Team appointed to lead response to information security incidents

Auburn University President Jay Gogue has appointed an Information Security Incident Response Team to lead the university’s response to all information security incidents on campus.

The team is composed of leaders from the offices of the Provost, Information Technology, Communications and Marketing, General Counsel, Human Resources, Public Safety and Risk Management and the Distributed IT Management Council. Subject matter specialists and others will be added as necessary.

The team will oversee Auburn’s activities to prevent individuals or groups from accessing and compromising electronic data or information so as to cause financial losses and damage to the university’s reputation, with adverse effects on students, faculty and collaborators in business, industry, government and research.

The Office of the Provost asks members of the university community to report apparent breaches of information security or cyber incident by phone at 844-0888 or email at abuse@auburn.edu.

Examples of information security to report include:

- Breach of IT security that affects normal operations or result in loss of mission capability.
- A security compromise, improper or illegal use of an Auburn University owned or operated IT system.
- A compromise of a user’s or system’s account credentials.
- Disclosure of sensitive information potentially compromising university operations.

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New infrastructure to improve conditions for future Auburn Oaks

Although the exact species of trees that will replace Auburn’s famed oaks has yet to be determined, the literal foundation for their survival is nearing completion at Toomer’s Corner. The future oaks – scheduled for planting in early 2015 – will be planted in a high-tech environment which will maximize their chances of living many years.

Construction crews have installed a modular, underground structural system known as Silva Cells, which are designed to support large tree growth while reducing soil compaction and providing stormwater management. The project in Samford Park is the first in Alabama to use Silva Cell technology.

“This system is specifically made for trees to thrive in urban environments,” said Auburn Campus Planner Ben Burmester. “It is quite a challenge to create adequate space for the new trees so close to a major intersection, but this technology will allow for the best root-growth possible.”

Silva Cells have been installed in landscaping projects around the world, including venues like New York’s Lincoln Center and Green Bay’s Lambeau Field.

Each cell is composed of a deck and frame and holds about 10 cubic feet of soil. Samford Park has multiple Silva Cells surrounding the areas where both trees will be planted. The units will create a maximum containment area for lightly compacted soil. Rigid vertical posts protrude from the bottom of the frame to support “hardscapes” along with the weight of any load they carry, such as vehicular traffic.

Further increasing the chances of the future trees’ survivability, crews will install a specially mixed soil at Toomer’s Corner. The mixture of sand, clay and other substances has been specially formulated by horticultural experts well-credentialed in tree transplantation.

The first phase of the Samford Park at Toomer’s Corner project is scheduled for completion in mid-August. Following the installation of soil this month, crews will construct a large circular seating wall and plaza.

“We are on schedule at this point,” said civil engineer and project manager Buster Reese. “People will really see the park taking shape once we build the wall and install the landscaping.”

A rendering of the first phase of the project can be found online at http://www.auburn.edu/communications_marketing/oaks/tree_render.pdf.

– Mary Reynolds Porter

New technology for trees

Auburn is using new technology to protect the roots of new trees at Toomer’s Corner from soil compaction that is a frequent problem for trees in high-traffic areas. The underground latticework, which is being filled with soil, will provide more arable soil for trees that will be planted in the near future to replace the ones removed last year after succumbing to deliberate poisoning with herbicide in late 2010.
University Senate creating panel to study new budget model

The University Senate voted Tuesday to establish a special committee to study and report back on a proposed strategic budgeting model for Auburn University that the administration has been discussing this spring with deans, directors and faculty and staff organizations.

The Huron Consulting Group, a global management consulting company headquartered in Chicago, is assisting the university in developing a budget model specifically designed for Auburn. If a new model is adopted, it would replace traditional incremental budgeting with budgets more aligned with the university’s strategic priorities.

In remarks to the Senate, Provost Timothy Boosinger said this is a good time for a committee to look at budgeting models. He said the university needs a budget model that is more incentive-based than traditional incremental budgeting and more adaptable to needs as defined in strategic priorities that the faculty played a major role in establishing.

Veteran faculty member named as interim dean of School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences at Auburn

Graeme Lockaby, associate dean of research in Auburn University’s School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, has been named interim dean of the school in an announcement by Provost Timothy Boosinger.

“Dr. Lockaby will provide excellent leadership for the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences,” Boosinger said. “He has been at Auburn for 28 years and is a nationally respected authority for his work in forest sustainability.”

A national search will begin in July for a permanent dean. Lockaby succeeds Jim Shepard, who is returning to the faculty fulltime as a professor.

“We have outstanding faculty, staff and students and I look forward to working with them to enhance their research, education and outreach experiences,” Lockaby said. “Collaboration with alumni, federal and state colleagues, industry, forestry, wildlife and natural resource associations and other stakeholder groups is also very important to the success of our school and completion of our three missions.”

Lockaby, a faculty member at Auburn since 1986, is director of the school’s Center for Forest Sustainability and serves as the Clinton McClure Professor of Forestry. He earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in forestry at Clemson University and his doctorate in agronomy at Mississippi State University. His research focuses on wetland biogeochemistry.

National fashion schools website gives high ranking to Auburn programs

Auburn University is ranked among the best fashion design, merchandising and management schools in the region and country in 2014, according to a website devoted to researching fashion schools for students seeking information about programs and careers.

Nationally, www.fashion-schools.org lists Auburn as the fifth best school for fashion management, sixth for fashion merchandising and 12th for fashion design. In the South – which the website defines as Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, West Virginia, Tennessee, Mississippi and Arkansas – Auburn is the number one school for fashion merchandising and the number two school for fashion design.

No university in the Southeastern Conference is ranked higher than Auburn nationally or regionally. The University of Georgia is the only conference rival that comes close, finishing second in the list of Top 15 fashion merchandising schools in the South.

The writers, designers and researchers behind the website began publishing regional and national rankings in 2013 at the request of aspiring fashion designers and merchandisers asking about the best schools in the country, a given state, or a particular region. The result also provided students access to ample information so they can make an informed decision about the school and program that best fits their needs.

Auburn’s Apparel Merchandising, Design and Production Management program in the Department of Consumer and Design Sciences in the College of Human Sciences improved in every national ranking from 2013 to 2014. The most significant improvement was in the list of the country’s top 75 fashion design schools, where Auburn rose from 20th in 2013 to 12th in 2014.

Carol Warfield, head of the Department of Consumer and Design Sciences, attributed the progress to a dedicated commitment to highly qualified faculty, talented and motivated students, and a partnership with firms throughout the fashion industry.

To prepare its rankings, the website team examined more than 200 schools across the country with fashion programs on the basis of academic reputation, admission selectivity, depth and breadth of the program and faculty, value and geographic location. School surveys were an added factor in 2014.
Physics faculty, students envision new opportunities for scientific breakthroughs with 6,000-pound magnet

Auburn University’s College of Sciences and Mathematics recently opened its new Magnet Laboratory, a one-of-a-kind facility that will support plasma physics research for university faculty and students, as well as a diverse team of national and international scientists who will come to Auburn to perform experimental and theoretical studies.

The lab, which is housed in Auburn’s Department of Physics in Leach Science Center, includes a 6,000-pound superconducting magnet, the only one of its kind in the world as it is designed to allow researchers to shape the structure of the magnetic field. As a result of this unique capability, Auburn researchers and the larger plasma physics community now have the capability to perform potentially ground-breaking experiments that have not been possible until now.

“We have worked very hard to establish a team of collaborators. We have potential partners from Europe, from Asia, and we are continuing to build our partnerships with our U.S. collaborators. It is our hope that by the end of 2014 to early 2015, we will provide an opportunity for the first of those collaborators to come to Auburn and begin doing experiments here,” said Physics Professor Edward Thomas.

“Some of the things we hope to discover are how to control the growth, formation and trapping of dust. If we can control the behavior of dust, then we can see how to use dust as a tool. Only a few experiments in the world have looked at the charged, magnetized particles, and that is the primary mission of the device,” said Thomas.

“The other part of the mission of the device is to study the fundamental physics of strongly magnetized plasmas,” he added. “Because of the magnetic field strength that we can produce, and because that magnetic field can be produced in steady state, meaning the magnetic field strength remains constant, we can perform long-duration experiments at high magnetic fields, which is something fairly unique in the plasma physics community.”

“The superconducting magnet in the laboratory is a one-of-a-kind device,” said Thomas. “There have been a half-a-dozen or so experiments around the world that have tried to explore the physics of magnetized dusty plasmas. We think of our device as the first, second-generation device, where we have taken a lot of the lessons we have learned on earlier devices and incorporated them into the design of this facility and tried to put together something that is pretty unique.”

Thomas oversaw development of the lab, which was funded by a National Science Foundation Major Research Instrumentation award of $2.1 million, which includes a 30-percent cost-sharing by Auburn University. The grant is one of the largest MRI projects ever awarded to Auburn.

Thomas and Uwe Konopka jointly run Auburn’s Plasma Sciences Laboratory.

– Candis Birchfield

Information security

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♦ Disclosure of sensitive information potentially compromising the identity or privacy of university employees, students, contractors, alumni or other individuals whose data is entrusted to the care of Auburn University.

♦ A serious operational incident related to IT systems owned or operated by the university, such as a successful denial-of-service attack, or a major system or sub system failure resulting in continuity of service failures.

♦ Contact from the FBI, Secret Service or other law enforcement organizations regarding a university information resource that may have been used to commit a computer crime.

♦ Serious improper or illegal use of an external system by a university employee, student or contractor originating from or passing though the AU network.

♦ Incidents involving the possible theft, compromise or improper use of Auburn University computer equipment, mobile device or electronically stored information.

Family Fun Day Redux

Several hundred Auburn University employees brought their families to campus June 4 for Family Fun Day, an annual festival marking a brief lull between the end of one year on the Plains and start of another. As always, inflatables proved to be among the biggest draws for the younger set.

Farmers Market Thursdays

The Market at Ag Heritage Park opens each Thursday from 3-6 p.m. for the university community in front of Ham Wilson Arena at Lem Morrison and Donahue drives. Hosted by the College of Agriculture since 2005, the market brings in area vendors offering fresh, seasonal fruits, vegetables, flowers and other farm items.
Family ties

Father, son team up in pursuit of business degrees

Running into your brother or sister on campus is not unusual for siblings enrolled on the Plains. Bumping into your father as a fellow student is quite rare, though, and might be considered awkward— but not for Xavier and C.J. Uzomah, a father and son duo pursuing their goals through Auburn University and its Raymond J. Harbert College of Business.

C.J. has been working toward an NFL career since he was 6. And why not? A prize recruit at North Gwinnett High School in Georgia, he became the starting tight end on Auburn’s 2013 SEC championship team and scored three touchdowns on 11 receptions last season—including the dramatic game-winner in the closing seconds against Mississippi State.

“But at the same time, I know that if that doesn’t work out then there are other options for me,” said C.J., a senior marketing major. He’s a passionate soccer fan who also ponders a future as a communications/marketing representative for an international “futbol” outfitter.

“I’m a pretty outgoing person,” he said. “I figured that marketing would be something that I could talk to people professionally. I feel that I’m pretty persuasive in some aspects.”

His father, Xavier, is an experienced financial analyst from Atlanta who wants to climb the corporate ladder. That’s why he earned an Executive MBA, or EMBA, degree from Harbert College.

“I was a 5-star EMBA prospect,” joked Xavier, a May 2014 graduate who kidded that recruiters told him, “I’ve seen the way you can handle that pencil.”

Together, the father and son tackled academics on the Plains, sharing some of the same courses and professors.

“It was weird at first because I saw him on campus and people are like ‘Hey, I think I saw your dad but I’m not really sure because I don’t know why he’d be here,’” said C.J. “It was a fun experience—him being able to take me out sometimes and talking about his schoolwork. It was kind of eye-opening—to see how much fun he was having with his classmates and the opportunities that they were able to come across.”

The EMBA program blends on-campus residencies and distance learning, which appeals to business professionals nationwide—allowing them to work full-time while earning an MBA. During his EMBA residencies, Xavier managed to visit his son, while respecting his freedom.

“We tried to have dinner once every week I was here,” said Xavier, who earned his undergraduate degree in business administration from Southern Mississippi in 1997 and has worked for the likes of SunTrust and the Southern Company. “I tried to stay out of C.J.’s way. He’s 21. I wanted to let him have his own experiences.”

While C.J. competed on the field, he also competed, in a sense, with his father off of it. After his freshman year in 2011-12, the athlete established a reputation among professors as a bright, attentive student. Little did he know that some of those same professors would soon be comparing his father to him.

“My dad was like ‘Some of the professors said that you were a good kid, nice student, and all this stuff and so, obviously I have to be better than you at this,’” C.J. said with a grin.

“It’s something where we kind of competed with each other a little bit, tried to make it a ‘lets’s see who can do better’ type of thing,” C.J. said. “That was fun for me. My dad worked his butt off. He stayed up until 4 in the morning some nights doing some things and I was like ‘I’m going to go ahead and go to sleep.’ I think he had the upper hand.”

C.J. said his father admitted to him at graduation in May that his own passion for schoolwork and success inspired him to pursue this and get his EMBA. That was a jump-start for him.

“Seeing him going through the process—getting his picture taken in front of the Auburn University sign and getting his diploma, inspires me to not only get my undergraduate degree but hopefully to be able to get my MBA from Auburn,” C.J. said. “It really was a fun experience—hearing his name called, and next year it should be me.”

Academics are obviously important in the Uzomah household. C.J.’s mother, Stephanie, is a kindergarten teacher and holder of a master’s degree in education. C.J. said he believes that one day returning to earn his MBA, or possibly an EMBA, will give him a competitive edge in the workplace.

“Attending my father’s graduation I was observant to the plethora of students that graduated with business degrees—meaning the business world is becoming a hot commodity and there is going to be fierce competition when I graduate,” he said. “I believe it will be to my benefit to get my MBA in improving my chances in this competitive field.”

Engineering faculty develop roadmap for future use by commercial drones in U.S.

The day may soon come when the order you placed online will be delivered through the air—not by plane, but by drone.

Kevin Gue, an associate professor in the Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering at Auburn, is part of a research group that has developed a roadmap, or planning document, to address changes in the material handling and logistics industry.

Gue has utilized his research expertise in warehousing, material handling and order fulfillment to examine how emerging technologies can have a direct impact on companies now, as well as 10 to 15 years down the road.

The development of the roadmap incorporated four workshops in cities throughout the United States to assess what the industry will look like in 2025 and how businesses should be preparing now. This included conversations regarding the workforce, suppliers and planning systems involved in the industry.

The overwhelming consensus was that stakeholders may be focusing too much on the present, and not spending enough time preparing for the future.

“As the study describes, there are many challenges that individual companies will have to solve in the future, such as robotic order picking, automated truck loading and possibly home delivery by unmanned drones,” Gue said.

Companies like Amazon are pioneering the use of drones through package delivery, and Gue said he believes the industry will undergo a rapid change as more and more companies experiment with these technologies.

“In robotics in particular, we’re going to see a revolution in the next three to 10 years that I think is going to be shocking and exciting at the same time,” he said. “We’re going to have robots doing things that we never thought could be done. The technology is pushing us.”

– By Megan Burmester