Panel to draft policy proposal to prohibit smoking on campus

Auburn University is assembling an ad hoc committee to draft a policy to make the campus free of smoke from cigarettes, pipes and cigars. Their proposal will go to President Jay Gogue early in 2012, and, if adopted, the policy could go into effect one year from now.

Gogue recently asked Ainsley Carry, vice president for student affairs, to organize a committee to draft a policy to end tobacco smoking on campus grounds. His request was based on resolutions adopted in spring semester by the Student Government Association, University Senate, Staff Council and Administrative and Professional Assembly. Such a policy would expand the current no-smoking policy from campus buildings to outside areas.

Eric Smith, director of the Office of Health Promotion and Wellness Services in Student Affairs, is coordinating the process. Smith said the committee will include two representatives each from those four faculty, staff and student organizations as well as representatives from the Campus Health and Wellness Committee, Human Resources, Risk Management, the Medical Clinic and others.

Plans call for the committee to organize and begin work near the start of fall semester, with a goal of having a draft policy for the president by early next year.

Although much of the activity related to the proposed smoking ban occurred last spring, the movement toward banning smoking began in April 2010, with a letter to the university president in which a student suggested that Auburn follow the path of other institutions that had smoke-free campuses. At Gogue’s request, Carry asked the Health and Wellness Committee to investigate the need and support on campus for a broader no-smoking policy, as well as the pros and cons of such a policy. That panel’s report, favorable to a smoke-free-campus policy led representatives of the SGA, University Senate, Staff Council and A&P Assembly to introduce the resolutions that were debated and ultimately passed by those organizations.

Smith said public forums during the past academic year and feedback on a website revealed support for making Auburn a smoke-free campus, with a minority either opposed to a policy or questioning the need for one. In some cases, sentiments have been strong on both sides of the issue, he noted.

With smoking banned in campus buildings, many smokers step outside the buildings or onto highly trafficked sidewalks and concourses between buildings; it is here that smokers and nonsmokers frequently come into contact. On the website, as well as the forums, nonsmokers objected to being subjected to second-hand smoke, and some complained of walking through a haze of cigarette smoke and being sickened by the smoke and smells. Meanwhile smokers

See Smoke-free campus, page 2
Auburn University will award 1,237 academic degrees during two summer graduation ceremonies Saturday, Aug. 6, in Auburn Arena.

A 10 a.m. ceremony will include the colleges and schools of Architecture, Design and Construction; Engineering; Forestry and Wildlife Sciences; Liberal Arts; Nursing; and Sciences and Mathematics. A 2 p.m. ceremony will be held for the colleges and schools of Agriculture; Business; Education; and Human Sciences. Both ceremonies can be viewed live through the university’s website at www.auburn.edu/graduationlive.

The ceremonies mark a return to Auburn Arena for graduations. Spring commencement was held at Jordan-Hare Stadium in one large ceremony, but university officials have selected Auburn Arena for future ceremonies to avoid possible weather-related concerns with the stadium. Graduations were held from 1969 to 2010 in Beard-Eaves-Memorial Coliseum, which is slated for demolition.

The university will award 842 bachelor’s degrees, 300 master’s degrees, 83 doctorates, nine specialist degrees and three professional degrees. The College of Liberal Arts will award the most bachelor’s degrees with 246, followed by the College of Business with 166 and the College of Human Sciences with 100. The Samuel Ginn College of Engineering will award 84 degrees; College of Education, 67; College of Architecture, Design and Construction, 62; College of Sciences and Mathematics, 61; College of Agriculture, 37; School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, 9; and Office of the Provost (interdisciplinary), 10.

NASA to launch student-built satellite for outer-space study

The Auburn University Student Space Program has completed AubieSat-1, the first student-built satellite in Alabama.

The students — Ian Locklar, Kyle Owen and Andrew Slaughter — and their mentor, Jean-Marie Wersinger, will travel to California Polytechnic State University on Monday to go through a mission readiness review with NASA.

The group will also deliver the satellite for an Oct. 25 launch aboard a Delta II rocket. The satellite will conduct a science mission, testing various types of solar cells protective films in the harsh environment of space. It will also transmit “War Eagle,” upon request from the ground station in Allison Lab on campus.

Smoke-free campus

Continued from Page 1

complained that they are already being discriminated against — in practical, if not legal, terms — by being forced outside; they argued that forcing them to leave campus to have a cigarette would create an unwarranted hardship on the smoking minority to appease the majority.

Nationally, the Centers for Disease Control report that 20.6 percent of adults in the United States smoke cigarettes on a regular basis. The percent has declined steadily since the early 1980s in response to public campaigns against cigarette use and a sharp decrease in the acceptability of smoking in society.

The American Lung Association has identified 246 smoke-free colleges and universities, including the University of Florida and all of higher education in Arkansas. Joining that group is Troy University, which recently announced that it will become a smoke-free campus in the fall of 2012. Locally, East Alabama Medical Center extended its ban on smoking to cover the grounds of all its facilities in 2010.

—— Ray Summerford
Student researchers at Auburn work on technology to expand health services electronically for children

KidCheck, a state program that administers health screenings to children in rural and medically underserved communities in Alabama, is expanding statewide with help from technology developed at Auburn University.

The new wireless system incorporating handheld devices used by nursing students to instantly analyze data for patient risk assessment was developed last year as part of an Auburn engineering student design project.

Guided by Richard Chapman, an associate professor in the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering’s Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering, seniors Ben Coulston, Zachary McKinnon, Stephen Duraski, John Brooks and Logan Cannon used a $23,000 grant from the Verizon Foundation to automate data gathering during KidCheck assessments.

By partnering with Auburn nursing students who perform the screenings, the five engineering students, who have since graduated, built a system that provides secure and confidential patient information and eliminates time-consuming paperwork.

“In the past, KidCheck used a manual screening process, leaving school nurses with the daunting task of going through a stack of paperwork, reaching out to parents and sending follow-up paperwork to healthcare providers,” said Jeff Haddox, CEO of Sight Savers America, the Birmingham-based nonprofit organization that administers KidCheck. “This often took months, which slowed down the coordination of follow-up care for the children.”

Through a second grant from the Verizon Foundation, Chapman and his team of wireless engineering researchers have received an additional $18,000 for continued research and software production for KidCheck. The funding is part of a $100,000 grant to Sight Savers America to further develop and implement the program and new wireless system across the state.

“When this project began, we identified shortcomings in the previous system that we thought could be more user friendly during screenings and would let us gather data more efficiently,” Chapman said.

He added, “As KidCheck software is being put to use, we see how we can expand and continue our research. I like getting students involved in the project and allowing them to work with the people who will be using the software they develop.”

KidCheck has been implemented in 43 Alabama school systems in conjunction with more than 20 Alabama nursing programs.

KidCheck reports can be instantly generated to notify parents of their children’s screening results and follow-up care, including referrals. The software also makes important health data accessible to public health professionals, as well as state policy-makers, while maintaining strict patient privacy.

— Sally Credille

Website puts new focus on Chattahoochee Valley

Students, faculty and staff in the College of Liberal Arts’ Department of Communication and Journalism have developed a website dedicated to the Chattahoochee River Valley, a 430-mile stretch of land beginning in North Georgia and ending near the Florida state line.

The website creators and advocates say the site is a means of sharing with others insights into an area that is rich in Southern culture and history.

“The idea of the Chattahoochee Heritage Project is to offer a multi-platform website that focuses on the people, places, history and culture of the Chattahoochee River Valley,” said Ric Smith, director of experiential learning and executive producer of the site.

Smith said he and site designer Kevin Smith created the site with intentions of providing outreach for the Chattahoochee Valley community, while creating a learning lab for the students working on the project.

“The experience was one of the best I’ve had during my time at Auburn,” said Kathryn Johnson, senior in radio, television and film. “I was born and raised in Eufaula, which sits on the Chattahoochee, so I really took pride in the content I produced.”

Johnson became involved with the project through Ric Smith’s broadcast news production class. Johnson said her contributions were time intensive, often taking five to seven hours a week of traveling, interviewing and writing.

“Kathryn’s story is a perfect example of what the site is all about,” said Smith of the feature that tells the story of Butch Anthony and John Henry, folk artists from Seale in Russell County. Johnson’s story is one of many that give an intimate glimpse of the people of the Chattahoochee Valley. Other articles focus on a range of topics from history and attractions to places and art.

The project also includes stories on the 112 miles after the Chattahoochee ends, following the waters through the Apalachicola River and into the Gulf of Mexico.

“This project helped me discover just how special the people and culture of the Chattahoochee Valley are, and that’s why I think the project is so important,” said Johnson.

The website is at www.chattahoocheeheritage.org.

— Katie Horn

Researchers set university record for patents in 2010

Auburn University researchers set university records last year for the number of U.S. patents and license and option agreements.

During 2010, Auburn researchers were responsible for 25 new U.S. patents, beating the second highest mark of 19 in 2007, and secured 25 new license and option agreements. Researchers at Auburn also cited 105 new invention disclosures, almost reaching the 2010 mark of 110 four years ago.

New patents and inventions are in fields as diverse as advanced materials, biotechnology and environmental sciences.

“Auburn researchers develop ideas through rigorous analysis, design and testing,” said John Mason, vice president for research. “They complete the process by putting that concept to work in the marketplace, whether it’s to improve the human condition, create economic opportunity or add understanding of the world around us.”

The recently released 2010 Auburn Research annual update describes progress in Auburn’s research programs and profiles several university experts working closely with private industry and government.

Mason said cyber-security, or protecting sensitive material that travels over the Internet, is one of the university’s many growing research programs. Auburn researchers strengthen information assurance technologies and processes for industry and government.

The Auburn Research Park continues to expand alongside the university’s research programs. In 2010, the park added an MRI Research Center. Tom Denney, who directs the center, notes that the facility houses the most advanced clinical MRI, a 3 Tesla, and will soon add one of the world’s few 7 Tesla machines, used only for advanced medical research.

“The center unites expertise in engineering and health with one of the most powerful diagnostic tools available,” Denney said. “Improving cardiovascular health and advancing neuroscience are just two of the many promising medical developments we see in the future.”

The Auburn Business Incubator opened its doors in the park in May. Groundbreaking for the Center for Advanced Science, Innovation and Commerce is slated for this fall.
Campus News Briefs

Auburn University Libraries team wins Great Grown-Up Spelling Bee

Auburn University Libraries’ Win, Lose or Draughon spelling team of Marliese Thomas and Gerrit DeWitt won the first-place trophy from the Lee County Literacy Coalition’s eighth annual Great Grown-Up Spelling Bee in July.

The Literacy Coalition came in second, with English faculty members Jo Mackiewicz and Chad Wickman, representing the College of Liberal Arts, placing third. The event raised money for the literacy coalition’s education programs.

Business Office official receives national association’s Young Professional Award

Misty Kennedy, manager of procurement services in Auburn University Procurement and Payment Services, was recently awarded the Young Professional in Procurement Award by the National Association of Educational Procurement.

Presented at the Annual NAEP Conference in Memphis, the award recognizes the efforts of an outstanding young procurement professional who is an active member of the NAEP and has made great strides and contributions to the education procurement industry.

Mechanical engineering faculty member earns award for best paper

P.K. Raju, Thomas Walter Professor in the Department of Mechanical Engineering, received the best paper award recently at the 2011 American Society for Engineering Education annual conference and exposition in Vancouver.

Raju’s paper, “Improving Engineering Education in Developing Countries: A Study,” included contributions from Jian Yu, visiting scholar from the Tsinghua Center for Leadership Development and Research in Beijing, and Chetan Sankar, faculty member in Auburn’s College of Business.

College of Business professor to attend, present paper at Oxford Round Table

Peter Stanwick, an associate professor of management in the College of Business, has been invited to participate in the Oxford Round Round Table at the University of Oxford in England. The purpose of the Oxford Round Table is to promote education, art, science, religion and charity by means of academic conferences and publication of scholarly papers.

Stanwick will present his paper, “The Ethical Issues of For-Profit Colleges in the United States,” during the conference this month. This is the second invitation Stanwick has received to attend the Oxford Round Table. In 2004, he presented a paper on corporate governance.

Water Watch director named Water Conservationist of the Year

Bill Deutsch, director of Alabama Water Watch in the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, has been selected as Water Conservationist of the Year by the Alabama Wildlife Federation.

The award is a part of the AWF Governor’s Conservation Achievement Awards, which recognize individuals and organizations that make great contributions to the conservation of Alabama’s wildlife and related natural resources.

Agriculture professor named fellow of Crop Science Society of America

Beth Guertal, a faculty member in the College of Agriculture’s Department of Agronomy and Soils, will be inducted as a fellow in the Crop Science Society of America in October.

Only 0.3 percent of the society’s active and emeritus members may be elected fellow.