New paths, parking making Auburn bicycle-friendly as efforts continue to change transportation culture

Auburn University’s program to make the campus more bicycle-friendly is entering a new phase.

In 2002, the Board of Trustees adopted a plan to implement new bike paths around campus. After grants and funding were received, Phase I of the three-part plan began in 2006 with plans to nearly triple the mileage of shared use bicycle paths on campus.

“Our intentions were to change the transportation culture on campus,” said Cathy Love, master plan campus civil engineer, of the first phase which will reach completion this fall.

Phase I was funded by the university, with additional support in the form of a grant from the Federal Highway Administration through the Alabama Department of Transportation for $1 million. With the university funding and grant, Phase I includes bike paths along Samford Avenue and Wire Road from Samford Avenue to Webster Road, which will join with older paths on campus and city-funded bike paths elsewhere.

“The success of the university in terms of promoting the use of bicycles is very much contingent on the city because we’ve got to make points of connectivity with their paths for commuters,” noted Love, who said she hopes the city and university paths will grow to allow community members and students alike to traverse most of the city on bike.

Love also sees the paths as a way to make Auburn a greener campus. After a sustainability survey, Love and other planners saw a need for a new approach to tackling natural environment preservation, including the timberlands and creeks surrounding campus.

“We knew, through gathered data, if we could get these paths implemented, we could avoid building over 60 acres of asphalt parking, which leads to blacktop heat island and run off,” said Love.

Love notes that the paths will help more than just the environmental health; they will also help those who choose to bike live a healthier lifestyle.

Eric Smith, director of the Office of Health and Wellness in Student Affairs, has teamed up with Love to focus on promoting biking as transportation and working with the SGA to make sure these paths are accessible for student use.

“We see this as a way to promote biking as a means of transportation and getting out,” said Smith. “And if it’s promoting better health, of course, we’re all about it.”

College of Business rises in Forbes ranking of top schools

Forbes has released its biennial survey of top business schools and the Auburn University College of Business came in at 58th overall, up from No. 64 in 2009. Among the nation’s publicly supported business schools, Auburn ranks 27th. The ranking measures the best five-year “return on investment” for MBA graduates of the class of 2006.

For this year’s survey, Forbes sent questionnaires to 16,000 graduates of master of business administration programs around the world. To determine the five-year MBA gain, Forbes compared their earnings in their first five years out of business school to costs such as tuition, required fees and foregone compensation.

Although the financial payback for all MBA graduates has slowed in recent years, the Auburn MBA continues to be one of the best ways to jump start your career. The survey results show that Auburn graduates had an average pre-MBA salary of $28,000. That average rose to $71,000 five years after graduating with their MBA. According to Forbes’ calculations, it took them 3.1 years to recover the cost of their graduate education, with Auburn tied with Brigham Young, Michigan State and Iowa for fastest payback.

The top eight schools in the ranking were private universities, with Harvard University edging out 2009’s leader, Stanford University, for the number one spot. The top public MBA program was again the University of Virginia, at ninth overall. The Southeastern Conference was well represented with seven member institutions in this year’s ranking.

Dean Bill Hardgrave credits the ranking to the quality students the program attracts and to the faculty and staff who work tirelessly on their behalf. “While this latest ranking is just one measure of the excellence of our program, it confirms that we are on the right path. Recognition from such a high-profile business publication as Forbes validates our commitment to innovative, yet prac-
The Gnu’s Room to preview PBS documentaries

The PBS “Point of View” program has selected The Gnu’s Room, partnering with Auburn University’s Caroline Marshall Draughon Center for the Arts & Humanities in the College of Liberal Arts, as a preview site for upcoming films.

“Point of View,” known as “POV,” is television’s longest-running showcase for independent nonfiction films. Each year, it selects community partners from around the country to preview programs on a variety of contemporary social issues before they air on PBS.

Future screenings will be announced through The Gnu’s Room’s website and through the Caroline Marshall Draughon Center for the Arts & Humanities. The free screenings are open to the public and will be followed by discussion.

Bicycle-friendly campus

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Smith and SGA representatives have been working on a bike loaner program targeted to begin fall of 2012. That plan will be modeled after a program at Mississippi State University and include a fleet of 30-50 custom-made bikes, unique to Auburn University. Smith, an avid biker himself, is optimistic that the program will go over well and is depending on the Auburn Family to help make the program successful.

“Students will be able to pick up a bike, let’s say outside of the Student Center,” said Smith. “Then if they need to get to Goodwin, or wherever they’re going, they can ride the bike to their destination, stick it on the racks and be done with the bike.”

While the bike-loaner program will run on an honor system, Smith says he is not worried and feels Auburn is the perfect environment for such a program. “We’ve been talking to Mississippi State and they’ve had great success and I feel our communities are very comparable and we will find similar success, also,” he said.

As it prepares for an increase in bicycles on campus, the university is adding new bike racks around campus this fall. Among other planned improvements are a Dero Fixit repair stand that will include a pump and basic tools allowing bike riders to make adjustments or minor repairs as needed.

Now, with Phase II nearing completion, Love and Smith are seeking to develop the most effective strategy for the future. For Love, the next step will be reevaluating Phase II to make sure the priorities are still the same as they were in 2002, assigning costs to the project and putting forward funding requests. For Smith, it will involve preparing students and faculty alike for the cycling opportunities that are to come.

“It’s a no brainer,” said Smith. “This is the right atmosphere. The campus is safe, the people are respectful. It’s time to get this campus moving.”

— Katie Horn

Forbes’ top schools

Continued from Page 1

tical, education. While we are certainly pleased, we continue to look for ways to build upon and add value to our on-campus MBA program.”

Dan Groppe, associate dean for MBA programs, noted, “The Forbes survey indicates that our students double or triple their pre-MBA salaries within five years. This rate of return is very strong, among the strongest in the entire group of ranked schools. It is encouraging to see such a positive return on investment, and this is a tribute to our students and faculty.”

The Forbes ranking adds to the national recognition that the college has received. U.S. News has ranked Auburn 24th among the nation’s public undergraduate business programs and 32nd among the nation’s public graduate business schools. In its latest report, the Financial Times ranked Auburn’s EMBA program 35th in the nation and 75th in the world, up from 40th and 80th respectively, in 2009.

In May, Modern Healthcare magazine named the Auburn University College of Business among the nation’s top graduate business schools for physician-executives. Eighth among MBA programs, the Auburn Physicians Executive MBA program has been ranked every year since the survey began in 2003.

— Dina Kanellos Roberts

Extension director honored

Gaines Smith, director of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, is shown outside the Alabama 4-H Center’s environmental science education building, which now bears his name. The Alabama 4-H Club Foundation named the facility at the 4-H Center near Columbiana after the longtime ACES director on Aug. 9. Smith’s Extension career has spanned 45 years, and he has held leadership positions at the county, district, regional and state levels. He also serves on the National 4-H Council Board of Trustees.

Jeff Etheridge, Photographic Services
Long-time Auburn professor found new perspective in extra degree

Management Professor Bill Sauser recently fulfilled a long-held goal of obtaining a master’s degree. That is not unusual on a university campus, of course, except Sauser earned his first master’s degree, as well as a Ph.D., decades ago and has been on the Auburn University faculty since 1977.

But the master’s degree in business ethics Sauser received in July from the University of Wales provided him with new perspectives for an Executive MBA course on business ethics he has taught at the College of Business at Auburn for several years. That course is one of several business and professional ethics courses offered in various colleges and schools at Auburn, in addition to the Department of Philosophy in the College of Liberal Arts. Besides teaching business ethics, Sauser has also taught ethics in higher education in Auburn’s College of Education.

Sauser is also chair-elect of the University Senate, which represents the Auburn faculty, and he will serve as chair of the Senate in the 2012-13 academic year.

He did not need another academic degree, but Sauser had learned over the course of his career in higher education that anyone, even an authority in a subject, can have his blind side. Instead, he says, he wanted to be sure that he is meeting the students’ needs in courses he teaches.

“I have been teaching business ethics from a management perspective to people who are already in management,” said Sauser, whose Ph.D. from Georgia Tech was in industrial psychology, a management discipline. “These students are already dealing in their jobs with problems requiring ethical decision-making, and I was able to help many of them increase their own knowledge of the processes from a managerial perspective.”

He continued, “But good managers realize they need to view situations from a broader perspective in order to consider the impacts of their decisions beyond the short term, both for their company and for everyone it touches. Good students have the same motivation in taking business ethics courses, and I wanted to widen my own knowledge base in order to help them make ethically correct decisions.”

The goal, he said, was to learn to view ethical issues from other perspectives than solely that of a business manager or business professor. So, early in the past decade, he began to look for programs offering differing perspectives that could be incorporated into a business discipline. Since he teaches classes through distance learning, Sauser also sought to experience education from the perspective of his students, so he committed himself to becoming a student of distance learning programs, as well.

A Presbyterian minister as well as a professor, Sauser started with courses in ethics at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Ga. Afterward, he enrolled in a program at the Southern Institute for Business and Professional Ethics, since renamed the Center for Ethics and Corporate Responsibility, at Georgia State University. Those two programs took nearly four years on a part-time basis to complete.

At the Southern Institute, Sauser learned about a distance learning program at the University of Wales that offered the broader perspective on business ethics that he had been seeking.

Taught by European philosophy professors, the Wales course of study examined topical issues from a perspective that examined the impact of political and business decisions on persons far from the board room, such as workers and customers, and on the environment and local and global economies. Those studies examined the sometimes unintended consequences of decisions made with short-term objectives and too little information. He observed that management decisions made under those conditions can threaten the future of the company or industry, as well.

In addition to taking courses online, Sauser traveled to London at one point for studies with Benedictine monks. “What I wanted,” he said, “was depth of knowledge in the field, not just more information about it.”

Grading throughout the program was tough, he recalled, and involved intense analysis and thoughtful questions by a tutor and an outside authority in each subject. “It did not matter how much of an authority you were in a subject, they forced you to think more deeply about it,” he said.

“It did not matter how much of an authority you were in a subject, they forced you to think more deeply about it.”

— Bill Sauser

The program took an additional two years and, with a thesis option, led to a master of arts degree in business ethics. His thesis, “Empowering Leaders to Craft Organizational Cultures of Character: Concepts and Examples,” has served as the basis of several recently published journal articles and book chapters.

In July, Sauser traveled to Lampeter, Wales, in the United Kingdom for commencement, during which he received his degree from the vice chancellor of the university. “I have always wanted to receive a degree from a European university and have at last fulfilled that dream,” he said.

“I have learned a lot more about a subject that I thought I knew a great deal about already. Now, I hope to apply this understanding to help my students learn more about business ethics. And, I would like to pursue some topics more deeply in my research and writing.”

— Roy Summerford

University makes Samford Lawn available on weekends as site for outdoor weddings

Beginning this fall, the lawn in front of Auburn University’s Samford Hall will be available for wedding and vow-renewal ceremonies on Saturdays and Sundays throughout the year, with the exception of graduation and home football game weekends.

“We are pleased to offer this new opportunity to the Auburn Family,” said Teresa Whitman-McCall, director of campus and community events. “The university has received many requests for weddings in the past, but was unable to accommodate them because of logistical concerns in Samford Park, the most frequently requested location. Now we have a system in place to make it easy for couples to enjoy this beautiful setting.”

The Office of Communications and Marketing at Auburn, in partnership with The Hotel at Auburn University, will organize weddings in Samford Park. Wedding packages will range from simple, walk-up ceremonies to more elaborate events with seating for 300, non-alcoholic beverages and décor.

The Hotel will handle the booking for the wedding ceremony and can provide additional coordination and a back-up location if requested. Also, it can host the rehearsal dinner, wedding reception and accommodations for out-of-town guests for those wanting full services.

“The Hotel is excited to partner with the Office of Communications and Marketing in this new venture,” said Terri Lynn Beasley, sales manager at The Hotel at Auburn University. “We are thrilled to be able to create memories for Auburn couples at the most revered location on campus. Dates are still available for 2011 and 2012.”

For more information about weddings at Samford Park, go to www.auburn.edu/wedding or contact The Hotel at Auburn University catering manager at 321-3175.
Campus News Briefs

Committee to meet Aug. 30 to consider nominations for Board of Trustees

The Auburn University Trustee Selection Committee is scheduled to meet on Tuesday, Aug. 30, at 10 a.m. in the State Capitol Auditorium. The Committee will determine which Auburn University Board nominees they will call for interviews.

Almost 170 people were nominated for nine positions that are either currently vacant or will become vacant next year. Gov. Robert Bentley, who serves as the board’s president, said the committee will interview up to three nominees for each position. The committee will appoint new trustees after interviews are conducted, and those appointments are subject to confirmation by the State Senate.

In addition to Bentley, Auburn Alumni Board members Bobby Poundstone and Nancy Fortner and Auburn Trustees Raymond Harbert and John Blackwell serve on the selection committee.

Savrda appointed to two-year term as dean of Sciences and Mathematics

Charles E. “Chuck” Savrda, who has been serving for much of the past year as interim dean of Auburn’s College of Sciences and Mathematics, will continue in that role for another two years.

Savrda was first appointed as interim dean by then-Provost Mary Ellen Mazey following the death of Marie Wooten in the fall of 2010. Last spring, the university began an internal search for an interim dean to serve for two more years.

Following the recommendation of a search committee, interim Provost Tim Boosinger recently appointed Savrda to the two-year term. Savrda will not be a candidate for the permanent dean position, and the university will conduct a search for a permanent dean during the latter part of the two-year period.

Campus program helps students gain experience as congressional interns

The Auburn on the Hill internship program connects Auburn University students to prestigious congressional internship opportunities in Washington, D.C.


College of Agriculture faculty studying toxic algae blooms in Southeast

Two College of Agriculture faculty members and a U.S. Department of Agriculture researcher have received a nearly $248,000 grant to study a toxic algae in ponds and other water resources.

Alan Wilson and Russell Wright, both in the college’s Department of Fisheries and Allied Aquacultures, and Kevin Schrader with the Agricultural Research Service in Washington, D.C., were awarded the U.S. Geological Survey grant to study toxic blooms of cyanobacteria, a type of blue-green algae which has been shown to lead to the poisoning of drinking water supplies, aquatic foodwebs, livestock, pets and, in extreme cases, humans.

These cyanobacteria also can cause off-flavors in water and pond-raised fish. The project will help create a database on Southeastern cyanobacterial blooms and toxins and identify factors mediating toxic algal bloom events. The project is funded through the Alabama Water Resources Research Institute.

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