Incentives to graduate in four years

Auburn restructures tuition model in bid to improve graduation rate

Following the first major restructuring of tuition in more than four decades, Auburn students this summer will pay tuition under a new fee structure designed to improve graduation rates.

The Board of Trustees approved the changes on March 26 to offer incentives for undergraduates to take more coursework each semester so that more students will graduate on schedule. A higher graduation rate, in turn, could help the university improve its academic ranking among its peers.

Administrators and trustees said the old fee structure was out of sync with the university’s goals and the needs of its students, as well as current standards in higher education. “The updated schedule reflects the realities of both today’s economy and the academic requirements to earn a degree,” said Executive Vice President Don Large, one of several officials involved in discussions leading up to the change.

Large worked with a university committee and Provost Mary Ellen Mazey to develop the tuition restructuring proposal that was accepted by President Jay Gogue and adopted by the Board of Trustees.

The restructuring, effective in May with the start of summer semester 2010, provides incentives for students to make steady progress toward graduation and enter the workforce in four years; in doing so, it removes the previous structure’s incentives for staying in school an extra year or two. With tuition accounting for only about one-third of the cost of a college education, Large noted that each additional year costs the average student $20,000 to $35,000; meanwhile, the student is losing earnings potential by delaying entry into a career field.

For the university, its faculty and alumni, the new structure offers the potential of enhancing the university’s academic standing. Accrediting agencies and most official and unofficial rating systems consider a low four-year graduation rate as a negative factor even if most undergraduates do eventually graduate. While approximately two-thirds of Auburn undergraduates earn a degree within six years, only about one-third meet the four-year graduation standard.

The new fee structure removes the penalty for students who sign up for more classes in order to graduate on time or early. Now, students who take 15 or 18 hours will pay the same tuition as those who take the minimum of 12 hours.

Under the old system, students paid one fee for 10 to 15 hours per semester and additional fees for each additional hour over 15. For 2009-10, the base fee was $3,120, with an additional charge of $99 for each credit hour above 15 credit hours. With state appropriations hampered by the recession, those fees were expected to go higher in 2010 even if the fee structure had remained unchanged.

Large noted that the 10-hour minimum did not meet federal or other standard definitions of a full-time undergraduate student. Although the 12-hour minimum meets the federal standard, Gogue said students need to take at least 15 hours a semester, and more in some curricula, to graduate within four years.

Under the new fee schedule, students will be classified as full-time at 12 hours instead of 10, with tuition set at $3,950 for 12 hours or above. Meanwhile, full-time graduate students will pay $3,947 for 10 or 12 hours.

Students from out of state will continue to pay higher tuition than in-state students. With the new fee schedule, undergraduates from out of state will pay tuition of $10,958 for 12 hours or above, and full-time graduate students from outside Alabama will be assessed $10,949 for 10 hours or more.

Additionally, registration fees have been reduced for in-state and out-of-state students.

Also, undergraduate students on campus who wish to take online courses will now be able to do so without additional charge.

Information about the new tuition model is available online at http://ocm.auburn.edu/ tuition_faq.html and the fee schedule is available at http://www.auburn.edu/communications_marketing/wireeagle/2010tuition.pdf.

— Roy Summerford

Pedestrian crossing

A pedestrian crossing Magnolia Avenue gets a safety boost from strategically placed traffic warning signs at crosswalks along the busy street separating the university from the city. The signs, which are also along a section of College Street, are one of a series of measures Auburn University and the City of Auburn are taking to enhance pedestrian and traffic safety where the campus and city intersect.

Campaign next week to focus on safe habits on city streets

Auburn University and the City of Auburn have formed a partnership to present a safety and alternative-transportation campaign, “Travel With Care,” the week of April 5-9. University President Jay Gogue, Auburn Mayor Bill Ham and other community leaders will kick off the campaign at 11:15 a.m. Monday at Toomer’s Corner. During the week, police will strictly enforce traffic and safety regulations regarding visibility, jaywalking and red-light running.

As part of the campus and city safety-awareness campaign, organizers are making a public appeal for everyone to wear white on Wednesday. Additional information is available on the Web at www.travelwithcareauburn.com.
Assistant provost named to lead Auburn’s international programs

Andrew R. Gillespie, associate dean of international programs at Purdue University, has been named assistant provost for international programs at Auburn, effective April 15.

“Dr. Gillespie brings to Auburn significant experience in university international leadership and administration,” said Provost Mary Ellen Mazey.

She added, “In his academic and administrative work at Purdue, he has provided leadership, support and facilitation of internationalization efforts through program development, faculty support and global outreach.”

Since 2002, he has worked with Purdue’s faculty to initiate more than 100 new international education courses and create overseas programming for undergraduate and graduate students.

Gillespie holds a bachelor’s degree in natural resource management from the State University of New York’s College of Environmental Science and Forestry, a joint program with Syracuse University. He earned his master’s in forest biology from the University of New Hampshire, and his doctorate in soil science from Purdue.

At Auburn, he will work with faculty and students to increase the international aspects of Auburn’s academic programs as part of the university’s mission and strategic initiatives. Activities in these areas include program development, promotion of academic partnerships with foreign institutions and development of study abroad and student and scholar exchange programs.

Gillespie will be instrumental in coordinating international research and outreach activities, working with the Auburn Abroad program, International Student and Scholar Services and the Intensive English program.

— Carol Nelson

Engineering college enters into talks for establishing a campus in China

Although discussions are at an early tentative stage, Auburn could some day have a campus in China under a plan being explored by the university administration and the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering.

Following a presentation by Engineering Dean Larry Benefield, the Board of Trustees on March 26 authorized university and college administrators to continue developing a proposal to establish a campus in China.

Benefield said preliminary discussions with education officials in China have established the potential for Auburn to join with Shanghai University to create a campus in the city of Danyang, which is in the same province as Shanghai. Representing Auburn in the discussions is Engineering Professor C.T. Liu, who is a member of the National Academy of Engineering and the Chinese Academy of Engineering.

While a campus in China would be several years away at the earliest, the board approval enabled the College of Engineering and the university administration to further develop the concept.

In other action at the March 26 meeting at the 4-H Center near Columbiana, the board approved a request for the Honors College to assess fees of $200-$250 a semester to support and expand programs for its students. Current Honors College students would be exempt from the fees.
Spirit of Excellence winners named for fall semester

University employee honors
Auburn University Human Resources has announced Spirit of Excellence winners for the months of September through December. The awards recognize Auburn staff members for exceptional performance and service to the university. In late spring, Auburn’s Employee of the Year awards will be presented to four individuals selected from the 2009-10 Spirit of Excellence winners. Spirit of Excellence award recipients for September, above left, are, seated, Kristen Raiford of Development, and standing, from left, Kathleen Swenson of Animal Science, Darryll Gregg of the Sign Shop and Gavin Yates of Surplus Property. Winners for October, above right, are, seated, Kimberly Ailiff of Student Financial Services, and, standing, from left, Lou Martelli of the Sign Shop, David Roberson of Facilities Design and Construction and Scott Quinn of Surplus Property. Award winners for November, below left, are, seated, Kathryn Glass of Agronomy and Soils, and, standing, from left, Willie Ramsey of Heavy Construction, Ann Gulatte of Agriculture Administration and Richard Deason of the Sign Shop. December recipients are, seated, Barbara Yates of Foreign Languages and Literatures, and standing, from left, Tommy Waldrop of Human Resources, Jeremy Hall of Information Technology and Nathan Evans of the Plumbing Shop.
Hankes writes guide to college success for student-athletes

An experienced sports psychologist at Auburn has given student-athletes a new playbook to apply to their game and to the classroom.

Student Counseling Services Director Doug Hankes, a licensed psychologist, has released a new book that he co-authored with Trent Petrie titled “A Student-Athlete’s Guide to College Success: Peak Performance in Class and Life, Third Edition.”

The book is about achieving excellence in the classroom as well as excellence on the field. The text will guide students on how to reach their peak performance in class and in life with topics focusing on specific challenges facing today’s student-athletes.

Hankes said student-athletes face unique stressors, and the book addresses how to manage those stressors and lead a balanced life. This student population requires a different set of study skills they will need to practice and incorporate in order to be successful on the field, the classroom and in life, he explained.

“A Student-Athlete’s Guide to College Success” focuses on topics significant to today’s student-athletes including laying the foundation for success, succeeding in the classroom, succeeding in life and relationships and succeeding on the field. Each chapter is organized around three elements that are familiar and relevant to athletes including preparation, performance and post-game review. The chapters also contain self-assessments, review questions, journal activities and motivational tools.

Hankes said the motivation behind the book was to communicate the responsibility student-athletes have to prepare for a life after competitive sports.

Many student-athletes enter college with a self-identity primarily focused on their participation in sports, he said. This may include the goal to play professionally or at the next level of their sport.

A select number will accomplish this goal, but for many, learning how to engage in their academics will be a more important step toward a long-term goal of a meaningful and successful career.

This edition’s new content includes a chapter on achieving mental toughness. Current topics have been added such as managing social networking sites, credit card use and abuse, recovery from injury and acceptable classroom behaviors.

Hankes, who has graduate faculty status at Auburn in the departments of Kinesiology and Psychology, is in his fifth year as a member of the university’s sports medicine optimal performance support team, through which he works closely with the Athletic Department’s sports medicine staff.

— Brittany Cosby

Bohanan to present Final Lecture to Class of 2010

History Professor Donna Bohanan will present the third annual lecture in Auburn’s Final Lecture series at 5 p.m. Thursday, April 8, in the Student Center Ballroom.

The Final Lecture is a commencement-style address delivered each spring by a distinguished member of the Auburn faculty who has been selected by the senior class as among Auburn’s most inspiring professors during the students’ academic careers. Selected professors are asked to present their thoughts to students and the Auburn community as if the address were the final lecture of his or her career.

Bohanan, an Auburn faculty member since 1982, has written two books on French history and is also an authority on European and world history in the College of Liberal Arts.

Previous speakers in the Final Lecture series were Joseph Kicklighter of History in 2008 and Lawrence Witt of Biological Sciences in 2009.

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