Task force formed to try to save Toomer’s oaks

In an effort to save its famed Toomer’s oaks, Auburn University has formed a task force of experts in horticulture, agronomy, civil engineering, forestry, chemistry and landscape services.

The creation of the task force was one of several major developments following confirmation on Feb. 16 that the historic trees at Toomer’s Corner had been deliberately poisoned with a potentially lethal dose of herbicide and the subsequent arrest of a Tallapoosa County man in connection with the poisoning.

Auburn students, alumni and well-wishers turned out by the hundreds at Toomer’s Corner on Saturday to pay tribute to the trees, which have been a treasured part of Auburn history for approximately 130 years and the site of celebrations for more than half a century.

While they try to save the trees, the task force asks fans not to roll Toomer’s Corner or walk in the bedding area around the trees.

Initial efforts involved fencing off the area immediately around the trees and the use of charcoal to draw part of the poison away from the trees’ roots. This week, workers placed tents around the base of the trees and began removing contaminated soil around the roots. During the soil removal, scientists are evaluating additional soil samples to determine the concentration of the herbicide at different depths, and the Alabama Board of Examiners in Psychology, and international president of the Society for Advancement of Management. He also serves on the boards of the Auburn/Opelika Tourism Bureau, the Greater Peace Community Development Corporation and United Way of Lee County.

Hendricks is a Charles W. Barkley Endowed Professor in the School of Nursing, which she has represented in the Senate for three years. She has been a member of the Auburn faculty since 2007, returning after having been on faculty here from 1987-96. She holds a Ph.D. from Boston College.

Hendricks is the Senate parliamentarian and serves or has served on the following committees: University Promotion and Tenure; Competitive Research Grants; Faculty Grievance; Ad Hoc Tenure and Promotion; Quality Enhancement Plan Exploratory / SACS; Rules; Budget Advisory; Faculty Dismissal; and the Pharmacy Dean Search.

Jaffe is an associate professor in the Department of Theatre in the College of Liberal Arts. He serves as faculty technical director and production manager for Auburn University Theatre and has worked as a scenic, lighting and/or sound designer for more than 40 Auburn Theatre productions and technical director for more than 100 University productions and events since his arrival in 1992.

From 1995-2004, Jaffe serves on the Auburn Chapter of the AAUP as listserv director and web master and is an ad hoc executive committee member. His service on University and Senate committees includes: Safety, Multicultural Diversity, Concessions Board, Persons with Disabilities, and Scheduling and Calendar committees. He holds a master of fine arts degree from Memphis State University.

Baginski is a professor in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, where he has served on the faculty since 1985. He holds three degrees from Pennsylvania State University, including a Ph.D.

Baginski represents his department in the Senate and has served on several University and Senate committees, including recent service as chair of the Administrator Evaluation Committee.

In July, Claire Crutchley of Finance will end her term as chair of the University Senate, turning the
Toomer’s trees: Man arrested, rescue effort under way

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civil engineers are installing small cylinders to monitor the downward spread of herbicide. Future actions will be based on results of these steps. Ongoing updates on the treatment and prognosis are available at www.auburn.edu/oaks.

“We are assessing the extent of the damage and proceeding as if we have a chance to save the trees,” said Gary Keever, an Auburn University professor of horticulture and a member of Auburn’s Tree Preservation Committee. “We are also focused on protecting the other trees and shrubs in Samford Park. At this level the impact could be much greater than just the oaks on the corner, as Spike (80DF, tebuthiuron) moves through the soil to a wide area.” Additional tests are being completed to determine the movement and extent of the area affected, Keever said.

On Feb. 17, the Auburn Police Division arrested Harvey A. Updyke Jr., 62, of Dadeville on a warrant charging him with felony criminal mischief. If convicted, he could face up to 10 years in prison. Updyke was later released on $50,000 bond.

The Auburn Police Division is receiving assistance in the investigation from the university, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Marshals Service, the Pesticide Management Section of the State of Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries, Tallapoosa County Sheriff’s Office and Dadeville Police Department.

“We will take every step we can to save the Toomer’s oaks, which have been the home of countless celebrations and a symbol of the Auburn Spirit for generations of Auburn students, fans, alumni and the community,” said University President Jay Gogue. Gogue asked members of the Auburn Family to “continue to be ‘All In’ in upholding its reputation for class” and not allow anger to be expressed inappropriately or undeservedly.

“It is understandable to feel outrage in reaction to a malicious act of vandalism,” Gogue said. “However, we should live up to the example we set in becoming national champions and the beliefs expressed in our Auburn Creed. Individuals act alone, not on behalf of anyone or any place, and all universities are vulnerable to and condemn such reprehensible acts.”

Police and university officials confirmed on Feb. 16 that an herbicide commonly used to kill trees was deliberately applied in lethal amounts to the soil around the Toomer’s Corner live oaks on campus, and agricultural scientists have said there is little chance to save the trees.

In addition to applicable local and state laws, the application of this herbicide, known as Spike 80DF, or tebuthiuron, is governed by state agricultural laws and the Environmental Protection Agency. The university does not use Spike herbicide, and campus horticultural and herbicide experts said there is no reason to suspect any human danger from the herbicide, which manufacturer Dow Chemical says should be applied with proper clothing protection; a typical use of the herbicide isconsto kill trees along fence lines.

The police investigation began after a caller to The Paul Finebaum Show, a nationally syndicated radio show based in Birmingham, on Jan. 27, claimed he had applied the herbicide. Soil samples were taken the next day and sent to the Alabama State Pesticide Residue Laboratory on campus for analysis. Due to a small fire that occurred in the state lab in December, the tests were forwarded to a lab at Mississippi State University.

The lowest amount of the poison detected around the trees was 0.78 parts per million, described by horticulture and herbicide experts as a “very lethal dose.” The highest amount detected was 51 parts per million, or 65 times the lowest dose. Experts say a normal application by itself would have been enough to kill the trees, which are estimated to be more than 130 years old.

The Finebaum Show caller, identifying himself as “Al from Dadeville,” claimed to be a fan of University of Alabama football who sought revenge for the Tigers Iron Bowl victory over the Crimson Tide in November by attacking Auburn’s landmark oaks. University of Alabama officials said the individual had never attended the university and had no affiliation with the institution, and numerous persons who are associated with the university condemned the poisoning. In addition, a group of University of Alabama students and alumni organized a Tide for Toomer’s fundraising drive as a show of solidarity with Auburn.

The Auburn Alumni Association has also launched a Toomer’s Trees and Traditions Fund. Details are available at www.auburn.edu/oaks.

Faculty officers

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gavel over to Ann Beth Presley of Consumer Affairs, who served this year as chair-elect, and Russ Muntifering of Animal Sciences will step down as secretary, turning those duties over to Larry Crowley of Civil Engineering, the current secretary-elect.

As immediate past-president, Crutchley will serve during the next academic year as faculty advisor to the Board of Trustees. The persons elected as chair-elect and secretary-elect will assist the chair and secretary in the coming academic year, and they will become University Senate chair and secretary in 2012.

Five to receive Auburn Journalism Awards

Veteran CBS News reporter Jim Stewart is one of five journalists chosen to receive 2011 Auburn Journalism Awards at The Hotel at Auburn University on April 22.

The other honorees are Dewey English, managing editor of The Mobile Press-Register; Carol Pappas, former editor and publisher of The Talladega Daily Home and St. Clair Times; Jon Johnson, sports editor of The Dothan Eagle; and the late Ronald B. Casey, former editorial page editor of The Birmingham News.

“We have honored some of the state’s best journalists since the awards were established in 2005,” said Roy Bain, journalism advisory council awards chairman. “This year’s honorees are no exception.”

Stewart will receive the Distinguished Mass Media Achievement award; English, the Distinguished Auburn University Journalism Alumnus award; Pappas, the Distinguished Alabama Community Journalist award; and Johnson, the Distinguished Alabama Community Sports Journalist award. Casey will be honored posthumously with the Distinguished Special Achievement in Journalism award.

Tickets for the 11:30 a.m. honors luncheon and awards ceremony are $40 per person. Make checks payable to The Auburn University Foundation, with “2011 Journalism Awards Luncheon” in the memo line, and send to Jennifer Wood Adams, Journalism Program Director, Department of Communication and Journalism, 232 Tichenor Hall, Auburn, AL 36849. The deadline for reservations is April 4.

The Auburn University Journalism Advisory Council in the College of Liberal Arts established these awards “to recognize and celebrate the best and most enduring professionals in our field” who work inside or outside the state, but who have Alabama roots.
New model for Honors College leads to large increase in number of high-achievers, rapid jump in ACT scores

A few years ago, as Auburn University developed its master plan for this decade, the university’s Honors College accepted a unique challenge: Create a new model that would move the Honors College from a prestigious but small element on campus to a central and even more prestigious role in the university’s academic mission.

The Honors College began the task almost immediately and has largely met its goal over the past two years. After decades of maintaining steady enrollment of approximately 750 students, Auburn’s Honors College has seen its enrollment nearly triple to more than 2,100 students in just four years; today, every 10th Auburn undergraduate is a member of the Honors College. Last fall, approximately 25 percent of members of the entering class were honors students, and similar numbers are projected for this fall.

Quality rose along with enrollment. The 1,000 freshmen in the Honors College last fall had an average ACT score of over 31 and their high school grade point average exceeded 4.0. Overall, Auburn’s freshman class had an ACT average of 27, with 80 percent scoring 24 or higher on the ACT, compared to 50 percent in 2006. And Auburn ranked fifth in the country among public institutions in enrollment of National Merit Scholars.

Honors College Director Jim Hansen said the redesign of the Honors College and the resulting growth came about because of a widespread commitment throughout the university community to raise the academic profile of the entire university, with honors students playing a more visible role in their endeavor. In 2006, the Board of Trustees authorized a merit-based scholarship program to make Auburn more competitive with peer institutions in attracting students with the most academic potential. The scholarship program was created in the belief that a large nucleus of high-achievers would elevate academic standards for the entire student body, further increasing the value of an Auburn degree.

But the Honors College was not set up to accommodate large numbers of students or to retain significant numbers beyond the sophomore year, particularly in engineering and the sciences.

A general consensus formed among administrators, faculty and trustees that a new model was needed. Hansen noted that President Jay Gogue, Provost Mary Ellen Mazey, the Board of Trustees and numerous deans, faculty and student leaders have strongly supported measures to meet the need for a larger, more visible Honors College.

“President Gogue and Provost Mazey encouraged us to do what needed to be done to accommodate a greater number of highly qualified honors students and provide these students with even more opportunities to excel,” Hansen said. “They wanted the experience for honors students to be state of the art for undergraduate education.”

With support from deans and faculty throughout the university, Hansen and his associate directors, Paul Harris and Kathie Mattox, worked with a task force led by Dean of Libraries Bonnie McEwan to develop a strategy for a broader-based Honors College with more opportunities for juniors and seniors as well as freshmen and sophomores.

The strategy included reinventing the curriculum for honors students to include additional sections of traditional Honors core courses, new Honors departmental courses, new interdisciplinary symposia, Honors Seminars and a series of Honors participation courses, such as Freshman Exploration, Honors Lyceum, Honors Book Clubs and Honors Forum.

Under the Honors College’s previous academic model, the core curriculum for freshmen and sophomores was largely a variation of the core curriculum for all students, with the primary difference being smaller classes and more interaction with their professors.

A major part of the program for juniors and seniors was the traditional honors thesis. Colleges with flexibility in their curricula could accommodate the honors thesis, while students in architecture, engineering and the sciences had little room in their curricula for completing it. The new Honors College model provides more flexibility for students faced with this dilemma.

“Instead of trying to develop a thesis in every circumstance, students now have the option of expanding a project they are working on as part of their major, so they can explore it in more depth,” Hansen said.

To retain upper-level honors students, the Honors College developed a series of alternatives, labeled the “Apogee Experience,” derived from the ancient Greek term for “highest point.” Among those options, upper-level honors students may produce a portfolio, give a conference-style presentation, participate in a team project, do an enhanced study abroad program, complete a service learning project or complete two new 300-level Honors Seminars.

Since many honors students have diverse interests beyond traditional academic majors, the new model also encourages diversity in curricula and majors. Team teaching, long a part of Auburn’s Human Odyssey program, is being adopted for new interdisciplinary studies in emerging fields such as sustainability, which features faculty from agriculture, engineering and the social sciences, as well as a new technology and culture series. In addition, discussions are under way across campus for the introduction of more interdisciplinary disciplines.

“Next fall, we will admit about 200 honors students directly into our new interdisciplinary curricula, as there is a great deal more student interest in interdisciplinary approaches to learning,” said Hansen. “So we still have a lot of untapped capacity.”

– Roy Summerford

Viewing Phase II

U.S. Sen. Richard Shelby, left, received a progress update this month on Shelby Center Phase II from Larry Benefield, right, dean of the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering. Shelby played a key role in obtaining federal funding for both phases of the engineering technology center.
Statement from faculty chair-elect nominee

Constance Smith Hendricks

While these are challenging economic times for our state and the nation, it is still a wonderful time to be in academia especially at Auburn University. Yes, Auburn has been thrust into the national light for some great things and some not so great.

However, we embrace the closer look from our counterparts and prospective students. What their inspection will reveal is that Auburn University is like any other family, there is much good here and a few things we must continue to work together to improve.

In preparing for this role, I resorted to the official documents for guidance, the University Faculty Constitution and the University Senate Constitution:

“The University Senate is established with the belief that members of the University community who are involved in the day-to-day life of the University should participate in the formulation of policies affecting the faculty and the academic life of the institution. The Senate provides a vehicle through which such collective intelligence can be directed toward promoting the well-being of the University.”

“University Senate is advisory to the President. In that capacity it is the body having primary concern for the general academic policies of the University, including those involving curricula, programs, standards, faculty appointment, evaluation and development, student academic affairs and libraries. The University Senate is also concerned with issues that affect all members of the University community, such as the budget, employee welfare programs, the calendar, and facilities.”

“The chair shall be the presiding officer of the Senate and may designate a parliamentarian to assist in this responsibility and shall be responsible for the agenda for each meeting in accordance with the Senate Constitution. The chair shall be the chair of the Rules Committee and the Steering Committee, shall be an ex-officio member of all other Senate committees, and shall be a member of the University President’s Cabinet.”

“Chair-Elect: The chair-elect shall act for the chair in the chair’s absence. The chair-elect shall be a member of the Rules Committee and the Steering Committee and shall assume the duties of chair if the chair is vacated, either for expiration of term or for other reasons.”

I have had the privilege to serve as faculty or in an administrative position at several institutions of higher learning during my 30-plus years as an academician. The opportunity to participate in the academy in a variety of institutions has afforded me the opportunity and privilege to gain a better understanding of the organization as a system. Yes, there is academic freedom afforded every faculty; however, it is not without obligation, privilege and responsibility.

The philosophy of shared governance and transparency is the goal of our current Auburn University administration. As your chair-elect and ultimately your chair, I pledge to promote the enhancement and support of that philosophy to ensure it always furthers the inclusiveness of all.

As we prepare to submit our request for reaffirmation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, our synergistic efforts and wisdom is essential to ensure that we demonstrate that we are just what we purport to be: A Great University that fulfills its mission and contributes to society by the quality product we yield, top-quality graduates.

During my term as senator, I have been involved in numerous committees and ad hoc committees, including being elected to the Rules Committee. Currently, I am serving as the Senate parliamentarian. I believe my track record would support the statement that I was a contributing member to ensure we met the goal.

Over the years, I have obtained leadership development opportunities from numerous reputable sources so that I would be prepared for a challenge such as this. I believe I am the leader to serve you as your next chair-elect. I understand the job description, and am ready to serve you. I invite you to review my credentials on the School of Nursing website and welcome any questions or concerns you may have.

The opportunity to serve the university and my colleagues as Senate chair-elect is not an obligation that is taken lightly. I am fully aware that with this privilege come many obligations and responsibilities.

OIT bringing its operations together in new building

The Office of Information Technology has begun moving into its new building at 300 Lem Morrison Drive.

The new 62,500-square-foot building, with office and support spaces for more than 120 persons, will enable consolidation of OIT offices from nine different buildings, including all OIT employees located in Parker Hall, Telecom Building, Dunstan Hall, Property Services and the L Building.

The new OIT Building will be home to the OIT machine room, Test Scoring Services, Identity Management, AU Lease, Campus Web Solutions, Classroom Support, and Network and Voice Services. OIT will continue to operate the HelpDesk in Draughon Library, the IMG Office in Haley Center and the Student PC Shop from sites convenient to on-campus housing.

For more information on the new OIT Building see https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/oit/construction/Pages/Home.aspx.
Statement from faculty chair-elect nominee

William Sauser

When I was invited by a member of the Nominating Committee to consider running for University Faculty chair-elect, I immediately began to reflect on the leadership qualities of the fine men and women who have held that post over the nearly 34 years I have served on the Auburn University faculty. During my tenure here I have seen both good times and bad times in the life of the university, and I have always been impressed with the faculty’s ability to select leaders whose qualifications and style matched the needs of the university at the time.

Despite the dire economic circumstances of our state – circumstances that threaten to limit further progress at all levels of public education – I submit that Auburn University is currently enjoying a good time in its history.

We are blessed with a president, provost and central administrative team that value shared governance and have actively invited our participation in many positive projects. Under way, for example, are efforts to (a) broaden and strengthen our curriculum in general education, (b) enhance our capacity for research and reward faculty who are successful in attracting increased grant funding, (c) magnify our outreach to the citizens of Alabama and provide more opportunities for our students to participate in service-learning projects, (d) strengthen our Honors College, our distance learning efforts, our graduate programs and our international programs, and (e) demonstrate a true commitment to such important values as diversity, inclusiveness, and environmental quality and sustainability.

Our national rankings in academics, student life, athletics, and engagement have positioned Auburn University in a very favorable light, and we are poised to leverage this opportunity to move to even greater heights…if we can continue to work together, use our resources wisely, and focus on the advancement of the University as a whole.

We have seen the Auburn community come together over the past few years, and our challenge now is to maintain this unity and work together to enhance the Auburn experience for all our stakeholders. We must show that we faculty – the heart of the academy – are willing to roll up our sleeves and work with all who love Auburn University to demonstrate our commitment to accountability and academic integrity; to provide high-quality programs of research, instruction, extension and outreach; to find economies wherever we can; to partner with other institutions, agencies, and organizations in this state; to rally private and public financial support; and, in short, to position our University to thrive – not just survive but thrive – in the future.

I believe these times call for faculty leaders who are willing to stand farm on issues of academic freedom, shared governance, faculty rights, and academic quality, while also working collaboratively with others to create opportunities, build programs, foster inclusiveness and diversity, and bring a global perspective to our university community.

I believe these times call for experienced faculty leaders who are willing to listen, who seek out and encourage faculty from throughout the university to “get involved,” who care about the integrity and reputation of this institution, and who want to see Auburn truly make a difference in the lives of the people of Alabama and the world. Producing the world’s next great generation of leaders is a task that will require the best efforts of us all.

This is the type of leader I intend to be if chosen as faculty chair-elect. My experience on many university councils and faculty committees during my career – including the Research Council, the Outreach Council, the Diversity Council, the Academic Program Review Committee, and the Faculty Handbook Review Committee (which I currently chair) – in combination with insights gained from various administrative assignments, my year as an American Council on Education Fellow, and my international work – has opened my eyes to the many challenges facing Auburn University.

My years of experience teaching large undergraduate introductory courses, small seminars, graduate courses at a distance, and seemingly everything in between has sensitized me to the needs of faculty throughout this institution. My devotion to community service and lifelong learning has taught me to empathize and seek to understand voices that too often have remained unheard. My service as an elected senator and as the appointed parliamentarian of the University Senate for several of our recent past presidents has taught me the value of a disciplined and orderly approach to doing the faculty’s business.

I am excited about Auburn University’s future. I hope you will join me in seeking to make it a bright one. That is why I accepted the invitation to stand for election as faculty chair-elect.

Interdisciplinary program

Curtis appointed director of new Food Systems Initiative

Patricia Curtis has been named director of the Auburn University Food Systems Initiative, a collaborative effort between the Office of the Vice President for Research and the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station.

The initiative is an interdisciplinary, multi-institutional program that integrates research, outreach and academic efforts to enhance the safety of the nation’s food supply at all levels, from producer to consumer.

The Food Systems Initiative began with a focus on food safety but has expanded to include all aspects of the food system, from production to development of new food products to protecting the quality and quantity of the world’s food supply. As director of the initiative, Curtis will coordinate projects among faculty across the Auburn campus and at other partner institutions across the nation.

“The international food system is a complex global structure that moves locally produced food around the world every day and is comprised of many companies who purchase, process, package, market, distribute and sell food and food products around the world,” said College of Agriculture Dean and AAES Director Bill Batchelor.

“Through the Food Systems Initiative, Dr. Curtis will develop projects to solve major problems related to the food system that are important to Alabama, the nation and world, and will educate our students and the public on food systems issues,” Batchelor added.

John Mason, Auburn’s vice president for research, said extending the initiative to encompass the entire food system will further strengthen the university’s land-grant mission to improve the quality of life for people in Alabama and beyond.

Faculty members from colleges and schools across the Auburn campus have worked with the Food Safety Initiative; Curtis, a professor in the College of Agriculture’s Department of Poultry Science, said she hopes to advance that collaborative effort among scientists at Auburn as well as at other groups and institutions.

Curtis came to Auburn from North Carolina State University in 2002. She received her bachelor’s degree from Texas Women’s University and her master’s and Ph.D. degrees in food science and technology from Texas A&M.

– Jamie Creamer
Statements from faculty secretary-elect nominees

Michael Baginski

It was an unexpected honor and surprise to be asked to run for the secretary-elect of the University Senate. My initial reaction was to refuse because I felt somewhat unqualified. However, after talking with several senators, I began to view this as an excellent opportunity to become more involved with shared governance at Auburn University. I feel this shared governance will become increasingly important as both the administration and faculty face the current challenges.

The future will no doubt require that Auburn University carefully balance our goals and adapt as necessary. I'm personally very thankful that President Gogue and Provost Mazey have been so supportive of shared governance and I look forward to working with them in the future. Since first arriving here in the fall of 1985, I have never seen the administration and University Senate work so well together.

During my time here I have witnessed the university go through a significant number of changes and have been a member of many University and Senate committees. Some of these have been more demanding than others. My most recent involvement as chair of the Administrator Evaluation Committee has taught me to never underestimate the amount of work and time involved in carrying out shared governance.

If elected, I will make certain that faculty viewpoints are clearly presented and discussed within the University Senate. In the past I have been a member of many University and Senate committees and welcome the challenges this job presents.

New Spirit of Auburn credit cards celebrate national championship

The Auburn Spirit Foundation for Scholarships has unveiled two new card designs to help Auburn alumni and friends celebrate the Tigers’ BCS national championship.

The new designs feature the national championship logo and offer card-holders a choice of a credit card with an image of Jordan-Hare Stadium or a card with Auburn football team players.

The credit card program is issued and administered by FIA Card Services, N.A., on behalf of the Auburn Spirit Foundation for Scholarships. Both cards contribute to Auburn’s scholarship fund at no additional cost to cardholders.

To date, this program has generated more than $4.5 million for freshman academic scholarships.

Cardholders earn rewards points on purchases that can be redeemed for travel, merchandise, or cash rewards. This is the only card that directly benefits the university. Information about the card is available online at www.auburn.edu/spiritcard.

Robin Jaffe

Being considered and selected as a candidate for secretary-elect of the University Senate is a great honor. I believe shared governance gives us the privilege to help improve our own working environment, and service is the opportunity to participate in that process. Service work has provided me the means to give something back for all that my family and I have received from the Auburn University community. Thank you for this opportunity.

This year, I’m serving on the Faculty Senate as a member of the Senate Steering Committee. I am also a member of the Faculty Handbook Committee and chair of the Calendar and Schedules Committee. All have allowed me to gain continued direct experience, and to further appreciate what members of the Senate strive for and represent. When we address an item, whether it is the university calendar, multicultural diversity, safety on campus or the effectiveness of teaching, it’s all about collaboration to make Auburn a better university. Each member of the Auburn family has a voice, and that has been the most important guiding factor for me on every committee that I have served.

As committee members, we strive to seek out input and opinions broadly, listening with intent, and giving thoughtful consideration. The fairness of shared governance relies on the consideration given to differing opinions, and is strengthened by the transparency of the process. To this end, the Faculty Senate is a conduit for the flow of information between faculty and administration. It is essential that we convey information to the faculty so that everyone can make informed decisions, and the secretary must disseminate that information accurately and without bias.

With the Calendar Committee, I faced the challenge of a process that historically has been contentious. I learned that providing a better record of the process – all the input that was considered, what the options were, how conclusions were reached – was the key to building a consensus. With transparency, the process was not contentious at all. I bring the experience that providing clearer information can facilitate our moving forward in a positive way.

If elected as your secretary-elect of the University Senate and University Faculty, I pledge to fulfill the duties of the position to my fullest capabilities, to report all information clearly and without bias, to disseminate that information and to be a representative for the faculty at all times. Thank you sincerely for this honor. War Eagle.

Panel seeking concept submissions for new Quality Enhancement Plan

A special committee at Auburn University has issued a call for concept submissions for a Quality Enhancement Plan. A QEP is required as part of the requirements for reaffirmation of accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

SACS defines the QEP as a “carefully designed and focused course of action that addresses a well-defined topic or issues directly related to improving student learning.” Auburn’s QEP project will commence in 2013, with a full report due to SACS in 2018. While the budget for the QEP is yet to be determined, the project is expected to have a significant scope and must be supported by a workable plan, including adequate resources.

Concept submissions should provide a brief description and rationale for a specific QEP project connected to a theme or area that will enhance student learning. For more detailed information, including summaries of data reviewed by the Exploratory Committee, see the QEP website: http://www.auburn.edu/qep/.
Future E.W. Shell Center
The first view many people will see of Auburn this fall will be the new E.W. Shell Fisheries Research Center at the fisheries ponds on North College Street.

New fisheries research center on track to open this summer

Visitors entering Auburn from points north this fall will see something new and of major importance to Alabama fisheries as they pass the E.W. Shell Fisheries Research Center on North College Street.

Construction of the $9 million-plus Auburn University Center for Aquatic Resource Management began in April 2010 and is scheduled for completion in June. Plans are for the LEED-certified facility to be equipped and furnished in July and open for business in August. Construction has been funded primarily by monies from the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration.

This facility provides a unique opportunity to conduct research and expand our capabilities in all aspects of the land-grant mission of teaching, research and outreach,” said David Rouse, head of the Department of Fisheries and Allied Aquacultures. “We’ve known for a number of years that we have needed to upgrade our facilities at the Shell Center. It provides a great resource for outdoor work, but modern research is calling for more controlled studies.”

The new center includes a 20,000-square-foot administration building and an adjacent laboratory building with more than 17,000 square feet of space. The larger building has classroom and meeting space, a teaching lab and hatchery, a reception and visitor-education area, a new sales room with fish-processing space, offices and a large fish-holding area where fish from the Shell Center’s 344 research ponds will be sorted, weighed and counted as needed for research projects. The laboratory building will house state-of-the-art labs, fish tanks and space for a wide range of studies.

Rouse said the facility will be for multidisciplinary research in areas including fish health and genetics, environmental stresses, water quality and new fish- and seafood-processing options. “Now we can bring classes to the ponds, take fish or microorganism samples from the ponds and bring those samples right into the center for the students to study.”

Shell Fisheries Research Center Director Randell Goodman said he is excited about the outreach opportunities the new facilities will provide. In the administration building’s reception and visitor-education area, for instance, guests will find aquariums filled with interesting fish and kiosks and displays offering virtual tours of the research station, information about Auburn’s world-class international fisheries, allied aquacultures programs and more.

Although funding from NOAA will cover construction costs, additional support is needed to furnish and equip the new center. The College of Agriculture and the university administration are helping with that effort, and scientists who use the facility will pay for their specific laboratory needs through their own research dollars, but monetary donations or in-kind donations for equipment are welcome.

The Shell Center, which includes 1,850 contiguous acres and 344 research ponds with 257 acres of surface water, is part of 3,330 acres in north Auburn that are managed by the Department of Fisheries and Allied Aquacultures.

– Jamie Creamer
Congo’s ambassador to U.S., an Auburn graduate, returns to campus on Monday

Auburn alumna Faida Mitifu, ambassador to the United States from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, will present a public lecture at Auburn on Monday, Feb. 28.

Ambassador Mitifu, who earned a master’s degree in French studies from Auburn in 1988, will speak on “The United States and Africa: Current Opportunities and Concerns,” at 3:30 p.m. in Room 2222-23 of the Student Center. She has served as ambassador to the U.S. since 1999. The presentation is sponsored by the Auburn University Special Lectures Program, the Honors College and the College of Liberal Arts departments of Foreign Languages and Literatures and Literatures and Political Science.

Auburn professors participate in choirs workshop for Black History Month in Italy

Rosephanye and William Powell served as clinicians for the Feder Gospel Choirs 2011 Black History Month Workshop in Milan, Italy. She has served as ambassador to the U.S. since 1999. The presentation is sponsored by the Auburn University Special Lectures Program, the Honors College and the College of Liberal Arts departments of Foreign Languages and Literatures and Literatures and Political Science.

Portion of Wire Road on southwest side of campus closed during bike lane construction

Public Safety officials have advised drivers to use caution when traveling on Wire Road between West Samford Avenue and Shug Jordan Parkway through March 17. The westbound outside lane will be closed for the construction of a new bicycle lane.

Deceased Auburn emeritus librarian leaves collection of 5,000 books to university

Librarian Emeritus Henry H. McCurley Jr., who died in April 2010, has left a bequest of $25,000 and a gift of 5,000 volumes from his personal collection to Auburn University Libraries. McCurley retired in June 2009 as head of the Cataloging Department of the Ralph Brown Draughon Library. He held a master’s degree in library science from the University of South Carolina and a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Georgia.

“Henry McCurley was a valued member of the Auburn University Libraries family since 1989,” said Bonnie MacEwan, dean of libraries. “We all knew him as a gentle, soft-spoken man with a great sense of humor and an astounding knowledge of philosophy and classical history, but few guessed that he held such a wonderful private library, or that he would leave that collection to Auburn University Libraries along with a very generous monetary gift that will help Auburn better serve its students in these times of tight budgets.”

Engineering professor receives National Science Foundation Early Career Award

Ahjeong Son, an assistant professor in the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering’s Department of Civil Engineering, has been recognized with the National Science Foundation’s prestigious Faculty Early Career Development Program award. She also received a grant of more than $430,000 from the NSF for her research.