Jay Gogue, who has headed universities in New Mexico and Texas, came to Auburn Wednesday afternoon for a whirlwind tour of get-acquainted meetings with university and community leaders and a packed ballroom of faculty, staff and students at the AU Hotel.

Thursday afternoon, as Gogue and his wife Susie were on an airplane headed back to Texas, the AU Board of Trustees selected the University of Houston president and UH System chancellor as Auburn’s 18th president.

The Presidential Search Committee had unanimously recommended Gogue (rhymes with “rouge”), and the AU Board voted unanimously for the selection.

“The Auburn family found the same exceptional qualities in Dr. Gogue that we discovered during an exhaustive and comprehensive search for Auburn’s next leader,” said Charles McCrary, chairman of the presidential search committee and a member of the Board of Trustees. “He is a visionary leader who is committed to academic excellence. We welcome him back to campus as Auburn’s new president.”

The new president is scheduled to start at AU on July 16. President Ed Richardson, who had planned to retire at the end of June, agreed to remain through July 15.

“We cannot thank Dr. Richardson enough for his straightforward and steady leadership,” said Earlom McWhorter, president pro tem of the AU Board. “He focused resources on academic progress, strengthened recruitment of Alabama’s brightest students, reinvigorated Auburn’s research mission, and set the stage for the new president to continue moving Auburn forward.”

The board authorized McWhorter to negotiate a starting salary with Gogue, subject to board approval.

Gogue was the only finalist who allowed his name to become public in a presidential search that began two years ago, but search consultant John Kuhnle of the Korn-Ferry executive search firm, said the fit between Gogue and AU was the best he has encountered in more than 100 executive searches.

A native of Waycross, Ga., Gogue and his wife, the former Susan McGoogan, are both 1969 graduates of AU and both earned master’s degrees from Auburn in 1970. Also, one of their three children, daughter Alison, earned a master’s degree from AU in 2002.

Jay Gogue earned a Ph.D. in horticulture from Michigan State University and had extensive experience as a faculty member, senior administrator and president at other land-grant universities. He taught and was vice president for research at Clemson and served as provost at Utah State under George Emert, a former executive vice president at Auburn.

Gogue served as president of New Mexico State University, another land-grant institution, from 2000-03, and has been president of the University of Houston and chancellor of the 56,000 student-UH System since 2003.
Gogue wins rave reviews in visit

Even before the Board of Trustees voted on Thursday to offer the AU presidency to Jay Gogue, the 1969 Auburn graduate made it clear he would love to return to his alma mater as its leader. And many in the university community told him they would love to have him there.

“There are very few positions that would entice me away from the University of Houston and the UH System,” he said. “However, the opportunity to lead my alma mater to its next level of excellence is indeed a once-in-a-lifetime possibility.”

Among those joining AU Trustee Charles McCrary, the committee chair, in calling all the finalists “stellar,” Bailey noted that Gogue was number one or two on the list of every search committee member. McCrary said Gogue stood out in an outstanding field of candidates. “This is the guy who I think is just head and shoulders above everybody,” he stressed.

Earlon McWhorter, a search advisory committee member and president pro tem of the Board of Trustees, said Gogue had been his favorite since their first meeting. After meeting with Gogue again and then watching the candidate and his wife Susie draw enthusiastic audiences, McWhorter said, “I am even more certain that they are a perfect fit for this university.”

Under the Alabama Constitution, Gov. Bob Riley is president of the AU Board of Trustees, but by tradition the governor rarely attends meetings of the board. Riley, saying he wanted to be part of the special occasion attended and joined the board in unanimously voting to offer the AU presidency to Gogue.

Having met Gogue earlier in the day, Riley said he was extremely impressed. “This gentleman surpasses our best expectations,” Riley said. “This is a great day for Auburn.”

In meetings with Auburn constituents, Gogue said he does not approach the presidency with set goals. Instead, he said, he wants to “fit the ground listening” to the people throughout the university community, then use that input in developing a course of action. Responding to questions about the role of land-grant universities in American higher education, Gogue noted that from their origins in 1862, land-grant institutions had made education attainable to the children of the working classes while laying the groundwork for economic development in their states and the nation. The challenge, he said, is to continue the progress into the 21st century.

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National society honors AU professor

The Society of Manufacturing Engineers and its Electronics Manufacturing Tech Group have presented the SME Total Excellence in Electronics Manufacturing Award for 2007 to Wayne Johnson of AU’s Samuel Ginn College of Engineering.

The annual award recognizes persons who have demonstrated “extraordinary dedication and innovation in setting new or higher levels of achievement in electronics manufacturing.”

Johnson, an AU faculty member since 1987, is a Ginn professor of electrical engineering in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering. At Auburn, Johnson has established teaching and research laboratories for advanced packaging and electronics manufacturing.

“Professor Johnson is a leader in the area of electronics and advanced packaging and manufacturing,” said Alok Sharan of Hewlett-Packard, the award selection committee chairman.

“He has made wide-ranging contributions to the field of electronics manufacturing, specifically in areas such as lead free solder, flip chip assemblies, hybrid microelectronics and extreme environment electronics.”

AU World’s Fair

Students from area schools, other visitors and Auburn students viewed cultural displays from around the world last week on the Haley Center concourse. AU students, faculty and local residents with family ties to 40 countries came together at the annual AU World’s Fair to demonstrate unique aspects of the cultures in their home countries.

Doctoral student at AU named president of Holmes Scholars

Cheron Hunter, a doctoral student in the AU College of Education’s reading education program, was elected national president of the Holmes Scholars program during the organization’s recent conference in San Antonio, Texas.

She is the newest of the college’s four current Holmes Scholars, having been selected for the honor in 2006. In her capacity as national president, Hunter will serve as an advocate for the Holmes Scholars throughout the United States.

The Holmes Scholars Council offers extra academic experiences, professional career training and mentoring to talented men and women of underrepresented ethnic groups or students with disabilities.

As head of the national organization, Hunter coordinates the work of four elected officers and five regional representatives. Her position as president also allows her to sit on the board of directors of the Holmes Partnership, which sponsors the Holmes Scholars program.

Birthday party

College of Liberal Arts Dean Anne-Katrin Gramberg served the first slices of cake to students last week during a celebration of Liberal Arts’ first 20 years as a college. AU began as a Methodist liberal arts college in 1856. After Auburn became a public land-grant institution in 1872, liberal arts remained a major part of the curriculum. Those programs were brought into the current college during a restructuring that began in 1985 and was completed in 1987.

AIA recognizes AU architecture team for modular design

The American Institute of Architects has named AU School of Architecture professors David Hinson and Stacy Norman winners of the Special Housing Award for 2007 as part of the institute’s Housing Awards Program.

Hinson and Norman won for their work on the Designhabitat2 home which was built in partnership with Palm Harbor Manufactured Homes and Habitat for Humanity. The project was part of Hinson’s fourth-year studio, with 14 students creating a design and working on-site to complete the home.

This marks the second national award for the Designhabitat2 project. The project won the Collaborative Practice Award from the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture earlier this year. The modular home was placed in Greenville for Dorrinda Crews and her three children, who were displaced from their home on the Gulf Coast by Hurricane Katrina.

“Recognition from AIA for national distinction in design excellence is rare,” said Dan Bennett, dean of the College of Architecture, Design and Construction. “Only a few projects are selected from hundreds of entries. This is a well deserved and significant accomplishment for David, Stacy and their students.”

The AIA’s Housing Awards Program recognizes the best in housing design and promotes the importance of good housing.

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