Richardson outlines goals for AU

Saying he wants to ensure that his successor has a long and successful tenure at Auburn, interim President Ed Richardson presented a broad and fast-paced agenda to the Board of Trustees and the university community on Friday, June 17.

The agenda, expanding upon six initiatives unveiled in 2004, places major emphasis on AU creating a comprehensive and ongoing strategic planning process, changing the concept of the AU System, developing a process of academic program review and creating an institute to give a new focus to AU’s programs in agriculture, forestry and the natural sciences.

“It is important to note that many of these proposals come in anticipation of what I believe will be a continually growing demand for accountability from both the Legislature and the taxpayers of Alabama,” Richardson said.

By moving quickly on the plans and proposals, Richardson said, AU would control its destiny and overcome “disconnectedness,” which he described as an environment in which AU constituencies see themselves at odds with one another instead of pursuing goals for the common good of the university. By working together in pursuit of these goals, he said, all parties will help set the stage for Auburn’s success under a long-term president.

Richardson said the university could make enough progress during the coming year to conduct a search for a new president and fill the position by the end of 2006.

Faculty and administrators began work on the strategic plan earlier this year. The plan will guide the board’s allocation of resources, guide efforts to establish a legislative agenda and assist the board in identifying priorities that would aid in the search for highly qualified candidates for a new president.

Richardson said he expects to bring a proposal to the board in November. If the board approves

See AU initiatives, page 2

Plans revolve around six key initiatives

Six initiatives that interim AU President Ed Richardson introduced in October 2004 figure prominently in proposals and plans that Richardson presented to the Board of Trustees on Friday.

Initiatives discussed Friday were:

- Review and reorganize Auburn’s agricultural and related programs to reposition those programs to meet 21st century challenges.
- Define the relationship between Auburn and AU-Montgomery, ending ambiguity about how the institutions work together while maintaining separate identities in the AU System.
- Establish a process for regular and ongoing review of academic programs.
- Position the AU-owned Auburn-Opelika Robert G. Pitts Airport as a more attractive, more modern and self-sustaining economic development tool for East Alabama.
- Provide university leadership for a privately financed and operated beachfront resort hotel and convention center at Gulf State Park that will provide a base of operations for related academic programs.
- Position the AU-owned Auburn-Opelika Robert G. Pitts Airport as a more attractive, more modern and self-sustaining economic development tool for East Alabama.

The airport initiative was advanced on Friday through board action authorizing the administration to proceed with approval of ground leases for commercial development at the airport.

Also on Friday, Richardson further defined and set timelines for the initiatives related to agricultural programs, the AU-AUM relationship and academic program review.

The research park and the Gulf Shores projects are in early stages of development.


President cites other objectives for AU to tackle in coming year

Interim President Ed Richardson cited some objectives that fall under the six initiatives cited on page 1. Those include:

- Finalizing the criteria and guidelines for a space utilization and management plan for the AU Systems.
- Completing a north Auburn campus plan to accommodate future needs and preserve valuable existing programs.
- Adopting a plan to promote diversity. The plan would be implemented, the changes I have proposed should better position us to meet those demands that demand that demand that demand that demand that demand that demand that demand that..."

Richardson said the title of chancellor of AU-Montgomery would change to president of that campus.

The title of AU provost and vice president for academic affairs would be changed to vice chancellor of the AU System and president of Auburn University.

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The title of vice president for development would be changed to vice chancellor of AU for AU System and retention of the current title for AU duties.

Meanwhile, in a move that goes to the heart of the AU Strategic Plan, Richardson said, we need to be proactive in our efforts to be more attractive to highly qualified, outstanding presidential candidates of the quality this university desires.

We are already beginning to see the call from our state lawmakers to demonstrate that we are making wise use of the funds we are allotted. Recently, the Legislature’s Commission on Government Accountability released data from a survey of recent graduates of Auburn’s schools and colleges. The survey asked graduates whether they would attend their respective alma maters again as well as sought ratings on various elements of their student experience at Auburn. Auburn ranked extremely well in this survey, in fact, a higher number of our graduates said they would definitely attend Auburn than those of any other school.

Six simple survey, despite the importance of the numbers that it generated, is only the tip of the iceberg. It is clear to me that the public perception that is not stringent enough to demonstrate how well our institutions of higher learning are spending public money are long overdue. From Opp and from Oxford, the public view of higher ed is dominated by ever-increasing tuition rates and the perception that our professors enjoy light workloads, yet draw significant salaries.

Rest assured that constituents pass those views — in essence, those concerns — along to their legislators and that concerns, unless they are effectively countered, come into play when the state begins its annual budgeting process. Soon, these proposals for academic accountability will become more stringent and more formal, and Auburn is far better off if we prepare ourselves in advance of those formalities.

Auburn is positioning itself to lead way in establishing accountability measures for higher education in the state of Alabama.


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As most of you are already aware, I put before our Board of Trustees at its June 17 meeting several items that will result in significant change at Auburn and within the AU System.

It is important to note that many of these proposals come in anticipation of the proposed growing demand for accountability from both the Legislature and the taxpayers of Alabama. When im-

It is only reasonable that those who work daily on our campus should know better than anyone the worst indicators of our effective use of resources and more appropriately address the needs of the state and both institutions’ local communities.

Secondly, and most importantly, higher education should take the lead in defining the terms of its accountability. It will be measured. It is only reasonable that those who work daily on our campus should know better than anyone the worst indicators of our effective use of resources.

Auburn — a far better fate than having standards imposed upon us by those less familiar with what we do. It is my desire that Auburn lead the way in establishing accountability measures for higher education in the state of Alabama. Now, in advance of those proposals for academic accountability, it is the time for us to begin “setting the bar.” The timing is made even more essential with a presidential search on our horizon.

We can begin to address accountability in advance of outside mandates by keeping tuition increases to a minimum.

We must also closely scrutinize faculty time and workload, taking into account time spent in the classroom, time spent in the research laboratory and other applicable factors.

We must re-examine how we schedule our classes and utilize our space, ensuring that we don’t create new space to meet maximum class loads that could be more effectively spread out, as a result, require less space.

We must begin to establish relationships through which we work with other institutions of higher learning throughout the state in maximizing our resources. In particular, we should take advantage


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Auburn developing new planning process to identify goals for future

With Auburn about to complete its five-year plan for the first half of this decade, faculty and administrators at AU are preparing a strategic plan to guide the university through the remainder of the decade while setting a pattern for planning in the future.

Phase two will focus on answering strategic questions and setting goals for the next five years and beyond.

Sauser is a professor and associate dean for outreach in the College of Business and the Citrus College of Engineering.

With assistance from the Group Solutions consulting firm, the steering committee will assemble the material and present a final draft of questions for consideration to interim President Ed Richardson in July.

Richardson said he will take a proposed plan to the Board of Trustees in November. After the board adopts a plan, the administration will work with faculty and staff to develop operational strategies to achieve the goals.

While the first phase has concentrated on identifying questions and issues that could affect the university’s progress over the next five years, phase two will focus on answering the strategic questions and setting goals. That process will include more specific forums and web surveys in August and analysis by the strategy team in September.

Early in fall semester, Richardson will seek feedback on the strategy team’s draft and further narrow the list to a set of overarching goals. Richardson is scheduled to present six to eight overarching goals to the Board of Trustees in November, but Sauser has said the final number could vary, depending on the results of the final draft and feedback from the university community during the planning process.

With the current five-year plan expiring on Oct. 1, vice presidents, deans and other AU budget planners will use the resulting goals next spring and summer in developing operating budgets for 2006-07. The goals will also guide AU in setting priorities and planning of budgets for the remainder of the decade.

Procedures established during the current planning cycle will be modified as necessary and followed as the university develops an ongoing process for long-term planning beyond the next five years.

In recent presentations, Sauser told the University Senate and the AU Board of Trustees that the new process is intended to provide a comprehensive and broad-based means of defining the university’s direction with a limited set of high-priority, long-term goals. Those goals, he said, should guide policy decisions and legislative strategy; focus decisions about resource allocation; serve as the basis for unit operational goals, plans and benchmarks of progress; and guide selection of future leaders.

Accountability continued from page 3

opportunities to work closely with the University of Alabama System. Such a relationship can prove particularly beneficial, as is evidenced by our cooperation in the most recent legislative session.

Finally, we must pursue the ongoing comprehensive strategic planning process that will provide for us all a more definitive focus for Auburn’s future.

Increased calls for accountability are on the horizon, and I believe that measures taken as a result of my six initiatives coupled with those I have outlined here will better prepare this university to answer those calls and, at the same time, attract a president with the qualities to serve Auburn well for many years.

It is my hope that the entire campus community — students, faculty, staff and administrators — can move toward making these proposals a reality with a degree of unity so that we can improve and effectively demonstrate to the legislature, taxpayers and presidential candidates the outstanding job we do in meeting our missions of education, research and outreach.

Increase in tuition will help fund scholarship program

The AU Board of Trustees on Friday approved a 4 percent increase in tuition for 2005-06.

One-fourth of the $5.3 million in added revenue will fund scholarships, and one-eighth will be for Student Activities Programs. The remainder will go toward university operations.

The increase will be $95 per semester to $2,400 for in-state students. Non-resident students will see their tuition rise by $285 to $7,200 per semester.

Addressing concerns about the impact of rising tuition on students from families with lower incomes, the increase will generate more than $1 million per year for scholarships.

Executive Vice President Don Large noted that AU ranks near the bottom among major universities in the South in the amount of financial aid, $12 million, awarded per year and in the percent of students receiving aid. In 2004, 55 percent of entering freshmen at Auburn received financial aid, compared to 74 percent at the University of Alabama.

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