On campus and abroad

Auburn to add new options for students to gain global view

Auburn University students will gain more international exposure over the next few years as the university launches new initiatives to prepare students for life in an increasingly global economy.

“The goal is for greater international exposure to provide an enriching educational experience for all our students,” said Andrew Gillespie, Auburn’s assistant provost for international education. “Everyone, not just students, needs to think globally because both the problems and the opportunities are global.”

As part of the university’s strategic plan, all academic areas, and many administrative and support operations are becoming increasingly involved in international programs and activities.

Faculty and administrators will explore several new initiatives this academic year and could launch some of them as soon as the fall of 2011. “We are developing a menu of offerings as a way to expand opportunities for students in different circumstances to participate,” said Gillespie, who came to Auburn in April from Purdue University, where he was associate dean for international programs.

He said campuswide efforts this year will be directed at reducing barriers that can limit the international perspective of American college students in general and Auburn students, in particular. Family obligations, finances and time constraints are legitimate concerns for many students who wish to study abroad, he said, adding that various initiatives could offer new travel alternatives to some students while other initiatives could offer opportunities for meaningful international experiences on campus for those who are unable to travel abroad.

Among those initiatives is a push for traditional exchange programs that would enable Auburn students to spend a semester or year at universities abroad, with those institutions reciprocating on a one-to-one basis with their students studying at Auburn at the same time. For each student studying abroad, a student from that country would be working on class assignments with undergraduates at Auburn.

“One advantage of exchange programs is that, except for airfare, they are revenue neutral for the student,” Gillespie said. For example, under a typical plan at schools with exchange programs, each student pays tuition to his home institution, the same as if he were studying on campus. “Students should even be able to find situations where it is cheaper to take their classes overseas if the cost of living is less in the host country,” he added.

Noting that Auburn is the only school in the Southeastern

University health insurance plan expanding for older dependents

As a provision of recently enacted national health care reform legislation, Auburn University has opened a one-time special enrollment period in its group health insurance plan for employees to sign up for extended coverage for their children up to age 26.

The enrollment period began Aug. 16 and ends Sept. 15, and the coverage becomes effective on Oct. 1.

In the health care legislation passed by Congress and signed by President Obama in March, one provision requires extension of family health insurance coverage to young adults, effective at the beginning of an insurance plan’s administrative year, which is Jan. 1 for Auburn employees. University officials said Auburn is implementing the provision three months early as a benefit to employees.

Formerly, coverage of dependent children ended at age 19 but could be extended to age 24 for unmarried dependents who were full-time students. The extended coverage is one of the first provisions of the recently enacted health care legislation to take effect between 2010 and 2014.

During Auburn’s special enrollment period, a covered employee may enroll dependent children over the age of 18 and under 26, regardless of the dependent’s student status or marital status. Those who are now eligible but whose coverage ended under previous regulations or who were denied coverage or were not eligible for coverage, may be added under the new legislation. Coverage will continue until the last day of the month of the dependent’s 26th birthday.

Any dependent child who would age out of the current plan before Oct. 1 or who graduates

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Conference without an international exchange program, Gillespie said faculty and administration planners could draw from the experience of Auburn’s peer institutions and tailor a plan for Auburn fairly quickly.

Gillespie said Auburn’s Study Abroad programs are holding strong at approximately 900 students and are on par with those of its peer institutions. Although some students participate in semester and longer programs, the most popular part of Auburn Abroad is a series of faculty-led summer programs of four to six weeks in countries around the world.

“Auburn has some excellent international programs already, but they are limited in the number of students they can enroll,” he said. “I expect participation in those programs to remain strong. Meanwhile, an exchange program would be one way to expand opportunities without impacting capacity-limited programs.”

Many students say they cannot afford the time or money to spend a semester or even a summer abroad. For those students, Gillespie said Auburn’s colleges and schools could offer classes with an option for students to work for a week on special projects abroad during spring break. Such brief, targeted projects would help students gain a global perspective on the material they cover in class.

There are various other possibilities for enhancing the international perspective of American students who have never traveled abroad, said Gillespie. He noted that approximately 150 of Auburn’s 850 international students are undergraduates, taking classes with students who have never left the United States. Yet, he added, in many classes there is far too little individual or group interaction between American and international students, who are often more restrained in class discussions than their classmates. Faculty who are successful at bringing international students into class discussions are often also successful in helping all their students learn more from each other, he said.

Noting that Auburn’s faculty are among the university’s strongest advocates for helping students gain an international perspective and global skills, Gillespie said the focus is not just on the students. Discussions with faculty leaders, deans and university administrators have revealed widespread support for integrating a global perspective into all parts of the university.

“We need to internationalize the entire campus, not just students,” he said. Among the initial steps in that direction, the Office of International Education this fall will conduct workshops and meet with faculty and campus groups to develop ways to broaden the international perspective across campus.

“We have a significant number of international faculty on campus, and we especially want to draw upon their experience,” Gillespie said. He noted that in many cases these faculty may be able to interact with institutions in their native countries to help the university build or expand international linkages.

Also, many senior faculty who were born in the United States have established international contacts through their research and outreach endeavors and professional associations. In many cases, these faculty are mentoring junior colleagues within their departments and are willing to help their younger colleagues get established in the international arena, he said.

Staff members also can play a greater international role, Gillespie said. Noting, for instance, the critical guidance that academic advisors provide for students in every college and school at Auburn, he said advisers can counsel students more effectively if they have the opportunity to travel professionally, learn and establish overseas contacts.

The state and nation, as well as the students stand to gain from an expanded international approach to education, Gillespie said. “In our students’ lifetime, they will need the skills, knowledge and attitudes to succeed as global citizens. Many of their families are already affected by globalization; look at all the international corporations that now operate in Alabama. Even students who return to their hometowns after graduation are likely to find themselves working for or dealing with global corporations at many levels. It is part of Auburn’s mission to ensure that our students succeed in an increasingly global world.”

— Ray Summerford

Health insurance

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from college this summer must be re-enrolled during the special enrollment period to retain coverage; these children are not automatically carried over as dependents under the revised plan.

To add a dependent who falls within the new criteria, obtain an application from the Office of Payroll and Benefits in Ingram Hall and return the completed form to that office by 4:45 p.m. Sept. 15. The dependent’s birth certificate must accompany the application form.

Any changes to Auburn’s health insurance plan for 2011 will be addressed during the November open-enrollment period for the university’s self-insurance plan, which is administered by Blue Cross Blue Shield on a calendar year, January-December, basis.

— Roy Summerford

New parking restrictions apply to two parking areas as construction closes others, off-campus parking expands

Continuing a trend of recent years, parking this fall is more restricted on the north side of campus, some lots on the south side are closed due to construction and new spaces for displaced drivers are available around the edges of campus.

Effective this week with the start of fall semester, all spaces in the Lowder Building and Foy Hall parking lots are A zone, the B zone Wright Street lot has been enlarged and B zone parking in the Magnolia/Donahue lot has been reconfigured and enlarged.

The C and RH zone parking lots along Lem Morrison Drive between P.O. Davis and Duncan drives are no longer available for student parking due to the construction of a new building on this site.

Alternative parking is available in the hay field through the entrance off Donahue Drive. Parking in the Medical Clinic lot is restricted to the clinic’s staff and patients.

Campus Calendar

MONDAY, AUGUST 23
FREE SCREENING for speech and hearing problems, 1-4 p.m., Speech and Hearing Clinic, Haley 1199; no appointment necessary

TUESDAY, AUGUST 24
MEETING University Senate, 3 p.m., Broun Hall Auditorium

THURSDAY, AUGUST 26
PUBLIC LECTURE “Student Life and Cheerleading in the Postwar Era,” Tom Eden, Auburn’s head cheerleader in 1949-50, 3 p.m., Special Collections Suite, ground floor, Draughon Library; part of Discover Auburn Lecture Series

TUESDAY, AUGUST 31
OPEN HOUSE Multicultural Center, 11:45 a.m.-12:45 p.m., first floor of Student Center

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 3
NEXT Auburn Report
Auburn University is ranked 38th among public universities nationwide, up from 39th last year, in the newly released survey for 2010-11 by U.S. News & World Report. This is the 18th consecutive year the magazine has ranked Auburn among the nation’s top 50 public universities.

Auburn ranked 85th nationally among both public and private schools, up from 88th in 2009. Its College of Business undergraduate program ranked 24th among public schools and 42nd in the nation, up from 57th in its previous ranking. The undergraduate program of Auburn’s Samuel Ginn College of Engineering ranked 56th nationally overall, up from 64th last year, and 32nd among public universities that offer doctoral programs in engineering.

Among land-grant institutions, Auburn ranked 19th in the nation. Auburn is also in the magazine’s list of A-Plus Schools for B Students, which identifies schools that admit solidly prepared high school students and do a good job of helping them advance toward their educational goals.

Rankings of other programs are released at various times during the year by U.S. News & World Report.

“The U.S. News ratings are based on indicators that some prospective college students may value, such as general reputation or selectivity,” said Drew Clark, director of Auburn’s Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. “But Auburn also uses assessments that provide direct information on equally important indicators of quality, such as how much students are actually learning and what kind of college experience they have.”

To establish its rankings, U.S. News categorizes colleges and universities primarily by mission and, in some cases, region. The magazine then gathers data from each on up to 16 indicators of academic excellence, assigning each factor a weight that reflects the magazine’s judgment about how much each measure matters.

The indicators the magazine staff uses to capture academic quality fall into seven categories: academic reputation among its peers, retention of students, faculty resources, student selectivity, financial resources, alumni giving, and (for national universities and liberal arts colleges) the graduation rate performance, or the difference between the proportion of students expected to graduate and the proportion who actually do.

Highlights of the rankings will be published in the September issue of U.S. News & World Report, available on newsstands Aug. 31. The 2011 Best Colleges guidebook will be on newsstands Aug. 24.

— Charles Martin

The late legendary architect Samuel Mockbee and Auburn University’s Rural Studio for aspiring architects are the subject of a documentary film by producer-director Sam Wainwright Douglas that PBS will air nationwide at 9 p.m. Monday, Aug. 23.


A 7 p.m. reception and an 8 p.m. panel discussion will precede the 9 p.m. showing of the film. The event is a collaboration of the museum and the Auburn University College of Architecture, Design and Construction.


Mockbee’s leadership of the program and his pioneering drive to create innovative architecture in Alabama’s economically stressed Black Belt earned worldwide acclaim for the Rural Studio and a national Genius Grant for himself from the MacArthur Foundation.

Mockbee developed the Rural Studio into a teaching laboratory with a strategy to improve the living conditions in rural Alabama while imparting practical experience to architecture students.

Douglas describes his documentary as being guided by frank, passionate interviews with Mockbee. The film also shows how a students use their creativity, ingenuity and compassion to craft a home for their client, Jimmie Lee Matthews, known to locals as Music Man because of his zeal for old R&B and soul records.

Douglas says the film reveals that the Rural Studio is about more than architecture and building; it provides students with an experience that forever inspires them to consider how they can use their skills to better their communities. Interviews with Mockbee’s peers and scenes with those he’s influenced infuse the film with a larger discussion of architecture’s role in issues of poverty, class, race, education, social change and citizenship.

“‘Citizen Architect’ provides a thoughtful and insightful look at how Auburn students and faculty literally transform the lives of citizens who live and work in Alabama’s remote Black Belt,” said Dan Bennett, dean of the College of Architecture, Design and Construction. “The film poignantly demonstrates the role that architecture can play in lifting the spirits of some of the most economically disadvantaged citizens, and how the lives of the students are equally transformed.”

Douglas, the son-in-law of Mockbee, has been working in documentary film and television since graduating from New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts in 1998. He has produced and directed several award-winning feature length documentaries. He has taught film and video editing in the Department of Radio Television Film at the University of Texas, and he recently edited “Along Came Kinky: Texas Jewboy for Governor,” a film set for 2011 release on musician, writer and raconteur Kinky Friedman and his independent run for governor of Texas in 2006.

— Neali Vann
Campus News Briefs

Biggio Center director conducts teaching academy in Estonia

James Groccia, director of Auburn’s Biggio Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning and an associate professor in the College of Education, conducted a European Union-sponsored summer teaching academy in the Baltic country of Estonia, Aug. 9-12. Faculty members from universities throughout Estonia participated in the academy, “Applying What We Know about Learning to Create Effective, Engaged Classroom Environments.”

Business professor participates in Financial Innovations Lab

James R. Barth, Lowder Eminent Scholar in Finance, recently participated in a financial innovations lab on “Opportunities for Restructuring in States and Municipal Finance” at the Harvard Club in New York City.

Sponsored by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, the lab focused on financial and policy mechanisms that states and municipalities can use to bridge the structural gap between revenues and expenditures.

Barth was also interviewed on Aug. 2 by the Congressional Oversight Panel. Congress has instructed the panel to produce a special report on regulatory reform that will analyze the current state of the regulatory system and its effectiveness at overseeing the participants in the financial system and protecting consumers.

Auburn prof to lead newspaper division of national association

John Carvalho, an associate professor in the Department of Communication and Journalism, was elected head of the newspaper division for the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. The newspaper division is the largest and oldest division in the national association.

Two Human Sciences professors honored at international meeting

Martin O’Neill, a professor of hotel and restaurant management and head of the Department of Nutrition and Food Science, and Kyungmi Kim, an assistant professor of hotel and restaurant management, received the Conference Best Paper Award in the Services Marketing/Management category at the recent annual meeting of the International Council on Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Education in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

The paper was titled “The Use of Sequential Critical Incident Analysis to Evaluate Service Process Quality in the Restaurant Sector.” In addition, O’Neill was sworn in as U.S. Southeastern CHRIE Federation President. In this position, he will represent the interests of council members across the Southeast, Florida and Caribbean and will serve on the international federation’s board of directors.

Cooperative Extension to present estate planning videoconference

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System will present an estate planning videoconference from 9-11 a.m. Wednesday, Aug. 25, in 112 Duncan Hall. Robert Tufts will discuss the purpose of an estate plan, “your plan or Alabama’s plan,” basic documents in an estate plan and using wills and trusts. Additionally, the program may be viewed from a desktop computer. Contact Carol Centrallo at centrcb@auburn.edu or 844-1325 to register or to receive log-on instructions.

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