Auburn to get funds for recession relief in budget this fall

The Auburn University System will receive nearly $25.9 million in one-time federal funds during the fiscal year starting Oct. 1 under the recession recovery package passed by Congress earlier this year, with $16.9 million of that amount slated for the main campus.

The federal funds helped the Alabama Legislature stabilize funding in the $6.2 billion state education budget for 2009-10 in the recently concluded legislative session. Of the education budget total, the Auburn System is slated to receive $286.6 million, with $185.3 million slated for main campus operations and maintenance.

State funds account for approximately one-third of Auburn’s total budget, which the administration is developing for review by the Board of Trustees. In addition to the state budget, primary sources of revenue for the main campus are tuition, research, auxiliary enterprises and endowments, but some of these revenue streams are restricted to uses specified by the source of funds.

The state allocation to the Auburn System for 2009-10 falls between the $293.7 million originally allocated in spring 2008 for the current budget year and the adjusted current-year budget of $267.3 million after proration. Higher education in Alabama started the current budget year last October with a 12 percent reduction in appropriation from 2008-09, soon followed by another 9 percent cut due to the impact of the recession on state revenues.

In addition to the main campus, the Auburn System includes Auburn University Montgomery, the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. The state budget includes $35.6 million for AAES, $38 million for ACES and $26 million for AUM. Additional funds were included for several programs in each division of the Auburn System.

While passage of the education and general fund budgets highlighted the legislative session, legislators whose districts include the main Auburn campus also provided additional support during the session and the months leading to it.

Rep. Mike Hubbard supported the Encyclopedia of Alabama, the Auburn-Opelika Robert G. Pitts Airport, the Louise Kreher Forest Ecology Preserve and programs in the College of Education, and he donated his legislative pay raise to scholarships in the hotel and restaurant management program in the College of Human Sciences.

Sen. Ted Little supported the Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art, Auburn University Libraries, the School of Nursing, the colleges of Education and Human Sciences and the Women’s Equestrian Team.

Auburn’s annual Faculty Staff Campaign recently concluded with a record 70 percent participation. Increasing 10 percentage points from last year, this is the highest giving rate in the SEC and one of the highest in the nation among public universities.

“The dedicated efforts of Auburn’s faculty and staff made this possible,” said President Jay Gogue. “This is a phenomenal result and shows the support the faculty and staff have for the university — even during these challenging economic times.”

Seven colleges, schools and divisions reached 100 percent participation, compared to five last year. These divisions include the President’s Office, Development Office, Office of Communications and Marketing, School of Nursing, College of Education, Alumni Affairs and Student Affairs. Almost every unit increased its rate of participation over the prior year’s results. “Auburn’s faculty and staff amaze me every day,” said Jeff McNeill, vice president for development. “Their contributions to this campaign show the tremendous support they have in this university and their belief in its successful future. I sincerely thank all individuals who participated in this campaign. Your support is an example I hope all members of the Auburn family will follow.”

The active phase of this year’s Faculty Staff Campaign ran from March to May. Recognizing faculty and staff members who contributed at other times during the year, the campaign counts all donors from June 2008 to present. The spring campaign involved dozens of volunteer team captains from colleges, schools and divisions. Campaign co-chairs were Harold Cummings of Facilities, Debra Dowdell of Auburn Libraries, Michael Tullier of the College of Education and Gary Waters of the College of Business.
Challenger explosion
Hansen book tells story of man who warned of shuttle disaster

Twenty-three years after the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster, Auburn professor and author James Hansen has co-authored a book examining the causes of the U.S. space program’s first fatal in-flight accident.

Hansen, a professor of history and director of Auburn’s Honors College, teamed up to write the 626-page book “Truth, Lies, and O-Rings: Inside the Space Shuttle Challenger Disaster” with Allan McDonald. McDonald was an engineer who warned NASA officials that Challenger’s solid rocket motor could explode at ignition if launched on a very cold wintry morning in 1986.

In the book, which was just released by the University Press of Florida, Hansen assists McDonald in telling how his words of warning were ignored and how that decision led to fatal consequences.

“The fiery destruction of Challenger, with seven American astronauts on board, including the first ordinary citizen, a beloved schoolteacher, happened more than two decades ago,” writes Hansen in the foreword to the book.

He adds, “One might think that historians have duly recorded — and that the technical aerospace community has fully comprehended for some time — exactly why the U.S. space program’s first fatal in-flight accident occurred on the cold, heartless morning of January 28, 1986. Surely, the facts underlying the horrible tragedy must have all surfaced by now, all the evidence fully examined and reexamined, all the expert testimony scrutinized, all the critical failure points analyzed and digested, all the penetrating engineering studies performed, all the revelatory books and articles written, all the important lessons learned.

“It is not the case,” Hansen writes.

In the first published memoir by anyone directly associated with the decision to launch Challenger, McDonald, with Hansen’s help, writes about officials ignoring — and then covering up — the warnings he offered, and the price he paid to expose the truth. McDonald was director of the Space Shuttle Solid Rocket Motor Project for Morton Thiokol Inc. in Utah at the time. He was sent to Kennedy Space Center as the company’s senior management representative for the Challenger launch.

Hansen notes that in the years after the explosion, McDonald tried to avoid publicity — first, because he was testifying in investigations, then because he was concentrating on redesigning the solid rocket motor for a safe return to space. But during that time, McDonald had put together six big boxes of notes, including 1,400 handwritten pages about what happened. He retired in 2001 and decided it was finally time to tell his story.

Hansen said the main reason McDonald wanted his story published was that he did not want the lessons learned to be forgotten and he wanted to make sure there would not be another such disaster.

Hansen said “Truth, Lies and O-Rings” isn’t just about what went wrong with the Challenger disaster but it is also about what went right as it also recounts what McDonald and others did to redesign the solid rocket motor and get the Space Shuttle flying again.

“The first time a shuttle returned to space after the accident, in 1988, Al was there,” Hansen said. “During the countdown, he was holding his breath, along with everyone else. I was doing the same at home, watching TV. I had no idea then that I would team up with Al to tell his powerful story.”

— Katie Wilder

Faculty Staff Campaign continued from page 1

In addition to the direct benefit that faculty and staff contributions provide, campaign leaders noted that the on-campus support makes a statement to alumni and friends that a significant percentage of faculty and staff supports the university.

“A major goal of the campaign was participation,” said Bob Martin, assistant vice president for development.

Martin continued, “All gifts, of any size, counted toward each division’s competitive participation rate. Donors could target their funds to help ensure the success of their colleges, schools or programs or designate other uses that support the university’s mission and help strengthen the university.”

— Kristen Jackson

Changing markets prompt new recycling procedures

Due to changing market conditions, the Auburn University Recycling Program is changing its collection practices for recyclable materials.

The recycling program on campus has been collecting single-stream or mixed recycling in 50 dumpsters for the past four years. Last December, however, Auburn lost its market for single stream material and was not able to identify another potential buyer for this material due to the drop in recycling markets worldwide.

Since the university’s recycling program could not market the single-stream recyclables to another company, the program is converting from single-stream to sorted-stream collection. Starting in August, all recyclables on campus will be collected in three separate material streams: mixed paper, standard plastic and metal beverage containers and cardboard.

To start this conversion from single-stream to sorted stream, the recycling program is converting its recycling dumpsters to cardboard only by mid-June. Once all the dumpsters are converted cardboard will be collected in the dumpsters, and mixed paper and beverage containers will be collected separately in blue 90-gallon roll-carts on the loading dock or near the cardboard and trash dumpsters.

Meanwhile, the desk-side recycling program will go off-line during the conversion.

Campus Calendar

Monday, June 1
FREE SCREENING for speech or hearing problems, 1 p.m.-4 p.m., Speech and Hearing Clinic, 1199 Haley Center

Wednesday, June 3
CEREMONY Employee Recognition Program, 2 p.m.-4 p.m., Ballroom, Student Center

Thursday, June 4
BOOK TALK Andrea Wulf, author of “The Brother Gardeners,” 2 p.m., Special Collections and Archives, Draughon Library

Tuesday, June 9
MEETING University Senate, 3 p.m., Auditorium, Broun Hall

Wednesday, June 10
OPEN HOUSE Speech and Hearing Clinic, includes demonstrations of latest in hearing technology, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., 1199 Haley Center; also June 11 and 12

Friday, June 12
Next Auburn Report

Friday, June 19
MEETING Board of Trustees, time TBA, The Hotel at Auburn University
Tripp: Kids can learn a lot from Fat Albert cartoons

With his oversized red sweater and rumbling greeting of “Hey, hey, hey,” Fat Albert ambled into the living rooms of American children in the early 1970s as a jovial presence who loved chowing down on a good burger, playing sports and making music on instruments cobbled together from junkyard remnants.

Created by Bill Cosby, “Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids” was an animated television series inspired by the comedian’s childhood experiences in North Philadelphia. Fat Albert and his friends, from wise-cracking Rudy to pink ski mask-wearing Dumb Donald, transcended the stereotypical cartoon shtick of slapstick humor during its 109-episode run from 1972-84.

“There are some very strong moral tones in it,” said Octavia Tripp, an assistant professor of elementary education in the College of Education’s Department of Curriculum and Teaching. “At the end of each episode, there was a lesson to be learned.”

Tripp joined the discussion of how the cartoon and its lessons could be relevant to both students and teachers during the “Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids Character Education Partnership Summit” in Washington, D.C., on May 1-2. Invited to the summit to discuss the show’s handling of self-esteem related topics, Tripp explored an episode in which a short character named “Pee-Wee” is excluded from playing basketball because of his height. Pee-Wee later becomes the star of a neighborhood football game when he proves he can kick a football better than any of the older children.

“It talked about differences and feelings and, at the end, it talked about looking at your strengths,” Tripp said. “Pee-Wee’s strength was that he could kick a football. They began to accept him and it left a message that, no matter who you are, you have something that you can offer.”

At the summit, Tripp met Cosby, the actor, author and activist who earned a doctorate at the University of Massachusetts in 1976 and based his dissertation on the incorporation of “Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids” into elementary school curricula as a teaching aid.

During its heyday, the cartoon explored a variety of themes, from “puppy love” and stage fright to the dangers of gun violence and crime. Recently, the cartoon has been used as a teaching tool in D.C.-area schools for grades K-5 and has spawned Character Leadership Clubs, collectives of students who look for solutions to such problems as bullying and intolerance.

At the summit, Cosby spent one morning meeting with children and teachers and learning what they were doing to make their schools better places.

“I saw him talking with children about what they were doing in their schools,” Tripp said. “He gave a very dynamic speech — not only about kids being strong, but he also talked to the teachers in the audience. These kids have come together to identify problems and help other kids see that it’s not good to tease.”

Tripp said aspiring teachers can learn as much from “Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids” as can young children. She said the cartoon provides lessons on understanding children, their insecurities and fears as well as what inspires them to learn. Tripp said she hopes that the themes of character development and social responsibility explored by “Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids” eventually become a part of the K-5 curricula in Auburn and Lee County classrooms.

“I want to integrate it into my classroom management class because first-year teachers have so many things they have to deal with and do,” she said. “A lot of times, we overlook issues that are going on in the classroom. Before you teach, you have to deal with the (students’) problems.

“It’s not just teaching content nowadays. You have to have relationships with your students and understand their personalities and learning styles. You have to understand their background, their character, the environment they’re coming from.”

— Troy Johnson

New endowment in College of Business honors professor who introduced student to accounting

Auburn alumna Wendy S. Wilson of Huntsville has established a professorship endowment in the Auburn University College of Business in honor of her first accounting professor, Gary Waters, who now serves as the college’s associate dean for undergraduate programs.

The endowment, in response to President Jay Gogue’s charge to create 81 new professorships at Auburn for existing faculty with exceptional merit, is the second to be secured by the College of Business in two months and is the first to be fully funded.

The professorship will be called the Wilson Family Endowed Professorship until the retirement of Waters from the College of Business, at which time the professorship will be renamed the Dr. Gary Waters Professorship. The university will match annual endowment earnings up to $7,500 in perpetuity.

“There are many people who have had great influence on my life and career and I am very pleased to honor them with this endowed professorship,” said Wilson.

A 1988 graduate of Auburn with a bachelor’s degree in accounting, Wilson is the owner, president and chief executive officer of Aero Thermo Technology Inc., also known as AT2. The company is an engineering, advisory and assistance firm with offices nationwide, providing support to the U.S. Department of Defense since 1989. Earlier in her career, Wilson was a staff accountant and auditor for Deloitte & Touche in Atlanta.

Wilson was recently appointed to the board of directors for the Auburn University Foundation and was selected last year to participate in the Lowder Visiting Executive in Residence Program in the College of Business.

“Wendy’s generous gift in these tough economic times is tangible proof of the Auburn Spirit,” said Paul Bobrowski, dean of the College of Business. “We are extremely grateful to Wendy for this professorship.”

— Dina Roberts

May 29, 2009

Tripp: Kids can learn a lot from Fat Albert cartoons

Auburn Report
Four Freshmen: Not a singing group but quads

There’s a lot of orange and blue around the Haynes house these days. Like lots of other families throughout the state, Tammy and Bruce Haynes of Ohatchee are preparing to send their children to Auburn this fall. However, unlike those other parents, Tammy and Bruce are sending four to Auburn at one time.

The Haynes quadruplets — Elizabeth, Sarah, Will and Caitlin — will be freshmen at the university come August and recently attended the first session of Camp War Eagle. Each is excited about facing college life together but they are also looking forward to stepping out on their own.

“We’re from a small school so we have a lot of the same friends,” said Caitlin of graduating with a class of 61 at Ohatchee High School. “I’m excited about coming to Auburn and finding independence and getting out of the bubble.” Will agrees, saying he is looking forward to meeting people from different backgrounds and “experiencing a new atmosphere.”

Although no specific records on the subject have been kept, administrators say it appears that the Haynes quadruplets are the first set of quads to enroll at Auburn.

While each is personable, they have very different attributes. Elizabeth is deemed the social and outgoing one, perfect for her career choice in public relations. Sarah is the self-described shy and dramatic one. Caitlin, the tidiest of the four, is a planner. She and Sarah are both pursuing majors in human development and family studies. And although all four are in the top five of their graduating class, the girls agree that Will, a business major, is the smartest of the bunch.

To some, the siblings might be familiar. Since they were toddlers, Elizabeth, Sarah, Will and Caitlin were known as the “Alfa quads” for a series of advertisements they did for Alfa insurance featuring the foursome along with their family — mom, dad and older sister Anna Lee. The campaign ended a couple of years ago.

Although the commercials provided some added income while the quads were growing up, Tammy said there is a misconception about just how lucrative they were. “We actually only got paid according to the Actors’ Guild for the days we worked,” she said. “But the experience was great. We met a lot of people and it really taught the kids a lot.”

One thing they learned, she said, was the value of hard work. It is something the quads will rely on to help with the costs of sending four to college at one time. Although the Hayneses have each earned a scholarship to Auburn, the family is still faced with four times the cost of books and four times the apartment rent among other things. The four said they will use student loans to help defray some of the costs and they will all be looking for part-time jobs this fall to help supplement their college expenses.

“I’m ready to work hard and I’m excited about living on my own,” said Elizabeth, who will share an apartment with her sisters and a friend. Will is living with a group of friends in the same apartment complex, just “across the parking lot.”

But counter to the financial challenges, Sarah said the siblings will actually have one definite advantage over other incoming freshmen, many of whom will be leaving home for the first time. “We won’t get homesick,” she said, “because we’re bringing our family with us!”

— Katie Wilder