Budget plan spreads impact of recession across all segments

Budget guidelines authorized by the Board of Trustees on June 19 confirmed what administrators have been saying for months: Every part of the university will feel the sting of the worldwide economic recession at least through 2010.

In reviewing the guidelines for the fiscal year that starts Oct. 1 and approving a tuition increase effective fall semester, trustees said shared sacrifices are necessary for Auburn to overcome reduced state appropriations due to the recession.

For 2009-10, the main campus faces a reduction in state funding for operations of $5.8 million and mandatory cost increases of $10.3 million, and the three other major divisions of the university face similar funding problems.

The funding shortfall for the coming budget year is on top of this year’s 21 percent reduction in state appropriations, leaving the Auburn campus with $39.2 million less in the coming year than it had in 2007-08, before the recession started.

To balance the budget, trustees agreed to a 5.7 percent increase in tuition for students, a second consecutive year without salary increases for faculty and staff and a mix of continuing and one-time budget cuts affecting all departments.

The tuition increase is projected to yield $9 million in additional revenue, and the campuswide budget cuts are expected to yield $30.2 million in savings, split evenly between ongoing and one-time cuts.

Using the guidelines, President Jay Gogue and Executive Vice President Don Large will present the final budget to the board in September.

At the June board meeting, Large said federal stimulus funds allocated by Congress to the states for recession recovery are expected to help shore up Auburn’s finances at some point in the coming year, but officials remain unsure of exactly when the funds will be available or what strings will be attached. Until more is known, Large said, the university cannot include those funds in its budget. Even so, he added, the overall effect will be to keep a bad economic picture from getting worse than it otherwise would.

While the impact of recession-relief funds on the Auburn and Montgomery campuses remains unclear, Large said the additional federal funds for the Agricultural Experiment Station and the Cooperative Extension System will enable the university to drop consideration of a “buyout” package designed to encourage a limited number of employee retirements and voluntary departures. He said buyouts could create serious staffing problems for AES and CES and are not something to pursue as long as other options are available.

Complete in 2010

Work starts on new airport terminal

A long-held goal for university and community leaders moved a step closer to fruition on June 18 as ground was broken for a new terminal and flight line at the Auburn-Opelika Robert G. Pitts Airport. Officially signaling the start of construction were, from left, Paul Spina of the University Board of Trustees, Auburn Mayor Bill Ham, State Rep. Mike Hubbard and University President Jay Gogue. Ham and Hubbard have long worked closely with university leaders in support of the airport upgrade and, earlier, for its expansion.

University and community leaders recently broke ground for a new terminal and flight line at the Auburn-Opelika Robert G. Pitts Airport. Officially signaling the start of construction were, from left, Paul Spina of the University Board of Trustees, Auburn Mayor Bill Ham, State Rep. Mike Hubbard and University President Jay Gogue. Ham and Hubbard have long worked closely with university leaders in support of the airport upgrade and, earlier, for its expansion.

Upgrading airport

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“The desire for a new terminal was initially expressed in the late 1980s, and since then we’ve continued to grow,” said Airport Director Bill Hutto. “This addition is extremely necessary and should prove to be tremendously beneficial for Auburn University and our community.”

Community and university leaders came together at the airport for the ceremony. Auburn Mayor Bill Ham, chairman of the Airport Advisory Board, served as master of ceremonies, and speakers included University President Jay Gogue, State Rep. Mike Hubbard and Board of Trustees representative Paul Spina. Other members of the Board of Trustees and various state and local government officials and administrators also participated.

Owned by Auburn University, the airport is a training site for aviation students and serves the local area as a public use facility.

“We have over 65,000 aircraft operations every year. Without this addition, we would not have the space or amenities to adequately support our mission,” said Hutto, “But, with this new construction, our dream will be able to become a tangible public benefit.”

Construction, which is scheduled to take a year, follows a planning effort that began in

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Auburn Archives receives historic Civil War letter

Auburn Archives recently acquired a letter documenting a dramatic moment in American history: Gen. Robert E. Lee’s surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia, signaling the defeat of the South in the Civil War.

On April 9, 1865, Lee met with Gen. Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Court House. In a letter of the same date, Grant gave Lee the terms of surrender.

The following day Grant apparently made a handwritten copy of the April 9 letter for posterity’s sake, dating it April 10.

“Before the days of copy machines, it was common practice to produce more than one handwritten copy of important documents,” said Dwayne Cox, head of Special Collections and Archives in Draughon Library. “In 30 years as an archivist, I have never received an item of greater significance.”

History Professor Kenneth Noe, an authority on the Civil War, called Starr’s donation “a landmark addition to the university’s holdings of letters, diaries and rare books” related to the conflict.

Grant’s terms included the parole of all officers and enlisted men in Lee’s army. In this context, parole meant the promise of a prisoner of war not to take up arms in the future against his captors.

The terms called upon Lee’s army to surrender its artillery and other weapons, but excluded officers’ sidearms, private horses and other personal items. Finally, Grant allowed officers and men to return to their homes, “not to be disturbed by the United States authorities,” provided they observed their parole and the laws of their localities. Historians consider the latter provision an attempt on Grant’s part to preclude treason trials. Most scholars interpret Grant’s terms of surrender as magnanimous.

The Grant letter will appear on a Web site that will include all of Auburn’s original Civil War manuscripts. The site is planned for release in 2011, during the Civil War sesquicentennial.

Historic letter

In Draughon Library, Joyce Hicks and Dwayne Cox view the letter written by Gen. Ulysses S. Grant in 1865 describing terms for the surrender of Gen. Robert E. Lee’s forces at the end of the Civil War. The letter is a gift from Auburn alumnus James L. Starr.

Budget impact

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Trustees expressed concern about the university’s inability for the second consecutive year to fund salary increases for employees, other than for promotions, but they noted that most other institutions face similar funding problems.

Discussing tuition, trustees noted that the increase is less than those at other large universities in Alabama and across the region, but they said the recession’s impact on students and made the decision to raise rates difficult. Tuition for Alabama residents will increase to $9,360 from $8,820. For non-residents, the rate will increase to $3,120 per semester from $2,940; for non-state students because each increase costs out-of-state students three times as much as in-state students.

In addition to a tuition increase, students will pay $50 more per semester toward construction of a new student activity center. The building was requested in a referendum last spring and planning is at an early stage; the project will come before the board for review before it can proceed to the construction stage.

In a related matter, Large said, some funds from student fees will be available for a pilot program for extending Tiger Transit hours for nighttime bus service to students living off campus. If the extended hours are successful, a permanent source of funding will be necessary for continued night operations, he said.

— Roy Summerford

Carr elected to certification board for behavior analysts

James Carr of Auburn’s College of Liberal Arts has been elected to a three-year term on the Behavior Analyst Certification Board.

Established in 2000, the certification board establishes practice and ethical standards and implements a national and international certification program for practitioners of applied behavior analysis.

Carr is the incoming director of the Department of Psychology’s master’s program in applied behavior analysis and developmental disabilities, and he advises doctoral students in the department’s experimental psychology program.

Airport groundbreaking

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2002 with funding from Lee County and the cities of Auburn and Opelika, which rely on the airport as an important component of the area’s economic development efforts. Much of the construction cost is financed with grants from the Federal Aviation Authority.

“Modernizing and growing our airport will better reflect the university and community it supports and create a better impression with visitors of what we are really about,” Hutto said. “This is a huge addition to the university and should serve as an economic tool to help advance our region.”

— Sarah Jane Little
Biggio program helping faculty at critical point in their careers

A program launched five years ago through Auburn’s Biggio Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning is helping new faculty at Auburn at a critical period in their academic careers.

After completing their first and second years on a university faculty, assistant professors, especially those with newly earned doctorates, find the seven-year window for tenure beginning to close. With little margin for error during that period, 25 to 40 new faculty members each year turn to the Biggio Center’s New Faculty Scholars Program to ensure that they are on the right path in a quest that extends beyond tenure.

While the Biggio Center provides programs for faculty at each stage of their careers to help them develop or keep their edge in teaching effectiveness, Jim Groccia, the center’s director, says the New Faculty Scholars Program is important because it comes at a critical stage in a faculty member’s career.

Several other programs and services at the Biggio Center help tenured faculty members stay up to date and effective in the knowledge and use of theory, technology and practice in and outside the classroom. However, faculty in an early career stage usually have broader needs, which the New Faculty Scholars Program seeks to address, Groccia noted.

“The program has a major focus on enhancing teaching, which is very important,” he said. “But new faculty also need and ask for a holistic approach that takes a comprehensive view of research, outreach and service, along with teaching, and that is what we try to provide.”

With professional development activities distributed over the span of a year, New Faculty Scholars take part in activities such as a course design workshop in August, a “Publish and Flourish” workshop on academic writing in October and a symposium in February focusing this year on multicultural issues in teaching and learning. In May, they participate in a two-day retreat on academic portfolios and an overview of tenure and promotion policies. At other times, many scholars voluntarily attend other programs, such as professional development seminars and the Biggio Reading Group.

Two other key aspects of the program, Groccia noted, involve mentoring by established faculty members and developing personal ties with colleagues in other disciplines.

New Faculty Scholars also participate in either an in-class or online mid-semester process to gather feedback from their students on how well things are going in their classes and suggestions on how teaching and learning experiences can be improved. Faculty and students describe this as a “win-win” situation that results in enhanced teaching and learning as well as a greater sense of student satisfaction in the course.

Beyond helping faculty members get established in their disciplines, the New Faculty Scholars Program helps participants become part of the broader campus community as they get to know others in similar circumstances but different academic fields. “I have had people tell me it was a revelation to discover what others do in different disciplines,” Groccia said. Noting that each class produces a strong network of scholars across the disciplines, he said participants find it easier to avoid becoming trapped in academic silos as they develop a broader view of the disciplines.

Past participants cite the collegiality aspect of the program as one of its greatest strengths. Tom Gallagher of Forestry, a member of the New Faculty Scholars Program’s inaugural class of 2004, cited that as one of the most enduring benefits of his time with the program. “It allowed me to meet and converse with colleagues from other disciplines, which greatly broadened my experience here at Auburn,” he said.

Gallagher added, “It also helped me to meet faculty in similar disciplines from other colleges that I may not have crossed paths with otherwise, thereby enhancing collaborative efforts.”

Barb Bondy of Art, a member of the 2005 class, also cited the long-term benefit of working with faculty in various disciplines through the program. “I continue to be connected with many of these individuals,” she said.

Bondy said she continues to benefit from the workshops. “I also learned excellent strategies leading to the development of an academic portfolio. I developed a philosophy statement for each of the areas in which I focus: research, teaching, outreach and service. With a clearer focus and alignment of approach in these areas, I learned to make more efficient use of my time and was able to develop a coherent tenure dossier.”

With the approval of their department heads, new faculty members apply to the program in the spring of their first or second year at Auburn. Although the application period for 2009-10 closed in May, and the new class is organizing this summer, Groccia said the Biggio Center asks department heads to start early in identifying first- and second-year faculty members who could benefit from the New Faculty Scholars Program and encouraging them to apply for the 2010-11 class.

— Roy Summerford

Groome creates professorship in Ginn College of Engineering

H. Vincent Groome III, owner of Groome Transportation which operates Auburn’s Tiger Transit system, has created a professorship in the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering in honor of his father.

The Harold V. Groome Jr. Professorship in Transportation Engineering will support a civil engineering faculty member who is a recognized authority in transportation engineering instruction and research.

Auburn has undertaken a professorship initiative to create 81 endowed professorships across campus. The university has agreed to add $7,500 annually to the earnings of any new professorship endowment established by Sept. 30. This means an investment of $150,000 — half the amount normally required — will create the equivalent of a $300,000 named endowed professorship.
Led by William Powell

Carnegie Hall makes lasting impression on Auburn performers

A group of Auburn choir students has joined the likes of George Gershwin, Judy Garland, Stevie Ray Vaughan and The Beatles by performing at Carnegie Hall in New York.

The group of 28 Auburn students participated in a June 14 performance at the famed concert venue. The students represented each of Auburn’s six choral ensembles: Chamber Choir, Women’s Chorus, Men’s Chorus, Gospel Choir, Vocal Chamber Ensemble and the AU Singers. William Powell, director of choral activities at Auburn, directed them for part of the performance.

“The music, which was in Latin, initially was challenging, but with Dr. Powell’s encouragement and help we performed beautifully in the most amazing concert hall I have ever been in,” said Lola Obebe, a junior who has been a member of the University Choirs for two years. “Plus, I made new friends and got to explore New York City for the first time.”

The students were invited last summer to be part of the 2009 Carnegie Hall Concert Series by MidAmerica Productions, which sponsors more guest concerts in Carnegie Hall than any other company.

“The significance of this invitation speaks very highly of the Auburn University music department,” Powell said. “Since we currently do not have a performing arts facility on our campus, it was especially rewarding for the students to have the opportunity to perform not only with other fine musicians from around the country, but also in one of our country’s greatest musical landmarks.”

The students collaborated with several other college, high school, community and church choirs from around the country. They also were accompanied by a resident orchestra, the New England Symphonic Ensemble, for the 40-minute concert which included two works by Franz J. Haydn, “Te Deum” and “Missa Brevis St. Joannis de Deo,” also referred to as “Little Organ Mass.”

University President Jay Gogue and his wife joined former Vice President of Development Bob McGinnis and his wife in the audience.

Leading up to the concert, the Auburn group volunteered to perform at two City of Auburn events, the Veteran’s Day ceremony and the Mayor’s Memorial Day breakfast, for which the mayor’s office made a contribution to the group’s travel fund. In addition, each student raised $1,600 to travel to New York.

— Lisa Marshall

State historical association honors Jakeman

Jeff Jakeman, an associate professor of history in Auburn’s College of Liberal Arts, was recently honored by the Alabama Historical Association for service as editor of the state’s scholarly historical journal, The Alabama Review.

In a resolution adopted by the AHA Board of Directors in its annual meeting, the association commended Jakeman for producing 50 issues of the journal from 1995 to 2008, making the journal accessible and of interest to the general reader as well as the scholarly community, and mentoring numerous graduate research assistants who have gone on to make contributions to the field of history.

Jakeman holds the title of Engaged Scholar in the College of Liberal Arts. The CLA Engaged Scholar program seeks to support superior faculty in the college and strengthen student and faculty engagement in the community, national and international arenas.

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