Funds allocated for pay increases tied to merit in two stages this fall

A two-step process for employee merit-salary improvement is part of a $779.7 million main campus operating budget for Fiscal Year 2011-12 that was approved by the Auburn University Board of Trustees on Sept. 9.

The main campus budget is the largest part of a $964.4 million operating budget for the university system, which also includes $57.6 million for the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station, $52.4 million for the Alabama Cooperative Extension System and $79.7 million for Auburn University Montgomery.

The new budget, effective Oct. 1, follows guidelines for spending priorities reviewed favorably by the Board in June. Among the top priorities are funding to increase the salary pool by 2 percent for permanent salary improvement, effective Oct. 1, and an additional 2 percent increase in the salary pool for one-time funding, effective later in the new fiscal year.

Both increases will be variable and based on each individual’s performance evaluations.

The one-time increase will be similar to that distributed last December for the 2010-11 fiscal year, after the board expressed a desire to offer merit-based salary improvement with available funds but without committing the university to future spending in an uncertain economic environment.

The permanent increase, meanwhile, will help employees offset the cost of increased contributions to the Alabama Teachers’ Retirement System that take effect Oct. 1.

The Alabama Legislature voted earlier this year to increase employee contributions from 5 percent to 7.25 percent this year and 7.5 percent in 2012 to financially strengthen the retirement systems for public education and state employees.

To be eligible for the permanent salary increases that will go into effect on Oct. 1, a person must have been employed on or before May 31, and be a regular, continuing employee. Instructors, who are technically part-time, may qualify under some conditions. TES employees, graduate students, and regular student employees are excluded from eligibility.

The one-time salary supplements in December have the same eligibility requirements as the permanent increases, with the exception that a person has to be employed on the date of payment, as well as at the start of the fiscal year.

Executive Vice President Don Large said the university’s finances remain solid despite the national economic situation, and the state education budget is slightly better for the coming year after several years of declining revenues.

The state appropriation for the Auburn University System is budgeted to increase nearly $5 million to $247.9 million in the coming fiscal year. But that amount is still nearly $90 million less than the appropriation for 2008.

While there is always the prospect for proration in uncertain economic times, Large said the university has prepared for such contingencies in the new budget.

The increase in state appropriations is one of the smaller increases in revenue for the coming fiscal year. New revenue also includes savings from a decrease in the fringe rate costs related to employee benefits, a tuition increase, a proration fee and deferred maintenance savings. Total increased revenue for the main campus is projected at $44.5 million.

Although small by pre-recession standards, the increase will enable the

New signs installed to make building identification easier

Over the past few weeks, Auburn University has been erecting new signs to make it easier for visitors and new students to find their way around campus.

The six-foot-high vertical slate-toned aluminum signs sit atop a limestone base and are aligned perpendicular to the buildings to catch the eye of pedestrians as they approach. In the case of buildings near a street, the signs also alert drivers as they approach the building instead of, as in the past, when they are directly in front of it.

Tom Tillman and Jeffrey Dumars of the Office of Campus Planning and Space Management said the new signs, part of a signage and wayfaring initiative included in the 2007 campus plan update, are designed to make it easier for visitors and others to find campus buildings while maintaining a consistent, attractive appearance.

Besides facing oncoming foot and vehicle traffic, the signs on campus contain the familiar name of the building in large white type on a dark background. The sign panel is edged with a narrow orange stripe as a highlight color. In addition, colleges and schools are identified at buildings where the dean’s offices are located. Meanwhile, a large “watermark” of the Samford Tower logo is displayed in the lower left corner.
Auburn rises again in U.S. News national rankings

Auburn University is ranked 36th among public universities nationwide, up from 38th last year, in an annual survey released this week by U.S. News & World Report. The ranking marks the 19th consecutive year the magazine has ranked Auburn among the nation’s top 50 public universities.

Among land-grant universities, Auburn ranks 19th. Auburn also improved its ranking among all universities, coming in 82nd nationally, up from 85th in 2010. Its College of Business undergraduate program ranked 27th among the nation’s public institutions and 46th overall.

“While we are pleased to maintain our position as a top 30 public business school in the U.S., we will continue to look for ways to build and improve upon the undergraduate business program and the educational experience provided to our students,” said Bill Hardgrave, dean of the College of Business.

The Samuel Ginn College of Engineering ranked 57th among universities offering doctoral programs in engineering. “This ranking is a reflection of the quality and work ethic of our faculty and students. Despite the tough economy and tight resources, we continue to excel in the classroom and laboratory,” said Larry Benefield, dean of the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering.

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

“While no calculation can ever capture what is most essential and alive about a college or university, it is always good to have confirmation of the challenging and supportive environment that Auburn provides for

New signage for university buildings

Continued from Page 1

“The challenge was to develop consistent signage that complements the building, instead of dominating the site, while making it easier for people to find their way around,” said Tillman. “The signs also needed to reinforce the image and character of the campus and recognize Auburn as a state-of-the-art, modern institution.”

To accommodate larger type and make name recognition easier for pedestrians or drivers, informal names of buildings are placed on the signs. The full names of buildings are displayed on the buildings, Tillman noted.

A new addition to campus signage is the building’s street address to help visitors find it using a map or GPS. The street address can also help persons making emergency 911 calls provide better information faster and improve emergency response.

The older, small bronze-colored metal signs near building entrances will be removed in the near future, Tillman said. Those signs, which have been in use for several years, lack a consistent look and were not adequate for persons trying to find specific buildings, he said.

How did planners confirm that new signage was necessary? A few years ago, Sasaki Associates, consultants to the university in developing and updating its master plan, sent to campus two graphic designers who had never been to Auburn before and told them to find their way around as best they could. Tillman said these designers intentionally experienced the campus as many other first-time visitors and new students do, becoming disoriented and sometimes walking past the buildings they were seeking.

These designers and others from Sasaki then worked with campus planners and a committee of faculty and professional staff to develop signage that could make it easier for people to locate campus buildings while enhancing the image and character of the university. The latter goal had been a major part of the Campus Master Plan of 2002 and has remained a target in subsequent updates.

Dumars said the signage provides for some variation depending on the property’s location and its use. For instance, some signs on the campus periphery are horizontal but retain the subdued color scheme, as in front of the Alumni Center and the new Auburn University Research Park.

Meanwhile, at Auburn University properties away from the campus, a dark blue background is used on the signs, and the image of Samford Tower is in orange to provide a clear connection to the university. An example of the latter is on display at the E.W. Shell Fisheries Research Center on North College Street.

Among planned changes, large maps will soon be displayed at strategic locations on campus to provide additional assistance to visitors and new students. Digital versions of the maps will be also be available online through the university website, www.auburn.edu.

— Roy Summerford

Budget strategy

Continued from Page 1

Auburn needs to continue its progress, Large said. He said the budget strategy includes continued focus on the strategic plan, efforts to enhance quality and reputation and reducing operating costs where possible.

Cost commitments include support for scholarships, salary improvement and merit promotions, increased debt payments, building costs, utilities, provost and academic needs, public safety, libraries, SACS accreditation and Outreach programs.

— Roy Summerford

Campus Calendar

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 18
CONCERT Auburn University Music Faculty Showcase, 7:30 p.m., Goodwin Rehearsal Hall; $10 general admission, $5 for students
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20
PANEL DISCUSSION “The Status of Free Speech at Auburn University,” 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m., Student Center 2222 /2223; panelists include University General Counsel Lee Armstrong, Steve Brown of Political Science, John Carvalho of Journalism and Margaret Fitch-Hauser of Communication; part of the Multicultural Center Lunch & Learn Series
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21
PUBLIC LECTURE “Securing Our Liberties,” Gene Policinski, senior vice president and executive director of the First Amendment Center, Vanderbilt, 3 p.m., Special Collections and Archives, Draughon Library
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 22
THEATRE “La Bete,” 7:30 p.m., Telfair Peet Theatre; also same time Sept. 23 and Sept. 27-30, and 2:30 p.m. Sept. 25; admission charged; call 844-1484
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 25
CONCERT Auburn University Community Orchestra, 4 p.m., Kiesel Park; free admission
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 28
SUSTAINABILITY DISCUSSION “I believe in Auburn and Love It: Exploring What This Looks Like in Action,” 3:30 p.m. Student Center 2222
FACULTY RECITAL Matt Wood and Jeremy Samolesky, 7:30 p.m., $10 general admission, $5 for students
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 30
NEXT Auburn Report
Auburn breaks enrollment, ACT records this semester

Auburn University has achieved its highest enrollment in history this fall, and its freshman class set a new Auburn record for average ACT score, according to Auburn’s Office of Institutional Research and Assessment.

Enrollment is 25,469 among all student groups – undergraduates, graduate students and those enrolled in professional schools – up from 25,078 in fall 2010. Auburn has students from all 50 states and from 79 foreign countries.

New freshman enrollment consists of 4,202 students, just two fewer than last year’s record class. The class compiled an average score of 27.2 on the ACT college entrance exam, outpacing last year’s then-record of 26.9. They also earned an average high school grade-point average of 3.81, up from 3.79 last year.

“Auburn University’s outstanding academic programs, faculty and student body continue to attract record numbers of prospective students to our campus,” said Cindy Singley, director of University Recruitment. “Once they are here and experience the Auburn Family, they want to be a part of it too!”

At the bachelor’s degree level, enrollment is 20,446, up 225 from last year. Post-baccalaureate enrollment is 5,023, up 166 from last year. This category comprises 1,018 professional students in the schools of pharmacy and veterinary medicine, up 3.6 percent, and 4,005 graduate students in other programs. The graduate student enrollment is a 3.4 percent increase above the 2010 figure of 3,874.

The numbers reported are official enrollment numbers, calculated after the 15th class day of every fall semester.

— Carol Nelson

Sept. 23 groundbreaking set for new Kinesiology building

Auburn University will break ground Sept. 23 on a facility that will offer nearly 58,000 square feet of research and office space for the College of Education’s Department of Kinesiology.

The academic department will move from its current location in Beard-Eaves-Memorial Coliseum to the new building by March 2013. The coliseum is marked for demolition following that move.

Located on Wire Road adjacent to the university tennis courts, the new Department of Kinesiology building will house laboratories conducting a broad range of research relating to human movement, health and performance.

Mary Rudisill, head of the Department of Kinesiology, said the new building is designed to meet the varied interests and needs of faculty and students in exercise science, physical activity and health and physical education teacher education.

“We specialize in health and performance-related activities,” Rudisill said.

“We are interested in improving health through daily physical activity as well as optimizing performance. Our work can be applied to people of all ages, including everyday movers, those recovering from surgery, athletes, soldiers, marching band members and more.”

The first floor of the new three-level facility will house space for the department’s biomechanics and motor behavior laboratories. The motor behavior lab, which focuses a significant portion of its research on physical activity in children, will open onto a green space for outdoor activity. The second floor will house epidemiology and exercise behavior labs, as well as the department’s TigerFit program, which provides health screenings and fitness assessments. The third floor will feature controlled-access space for muscle physiology, cardio-protection, neuromechanics, sports optimization and thermal labs.

“We’re growing,” Rudisill said. “We’ve got a lot of great things happening.”

— Troy Johnson
Campus News Briefs

Dagley named to position on national psychology society’s executive board

John Dagley, an associate professor of counseling psychology in the College of Education’s Department of Special Education, Rehabilitation and Counseling, has been elected to serve on the Society of Group Psychology and Group Psychotherapy’s executive board. The organization provides a forum for psychologists interested in teaching, research and practice in group psychology and psychotherapy.

Study by Biological Sciences Ph.D. candidate published in journal Nature

Representing an international team of scientists, College of Sciences and Mathematics’ Biological Sciences Ph.D. candidate Kevin M. Kocot has published a study in the leading international scientific journal Nature.

The study examines relationships among major groups of mollusks. The study’s results have important implications for the fields of neurobiology, fossil records and early evolution. Kocot is directed in his doctoral program by Professor Kenneth Halanych and Associate Professor Scott Santos, both of Biological Sciences.

Auburn art professor commissioned for CNN project commemorating 9/11

Zdenko Krtic, an associate professor in the Department of Art in the College of Liberal Arts, has been selected by CNN Network to participate in the “9/11: Ten Years Later Project.” CNN.com commissioned a small group of diverse artists to create or choose work to illustrate the ripple effect of 9/11, including profound changes experienced over the past 10 years by individuals, communities, nations and the world.


Theatre season opens Sept. 22 with ‘La Bete’

Auburn University Theatre in the College of Liberal Arts will open its 2011-12 season with David Hirson’s “La Bete” in the Telfair Peet Theatre, Sept. 22 – Oct. 1.

Hirson’s comedy of contemporary sensibilities viewed through a neoclassical frame opened on Broadway in 1991. The play is set in the time of the 17th century playwright Moliere, whose work inspires both the action and Hirson’s lyrical, rhyming script. Elomire is the head of a theatre troupe whose wealthy patron has demanded that they collaborate with the street performer Valere, bringing about a clash of high art and lowbrow entertainment.

“The neoclassical period was all about rules, structure, the unities,” said director Daydrie Hague. “Elomire, whose very name is a play on Moliere’s, represents those qualities and really embodies truth in language, dramatic form and content – what we might call high art. Valere breaks those rules and brings chaos, excitement, humor, even danger to the process, in short, entertainment value.”

“La Bete” features scenic and lighting design by Fehreshteh Rostampour, costume design by Tracy Oleinick and sound design by Kelly Walker. The cast is comprised of Madeleine Koon, Marcus Clement, Roxanne Gatian, Taylor Galvin, Spencer Hardy, Eli Jolley, Perry Jones, Garrett Keller, Houston Mahoney, Sarah Jean Peters, Anna Claire Walker, and Ben Young III. Meghan McCarthy and Kaye Stucky will be performing in the pre-show.

“La Bete” runs Sept. 22-23, 27-30 and Oct. 1 at 7:30 p.m. with a matinee on Sept. 25 at 2:30 p.m. For more information, see www.auburnuniversitytheatre.org.

Index

1 Budget includes merit-based salary relief in two steps for Auburn faculty, staff
2 Auburn University rises in latest college rankings by U.S. News & World Report
3 Enrollment, freshman ACT average break previous records at Auburn this semester