Senate confirms four trustee appointments, five pending

The Alabama Senate has confirmed the appointment of a new trustee and reappointment of three other members for the Auburn University Board of Trustees. Five other trustee appointments are pending.

The State Senate on March 15 confirmed the appointment of Autauga County farmer and businessman Jimmy Sanford to the seat formerly held by Dwight Carlisle, who rotated off the board in February. Sanford’s seven-year term began upon confirmation, and he will take his seat at the board’s April 20 meeting.

Sanford is head of Home Place Farms Inc. and is chair of the Alabama Cotton Commission. The former chair of the Birmingham Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Sanford graduated from Auburn University with a bachelor’s degree in business administration in 1968 and a master’s in economics in 1971.

On March 24, the Senate confirmed the reappointments, effective immediately, of Jimmy Rane of Abbeville, Sarah Newton of Fayette and Charles McCrary of Birmingham. Rane, president and CEO of Great Southern Wood Preserving Inc., has served since 1999. Newton, principal of Fayette Elementary School, and McCrary, president and CEO of Alabama Power Co., have served since 2004.

The four were among nine persons chosen in February by the Auburn University Trustee Selection Committee and appointed by Gov. Robert Bentley, subject to Senate confirmation. Nominees awaiting Senate action are B.T. Roberts of Mobile, Clark Sahlie of Montgomery, Bob Dumas of Auburn, Elizabeth Huntley of Clanton and Jim Pratt of Birmingham; all were nominated for vacant or soon-to-be vacant seats.

Also pending in the Alabama Legislature is a bill that would restructure the board, add seats and stagger the terms of members. The Senate has passed the bill and sent it to the Alabama House. If passed by both houses, the proposed constitutional amendment will go before the voters in a statewide referendum.

Auburn faculty to vote next week on leaders for 2013

Auburn faculty will vote in early April to fill two leadership positions in the University Faculty and its representative body, the University Senate.

Faculty will vote electronically April 5-9 for chair-elect and secretary-elect, with winners announced at the spring meeting of the University Faculty at 3 p.m. April 10 in the auditorium of Broun Hall. Also at that meeting, President Jay Gogue is slated to present the annual state of the university address.

The nomination period for the faculty offices closed on March 27, with Larry Crowley of Civil Engineering in the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering unopposed for chair-elect. Meanwhile, the candidates for secretary-elect are Judy Sheppard of Communication and Journalism in the College of Liberal Arts and Don Mulvany of Animal Sciences in the College of Agriculture.

The Senate will notify faculty of the voting procedures shortly before the start of voting. Leaders elected in April will take office on July 1, along with the incoming chair, Bill Sauser of the Department of Management, and secretary, Robin Jaffe of the Department of Theatre, for 2012-13. The newly elected chair-elect and secretary-elect will move into the chair and secretary positions, respectively, in July 2013.

Larry Crowley

Crowley is the current secretary of the University Senate. An associate professor, Crowley has been a member of the Auburn faculty since 1992. He represented his department in the University Senate from 2003 until being elected secretary-elect in 2010, and he served as secretary of the Senate for the past year. He holds a master’s degree from Texas Christian University and bachelor’s and Ph.D. degrees from Texas A&M.

Crowley says he is hopeful of what might be accomplished in university governance over the next few years because of a renewed sense of trust between the faculty and the administration. “I have been impressed with the way President Gogue and the provost operate with the Senate in a true spirit of shared governance,” he said. “The faculty have a closer perspective on some issues than anyone else, and the administration seems to recognize this and involve the faculty in working through the issues.”

He added, “For the last several years, there has been a lot of cooperation between the administration and the faculty. The president and the provost have been very supportive of the faculty. They have been transparent in their actions and solicited faculty input early in the planning process for the strategic plan, not waiting until the implementation stage to bring in the faculty.”

A shared sense of mission makes it easier for faculty and the administration to work together in addressing major issues, but the issues themselves still pose a challenge, he said, citing enrollment issues. “Student enrollment balance is a complicated issue that we are just beginning to address. Some colleges find their resources overtaxed by heavy demand while others are capable of handling...”
Cancer research Initiative
Mike Hubbard, right, speaker of the Alabama House of Representatives, recently toured facilities of Auburn’s new Research Initiative in Cancer at the College of Veterinary Medicine. Hubbard was guest of honor at a ceremony announcing a $1 million state appropriation and establishment of a fellowship for cancer research. Annette Smith, AURIC’s director of oncology, shown with an animal patient, discusses cancer treatments with Hubbard and Bruce Smith, the initiative’s director.

Major new initiative targets cancer in animals, humans

The College of Veterinary Medicine has launched a new initiative to accelerate cancer innovation from the laboratory to the clinic. The Auburn University Research Initiative in Cancer, or AURIC, embodies “One Medicine” – the concept that sees human and animal health as a single field where discoveries in one species advance health in both species.

“In 2010, more than 23,000 new cases of cancer were diagnosed and more than 10,000 people died of cancer in Alabama,” said Bruce Smith, AURIC director. “In addition to being ill with cancer or seeing relatives endure pain, many Alabamians have also watched a beloved pet suffer from this disease. Animals and humans share many of the same cancers and what we learn in treating a tumor in a dog can teach us more about treating the same tumor in a person.”

Alabama House Speaker Mike Hubbard of Auburn was instrumental in establishing AURIC. A $1 million appropriation from the State of Alabama will be used to support cancer research by Auburn University faculty in a wide range of cancer-related areas. “The goal is to leverage this initial funding into increased federal and private support,” Smith said.

“AURIC will build on the college’s existing strengths in nanotherapeutics, nanomedicine, cancer genetics, gene targeting and the capacity to develop translational models,” said Calvin Johnson, acting dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine.

On March 16, the College of Veterinary Medicine announced the creation of The Speaker Mike Hubbard Fellowship in Cancer Research at Auburn University. The endowed fund will provide support to an outstanding student pursuing a Ph.D. in cancer research. Members of AURIC’s board include scientists and oncologists with the College of Veterinary Medicine, as well as representatives with Auburn’s Harrison School of Pharmacy and Samuel Ginn College of Engineering. “What makes AURIC unique are the research entities and tools available to us as a university,” Smith said. “Auburn is one of a few universities in the United States that has the combination of an engineering college, veterinary medicine and an MRI facility.”

— Tara Lanier

Parker named as new VP for development

After an extensive national search, Auburn University President Jay Gogue has named Jane Parker as vice president for development.

Parker, who assumed the post on March 28, previously served as executive vice president and managing director of development for Arizona State University. Before Arizona State, she served for more than 30 years at Emory University, ultimately as vice president for operations for the university’s office of development and alumni relations.

“There was a consensus in the search process that Jane’s level of professional experiences and successes would enhance our development efforts and structure as we move toward a $1 billion-plus campaign in the near future,” Gogue said. “We are pleased to have her joining Auburn University in her new role.”

Gogue continued, “We are grateful for the very fine interim leadership efforts that Rob Wellbaum has provided the last year. Rob has helped move us forward and we are positioned very well for success in the future.”

Groccia authors four books on teaching

James Groccia, director of the Biggio Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, is the primary author or co-author of four new books in his field.

Groccia’s recent publications include first authorship of “The Handbook of College and University Teaching: A Global Perspective” and “The First-Year Seminar: Designing, Implementing, and Assessing Courses to Support Student Learning and Success: Volume II – Instructor Training and Development.” He also contributed to “Evidence-Based Teaching: New Directions in Teaching and Learning, Vol. 128” and “To Improve the Academy: Resources for Faculty, Instructional and Organizational Development, Volume 30.”

Also, Groccia spent fall semester at the University of Tartu in Estonia as a faculty Fulbright Scholar. In upcoming activities, Groccia will participate April 23-24 in a conference on “The Future of Public Policy Schools in the 21st Century,” hosted by Central European University in Budapest, Hungary.

Campus Calendar

TUESDAY, APRIL 10
MEETING University Faculty annual spring meeting, 3 p.m., Broun 238
FILM PRESENTATION “My Perestroika,” the lives of five ordinary Russians during and after the collapse of the Soviet Union, 6 p.m., Julie Collins Smith Museum; part of the South Circuit series of independent films

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11
FILM PRESENTATION “Princess Ka‘iulani,” film about the doomed struggle of Hawaiians to retain their kingdom’s independence at the end of the 19th century, 2 p.m., Student Center 2225; part of the Multicultural Center’s Watch and Learn Series

THURSDAY, APRIL 12
ENGAGED SCHOLAR SERIES Discussions of their current scholarship by Brigitta Brunner of Communication and Journalism and Carole Zugazaga of Sociology, 5:30 p.m., Gnu’s Room on South College Street; part of the College of Liberal Arts Community and Civic Engagement Initiative

FRIDAY, APRIL 13

U.S. News lists several Auburn programs in latest publication presenting ‘Best Graduate Schools’

Auburn University’s graduate programs achieved high rankings in the newly released U.S. News and World Report “America’s Best Graduate Schools” rankings. The Harrison School of Pharmacy ranked 25th among public institutions and 26th among all public and private institutions in its field, while the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering ranked 40th among public universities and 67th among all engineering programs. Auburn’s College of Education ranked 59th among public institutions and 77th among all institutions, and the College of Business ranked 46th among public institutions and 88th overall.

“We are pleased that our graduate programs have again earned high placements in the survey,” Auburn University Interim Provost Timothy Boosinger said. “Our faculty and staff are dedicated to providing students with the knowledge, research skills and practical application to help them succeed in their future careers.”

Within the College of Engineering, the industrial systems engineering program is 15th among public universities and 21st nationally, and aerospace engineering is 25th among public universities and 34th nationally.

Civil engineering ranked 29th among public universities and 47th overall, up from 58th; chemical engineering is 32nd among public universities and 51st overall; electrical engineering 28th among public universities and 51st overall; computer science and software engineering 29th among public universities and 52nd overall, up from 67th; mechanical engineering 37th among public universities and 62nd overall; and materials engineering 42nd among public institutions and 63rd overall.

“I could not be more appreciative and proud of our faculty in their quest to enhance our graduate programs,” College of Engineering Dean Larry Benefield said. “The College of Engineering’s overall ranking has improved 10 points over the past eight years. Given the challenge of moving ahead in the U.S. News and World Report rankings, the latest numbers are a testament to their hard work and tenacity.”

The College of Liberal Arts’ audiology program ranked 38th among public institutions and 45th when private institutions are included, and its clinical psychology program ranked 63rd among public institutions and 79th overall. Its speech language pathology program ranked 43rd among public institutions and 52nd overall, while its master’s degree program in public administration ranked 48th among public schools and 57th overall.

— Charles Martin

Faculty elections: Candidates for secretary-elect

Continued from Page 1

additional demand,” he explained. “It is a matter of finding the right balance. We are addressing ways to make sure that everyone’s program is full and student needs are met without exceeding faculty resources.”

Crowley continued, “Realignment of enrollment is one of those issues that are very complex and must be approached with deliberate care. I like that the administration and Senate with move with utmost deliberation on issues like this, because they can cause a great deal of disruption if not handled correctly.”

Some issues that have long been in the background could also get more consideration in the near future, Crowley said, citing problems that younger faculty encounter with maternity leave. “It is difficult for young faculty to take time off during or for a semester,” he said. “We need to figure out how to accommodate these faculty, who are often trying to achieve tenure.”

The work of faculty leadership in the past has helped elevate the role of the faculty in addressing today’s issues, Crowley said. “The heavy lifting by the faculty leadership in past years was instrumental in bringing us to this point. Where we are now is the result of what was done then. My past involvement in shared governance has made me confident that we can work together to make the institution better.”

Judy Sheppard

Secretary-elect nominee Sheppard is an associate professor of journalism in the College of Liberal Arts, where she has been a faculty member since 1993. She is a former senator from the Department of Communication and Journalism. Sheppard, who holds bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Auburn, has won numerous journalism awards, including several for public service journalism, business writing and crime reporting. She also won the Southeast’s top award for media criticism, the Green Eyeshade, and the Sigma Tau Delta national short story contest. She is researching and writing a book, “Prophets Without Honor: The Unexamined Lives of Four Alabama Editors in the Civil Rights Era.”

Sheppard said, “Happily, Auburn University seems to be enjoying one of those peaceful, productive times in its history, letting us focus on the reasons we work here: educating minds, performing public service and producing research to improve lives not only in Alabama but, given Auburn’s enormous global presence, the world.”

She added, “As a reporter, I covered Auburn during the Charles Curran controversy, and as a faculty member I was active during the turbulent years between Presidents Muse and Gogue. I believe we should take advantage of quiet times. Good work is being done. But financial pressures — and, in Alabama particularly, political pressures — aren’t going to stop. We have a responsibility to ourselves and our students to take advantage of our seat at the table. I would welcome the opportunity to do that as secretary-elect, and I hope the faculty will allow me to be an effective voice for our concerns.”

Don Mulvaney

Secretary-elect nominee Mulvaney, whose service includes the Senate’s Teaching Effectiveness Committee and other committees, is an associate professor of animal sciences in the College of Agriculture, where he has been a faculty member since 1983. He is also a former faculty fellow associate director for the Biggio Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, where he participated in New Faculty Scholars, Future Faculty and other professional faculty development programs and assessment processes. He has developed 16 courses at Auburn, was nominated for the 2009 USDA National Educator Award and is a past recipient of his college’s Teacher of the Year Award. He holds a bachelor’s degree from the University of Illinois and master’s and Ph.D. degrees from Michigan State.

Mulvaney said shared governance is essential for a university to achieve and maintain excellence in its endeavors. “The core values of Auburn are conveyed through a healthy and systematic form of shared governance. It is important for faculty from across our campus to see each other as part of a larger university community for which we have caretaker responsibilities and a representative voice.”

“Consistent with the challenges facing higher education, our campus has increasing complexity around our educational, research and outreach programs and constituencies,” he said. “Collectively, this makes the process of faculty governance more important yet more difficult than ever before. Service in faculty governance provides us all with opportunities to make a difference as we observe, assess and learn from the broader wisdom of the combined university community.”

Mulvaney added, “If called to do so, it would be an honor and privilege to serve as secretary-elect and work with the whole Senate team to protect and enhance shared governance. I will work diligently and tirelessly to carry out the duties of secretary and hope to bring effective communication, creativity and leadership to the role.”

— Roy Summerford
Senior awarded Fulbright grant for study in Germany

Paul Bergen, a senior in Auburn’s College of Sciences and Mathematics double majoring in microbiology and German, has been awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to study in Germany for the academic year 2012-13. At the Technical University of Munich, he will continue to pursue his research in microbiology.

“Paul is an inquisitive and engaging young man with a range of interests and activities that go well beyond the lab and range from the study of German politics, culture and language to being an active member of the university’s nationally recognized mock trial team,” said Paul Harris, associate director in the Auburn Honors College.

Harris added, “He will gain so much from his classes and interactions with German students and faculty, and he will represent himself, Auburn University and the United States with distinction.”

A four-year member of the Honors College with 3.97 overall grade point average in two demanding majors, Bergen is Auburn’s fourth consecutive student Fulbright Scholar, following Rebecca Ludvigsen, Germany, 2009; Helen Hunter Robertson, France 2010, and Kristen Snow, France, 2011.

His achievements include being selected for the Competitive Undergraduate Research Fellowship for the 2010-11 academic year; being named a Cellular and Molecular Biosciences Summer Fellow in 2011; and being named the College of Sciences and Mathematics’ top junior for 2010-11. He is also a recipient of Auburn’s Presidential Scholarship.

For the past two years, Bergen has conducted his honors research under the guidance of Mark Liles, examining clones from a soil metagenomic library that have inhibitory activity against bacterial pathogens. Liles is an associate professor in the Department of Biological Sciences. Bergen’s work in the Liles Laboratory is the basis for his honors thesis, and it is this work that he will continue to pursue under the direction of professor Wolfgang Liebl at the Technical University of Munich.

“Shortly after entering Auburn, I accepted an invitation to join the lab of Dr. Mark Liles,” Bergen said. “The Liles Lab is devoted to discovering novel, natural antibiotics from soil bacteria. Under the direction of Dr. Liles, I discovered a love of seeing the experiment to the end and discovering that the data helps to confirm, or even contradict, a hypothesis.”

He continued, “Sometimes, it is the experiments that reach an unexpected conclusion that help us out the most, and I have certainly found this to be true in my research. I always end up with additional questions which drive me to continue the pursuit of the final answer.”

Bergen added, “This experience, along with my desire to learn more about the German language and culture, strengthened my determination to pursue a Fulbright Scholarship to Germany.”

The Fulbright Scholarship Program is a highly selective, merit-based award to foster mutual understanding between the people of the United States and those of other countries. Founded in 1946, the program selects graduating seniors and graduate students who plan to conduct research or exercise their talents abroad.

— Neali Vann

Davis Arboretum wins national honor for oaks

Auburn University’s Donald E. Davis Arboretum has won national recognition for its extensive and valuable collection of oaks.

Home to 38 species of oaks native to Alabama and the Southeast, including rare and threatened species, the arboretum has been honored by the North American Plant Collections Consortium as a member of its Multi-Site Quercus, or oak, Collection, a distinction given to select botanical gardens and arboreta.

Auburn’s arboretum, in the College of Sciences and Mathematics, is one of only 20 from across the country to be accepted into the Quercus Collection.

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