This landscape architect’s rendering, looking southwest into Samford Park from Toomer’s Corner, shows the area slated for redevelopment in the first phase.

Toomer’s Corner, Phase I
This landscape architect’s rendering, looking southwest into Samford Park from Toomer’s Corner, shows the area slated for redevelopment in the first phase.

Toomer’s Corner redevelopment to start with soil replacement

The Auburn University Board of Trustees on Feb. 7 approved a plan to redevelop and enhance historic Toomer’s Corner. Work will begin this spring to replace the soil contaminated by the 2011 poisoning and will finish with the planting of two new trees in early 2015.

This first phase of the Samford Park redevelopment also will feature the construction of a circular wall that will allow a larger number of visitors to sit and enjoy the area. Phase II of the project, which will be completed at a later date, will create a tree-lined walkway from the corner to Samford Hall.

“We think the Auburn Family will like the look of the corner,” said Dan King, assistant vice president for facilities management. “It is not a radical change, but it will open things up and allow more people to enjoy it.”

The estimated cost of Phase I is $900,000, which includes soil replacement, the installation of new pavers and circular seating wall and the planting of the new trees. The brick gates erected in 1917 will remain at the corner.

The landscape architectural firm Holcombe Norton Partners of Birmingham completed the schematic design for the Auburn Oaks at Toomer’s Corner Redevelopment Project in January.

Search starting for architect for grad school building in Harbert College of Business

The Raymond J. Harbert College of Business is moving forward with plans to add a new building for graduate business education, following action on Feb. 7 by the Auburn University Board of Trustees.

Among action items at the meeting at the Auburn Montgomery campus, the board authorized Facilities Management to begin the search for an architect to help bring the project to life. The project, which will be near the college’s headquarters in Lowder Hall, will advance beyond the conceptual stages once the college raises the money to fund construction.

Bill Hardgrave, dean of the Harbert College of Business, says the building will be part of a vision for the college presented last October, when the university announced a $40 million gift to the college from Auburn alumnus and Trustee Raymond J. Harbert.

“Mr. Harbert’s gift generated incredible momentum for our college,” said Hardgrave, who is also the Wells Fargo Professor in the college. “In the next few years, as we put the Harbert gift to work and continue to generate support from other stakeholders, we expect to create at least three research centers and to substantially increase the number of Ph.D. students. Additionally, our current master’s programs – in particular, our Executive MBA and Physician’s MBA – are constrained by our existing facilities. We need room to grow and space that will enable us to better serve our on-campus and online students.

“A Graduate School of Business building represents an important component in our quest to become one of the nation’s top public colleges of business.”

Potential occupants for the new building include the college’s graduate programs, as well as research and outreach centers and online classrooms. Graduate offerings in the Harbert College of Business include MBA and Executive MBA options, a Master of Accountancy program, and master’s and Ph.D. programs in finance, management and information systems.

While a graduate business building represents a future objective for the college, a number of facility improvements will be more immediate. Construction began last week on an expanded student and faculty lounge on the ground floor of Lowder Hall. The 3,200-square-foot facility will feature a full-service Starbucks with indoor seating for 80 and outdoor seating for 20. The project is projected to be complete by August.

In related action at the Feb. 7 meeting, the Board of Trustees selected Kahn South Inc. of Birmingham as project architect for the Recycling and Service Support Facility. Approved by the board in November, the new building is anticipated to be constructed at the Facilities Management complex on West Samford Avenue. The recycling support functions currently operate in the existing Food Service warehouse near Lowder Hall. The Campus Master Plan allows for the demolition of the warehouse to create future expansion space for the Harbert College of Business.

Among other construction-related business at the Montgomery meeting, the board approved selection of Walcott Adams Verneuille Inc. of Fairhope as project architect for a new Aviation Education Facility. The action follows approval in November for the new facility for use by the Aviation Management academic program. Currently, the flight education operation is located in temporary facilities at the Auburn University Regional Airport.
Auburn senior Ahmed to receive worldwide 2014 Clinton Hunger Leadership Award

Auburn University senior Azeem Ahmed has been named winner of the 2014 President William Jefferson Clinton Hunger Leadership Award, an honor presented to only one university student worldwide each year.

“We are excited that Azeem’s passion for tackling global hunger has been recognized in this award,” said Melissa Baumann, assistant provost and director of the Honors College.

“He has dedicated his undergraduate studies and extracurricular activities to understanding and alleviating the roots of hunger,” Baumann said. “This speaks to Auburn’s land-grant mission to improve the lives of Alabamians as well as people around the world.”

The award was announced by the Stop Hunger Now organization and the North Carolina State University Center for Student Leadership, Ethics and Public Service. Ahmed will receive the award during the Universities Fighting World Hunger summit at Auburn from Feb. 28-March 2.

Created to honor former President Bill Clinton for his commitment to humanitarian causes, especially his commitment to eradicating hunger, the award criteria include demonstrated leadership in the fight against hunger and a commitment to a life of service in the areas of hunger and poverty reduction.

“I’m honored to be named this year’s recipient,” said Ahmed, who will graduate in August with a major in finance and minor in sustainability. “I am thankful to my family, friends, mentors and professors, especially Dr. Paul Harris, Dr. Harriet Giles and Professor Douglas Coultts for their years of support and commitment to helping students make our world a better place.”

Ahmed, who grew up in Auburn, is the president of the university’s Committee of 19, a group dedicated to fighting world hunger; vice president for the Campus Kitchen Project; a past vice president of the Honors Congress; a Community and Civic Engagement undergraduate fellow; and a lifetime member of the American Red Cross and past president of its Auburn University chapter.

He traveled to Egypt in 2011 as a World Food Programme intern to help develop a national food program, conducting more than 40 field visits and certifying enough mills to produce 250,000 tons of vitamin-enriched rice. In 2012 he worked in Bangladesh with the International Center for Diarrheal Disease Research, and worked in Egypt in 2011 as a World Food Programme intern to help develop a national food program, conducting more than 40 field visits and certifying enough mills to produce 250,000 tons of vitamin-enriched rice. In 2012 he worked in Bangladesh with the International Center for Diarrheal Disease Research, with the International Center for Diarrheal Disease Research, with the International Center for Diarrheal Disease Research.

Auburn University officials and the mayors of Opelika and Auburn helped the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine break ground Feb. 6 for the private medical college’s first building on its campus at the Auburn Research Park.

The 90,000-square-foot, four-story building will be situated on 15 acres south of the Auburn University campus.

Widely known by its acronym, VCOM, the medical college is applying for accreditation, and when approvals are complete, the college expects to welcome its first 150 students in the fall of 2015.

The private college’s new academic facility in Auburn Research Park will have classrooms, small-group learning rooms, laboratories, and a technology center. No state funds will be required for operations or construction, resulting in no cost to the state taxpayer.

“I want to emphasize two major things. First, how grateful we are for this association with Auburn and the opportunities it provides for both partners, and secondly, how this branch campus will assist in our mission by meeting the growing need for physicians in Alabama and the surrounding rural and underserved areas,” said VCOM President James F. Wolfe.

“Serving society is part of Auburn’s mission,” said Auburn University President Jay Gogue. “Auburn and VCOM are working together to help address the challenges Alabama faces in terms of health and shortage of physicians. We are excited about what the future holds, not just for Auburn but also for the citizens of Alabama.”
Engineering students may see cut in curriculum requirement as Senate considers request to reduce hours needed for graduation

The Core Curriculum and General Education Committee of the University Senate has recommended to the Senate that the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering be permitted to reduce credit-hour requirements toward graduation for its undergraduates.

Discussed at the Senate meeting on Feb. 4, the proposed change would enable the college to comply with a university goal of bringing required credits for a bachelor’s degree as close to 120 credit hours as possible. The 120-hour target is part of a university strategic goal to improve student retention and four-year graduation rates. Engineering degree requirements vary by program, with some now requiring up to 134 hours.

With a large number of specialized courses in various College of Engineering programs required by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology, the Senate committee recommended that core curriculum requirements for engineering students be cut by six hours from the present total of 35-36 credit hours. A cut of three credit hours would come from the Humanities and Fine Arts subject area and another three hours from the History, Social and Behavioral Sciences area, reducing the requirement in those two subject areas for engineering majors to nine hours each from the original 12 hours.

Most subjects in those areas are taught in the College of Liberal Arts. The remaining areas, which would not be affected, are in the area of Written Composition and the Natural Science and Mathematics area.

The proposed change is the first to be brought to the Senate for consideration since the university adopted the current version of the core curriculum in 2011, and it will be the last the committee will bring forward, said Committee Chair Constance Relihan.

Responding to questions about setting a precedent for other exceptions to the core curriculum, Relihan said the College of Engineering’s situation is unique due to a large number of required courses in most engineering fields due to rapid growth in technology. While other colleges and schools are also dealing with an expanding knowledge base, they have more flexibility in their curricula, she said.

Several faculty senators from Liberal Arts departments argued against reductions to the core curriculum, saying those courses are the only exposure most students in highly technical fields such as engineering get to the humanities, social sciences and related fields. Rather than reducing time spent in those fields, they said, students in technical fields need additional exposure to a general curriculum.

Although much of the discussion involved state standards, proponents of the proposed change said colleges of engineering at public universities in other states are also under increasing pressure from state capitals and Washington D.C., as well as parents, over the rising cost of college, especially when course requirements contribute to undergraduate stays beyond four years.

Relihan, who is a professor of English and Auburn’s associate provost for undergraduate studies, said the committee tried to find the right balance between the core curriculum, which was designed to broaden students’ academic experience beyond their majors, and the strategic plan approved by the university in 2013. Listed first among Auburn’s strategic goals is a commitment to “emphasize student retention and achievement by encouraging and expecting timely degree completion and by clearing pathways to student success.”

Relihan said the university would bring degree requirements for engineering majors more in line with Auburn’s goal of 120 hours for all undergraduate programs, as well as with a state law, the Alabama Articulation Act of 1994. At the time, Auburn was granted an exception to continue with higher requirements for its engineering undergraduates; proponents of change noted that Auburn could make the proposed change and still be at or above the level for other engineering programs in Alabama.

The committee’s credit-hours recommendation is scheduled to come back before the Senate at its March 4 meeting at 3:30 p.m., in Broun Hall. Minutes of the Feb. 4 meeting are posted online at www.auburn.edu/administration/governance/senate/website/minutes/2013-2014/Current_2013-14.html. Slides with details of the committee presentation are posted at that site in the agenda for the Feb. 4 meeting.

If the Senate passes the measure, the next step would be for the Ginn College of Engineering to send revised curricula for its programs to the Senate Curriculum Committee.

Hunger Leadership Award

Continued from Page 2

Disease Research. In 2013 he was awarded a Harry S. Truman Scholarship, one of the nation’s top academic awards bestowed on college juniors, being one of only 62 recipients nationwide and the only recipient from the state of Alabama.

Harriet Giles, managing director of the Hunger Solutions Institute within Auburn’s College of Human Sciences, said, “As a young adult, he has demonstrated both the scholastic aptitude, as well as the interpersonal skills, to be an innovator and leader who will contribute greatly to ending hunger in his generation’s lifetime.”

Ahmed had to go through a lengthy application process for the award. First, he had to develop a video (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N8h5WY4Gnww) which detailed his vision for a world without hunger. After a panel of judges reviewed each video entry, five finalists from across the nation were selected.

As a finalist, Ahmed had to write three essays addressing his involvement in the fight against hunger; his thoughts on the current state of hunger related policy and hunger relief; and his vision for continued efforts in the fight against hunger.

“Azeem is eager and willing to use his skills to make the world a better place for the billion of the world’s population who live from hand to mouth in unsustainable environments,” said Paul Harris, associate director for prestigious national scholarships. “He is going places and he will leave a lasting mark. The Auburn Family can take great pride in him.”
New York Times writer, author to present York Lecture on issues of ‘Frankenfoods and Superweeds,’ related topics on Feb. 25

Critically acclaimed science writer and New York Times columnist Carl Zimmer will discuss “Of Frankenfoods and Superweeds: Reporting from the Front Lines of Biology,” in a public lecture at Auburn University on Feb. 25.

Zimmer, who is also a blogger for National Geographic, will speak at 4 p.m. in Lowder Business Building, Room 113-A, as part of the College of Agriculture’s E.T. York Distinguished Lecture Series and in conjunction with the university’s Littleton-Franklin Lecture Series.


Titled “Jerome Myers: Raising Hope in the New World,” a select group of paintings and works on paper opened Feb. 8 and will be on display at the museum through May 4. An illustrated publication with essays accompanies the exhibition.

“In a career that spanned the late 19th and first half of the 20th century, Myers painted the reality he saw in the immigrant neighborhoods on New York’s Lower East Side,” said museum director Marilyn Laufer. “His subjects were children and families dressed in their best clothing at the markets, on stoops or at religious and cultural festivals.”

Considered a peer of urban realists such as Robert Henri, John Sloan and George Luks, Myers’ empathy for his immigrant subjects went against what was the prevalent thought at the time. Myers said “Others saw ugliness and degradation there, I saw poetry and beauty.”

“So much of the political and social climate of the progressive era focused on the sad impoverished conditions of the tenements and the immigrants who lived there,” Laufer said.

“But Myers focused on the positive – the hopeful-ness of the immigrant community he believed was part of the melting pot he saw as modern America,” she added. “A lot of the progressive rhetoric was how to Americanize these new citizens, but Myers celebrated that difference.”

Laufer said the exhibition is timely, given some of the perspectives and discussions of immigration today. She said support from donors and museum colleagues prompted research and a reevaluation of Myers at Auburn’s art museum, which includes work by the artist from the permanent collection.

Special support for the exhibition came from the estate of the late Helen Farr Sloan, widow of artist John Sloan; attorney Jerome K. Grossman; Katherine Degn and Carole Pesner of the Kraushaar Galleries; and Myers’ grandson, Barry Downes.

Lenders to the exhibition include the Columbus Museum, Columbus, Ga.; Delaware Art Museum in Wilmington; the Georgia Museum of Art at the University of Georgia, Athens; Arkansas Art Center, in Little Rock; and collector Samuel Rosenfeld.

On display
The color etching “First Avenue Park,” is among works in the exhibition “Jerome Myers: Raising Hope in the New World” at the Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art.

“As technologies advance and new scientific discoveries and developments are made, scientists have a responsibility to effectively explain these technologies to consumers and to policymakers,” Patterson said. “We look forward to hearing Mr. Zimmer provide his insights on how to communicate complex scientific issues in a meaningful way.”

While at Auburn, Zimmer also will speak to campus communications professionals and agricultural communications students and will visit journalism and communication classes in the College of Liberal Arts.

Women’s rights activist to present public lecture

Author and women’s rights activist Gloria Steinem will speak at 4 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 18, at The Hotel at Auburn University as part of the Auburn University Women’s Leadership Institute’s Extraordinary Women Lecture series.

“Steinem is widely recognized as a profound voice in the struggle for equality,” said Barbara Baker, executive director of the Women’s Leadership Institute in the College of Liberal Arts. “A leading authority on issues of power, privilege and equal rights for all, she is one of the most influential women in America.”

Limited general seating for the public lecture is available on a first come, first served basis. Doors will open at 3 p.m. The College of Liberal Arts’ Dean’s Brass Quintet and the Mosaic Theatre Company will perform at the event, and an exhibit featuring work from the class project “Gender on the Margins” will be displayed.

Steinem is scheduled to participate in a book signing following the public lecture, and the Auburn University Bookstore will have copies of her books available for purchase.

Steinem will also be the guest of honor at the Women’s Studies Program awards luncheon on Feb. 19 at the Student Center. At the ticket-only luncheon, awards will be presented to Auburn faculty, students and members of the community for achievements in women’s and gender studies and for making a difference in the lives of women in the community.

“We are pleased to welcome Gloria Steinem to campus as part of the Extraordinary Women Lecture series,” Baker said. “Gloria Steinem has committed her career to improving women’s rights and enhancing the power of the female voice.”

A founder of the Women’s Media Center, the Ms. Foundation for Women, the National Women’s Political Caucus and Ms. Magazine, for which she served as editor for 15 years, Steinem has authored four books, is editor of The Reader’s Companion to U.S. Women’s History and is a frequent media spokesperson.