Traffic calming approach on Samford yields safer crossing for pedestrians

In the ongoing competition between vehicles and pedestrians for use of AU streets, campus planners may have found a way to accommodate both by raising to a new level a concept that, in its original incarnation, was so simple that it ran the risk of being, er, “too pedestrian” for such a complex challenge.

Yet as part of a more comprehensive package, a “traffic calming” approach along a two-block stretch of Samford Avenue has been confirmed by civil engineering researchers at Auburn as having achieved its objective of slowing traffic. That was a vital part of the effort to make crossing the busy street safer for students on foot.

As AU converted its primary internal streets to pedestrian-only zones in recent years, the traffic was channeled to already busy streets on the edges of campus, increasing the difficulty and risk for thousands of students, who have to cross those streets to go back and forth from residence halls and parking areas.

The problem is particularly acute along the section of Samford Avenue between Mell Street and Duncan Drive. That section separates the South Residence Halls from most academic buildings on the main campus.

Early in this decade, when campus planners investigated the possibility of closing or restricting vehicle access to that section of Samford Avenue, as the university was doing with the interior streets, they found few viable options. While thousands of students have little choice but to cross the busy street at least twice a day, thousands of cars and trucks, including emergency vehicles, must use the street each day for their only east-west access within nearly two miles south of downtown Auburn.

Working with private engineering and design firms, the Office of Campus Planning and the university’s ad hoc, temporary, Pedestrian Committee came up with safety improvements that channeled pedestrians onto wide crosswalks elevated five inches above the road surface. Unlike traditional speed bumps that are much despised and frequently crossed at excessive speed by motorists, the three raised crosswalks along that two-block stretch were designed to make drivers more aware of pedestrians, reduce incentives for random pedestrian crossings and force vehicles to slow down even when no one is in a crosswalk.

The raised crossings are part of a category of techniques and strategies called traffic calming devices that engineers use to improve safety along congested streets.

In designing the crosswalks for traffic going 20 miles an hour, planners were aware the vehicles were going well in excess of that speed. “There was...
Auburn juniors, seniors vote for Kicklighter to deliver ‘Final Lecture’ to Class of 2008

Auburn juniors and seniors have selected History Professor Joseph Kicklighter of the College of Liberal Arts to start a new tradition of a favorite AU professor delivering a pre-commencement, graduation-style “Final Lecture” to graduating students.

Kicklighter, who received the university’s Leischuck Award for excellence in teaching in 2006, will offer a presentation at 2 p.m. April 9 in the Foy Ballroom.

Kicklighter was selected by students after seniors and juniors across campus voted to select Kicklighter to deliver the lecture.

An Auburn faculty member since 1975, Kicklighter has won the SGA’s Award for Outstanding Professor four times in addition to the Leischuck Award in 2006 for being selected by the Student Government Association. Among Kicklighter’s former students have established an endowed professorship in his name.

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Plan with bad case of munchies has starring role in upcoming play

AU Theatre will present the rock musical “Little Shop of Horrors” in April.

Featuring the world’s best known carnivorous plant — a fictional alien plant known as Audrey II — and a student cast, the AU adaptation of the 1960 Roger Corman cult movie and its 1986 remake will be at Telfair Peet Theatre at 7:30 p.m. April 9-12 and April 15-19 and 2:30 p.m. on April 13.

With popular musical styles from the early 1960s, the stage production revolves around meek, nebbish florist Seymour Krebourn, who makes a Faustian pact with a tiny plant from another planet in order to win Audrey, the girl he loves. As a result of that bargain, the plant grows rapidly and the neighborhood sees an equally rapid population decline.

The original script was adapted for the stage in 1982 by Howard Ashman with music by Alan Menken, and the play became a hit both on- and off-Broadway. Among more than 10 faculty helping the cast of students prepare for the AU Theatre run are Theatre Department Chair Dan LaRocque, the play’s director; Joseph Bates, musical director; and Adrienne Wilson; choreographer.

For ticket information, contact the theatre box office at 844-4154 or see the AU Theatre Web site, http://media.cla.auburn.edu/theatre.

Department in Auburn’s College of Education receives national recognition for productivity

Faculty productivity in the AU College of Education’s Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership and Technology is among the highest in the nation, according to a recent report that assessed academic departments on their scholarly output.

Released by Pennsylvania-based Academic Analytics, the Faculty Scholarly Productivity Index ranks the AU College of Education department as no. 7 in its field in terms of academic productivity.

The FSP Index measures the annual productivity of faculty on such factors as publication of books and journal articles, citations in journal publications, federal research funding and awards and honors received by faculty. The FSP analysis creates, at the discipline level, a scale based on the cumulative scores of a program’s faculty and compares the results against national standards.

“This department is vital not only because of its degree programs, but also to other disciplines throughout the college and university,” said Jose Llanes, professor and EFLT department head. “The faculty work in this area is central to what we as educators do in the classroom and beyond.”

Besides being ranked seventh, Auburn was the only university in the Southeast among the top 10.

“Sometimes, the nomination becomes an honor in itself,” Llanes said, “but being ranked in a list that includes universities we know to be the best in the country speaks volumes about the work our faculty is doing.”

The index is published annually and is partly financed by the State University of New York at Stony Brook. It utilizes a methodology created after a decade of study of faculty productivity by Lawrence B. Martin, graduate dean at Stony Brook.

For more information and the list of ranked schools online, visit www.academicanalytics.com/TopSchools/TopPrograms.aspx.

Governor announces search for new Auburn trustee, sets May 2 deadline for submission of nominations

Gov. Bob Riley has announced a search to fill an at-large seat on the AU Board of Trustees.

The position is currently held by former President Pro Tem Earlon McWhorter, whose term ended in January. To provide continuity under the Alabama Constitution, AU Board members may serve for up to a year during the search for a successor.

Submit nominations and relevant information on potential candidates by May 2 to Grant Davis, secretary to the Board of Trustees, in 105 Samford Hall.

Riley or a representative of the governor will head a five-person search committee, which will begin interviews of prospective candidates after the submission due date.

In addition to the governor or his representative, the search committee will consist of two representatives of the AU Board of Trustees and two representatives from the Auburn Alumni Association.

The search committee’s selection will go to the Alabama Senate for confirmation.

Agriculture’s Chris Kerth selected as Fulbright Scholar

Chris Kerth, an associate professor in the College of Agriculture’s Department of Animal Sciences, has received a Fulbright Scholar grant to spend a total of three of the next 12 months in Uruguay.

In the South American nation, Kerth will present lectures and seminars and conduct research at the country’s National Agricultural Research Institute in Tacuarembó. He will travel to Uruguay in late summer and again in late winter for two six-week stays.

At Auburn, Kerth’s research focuses largely on grass-fed beef, a product that is among Uruguay’s top agricultural commodities. The Auburn faculty member said his presentations in the host country likely will highlight his research in the areas of sensory analyses of and consumer attitudes toward grass-fed beef, as well as processing methods and product safety.

Kerth is among 800 U.S. faculty and professionals who will go abroad for academic and professional activities through the Fulbright program this year.

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