Federal stimulus funds targeted for academics, student services

Auburn University has identified programs that $25.9 million in stimulus funds from the federal government will support once released by Gov. Bob Riley. The majority of the funds will support student learning, safety and other enhancements, as well as teaching. The intent is to enhance the experience of the entire student body, which for fiscal year 2010 has reached 24,602.

"It would have taken a 26 percent tuition increase to cover the gap created by the dramatic decrease in state appropriations for fiscal year 2010," said Executive Vice President Don Large. "The promise of stimulus funding allowed us to mitigate that by using the majority of funds to improve student services."

Large added that Auburn University Montgomery also used the planned funding to mitigate tuition increases and preserve faculty and staff support jobs that would otherwise be eliminated due to state appropriation reductions.

Funds will be used to provide additional services at the Auburn University Libraries and Honors College, and for student wireless communications and classroom multimedia upgrades, as well as to enhance public safety and security.

"The safety enhancements, as well as a night security shuttle for students, are a major priority for both students and parents, and Auburn’s plan to support those areas indicates the university is listening," said Student Government Association President Jacob Watkins.

"In addition, it is critical to retain graduate teaching assistants, part-time faculty and core faculty positions to ensure positive outcomes for our students’ futures," Large said. "With careful funds management, we’re combining our budget with planned stimulus funds to avoid reductions in student services and preserve academic quality."

Large noted that the stimulus funds, while helpful, make up a small portion of the $172 million cumulative cut in Auburn’s state funding when combined with the effects of the state reductions in

Health insurance rates to rise in January

The cost of employee health insurance at Auburn will increase on Jan. 1 for both the university and its employees. Faculty and staff will also face higher co-pays in 2010.

Part of a longer term, nationwide trend, the higher costs reflect a 4 percent increase in total claims paid by the university’s employee health insurance program during the past year.

The rate increase varies among employees, depending on salary range, pay period and type of coverage. The smallest increase, less than $1 per pay period, approximately $25 per year, will be for employees with individual coverage who are paid every two weeks. At the other end of the scale, faculty and staff earning $38,000 or more per year with family coverage and paid monthly will see their payments increase by $15.51 per month, approximately $186 for the year.

Those costs are for the group health insurance traditional plan, which covers the majority of Auburn employees; similar increases apply to those covered by the GHI Personal Choice Plan, which offers lower rates in exchange for additional steps for some medical services. Employees who wish to change plans may do so through the Office of Payroll and Employee Benefits during November.

Meanwhile, the university, which pays the majority of each employee’s total insurance premium, will pay an additional $1.1 million due to the premium increase. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama administers but does not fund the insurance program for the university and its employees, who collectively maintain the funding pool that finances the program. The Auburn insurance fund’s only other source of revenue is investment earnings from the fund, itself.

With prescription drugs accounting for 26 percent of the total value of claims, the health insurance program will increase co-pays for prescriptions and add restrictions on the availability of some drugs in 2010. Employee co-pay on the category of drugs listed as Tier 2, preferred brands, will increase to $30 from $25, and those identified as Tier 3, non-preferred brands, will...
Recalling the Berlin Wall

Students gather around a replica of one section of the Berlin Wall, an act that would have been dangerous to attempt at the actual wall during the Cold War. Students in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures and the Honors College erected the replica Monday on Haley Concourse for the 20th anniversary of the end of the wall and the reunification of Germany.

Stimulus plans

continued from page 1

fiscal years 2009 and 2010. In terms of continuing appropriations, Auburn’s adjusted base appropriations from the state have been reduced by $96 million from the fiscal year 2008 level, an amount greater than the total reduction in appropriations for Alabama’s two-year college system.

A recent letter to the governor from the university outlines Auburn’s plans and its intention to provide transparent and full disclosure of all spending. While the funds were appropriated to the university by the legislature in the fiscal year 2010 Education Trust Fund budget, the funds have not yet been released by the state.

Health insurance

continued from page 1

increase to $60 from $50. When a generic drug is available, a brand-name version of that drug will not be covered. Tier 1, most generic medications, will have a $10 co-pay, but faculty and staff who use the internal employee pharmacy’s Tiger Meds program for all their prescriptions will have the co-pay waived for these generics.

Information on the Tiger Meds program is available online at the program’s Web site: http://pharmacy.auburn.edu/tigermeds/.

A new class of rare, technologically advanced drugs, identified as specialty medications, will have a co-pay of $100 per prescription. These include bioengineered proteins or blood products.

Some drugs are no longer covered. These include prescription medicines for which comparable benefits are said to be available from over-the-counter medications. Also, male enhancement drugs such as Viagra, Levitra and Cialis will no longer be covered.

In addition, some restrictions and alternative therapies will apply for persons receiving medications for certain gastrointestinal and heartburn ailments.

Premium increases also apply to employee dental insurance plans, and a new vision insurance plan will be implemented for 2010. Cancer insurance and supplemental disability insurance plans are also available.

Changes in insurance plans or flexible spending accounts for tax savings on medical spending may be made each year only during the November open enrollment period. For application forms or for more information, contact Payroll and Employee Benefits at 212 Ingram Hall or call 844-4183.

Campus Calendar

change in publication schedule

The Auburn Report will depart from its regular two-week publication schedule in November and December due to the Thanksgiving holidays and the approaching end of fall semester. Look for the next edition on Dec. 4, followed on Dec. 11 by the final edition of the semester.

Friday, November 13

Theatre “Brighton Beach Memoirs,” 7:30 p.m., also Saturday, Nov. 14, and Tuesday-Friday, Nov. 17-20, and 2:30 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 15, Telfair Peet Theatre; Box Office: 844-4154

Sunday, November 15

Hungry Awareness Concert “Voices Against Hunger,” Auburn University Gospel Choir, University of Alabama Afro-American Gospel Choir, Tuskegee University Gospel Choir, Bell Missionary Baptist Church Gospel Choir and Opelika High School Gospel Choir, 5 p.m., The City Church, 950 Shelton Mill Road; admission: $5 or five canned goods

Tuesday, November 17

Littleton-Franklin Lecture “Don’t Ask What Robotics Can Do For You; Ask What You Can Do For Robotics,” Natalie Jeremijenko, director of xDesign Environmental Health Clinic, New York University, discussing new technologies for non-violent social change, 4 p.m., Sciences Center Auditorium, Roosevelt Concourse

Wednesday, November 18

Open Forum Provost Mary Ellen Mazey and Auburn faculty, discussion of lecturer and senior lecturer guidelines, 3 p.m., auditorium, Draughon Library

Monday, November 23

Thanksgiving Holidays No classes this week

Wednesday, November 25

Thanksgiving Holidays Offices closed for remainder of week

Friday, December 4

Next Auburn Report

Wednesday, December 9

Final Exams Also Dec. 10, 11, 14 and 15

Friday, December 11

Final Auburn Report of fall semester

Friday, December 18

Graduation 2 p.m., Beard-Eaves-Memorial Coliseum

Monday, December 21

Holiday Break Offices closed until Monday, Jan. 4; spring semester classes resume Monday, Jan. 11; first edition of Auburn Report for spring semester, Friday, Jan. 15
Profiles in Excellence

Professor honored for community service

Neither his teaching nor research would be complete for Psychology Professor Barry Burkhart without community service.

For Burkhart, recipient of Auburn’s 2009 Award for Excellence in Faculty Outreach, outreach connects nationally recognized research, more than three decades of teaching, active clinical practice and development of student community-engagement programs.

“Outreach is the crucible for my research,” said Burkhart. “Whatever we learn in the lab has to be confirmed and tested in the world, and what we discover in the real world comes back to be examined in the lab. In my work, outreach and scholarship are seamless; they are the warp and woof of one fabric of discovery.”

A licensed psychologist, Burkhart is the former chair of the Department of Psychology in the College of Liberal Arts, where he has been on faculty since 1974. He also served as chair of the University Senate in 1992.

In addition to extensive teaching and research activities, he has established a statewide and national reputation for outreach scholarship focusing on violent crime, its aftermath and its prevention. Burkhart’s engagement provides intervention for area youth-at-risk, counseling to victims, treatment and rehabilitation of offenders, and policy consultation to youth-development services and law enforcement agencies across the state and region.

“Barry Burkhart sets the standard for engaged scholarship, not only in his own discipline, but also across the academic enterprise,” said Royrickers Cook, assistant vice president for University Outreach at Auburn. “Barry’s work is respected at the highest levels of his discipline and recognized for its tremendous impact on every aspect of the community touched by violent crime.”

Burkhart describes outreach as part of an ongoing cycle of responsible civic engagement. “As a clinical psychologist, my research and professional work are interwoven far more tightly than most. Much of my research is conducted within the setting where I am engaged in providing service work,” he noted.

For example, Burkhart was asked by the Alabama Department of Youth Services to develop a program to evaluate and provide appropriate treatment for adolescents convicted of sexual crimes.

“To my way of thinking, given that we knew so little about the characteristics of these boys, it was natural to build in a research component such that we could develop a better understanding of the psychological status of these youthful offenders.”

Burkhart used the data collected in the evaluations of the boys to study the effectiveness of treatment services. “I saw this as not simply important, but absolutely necessary if we were to be intellectually and socially accountable.”

External engagement also helps in the classroom for Burkhart, who said he considers his outreach most often a form of teaching.

“If we have developed a new method of preventing adolescent suicide, and we need for teachers to be the implementors, then we have to teach the teachers,” he explained. “Once again, the process is an ongoing dialectic between implementation, evaluation, review, revision and implementation,” said Burkhart. “What this has fostered in me is awareness that teaching requires the same consciousness, intention of purpose and evaluation as does the practice of psychology.”

In addition, Burkhart’s lab and service-learning settings have hosted numerous undergraduate students who completed research and service-learning practica. The experiences to which these students were exposed are profoundly enriching, he noted.

“None of our students are unmoved by this exposure and, in fact, often they end up developing professional careers based on their work with us,” added Burkhart. “One of my former students is now working with the behavioral sciences division of the FBI because she found this work so engaging and important.”

Coupled with his broad research interests in assessment and treatment of problems resulting from violence and victimization, Burkhart has significant experience working directly with sex offenders. He was appointed to the board of the first adult sex-offender treatment program sponsored by the Alabama Department of Corrections and worked in the program developed and implemented at the Bullock County Correctional Facility. Burkhart commented that “most faculty spend their sabbatical leave in exotic places; I spent mine in prison learning to treat sex offenders.”

He has also served as a consultant to the juvenile sex offender treatment program at Dozier School for Boys in Marianna, Fla. Since 1999, he has been involved with the accountability-based sex offender program in the Alabama Division of Youth Services facility at the Mount Meigs campus. Currently, he is director of a treatment program for juvenile sex offenders incarcerated in a state training school.

Burkhart noted that his project with the Alabama Department of Youth Services has enabled DYS to meet a mandate to provide treatment services to juvenile offenders, which is now a nationally recognized model. Moreover, data collected through his research will have profound implications for DYS and even for Alabama policy-makers.

“Our research has demonstrated that juvenile sex offenders are quite different from adult offenders in how well they respond to treatment. Those adolescents we have treated have very low recidivism rates for new sex offenses — extraordinarily low rates,” said Burkhart. “Thus, we can now go back to the Legislature and suggest how policy can be articulated to these findings so as to craft smart laws rather than have to blindly make laws without an understanding of the reality of the situation.”

At the same time, Burkhart’s work has led to the identification of a subgroup of adolescents who, while not at an increased rate for new sex offenses, have a high rate of delinquent offenses. “Now we know that we have to develop treatment strategies that address the risk for this kind of delinquency,” Burkhart added.

In recognition of Burkhart’s community service, the psychological services building of the Lee County Youth Development Center is named in his honor.

Burkhart’s work has reached well beyond the state, though. Burkhart has presented more than 200 academic papers and given addresses at dozens of major U.S. universities. He appeared in nationally broadcast documentaries on sexual violence for Fox and ABC television networks.

Burkhart said his work in the field and that of his students has enabled many students to broaden their knowledge base and develop professional skills that would be difficult to achieve solely through studies of texts. Professional counselors, their clients and society benefit from a strong mix of research, outreach and teaching, he added.

— Ralph Foster and Roy Summerford

Editor’s Note: Profiles in Excellence is a periodic series of feature articles about Auburn faculty and staff who have been honored by the university or nationally for the top level of achievement in teaching, research, outreach or within a professional field.
Auburn to inaugurate accelerated dual degree program; airport gets new name

Auburn students will soon have the opportunity to earn credit for a master’s degree while still working toward an undergraduate diploma.

The Board of Trustees on Nov. 6 approved an accelerated dual degree program designed to appeal to students who wish to work in fields where advanced qualifications are needed. “It’s an attractive option for highly motivated students,” said President Jay Gogue. “They can use their academic talents to more quickly earn an advanced degree through a rigorous course of study.”

Students must meet minimum grade point and credit hour standards to become eligible.

“We’ve heard from prospective students and high school teachers and guidance counselors,” said Sarah Newton, president pro tempore of the Auburn Board. “Many students want to augment their educational experience by working toward two degrees.”

The program is projected to save participating students time and money. It will also benefit students who are preparing for careers in which professionals are in short supply.

Among other actions, the board voted to rename the Auburn-Opelika Robert G. Pitts Airport. In recognition of its ongoing expansion and its regional service area, the university-owned airport was renamed the Auburn University Regional Airport, and its airfield was designated the Robert G. Pitts Field.

Pitts served 44 years on the Auburn aerospace engineering faculty, much of the time as head of the aviation program, until his retirement in 1979.

Five choirs to perform Sunday at gospel concert to raise awareness of hunger

Gospel choirs from three universities, a local church and a local high school will perform Sunday, Nov. 15, at a concert to raise awareness about hunger among the poor in Alabama.

Access and Community Initiatives, a unit of Auburn’s Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs, and the Auburn University Gospel Choir will host “Voices Against Hunger” at 5 p.m. at The City Church, 950 Shelton Mill Road. Admission to the concert is $5 or five canned goods.

Choirs scheduled to perform include the Auburn University Gospel Choir, the Tuskegee University Gospel Choir, the Afro-American Gospel Choir from the University of Alabama, the Bell Missionary Baptist Church Gospel Choir and the Opelika High School Gospel Choir.

Nearly 1.5 million Alabamians live below the federal poverty level and 226,000 Alabama households are food insecure. Approximately 546,684 persons per month receive food stamps, with the average monthly food stamp benefit per person totaling $90.50.

The concert’s sponsors include Auburn University’s Access and Community Initiatives, a unit of the Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs, Auburn University Gospel Choir, Afro-American Gospel Choir from the University of Alabama, Tuskegee University Gospel Choir, The City Church of Auburn, East Alabama Teen Summit, Auburn University Outreach, and The Committee of 19.

For more information on the “Voices Against Hunger” Gospel Fest, contact Brandon Wolfe at 844-5042 or wolfebr@auburn.edu.