Search begins in effort to fill nine seats on Auburn Board

Gov. Robert Bentley has started the search to fill nine open or soon-to-be open seats on the 14-member Auburn University Board of Trustees. The board consists of 13 appointed members and the governor, who is ex-officio chair.

On March 31, Bentley issued a call for nominees, with a request that nominations and supporting materials be submitted by April 8 to Grant Davis, secretary to the Board of Trustees, on behalf of the Auburn University Trustee Selection Committee.

The selection committee will seek to fill current and upcoming vacancies in all but two of the nine district seats and one of the three at-large seats.

Current unfilled seats are for District 1, formerly held by Jack Miller of Mobile, who died in 2009, and District 6, formerly held by Paul Spina of Pelham, whose term ended in 2010.

Members whose terms recently expired are Dwight Carlisle of Talladega in District 4 and Sarah Newton of Fayette in District 7.

The search also includes nominees for three seats whose members’ terms expire later this year. They are Byron Franklin of Birmingham in District 9; Bobby Lowder, District 2 representative from Montgomery; at-large member Charles McCrary of Birmingham; Jimmy Rane of Abbeville in District 3; and Virginia Thompson of Opelika, representing Lee County, also in District 3.

Members whose seats are not included in the upcoming searches are President Pro Tem John Blackwell of Huntsville, District 8, and at-large member Sam Ginn of San Mateo, Calif., whose terms run until 2012; Gaines Lanier of Lanett, District 5, whose term ends in 2014; and at-large member Raymond Harbert of Birmingham, whose term runs until 2016.

The five-member Trustee Selection Committee is comprised of the governor or his designee, two members selected by the Board of Trustees and two selected by the Auburn Alumni Association. Blackwell and Harbert will represent the Board of Trustees.

The Alumni Association has selected three of its members as representatives, although only two at a time will represent the association at committee meetings. Bobby Poundstone will attend all meetings, while Howard Nelson and Nancy Fortner will alternate.

The selection committee’s nominee for each board position will go to the Alabama Senate for confirmation. The 2011 legislative session began on March 1 and would normally conclude in mid-June, but legislative leaders have indicated that this year’s session may wrap up early.

At the end of a term, a trustee may serve up to one year until the seat is filled for the next seven-year term. If an appointment is not made within that time, the seat becomes vacant until a nominee is confirmed by the Senate.

Participation rate cited as key to success

Campaign asks faculty, staff to help support their favorite programs

Auburn’s 2011 Faculty Staff Campaign is under way as volunteers seek to build on last year’s record 70.7 percent participation rate in a demonstration of support for the university by its own faculty and staff.

The Faculty Staff Campaign, which runs through May 6, is an annual fund-raising campaign in which faculty and staff members donate funds to support those aspects of the university that are of special importance to each individual.

Rather than suggesting a minimum or maximum on the size of gifts, volunteers ask all faculty and staff members to choose a gift level and donate either through payroll deduction or other financial gift to an area of each individuals’ choice. Gifts in the past have ranged from a small sum up to $10,000.

Development officers say that feedback from alumni and friends of Auburn, as well as other universities, show that they are more willing to give and to contribute larger amounts when they see a significant proportion of faculty and staff contributing to the university. With its nearly 71 percent faculty-staff participation rate in 2010, Auburn has the highest participation rate among all its peers in the Southeastern Conference.

The Faculty Staff Campaign has 11 team captains representing every division on campus plus the Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension. Campaign chairs are Bob Boyd of the College of Sciences and Mathematics, Rick Good of the College of Liberal Arts and Julie Huff of the Office of the Provost.

Campaign volunteers have distributed packets about the campaign and details on ways of supporting it. Additional information about the campaign is available at https://develop.auburn.edu/auburnfund/campusparticipation.html.
Two Auburn Honors College students – Nathan Warner in the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering and Emily Brennan in the College of Agriculture – have been awarded nationally prestigious scholarships recognizing them as among the best in their academic fields in the United States.

Warner, a biosystems engineering major, has been selected as one of 80 recipients from 61 universities for a Morris K. and Stewart L. Udall Scholarship for Excellence in National Environmental Policy. Scholars were selected on the basis of commitment to careers in the environment, health care or tribal public policy; leadership potential; and academic achievement.

Brennan, an animal science major, has been chosen as a 2011 Barry M. Goldwater Scholar. The scholarship, awarded to only about 300 students nationwide each year, is widely considered the most prestigious award in the United States for undergraduates in science, technology, engineering and mathematics disciplines.

Engineering student Warner, who is also pursuing a minor in sustainability, is strongly committed to alleviating poverty, which complements his dedication to a sustainable environment.

The focus of his honors thesis is the provision of safe water and sanitation to those most affected by poverty and hunger. He is a member of the Honors College, the Committee of 19 and co-founder of the Auburn chapter of “Engineers without Borders.” Warner will use the $5,000 Udall Scholarship to fund his senior year at Auburn.

In studies involving two colleges, College of Agriculture student Brennan conducts research in Professor Geoffrey Hill’s laboratory in the College of Sciences and Mathematics’ Department of Biological Sciences.

Her research involves enzyme-linked immunosorbent assays on eggs collected from House Finch bird nests to test for antibodies to the bacterium, Mycoplasma gallisepticum. The goal is to determine the role of maternal effects – the ability of mothers to pass helpful substances to their offspring at birth – in the adaptation of House Finch populations.

## Rotary Club names museum Citizen of the Year

The Auburn Rotary Club is presenting its Citizen of the Year Award for 2011 to Auburn University’s Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art.

Each year since 1983, the Auburn Rotary Club has presented its highest honor, a Citizen of the Year Award, to deserving individuals or organizations that exhibit the club’s objective of service above self.

The Citizen of the Year is presented to a local, non-Rotarian who has significantly contributed to the Auburn Community. The university’s art museum was selected as this year’s recipient for significantly changing cultural life in the Auburn community.

The museum houses Audubon prints, Tibetan bronzes dating from as early as the 15th century and works by important 20th century American artists.

“We are honored that the Auburn Rotary Club has chosen the Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art for this prestigious award,” said Marilyn Laufer, the museum’s director, “and we will strive to continue to bring art and culture to the Auburn community.”

### Staff awards

Auburn University Human Resources has announced Spirit of Excellence winners for December, recognizing exceptional job performance by staff members. The recipients were, from left, Linda Allgood of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Vanessa Jerido (front) of Building Services in Facilities, Bryan Elmore of the University Budget Office and Kendall Price of the Office of Information Technology.
Profiles in Excellence

Leischuck Award winner takes global approach to teaching, research in College of Agriculture

When Auburn University recognized its top faculty award-winners for 2010 last fall, one of the winners of its highest award for excellence in teaching was half a world away. Having attained international recognition as a soils scientist and turfgrass specialist, the College of Agriculture’s Elizabeth Guertal was a Fulbright Scholar during fall semester, teaching at the University of Mauritius off the east coast of Africa.

Guertal, who is an Alumni Professor in the Department of Agronomy and Soils at Auburn, had traveled to Mauritius to teach soil science and turfgrass management, her academic specialty. But the students were not the only ones interested in learning, she said, citing the opportunity to examine culture and science from a different perspective.

The Fulbright fellowship was a learning experience for her as well as the students, she said, applying on an international scale elements of a teaching philosophy she had outlined earlier in a written statement to the Leischuck Awards selection committee.

In the statement on teaching philosophy, Guertal noted that she often learns during her preparation for a course and in her interaction with students in the classroom. “I teach to learn,” she wrote. “I teach to learn the best techniques for classroom presentation, to learn how my students interpret course material and to learn what I should add to my course as the science of turfgrass advances.”

Even though she is on a 50 percent research appointment, Guertal had won numerous teaching awards in the decade and a half before being named a winner of the university’s most prestigious teaching honor, the Gerald and Emily Leischuck Endowed Presidential Awards for Excellence in Teaching. That award recognizes the College of Agriculture professor as one of the best teachers among the university’s most prestigious teaching honor, the Gerald and Emily Leischuck Endowed Presidential Awards for Excellence in Teaching. That award recognizes the College of Agriculture professor as one of the best teachers among the university’s senior faculty.

In nominating Guertal for the Leischuck Award, colleagues and students cited her classroom success to an extensive knowledge of related disciplines, as well as her own, and the ability to share that knowledge at the students’ level. But, equally important, they said, is the large amount of time she devotes to advising students outside the classroom.

“Dr. Guertal is, in my mind, all you could ask for in a professor,” wrote William Brandon Smith, a junior in animal science. “I can think of no other professor that cares more about his or her students than she does. She goes above the call of duty to see that every student that needs assistance or advice gets just that. Her knowledge extends far beyond the curriculum she teaches; she is able to use her knowledge and wisdom to guide the young lives that come through her program year after year.”

Joe Touchton, head of the Department of Agronomy and Soils, said Guertal is not only one of the most respected classroom teachers in the department, she is also one of the busiest advisers to students and prospective students. He added that her teaching is part of an overall record of achievement that includes and is influenced by an equally strong research program and outreach activities such as the Community Garden, which produces fresh produce for the Food Bank of East Alabama.

Guertal, who came to Auburn after earning her Ph.D. from Oklahoma State University in 1993, says the research, outreach and teaching all come together in the classroom. Most of her students are majors in the subject being taught or in related disciplines, so it is doubly important, she says, to know the material thoroughly before she enters the classroom.

“Adequately preparing to teach a class is as important as actually teaching it,” she said. “These are majors who are eager for the information, so I want to present it as straightforward and clearly as possible.”

While the presence of large numbers of majors in her classes presents its challenges due to their higher expectations, Guertal says faculty in core curriculum courses have a greater challenge in trying to reach students from a diverse array of majors. “It is hard to keep the attention of the class and get them to focus on the material when it is outside their majors,” she said. “My students see a direct connection to their career goals and are eager to learn.”

She teaches Introduction to Turfgrass Management each semester, Introduction to Soil Science, usually in the spring, and senior seminars on a regular basis. In these and other courses, she noted in her teaching philosophy: “I’ve learned that memorization of details is necessary, but that teaching students to combine the details into a semester-long synthesis is a challenging process. The process, however, is why I teach.”

Guertal is frequently lauded by students and former students, who say her counseling efforts outside the classroom are a major factor in their own success. In addition to office visits, students contact her electronically through texts and emails. She uses these electronic communications as part of Auburn’s Writing Across the Curriculum program, advising students on how to use electronic messages to enhance their professional image by writing appropriately for the intended audience.

“— Ray Summerford

Group presents Senior Scholar Award to Melancon

History Professor Emeritus Michael Melancon of Auburn’s College of Liberal Arts will receive the Senior Scholar Award at the April meeting of the Southern Conference on Slavic Studies. The award is not given annually, but only on the basis of exceptional merit.

Melancon was chosen for the award based on his contributions to the study of Russian history and related subject areas. The committee noted that Melancon has emerged as an important senior scholar of international stature.

The meeting also features a panel discussion, “Against the Grain: Michael Melancon and the Persistent Rethinking of Russian Revolutionary History,” regarding Melancon’s scholarly work.
Campus News Briefs

Committees to work concurrently in search for interim, permanent provost

President Jay Gogue announced Tuesday that two search committees will soon be appointed in connection with the pending departure of Provost Mary Ellen Mazey to become president of Ohio’s Bowling Green State University in July.

Gogue told the University Senate that he expects to appoint a six-member committee to conduct an in-house search for an interim provost, who will serve from the time of Mazey’s departure until a new provost can be appointed and take office.

A larger committee of 10-12 persons, or more, will be appointed to conduct a national search for the new provost. The goal, he said, is to get a new provost on campus by Jan. 1, although he acknowledged that a longer lead time is often needed in such searches.

Exploratory committee identifies eight concepts for quality improvement plan

The University Quality Enhancement Plan Exploratory Committee recently received 25 concept submissions and has narrowed the list to eight broad concepts.

The concepts are Cross-Cultural Global Learning, Electronic Portfolios, Financial Literacy for Today’s Citizens, Human Touch Learning Opportunities, Interdisciplinary Learning, Leadership Excellence, Literacy for a Sustainable World and Undergraduate Research.

A QEP is part of the requirements for reaffirmation of accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Auburn professor’s presentation in Germany featured in Stars & Stripes

Paul Harris, an associate director of Auburn’s Honors College and associate professor of political science, was featured in the U.S. Armed Forces newspaper Stars & Stripes for a presentation he made in March to military and civilian personnel at Wiesbaden Army Airfield in Germany. As part of a Salute to Education event at the airfield, Harris encouraged the troops to take advantage of incentives in the military to earn a college degree while on active duty. The newspaper said Harris’ example proved that it is never too late to earn a college degree.

Harris noted that he had not gone straight to college after high school and found himself several years later as a civilian driver in Wiesbaden for a colonel who pushed him into signing up for his first college course. That first class eventually led him to obtain a Ph.D. and launched his career in higher education.

Theatre to present different take on ‘Hamlet’

A thoroughly modern version of William Shakespeare’s classic play “Hamlet” will be coming to Auburn University’s Telfair Peet Theatre next week.

Students and faculty in the Department of Theatre in Auburn’s College of Liberal Arts will present the “90-Minute Butchered Rock & Roll Boombox Hamlet” at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday-Friday, April 12-15, and 2:30 p.m. Saturday, April 16.

“Shakespeare’s ‘Hamlet’ is considered by many to be the greatest play ever written,” said Chris Qualls, the production’s director. “Too often, though, this leaves people feeling the text is completely sacred.”

Qualls continued, “For this production, I’m taking the approach of adapting it as one might adapt a novel for the stage or screen. I think an edited approach to the text creates an environment wherein our students can delve into the remaining language with greater depth.”

For tickets, call the Auburn University Theatre Box Office at 844-4154.