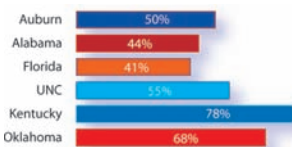


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How Auburn Stacks Up

Percentage increase in endowment value of select SREB peers from FY2003-FY2006



Source: Institutional Research and Assessment

www.ocm.auburn.edu/au_report/aureport.html

FOR THE FACULTY AND STAFF OF AUBURN UNIVERSITY report

First meeting

Shortly before presiding last week over his first meeting of the AU Board of Trustees as the board's new president pro tem, Paul Spina, left, reviewed key items of the board agenda with Jay Gogue, who was attending his first meeting with the board as AU president. Gogue assumed office in July. Spina's fellow trustees elected him in June as their presiding officer.



Auburn developing program to help students improve their writing skills

Anationally prominent authority on the teaching of academic writing will visit Auburn this month to discuss ways to implement an intense, comprehensive program to upgrade the writing skills of AU students.

In a report to the Board of Trustees last week, Provost John Heilman said Joseph Harris, director of the Duke University Writing Program, will advise faculty and administrators as they develop an expedited program to raise the writing skills of Auburn students. The goal is to enable AU students to surpass their peers on a national standardized assessment of writing skills within four years.

The author of textbooks on the teaching of writing and critical inquiry, Harris has also edited a series of books on the subject, as well as the refereed journal *College Composition and Communication*.

The AU Board set the target for writing improvement in a resolution on June 29. Heilman and faculty leaders Richard Penaskovic and David Cici said Thursday that, as long as faculty are fully involved in developing the plan, they expect it to have widespread faculty support.

Heilman said he expects to have a prospectus ready by the board's Feb. 1 meeting. With most

board members present, Trustee Jack Miller, chair of the Academic Affairs Committee, said he expects the board to find the funds if it receives the framework for a program that will produce results.

Such a program, Heilman said, would likely include freshman courses involving intensive, individualized instruction in writing technique and critical thinking, with class size limited to 15 students.

Beyond the writing-intensive course, Heilman said the proposal in February will address ways to include writing assignments as part of the course requirements in all disciplines.

Starting with the 2009 freshman class, Auburn will require all prospective students to take a test of writing ability as part of their college entrance exams. Although it is too late to require the tests for the 2008 freshman class, Wayne Alderman, dean of enrollment management services, said the university will recommend the test for next fall's prospective students.

In other board activity, trustees Friday approved an \$839 million AU System budget for the 2007-08 fiscal year, which starts Oct. 1. If growth continues at the present pace, Executive Vice President Don Large said, the university budget is on course to reach \$1 billion in two or three years.

CADC surpasses its \$20 million goal with \$5 million gift from McWhorters

With a \$5 million commitment from Auburn alumnus and Trustee Earlon McWhorter and his wife Betty, the College of Architecture, Design and Construction has surpassed its \$20 million goal in AU's "It Begins at Auburn" Campaign.

The gift will provide endowments for the Department of Building Science, the Design-Build graduate program and the CADC dean's position.

"Earlon and Betty McWhorter's gift does far more than take the College of Architecture, Design and Construction past its campaign goal," said AU President Jay Gogue. "Their generosity means that generations of students will learn from the best and use what they've learned to become successful and make a difference in the world. This endowment truly represents what is meant when we talk about the Auburn Spirit."

The Design-Build Fund for Excellence Endowment will enable students in the progressive, context-based master's program to continue their mission of learning through experience and integrated practices.

The Endowed Eminent Scholar Chair in Building Science, the Endowed Chair for the future Department Head of Building Science, and the Endowed Chair for the future CADC dean will recognize outstanding teachers and administrators and their academic units by providing resources to ensure these key positions are adequately funded. Endowed chairs provide salary supplements to existing salaried

positions as well as funds for other needed support for the recognized administrator and professor. The current CADC dean and Building Science department head will not be eligible for these chairs.

"This endowment is the largest individual gift to the college during the 'It Begins at Auburn' university campaign," said Dan Bennett, CADC dean. "We are extremely grateful to Earlon and Betty McWhorter for their remarkable generosity and genuine support. The long-term impact of these endowments for the college and construction education will be transforming."

A trustee at AU since 2001, Earlon McWhorter graduated from Auburn with a bachelor of science degree in building construction in 1968. He is president of McWhorter and Co. Inc., an Alabama-based general construction company, and owner of McWhorter Properties. At Auburn, he recently completed four years as president pro tempore of the AU Board of Trustees, where he continues to serve as an at-large member.

"In the past few years, Dean Dan Bennett and the outstanding faculty of the College of Architecture, Design and Construction have taken our college to new heights," said the McWhorters. "Our faculty and student performances have brought us national recognition and placed us in the top rankings among our peers. Today, we are funding these endowments to give the CADC the best opportunity to continue to attract and retain outstanding deans and faculty for the future generations of our students."

Gas industry institute signs agreement with AU center for bioenergy research

Auburn's Center for Bioenergy and Bioproducts has signed a research agreement with Gas Technology Institute to conduct collaborative research on the creation of liquid fuels using wood, energy crops such as switchgrass and other agricultural byproducts.

Officials with Auburn and GTI, a major technology development organization for the natural gas industry and energy markets, say a key component will be the design and construction on campus of a process research-scale gasification and gas-to-liquids system.

"It will give Auburn faculty and students the ability to study gasification of biomass into a gas rich in hydrogen and carbon monoxide that can then be catalytically converted into liquid fuels like diesel fuel, gasoline and aviation fuel," said Steve Taylor, center director.

The laboratory equipment, which uses thermochemical conversion techniques, will be a unique feature of Auburn's bioenergy and bioproducts research program and will distinguish it from those of other universities in the Southeast, which concen-

trate mainly on biochemical conversion approaches.

"We focus on the entire bioenergy and bioproduct system which includes agricultural and forestry production, harvesting, transportation, processing, energy or fuel production and final product testing," Taylor said. "The primary emphasis of the center is to find ways to convert a wide range of forest and agricultural biomass feedstocks into a variety of products that include liquid fuels, electrical power, heat, specialty chemicals and other bio-based products."

AU's Center for Bioenergy and Bioproducts, part of the Natural Resources Management & Development Institute, was formed in 2006 to find cost-competitive alternatives to petroleum-based fuels and products.

GTI, a not-for-profit, research-and-development organization with national scope, is headquartered in Des Plaines, Ill., with a branch office in Birmingham. In its more than 65 years of operation, GTI has trained more than 55,000 energy professionals, has been awarded more than 1,000 patents and has introduced into the marketplace nearly 500 products incorporating GTI-developed technology.

Upcoming Events

Tuesday, September 4

MEETING University Senate, 3 p.m., auditorium, Broun Hall

Wednesday, September 5

DISCOVER AUBURN LECTURE Geoffrey Hill of Biological Sciences, author of "Ivorybill Hunters: The Search for Proof in a Flooded Wilderness," 3 p.m., Special Collections and Archives Department, Draughon Library

Friday, September 7

WOMEN'S STUDIES PANEL "Raising Feminist Children in a Conservative State," panel discussion, noon-2 p.m., Comer 109; bring your lunch

Monday, September 10

NEXT AU Report

Wednesday, September 19

STUDY ABROAD FAIR Displays and information on opportunities for international travel and study, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., lobby, Haley Center

Thursday, September 27

THEATRE "Deadwood Dick or A Game of Gold," 7:30 p.m., Telfair Peet Theatre; also Friday and Saturday; box office 844-4154

Sunday, September 30

THEATRE "Deadwood Dick or The Game of Gold," 2 p.m., Telfair Peet Theatre; box office 844-4154

Tuesday, October 2

MEETING University Senate, 3 p.m., auditorium, Broun Hall

LITTLETON-FRANKLIN LECTURE Thomas Friedman, New York Times columnist and author of "The World is Flat," 4 p.m., Coliseum

THEATRE "Deadwood Dick or A Game of Gold," 7:30 p.m., Telfair Peet Theatre; also Wednesday-Friday; box office 844-4154

Art Exhibit

BIGGIN GALLERY "Facing Pages," artist books by proprietors of independent or collegial presses and their students or alumni, through Sept. 21



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Provost appoints faculty member to lead International Education Office

Citing a commitment to integrate international education more fully into AU's academic programs, Provost John Heilman has announced a new position, special assistant to the provost for international education.

Kenneth McNabb, a faculty member and Extension specialist in AU's School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences since 1989, has been named to the post in an interim appointment, effective Aug. 27.

"This assignment demonstrates our strong and growing commitment to international education," said Heilman. "By naming a faculty member to lead the Office of International Education, we are strategically reaffirming it as a critical component of the academic experience."

AU's Office of International Education, housed in Hargis Hall, is the administrative support unit for a broad range of international programs and activities involving Auburn faculty and students. The office was formerly headed by a director, Jim Ellis, who recently moved to a position in the Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs.

McNabb teaches a senior- and graduate-level course in international forestry, and he has 12 years combined experience as a researcher and extension specialist in Brazil and Pakistan. The forestry professor said he will seek to apply that and other international experience toward programs and activities to increase faculty and student involvement in international programs across the curriculum at Auburn.

"Auburn University International Education has an important role to play in educating today's citizens and tomorrow's leaders for an active role in the international community," said McNabb. "The economy and culture of Alabama and the United States, in general, are increasingly tied to the economies and cultures of other nations, and it is important that we prepare our students and our state to be successful in this changing world."

Grant supports MRI study

The National Institutes of Health have awarded a \$340,000 grant to AU Engineering Professor Stan Reeves and Don Tweig of the University of Alabama Birmingham to develop a new way to collect and assemble a special type of MRI imagery.

This new type of MRI gives diagnostic images of specific chemical concentrations in tissues and organs in the body. The research will focus on developing a faster mechanism than existing technology to capture these images while improving patient comfort and reducing imaging costs.



Traffic, parking alternative

With parking spots hard to find close to the main campus, Auburn students are turning to bicycles in increasing numbers to get closer to classroom buildings. In the recent past, spaces were readily available in bike racks around campus buildings. This year, the university is adding bike racks to meet increasing demand. Nearly 700 bicycles are registered, and officials say an unknown number are unregistered, despite the reduced recovery potential for stolen or impounded unregistered bikes.

Grant from NSF aids composites research

A professor in AU's Samuel Ginn College of Engineering and a colleague from the University of South Alabama will share a \$260,000 grant from the National Science Foundation for research into safer, more reliable composite materials.

Hareesh Tippur, Alumni professor in the Department of Mechanical Engineering at AU, will share the NSF grant with A.V. Phan, an associate professor at USA, for a study of the fundamental aspects of thermo-mechanical failure of particulate composites such as nano-composites, biocements and other bio-inspired materials.

Polymer-based particulate composites are found in a variety of day-to-day engineering applications, such as bio-cements, electrically conducting adhesives, syntactic structural foams, scratch-resistant coatings, solid propellants and other materials.

Tippur said understanding the mechanical characteristics in general and failure properties in particular is central to the safety and reliability of structural systems which use particulate composites.

Tippur will examine rapid fractures under impact loading conditions using laser-based diagnostics and ultra high-speed imaging up to 2 million frames per second in the facility he developed at Auburn.



Thirst quencher or fashion accessory?

If you remember when people drank water from a glass or faucet, you are probably not a student. Water bottles have become the latest fashion accessory as Auburn students respond both to one of the hottest, driest summers on record and to the growing acceptance of bottled water as a consumer product.

Technology Transfer Office helps launch four start-up companies

The AU Office of Technology Transfer has announced the formation of four start-up companies based on technologies developed within the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering. Two of the start-ups will be based in the Auburn area.

"Historically, we have helped launch two start-ups per year, but we have only done two purely engineering-based companies to date," said Technology Transfer Director Jan Dowdle Thornton. "To ramp these up so quickly, and have all of them come out of the College of Engineering is truly an unprecedented event for Auburn University."

The four new companies are:

- ◆ **Aunigma Communications Technologies, Inc.,** Atlanta. Based on wireless engineering research in the labs of John Wu and David Irwin of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Aunigma is launching next generation network security solutions. The technology will address new and expanding communication pathways and related Internet security threats. Aunigma's flexible and efficient protocols bring to the marketplace multiple threat protection while achieving unmatched performance compared to competing security offerings. Aunigma was founded by Auburn graduate Ken Garrard.

- ◆ **Modular Carpet Recycling Inc.,** or MCR, Auburn. Using a carbon dioxide-based process invented by Chris Roberts of Chemical Engineering, MCR will provide turn-key plants for efficient recycling of nylon from used carpets on a local and regional level. The company has initiated efforts to raise capital to demonstrate the technology in a pilot plant. A team led by Paul Swamidass of the Thomas Walter Center for Technology developed an Alabama Launchpad award-winning business plan for the company.

- ◆ **Applications Quest LLC,** Fairfax, Va. With recent U.S. Supreme Court rulings placing affirmative action under fire, mechanisms are needed to provide solutions to allow universities to realize their diversity objectives in a manner that is both effective and in conformity with legal standards. Applications Quest clustering software developed by Juan Gilbert of Computer Science and Software Engineering provides this capability by comparing application pools in their entirety,

thereby allowing multiple factors such as income, race, gender and geographical location to be considered without any one of them becoming a deciding factor.

- ◆ **OcuMedic Inc.,** Auburn. Co-founded by Mark Byrne of AU Chemical Engineering, OcuMedic is a drug delivery and medical device company with proprietary technology that creates new polymer films to allow increased loading and delayed release of drugs. Byrne and his group have invented a number of novel contact lenses to deliver medications to the surface of the eye, improving therapy over standard eye drop formulations. Part of OcuMedic's mission is to create a product line of therapeutic contact lenses to deliver medication for extended periods to address the considerable unmet need for more effective ocular drug delivery.

Brian Wright, associate director for commercialization in the Technology Transfer Office, attributed the increase to support from the Ginn College of Engineering. "Dean Larry Benefield and the college have significantly supported technology transfer efforts, including analysis and marketing efforts which have contributed directly to the development of these new companies," Wright said. "And, of course, tremendous credit goes to the researchers, for not only creating the licensed inventions, but for also being supportive of the start-up process."

Thornton said a contributing factor has been the inaugural Alabama Launchpad event, a university-centered statewide business plan competition. Auburn placed two teams in the finals of the events, MCR and OcuMedic, the winner of the \$100,000 competition.

"There's no question that Alabama Launchpad had a big impact on our start-up activity this year. OcuMedic was launched directly from its involvement in the competition, and MCR, the carpet recycling business, certainly received a big boost in recognition and contacts," Thornton said.

Larry Benefield, dean of the Ginn College of Engineering, said the commercialization of intellectual properties developed by Auburn faculty represents a significant funding component for the college. "The technologies on which these companies are based represent truly innovative and forward-focused research with real-world applications," he added.

Geoff Hill to discuss search for Ivorybill

Geoffrey Hill, author of "Ivorybill Hunters: The Search for Proof in a Flooded Wilderness," will speak in Draughton Library at 3 p.m. Wednesday as part of the Discover Auburn Lecture Series.

Hill, Scharnagel professor of biology in the College of Sciences and Mathematics, will present the public lecture in the library's Special Collections and Archives Department.

"Ivorybill Hunters" tells the story of how Hill and two colleagues stumbled upon what may be a breeding population of Ivory-billed Woodpeckers, long thought to be extinct, in the swamps of northern Florida.

Written like a detective story, the book delves into the science behind the rediscovery of a species, explaining how professional ornithologists respond to the sighting of a rare bird and how this activity differs from the public's perception of how scientists work.



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