Walker: Cuts Alone Will Not Solve Problems

A looming crisis in state funding endangers both higher education and public schools in Alabama, says AU President William Walker.

In his State of the University address to the faculty on March 11, Walker said educators statewide must unite, recruit allies and act quickly to reform a tax structure that hampers education quality at all levels and threatens the future of the state.

Already underfunded public schools, colleges and universities face potentially drastic cuts as Gov. Bob Riley and the Alabama Legislature deal with an anticipated $500 million drop in state revenues for the 2003-04 fiscal year that starts Oct. 1. Initial projections from the governor call for a 6.3 percent cut in the education budget and 18 percent in the general fund budget.

Walker, focusing his remarks on education cuts, said the impact will be devastating for all levels of education, and the problem will get worse unless educators at all levels work together and build support statewide for tax reform and adequate education financing.

“If the Legislature and the voters of this state fail to address this very fundamental issue of education funding and tax reform, we are going to be witnesses to a disaster,” Walker said.

Part of the problem, he said, is that higher education and the kindergarten-Grade 12 sectors already have been weakened financially by a century of recurring crises due to inadequate funding even in good economic times.

A good sign, he added, is the willingness of Alabama’s governor to address problems that previous governors ignored. But Riley’s discussion with the Legislature so far has centered on budget cuts and earmarking of funds. Walker noted that there is little support for earmarking in the Legislature. “Cuts alone will not solve our state’s problems,” he said. “Band-Aid solutions just will no longer work.”

Options are limited, Walker said. “There is no magic in all this. And there is no money. The only way for more dollars to appear in the state treasury is to tax the citizens of this state in a fashion comparable to what residents are taxed in other Southeastern states.”

(Spring Arrives On Campus)

The Yoshino Cherry trees along South Donahue Drive came alive with pink blossoms against a vibrant, blue sky on the first day of spring. A 1988 gift to AU from Juki Industries of America, the trees serve as a continuing reminder of the cooperative spirit between Japan and the United States.
Hansen Writing Neil Armstrong Biography

Astronaut Neil Armstrong, who in 1969 became the first man to set foot on the moon, has selected Auburn University History Professor James R. Hansen to record that millennial event from Armstrong’s perspective.

Hansen, a prominent writer on the history of the U.S. space program, says he hopes to complete his research for the authorized biography by this summer and have it published within two years. “I feel incredibly lucky,” Hansen said. “It is the opportunity of a lifetime—kind of my own moon landing.”

Award-winning filmmaker and actor Clint Eastwood has acquired the movie rights to Hansen’s biography of Armstrong. Eastwood intends to develop the property into a feature film that he will produce and direct, but not star in.

Hansen contacted Armstrong three years ago to seek permission for the biography, but Armstrong politely declined. After months of correspondence, however, the two became better acquainted and, in the summer of 2001, Armstrong gave his approval.

Armstrong said he wanted someone who is an academic—someone who has scholarship first and foremost in mind, Hansen recalled. “I think landing the task was a combination of the nature of my own work in the history of science and technology, plus catching him at the right time.”

“Neil is a lot more than just an astronaut,” says Hansen. “He was an astronaut for just eight years. He’s a professional engineer and a test pilot, and he flew 78 combat missions in the Korean War. The book will cover his entire life, starting with his boyhood in Ohio.”

Hansen has published four books and more than two dozen articles and book chapters on the history of science and technology and their impact on society. He has seven books currently at press. Much of his work involves NASA and aerospace history.

Message from the President

Dear Auburn Friends and Supporters,

Ordinarily, I write this column to bring you good news about Auburn University. You have come to expect outstanding performance in the three essential components of our land-grant mission—research, teaching and outreach. I am happy to report to you that Auburn continues to excel in these areas.

Unfortunately, I must report that Auburn faces a severe funding crisis. The state is predicting a budget that would decrease funding for Auburn University by 6.4 percent. That translates to approximately $13 million to a university that has already been underfunded for more than a decade. It would be unwise to expect that the state will find a last-minute solution to restore these dollars. Despite these anticipated cuts, it would be unacceptable to reduce our commitment to academic and research excellence. If we do nothing else, we must teach our students, support our research and bring services and programs to the state’s citizens.

Auburn’s administration is reviewing and considering a number of cost-saving measures to bring our budget in balance. We are looking critically at our administrative functions and structures and our auxiliary enterprises to ensure they are contributing at appropriate financial levels to the university. Consistent with other research institutions in the state, and in line with discussions the research institutions are having with the coalition Campaign for Alabama, we are also looking at ways to reduce our centrally funded costs associated with fundraising activities and alumni-related activities. Both of these areas are critical and are performed extensively at the college level, as well as at a central level. We are seeking budget relief by shifting more of the centrally funded costs of the university to the private entities—the Auburn University Foundation, the fundraising arm of the university, and the Auburn Alumni Association. These organizations are being asked to further assist Auburn University during these times of budget crisis. We are also discussing possibilities of tuition increase to bring Auburn’s charges more in line with other public institutions in the Southeast.

These difficult problems demand creative solutions. However, we decide to deal with the continuing issue of funding, it will not be at the expense of our academic, research or outreach activities. These endeavors compose Auburn University’s reason for being.

Sincerely,

Bill Walker

Auburn COMMONS


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www.auburn.edu/commons
It might surprise many to know that AU played a prominent role in one of the most controversial and, some have said, “strange” chapters of American art history.

In 1946, the U.S. government was eager to demonstrate the ascendancy of American culture in the newly liberated post-World War II era. To achieve this end, the U.S. State Department organized a traveling exhibition of 117 oil paintings and watercolors by many of the finest artists working in America. Described as a cultural Marshall Plan, the paintings were divided into two exhibits that were to be shown briefly in the United States and, later, sent on a multi-year tour to Haiti, Egypt and major cities in South America and Europe. The “Advancing American Art” exhibition was met with generally positive reviews during its initial three-week exhibition in October 1946 at New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art. But even at this point in the collection’s history, rumblings could be heard about the abstract nature of the work, and one writer wondered “what would happen were the Department of State to be as ‘radical’ in the handling of world affairs as it appears to be in its choice of art.”

Despite the criticism, the exhibitions were soon on their way to Paris; Port-au-Prince, Haiti; and Prague. But the entire affair turned into full-scale controversy when Fulton Lewis Jr. criticized the collection on his popular radio program. Look magazine devoted a full-page article to the controversy, illustrating seven of the paintings and entitling its essay “Your Money Bought These Pictures.” Little more needed to be said. The exhibition was now under assault and soon making national news.

It isn’t difficult to discover what the American public found offensive about “Advancing American Art.” Even its defenders were surprised by the experimental nature of the paintings, which many critics derided as the product of “a lunatic fringe” creating “a bunch of junk.” Harry Truman perhaps captured the mood of the time best when he said that “so-called modern art...[is] merely the vaporings of half-baked lazy people.” In his most famous musing on the subject, “Give-em-hell Harry” took a peek at Yasuo Kuniyoshi’s “Circus Girl Resting” and jibed: “If that’s art, then I’m a Hottentot...”

The whole episode turned serious, however, when a subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations held a hearing on the State Department’s expenditure of public funds for the collection. In a move that foreshadowed the red-baiting attacks of Sen. Joseph McCarthy, it was implied that avant-garde, abstract art of the type in the exhibition was evocative of communism. Even more damaging was the revelation that many of the painters in the exhibition were not just “left-leaning” but had belonged to communist organizations. The collection was now labeled by some as “subversive,” and part of a communist plot, master-minded by Moscow.

By April 1947, the Advancing American Art exhibition was suspended. The paintings were recalled, placed in a warehouse and readied to be sold at auction as government “surplus property.” The last point is significant. Qualified, tax-supported institutions like state universities were eligible to receive a 95 percent discount on all government property identified as “surplus.” Frank Applebee, head of AU’s art department, recognized the opportunity the auction presented but had to work quickly to acquire the necessary funding. He convinced the art department faculty to waive its salary increase for that year and create a pool of funds that could allow the university to enter the State Department auction.

(Art, continued on page 5)
Auburn University’s John D. Freeman Herbarium has completed a three-year effort to database and post all its dried plant collections on-line, becoming one of few in the country to undertake such a project.

“Herbaria and other natural history collections around the world are realizing how important it is to document their collections,” says Curtis J. Hansen, curator of plants at the Freeman Herbarium. “The direction in collections management today is to database. It is important not only to document what you have, but to make that information readily available to other researchers.”

The herbarium, which is maintained by the AU College of Sciences and Mathematics, houses a valuable collection of dried flowering plants, gymnosperms, ferns, bryophytes, fungi and lichens. Concentrating on specimens collected in Alabama over the past 150 years, the resource functions much like a botanical archive providing essential information for use ranging from educational outreach to basic research in systematic botany. With the support of the State Lands Division of the Alabama Natural Heritage Program and data-entry help from student workers, information from about 60,000 vascular plant collections has been entered into the herbarium’s database that is hosted on-line by E-Media Library.

The on-line database allows researchers to search the herbarium’s holdings before formally requesting a loan of plant material. The database also provides other benefits.

“As we acquire new plant material, we can simply enter the information into the ever-growing database and, through the E-Media Library, the on-line database is updated immediately,” Hansen said. “Another benefit of having the collection in a database is that it has helped me to identify under-collected regions of the state thereby allowing me to pinpoint areas for future collecting efforts.”

Hansen says he is looking forward to preparing a database of the herbarium’s non-vascular plant collections. The facility’s long-term goal is to capture an electronic image of each of the more than 60,000 specimens and link those images to the on-line database to create a “virtual herbarium.”

“While nothing can substitute for actually examining a specimen under a dissecting scope, a ‘virtual herbarium’ would allow researchers to zoom in on an image of a mounted specimen to view its major characteristics,” Hansen said. “Depending on what a researcher is looking for, an image may suffice, thus eliminating the need to request a loan of plant material and saving a great deal of unnecessary handling which can damage the specimen.”

Aubie, the mascot of Auburn University, has been named the nation’s No. 1 collegiate mascot for the fifth time—all in the past 13 years.

The lovable and mischievous costumed Tiger took the title from 15 finalists at the Universal Cheerleaders Association’s 2003 national championship mascot competition in Orlando, Fla., last January.

“We’re very excited that Aubie has continued the tradition of excellence, again bringing home the national championship,” said Debbie Conner, the adviser to Aubie. “The students who have served this year have worked hard to get this title back.”

This year’s Aubie “team” was composed of head Aubie Taylor Griswold, a senior in electrical engineering from Montgomery; Jeremy Legg, a senior in textile engineering from Franklin, Tenn.; and Trey Mock, a sophomore in the College of Sciences and Mathematics from Marietta, Ga.

Aubie’s four previous UCA national championships were in 1991, 1995, 1996 and 1999. He took the title this year over runner-up Big Al of the University of Alabama, third-place Smokey of the University of Tennessee, fourth-place Goldy the Gopher of the University of Minnesota and Sparty of Michigan State University, who finished fifth.

Aubie, who began as a cartoon created by Birmingham artist Phil Neel and featured on Auburn home football program covers from 1958 through 1976, came to life as the official AU mascot in 1979. Aubie never speaks, but his animated antics entertain Auburn fans of all ages at sporting events and other special occasions.
AU Architecture Ranked in Top 10

A new national survey ranks AU’s School of Architecture in a tie for 10th in the U.S. with its counterparts at Columbia and Rice universities as one of the “Best Architecture Schools for 2003.”

The survey also ranks the School of Architecture’s Interior Architecture Program as the 13th best program in the country for interiors education.

The survey was conducted during the summer and early fall by DesignIntelligence and the Design Futures Council, in conjunction with The Almanac of Architecture & Design.

The survey team polled more than 300 leading interior design and architecture firms throughout the nation.

“Obviously, we’re very pleased to be recognized with such outstanding universities as Harvard, Cornell, Yale, Columbia and Rice, among others,” said Daniel Bennett, dean of the College of Architecture, Design and Construction. “It’s an honor to be included with such nationally prominent universities, especially since only four of the top 10 listed universities are public institutions.

“The majority are Ivy League schools. Being ranked as one of the top schools of architecture in the U.S. and Canada is a significant honor for the school, the entire college and for Auburn University.”

Science Lab Construction Begins

Site preparation for the three-building science laboratory center, one of the largest construction projects to ever take place on the AU campus, began in January 2003.

The new buildings comprising this project will be located on and near the site previously occupied by Extension Cottage and Saunders Hall. The most complex of the buildings is the one that will house undergraduate biology and chemistry laboratories among its four floors. This building will parallel Roosevelt Avenue and close off one of the lower quad dorms’ green space. When the entire project is completed in 2005, Roosevelt will be closed to vehicular traffic in the first step towards pedestrianization of the central campus in an area contained within Magnolia, Samford, Mell and Duncan.

The second building, which is scheduled to be complete in May 2004, will contain classrooms of varying capacity and be equipped with the customary white and smart boards and multimedia projection equipment on the first of two floors. The second floor will house the college’s dean’s offices.

Connecting the lab and classroom/office buildings, which will be at right angles to each other, will be a 300-seat “space-age” auditorium with technology intended to match the expectations of the 21st century student by complementing the traditional professor-focused lecture environment. Subsequent to attending presentations in this room, students will participate in smaller class sections than what had been presented in the larger venue. This building will be ready for the fall 2004 semester.

In addition to providing an exceptional teaching environment, the construction will include a major project to result in a College of Sciences and Mathematics’ academic park.

“The new complex will serve as an anchor to what we see as a broader COSAM academic park. The expectations are that this site will include more green space to create a collegial ambiance with additional new buildings for math, physics, biological sciences, and geology and geography. This area will be open on the north end, towards Haley center, and closed by the amphitheater on the south,” said Stewart Schneller, dean of the College of Sciences and Mathematics.

Progress of the construction can be followed on the web via the college’s Science Laboratory Center Webcam at www.auburn.edu/cosam/slccam.
Horticulture’s Paterson Complex Renovated

Last September, a ceremony on the Auburn campus commemorated the renovation of a campus landmark, the Paterson Greenhouse complex. This facility has been a hub for horticultural research and teaching efforts since 1948 when it was built thanks to the foresight of then Alabama Commissioner of Agriculture and Industries, Haygood Paterson.

In that 55 years, the Department of Horticulture has experienced phenomenal growth. Enrollment in Horticulture increased 430 percent since 1985. In the past decade, the department graduated more than 500 students representing some 50 percent of all graduates in the College of Agriculture. In addition, research and outreach efforts of the department also have grown in response to industry needs. Nursery and greenhouse crops are the top five commodities in 27 states, and the top 10 commodities in 42 states. The nursery and landscape industry employs more than 600,000 workers nationwide during peak seasons, and the grower segment of the industry employs at least 45,000 workers year-round and up to 105,000 during peak seasons.

Despite all this expansion in horticulture, more than 50 years passed with little investment in the Paterson complex and the greenhouses had deteriorated significantly. Some of the facility had become unusable because of safety concerns.

Observing the extraordinary growth in horticulture, Christine Curtis, associate provost for Facilities, recognized the need to renovate and expand these facilities and took her concerns to the Board of Trustees and AU President William Walker, who quickly agreed the university needed to meet the needs of the constantly growing horticulture program. The board allocated $1.2 million in 2001 to refurbish the facility.

The result is a newly renovated, attractive, safe and functional facility for teaching and research. The complex includes a 4,600 square-foot, modern gutter-connected greenhouse and a 2,300-square-foot polyethylene Quonset greenhouse. The main house holds new offices, restrooms, and important safety equipment. The former classroom was expanded and features multimedia capability. A new walk-in cooler and a laboratory were added and a new potting and work area was constructed along with a new pesticide storage and rinsing/mixing building.

These renovations are exciting and long overdue. They will significantly benefit all aspects of the department’s program. Though the department has successfully placed 100 percent of its graduates in jobs during the last 16 years, these facilities will make AU horticulture students even more competitive in the job market by providing them with hands-on learning opportunities. Research and outreach opportunities at this facility also will enhance Auburn’s service to the horticulture industry. Ultimately, these upgraded facilities will benefit Alabama’s economy and improve the quality of life for all Alabama citizens.

Auburn Online Community on the Way

Auburn University and the Auburn Alumni Association are working together to offer an exciting new online service to AU alumni and friends. The Auburn Online Community will allow AU alumni and friends to search for and locate former classmates and friends, post professional services information and class notes, and access a campus calendar featuring a schedule of upcoming events. Community registrants will also have the option of obtaining a special "auburnalum.org" permanent e-mail address, which will provide e-mail forwarding services to help alumni and friends stay in touch with Auburn and each other.

Registered users will also be able to update their own records on the AU database as well as determine what information they would like to make available to other community visitors. More detailed information on registration, usage instructions and an in-depth explanation of services will be provided on the university and alumni websites, www.auburn.edu and www.aualum.org, before the community grand opening, as well as in university publications and Auburn Magazine.

For more information about the Auburn Online Community, call the Auburn Alumni Association at (334) 844-2960, or e-mail aubmag@auburn.edu.
AU Student on USA Today All-Academic Team

Juan Carmona, a senior in Auburn University’s College of Sciences and Mathematics, has been named to the prestigious USA Today All-USA College Academic First Team, featured in the newspaper’s Feb. 13, 2003, edition.

Eleven women and nine men from across the United States were selected for the team, based on academics, leadership, activities and application of their talents beyond the classroom.

Only the nation’s top 20 undergraduates are chosen for the All-USA First Team, demonstrating Carmona’s exceptional academic record and accomplishments at Auburn.

Carmona has amassed a 3.99 GPA in his major of molecular biology, which is one of the most difficult curriculums at AU. He is also enrolled in the University’s Honors College, where he encounters the most rigorous sections of the core curriculum.

Active in a variety of undergraduate research programs, Carmona has worked at the cutting edge of neurobiological and immunological research. For the past three summers, he has participated in stem-cell research programs at Princeton University and epilepsy research at Harvard Medical School. His summer work has given him the opportunity to make presentations at several scientific meetings and co-author other works.

Carmona recently received national recognition for his research on epilepsy at Harvard University. He won first place for his poster and was the top cell biology presenter at the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students in New Orleans, sponsored by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute and the National Institutes of Health. He was the first student from AU to present at the national conference, and he was the first winner from the state of Alabama.

While at the conference, Carmona met with several representatives from the nation’s top medical and graduate school programs and he interviewed with Francis Collins, who is director of the National Human Genome Research Institute.

Carmona has been accepted to Harvard University, Johns Hopkins University, and Yale University, with interviews still pending at Stanford University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Ultimately, Carmona hopes to complete his doctorate and pursue a biomedical research career. Carmona is Auburn’s eighth student featured on the USA Today All-USA College Academic Team since its inception.

Address

(Continued from page 1)

Walker said the timing is right for tax reform and a new state constitution. “To achieve reform, he said, K-12 and higher education must work together. “The days of pitting K-12 against higher education hopefully are over. As far as I am concerned, we are all in this together.”

Auburn faculty should be active participants in the effort for tax reform and constitutional reform, he said.

Walker also urged the faculty to get involved in a statewide discussion of the extent to which a business model will define colleges and universities in Alabama. That discussion among leaders in business, government and education could shape state government’s future expectations of higher education and funding based on those expectations, he cautioned.

“It seems to me that the momentum is building for the philosophy that higher education is just another business,” he said. “Well, it is not just another business—although some business principles may be useful.”

Walker said the university’s graduates are its most significant economic impact, and that the most positive economic contribution we can make is to improve the quality of life in Alabama so that these graduates will not need to leave the state for better jobs and better schools in Florida and Georgia.

ACADEMIC HOTEL—June Henton, center, dean of the College of Human Sciences, welcomes hotel executives Horst Schulze, left, and John Russell. Schulze, former president of the Ritz-Carlton luxury hotel group, is head of the company that assumed management of the AU Hotel and Dixon Conference Center on March 1, when it became part of the college’s hotel and restaurant management academic program. Russell, a former Ritz-Carlton manager, is the AU facility’s new manager.

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TIME FOR UPGRADES—
Jordan-Hare Stadium will undergo major changes over the next two years. The Athletic Department plans to increase the number of restrooms, upgrade and increase the number of luxury suites and add 1,000 seats to the east side. Approved on April 4 by the Board of Trustees, AU will finance the $28 million project with a bond issue to be repaid through Athletic Department revenues. What became Jordan-Hare Stadium was first opened and dedicated on Nov. 30, 1939 and held 7,500. At present, Jordan-Hare Stadium has a capacity of 86,063.