Two new trustees take seats on Auburn Board

The Alabama State Senate approved two new members of the Auburn University Board of Trustees on Feb. 14.

Mike DeMaioribus, senior vice president at technology company Dynetics in Huntsville, represents District 8, which stretches across the Tennessee Valley.

Wayne Smith from Nashville was selected for an at-large position. Smith is chairman and chief executive officer of Community Health Systems, an operator of acute care hospitals in 29 states.

The new trustees immediately began seven-year terms. They replace John Blackwell and Sam Ginn, who were not eligible for reappointment. Auburn trustees next meet on April 12.

“Mike and Wayne bring a fresh dose of strategic thinking, enthusiasm and passion for serving Auburn,” said Raymond Harbert, president pro tem of the university’s board.

Smith earned a bachelor’s in physical education and a master’s in school administration in 1969 from Auburn, and a master’s degree in healthcare administration from Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas.

In addition to his duties with Community Health Systems, Smith is chairman of the Federation of American Hospitals and has been named one of the “100 Most Influential People in Healthcare” by Modern Healthcare magazine for each of the past 10 years.

Named Auburn’s Outstanding Electrical and Computer Engineering Alumnus of 2003, DeMaioribus is the chair of the Alumni Engineering Council and past chair of the Research Committee.

DeMaioribus and Smith were chosen from more than 100 nominees. The selection committee was composed of Harbert, trustee Jimmy Rane, Auburn Alumni Association representatives Bill Stone and Gaines Thomas, and Gov. Robert Bentley, who is president of the Board of Trustees.

Johnson named CVM dean

Auburn University veterinary professor, department head and alumnus Calvin Johnson has been named dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine after a national search, announced Feb. 13 by Timothy Boosinger, Auburn provost and vice president for academic affairs.

“(Dr. Johnson) has done an excellent job as a department head and during his time as acting dean,” Boosinger said. “His record is outstanding. We are excited that he will be leading the college in the coming years.”

Johnson, head of the Department of Pathobiology, joined the Auburn faculty as a professor in 2003 and was named department head in 2005. His experience also includes 11 years at the University of Florida.

“I am very honored to have been named dean and am enthusiastic about working with the faculty, staff, students and alumni to mold our programs to meet the needs of a 21st century global society, while preserving Auburn’s historical strengths in veterinary medicine,” Johnson said.

He becomes Auburn’s seventh veterinary dean since the college was established in 1907; the veterinary medicine program began at Auburn in 1892. He succeeds Boosinger who served as dean for 16 years until 2011, when he was

Fulbright-Hays Fellow working on literacy project in Senegal

Kimberly Smith, a doctoral student in Auburn University’s Department of Curriculum and Teaching in the College of Education, is conducting literacy research in Senegal as a Fulbright-Hays Fellow.

Smith is working with Senegalese educators to evaluate students’ oral vocabulary development in French and Wolof, a local language spoken by nearly 40 percent of the country’s population, and to promote French literacy skills necessary for academic and career success.

A native of Brewton, Smith has been working in the West African republic since the start of the 2012-13 academic year.

The U.S. Department of Education’s Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Program provides funding for students interested in conducting research in foreign language and international studies for a period of 6-12 months.

Smith, who also conducted teacher training in South Africa, Kenya and Malawi in the last decade, said she hopes to develop instruments and practices that can help educators better connect with children in complex second language settings and considers it a privilege to participate in teacher training on a national level in Senegal.

“Senegal is not unlike many countries around the world where young children speak one language at home, but arrive at school having to learn to read and to write in a formal language that is not their mother tongue,” said Smith, who is pursuing a doctorate in reading education. “I believe strong literacy skills are essential in providing students with the base to learn in all subject areas.”

International education

Auburn doctoral student Kimberly Smith, standing, is working with Senegalese educators through a Fulbright-Hays grant from the U.S. Department of Education.
Gift of $1 million moves plans for new band building closer to goal

The Auburn University Marching Band has received a $1 million gift from supporter Meredith Birchfield.

“There’s just nothing else like it,” Birchfield said. “I’ve always loved the band.”

When Birchfield found out that the band was trying to raise money for a new practice facility, she decided to take her commitment even further and donated $1 million to the band’s fundraising campaign.

The marching band is raising funds to build a facility where the students can safely house their uniforms and instruments and accommodate the needs of the marching and concert bands under one roof. It will be the first time in 40 years that the marching band’s indoor rehearsal space will be located adjacent to its outdoor practice field.

“It’s a way of giving back for all the joy they’ve given me,” Birchfield said. “I believe the band is the heart and soul of every game that takes place under the aegis of Auburn University. I want to make things a little better for them, and I think the Auburn University Family does also. They deserve it.”

“The Auburn Band is very thankful for the generosity and overwhelming support provided by Meredith Birchfield,” said Rick Good, director of bands. “This commitment makes the dream of a ‘new home’ for the Auburn Bands more of a reality. It’s clear that Ms. Birchfield continues to embody the Auburn Spirit.”

Birchfield said that she and her family have a long history with Auburn. “I knew I was coming to Auburn before I could even talk!” she recalled. “My great-aunt was one of the first coeds to graduate from Auburn and all of my family — father, brother, aunts, uncles, cousins — graduated from Auburn. I stayed with my family in Chambers County every summer when I was a kid, and we always spent time in Auburn.”

Throughout her life, Birchfield has found ways to give back to programs she feels are vital. She is still very involved with a number of philanthropies, including programs that utilize horses in providing therapy to veterans and developmentally disabled children and adults.

“Giving back is part of the Auburn Spirit,” Birchfield said. “It’s being part of the Auburn Family that makes us want to give back. And why shouldn’t we, as alumni, give back to the band? Haven’t they entertained us, worked their hardest and been the soaring spirit that pervades every game Auburn is in? I believe it is just as our slogan says — we are family and we are in it all together.”

— Vicky Santos

International teaching, research

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Smith’s work has received support from Auburn’s Office of Outreach, which provided books and other resources for use in the schools. Smith said the fellowship has enabled her to work closely with U.S. Embassy personnel and others who, she added, have helped her obtain a larger view of educational work from a global development perspective.

While Smith’s travels have taken her to France and Iraq, she said she remains devoted to serving the needs of students in impoverished settings.

A survey released by the Center for Universal Education at Brookings revealed that half the approximately 61 million children of primary school age in sub-Saharan Africa will reach adolescence lacking the ability to read, write or perform basic mathematics. In Senegal, only 7 percent of children who begin receiving formal education earn the equivalency of a high school diploma.

“The realities are staggering,” Smith said. “For this part of the world, a good level of education means having choices regarding one’s future, which can lead to economic opportunities.”

— Troy Johnson

Campus Calendar

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 22
UNIVERSITY THEATRE “She Loves Me,” 7:30 p.m., Telfair Peet Theatre; also at 7:30 p.m. Feb. 23 and Feb. 26-March 2, and 2:30 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 24; admission charged

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27
FACULTY CONCERT Michael Pendowski on saxophone and Laurelie Gheesling at piano, 7:30 p.m., Goodwin Recital Hall; admission charged

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 28
PUBLIC LECTURE Award-winning author and journalist Alexander Stille, “The Force of Things: Marriage in War and Peace,” 6 p.m., Pebble Hill; part of the Community and Civic Engagement Initiative in the College of Liberal Arts

SUNDAY, MARCH 3
CONCERT Auburn University Chamber Concert Choir, 2:30 p.m., Auburn First Baptist Church; admission charged

TUESDAY, MARCH 5
MEETING University Senate, 3:30 p.m., Broun Hall
CONCERT Auburn University Community Orchestra, 7:30 p.m., Telfair Peet Theatre; admission charged

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6
PUBLIC LECTURE “Revolutionary Gardens: Politics, Nature and Gardens in the 18th Century,” author Andrea Wulf, 5 p.m., Jule Collins Smith Museum

THURSDAY, MARCH 7
FACULTY CONCERT Jeremy Samolesky, piano, 7:30 p.m., Goodwin Recital Hall; admission charged

FRIDAY, MARCH 8
NEXT Auburn Report
International Programs hosts visiting Korean students

The Auburn University Office of International Programs hosted a group of 25 visiting Korean high school students Feb. 8, as part of a comprehensive cultural and leadership development program.

The students, selected by the government of the Gyeongsang province in Korea, experienced hands-on activities in the College of Engineering, the College of Agriculture and the College of Architecture, Design and Construction.

“We’re honored to have the opportunity to showcase Auburn University to these top Korean students,” said Jennifer Mason, director of international initiatives at Auburn. “We hope this exposure to everything our region and our university can offer will inspire these students and their friends and families to consider Alabama as a prime destination for higher education.”

The Alabama-Korea Educational Exchange Program was founded in 2012 to give high school students from Alabama and Korea an opportunity to experience each other’s cultures in authentic environments.

During their 10-day stay in Alabama, the students toured the Capitol, visited Hyundai Motor Manufacturing Alabama, experience Space Camp at the U.S. Space and Rocket Center and learned about the civil rights movement at the Rosa Parks Museum. The first group of Alabama exchange students visited Korea for a similar program last year.

Auburn University continues to develop innovative partnerships with the Korean community at home and abroad through programs such as the Auburn-Keimyung University Korea Center and initiatives with the automotive manufacturing industry, says the leader of Auburn’s Office of International Programs.

“Auburn’s relationships within the Korean community create so many mutually beneficial opportunities not only for the university and industry, but for our entire state and region,” said Andrew Gillespie, assistant provost for international programs. “We’re dedicated to keeping these doors open and finding new, creative ways to engage with our existing and potential partners in the Korean community.”

Veterinary Medicine

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named Auburn’s provost. Johnson was acting dean for 17 months, followed by Fred Hoerr as interim dean for four months.

“The college has built a solid foundation through 121 years of exceptional education and leadership in veterinary medicine, including companion animal health, agricultural production medicine, biomedical research and the interface between animals, humans and the environment,” Johnson said.

“I look forward to building upon the successful leadership of Dr. Boosinger and all the previous deans. Among his many contributions, Dr. Boosinger developed a business model to construct state-of-the-art hospitals for large and small animals, and a premier educational facility that can accommodate expanded classes and novel instructional strategies. My goal is to continue building the program and to support the faculty in pursuing the college’s mission.”

A 1979 graduate of Auburn High School, Johnson earned his bachelor’s degree in 1983 and his veterinary degree in 1986, both from Auburn University. He earned his Ph.D. in veterinary medical science (pathology) from North Carolina State University in 1992.

“The Auburn brand of veterinary medicine is well recognized because of its commitment to an exceptional educational experience and a mutual devotion to student success,” Johnson said.

“If we are effective as educators, then the citizens of Alabama, our educational partners in Kentucky and animal owners from the Southeast and beyond will all benefit,” he added.

Johnson is chair of Auburn University’s Health Sciences Task Force and serves on numerous other university and college committees.

He is a diplomate in the American College of Veterinary Pathologists, being board-certified in anatomic pathology, and in 2012 he was named Mentor of the Year by the national Student Chapters of the American College of Veterinary Pathologists.

He and his wife, Mary, live in Auburn and have a daughter, Frances, an Auburn pharmacy student, and a son, Gardner, an Auburn civil engineering student. Johnson’s father, the late Wiley C. Johnson, was an emeritus professor of agronomy in the College of Agriculture. His mother, Elizabeth Johnson, is a resident of Auburn.

United Way award

From left, Vice President for Research John Mason and Assistant Vice President for Human Resources Lynne Hammond, honorary chair and campus chair, respectively, of the 2012 Campus United Way Campaign display for President Jay Gogue the award Auburn received for institutional leadership from United Way of Lee County. The award recognized the university community as the largest source of gifts in its category to United Way in the 2012 campaign.

New group awards one of its first sustainability grants to Auburn prof

A faculty member in the Department of Chemical Engineering at Auburn University has earned one of the first grants to support sustainability research from the new Ray C. Anderson Foundation.

Jin Wang, B. Redd Associate Professor in the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering, earned a $50,000 award to support her research aimed at reducing energy and chemical consumption at pulp mills. Wang came to Auburn in 2006 after earning a Ph.D. in chemical engineering from the University of Texas at Austin.

The foundation also awarded grants to innovative sustainability-related programs at Georgia Tech, the University of Southern Mississippi and Arizona State University.

The foundation was launched in July 2012 as a legacy to Anderson, the late founder and chairman of Interface Inc., manufacturer of environmentally responsible modular carpet for the commercial, institutional and residential markets. Anderson was internationally recognized as a manufacturing industry leader and innovator in sustainability.

The not-for-profit organization bearing Anderson’s name seeks to promote innovation in sustainable production and consumption.

— Amy Weaver
Auburn professor publishes book about causes, issues of global organ shortage


Kaserman was a Torchmark Professor of Economics at Auburn University until his death in 2008. The book, dedicated to Kaserman, provides the first extensive analysis of the organ shortage worldwide.

Auburn’s Paulette Dilworth appointed to national expert panel for civic literacy

Paulette Dilworth, assistant vice president for access and community initiatives in Auburn University’s Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs, has been appointed a member of the Center for Civic Literacy national expert panel on assessing the status of civic literacy.

The Center for Civic Literacy, based at Indiana University Purdue University in Indianapolis, investigates the consequences of a public deficit in constitutional and civic knowledge and identifies programs with demonstrated effectiveness in producing civically literate students. The center also works to generate a broad and evidence-based national discussion through a variety of communication venues.

Association presents award for lifetime achievement to ag economics professor

Jim Novak, a professor and Extension economist in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology in the College of Agriculture, received the Southern Agricultural Economics Association’s Lifetime Achievement Award during the organization’s 2013 annual meeting this month in Orlando.

The award honors individuals for their significant and enduring contributions to the association, the agricultural economics profession and society.

Association honors Guertal for sports turf research, teaching programs

Agronomy and soils professor Beth Guertal was named the 2012 Dr. William H. Daniel Award winner by the SportsTurf Managers Association at its 2013 conference in January in Daytona.

Named for a pioneer in turf management, the award is presented to individuals for significant contributions to the sports turf industry through their research, teaching or extension outreach.

Guertal’s area of expertise is in environmental turfgrass and nutrient management. She has been a faculty member in the College of Agriculture at Auburn since 1993.

Summerfield elected to office in South Atlantic Modern Language Association

Giovanna Summerfield, associate dean for educational affairs in the College of Liberal Arts and scholar in Italian and French languages and literatures, has been elected to serve on the executive committee of the South Atlantic Modern Language Association.

The executive committee has five elected members with terms of five years. It administers the affairs of the association, whose purpose is the advancement of scholarship and teaching in the modern languages and literatures, with particular orientation toward the southeastern United States.

A Liberal Arts faculty member since 2006, Summerfield was instrumental in implementing the Language Across the Curriculum program and securing an Italian government grant for the Italian Studies Program in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures.