Board to consider dismissal policy proposed by faculty, administration

A proposal for a new faculty dismissal policy is scheduled to come before the Board of Trustees this week at the AU Hotel. The proposed dismissal policy is one of approximately 30 agenda items for committee meetings, which start at 10 a.m. Thursday. The full board will meet at 10:30 a.m. Friday to consider action on committee recommendations.

Faculty leaders worked closely with the university’s general counsel to draft the faculty dismissal policy, which the University Senate and Provost John Heilman recommended to President Jay Gogue. The six-page document, which now goes to the board, will replace a two-page policy from 1993 that officials have described as ineffective.

The policy lists steps to be followed in a faculty dismissal process, and it outlines the rights of the accused in such cases. Also, unlike the previous document, the proposed dismissal policy defines just-cause for misconduct and performance.

The Board of Trustees approved provisions related to misconduct earlier this year under a temporary policy while the University Senate developed the new policy, which adds performance criteria.

Among other agenda items are a proposal to change the designation of Building Science from a department to a school in the College of Architecture, Design and Construction, institute professional fees in the College of Business and establish a master of science degree in geography.

Also on the agenda are items related to construction of a plant sciences building, a track and soccer building, an addition to the Scott-Yarbrough House, interior modifications to the Athletic Complex and renovation of guest rooms in the AU Hotel.

Prepared a week in advance, agendas are subject to change. For online updates or changes in the agenda, see www.auburn.edu/administration/trustees.
Educator cites need of veterans returning from long deployments

With their tours of duty over in Iraq and Afghanistan, many American combat veterans are returning home and seeking college degrees. While some easily make the transition, others need help. Auburn University is one of those colleges assisting veterans in their service in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, focuses on the needs of veterans on college campuses and ways institutions can assist them.

The Auburn faculty member said education needs of returning veterans strike a special chord with him. “My work today in the area of veterans’ educational and transition needs was indeed influenced by my own experiences,” he explained.

DiRamo entered college after serving in the U.S. Navy from 1980-86. “Like many of the veterans that I am studying now, I used my G.I. benefits to attend college for the first time,” he said. “But the transition to college was not easy. I remember how rusty my academic skills were after being out of school for so long. So bad. “However, I persevered and ended up going on to complete a doctorate in education.”

A native of Buffalo, N.Y., he returned to his hometown after completing his Navy service. He earned a bachelor’s degree and an M.B.A. from New York University at Buffalo and then went on to earn his doctorate from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Along with his research on veterans’ educational needs, DiRamo also serves as the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators’ liaison for an American Council on Education initiative, “Severely Injured Military Veterans: Fulfilling Their Dream.” In that role, he helps locate spon-
sors to assist with student loans and to find internships for severely injured veterans.

“...90 percent of veterans will attend 200 colleges and universities in this country. Auburn University is one of those institutions,” DiRamo said.

Upcoming Events

Tuesday, October 30

PUBLIC LECTURE “Seeking the Perfect Balance: Perfectionism and Work-Family Conflict,” Jackie Mitchelson of the Department of Psychology, noon, Foy 208

Thursday, November 1

COMMITTEE SESSIONS AU Board of Trustees, 10 a.m. to approximately 3 p.m., AU Hotel

WOMEN’S STUDIES LECTURE Alison Piepmeier of the College of Charleston, “Own the F Word: Why Feminism Still Counts,” 1:30 p.m., Foy 217

ARTIST’S TALK “Indo Indica,” Julia Kjelgaard, artist and recent Fulbright Scholar in India, 4:30 p.m., Biggins 705

PUBLIC LECTURE Mark Morán, executive vice president for operations, Continental Airlines, 7 p.m., Lowder 125A

Friday, November 2

MEETING AU Board of Trustees, 10:30 a.m., AU Hotel

MEETING AU Alumni Association Board of Directors, 1 p.m., Alumni Center

Saturday, November 3

HOMECOMING Various school, college, student, alumni activities across campus, Saturday morning; AU vs. Tennessee Tech football game, 1:30 p.m., Jordan-Hare Stadium

MEETING Auburn Alumni Association, 9 a.m., Alumni Center

RESEARCH FESTIVAL Auburn Forestry, Agriculture and Fall J. Roundup (music, other entertainment and samples of foods from Alabama products), 9 a.m.-noon, Ag Heritage Park; admission $5 for age 6 and above

Next AU Report

Monday, November 5

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

Wednesday, November 7

FACULTY SEMINAR “The Power of Feedback to Students,” Jim Grocia, 1:15 p.m., Foy 203, contact Biggio Center, 844-8300

Publications

AU Report Editor: Roy Summerville. Contributing editors and writers: Katie Wilder, AU Communications; Colleen Brownlow, Education; and Sara Borchik, Engineering. Photography: Jeff Elleridge and Melissa Harmie. AU Photography Services. Executive Director of Communications & Marketing: Debbie Dovera. The AU Report is published by the Office of Communications and Marketing at Auburn University. Issues appear each Monday during fall and spring semesters and every two weeks in summer term, except on the Monday of the week after most major U.S. holidays. Copies are distributed free by campus mail to full-time faculty and staff at campus offices. Deadlines for electronic copy publication is 4 p.m. on Thursday before publication date. Direct inquiries, suggestions and news items to AU Report, 25 Sandhill Avenue, Auburn, AL 36849 Telephone: 334-449-9999. E-mail: aucomm@auburn.edu

Make changes in health insurance, tax in November

If your employee health insurance up to date and meeting your family’s needs? Do you want additional coverage for dental, vision or other conditions? How will you handle co-pay or uninsured medical expenses in the coming year?

The Office of Payroll and Employee Benefits is reminding AU employees that the annual one-month open period for faculty and staff to adjust their employee health insurance coverage and related federal tax documents for 2008 starts Thursday.

November is the month when faculty and staff may add or make changes in their health, dental, vision, cancer and supplemental disability insurance plans. These changes will take effect Jan. 1.

Under federal law, faculty and staff may also add or make changes in flexible spending accounts, which enable employees to reduce their taxes by setting aside money from each paycheck to offset out-of-pocket medical expenses for the individual and their dependents. The deduction will reduce the amount of salary subject to federal taxes, resulting in savings for most participants.

To comply with Internal Revenue Service regulations, employees must add or make changes to health insurance spending accounts by Nov. 30. For information, go online to the AU Access site on the AU Home Page or call 844-4183, or visit the Payroll and Employee Benefits Office in Ingram Hall.

NSF-funded study examines new way to teach computing

The National Science Foundation has awarded Auburn University a two-year grant of approximately $550,000 to AU and two other universities for research to improve the teaching of computing concepts to undergraduates.

N. Hari Narayanan of the Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering in AU’s Samuel Ginn College of Engineering is collaborating with researchers at Washington State University and the University of Hawaii to study studio-based instruction for teaching computing concepts to undergraduates. Studio-based instruction, in which teachers and encourages students to work collaboratively, is adapted from design-oriented disciplines, such as architecture.

“We are looking forward to our work on this proj-
ec, as well as the collaboration we will have with the other two to bring an exciting new way of teaching educators across the country,” said Narayanan.

At Auburn, Narayanan is working with Margaret Ross in the College of Education and Dean Hendrix of Computer Science and Software Engineering to examine the effectiveness of studio-based learning in undergraduate courses over the two years.

Researchers will compare results from Auburn with those from Washington State and Hawaii. They will then build a national network of educators interested in applying studio-based teaching in their classrooms. They also plan to organize workshops and create a web-based community support system for computing faculty interested in this approach.
Profiles in Excellence

For Pam Boyd, top students and top teachers are often the same

Her former students have a good reason for describing Pamela Boyd as a teacher’s teacher. A member of the AU College of Education faculty since 1991, Boyd not only teaches future and current teachers how to improve their own teaching, she also serves as a role model for students and colleagues both at Auburn and in the public schools.

Boyd is one of two winners of the 2007 Leischuck Awards for Excellence in Teaching, which AU awarded in a recent ceremony. Established by emeritus administrators Gerald and Emily Leischuck in 2005, the annual awards recognize the university’s best teachers, as recommended to AU’s provost and president by a committee of faculty, administrators, students and graduate students. The other Leischuck Award recipient for 2007 is Roland Dute of the Department of Botany and Microbiology in the College of Sciences and Mathematics.

Teachers in Auburn City Schools, former graduate students of Boyd, nominated the associate professor for the AU teaching award, citing her influence on their teaching philosophies and classroom performance. Boyd spends much of her time in the city schools, collaborating with teachers, advising student-teachers and mentoring graduate students in the schools where they teach.

The Auburn faculty member says working in elementary schools with graduate students who themselves are professionals is an exhilarating learning experience for herself as well as for the students. She notes that professional teachers are quick to recognize what works and to bounce ideas off one another. “They have a passion for learning or they would not be there,” Boyd said. “They are not just learning, they are becoming better teachers, and they are helping me to be a better teacher.”

Boyd describes herself as a student as well as a teacher. “My teaching style and method improve as I learn with my students the importance of modeling the type of teaching I expect of them. My efforts center on creating a positive environment that exemplifies respect for each student and encourages the students’ best efforts.”

In every class, Boyd tries to reach out to individual students. With graduate classes, this often involves working with the students to adjust the class syllabus to meet the challenges they face or will face on a daily basis. Boyd notes that the graduate classes provide models for appropriate planning, teaching and assessing, while the current and future teachers seek ways to apply those models in their own classrooms.

“I believe first-hand experience to be the best teacher,” Boyd said, adding that one of her proudest accomplishments in teaching graduate students has been the establishment of a cohort, a closely-knit group of in-service teachers who are seeking a graduate degree. The teacher-graduate students in the group regularly share their teaching experiences with one another as they develop individual strategies for meeting their students’ needs.

In addition to her work with graduate students, Boyd teaches orientation classes to undergraduates entering the AU College of Education. “She has invigorated these classes and created a sense of excitement about them among students and faculty alike,” wrote College of Education Dean Frances Kochan in supporting Boyd’s nomination for the Leischuck Award. “She brings an energy and enthusiasm to this task that inspires students and encourages them to enter and remain in the teaching profession.”

Kochan added, “She is among the most sincere, caring, compassionate and supportive teachers I have ever known.”

Since joining the AU faculty in 1991, Boyd has devoted much of her research and outreach efforts toward establishing effective partnerships between colleges of education and public schools. Through those efforts, she seeks ways to provide relevant, more effective learning opportunities for the faculty and students in elementary schools as well as the university. “These collaborative efforts greatly improved my teaching effectiveness and proved to be a win-win situation for all participants,” said Boyd, who credits Kochan, former Dean Richard Kunkel and recently retired Department Head Andy Weaver for providing enthusiastic support for the partnerships.

Teaching teachers
In elementary classrooms as well as at AU, Boyd helps novice and veteran teachers identify and meet the learning needs of their students.

UN program honors AU agriculture professor

Distinguished University Professor Rod Rodriguez-Kabana of the AU College of Agriculture recently received the Champion Award from the United Nations Environment Programme’s Technology and Economic Assessment Panel.

A soil biologist in the Department of Entomology and Plant Pathology, he was recognized at the Montreal Protocol as a leader in the search for replacements for the ozone-depleting fumigant methyl bromide.

In research honored by the UN program, the Auburn professor has developed a liquid form of the chemical sodium azide that has been demonstrated to be a highly effective replacement. The product has been under Environmental Protection Agency review and awaiting registration for almost four years.

A College of Agriculture faculty member since 1965, Rodriguez-Kabana is one of the longest-serving members of the Auburn faculty.

The AU Report is an official publication of Auburn University. Each unit mailing copies of this document to off-campus addresses must include its return address. The Office of Communications & Marketing will not accept billing for copies mailed by other units.