Recognizing Excellence in Faculty Outreach:

Christa Slaton
Dear reader,

Fall is an exciting time of the year here at Auburn University. Students are back on campus in historic numbers, and faithful fans descend on the Plains for another exciting season of Auburn Tiger football.

It’s also an exciting time in Auburn University Outreach with several new programs underway for the year. This issue of Beyond Auburn magazine features significant faculty initiatives from across the campus, plus special reports on several noteworthy events in faculty engagement and lifelong learning here at Auburn.

Our cover story highlights the recipient of the 2007 Award for Excellence in Faculty Outreach, Christa Slaton. Professor Slaton’s work exemplifies faculty engagement and outreach scholarship. Her groundbreaking work in mediation and elections administration is nationally and internationally recognized. But, her work right here in Alabama is equally significant. Dr. Slaton has facilitated a true transformation of community spirit for a west Alabama town in the heart of the distressed Black Belt region. As you will read, Dr. Slaton’s work in Uniontown is not only inspiring but clearly speaks to the importance of working together towards positive change. The Award for Excellence in Faculty Outreach, like our other premier university recognitions, aims to highlight meritorious and productive scholarship. But most importantly, it underscores the value of engagement. I can’t think of a more worthy recipient than our colleague, Christa Slaton.

In our feature on the 2007 Outreach Scholarship Grants, we highlight outstanding new faculty initiatives which were selected in this year’s round of competitive proposals. In all, we received 23 submissions from across campus and awarded $100,000 to six initiatives recommended by a peer review panel. These new programs address health, literacy, economic development, and youth academic enrichment. We also highlight one of these programs currently underway and producing results—a College of Education literacy initiative in two correctional facilities in Bibb and Elmore counties. All of these projects have enormous potential for connecting Auburn’s teaching and research expertise to the direct benefit of external audiences across Alabama.

Also within Beyond Auburn is a report on the selection of Auburn’s long running Academy of Lifelong Learning program to join the prestigious Bernard Osher Foundation’s network of lifelong learning institutes. The establishment of an Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Auburn is a high honor, recognizing years of effective work on the part of the staff and volunteers in this popular program. University Outreach’s commitment to lifelong learning for our seniors will continue to strengthen. To that end, I applaud AUall becoming OLLI at Auburn. It really opens a new chapter in lifelong learning excellence at Auburn University.

These aforementioned achievements demonstrate that Auburn’s outreach represents the highest standards of excellence that you would expect from a top tier land grant institution. It is grounded in the finest scholarship and recognized nationally and internationally for its quality and effectiveness. And, it is growing every day in reach and impact.

I hope you enjoy this edition of Beyond Auburn and I encourage you to watch for future issues.

War Eagle,

Royrickers Cook
Assistant Vice President
for University Outreach
Auburn University
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Christa Slaton is the 2007 recipient of the Auburn University Award for Excellence in Faculty Outreach.

(TOP PHOTO) The white plantation home used as a fund-raising effort for Uniontown Cares’ civic activities. Members of the group (African-American and white) worked side by side to paint, repair, and decorate the home for a city open house and historic tour. (MIDDLE) Slaton takes a hands-on approach working alongside local citizens and colleagues from Auburn as they clean up and establish a park for the children in Uniontown. (BOTTOM) The building for a local library in Uniontown was donated by a bank in town, restored by non-profit Sowing Seeds of Hope; and supported by Auburn University with books, computers, and more. An Auburn graduate student conducted a book donation drive and took hundreds of books to the library.
With an international reputation for promoting engaged citizenry and democratic systems, Christa Slaton embodies the concept of outreach scholarship. Slaton, professor of Political Science and associate dean in the College of Liberal Arts, is the recipient of the 2007 Auburn University Award for Excellence in Faculty Outreach.

In announcing the award, Assistant Vice President for University Outreach Royrickers Cook said, “Dr. Slaton’s work is the epitome of what it is to be engaged in outreach as a faculty member. Her commitment to sharing her academic expertise to all residents of this state should serve as a model for all of us who work at this great land grant institution.” The award recognizes Slaton’s extensive record of outreach scholarship, in particular her ongoing work with the national Election Center training program, and her groundbreaking civic renewal work in Uniontown, Ala.

“My outreach work has focused throughout my career on creating partnerships among the university faculty and students, citizens, and government officials to strengthen democracy in the United States,” says Slaton. “Whether it’s developing deliberative public opinion polling, teaching conflict resolution skills, creating civic-minded community groups, or training election and voter registration officials, the common theme is sharing knowledge and skills that can create a more engaged citizenry who can act effectively in our representative democratic system.”

Slaton’s involvement in outreach began long before her arrival at Auburn. While at the University of Hawaii, Slaton co-designed a method of deliberative public opinion polling and helped establish the first neighborhood justice center in Hawaii. Slaton earned her Ph.D. in political science from the University of Hawaii in 1990 and taught at Georgia Southern before arriving at Auburn in 1993. Since then, she has moved upward in the academic ranks, earning the title of professor in 2001, and served in various administrative roles including director of the Master in Public Administration Program and director of the Elections Administration Program.

For Slaton, outreach goes hand-in-hand with her other scholarly interests. “It is difficult to separate my outreach from my teaching and my research; the three have always been intertwined,” says Slaton. “For instance, the mediation course I teach to advanced undergraduates and graduate students was designed after I traveled across the United States with AU Alumni Professor Ted Becker researching mediation centers.”

That experience also led Slaton to help establish the first university-based community mediation center in the country. Slaton and Becker joined international mediation organizations and were hired by governments in Alabama, Hawaii, and the Philippines to train community mediators. “Based on our research and experience we wrote a mediation manual and designed a wide variety of simulations that came directly from our field experience,” said Slaton.
As her career at Auburn progressed, Slaton utilized her experience in polling and mediation to address community issues in impoverished rural Alabama. With funding from the Kettering Foundation, Slaton launched a five-year project in Uniontown, a west Alabama community noted for its racial tension, distrust between citizens and government, unemployment, illiteracy, substance abuse, and broken families. Tackling these thorny issues through countless community dialogs and planning sessions, Slaton guided citizen leaders to establish a diverse civic organization, Uniontown Cares, as a vehicle to promote renewal in the town. “The ability to build consensus and facilitate positive change in a community divided by racial tension is extremely difficult, and it requires a person who really cares and possesses a special skill-set,” said Cook. “Christa is to be applauded for her efforts in Uniontown.” Slaton’s efforts set the stage for many subsequent citizen-led projects such as town beautification initiatives, formation of support groups such as AA, and the opening of a new public library. The town now enjoys a civic Web site and community newsletter.

“It is immensely enriching to take the knowledge generated through academic research and see it applied effectively in communities,” says Slaton, who has also encouraged Auburn graduate students to undertake their own outreach projects in the community.

“In my democratic leadership course in the Masters in Public Administration Program, students have frequently chosen outreach activities for class projects. They find working directly with citizens and assessing their successes and failures to be a valuable means to place theory into practice.”

One of Slaton’s most far reaching outreach initiatives is a national training and certification program for election and voter registration officials. Slaton collaborated with several AU political science professors to develop more than a dozen certification and re-certification courses for the program, a partnership between Auburn and the Election Center, a non-profit education organization based in Houston, Texas. She was also instrumental in developing the center’s national code of ethics for election officials. Slaton has administered the program since 2003.

“Our goal is to help professionalize the field of elections and voter registration,” says Slaton. “We provide the elections officials a way to understand, evaluate, and improve the administration of elections.” The award-winning certificate program is the only national certification program in the country for election officials. Nearly 600 officials throughout the United States are graduates of the Election Center program, but the primary beneficiary is the public. “We gear all the workshops toward improving the administration of elections so that citizens are the primary recipients of more effective, knowledgeable, and efficient administrators,” Slaton said.

Here again, Slaton has incorporated her outreach experiences into her academic activities at Auburn. She has been instrumental in the establishment of new undergraduate courses and a graduate concentration in election administration in the Masters of Public Administration program beginning this fall.

College of Liberal Arts Dean Anna Gramberg says she is lucky to have a leader as strong as Slaton as part of her administrative team. “I consider Professor Slaton the ideal colleague: she is always willing to assume leadership in fulfilling the mission of the university, is an excellent teacher, and a brilliant scholar.” Gramberg recently appointed Slaton associate dean for Education Affairs and chair of the college’s Civic Engagement Initiative Task Force. “The entire leadership of the CLA is looking forward to working with Christa on our college outreach mission,” says Gramberg.

Slaton views outreach as a team effort that involves many faculty, staff, and students working together to fulfill the university’s mission to extend knowledge beyond the classroom. “Faculty at Auburn University have an impressive commitment to outreach. In every college across the campus, there are faculty distinguishing themselves in designing better systems, processes, and means to improve the quality of life in Alabama and beyond.”

And while Slaton’s outreach work has had an immense impact at Auburn, in Alabama, nationally, and internationally, she keeps it all in the perspective of teamwork. “All of my outreach activities at Auburn have been collaborative and have allowed me to discover the immense talent and dedication to excellence on this campus,” says Slaton. “For me, this award does not represent the accomplishments of a single individual, but the commitment of many individuals at Auburn who care about the greater public good.”
The Learning Never Ends at Auburn University

Fall signals a return to the classroom—but no longer just for kids. For senior adults, back to school means learning opportunities through Auburn University’s Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, or “OLLI at Auburn” for short.

Increasingly older adults nationwide are participating in some 200 institutes for lifelong learning across the U.S. These educational programs all have a common thread of learning as fun, providing senior participants an enjoyable challenge to stretch their minds. In this academic arena, as in so many others, Auburn University has long been a leader.

Auburn University began its Academy for Lifelong Learners in 1990. Serving a local student base of adults, the successful program inspired many similar programs across Alabama and the region. AUall’s impressive record drew the attention of the prestigious Bernard Osher Foundation which recognized it as a program ready to grow and awarded it a grant of $100,000 a year for three years. Now renamed OLLI at Auburn, the program becomes part of the foundation’s university institutes for seniors.

Mary Burkhart, OLLI at Auburn’s program coordinator in the Outreach Program Office, has been with the initiative from the beginning. Burkhart conceived the program after attending a 1988 conference on programs for retirees. Now retired herself, Burkhart is delighted with the Osher designation. “Of all the things I have done in my 30-year career in higher education, AUall is the tops,” said Burkhart. “I’m very excited that we’re receiving this grant from the Osher Foundation and the opportunity to become part of its network of lifelong learning institutes across the nation.”

From this initial grant, Osher will review the program for future funding—as much as $1 million in endowment grants. “This is one of our most successful programs at Auburn,” said Royrickers Cook, assistant vice president for University Outreach. “The grant by the Bernard Osher Foundation is a tremendous stamp of approval for the program and recognition for the wonderful work of Dr. Burkhart and the AUall volunteers.”

In OLLI at Auburn, there are no tests and no grades, no attendance requirements, and almost no prerequisites. There are no entrance requirements other than a desire to learn. OLLI at Auburn is a membership organization; an Auburn community of learners. It is peer-led. Active and involved members make it economical and effective. Members elect a board of directors to conduct the organization’s affairs. There are committees for curriculum, finance, membership and promotion, and long term planning. A social committee plans parties and other extra curricular activities. A travel committee organizes a variety of excursions and adventures, for an afternoon, to a week, or even overseas. Membership comes with many benefits in addition to learning in the OLLI classes. Folks can get an Auburn University library...
card and make full use of all three AU libraries and the millions of resources in them. They may audit university classes on an informal basis with permission of the instructor. They become a special sort of Auburn student. As OLLI members, they become connected to Auburn University, and are kept informed of AU public lectures and special events.

OLLI at Auburn members are their own faculty. There are a variety of class styles. Some of the groups resemble seminars in which everyone takes part in the discussion. Others are lectures, given by members and AU faculty. Speakers are drawn from government, industry, and the community. The curriculum is developed by members. Each term there are classes in a wide variety of subjects such as literature, music, art, theatre, science, history, government and politics, religion, and foreign language.

Former athletic director David Housel is representative of the faithful members who count the program as one of the real enjoyments of retirement. “We never stop learning, and AUall has allowed and encouraged me to study subjects in areas I had often thought about but never had time to pursue,” said Housel. “I’m a wiser, smarter, more learned man, thanks to retirement and to AUall, now OLLI.”

Imagine a school in which course material is challenging and the students are serious, but they are there because they want to be. Imagine a school in which, if you wish, you can take part in the teaching as well as the learning. Think about learning with friends, and partying with friends, too, in a place where you can pay one fee for the entire year and take as many classes as you want. Think about OLLI at Auburn.

OLLI offers exciting ways for adults in East Alabama to exercise their minds and engage in all that AU has to offer. For more information about OLLI at Auburn, go to the Web site at www.olliautauburn.org, or the Outreach site at www.auburn.edu/outreach.
AU Fosters Encyclopedia Project

From the diversity of fossils found under its soil to its role in launching people into space, Alabama has great stories to tell. And the new Encyclopedia of Alabama is going to help tell them. This online reference resource, which is being developed in partnership by Auburn University and the Alabama Humanities Foundation, will be available for free from any computer connected to the Internet. The site is scheduled to launch in the spring of 2008.

“The project was conceived as an interactive, authoritative, dynamic resource,” said Jeff Jakeman, EOA’s editor and a professor with AU’s History Department in the College of Liberal Arts. “There was a pressing need for a reliable, comprehensive research tool on Alabama, and it made sense to create an online presence that can be updated and expanded.”

EOA will have original articles—based on sound scholarship—about the state’s history, culture, geography, and natural environment. Most will range from 500 to 1,000 words, with overview essays and articles on significant topics as long as 2,500 words. The interactive format will include maps, hyperlinks to other relevant topics and resources, and pop-up windows for glossary terms and enlarged images. A remarkable array of photographs, videos, and illustrations will add depth and interest to the articles. More than 20 archives and repositories are committed to sharing their multimedia collections with EOA, and the list of collaborators continues to grow.

“We are overwhelmed by the support and encouragement the project gets from across the state,” said Wayne Flynt, EOA’s editor-in-chief. “The level of cooperation between so many organizations to create this encyclopedia is unprecedented.”

The site is planning to launch with 500 or more articles of statewide and national importance, with additional esoteric topics thrown in for good measure. However, more than 5,000 additional articles have already been identified as potential content, which means the site will be expanding for many years to come. Additionally, the content is being tagged in XML format, ensuring the site’s functionality in the future. This format will make it possible to transmit the content by cell phones and wireless devices. The electronic format also provides the opportunity to update articles as needed.

“Its potential in the classroom, for scholarly research, and for tourism and economic development is limited only by the vision and imagination of the user,” said Flynt. “We expect the state’s K-12 students to particularly benefit. EOA will be a learning tool that educators can integrate into a wide range of courses to enliven the learning process and make topics relevant.”

EOA has received financial, technical, and in-kind support from across the AU campus, with the College of Liberal Arts, Auburn University Libraries, College of Education, Office of Information Technology, and the University Outreach Office contributing to its creation. There are also individuals from academic disciplines in the sciences, liberal arts, and education providing expertise and writing articles.
Alabama State Treasurer Kay Ivey Speaks at AU Women’s Philanthropy Board Luncheon

Alabama State Treasurer and Auburn alumna Kay Ivey was the featured speaker at the Auburn University College of Human Sciences’ Women’s Philanthropy Board 2007 Fall Luncheon.

Ivey, a 1967 Auburn graduate, discussed “Today’s Decisions for Tomorrow’s Money,” the first part of a year-long educational partnership with the College of Human Sciences’ Women’s Philanthropy Board.

“Whether saving for retirement, planning for college, setting your financial goals, or even reducing debt, today’s decisions have lasting effect on one’s financial lives,” said June Henton, dean of the College of Human Sciences. “We are thrilled that State Treasurer Kay Ivey has worked with us in furthering the WPB mission to provide educational opportunities to help women achieve independence in their financial decisions.”

Ivey cites empowering citizens with access to information so they can take charge of their personal finances as one of her “taxpayer principles.”

“Through this partnership between the State Treasurer’s Office and the Women’s Philanthropy Board, I believe that we can help people gain skills and confidence in managing their money,” said Ivey.

As a student at Auburn University, Ivey was the first female elected vice president of the student body, the first female president of the SGA, and was named by five campus organizations as Most Outstanding Senior Woman.

The mission of the WPB is to inspire, educate, and enable women to develop their full leadership potential, achieve independence as financial donors and decision-makers, and serve as mentors for future generations of philanthropists. The board’s activities are sponsored by the membership and corporate partners including the Alabama Power Foundation, Citi Smith Barney, Moore Wealth Management, AU Office of Outreach, The Hotel at Auburn University and Dixon Conference Center, and the Flower Store.

ATAC RECEIVES 2007 INNOVATOR AWARD

The Auburn Technical Assistance Center, an outreach unit in the College of Business, has received the 2007 Innovator Award from the Southern Growth Policies Board. The annual award, which recognizes initiatives that are improving the quality of life in the south, was presented during the board’s Southern Workforce Summit conference held earlier this summer. ATAC shared the honor, presented by Missouri Gov. Matt Blunt, with the city of Auburn for the joint establishment of the Auburn Training Connection. First developed in 2002, the Auburn Training Connection provides basic skills training programs and enhances skilled manufacturing and industrial career opportunities for the citizens of Auburn, Lee County, and surrounding counties in Alabama.
The Office of the Vice President for University Outreach has awarded more than $100,000 in competitive Outreach Scholarship Grants to fund six faculty initiatives for 2007-08.

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

Six projects were funded out of 23 proposals submitted for the competitive grant program.

“The Outreach Scholarship Grants Review Committee felt these proposals show enormous potential for connecting research to the direct benefit of external audiences,” said Cook. “These projects will contribute greatly to Auburn University’s efforts toward improving the quality of life for individuals, organizations, counties, and towns throughout the state of Alabama.”

The six projects selected for funding, the award, principal investigators, and description are:

Providing Diagnostic Services to Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders: A Training, Tele-Health, and Service Demonstration Project, $19,993, Jennifer M. Gillis, assistant professor in the Department of Psychology in the College of Liberal Arts. This project will deliver low-cost diagnostic and follow-up services to students and their families.

An outreach project between Auburn University’s Harrison School of Pharmacy and the University of South Alabama, BreathMobile Program to Improve Asthma Care in Public School Children, $10,000, Karen F. Marlowe, associate professor, and Allison M. Chung and Jennifer Cole, both assistant professors, all in the Harrison School of Pharmacy. The project will support the activities of a mobile asthma clinic operating in Mobile County.

Improving the Basic Literacy Skills of Incarcerated Males in Two Alabama Correctional Facilities, $19,998, Margaret Shippen, assistant professor in the Department of Rehabilitation and Special Education in the College of Education. This project’s goal is to improve the reading skills of low literate inmates at correctional facilities in Bibb and Elmore counties.

Water Education for Alabama’s Black Belt (WET), $15,000, Ming-Kuo Lee and Lorraine Wolf, both professors in the Department of Geology and Geography in the College of Sciences and Mathematics. This project will provide

Literacy Outreach Brings Learning, Hope to Alabama Inmates

National studies indicate that released prison inmates who return to society lacking basic literacy skills are often unable to find employment, and consequently are likely to be incarcerated again. Auburn University’s Peggy Shippen is helping Alabama prison inmates tackle literacy problems through an innovative new program supported by an Outreach Scholarship Grant.

Shippen, an assistant professor in the Department of Rehabilitation and Special Education in the College of Education, has organized the outreach project in collaboration with the Central Alabama Laubach Literacy Council, the Society of St. Dismas (a faith-based organization), and the Alabama Department of Corrections. The program pairs inmate volunteer tutors who read above the seventh grade level with volunteer students who are not yet reading at the sixth grade level.

The goal of the program is to increase the reading level of student participants to at least the sixth grade level in order to be qualified to enter a GED preparation program. The first step is to administer individual reading tests to determine reading-skill levels. Those inmates who wish to be tutors, and are qualified, are trained in the methods of
water resources education to public schools in several Alabama counties.

The Design Seed Outreach Project, $20,000, Tsai Lu Liu, assistant professor in the Department of Industrial Design in the College of Architecture, Design and Construction. This project will facilitate the design and manufacturing of products that can be marketed to benefit and support economic development in the Black Belt region of Alabama.

KEMET (Knowledge and Excellence in Mathematics, Equilibrium and Technology) Academy, $15,000, L. Octavia Tripp, assistant professor in the Department of Curriculum and Teaching in the College of Education; Cheryl Seals, assistant professor in the Department of Computer and Software Engineering in the College of Engineering; Denise Davis-Maye, assistant professor in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work in the College of Liberal Arts; Garnetta Lovett, assistant professor in the Department of Art in the College of Liberal Arts; and, Dorienna M. Alfred, postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Counselor Education, Counseling Psychology and School Psychology in the College of Education. The project is a comprehensive academic enrichment program targeting African American students enrolled in schools in under-resourced communities across Alabama’s Black Belt region.

an adult basic reading program. One-to-one tutoring sessions are arranged twice weekly for 90 minutes at a time. Inmates, both tutors and students, are assessed every six months to measure reading growth. Once a student reaches the sixth grade reading level, he receives a GED study guide as his “graduation gift” and as an incentive for his next educational goal.

The program has been in place at Bibb Correctional Facility for a year and at Elmore Correctional Facility for six months. More than 230 inmates have been assessed for placement as students or tutors. Auburn graduate students Whitney Meade, Shelley Henthorne, and Nick Derzis as well as volunteers from the Society of St. Dismas assisted Shippen in administering the individual reading assessments. About 100 of those tested are now actively participating as students or tutors.

According to Bibb Chaplain Eddie Smith, “There continues to be great interest in the program.” There is a waiting list of inmates who want to take advantage of the opportunity to participate. Warden Cheryl Price said, “We are pleased with the reading program’s progress and what it adds to our educational efforts.” The inmate tutors have expressed their enthusiasm about the chance to help others by sharing a skill during their time in prison. One tutor described it as a “powerful experience.”
The Economic and Community Development Institute, a partnership of Auburn’s Outreach division and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, recently presented its 22nd annual Intensive Economic Development Training Course. The course was held on the Auburn campus during July and September. Course faculty included leading economic and community development experts from across the state and nation. In fact, several members of the faculty are alumni of the course and credit the training for providing them with the expertise necessary for advancement in their profession. This year’s class of 62 participants was the largest in the course’s history.

The Intensive Economic Development Training Course introduces participants to all phases of economic development and serves as the foundation for the other shorter issue-specific courses presented by ECDI. As part of the course’s interactive and hands-on learning format, participants toured the Hyundai Motor Manufacturing facility in Montgomery. They also participated in a half-day round-table session in which they collectively considered the top priorities for economic development in Alabama.

“This course is designed to provide individuals from throughout Alabama with the background and tools they need to develop a successful strategy for building communities and sustaining long-term economic growth,” said Joe Sumner, ECDI director. “As a result, this course has been a major contributor to the economic development profession at both the state and local levels.”

Auburn’s Intensive Course is unique in that it includes a second week of economic and community development training. While the first week of the course primarily focuses on the topics and issues included in the International Economic Development Council’s Basic Course curriculum, the second week’s curriculum is tailored to the specific and expressed needs of professional community and economic developers in Alabama. In addition, course participants are provided with CDs containing all of the course presentations as well as several hundred background articles, toolkits, and ideas that they can refer back to when they return home.

“The combination of this uniquely-tailored curriculum, the reference materials that are provided to each participant, and the networking opportunities offered through the course make it especially valuable to community leaders and economic developers from throughout the state,” says Amelia Hall Stehouwer, ECDI training and research coordinator.

The annual training course is supported by the Economic Development Association of Alabama, Alabama Gas Corporation, Alabama Power Company, Alabama Electric Cooperative, and AT&T.

With more than 20 years of experience in educating economic and community developers and almost 1,000 alumni across Alabama, the Economic & Community Development Institute at Auburn University is the state’s leading provider of economic and community development education.
Raptor Center to Host ‘Football, Fans and Feathers’ this Fall

The Southeastern Raptor Center hosted the educational “Football, Fans and Feathers,” birds-in-flight raptor programs on Fridays this fall before certain home football games. Each show began at 11 a.m. in the 350-seat Edgar B. Carter Educational Amphitheater on Raptor Road just off Shug Jordan Parkway.

Tickets were available at the raptor center gate for $5 each with proceeds going to the Southeastern Raptor Center. School groups could purchase tickets for $3 a person. Children under 3 years old were admitted free.

“We free-fly a variety of birds over the crowds from our flight towers,” said Marianne Murphy, education specialist. “It’s a very entertaining and educational show.”

Murphy and colleague Roy Crowe train Auburn’s golden eagle War Eagle VII, nicknamed Nova, and bald eagle Spirit, each of which flew above Jordan-Hare Stadium this season. Retired golden eagle War Eagle VI, or Tiger, also lives at the center.

“Guests see birds such as hawks and falcons flying and up close,” Crowe added. “We also have one of the eagles there during the shows.”

In addition to hosting shows in the amphitheater, they present shows across the Southeast for schools and organizations. More information about arranging an educational program is available by calling (334) 844-6943.

All birds used in the programs are non-releasable due to prior injuries or human imprinting. Any bird capable of surviving in the wild must be released, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which permits Auburn to house the birds.

The center, part of the College of Veterinary Medicine, has a mission of rehabilitating injured or orphaned raptors, educating the public, and researching new aspects of raptor biomedicine. Anyone wishing to report an injured raptor in the wild should call (334) 844-6347.
Gary Mullen should have learned a long time ago never to say “never.”

That was what he said back in 2004, when his 597-page tome, “Medical and Veterinary Entomology,” rolled off the presses. That was his first book, he said, and that would be his last. Been there, done that, he said.

Yet now here the Auburn University entomology professor is, just itching to sit down and start pounding out book number two.

This one will be worlds different from “Entomology”—which, incidentally, now ranks as the top textbook used in medical and veterinary entomology classes in colleges and universities across the country.

This second Mullen book will be a biography, one recounting the early years in the life of 19th-century British naturalist and artist Philip Henry Gosse.

By the time of his death in 1888, Gosse was recognized as one of the leading entomologists, zoologists, and marine biologists of the day in Europe.

But the foundation for the self-taught naturalist’s scientific achievements very well may have been laid in 1838, while he worked an eight-month stint as a private schoolmaster in Dallas County, Alabama.

“The time he spent in Alabama was a very formative period in Gosse’s life,” Mullen says. “It really launched his career as a naturalist.”

As a scientist and avowed history buff, Mullen has always been intrigued by naturalists of the 1800s—especially those with American connections and, even more so, the one with Alabama connections.

In the past couple of years, Mullen has become consumed with all things Gosse, going so far as to take a year’s professional leave from his teaching and research responsibilities at AU to travel internationally in his quest to trace Gosse’s story.

His fascination with Gosse was sparked in the 1980s, when he read “Letters from Alabama,” a book of personal observations and experiences Gosse penned while living in the Black Belt region of west-central Alabama. So mesmerized by Gosse’s writings was Mullen that he did a little research and found that, drawing on a skill he learned from a father who earned a living painting miniature portraits, Gosse produced 48 pages of intricate watercolor illustrations of 230 insects—mostly butterflies—that captured his attention as he explored the state’s countryside during his brief time here.

“I began to wonder what happened to these paintings,” Mullen says. “Out of curiosity, I—with the helpful assistance of a graduate student I had at the time, Steven Murphree—started investigating.”
What he and Murphree learned was that the paintings—yes, the originals—were in England, in the possession of Gosse’s great-granddaughter, Jennifer Gosse. That thought so consumed Mullen that, in the early 1990s, he traveled to England for the express purpose of visiting Ms. Gosse and possibly seeing the paintings firsthand.

And, oh, did he see them. Bound in an artist’s sketchbook that Gosse intended to publish as illustrations in “Entomologia Alabamensis” once he returned to England, the paintings were “extraordinary,” “masterful” and “some of the finest, if not the finest, scientific depictions of insects ever produced,” Mullen wrote in a special 2001 Auburn University Libraries brochure on the libraries’ possession of color transparencies of all of Gosse’s insect paintings.

(Though Ms. Gosse didn’t take Mullen up on a suggestion that the paintings be donated to the Auburn University Libraries Special Collections and Archives, she did agree to place the paintings on indefinite loan with the British Library. “At least we know they’re protected,” Mullen says.)

As his knowledge about and fascination with Gosse grew, Mullen began to entertain the idea of writing an article, maybe two, to submit to the quarterly history magazine “Alabama Heritage.”

“But the more research I did, the more I became convinced that this story merited more than just snippets in magazine articles,” Mullen says, and so he committed—to himself if not to a publisher—to producing a biography of Gosse’s early life that includes full-color renderings of Gosse’s superb Alabama insect artistry.

That much is certain. What is far less clear is just when the Gosse book will roll off the presses.

“There’s no way I can begin to estimate even when I’ll begin to write it,” Mullen says. “There’s so much more research to be done.”

And so little time to do it.

During his year of professional leave, Mullen traveled extensively on Gosse research missions. He made one trip to London to study Gosse’s paintings at the British Library; one to Newfoundland, where Gosse lived for eight years after emigrating from England as a teen; two to Quebec to visit the Canadian Museum of Nature where some of Gosse’s other paintings are housed; and two to Ottawa, where the naturalist lived immediately before arranging the schoolmaster job in Alabama.

And in addition to the international travels, Mullen made the rounds in the state, delivering Gosse lectures in 10 Alabama cities as part of the AU Center for the Arts and Humanities’ 2006 Draughon Seminars in State and Local History.

In those presentations, he covered basically the time in Gosse’s life that he plans to cover in the book: “from birth to the time he got on that boat (in 1838) going back to England,” Mullen says.

But now that he has his full-time responsibilities back as an entomology professor and Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station researcher at AU—not to mention his recent undertaking to make publisher-requested revisions in and updates for the second edition of “Medical and Veterinary Entomology”—he has had to relegate his Gosse fetish largely to an after-hours and weekend project.

“It’s frustrating,” Mullen concedes. “It may take retiring to have the time.”

Mullen, the state media’s go-to man on insect-transmitted diseases, joined the Auburn faculty in 1975.
The Poarch Band of Creek Indians are in the final stages of developing a strategic plan to guide tribal economic and community development decisions during the next several years. The Poarch tribe contracted with the Economic and Community Development Institute at Auburn University to provide technical assistance in developing the plan, which was initiated in January 2007 and is scheduled to be completed this fall.

The Poarch Band of Creek Indians was recognized by the U.S. Department of the Interior as an “Indian Tribe” in 1984 and is the only federally recognized Native American tribe in Alabama. The primary Poarch community is located in Escambia County near Atmore. There are currently more than 2,200 tribal members. About 1,700 of the tribal members live on or near the Poarch reservation near Atmore.

The Poarch Creek strategic planning project involved a large number of Poarch community residents throughout the course of the project. A community-based steering committee served as the overall project coordinating body, directing major tasks and keeping events on track. The steering committee consisted of 25 tribal leaders and community residents. This committee identified community residents that served on one of four strategic plan focus groups: community services, education, economic development, and infrastructure. Each focus group featured 15 to 20 members and met four to five times during the summer.

With assistance from ECDI project staff, the four groups examined the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for their topic area. Based on their examination, the four focus groups identified the most important (strategic) goals for their group and the action steps needed to accomplish each strategic goal. All four focus groups also prepared draft vision and mission statements for the Poarch community.

Following the work of the four focus groups, the project steering committee conducted a wrap-up session in July 2007 in which each focus group reported on their work, including a summary of the strategic goals they had identified, the action steps needed to accomplish each strategic goal, and the draft vision and mission statements they had developed. The four draft vision and mission statements were considered by the Poarch residents in attendance at the wrap-up meeting and, based on votes by the audience, final vision and mission statements were selected for the tribe. The wrap-up session attracted more than 70 community residents.

Based on information provided by the steering committee and the four focus groups, ECDI project staff prepared a draft version of the Poarch Creek strategic plan for review by tribal leaders and community residents. Once this review is completed, any needed plan revisions will be made and the revised plan will be presented to the Poarch Creek Tribal Council for their consideration. If the Tribal Council adopts the plan, it will become the tribe’s primary economic and community development policy document.

Plan implementation will involve naming a strategic plan monitoring or implementation committee that will meet at least quarterly with identified department and agency staff to discuss implementation progress and problems. The plan will be periodically updated to reflect goal accomplishment and new opportunities or threats.
COSAM Introduces G.U.T.S. Program for Parents and Kids

The College of Sciences and Mathematics recently introduced Getting Under The Surface or G.U.T.S., a bimonthly evening program aimed at students in grades 1-8 and their parents or grandparents. Each evening session includes dinner followed by a 90-minute science activity featuring a “getting under the surface” theme with common objects such as toasters or cell phones or techniques like DNA fingerprinting that can be demystified using simple scientific concepts.

The program takes place the first Tuesday and third Thursday of each month at 5:45 p.m. with dinner and check-in at Parker Hall. The activities are held in the Sciences Center Laboratory. Activities include “The GUTS of Solving a Mysterious Crime,” “GUTS: Getting a Charge out of Building Batteries” and more. Registration for a student-parent team is $25 per evening, with discounts available for additional family members to participate. For more information about the program including dates and registration, visit www.auburn.edu/cosam/outreach or contact the COSAM Outreach Office at (334) 844-5769 or cosam_outreach@auburn.edu.

Dilworth named Assistant VP for Access and Community Initiatives

Paulette Patterson Dilworth has been named assistant vice president for access and community initiatives in the Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs. Dilworth, formerly an associate professor in the School of Education at Indiana University Bloomington, began the position in July. With a career focus on exploring issues of access, civic engagement, equity, and building community, she has more than 30 years of experience in higher education diversity consulting and training, recruitment, retention, and teaching. A native of Selma, Dilworth earned a bachelor’s degree in political science from Florida A&M University; she holds a Master of Art in educational research, and a Ph.D. in educational studies from Emory University in Atlanta. She has been recognized with several awards for her contributions to research and service to education including the National Council for Social Studies Exemplary Research Award, The Kipchoge Kirkland Teaching for Social Justice Award, and the Emory University Outstanding Contributions and Service to the University Award. She is author or coauthor of numerous research publications and has served as an editor, consultant, reviewer, or contributor in many other publishing projects.

Reese-Burney Earns Bachelors Degree

Long time outreach staff member, Sarah Reese-Burney recently completed her undergraduate studies through the University of Phoenix. Reese-Burney is a native of Opelika and has worked at Auburn University for more than two decades. She joined the staff of the newly formed Office of Outreach Information in 1993. Currently, she oversees the administrative functions of the office and is responsible for CEU registrations and program documentation for the almost 1,000 outreach non-credit activities reported to the office each year from across campus. The mother of three daughters, Sarah completed her studies this summer and graduated in September.
Outreach Program Office holds fall Tax Practitioner Programs

Auburn’s Outreach Program Office has announced its statewide schedule of training for Alabama tax practitioners. For program schedules and locations, visit www.auburn.edu/taxseminar. This year’s program features Beanna Whitlock, EA CSA, a nationally known tax instructor from San Antonio, Texas; Suzanne Larson, CPA, a retiree from Birmingham with more than 34 years of IRS experience—most recently as an examiner; and Michael Ferguson, CPA, CFP, a practitioner from Guntersville, Ala., with more than 20 years experience in accounting, tax planning, and financial planning for businesses and individuals. For more information, contact Claire Twardy at (334) 844-3127 or email cst0003@auburn.edu.

Alabama-Mississippi Rural Tourism Conference

The seventh annual Alabama-Mississippi Rural Tourism Conference was held Oct. 30-31, in Tuscaloosa, Ala. The conference rotates between western Alabama and eastern Mississippi. The focus each year is helping Alabama and Mississippi communities capitalize on tourism opportunities. The conference provides a high-value, low-cost educational experience for both states’ tourism professionals. Attendance has grown to more than 120 participants for this two-day conference. Keynote speakers include regional and national leaders in the tourism industry.

The conference offers quality educational sessions covering topics such as historic preservation, agri-tourism, partnering across boundaries (city, county and state), budgeting on limited funds, nature-based tourism, Native American traditions, African American sites, birding, and sustainability.

For more information on the annual program, contact Tom Chesnutt, extension specialist in the Economic and Community Development Institute, a unit within Auburn University Outreach.

DeTure named director of Distance Learning and Outreach Technology

Monica DeTure has been appointed director of Distance Learning and Outreach Technology in University Outreach as of November 1st. DeTure will oversee the office’s base of non-credit certificate programs and the university’s Independent Learning Program credit courses. She will also collaborate with academic units on campus to build new online distance degree programs.

Auburn University Hosts National Symposium on Excellence and Public Trust in Government

The Center for Governmental Services, a unit within University Outreach at Auburn University, hosted a national symposium on advancing excellence and public trust in government on Monday, Sept. 17, at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. The symposium was a collaboration between Auburn, The National Endowment for the Public Trust and the Washington Center.

The purpose of the symposium was to discuss and develop standards for evaluation of transparency at all levels of government in four primary areas: finance, human resources, strategic planning and technology.

The symposium featured keynote speaker Juan Williams, who is an Emmy Award-winning writer, radio and television host and correspondent, and senior correspondent for National Public Radio.

Other speakers included Lt. Gen. Harold G. Moore (Ret.), author of the New York Times bestseller “We Were Soldiers Once ... and Young”; David Weil, co-director of the Transparency Policy Project at the Kennedy School of Management and professor at Harvard University and Boston University; Richard Greene, consultant to the Pew Center on the States; Irene Rubin, professor and author of “Politics of Budgeting” and former editor of “The Public Administration Review”; Michael B. Smith, president of The Washington Center; Suzanne J. Piotrowski, assistant professor of Public Affairs and Administration at Rutgers University-Newark and author of “Governmental Transparency in the Path of Administrative Reform”; Sandra Fabry, manager of the State Government Affairs division of Americans for Tax Reform; and Christa Slaton, director of the Elections Administration Program with the National Election Center and professor and associate dean at Auburn University.

Auburn University began hosting annual governmental excellence and best practices conferences in 2003. The conferences have brought together professionals from all levels of government, academics and representatives from the private sector to discuss and collaborate on best government practices.
AU Students Featured in Performing Arts Video

Auburn University students from all corners of Alabama have been featured in a new series of performing arts videos airing on cable and broadcast stations. The videos, which feature the talents of AU’s Steel Drum Band, Gospel Choir, Concert Choir, Auburn Singers, Percussion Ensemble, Jazz Band and Dancers, were produced by Auburn’s Media Production Group in the College of Business.

The first video, “A Medley of AU Performing Arts,” is available on the Internet at www.ocm.auburn.edu/performingarts. The free RealPlayer software is needed to view the show. Charter Cable aired a variety of the programs throughout the summer. A schedule of air dates is available on the Web site.
Picture, if you will, the wonder and beauty of mountain peaks set against Carolina blue skies with brilliant reds, fiery oranges, and golden yellows painted across the landscape. Feel the cool, crisp mountain air on a dew-soaked morning, a light mountain breeze softening the sunshine of an autumn afternoon, and the warmth of a friendly handshake and heartfelt greetings throughout the day. Now picture that you are attending one of the nation’s premier executive leadership programs.

One might say this is not your typical setting for a high power business conference. However, this is the Blue Ridge Conference on Leadership, an 88-year-old annual conference and corporate learning organization that is administered by the Auburn University College of Business.

The organization’s focus is on leadership development, organizational development, and adult learning. Approximately 500 individuals from companies across the southeast meet every October at the annual conference in Black Mountain, N.C., to learn from one another and participate in a wide array of leadership development opportunities. This year’s fall conference was titled “Learning to Lead with Vision and Values: Winning the Talent War” and featured keynote speakers Tom Haggai, a national supermarket CEO, and Jeanne Robertson, a motivational speaker and Auburn alumna.

Participants learned about servant leadership, the crucial differences between management and leadership, diverse cultures, conflict management, relationship management, and much more. The conference offers the opportunity to experience fellowship, inspiration, and rejuvenation in a relaxed atmosphere, all while learning from the nation’s top business leaders.

Information about the Blue Ridge Conference on Leadership is available online at www.blueridgeleadership.com. In addition to the main conference, speakers and facilitators of leadership development and organizational change are available through the Blue Ridge Learning Institute. Call Hope Stockton, executive director, at (334) 844-2870 or email her at stockhg@auburn.edu for additional information.