Budget includes pay raises; president receives top grade in external assessment

Under a budget approved by the Auburn University Board of Trustees on Sept. 21, faculty and staff will receive merit-based pay increases averaging 2 percent for the 2013 fiscal year, which starts Oct. 1.

In another step toward keeping salaries competitive with peer institutions, the board also approved one-time funds for a 2 percent average in a merit-based one-time payment to be distributed in December. The two-step process is the same as that used in 2010 and 2011, as the board has sought to provide some salary relief for faculty and staff during a prolonged period of tentative economic growth.

Executive Vice President Don Large said the university’s new budget provides added flexibility for deans to draw additional funds for salary improvement within their areas, and some deans have responded by adjusting their internal budgets to provide additional merit-based increases.

The salary increases are part of a university budget which nudged past the $1 billion mark for the first time due to projected revenue growth of just under $21 million. Of the new revenue, $13.4 million is allocated for salary improvement.

The main campus budget of $818 million accounts for 80.4 percent of the total budget for Auburn University, with Auburn Montgomery at 8.5 percent, the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station at 6.2 percent and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System at 4.9 percent.

Large said the university has been hit hard by an overall reduction in state appropriations since the economic recession began in late 2007. He noted that since the 2008 fiscal year, Auburn has seen its state appropriation decline by a total of $98 million.

State appropriations are reduced near $10 million for 2013. That is offset by projected income of $17.7 million for tuition increases at the Auburn and AUM campuses and $13 million through budget reallocation across the system.

Also at the Sept. 21 meeting, university governance consultant Peter Magrath, a much-honored former university president, said Auburn President Jay Gogue deserves a grade of A+ for his leadership

Campus United Way campaign seeks assistance for area charities, services

The 2012 United Way campus campaign starts Monday, Oct. 1, at Auburn University with a kickoff luncheon at the President’s Home. In coming weeks, volunteers across campus will be asking their fellow members of the faculty, staff and administration to help with financial support of local charities and non-profit social services in Lee County.

The campus campaign, with a $140,000 goal, is a major part of the 2012 campaign of the United Way of Lee County, which is seeking $900,000 locally to assist 26 nonprofit agencies that provide essential services to youth groups, the elderly, persons with disabilities, families in crisis, victims of disasters and other residents with special needs.

Lynne Hammond of the Office of Human Resources returns for a second year as chair of the campus campaign, after a previous year as cochair, and Vice President for Research John Mason is honorary chair. They are working with an 11-member leadership team, three dozen campus coordinators and other volunteers.

United Way volunteers began distributing pledge cards in campus departments and divisions this week. The most active period for volunteers will continue until Thanksgiving, but the campaign will continue receiving pledges and gifts through the remainder of fall semester. The campus campaign always starts a few weeks later than the county campaign and often continues into December, when many university personnel make their final giving decisions for the year. “Many people in the Auburn University community have felt the pinch of the economic recession, but, overall, we have been spared much of the pain felt by those who are struggling with financial, family or health crises,” said Hammond. “We do not always see the sacrifices of others, including some who work on campus, but the agencies in the United Way see the suffering up close on a daily basis, and they are turning to us for help. When we join together to provide assistance, we make this a better community for everyone.”

The Lee County United Way theme for the 2012 campaign is “United for a Cause.” Becky Benton, executive director of United Way of Lee County, said the theme is an important reminder for all local residents in an election year. “We may be rivals in sports or politics,” Benton said. “We may feel differently about religion or sporting tattoos, but we can all join together – United – to make a difference in the lives of people in Lee County.”

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Athletics pledges $1.5 million toward construction of band practice facility

The Auburn Athletics Department has pledged $1.5 million to the Auburn University Marching Band for its capital campaign to fund a new band practice facility.

The Band Practice Facility project was approved by the Board of Trustees in 2010 and will provide more than 32,500 square feet of space for the nationally renowned program. The total cost of the facility is estimated at $10 million and will feature a concert band rehearsal hall, percussion studio, marching band rehearsal hall, practice studios, administrative offices, archive gallery and a music library.

“The Auburn University Marching Band is an integral part of the pageantry and fabric of our gameday experience, and we are pleased to be able to help the band program move closer to its goal of building a first-class rehearsal facility,” said Director of Athletics Jay Jacobs.

Jacobs commended the College of Liberal Arts and its dean, Anne Gramberg, for actively supporting the band and music education at Auburn. “I am impressed by the vision Dean Gramberg and the band leadership have for this facility, which will ensure a commitment to excellence far into the future.”

He added, “Not only have Auburn University bands represented us all over the world for more than a century, they have been an invaluable part of the educational experience for generations of Auburn men and women who are proud band alumni. I urge the entire Auburn Family to get behind this project to make it a reality.”

The Marching Band has been a part of the Auburn Athletics experience for nearly 100 years. They are active on Auburn football gamedays as part of the tailgating festivities, Tiger Walk and the always anticipated pregame and halftime performances as well as energizing the crowd in the stands. Additionally, the Auburn Band provides atmosphere and pageantry for men’s and women’s basketball and many other Tiger sporting events.

“The Auburn Band is very thankful for the generous gift provided by the Auburn University Athletics Department,” said Director of Bands Rick Good. “This commitment will be used to house all components of the Auburn Band program, including the 380-member Auburn University Marching Band. The AUMB students give so much of their time to the university; I know they are excited that the dream of a ‘new home’ is much closer to becoming a reality now due to the support of Jay Jacobs and the Athletics Department.”

The first phase of construction, which included a new band rehearsal pavilion located off Hemlock Drive, has been completed. The second phase will incorporate the indoor practice spaces, offices and storage.

Presidential assessment

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of the university over the past five years. Magrath, who has led four universities and university systems and the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, said Auburn University is in excellent health and he has never seen an institution where the president was so highly praised by every constituency.

The evaluation, coming at the five-year mark of Gogue’s presidency, was part of the annual president’s performance assessment for the Board of Trustees. For the evaluation, the board turned to Magrath, who over four decades has served as president or interim president of the University of Nebraska, Binghamton University (twice), the University of Minnesota, the University of Missouri System and NASULGC, now the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities. The latter organization has named its community engagement award in his honor. He has also served as senior presidential adviser to The College Board.

After dozens of private interviews with trustees, faculty, staff, students and alumni, Magrath said everyone was highly positive about the president and the university. Based on those interviews and his own research, Magrath gave Gogue high marks across all constituencies for general administrative effectiveness, communications, advancement of the university and personal attributes.
Human Sciences to present IQLA, Lifetime Achievement awards at December event

Auburn University’s College of Human Sciences will honor Alastair Summerlee, president and vice chancellor of the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada, with the 2012 International Quality of Life Award in a ceremony at the United Nations on Dec. 3. The college will also pay tribute to James T. and Chris P. Pursell of Sylacauga with its 2012 Lifetime Achievement Award.

The annual event was launched in 1994 by the College of Human Sciences to recognize people and partnerships that have made significant and lasting contributions to individual, family and community well-being locally and around the world.

Summerlee has served as the seventh president and vice chancellor at the University of Guelph since 2003. Under his leadership, the university has emerged as a leader among Canadian institutions for its civic engagement and volunteerism. Trained as a veterinary scientist, Summerlee has attracted significant funding to support groundbreaking research in fields related to the hormonal control of pregnancy, birth and lactation, cancer biology, iron deficiency anemia in women and HIV/AIDS. He was awarded a prestigious 3M teaching fellowship in 2003 and continues, even as president, to be one of the most popular teachers on the Guelph campus.

Summerlee spent six years as chair of the board of the World University Service of Canada, one of the country’s leading international development agencies. During that time, he became passionately involved in humanitarian issues in Africa, especially in refugee camps in Kenya where he is setting up an educational program for children. He earned three degrees from the University of Bristol in the United Kingdom and had bestowed upon him the Doctor of Laws degree honoris causa in 2004 for his outstanding contributions to higher education.

“It is especially gratifying this year to honor a distinguished individual from the ranks of higher education,” said June Henton, dean of Auburn’s College of Human Sciences. “Alastair Summerlee is an innovative teacher, internationally acclaimed scientist, visionary administrator and passionate humanitarian. Without question, he is the quintessential scholar whose three-decade career in academia has met the highest standards by which members of the Academy are measured.”

Jimmy, a 1952 graduate of Auburn, and Chris Pursell began their careers working at Parker Fertilizer, a company started by Howard Parker, Mrs. Pursell’s father. The family business evolved into Pursell Technologies, best known for producing POLYON, a patented ultra-thin polymer-coated fertilizer. In 2001, the Pursells established Pursell Farms on 3,500 acres on the outskirts of Sylacauga. The property is home to FarmLinks, an 18-hole championship golf course that was the world’s first research and demonstration course. More than 1,000 golf and nursery professionals visit each year to learn firsthand about the latest in state-of-the-art golf course innovations.

In addition to their entrepreneurial success, the Pursells are philanthropists and civic leaders whose impact is felt throughout a number of educational, faith-based, civic and government organizations and initiatives, including Auburn University.

Lifetime Achievement is a special award given by the College of Human Sciences for individuals who have brought distinguished recognition to Auburn University and the state of Alabama.

Museum film series tracks era, issues in historic art exhibition

The Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art is presenting a film series along with its exhibition “Art Interrupted: Advancing American Art and the Politics of Cultural Diplomacy.”

The 2012 Film@JCSM Series is complementing the “Art Interrupted” exhibition, with the film series “Life Interrupted,” which uses cinema and discussion to examine the cultural upheaval of the mid-20th century, including the Great Depression, ideological clashes between capitalism and communism, war and the atomic age. Experts in film, theater, literature and history will introduce the films and lead post-film discussion.

Upcoming films in the series include “Cradle Will Rock” on Oct. 4, “Intruder in the Dust” on Oct. 11, “Red Tails” on Oct. 25 and “Kiss Me Deadly” on Nov. 1, all at 5:30 p.m.

The “Advancing American Art” collection of avant-garde modernist works by leading artists of that era was organized by the U.S. State Department for an international tour in 1946. The artworks provoked such a political firestorm that the State Department pulled the exhibition and quietly disposed of the valuable paintings at fire-sale prices.

Auburn, the University of Oklahoma and the University of Georgia now own many of these artworks and collaborated on the current exhibition, which reunites some of the most celebrated works from the original collection.

Visiting Russian dignitary

Auburn University President Jay Gogue welcomed Russian Consul General Alexander Zakharov, left, to campus Sept. 17. Based in Houston, the Russian consul general visited Auburn as part of an initiative to broaden the international exposure of students and increase ties between the university and countries around the world. Among his visits on campus, Zakharov met with the global geography class in the Honors College.

Campus United Way campaign

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Even though local United Way agencies have served the community for many years, Benton said she still finds people who do not understand the value of giving. “United Way is about neighbor helping neighbor and others in their community that they might never get to meet,” she said. “United Way is about meeting local needs. It is about making a difference. It is about changing lives.”

Benton asked, “Can you put food on the table of a family that might otherwise have nothing? Can you provide a safe place for a senior citizen to go during the day where they can have interaction with others, receive their medications correctly and have a nutritious meal? Can you help buy the materials to teach an adult to read so that they can better care for their themselves and their families?”

Benton added, “Your gift to United Way does all this and more – right here where we live and work.”
Campus News Briefs

Holiday pay schedules will change for last two months of calendar year

Auburn University is modifying its November and December holiday pay schedules. University Business Office administrators say the changes are expected to reduce the amount of estimating of hours worked, leave time taken and the associated recovery during holiday periods.

Pay dates for those two months will now coincide with original pay dates unless those dates fall on the weekend or a banking holiday. The following schedules are affected: Biweekly 24 pay period Nov. 4 to Nov. 17 will be paid Nov. 23. Biweekly 26 pay period Dec. 2 to Dec. 15 will be paid Dec. 21. Monthly 12 pay period Dec. 1 to Dec. 31 will be paid Dec. 31. Semimonthly pay period Dec. 16 to Dec. 31 will be paid Dec. 31. A list of payroll schedules can be found through AU ACCESS on the university website.

Faculty of 1,000 cites Auburn professor’s work among best published papers

Faculty of 1,000, a post-publication review group of thousands of experts in scientific fields, has cited a paper by Benson Akingbemi of Auburn University College of Veterinary Medicine as one of the best of all recently published research papers worldwide. Akingbemi is an associate professor at the Department of Anatomy, Physiology and Pharmacology. His research is focused on the effects of environmental toxicants. The paper, “The Industrial Chemical Bisphenol A (BPA) Interferes with Proliferative Activity and Development of Steroidogenic Capacity in Rat Leydig Cells,” appeared in the journal Biology of Reproduction and is part of work by graduate student Manjunatha Nanjappa. Last June, the Environmental Protection Agency banned BPA in baby bottles.

Rural Sociology professor edits book on university-community partnerships

Conner Bailey, a professor in the College of Agriculture’s Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, is an editor of the newly published book “Confronting Ecological Crisis in Appalachia and the South: University and Community Partnerships.”

The book, published by the University Press of Kentucky, focuses on partnerships between students and faculty at universities and the leaders of communities dealing with environmental crises. Bailey edited the book with Stephanie McSpirit of Eastern Kentucky University and Lynne Faltraco of the Concerned Citizens of Rutherford County.

International group honors Auburn professor for research, extension

Edward Sikora of the College of Agriculture received the International Award of Excellence at the 2012 International Integrated Pest Management Symposium in Memphis.

The award recognizes Sikora’s contribution to the “Soybean Rust – Pest Information Platform for Extension and Education Program.” Also known as PIPE, the program is a collaboration of international agencies, land grant universities and the soybean industry.

Walter Center director publishes new textbook on technological innovation

Paul Swamidass, director of the Thomas Walter Center for Technology Management and the Business-Engineering-Technology Program, has published a new book, “The Early Phases of Technological Innovation for Engineering and Business Students.” Designed for engineering and business students unfamiliar with the elements of technological innovation, the book seeks to make the seven-stage process of technological innovations easier to comprehend.

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