Campus planners at Auburn University have identified three areas as potential locations for one or more central classroom buildings that would mark a new approach to the design and use of teaching facilities on campus. Also in the works are suggested sites for new homes for several Auburn colleges and departments.

Seeking additional input, the Office of the Provost and the Division of Facilities Management presented the options, with several variations, to faculty and students Monday at a Provost’s Forum in Foy Hall. The presentation was one of several to campus constituencies in connection with a pending update to the campus master plan. Sasaki Associates, which developed the current master plan, has been working on the update with campus planners and Auburn’s Master Plan Update Committee.

Replacing Haley Center and other classroom buildings constructed in the mid-20th century, the new buildings will break from the traditional practice of housing most classrooms with faculty and administrative offices of each college and school. Designed to accommodate changes in instructional technology and teaching methods and built to serve at least 50 years, the new multidisciplinary facilities will be placed in the central campus in an area bounded by College Street, Samford Avenue, Donahue Drive and Magnolia Avenue.

Planners have recommended that the new classroom facilities, estimated at 150,000-165,000 square feet, be placed in one or more of three areas.

Option 1 is between the new parking deck south of the stadium and present-day Parker and Allison Halls. Option 2 is behind Tichenor Hall, east of the Dunstan-Tiger Concourse, including the current sites of the L Building, Dunstan Hall and Shop Buildings. Each of those options would enable additional decisions regarding whether to construct one large or two smaller buildings, either near each other or in two of the three CCF site options.

The Dunstan-Tiger Concourse site would also be near a parking deck that has been proposed for the northeast quadrant of campus.

Option 3 is between Draughon Library and Mell Street; if that site is chosen, planners recommend that only one of two smaller classroom buildings be constructed there, with the other building placed in the vicinity of either the Dunstan-Tiger Concourse or stadium parking deck.

At Monday’s forum, Student Government Association representatives advocated constructing a single classroom facility near the stadium parking deck.

Members of the Sciences and Mathematics faculty also supported the more southern site, next to their academic precinct. However, a Liberal Arts faculty member expressed concern about that site being too far from the north side of campus and said it would present a burden to that college’s faculty. The two colleges provide faculty for most of Auburn’s core curriculum and would be the heaviest users of the new facilities.

Additional site options include eventual removal of Haley Center and Parker, Allison, Funchess, Spidle and Upchurch halls, and possible locations for new, smaller buildings to house the colleges of Sciences and Mathematics, Liberal Arts, Human Sciences, and Education, along with some departments in the College of Agriculture. These buildings would include conference rooms and some specialized classrooms, but most general purpose classrooms would be in the new central facilities.

If Haley Center is torn down, the suggested site for the College of Education is south of the Hill Residence Halls, between Poultry Science and the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences.

Several options have been proposed for a new Liberal Arts building, with each depending on other building decisions in addition to Haley demolition. One option would be to construct new facilities for Pharmacy and Nursing away from the campus core and renovate their current buildings for use by Liberal Arts. Another option would be east of the stadium parking deck, if the central classroom building is not placed there. Two additional options for a new Liberal Arts building would be behind Tichenor Hall, if all or part of central classroom facilities are built elsewhere, or near the library, if that area is not needed for one of the central classroom buildings.

Potential sites for a future Sciences and Mathematics building would be in the existing COSAM precinct, including a building facing Liberal Arts if both are constructed near the stadium parking deck.

If Spidle Hall is demolished, possible sites for a new College of Human Sciences building would be the old Mell Hall site, next door at the corner of Roosevelt and Mell, or across College Street near The Hotel at Auburn University. College of Agriculture facilities displaced in the event of demolition of Funchess and Upchurch would move to new buildings in the vicinity of Comer Hall.


Upcoming Provost Forums will examine additional aspects of updates to the campus master plan. Next up, on Oct. 17, is discussion of parking, circulation and mobility, to be followed on Oct. 24 by on-campus housing, dining, security and quality of life and on Nov. 7 by options for redevelopment of Toomer’s Corner. All are at 3:30 p.m. in Foy 258.

– Roy Summerford
Distinguished Graduate Faculty Lecture

Gary Gruenhage of the Department of Mathematics and Statistics delivered Auburn’s 2012 Distinguished Graduate Faculty Lecture, “Undecidable Propositions” on Oct. 3 at the Rouse Life Sciences Building Auditorium. The Graduate School and the Alumni Association present the Distinguished Graduate Faculty Lecturer Award each year to an outstanding member of the graduate faculty. Addressing faculty and students from various disciplines, Gruenhage discussed the presence of “undecidable” statements beyond mathematics and how scholars deal with them. He included examples of natural questions in topology that have turned out to be undecidable.

Auburn receives $6.4 million gift

The Birmingham Urban Revitalization Partnership recently donated facilities housing the Harris Early Learning Center in Birmingham to Auburn University.

The gift, valued at $6.4 million, includes the building and contents, as well as an endowment for general maintenance. The Alabama Power Foundation will also continue its longtime support of the center.

“Auburn University now has a physical presence in downtown Birmingham from which our Extension and outreach mission can more effectively operate in one of the main population centers of the state,” said Joe Pittman, head of the Department of Human Development and Family Studies in Auburn’s College of Human Sciences.

“It will invigorate our research program that has been ongoing in the center since its inception. It will give more undergraduate and graduate interns from a variety of disciplines opportunities to observe or work with young children in a state-of-the-art facility, or, depending on the discipline of the participating student, it could provide ideas for how to design, operate or otherwise improve such facilities for the future.”

Business and civic leaders joined forces with Auburn’s Human Development and Family Studies faculty in 1994 to provide parents working in the downtown Birmingham area with a high-quality child care facility. Human Sciences faculty from Auburn helped design the center, as well as create a curriculum to educate and foster developing social and practical skills.

Located in Birmingham’s Civil Rights District, the Harris Early Learning Center opened in 1995 with 65 children. Within two years, it was serving 200, ranging in age from six weeks to five years. The center continues to attract approximately 200 children each year, some of whom remain in the program until they leave for kindergarten. Besides serving as a state-of-the-art child care center, the facility provides on-site apartments for students and faculty who need accommodations for overnight or long-term stays while conducting research or completing internships. The center also offers parenting workshops and training for teachers and directors of other Birmingham metro centers.

The Harris Early Learning Center is named for Elmer and Glenda Harris of Birmingham, advocates of early childhood education who led the effort to obtain corporate sponsorship to build the center. Elmer Harris, an Auburn alumnus, retired as CEO of Alabama Power Co. in 2002 after 44 years with the company.

— Amy Weaver
What became of missing paintings?

Art researchers tackle Cold War cold case mystery

Art researchers at Auburn University’s Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art are on a wide-ranging hunt for a handful of historic paintings that have not been seen in public since the early days of the Cold War.

With few clues to go on, the search is for a handful of pieces missing from the politically charged “Advancing American Art” collection of the late 1940s. In the recently opened exhibition “Art Interrupted: Advancing American Art and the Politics of Cultural Diplomacy,” the Auburn art museum is presenting the most complete grouping of the historic collection since 1948, when the former State Department collection was sold at auction.

All but 10 of the original 117 works that were part of the final sale are accounted for in the touring exhibition, and 106 are on display at Jule Collins Smith Museum through Jan. 5, but, according to Dennis Harper, one of the principal curators, 10 paintings are still on the most wanted list. The hope is that through the exhibition and publications, someone out there might recognize a missing piece of history.

Harper said that for him and his colleagues, the effort involved in tracking down the artwork is similar to detective work. In addition to researching museum websites and inventories, they questioned expert witnesses. They also looked at sales records from the 1948 War Assets Administration auction and other contemporary documents. For example, the case of John Marin’s “Sea and Boat” had clues dotting a trail from the Southwest to the Atlantic Ocean.

“We had a missing painting. We knew the size. We knew the date. We knew the subject. We had a general title,” said Harper.

After seeing a black and white, somewhat blurry photograph, a scholar tipped the team off to a painting sold to a private collector by a Texas dealer. The dealer had brokered a sale with an unidentified buyer that seemed to match the missing work.

“They showed the photo to the owner, who said ‘no, nice painting but not mine,’” said Harper. “But, we did eventually find the Marin in a museum in Boca Raton, Fla. where it was ‘hidden in plain sight’.”

Another work that the team tracked down was Sol Wilson’s “Fisherman on a Wharf” in New York. Harper credited the tenacity of Mark White, curator of the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art, University of Oklahoma.

“It was sold in 1948 at the War Assets Administration auction and then went out of view,” said Harper.

“No one could find it when an exhibition similar to ours was put together by the Montgomery Museum of Art and the Smithsonian in the 1980s. It was hanging in a high school administrator’s office. School administrators were unaware of the historical significance but happy to loan the work. They had it restored, photographed, crated and sent it to us.”

In the search for others, Harper has returned to basics. “I’m looking through sources of exhibition records, gallery records, museum collections, private and public collections.”

The 1948 sales catalogue lists “Watercolor Landscape” by Yasuo Kuniyoshi, which Harper said may be Kuniyoshi’s “Way to Rockport,” a title he found listed on an old gallery receipt.

“We don’t have a photograph of it, which would certainly help,” he said. “It’s things like that, trying to poke in every corner that you can think of and see if something sounds likely. Most of the clues don’t pan out, but every once in a while they do.”

“There’s a chance that some of the paintings could have been destroyed – burned in a fire somewhere, thrown into a dumpster – you never know but you hope not,” said Harper. “I think that eventually most of these will turn up. Probably they are in the possession of people who appreciate them but have no idea that they belonged to a historically significant collection from the State Department.”

With a website and full color catalogue of essays and reproductions, someone might see the missing inventory list and spark a new lead.

With recent coverage of the yard sale Renoir, the forgotten Picasso at an Indiana museum and the Goodwill painting that sold for nearly $30,000 at auction, Harper believes that these types of discoveries generate audience interest in uncovering treasure.

“With venues like Antiques Roadshow and television and media that can draw attention to it, I think that maybe there is a little more intense search these days for the masterpiece hiding in the attic.”

After the show closes in Auburn, “Art Interrupted” then travels to the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art at the University of Oklahoma, the Indiana University Art Museum, and the Georgia Museum of Art at the University of Georgia. To see the list of missing inventory and learn more about the collection, go to www.artinterrupted.org.

The “Art Interrupted” tour is organized by the Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art. Researchers at the museum are conducting a wide-ranging search for a handful of long-lost valuable works from the post-World War II era.

Collins Smith Museum, the Georgia Museum of Art at the University of Georgia and the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art at the University of Oklahoma and was made possible by grants from the Henry Luce Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts as part of American Masterpieces: Three Centuries of Artistic Genius.

– Charlotte Hendrix

Magazine cites Auburn as Military-Friendly School

Auburn University has been named to G.I. Jobs magazine’s list of Military Friendly Schools for 2013 “for being among the top 15 percent of schools nationwide that deliver the best experience for military students.”

The list was compiled through extensive research and a data-driven survey of more than 12,000 VA-approved schools nationwide. Auburn is one of 1,700 U.S. colleges, universities and trade schools cited as doing the most to educate America’s veterans. Auburn will be listed in G.I. Jobs magazine’s 2013 Guide to Military Friendly Schools and will be included in an online listing at www.militaryfriendlyschools.com.

Auburn University has 284 veterans and 416 veterans dependents enrolled this semester.

One of the ways Auburn University makes its campus military-friendly to those veterans and their families is through its Veterans and Transfer Students Resource Center, established in 2010, to provide veterans a way to connect to academic and student support services.

“We are very honored to receive this designation in just our third year of operation,” said Johnny Green, director of the Veterans and Transfer Students Resource Center. “We are proud of what we’ve been able to accomplish. It’s through the leadership of our president, provost, employees and students who focus on bringing meaningful improvement to veteran issues that we have been successful.”

– Neali Vann
Auburn audiologists helping children in Guatemala

Auburn audiologists in the Department of Communication Disorders in Auburn University’s College of Liberal Arts are working in partnership with the municipality of Guatemala City to provide hearing screening, follow-up testing and hearing aids for children in inner city schools.

Students and faculty from the department have been traveling to Guatemala annually since 2009, but that practice meant follow-up testing could only be completed once a year.

“Imagine failing a hearing test in June and having to wait until the following May to be seen by an audiologist,” said Sandra Clark-Lewis, professor emerita in the College of Liberal Arts. “With our audiometric test equipment, we are now able to serve these children on a regular basis to assess their needs.”

With the support of grants from a 2012 Auburn University Competitive Outreach award, the Department of Communication Disorders and Auburn University at Montgomery, the clinic was able to purchase a new audiometer with remote testing capabilities, which faculty delivered to Guatemala, and the software, Blackboard Collaborate, which makes it possible to perform the test any place that has an Internet connection.

Once a child in Guatemala is identified as needing an audiological evaluation, school personnel make an appointment by email. An audiologist at Auburn and a school assistant in Guatemala both log on to a web-based service, which enables the audiologist to control the audiometer in Guatemala. The school assistant puts earphones on the child being tested and the audiologist in Auburn administers the test. The computer program enables the audiologist to see and hear the child throughout the test.

With the remote tests, Auburn audiologists can use their limited time in Guatemala each year to deliver more hearing aids and train school personnel, said Kelli Watts, assistant clinical professor in the Department of Communication Disorders. She added that the experience is also beneficial to students in the department, who assist in conducting the tests and are receiving hands-on training for their future careers.

“Telepractice is the future of audiology practice,” said Watts. “It can be used not only for international humanitarian aid, but also to reach local patients, such as those in nursing homes or rural areas, who may have difficulty traveling to an office.”

Planners present options for sites of new classroom facilities, other buildings

Birmingham group donates site of Harris Early Learning Center to Auburn University

Art historians reopen Cold War cold case in search for long-lost valuable artworks

Since the project’s inception, the approximately 1,500 children in the Guatemala City Schools have received hearing screenings and evaluation.

– Carol Nelson

Index

1 Planners present options for sites of new classroom facilities, other buildings

2 Birmingham group donates site of Harris Early Learning Center to Auburn University

3 Art historians reopen Cold War cold case in search for long-lost valuable artworks

One of several options for new buildings, Page 1