Navy nursing leader, prominent architect to speak at graduation

A Navy nursing commander with a key role in training health care providers for wounded war veterans and a nationally prominent architect will be guest speakers at Auburn University’s spring commencement ceremonies May 3-4.

Approximately 3,670 new graduates will receive diplomas at the ceremonies in Auburn Arena.

Architect Don Brown will speak that Saturday at a 10 a.m. ceremony for the colleges of Education, Human Sciences and Architecture, Design and Construction and a 2 p.m. ceremony for the colleges of Agriculture and Business and the Interdisciplinary Studies program.

Navy Cmdr. Michele Kane will speak Sunday at a 1 p.m. ceremony for the College of Sciences and Mathematics and the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering and at a 5 p.m. ceremony for the College of Liberal Arts, School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences and School of Nursing.

The ceremonies will be streamed online at www.auburn.edu/communications_marketing/graduationlive/ and can also be viewed on mobile devices through the website or the Ustream app.

Brown, a 1971 graduate in architecture from Auburn, is vice president of the American Institute of Architects. He founded Brown Studio Architecture in Montgomery in 1997, after retiring as a colonel in the U.S. Air Force.

Kane, who received a bachelor’s degree in nursing from Auburn University at Montgomery in 1992, played a key role this year in developing Project SERVE while serving as director for the Centers for Nursing Science and Clinical Inquiry for Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. Project SERVE is a joint effort between Walter Reed, Auburn University and Auburn Montgomery to teach nursing students about returning wounded veterans seeking care in local communities.

Auburn will award 93 doctoral degrees, 566 master’s degrees, six educational specialist degrees and 2,768 bachelor’s degrees. The bachelor’s degrees by college and school are: Agriculture, 124; Architecture, Design and Construction, 159; Business, 506; Education, 248; Engineering, 426; Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, 44; Human Sciences, 134; Liberal Arts, 607; Nursing, 64; Interdisciplinary Studies in the Office of the Provost, 21; and Sciences and Mathematics, 435.

The James Harrison School of Pharmacy and the College of Veterinary Medicine, both professional schools, will award diplomas on May 6, at Auburn Arena, with the Pharmacy ceremony at 10 a.m. for 149 graduates and the Veterinary Medicine ceremony at 6 p.m. for 88 graduates.

Student surprised in classroom with word of Truman Scholarship

Sam Wilcox, an Honors College and College of Liberal Arts student majoring in history with a minor in economics, has been named a recipient of the Harry S. Truman Scholarship, one of the nation’s top academic and service awards, said Wilcox received outstand-

Sam Wilcox, an Honors College and College of Liberal Arts student majoring in history with a minor in economics, has been named a recipient of the Harry S. Truman Scholarship, one of the nation’s top academic and service awards, which is bestowed on college juniors.

Wilcox, a native of Nashville, was informed of the award by Auburn University President Jay Gogue during a surprise visit to class. Gogue spoke briefly to the economics class about the importance of scholarships and then announced to the class that Wilcox has won a prestigious Truman Scholarship.

Created in 1975 by an act of Congress, the Harry S. Truman Scholarship is awarded to 39 college juniors on the basis of four criteria: service on campus and in the community, commitment to a career in public service, communication ability and aptitude to be a change agent, as well as academic talent that would assure acceptance to a nationally competitive graduate program.

Wilcox is a Student Government Association senator representing the College of Liberal Arts, a member of the Committee of 19 hunger awareness group, supplemental instructor, legislative intern for Congressman Jim Cooper in the Fifth District of Tennessee and a regional volunteer coordinator for Bama Covered, a health care volunteer group.

“The Truman Scholarship recognizes Sam’s tremendous potential to create positive change in his state and his nation, and we are so pleased that Sam has been recognized by this award,” said Melissa Baumann, assistant provost and Honors College director.

Wilcox has also written editorials and guest columns on social and political issues, including a column on the effects of Tennessee’s voter ID law that ran in Nashville’s newspaper, The Tennessean.

“Sam has set a course for himself which is destined to lead him to a promising career in public service. A fearless advocate on behalf of those without a voice, Sam is a model student and model citizen,” said Joe Aistrup, dean of Auburn’s College of Liberal Arts.

Paul Harris, associate director for national prestigious scholarships, said Wilcox received outstanding practice thanks to his interview committee, co-chaired by Paula Bobrowski, associate dean in the College of Liberal Arts, and Raj Chaudhury, associate director for the Biggio Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning.

As part of the award, Wilcox will receive up to $30,000 to apply toward graduate study in the U.S. or abroad within a variety of fields.
Couple give $10.5 million to help Engineering bolster its programs

Auburn’s Samuel Ginn College of Engineering has received a philanthropic investment of more than $10.5 million from Walter S. “Walt” and Virginia E. “Ginger” Woltosz.

The gift will assist the college in supporting students’ educational needs and faculty’s research efforts, while bolstering the technical advances of its research facilities.

The couple’s gift is the second largest in the college’s history. In recognition of their support, the Auburn University Board of Trustees voted to name Engineering’s central research facility in the Shelby Center for Engineering Technology as the Woltosz Engineering Research Laboratory.

Walt Woltosz earned a bachelor’s degree in 1969 and a master’s degree in 1977 in aerospace engineering from Auburn and also holds a master’s in administrative science from the University of Alabama in Huntsville.

He is chairman and CEO of Simulations Plus, a company he founded in 1996 that is a leading developer of simulation and modeling software for drug discovery and development in the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries. Simulations Plus products are used by more than 200 pharmaceutical firms, including the world’s Top 25, helping to analyze new products and saving millions of dollars in research and development costs.

When Ginger’s mother became ill, Woltosz began developing augmentative communication systems for persons with severe disabilities. In 1981, Walt and Ginger founded Words+, a leader in creating state-of-the-art products that “unlock the person” by providing the highest quality communication and computer access tools available. The products have been recognized by the Smithsonian Institution.

When world-renowned astrophysicist Sir Stephen Hawking’s ability to communicate was compromised by ALS, it was the Words+ Equalizer and EZ Keys programs that allowed Hawking to continue his groundbreaking work.

“The quality of an Auburn engineering education is evidenced by the tremendous successes of so many of the college’s alumni, and I have been one of the very fortunate ones,” Walt Woltosz said. “We know our educations were supported by the gifts of others, so now it’s our turn to ‘pay it forward.’ Ginger and I believe in Auburn and hope that our gifts will assist in continuing its progress toward the forefront of engineering education in the nation and in the world.”

The couple’s gift will enhance their previous support of the Woltosz graduate fellows program while at the same time fund educational initiatives, research efforts and advancements in the college’s research facilities. It also creates a new endowed professorship in the Department of Aerospace Engineering in addition to the one the couple previously funded.

“Given Walt’s tremendous contributions to innovation throughout his career, it is quite fitting for our advanced research laboratory to be named in his honor,” said Engineering Dean Christopher Roberts. “Walt and Ginger’s investment in the college is pivotal to our ability to remain at the forefront of engineering research and education as we continue our trajectory of becoming one of the nation’s premier engineering programs.”

State appropriation, tuition up slightly in budget plans

The two largest revenue streams in Auburn University’s budget for the 2015 fiscal year, which starts this Oct. 1, became clearer on April 11.

That morning in Montgomery, Gov. Robert Bentley signed the 2015 Alabama Education Budget. The budget, passed the previous week by the Alabama Legislature, contains a slight increase for Auburn University for next year.

Meanwhile in Auburn, the Board of Trustees approved a 3.5 percent increase in tuition and fees for Alabama residents and 3.9 percent for out-of-state students, effective fall semester, on the main campus. On the main campus, tuition and fees per semester will be $5,100 for Alabama residents and $13,692 for non-residents. The percentage increase is the smallest at Auburn in more than a decade. Auburn University at Montgomery, meanwhile, will see tuition increases of 4 percent in undergraduate tuition and 4.5 percent for graduate students.

In the 2015 Alabama education budget, the four divisions of Auburn University – Auburn main campus, Auburn University at Montgomery, Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station and Alabama Cooperative Extension System – will see a total appropriation of $245.2 million, up slightly from $238.4 million for 2014.

Auburn University main campus will see its operations and maintenance funding increase $1.6 million to $157.4 million. AUM’s operations and maintenance appropriation will increase $155,000 to $22.3 million. State appropriations for the Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension will remain essentially level, with AAES at $30.6 million and ACES at $32 million.

Representing France

President Jay Gogue welcomed Denis Barbet, left, consul general of France for the southeastern United States, during the diplomat’s April 17 visit to Auburn. Based in Atlanta, the French diplomat was in Auburn to discuss with students, faculty and administrators, his country’s economic and cultural relations with other nations, including the United States. Barbet visited as part of an Auburn initiative to enhance the international experiences of students.

CHS conference to focus on learning for infants, toddlers

A science-based learning module for infants and toddlers will be the focus of an upcoming conference hosted by Auburn University’s College of Human Sciences.

The learning module to provide training in science education will be launched at the annual Focus on Family Child Care conference, June 13-14, at The Hotel at Auburn University and Dixon Conference Center in Auburn.

The conference is part of Auburn’s Family Child Care Partnerships program, which trains Alabama’s licensed family child care providers.

In 2013, the PNC Foundation became a presenting sponsor of the conference, increasing attendance by awarding scholarships to participants to defer the costs of travel, attendance and educational materials.

PNC’s support also led to the implementation of new curriculum modules in science, math, art and music for more than 230 child care providers and parents.

This year nearly 700 infants and toddlers are expected to benefit from the $15,000 gift from the foundation, which receives its principal funding from The PNC Financial Services Group Inc.

Since its inception in 2000, the Family Child Care Partnerships program has trained family child care providers to foster the healthy growth and development of the infants, toddlers and preschoolers in their care.

The program uses a veteran corps of full-time mentors to work directly with family child care providers in the home setting during normal operating hours. Family Child Care Partnerships has focused especially on providing its services in underserved areas of the state.
Three receive Sullivan Awards for humanitarian service

Auburn University presented Algernon Sydney Sullivan Awards, its highest honors for humanitarian service, to a faculty member and two students April 15.

Seniors Azeem Ahmed and Courtney Bessemer, and William I. Sauser Jr., a professor in the Raymond J. Harbert College of Business, received awards at the annual President’s Luncheon in the Student Center ballroom.

Presented at more than 60 colleges and universities across the South, the awards are named for a prominent 19th century humanitarian who was the first president of the New York Southern Society, now the Algernon Sydney Sullivan Foundation. Each year since 1951, Auburn has bestowed the honor on one male and one female student from the graduating class and one person from the faculty, staff or community.

Sauser, a professor of management, has been a member of the Auburn faculty for 37 years. He is the immediate past chair of the University Senate, served as faculty advisor for the past year to the Board of Trustees and led the United Way campus campaign for five years. He also is vice president of the Greater Peace Community Development Corporation, a public nonprofit that helps provide a number of community and economic development programs in Opelika and East Alabama. Last fall, he received Auburn University’s External Consulting Award at the annual Faculty Awards ceremony. He will retire from the university at the end of June.

Bessemer, a presidential scholar majoring in secondary science education, has devoted hundreds of hours to service activities within the university, local community and her home state of Florida. She has held several leadership roles in her social sorority and Alternative Student Breaks, a program that gives Auburn students the opportunity to perform community service during their academic breaks. Bessemer is a member of the Committee of 19 and Order of Omega and has volunteered with local municipal projects such as Katrina’s Kids, Camp Summit, Project Open Hand and Boys and Girls Clubs.

In addition to the Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award, Ahmed also received the President’s Award and W. James Samford Jr. Foundation Award for the Raymond J. Harbert College of Business. He is an Honors College student majoring in finance and pre-medicine with a minor in sustainability. Through his involvement and guidance with World Food Programme, Committee of 19, Campus Kitchens Project, American Red Cross, March of Dimes and other programs in the fight against hunger, he was recently named the winner of the President William Jefferson Clinton Hunger Leadership Award, presented to just one university student worldwide each year.

In 2013, Ahmed was the only recipient from the state of Alabama to be named a Harry S. Truman Scholar, one of the nation’s top academic awards for college juniors.

– Chelsea Payne

Accountancy to offer Auburn’s first online bachelor’s program

Auburn’s Raymond J. Harbert College of Business will become the university’s first college to offer an online undergraduate program when its School of Accountancy opens its new Bachelor of Science offering this fall.

The program, designed for working professionals interested in pursuing careers in accounting, will be added to the college’s current online offerings, which consist of graduate-level degrees.

“Our online programs combine traditional instruction with modern technology delivery to offer educational opportunities to working professionals beyond Auburn’s campus,” School of Accountancy Director DeWayne Searcy said. “We are very pleased to be the first academic unit at Auburn to offer an online undergraduate degree and to pave the way for other programs to follow.”

Admission will be limited to second degree candidates who have already completed a bachelor’s degree or MBA at a school or college accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business. Admitted students will receive a waiver of the university and college core courses.

Students balancing career and family obligations will be able to complete the 30-semester-hour program in two years by taking six credit hours per semester. Full-time students may graduate more quickly.

U.S. News & World Report ranked the Harbert College of Business 12th nationally in its 2014 survey of the nation’s online graduate programs.

“Our traditional on-campus classes are videotaped and online students watch their lectures via streaming video either live or at a time convenient to their work schedules,” said Amy Murphy, director of accounting graduate programs in the Harbert College of Business.

“Therefore, online students receive the same instruction and the same AACSB-accredited degree as their on-campus peers. Students are attracted to our program because they like knowing they are getting the same education as their on-campus counterparts without giving up their full-time jobs to improve their educational credentials.”

Searcy said development of the online undergraduate degree in accounting reaffirms Auburn University’s commitment to meeting the needs of current and future students, including those with family and career obligation.

Auburn University’s Strategic Plan prioritizes the “development of eLearning programs.”

Based on the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “employment of accountants and auditors are expected to grow faster through 2020 than for any other occupation.” According to the American Institute of CPAs, 75 percent of today’s CPAs will retire over the next 15 years, creating greater demand for a new generation of accounting professionals.

– Troy Johnson
CVM celebrates milestone in its history with dedication this month of Bailey Small Animal Teaching Hospital

Auburn University dedicated the new Wilford and Kate Bailey Small Animal Teaching Hospital at the College of Veterinary Medicine on April 11 with a ceremonial ribbon cutting and tours of the 208,000-square-foot teaching hospital.

Dean Calvin Johnson called the event “a momentous and historic occasion for the Auburn University College of Veterinary Medicine, in its 107th year as a college and 122nd year as an academic program.”

Johnson added, “In dedicating this beautiful facility, this college pledges to cultivate the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that promote career success for students, to serve the public by offering the most advanced standards of veterinary medical care, and to expand veterinary biomedical knowledge through innovative and impactful research.”

The facility is named for the late Wilford and Cratus “Kate” Bailey. Wilford Bailey, a 1942 graduate of the College of Veterinary Medicine, had 50 years of continuous academic and administrative service to Auburn, including serving as the university’s 13th president.

Johnson said the naming of the facility honors a family “who practiced the highest standards in their personal and professional lives and in honor of the many lives touched by the Baileys’ generosity, humility, and kindness – particularly John and Rosemary Brown who initiated the hospital’s construction with a very generous naming gift.”

“John and I did not really come to Auburn to search for role models, but it turns out the Bailey family were role models for us,” said Rosemary Brown, longtime friend of the Baileys, who along with her husband, made a philanthropic investment through the Auburn University Foundation to benefit the College of Veterinary Medicine and to name the teaching hospital for the Baileys. The gift was in appreciation of their friendship with the Baileys, which began when the Browns were students at Auburn in the 1950s.

The $47 million small animal teaching hospital, one of the largest and most technologically advanced teaching and referral hospitals in the country, serves a growing caseload of 15,000 new cases each year.

The College of Veterinary Medicine’s Teaching Hospital, which includes the Bailey Small Animal and the J.T. Vaughan Large Animal, is the largest academic outreach program at Auburn University. Inside the facility are 12 clinical services: cardiology, critical care, neurology/neurosurgery, oncology, radiology, orthopedics, physiatry/rehabilitation, internal medicine, general surgery, ophthalmology, dermatology and theriogenology.

The new building also houses a centralized pharmacy, serving both small and large animal teaching hospitals; a Clinical Pathology department; an 82-seat high-tech conference room, as well as smaller meeting spaces to expand the college’s instructional and outreach capabilities; and the Auburn University Veterinary Clinic, which is providing veterinary students experience in operating a small animal practice. The clinic is open to the public.

— Janet McCoy

Earth Week speaker to address risks of delay in confronting environmental problems

Mike Mullen, head of the Choctawhatchee Riverkeeper environmental organization will speak on “Climate Change is Real, Dangerous, and Deadly: If the Deniers Win, We All Lose” at 7 p.m. Wednesday, April 23, in Langdon Hall.

Mullen’s public lecture is sponsored by the Auburn University Office of Sustainability.

Mullen has more than 30 years of professional experience in environmental fields related to water quality, aquatic ecology and watershed management.

Before retiring from Troy University in 2006, Mullen was involved in water quality monitoring and research for 10 years. He taught both undergraduate- and graduate-level classes in erosion and sediment control and stormwater management.

“Climate change may well be the defining issue of our time,” said Mike Kensi, director of the Office of Sustainability at Auburn. “We are thrilled to have Mike Mullen on campus to present the latest scientific findings and explain how citizens can make a difference in tackling this challenge.”

The Choctawhatchee Riverkeeper is part of the national Waterkeeper Alliance and, led by Mullen, is an organization with the mission to protect and restore the ecological health of the Choctawhatchee River and surrounding systems that constitute the watershed.

The Choctawhatchee originates as two separate forks in Barbour County that connect in Dale County on its way to Florida, where it empties into the Gulf of Mexico near Destin.

The event is part of the Office of Sustainability’s celebration of Earth Week and Campus Conversations program.