camp War Eagle, and swim coach for Opelika Parks and Recreation.

Clark says one of her fondest memories occurred with the Aubie Committee: “My favorite memory with the Aubie program was an afternoon spent playing in a park with the Auburn Boys and Girls Club. I have been out of the playground for many years now, but I was quickly reminded that day of the pure beauty of childhood and how the simple act of throwing a frisbee can make such a huge difference. Giving back can be such a simple task.”

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Company Applying and Spreading Improvement Systematically

Union Foundry Company, a division of McWane Inc., has been a manufacturing mainstay in Anniston, Ala., since 1912. Boasting annual sales of about $75 million, Union Foundry is among the leading manufacturers of cast pipe fittings and accessory components.

In 2007, the company began working with Auburn Technical Assistance Center – the ATN Center at Auburn University – applying Lean Continuous Improvement, or CI, to its operations. To date, Union Foundry has spread CI into multiple areas of its operations through the application of Lean training and rapid improvement events in the manufacturing process. Additionally, ATAC has provided company leaders with strategy planning and CI initiative coaching assistance.

Union Foundry officials say that ATAC assistance has been a significant factor in enabling the manufacturer to remain competitive in a fierce global market.

“ATAC’s training and assistance in helping us to improve the efficiency of our manufacturing and management processes has definitely made us more competitive,” said Plant Manager Bryan Biehunko.

The company credits ATAC with helping it to retain some $1 million in sales that it might otherwise have lost and about that same amount in cost savings by improving its processes.

“We have facilitated rapid improvement events in five different manufacturing processes,” said ATAC Lean Specialist David Hicks.

Hicks aided by other ATAC Lean specialists, has been the primary facilitator in CI work with Union Foundry.

A rapid improvement event, or kaizen, is taking the lessons learned through Lean training and implementing them into rapid and meaningful improvements in the actual operation. Rapid improvement events are conducted onsite at the company’s manufacturing or business operations facility as three- or five-day facilitation sessions. During this process, ATAC trainers impart the knowledge and skill base to make immediate improvements and to enable the organization to continue and sustain those improvements.

Union Foundry personnel have been trained in ATAC’s five-day Lean Certificate Series, which prepares an organization’s Lean leaders to direct CI in their organizations; in ATAC’s Accounting for a Lean Enterprise course, which shows Lean companies how to tie accounting to the product value stream; and in the various tools of CI.

“We have conducted rapid improvement events in our component blasting and cleaning area, our mold casting area, machining area, cement lining process, and in the core box rigging area,” Biehunko said. “The events have significantly reduced set-up and travel time, in some cases by more than half. We have applied 5s (sort, set in order, shine, standardize and sustain) to areas and the result there is better organization as well as improved work flow and efficiency. And in other areas, we have improved product throughput by as much as 50 percent and production volume by nearly 80 percent.”
Less than two years after it launched, the Encyclopedia of Alabama (www.EncyclopediaofAlabama.org) added its 1,000th article. The free, online resource on all things Alabama reached the milestone in May with an entry on Cathedral Caverns State Park.

“Our one-thousandth article reflects the Encyclopedia of Alabama’s unique educational value to the state,” said Robert “Jeff” Jakeman, the encyclopedia’s editor. “Teachers kept telling us they needed additional resources with information on Alabama’s natural environment. EOA is filling that void with entries such as the one on Cathedral Caverns.”

“EOA has a list of more than 5,000 potential articles in 12 different content areas,” said Jakeman. “As we continue to add articles from this list, the site’s value to education, tourism, and promoting the state grows exponentially.”

The Encyclopedia of Alabama, based at Auburn University, offers articles on the state’s culture, history, geography and natural environment. EOA was developed through a partnership between Auburn and the Alabama Humanities Foundation. Since its launch in September 2008, the site has expanded by 480 new articles and more than 1,500 new images. It has experienced more than 2.4 million page views by visitors from all 50 states and more than 200 countries and territories. The site was named as a “Best of Free Reference” by Library Journal.

The editorial staff is hosted by Auburn University. The most recent financial support for EOA comes from The Daniel Foundation of Alabama, Vulcan Materials Company, Alabama Power Company, the University of Alabama, the State Department of Education, and Auburn University Outreach.

Top 10 EOA articles viewed by people in Alabama from September 2008 to June 2010: Birds of Alabama; Alabama, an overview; Reptiles of Alabama; Agriculture in Alabama; Geology of Alabama; Endangered Animal Species; Plantation Architecture in Alabama; Cherokees in Alabama; Minerals of Alabama; and Paul “Bear” Bryant.

Contact editor@encyclopediaofalabama.com for additional information.
The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Auburn University was awarded a $1 million endowment from the Bernard Osher Foundation of San Francisco, California, at the most recent meeting of the Foundation board. The gift was given in recognition of programming excellence and for demonstrating solid potential for long-term success and sustainability. The money will be invested through the Auburn University Foundation, and the interest from the investments will help fund OLLI at Auburn for many decades to come. OLLI at Auburn, which operates within the Office of Professional and Continuing Education, offers more than 150 courses per year to its members, as well as additional lectures, social events, and group study travel opportunities.

“This award is very generous and serves an important need for OLLI at Auburn,” said Mary Burkhart, founding director. “Our program has provided wonderful learning opportunities for mature adults for more than 20 years. OLLI at Auburn is a member-led organization, one focused around the love of learning and the sheer pleasure and joy that come from expanding one’s knowledge. Our program does not receive state funds, and until the Osher Foundation approached us with a grant opportunity in 2007, we relied solely upon member fees for operating expenses. The income from this endowment will provide about 30 percent of our annual budget, and therefore will allow us to keep offering exceptional non-credit educational programs for an affordable fee.”

“In many ways, life is an educational journey. The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute enriches that journey for its members. We are fortunate to have OLLI on our campus and grateful for the way it enhances Auburn University’s service to the state and beyond,” says Dr. Jay Gogue, president of Auburn University. “Having a program such as OLLI at Auburn enriches and enhances the lives of our participants. It provides a variety of learning opportunities and social interactions. These help keep our members and our community as a whole very vibrant and healthy. I enjoy the interactions with OLLI folks. I always come away with a renewed sense of purpose and energy. It is a very special program which brings great benefit to all involved. I am honored to be a part of it,” states John Freeze, interim director of the Office of Professional and Continuing Education.

The Auburn University Academy for Lifelong Learners was formed in 1990. For 17 years, AUALL thrived, expanded, and offered stimulating, peer-led classes. In 2007, AUALL received funding from the Bernard Osher Foundation and changed its name to the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Auburn University. By the time the endowment was awarded, OLLI had more than 700 members who were given the opportunity to register for more than 150 different classes, plus dozens of extra-curricular events each year, such as special lectures, socials, and trips. The winter 2011 term will begin with a meeting and a speaker on Monday, Jan. 11, 2011.
OLL at Auburn is open to anyone who enjoys learning. The only requirement is a desire to continue learning in the company of others who share this interest. One need not have graduated from college, nor do participants have to have been associated with Auburn University. It is not necessary to be retired or over a certain age. The institute is member-led. All instructors for courses are themselves members or volunteers.

“Imagine a school in which the courses are challenging and the students are serious, but where there are no entrance requirements, no exams, no grades, and no required reading. Where you go to school because you want to, not because you have to. Where you and other OLLI at Auburn members decide what to study and how to study, whether it is art or yoga, history or science, religion or literature. Where there are lots of social activities and opportunities to travel with friends… that’s OLLI,” says OLLI at Auburn Coordinator, Linda Shook. “Thanks to the Osher Foundation, we are able to offer some scholarships, too, so no one is kept from participating due to tight finances.”

“The partnership between Auburn University and the Bernard Osher Foundation has helped us become a regional leader for creative educational programming for older learners,” states Gail McCullers, former OLLI at Auburn president and retired director of Auburn University Housing. “We used some of our grant funds to host a Southern regional conference in 2008 and again in 2009. Our group helped sponsor the 2010 conference, and 10 of us traveled to Greenville to attend and present. Now, other lifelong learning institutes in the South are lining up to host future conferences.”

Ellen Sherling, OLLI at Auburn president says, “My beloved in-laws joined AUALL not long after its founding. Their enthusiasm never flagged and made me eager to join when I retired. Once I joined, I was hooked! Our volunteer teachers share their passion for their subjects, making time spent with them very rich indeed. OLLI nourishes the curious child in all of us, no matter what our ages or backgrounds.”

“Now is a very exciting time to be retired, but still learning,” according to Joan Schwartz, immediate past president of OLLI at Auburn. “Our program is growing, expanding, thriving.” The Auburn/Opelika area is a very popular retirement destination. Many people have told me they moved here in part because of the presence of Auburn University and the OLLI at Auburn program. Lots of people gravitate toward the stimulating experiences they remember from their school years. Others, such as engineers or business people, come seeking courses in the liberal arts, subjects they missed the first time around. Plus, it’s fun! I’ve made many new friends, people who share my interests, since I moved here in 2001 and joined OLLI. We have such good times together, at our social events and in our classes.”

“The Bernard Osher Foundation is delighted to recognize the accomplishments of OLLI at Auburn with this endowment gift,” noted Mary Bitterman, foundation president. “We are pleased to have the Auburn OLLI within our network. Our congratulations are extended to the university and to the volunteer leadership of this fine program.”

The endowment gift recognizes the success and sustainability of OLLI at Auburn. Since 2007, the Bernard Osher Foundation has provided $375,000 to help the program expand. The endowment gift, plus local fundraising efforts, will allow OLLI at Auburn, to continue to provide programs to its membership of more than 700 at an affordable price.

For more information about OLLI at Auburn, contact the OLLI office at 334-844-3102, or email OLLI@auburn.edu, or visit the Web site at www.olliauburn.org.
Journalism students from Auburn University came to Valley by the carload on Feb. 4, 2010, uncertainty and curiosity written across their faces. For many, it was their first time to visit the community. But after a hearty barbecue lunch with community leaders and a bus tour led by City Clerk Martha Cato, they knew it wouldn’t be their last.

They were on a mission, and it had just begun. The end goal - to produce a publication celebrating the incorporation of the area’s four mill villages into the city of Valley 30 years ago.

“The paper is an attempt to document, honor, and pay tribute to Valley on its 30th anniversary,” said associate professor of journalism Nan Fairley, College of Liberal Arts Engaged Scholar, who has a long tradition of engaging journalism students in community projects.
With that goal in mind, students in Fairley’s community journalism class and feature writing class and students in journalism professor Judith Sheppard’s advanced feature writing classes spent countless hours traveling to and from Valley during the spring semester. They talked to the city’s residents and officials, sat through lectures and meetings, and searched through archives and history books. More than anything, they listened to the people of Valley tell their story.

“Through this project, journalism students dove into Valley, a community that lived and almost died by its now silent and empty textile mills.” Fairley said. “By documenting this particular mill town and its fight to survive, students confronted a transition many communities across the nation are facing.”

Though students didn’t begin visiting Valley until February, the project actually began many months before. In the fall semester, Fairley met with Mark Wilson, coordinator of community and civic engagement activities in the College of Liberal Arts, to discuss the options for her next community project. At that meeting, Wilson says he told Fairley about Cato and District 2 Councilman Jim Jones and their hope for preserving Valley’s past while paving the way for the future.

“When Professor Fairley told me she was looking for a partner for her community journalism project, Valley came immediately to mind because they want partners to help tell their story,” Wilson said.

After the initial meetings in December 2009 with Cato and Wilson, the project quickly sailed forward with the help of enthusiastic civic leaders and citizens, Fairley said.

Now, months after their first encounter with the community of Valley, Fairley and Sheppard’s students have completed their mission. Along the way, they developed and refined their journalism skills and became immersed in a community other than their own.

Emily Beckett, a junior majoring in journalism, has seen the significance of the work she’s done in Valley. “We are not simply investing our time in the community, but we are investing time in the people, who are the lifeblood of the community,” she said. “Based on the time I have spent in the Valley community to this point, I would say Valley deserves more recognition and appreciation for what it is and what it represents to its residents.”

Jessica Shaddix, a senior journalism major, said this project opened her eyes to the difficulty of journalism. “I think [this project] actually proves the greatness of journalists because you really have to search for stories,” she said. “You can’t just skim the surface. You have to dig into people’s lives and learn something new about them that you and people in the area never knew before.”

Sheppard, a seasoned journalist, said it’s important for students to realize that journalists are the voices of communities. “Journalism is about public service,” she said. “Journalists have to speak for the people who don’t get spoken for. We want them to be heard.”

In the beginning, the students’ mission seemed almost unfathomable. But after months of work, they completed the project and even learned a few things along the way.

That’s what this project was all about, Fairley said. “My community journalism students got more than practical experience,” she said. “They gained a deep understanding of the significance of place and the knowledge that involvement in community is essential for individual journalists and for the citizens they serve. While we surely missed countless stories, I hope the newspaper captures a snapshot of a community rich in stories that need to be told.”
Center for Governmental Services Partners with Area Community Development Corporation

The Center for Governmental Services has developed a partnership with the Greater Peace Baptist Church Community Development Corporation in Opelika, Ala. The CDC was developed through the vision of Clifford E. Jones, senior pastor of the Greater Peace Baptist Church. Jones envisioned an organization that could serve community needs, particularly those associated with family and community development.

To date, the Center for Governmental Services and the Community Development Corporation have collaborated on two projects: providing relief for Haiti and providing consultation and support for the executive director of the CDC.

Royrickers Cook, assistant vice-president of University Outreach and Don-Terry Veal, executive director of the CGS represented University Outreach on a trip to Haiti following the January earthquake. With the support of Greater Peace Baptist Church, Jones accompanied the Auburn delegation on the trip. The primary purpose of the trip was to learn first-hand how to best provide support to Haiti.

While in Haiti, the delegation met with government officials, university administrators and local faith based assistance organizations. Included were visits with Afe Neg Combite, Women NGOs, the College of Fernand Prosper, and the University of Quisqueya.

As a result of the information gathered on the trip, members of the Greater Peace Baptist Church collected school supplies to benefit the victims of the earthquake. The event was successful in collecting more than 800 pounds of supplies to support children living in the facilities that the delegation visited.

“We are excited about the partnership we have developed with the Community Development Corporation and the on-going potential for collaboration on future endeavors,” Veal said.
In order to cultivate the next generation of leaders in agricultural production, science, education and agribusiness, the College of Education and College of Agriculture are planting possibilities in the minds of high school students.

As a product of its partnership between the two colleges, Auburn University has formed an agriscience education academy that will build student interest in related degree programs at the college level and groom future leaders in the field.

The two-year project, “MATRIX for the Future: Premier Agriscience Education Academy,” was developed by Brian Parr, an assistant professor of agriscience education in the College of Education’s Department of Curriculum and Teaching, and Don Mulvaney, who is a professor, animal scientist, and leadership coordinator for the College of Agriculture. Their initiative is supported by a $100,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Mulvaney and Parr developed the academy as a way of building a better future for agriculture regionally and nationally. Declining enrollment in agricultural programs at Auburn and at land-grant colleges nationwide, coupled with a shortage of secondary and postsecondary agricultural educators, spurred Parr and Mulvaney into action.

They will use the agriscience education academy to encourage high school students to pursue college degrees in agricultural disciplines and identify career avenues.

“What we have in mind is using it to build leadership capacity in secondary agriculture students and to also recruit students into our agriscience education program and into the technical ag programs in the College of Agriculture,” Parr said.

Parr said the initiative consists of three primary components, the first of which brought 80 secondary students to Auburn’s campus in November 2009 to gain a firsthand understanding of the university’s agriscience education and agricultural offerings. There was also a one-day agricultural leadership workshop with sessions hosted in the North, Central, and South regions of the state and a summer academy that brought students and agriscience education teachers to campus in June 2010.

“They’re exposed to agriscience education as a profession and as a major here at Auburn,” Parr said. “They’ll go back to their schools and we’ll implement programs that will be dual-enrolled.”

Parr and Mulvaney have enlisted the Auburn’s Collegiate Future Farmers of America chapter to hold the statewide leadership workshops for FFA chapters. The workshops will enable participates to recognize and develop their leadership potential.

The summer Agricultural Leadership Education Academy will feature advanced leadership instruction, tours of research facilities, preparation for college entrance exams, and job interviews and networking opportunities with Auburn faculty and students.
Each year, more and more people hear these words. In fact, this relatively young and rapidly developing technology has quickly become the doctor’s tool-of-choice for imaging soft tissues. Physicians of old would be astounded to see clear images of nerves, arteries, muscles and ligaments inside a living person. In the past, this level of physical assessment was only available at an autopsy. Magnetic resonance imaging, or MRI, uses a magnetic field and radio waves to create detailed images of organs, tissues and the skeletal system. Chances are you or someone you know has had one. The heart of the MRI machine is a large, tube-shaped magnet whose strength is measured in tesla, a unit named for electrical engineer and inventor Nikola Tesla. When a patient lies inside an MRI machine, the magnetic field temporarily aligns protons in water molecules in the body. Radio waves cause these aligned particles to produce faint signals that can be used to create cross-sectional MRI images — like slices in a loaf of bread. However, much work still needs to be done to unleash this technology’s full potential. Thanks to a partnership among Auburn University, Siemens Medical Solutions USA, Inc. and East Alabama Medical Center a portion of that work will happen in the new Auburn University Magnetic Resonance Imaging Research Center.

“Auburn’s College of Engineering has a number of faculty engaged in research with MRI,” explained Dean Larry Benefield. “The same is true for other units across
campus. Creation of this center is the first step in a broader initiative designed to bring together Alabama’s intellectual and business capital to advance Auburn University to the forefront of biomedical engineering and to create a one-of-a-kind resource for the state.” The center, which is housed in a building to be constructed in the Auburn University Research Park, brings together Auburn’s expertise in engineering, science, pharmaceutics, agriculture, veterinary medicine and business with Siemen’s expertise in magnetic resonance imaging. The building houses two Siemens’ MRI units. It also includes office space for associated Auburn units and local medical clinics.

A 3T unit, the most powerful MRI currently cleared for clinical use with humans, will be used during the day, Monday through Friday, by EAMC. On weekends and evenings, the unit will be available for research use. A 7T unit, not yet cleared for use on humans, will be available to researchers 24-7. According to MRI Research Center Director Thomas Denney, faculty member in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, the center will support the discovery of new technologies and their transfer to a broad spectrum of medical and pharmaceutical markets. An alliance with Siemen’s MRI Research and Development groups will drive research, technology development, and intellectual property commercialization. Al Zhang, Siemens’s zone business development director, will serve as center co-director, providing onsite technology management for the units.

Pulling together the partnerships needed to make the MRI center a reality has been a challenge spearheaded by Auburn engineering alum Ed Lewis, special projects officer for technology advancement in the college. “Ed brings to the table a keen business sense learned from his many years as a manager with Mars, Inc.,” said Benefield. “His energy and expertise have been critical to turning the MRI center from dream to reality and building the partnerships that will be essential for its success.”

In today’s high-tech economy, the correlation between a state’s economic well-being and the strength of its research and development capabilities is well documented. A recent report found that of the top 30 high-technology metropolitan areas, 29 were home to or within close proximity of a major research university. “It is not surprising that most states consider their universities to be critical components of their intellectual infrastructure,” said Lewis. “The importance of research and development capacity to the economic prosperity of a state and nation is predicted to increase in the coming years, and the research center is designed to address this reality.”

Existing and proposed partnerships with other institutions, such as the University of Alabama at Birmingham, U.S. Army Aeromedical Research Laboratory at Fort Rucker, and the Andrews-Paulous Research Institute, will provide the clinical network to support work on biomedical applications of the imaging technologies being developed at Auburn.

For example, Denney cited potential research in partnership with Fort Rucker on soldiers with neck and spinal injuries, as well as those with traumatic head injuries and post traumatic stress syndrome.

Commercialization of these newly developed technologies will support expansion of the center’s capability and increase its impact in the research and development arena.

“This collaboration will provide a research platform of the highest level,” added Zhang. “We believe this alliance will result in improvements in health, education, and economic growth for the state of Alabama and the nation.”

Around the globe, MRI-related research is being conducted on cognitive neuroscience, metabolic imaging and pharmaceuticals, as well as diabetes and cardiac research. A new seminar series, the Ginn MRI Distinguished Lecture Series, will provide Auburn faculty and graduate students the opportunity to interface with leading MRI researchers from around the world.

“The MRI Research Center and the supporting alliances are prime examples of how state funds can be invested and institutions collaborate with the private sector to develop a world-class research center to advance science and technology,” said Auburn University President Jay Gogue. “We believe that this collaboration establishes a precedent on which cooperation between Auburn and other institutions can build to improve the quality of life in the global community and promote economic development for Alabama.”
The U.S. Department of Commerce has awarded an Auburn University outreach initiative $4.6 million to expand the availability of broadband technology in Alabama’s rural libraries and schools. University Outreach will provide overall leadership for the Broadband Technologies Opportunities Program initiative which engages a number of campus partners, including Outreach’s Center for Governmental Services, the Wireless Engineering Research and Education Center, University Libraries, the Office of Information Technology, and Harrison School of Pharmacy. External partners in the project include the Alabama Public Library Service and Tuskegee University.

Overall, the initiative will deploy 1,000 new computer workstations and replace nearly 500 more at 94 rural libraries and 21 public schools across Alabama. Auburn plans to use the new equipment to offer online training programs and telemedical applications to underserved rural areas.

“Too many Alabamians are without broadband internet access and the learning resources it provides,” said Auburn University President Jay Gogue. “This project will help bridge the technological divide and open doors for thousands of students and adults.”

“Supporting Alabama’s educational infrastructure through innovative outreach is a key objective of Auburn’s strategic plan,” said Royrickers Cook, assistant vice president for University Outreach. “I commend CGS director Dr. Don-Terry Veal and the dedicated team of campus and external partners for their efforts in developing such a far-reaching and high impact project.”

CGS will coordinate the overall project and directly implement technological training of librarian personnel that will prepare them to do much of their own tech support. Faculty and staff with CGS, WEREC, the University Libraries, and Information Technology will provide Alabama libraries and schools with a detailed evaluation of their technological needs and service options. Additionally, the Harrison School of Pharmacy will provide advice and consultation regarding the installation of 20 audio-visual conference facilities at library locations. Auburn will work with Tuskegee University personnel to install the new internet workstations and with the Alabama Public Library Service on providing continuing technical support of these resources. WEREC will oversee the installation of Rural Connectivity Platforms that will expand broadband internet access in approximately 30 communities. The project will also provide practical experience for a number of Auburn and Tuskegee student interns in information technology.

Auburn was one of only 35 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act grants awarded in this latest announcement to expand broadband internet access to citizens through key anchor institutions such as schools and libraries. In announcing the awards, U.S. Commerce Secretary Gary Locke underscored the importance of the initiative. “When you don’t have access to high-speed internet, you don’t have access to all the educational, business, and employment opportunities it provides.” “These projects will have a real, lasting impact on communities,” said U.S. Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information Lawrence E. Stricking, head of the agency which administers the grant.
While Auburn University and the University of Alabama are widely recognized as athletic rivals, the universities are uniting on a project where they share a common goal of making Alabama a better place to live. In June 2011, students from both universities will join forces with the Alabama Association of Habitat for Humanity to build a house in Foley, Ala.

Ron Anders, resource development director for Habitat, approached the Office of Public Service about a possible collaboration because even though Habitat has a relationship with Auburn students, he realized there was even greater potential to engage students throughout the state. The conversations evolved into a plan to include students from both universities in a joint build.

The build will take place June 12-18, 2011, with 20 students from each university working on the construction. In keeping with the Habitat for Humanity model, the family to receive the home will also assist in the building. Cliff Barros, executive director of the Baldwin County Affiliate, will provide daily supervision of the project.

In addition to the immediate benefit of providing for a family that does not have a home, Anders sees positive outcomes for everyone involved in the project. “Long term there are going to be 40 young people who will hopefully be motivated to serve their communities wherever they end up when they get out of college,” said Anders.

Regarding the partnership between the schools Anders added, “Through it all, people will see that Alabama and Auburn can agree and work together on something realizing that a better Alabama is in the best interest of both schools.”

Anders is hopeful that this collaborative effort will increase public awareness about Habitat and provide a greater understanding of their mission. Ultimately, organizers would like to see the build continue and expand. “I would love to see this as an annual event that moves around the state, and that from this we will have collaborations with other universities in the state,” said Anders.

Ralph Foster, director of Auburn University’s Office of Public Service, and Wahnee Sherman, director of Community Service at the University of Alabama, are working with Anders to finalize details for the build and to identify students from each university to participate. Students who want to participate must complete an application and pay a fee which covers food, housing, and additional activities. The applications will be available in January 2011.

For additional information contact the Office of Public Service, (334) 844-5117.
Auburn University’s Department of Agronomy and Soils has launched a distance education program that gives professionals in fields ranging from agriculture to construction to environmental management the opportunity to earn advanced degrees online.

Candidates can pursue either master of science or master of arts degrees. In addition to the required coursework, students enrolled in the MS program are required to conduct original research and write a thesis; those working toward an MA must take additional coursework and submit a literature review in lieu of a thesis.

Courses, which are pre-recorded as video or audio sessions, can be downloaded and may include PowerPoint presentations and virtual laboratories, though the basic soil science course does require on-campus lab work that students can complete in one two-day visit either during the week or on weekends. Students submit course assignments online and interact with professors via e-mail, phone, or video conferencing.

For more information, visit www.ag.auburn.edu/agrn/distancelearning/ or contact Megan Ross at mhr0001@auburn.edu or 334-844-3201.

Christa Slaton, former associate dean for educational affairs and graduate studies in the College of Liberal Arts, began her tenure as dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at New Mexico State University in July. Slaton began her teaching career in Hawaii as a professor of political science. She received her bachelor’s in psychology from the University of Tennessee and master’s and doctorate in political science from the University of Hawaii.

“SBA and Lenders: Bridge to Economic Recovery” was the theme for a lenders’ conference conducted in April, in Prattville, Ala., at the Marriott Legends at Capitol Hill. The conference, the first in almost ten years, was sponsored by the Alabama Small Business Development Center Network, in conjunction with the Alabama District Office of the U.S. Small Business Administration, to collaborate on assisting the 314,000 small business owners in Alabama to gain critical access to capital.

The 125-plus attendees included bank lending officers, certified development company lenders, microlenders, SCORE counselors, and Small Business Development Center directors from across the state.

Attendees received updates on American Recovery and Reinvestment Act initiatives and had opportunities to attend sessions on SBA loan programs, community resource partners, and strategies for sustaining Alabama communities by strengthening small business. With the economic recovery and the recent, significant changes to SBA lending programs, the conference provided lenders and other resource partners with the tools to assess options for better serving the small business customer.

Tom Todt, director of the Alabama District Office of SBA, said, “We are greatly encouraged by the participation, the level of engagement by attendees, and by the favorable comments from so many. Economic recovery is going to occur in the cities, towns and communities of Alabama, from dialogues generated between small business owners and their lenders and trusted advisers.”

For more information on resources available to assist small businesses in Alabama, please refer to www.sba.gov or www.asbdc.org or contact the Small Business Development Center in the College of Business at Auburn University, 334-844-4220.
Slaton served in the College of Liberal Arts from 1993 until July 2010, first as faculty, then as the associate dean who changed the landscape of educational affairs - pioneering the Elections Administration Program, reviving civic engagement and outreach initiatives, establishing cross-discipline connections, and providing leadership training for college students. Christa will be missed by her students, colleagues, and the communities she has served.

Daniel Clay named dean of the College of Education at the University of Missouri

Daniel Clay, former associate dean for administration, research, and innovative programs in the College of Education was named dean of the College of Education at the University of Missouri effective June 1, 2010. Clay joined the Auburn faculty in October 2007. While at Auburn, Clay was a member of the University Research Council, International Programs Advisory Council, and the Outreach Advisory Council at Auburn.

Prior to his appointment at Auburn, Clay worked as the associate dean of academic affairs in the College of Education and Human Services at Western Illinois University and was director of the University of Iowa Counseling Psychology Doctoral Program. Clay received his bachelor’s degree in psychology from the College of Saint Scholastica in Minnesota, and his master’s degree and doctorate from the University of Missouri.

Center for Governmental Services Hosts Gubernatorial Forum

The Center for Governmental Services hosted a gubernatorial forum in November 2009. More than 500 people attended the event held in the Auburn University Student Center. Robert Bentley, Bradley Byrne, Artur Davis, Tim James, Bill Johnson, and Ron Sparks participated in the forum. Jeremy Campbell of ABC 33/40 in Birmingham moderated the event. The forum was sponsored by the League of Women Voters of East Alabama, the Auburn Chamber of Commerce, and the Opelika Chamber of Commerce.

University Outreach Supports Community Efforts to Prepare Local Students for College

Auburn University’s Outreach division has joined with a local community organization to assist area students in preparing for the ACT college exam.

Working with the Westside Community Development Corporation, Outreach organized a special ACT college entrance exam preparatory course for students in their service area. The program was administered by Outreach’s Office of Professional and Continuing Education.

Fortieth Annual Alabama County Government Institute

The Center for Governmental Services at Auburn University hosted the Fortieth Annual Alabama County Government Institute, in June 2010. The Institute brings together Alabama county commissioners, tax collectors, revenue commissioners, and other county and local officials to explore ways for Alabama counties to enhance its revenue environment, position the county for economic development and growth, and effectively build for the future.

The theme of this year’s conference was “New Ways to Generate Revenue.” Ted Abernathy, executive director of the Southern Growth Policy Board, was a featured speaker. Additional speakers included: Doni Ingram, director of ADECA; Glen Zorn with the Alabama Department of Agriculture; Sonny Brasfield executive director of the ACCA; and Bill Bass, director of the Proper Tax Division of the Department of Revenue.

Randy Grubb of Armstrong University provided content related to cyber security and ways to safeguard data.

More than 60 participants attended this year’s event.
“Auburn is committed to working with community partners to reach under-served students and assist them in achieving their academic objectives,” said Royrickers Cook, assistant vice president for University Outreach. “By expanding access to necessary educational resources and support, college can be a more attainable goal for these individuals.”

Westside approached Auburn for assistance with the program because the Office of Professional and Continuing Education regularly offers ACT prep courses to local high school students in the summer. University Outreach agreed to fund half of the program and Westside raised the other half of the funds through private donations. As a result, 25 local high school students received valuable test-prep training they may not have otherwise had the opportunity to receive.

The Office of Professional and Continuing Education staff, in conjunction with the Florida-based Educational Testing Services, coordinated the delivery of the program, which was held in June at the City of Auburn’s Boykin Community Center. “We were very excited to offer this opportunity to students who have a desire to attend college but were in need of some assistance in preparing to take the ACT,” said OPCE Associate Director John Freeze.

Gail Gauntt honored for 20 years of service

During the 2010 Employee Recognition celebration, Gail Gauntt was honored for 20 years of service at Auburn University. Gauntt who currently serves as an executive support specialist in the Office of the Vice President for University Outreach joined the Auburn Family in 1989. Gauntt resides in Tallassee, Ala., where she enjoys spending time with her dogs.

SERVE • LEARN

Make a Difference

Faculty, students and community agencies can easily join the Auburn Serves network!

The Auburn Serves network utilizes a comprehensive database through which all stakeholders in the service learning process – including faculty, students, and community partners – can communicate and organize these important relationships. By joining the Auburn Serves network, you can create your profile, list your courses with a service learning component, search for community partners, and stay informed about new service projects and engagement opportunities.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED:

> Go to www.auburnserves.com
> Click on your perspective link on the menu
> You will then be directed to the database
> Select a username and password and register
> After your information is reviewed, you will receive an e-mail confirming your registration.
In September, U.S. Department of Commerce Secretary Gary Locke announced that the Alabama Department of Economic & Community Affairs would receive a grant award of almost $1.2 million to bridge the digital divide and promote engagement in the digital economy across all of Alabama’s 67 counties.

More than 85 percent of these grant funds will go to the Economic & Community Development Institute, the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, and Auburn University. Amelia Hall Stehouwer, ECDI Research and Training Manager, designed the project and served as lead developer for the proposal. ECDI staff members will lead and coordinate this initiative, which will be supported by the ACES/Ag Information Technology Unit and administered at the local level by Extension’s 67 County Extension Coordinators. Other funded project partners include the BEACON Consortium of the Alabama Community College System and the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind.

According to ECDI Director Joe Sumners, most of Alabama’s larger communities are well positioned to adopt high-speed telecommunications technologies. However, Sumners notes, residents of the state’s rural communities are not in this position. He adds that because of lower levels of educational attainment and economic, social, and physical isolation, rural areas are exactly where broadband is most needed.

Likewise, Stehouwer explained, “Alabama residents who possess communications barriers due to disabilities or language, have been displaced from jobs, lack transportation options, or have limited resources represent some of the state’s most vulnerable populations. These individuals have the most to gain from broadband but are currently least likely to utilize this technology.”

Sumners added, “ECDI and Extension are honored to play a key role in this initiative to bridge the digital divide currently faced by these rural residents and vulnerable populations. We believe this project will have a significant impact upon the lives of thousands of Alabama citizens.”

The project will employ interactive computer-based programs to educate and train Alabama residents and community leaders in the social and economic benefits of broadband technology and will utilize targeted statewide and regional media campaigns to increase awareness of broadband’s practical applications.

ConnectingALABAMA, a broadband initiative established by Ala. Gov. Bob Riley, will serve as the ADECA lead on this project. Jessica Dent, executive director of ConnectingALABAMA, says the grant partnership is an example of how organizations are working together to provide every region of Alabama with the communication tools needed to fully participate in the 21st century global economy.
Sure, times are hard. Wallets might be thinner than this time last year. But the College of Engineering’s Global Education Initiatives are continuing to create affordable opportunities for students to connect with the emerging global community. And our students are ready for the adventure.

Welcome Home

For four weeks this summer, 20 Auburn engineers participated in a course titled Engineering, Technology, and Society, taught by professional Spanish engineers – in English – at Pamplona Learning Spanish Institute in Pamplona, Spain. From June 1-27, they worked on engineering projects related to their particular interest and studied basic Spanish language, engineering terms, and culture. Four days a week they attended classroom sessions, spending a fifth day on-site in a lab setting related to their project topic.

Earlier this spring, students in Auburn’s Business-Engineering-Technology, or B-E-T, class traveled to India and the United Kingdom to work on projects with students from local universities. B-E-T students Anthony Caltabiano and Katie Captain visited the Indian Institute of Technology-Delhi with mechanical engineering faculty member Pradeep Lall to develop a low-cost GPS navigation system with elements of global positioning and inertial navigation. B-E-T students Pat Awbrey, Alison Barksdale, Mike Marsosci, Caitlyn Rummer and Blake Wager went to the University of Plymouth, UK, with Charlotte Sutton, a professor of management in the College of Business, to create a continuous tire pressure adjustment system for passenger vehicles, which maintains the manufacturer-specified pressure by using a pressurizing system incorporated in the wheel spokes.

Reaching across Borders

More than 1.4 billion people live below the poverty line in the developing world and many lack adequate housing, transportation, clean water, and sanitation. Auburn engineering students are addressing these needs with the formation of an Engineers Without Borders, or EWB, chapter, which partners with disadvantaged communities to improve their quality of life through education and implementation of sustainable engineering projects, while promoting new dimensions of experience for engineers, engineering students, and similarly motivated non-engineers.

Every EWB program begins with a trip to the proposed location to perform a community-needs assessment and identify priorities. During the following years, the chapter returns to implement the project, train the local community and develop the financial structure to ensure the project can be properly maintained and operated, working with communities for a minimum of five years. Auburn’s group is now meeting regularly and working with the national organization to identify its first project.

“EWB-USA’s unique grassroots approach requires that all program proposals come directly from the community in need,” said Steve Duke, chemical engineering faculty member and faculty adviser to the group. “This increases the likelihood of success by ensuring that the needs addressed by our chapters are being identified and driven by the community.”

In 2009, Auburn EWB will begin work on projects with local programs such as the Boys and Girls Club and Reading is Fundamental. In 2010, the group hopes to kick off its first spring break project in the Gulf Coast region and begin international work, most likely in Bolivia.