Looking west
Three of Auburn’s larger buildings dominate this wide-angle view, looking west from the center of campus under bright skies on a briskly cold morning. The new Student Center is flanked in the background at left by Jordan-Hare Stadium and at right by Haley Center, both of which are closer than they appear in this photo. The crane behind Haley marks the construction site for Shelby Center, phase two. Beyond those buildings are the new arena, new dining hall and new Village student residential complex.

Optional pharmacy benefit
Program reports $1.3 million in prescription savings

TigerMeds, a pharmacy services program for Auburn employees, experienced rapid growth during its first year of operation and led to $1.3 million in savings on prescription costs for individuals and the university.

Auburn’s group health insurance plan saved more than $1 million in prescription costs during the past year through implementation of the TigerMeds program. That figure is based on an external pharmacy benefit analysis by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama, administrator of the self-insurance plan.

In addition, participating Auburn employees and their families saved approximately $300,000 on their out-of-pocket prescription costs during the first year of the program, which began in November 2008, said Kimberly Braxton Lloyd, assistant dean for the Pharmacy Health Services Division. The division includes the Auburn University Pharmaceutical Care Center and the Auburn University Employee Pharmacy; both play key roles in the TigerMeds program.

Since financing for Auburn’s health insurance plan comes from premiums paid by the university and employees, university financial experts look to TigerMeds as part of a comprehensive effort to slow, if not reverse, the rate of premium increases for health insurance in the future for both the university and its employees.

TigerMeds is an optional expanded pharmacy benefit for Auburn employees. For participating employees, immediate savings for prescriptions range from a few dollars at a time — for those receiving generic medications prescribed for minor, occasional ailments — to $1,500 or more per year in co-pay costs. Those saving the most are usually employees and dependents who require medications for conditions such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, osteoporosis, allergies, depression, stomach problems and other chronic health issues.

Approximately 20 percent of on-campus employees are receiving pharmacy services from the University Employee Pharmacy in the W.W. Walker Building. Available to off-campus employees as well as those on campus, the TigerMeds program also provides courier delivery of prescriptions to participating faculty and staff at Auburn-Montgomery and delivery by mail to Extension offices and research units away from campus.

Most prescription savings occur, Braxton Lloyd noted, when the pharmacists work with the prescriber to move the patient from a high-cost, brand-name medication to an alternative within the same “family” that has been shown in research to achieve the same treatment goal.

One example, she said, might involve the pharmacist performing a patient assessment and recommending a switch from the cholesterol-lowering drug Lipitor to an equivalent dose of simvastatin, the generic of Zocor, which is in the same drug class. She said the appropriate dosage of generic simvastatin can achieve the same lowering of LDL cholesterol in many patients who have mild to moderately elevated cholesterol. “If this conversion is successful, and the patient achieves the same cholesterol goal, then the patient saves $480 per year in out-of-pocket co-pay costs for this one medication, and the university health plan saves as well,” she added.

“The goal of TigerMeds is to integrate the pharmacist into the healthcare team and for the pharmacist to provide medication evaluation and education,” Braxton Lloyd said.

She explained that the pharmacist works closely and communicates frequently with the patient and the prescribing physician. A pharmacist at the Employee Pharmacy will refer the individual to the Pharmaceutical Care Center to meet with a pharmacist for expanded medication evaluation, education, training and monitoring. The pharmacy team works to ensure that every patient is receiving the most from each medication that the patient takes, evaluates disease risks, makes wellness recommendations and provides immunizations and other services. Through the Harrison School of Pharmacy, pharmacists in the Employee Pharmacy have access to drug information resources and the latest research in medication outcomes.
United Way success

Auburn University received the Institutional Division Leadership Award from United Way of Lee County for its successful 2009 campus campaign that exceeded the campus goal of $140,000. Campaign leaders Bill Sauser, Susie Hall and Dianne Townsend celebrated the victory with Provost Mary Ellen Mazey and Assistant Vice President for Human Resources Lynne Hammond. From left are Hall, Hammond, Mazey, Sauser and Townsend.

Freshman class has sharp increase in National Merit Scholars in ’09-'10

Auburn more than doubled its number of newly enrolled National Merit Scholars this year, ranking 34th nationally, according to a new National Merit Scholarship Corporation Annual Report. AU enrolled 64 new scholars last summer and fall, which is an increase of 106 percent over the previous year’s number of 31. Of the 64 students, 32 are residents of Alabama and 32 are non-residents.

The 2009-10 figure places Auburn fourth in the Southeastern Conference, up from ninth last year, according to the report. Nationally, the university advanced to 34th from 56th.

“We are especially grateful to the Auburn University Board of Trustees for establishing two key scholarship programs three years ago,” Director of University Scholarships Velda Rooker said. “Both the Spirit of Auburn Scholarship for Alabama residents and the Academic Scholarship for nonresidents have directly contributed to a significant increase in scholarships awarded over the last few years.

“We received another boost this past year when we began offering an on-campus housing allowance for four years to National Merit Finalists, National Achievement Finalists and National Hispanic Scholars.”

National Merit Finalists at Auburn receive full tuition for four years; a $1,500 technology allowance the first fall semester; the Auburn Academic Guarantee, which includes automatic admission to the Honors College and an enrichment experience stipend valued at $4,000 one semester after the second year; and an on-campus housing allowance for four years.

These students may also be eligible for a university stipend for four years, depending on eligibility as determined by National Merit Scholarship Corporation or by financial need as determined through completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

TigerMeds

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While providing a direct benefit for participating Auburn employees, the center is developing and expanding a model of pharmacy services that graduates can apply in their communities and careers.

“For the university community, it is important that we are saving Auburn employees and the university money while helping improve health care outcomes,” Braxton Lloyd said. “Beyond campus, the model we are establishing at Auburn will carry over into improved pharmaceutical services across the state and region.”

For online information about the TigerMeds program, including enrollment information, see http://pharmacy.auburn.edu/tigermeds/.

Campus Calendar

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 2

LITTLETON-FRANKLIN LECTURE “Beyond Security Theater: Fighting Terrorism the Right Way,” Bruce Schneier, author of best-selling books on individual and national security preparedness and response, 4 p.m., auditorium and adjacent classroom, Sciences Center


WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 3

MUSIC RECITAL Award-winning chamber music quintet Triton Brass, artists in residence at The Boston Conservatory, 7:30 p.m., Goodwin Music Hall; admission free for students with ID, $10 for others

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4

GROUNDBREAKING MRI Research Center, 2 p.m., Auburn Research Park, Devall Drive

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5

MEETING Board of Trustees, time TBA, Chi Omega chapter room, Willow Hall, The Village student residences

DEDICATION Learning Commons, 2 p.m., second floor of Draughon Library

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 6

EXHIBITION OPENING “After You Left, They Took It Apart: Demolished Paul Rudolph Homes.” Photographs by Chris Mottalini showing the temporary nature of iconic 20th century architecture, noon, Jule Collins Smith Museum, exhibition runs through April 17

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 9

MEETING University Senate, 3 p.m., auditorium, Brown Hall

ART LECTURE “The Innovative Spirit: Metal Art,” metal artist John Phillips, 4 p.m., Jule Collins Smith Museum

MUSEUM FILM SERIES “Visual Acoustics: The Modernism of Julius Shulman,” exploring the career of 97-year-old architectural photographer Julius Shulman, narrated by Dustin Hoffman, 6:30 p.m., Jule Collins Smith Museum

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12

NEXT Auburn Report

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17

STUDY ABROAD FAIR Exhibits and information booths about faculty-led programs and other opportunities for students to study in other countries, including funding information and students’ photos from past Study Abroad journeys, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., lobby, Haley Center
Profiles in Excellence

Life takes odd twists for award-winning professor

Thirty years ago, Morris Bian was studying for an undergraduate degree in China while simultaneously researching U.S. history and teaching himself English as a second language.

In an ironic twist of fate, Bian now lives in the U.S. and, as an associate professor of history at Auburn, is an internationally recognized authority on East Asian and world history.

“In general, the population of China knew very little about the United States and its history, but I wanted to learn more about it,” Bian said, recalling the start of a career trek that led him into college teaching and eventually to Auburn.

He continued, “Then, there were radio programs designed to help people study English. You could purchase books to go with those programs, so that’s what I did. I learned letters, sentences and grammar. I didn’t take any formal classes in college because they weren’t offered until the end of my undergraduate career.”

Thus began a career path that has taken Bian a long way in both professional and geographic terms. Among his professional honors, Bian received Auburn’s Creative Research and Scholarship Award in October at the university’s Faculty Awards for Excellence ceremony.

The award recognized the extensive research he conducted for his first book, “The Making of the State Enterprise System in Modern China: The Dynamics of Institutional Change,” which was published by Harvard Press in 2005.

Scholars have cited the book for making original contributions to the field of modern China studies and related subjects, and it was recognized by Choice Magazine as an Outstanding Academic Title of the Year. In 2007, the International Convention of Asian Scholars named his book one of the top 10 social science books in Asian studies, an award chosen from titles published around the world during the previous two years.

Describing the work, Bian said, “It produces a large body of new historical knowledge on Chinese political, economic and institutional development during the first half of the 20th century. It answers a fundamental question on the formation of China’s state enterprise system, a question that had not been asked until the publication of my book. It offers a new interpretation on the origins of China’s danwei (unit) system, which refers to the prevailing administrative system embracing virtually all government, business and educational institutions in urban China during the post-1949 period.”

He added, “Finally, it presents a new general theory of institutional change, which can be fruitfully applied to the study of institutional change in different historical as well as national context.”

Bian said he chose this topic because of China’s exclusive reliance on state-owned enterprises for economic development after the Communist takeover of China in 1949 and also because of his belief in the necessity of understanding continuity and change in order to see how societies revise existing patterns to meet the changing needs of human communities.

“The present is simply an extension and a modification of the past,” Bian said. “In order to understand the current configuration of a society, we’ve got to examine its history.”

In conducting research for the book, the Auburn professor made several extended trips, including visits to China’s central and provincial archives, as well as visits to the libraries at Harvard University and the University of Chicago.

Bian says he was drawn early in his studies toward life as a scholar. “I have literally been living, studying and working in a campus environment, either as an undergraduate student, graduate student, instructor or professor, since 1978. That’s 30 years,” Bian says. “I never left college life. So I guess that eventually becomes your second nature and you love what you do as a scholar and a teacher.”

In China, Bian received a bachelor’s degree in political science from Mudanjiang Teachers’ College in 1981 and a master’s degree in modern world history from Northeast Normal University in 1984.

After moving to the United States, he received another master’s degree — this time in U.S. history from Southern Illinois University — in 1991 and a doctoral degree in Chinese history from the University of Washington in 1998.

He came in 1998 to Auburn, where his responsibilities in the College of Liberal Arts include teaching courses in modern Chinese history, East Asian history and world history at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Bian says being named the recipient of the Creative Research and Scholarship Award, Auburn’s top academic award for research, was a humbling experience. “I’m grateful the committee decided to confer this honor to me,” he said. “I’m also grateful for the exceptional support I’ve received from Auburn during my years here. Without all the resources they made available to me, I couldn’t have written a book like this.”

— Natalie Nettles
Symposium to present cross-cultural perspectives on teaching, learning

Auburn University will host a two-day symposium on “Cross-Cultural Perspectives on University Teaching and Learning” on Feb. 19-20 for higher education faculty members across the state and beyond, as well as its own faculty.

In sessions led by scholars from around the world, topics include: managing a multicultural classroom; how culture affects writing; and teaching and learning in higher education in the context of Korean, African American, Hindu, Hispanic, Muslim and Confusian cultural perspectives.

The symposium is sponsored by Auburn’s Biggio Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, the Office of the Vice President for University Outreach, the Miller Writing Center and the Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs.

Registration deadline is Feb. 12. Symposium details and registration information are available online at www.auburn.edu/academic/other/biggio/symposium/.

Security expert to speak on fighting terrorism

Bruce Schneier, an internationally recognized expert on individual and national security practices, will speak on “Beyond Security Theater: Fighting Terrorism the Smart Way,” at 4 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 2, in the Sciences Center Auditorium at the Roosevelt Pedestrian Concourse.

Schneier, who has been dubbed a “security guru” by The Economist magazine, will speak at Auburn as part of the Littleton-Franklin Lecture Series. He is the author of several books, including “Secrets and Lies,” “Beyond Fear” and the bestseller “Applied Cryptology.” His current book “Schneier on Security” discusses issues ranging from identity theft to tamper-proof elections.

Coming to T-E-L-L  F-A-R-E  P-E-A-T

The Theatre and Music departments in Auburn’s College of Liberal Arts will present the one-act musical comedy “The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee” in Telfair Peet Theatre during February. Based on a book by Rachel Sheinkin and featuring music and lyrics by William Finn the show centers around six quirky adolescents in a spelling bee run by three adults, who are just as odd as the contestants. An unusual aspect of the show is that three or four audience members are invited on stage to compete alongside the actors. Performances are set for 7:30 p.m. Feb. 19-20 and Feb. 23-27, with a matinee at 2:30 p.m. Feb. 21. For additional information online, see http://media.cla.auburn.edu/theatre/ and for tickets, call 844-4154.

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