Auburn University will host a visiting team of academic representatives from Southeastern universities beyond Alabama, March 26-28, as part of the university’s 10-year accreditation review by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.

The nine-member On-Site Peer Review Team will be led by David R. Hager, emeritus professor of higher education and international studies at Old Dominion University in Virginia. Two non-voting staff members from SACSCOC will accompany the team as advisers, and there will be one observer from another member institution that is preparing for its own accreditation review.

The on-site review is a major step in a lengthy process leading to a decision on reaffirmation of Auburn’s accreditation during the commission’s annual meeting in Atlanta in December.

Although all areas of an institution’s academics, governance and resources are reviewed during the accreditation process, the current review pays special attention to Auburn’s adoption of professional electronic portfolios as a quality enhancement plan. The QEP component was added to the SACS Commission on Colleges standards over the past decade in a move to enhance student learning or the environment that supports student learning at each member institution.

Professional ePortfolios are collections of digital artifacts (text, visual materials, sound files, etc.) that students develop and refine over a period of time to showcase their skills, experiences and learning. The ePortfolio program seeks to help students develop a broader educational perspective while producing evidence of learning to present graduate schools and prospective employers with evidence of a student’s capacity for graduate study or employment, or both.

Auburn’s plan calls for introducing ePortfolios to the campus over a five-year period, starting in 2012-13 with the departments and schools of Art, Building Science, English, Nursing and Pharmacy, plus the co-curricular Study Abroad program and one student organization, the New Media Club. The ePortfolio Project’s timeline calls for the gradual addition of other academic programs over the next four years.

Drew Clark of Institutional Research and Assessment is coordinating Auburn’s SACS reaccreditation effort, and University Writing Director Margaret Marshall heads the ePortfolio Project.

Auburn submitted a final description of the ePortfolio plan to the SACS Commission on Colleges in early February. The university submitted other reaffirmation See Accreditation review, Page 3

Auburn faculty are voting electronically this week and next in an election to fill the top two leadership positions in the University Faculty and its representative body, the University Senate.

Voting began Monday for chair-elect and secretary-elect and will continue until 5 p.m. Monday, March 18. Election results will be announced at the spring meeting of the University Faculty at 3:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 19, in Broun Hall auditorium.

Nominees for chair-elect are Michael Baginski, an associate professor in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering in the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering, and Patricia Duffy, a professor in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology in the College of Agriculture. Nominees for secretary-elect are Margaret Flores, an associate professor in Special Education, Rehabilitation and Counseling in the College of Education and Gisela Buschle-Diller, a professor in Polymer and Fiber Engineering in the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering.

Those elected will take office on July 1, when Larry Crowley of Civil Engineering succeeds Bill Sauser of the Department of Management as chair of the University Senate and Judy Sheppard of Communication and Journalism succeeds Robin Jaffe of Theatre as Senate secretary. The new chair-elect and secretary-elect will assist Crowley and Sheppard, respectively, in the 2013-14 academic year and succeed them in July 2014.

A faculty member at Auburn since 1985, chair-elect

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See Faculty elections, Page 2

As the university moves closer to a final plan for redeveloping the Toomer’s Corner entrance to campus, the previous four design options have been reduced to two finalists. Both would keep the “1917 Gates” at their current location and put large trees at the entrance, close to the current sites of the dying iconic oaks they will replace; rejected plans would place trees farther from the corner. The “Curved Wall” plan, left, would continue the paving-stone entrance to a circular area with seating behind the front gates, and a brick walkway would present a straight, unobstructed view of Samford Hall. The “Arc Path” plan, right, would follow the current path.

Planners say the final proposal may contain elements of both. Work is to start in coming months, with a completion target date of the start of the 2014 football season.

See Faculty elections, Page 2

Then there were two

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Planners say the final proposal may contain elements of both. Work is to start in coming months, with a completion target date of the start of the 2014 football season.

See Faculty elections, Page 2
Elmer chosen to lead ePortfolio implementation program

Laura Elmer has been named the inaugural assistant director of university writing for ePortfolios in Auburn’s Office of University Writing, effective May 15. Elmer played a major role in developing Auburn University’s new program for electronic portfolios as a quality enhancement plan under accreditation guidelines of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.

Elmer will receive a dual master’s degree in English literature and in rhetoric and composition from Auburn in May. A subject matter specialist, she was a member of the development committee for ePortfolios and has made several presentations on electronic portfolios at conferences, including the Conference on Higher Education Pedagogy. She also led Auburn’s pilot project for ePortfolio Student Ambassadors last summer.

In announcing the appointment after a national search, University Writing Director Margaret Marshall described Elmer as a rising star in an emerging field.

“Laura was a terrific member of the development committee and has helped launch the project in her role as the graduate assistant for the Office of University Writing,” Marshall said. “Her understanding of how ePortfolios can promote student learning is simply remarkable and we know her leadership and energy will help us make this project better. We are very fortunate to have a rising star in ePortfolio scholarship at Auburn to help with implementation.”

Richard Burt, chair of the development committee for ePortfolios, said, “From the first meeting of the development committee, it was obvious Laura fully understood what ePortfolios were about and the impact they could have on student learning.”
Faculty grants lead to new programs for Auburn Abroad

With 22 new faculty-directed Auburn Abroad programs this year, Auburn University students are experiencing a nearly 25 percent increase in opportunities for international study with academic credit in 2013.

These include the addition of programs in countries as diverse as Belize, Denmark, Jordan and Fiji, as well as more variety in the seasons, duration and topics for various existing and new programs.

Deborah Weiss, director of Auburn Abroad in the Office of International Education, said the expansion of study abroad programs has been in the development stage over the past couple of years. The new programs, she noted, are a response to a growing interest among students and their parents for faculty supervised international exposure in their education, which, in turn, recognizes the demand for graduates with international experience in a global economy.

Weiss noted that the expansion of Auburn Abroad offerings is part of a broader increase in international activity under Andy Gillespie, assistant provost for international programs, and others throughout the university to increase international exposure for Auburn students. The programs address a goal in Auburn’s strategic plan by making it easier for Auburn students to go abroad and by bringing international students, diplomats and guests to campus.

One hurdle to developing new international programs in the past has been addressed through grants that are now available to faculty through the Office of International Education for site visits as they prepare to launch new programs, Weiss said.

She said faculty-led programs remain popular with students and their parents because the faculty can provide a smooth transition between Auburn’s academic environment and the cultural environment of the host countries. Also, she noted, many parents say they gain a greater sense of security having a faculty member on location with their sons and daughters.

Approximately 1,100 students per year participate in Auburn Abroad programs in one or more of four program types: Faculty-led, internships abroad, exchange programs and study abroad programs at other universities. By the time they graduate, one in six undergraduate students will have spent some time abroad in a university-sanctioned program.

With 89 Auburn Abroad programs across the university, every school and college at Auburn now has faculty-directed or faculty-led study abroad opportunities for their students, with programs available in all seasons and ranging from a couple of weeks to a semester and more.

New offerings this year are faculty-led programs in the Honors College in Germany; and the colleges and schools of Agriculture, in Costa Rica and Belize; Architecture, Design and Construction, in England, France, Denmark and Italy; Sciences and Mathematics, in Swaziland; Engineering, in Chile; Human Sciences, in Jordan, Peru, the Bahamas and Fiji; and Liberal Arts, in Italy, Austria and the United Kingdom. Also included are Liberal Arts internships in the United Kingdom, College of Business exchange programs in France and the United Kingdom and Pharmacy exchange programs in Thailand.

In addition, the Auburn University Singers will participate in a cultural and concert tour this summer, with performance venues including Salzburg, the Austrian city famous for both Mozart and “The Sound of Music.”

— Roy Summerford

Accreditation review

Continued from Page 1

documents during fall semester and these received preliminary review during an off-site phase in November. On the Auburn visit, the team will bring a draft of its report, drawn from the November off-campus report and documents submitted by Auburn in February, and will verify or correct its preliminary conclusions as a result of its on-campus review.

On March 25, a day before the full team visits Auburn, a few members will visit and review the Mobile campus of Auburn’s Harrison School of Pharmacy at the University of South Alabama. The accreditation review does not include Auburn University at Montgomery, which is separately accredited.

Additional information about the SACS accreditation process at Auburn University is available online at http://auburn.edu/communications_marketing/qep/reaffirmation.html. More about the ePortfolios program is available at www.auburn.edu/ePortfolios.aspx.

— Roy Summerford
Campus News Briefs

Arbor Day Foundation awards Tree Campus USA designation to Auburn

The Arbor Day Foundation recognized Auburn University in January for achieving recognition as a Tree Campus USA. Launched in 2008 by the Arbor Day Foundation and Toyota Motor North America Inc., the program honors colleges and universities and their leaders for promoting healthy trees and engaging students and staff in the spirit of conservation.

To obtain the distinction, Auburn University has met the five core standards for sustainable campus forestry required by Tree Campus USA, including establishment of a tree advisory committee, evidence of a campus tree-care plan, dedicated annual expenditures for its campus tree program, an Arbor Day observance and the sponsorship of student service-learning projects.

Authority on electronic portfolios to present public lecture and workshop

Bret Eynon, an authority on electronic portfolios will present a public lecture and a faculty workshop on professional ePortfolios at Auburn this month.

Eynon, associate dean for academic affairs at LaGuardia Community College in New York, was co-leader of the Visible Knowledge Project, a network of 20 colleges engaged in scholarship of teaching projects. He will present the public lecture, “Research on ePortfolios,” at 3:30 p.m., March 20, in Dudley Hall. The presentation provides an overview of the use of electronic portfolios at the college level and a discussion of research that links them to student learning.

Eynon will lead the workshop, “ePortfolios and Reflection,” from 3:30-5 p.m., March 21, in the Newspaper Room, first floor, of Draughon Library. Space limited; for information and seating availability, email ePortau@auburn.edu.

Smith paper ranks top among 25 hottest articles in scientific database

A paper written by Alice Smith in the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering at Auburn University, has been recognized as the top article in reliability engineering and systems safety on ScienceDirect.com.


Smith, the W. Allen and Martha Reed Professor in the Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering, has served as principal investigator on more than $6 million of sponsored research on analysis, modeling and optimization of complex systems.

The article is available online at www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0951832005002012.

Agronomy prof cited for early-career achievements in weed science

Agronomy and Soils Associate Professor Scott McElroy received the Early Career Outstanding Scientist Award on Feb. 4 from the Weed Science Society of America at the organization’s annual meeting.

The award recognizes a young scientist who has been in the discipline of weed science for no more than 10 years since his or her terminal degree, has demonstrated originality and creativity, has made notable contributions to weed science and has potential for continued excellence.

McElroy, who holds two degrees from Auburn, received his Ph.D. in crop science from North Carolina State University in 2003 and was on the faculty at the University of Tennessee until returning to Auburn in 2008.

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Auburn Report

March 8, 2013

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