Draughon Center to renew series on art next year

Auburn professor says book adds to misperception

Extension to open ‘green’ building at state 4-H Center

Author to speak on interplay of science, fine arts

How Auburn Stacks Up

Share of undergrad transfer students by college & school at Auburn in fall 2007

Signs of fall
After a long wait for signs of fall, Auburn witnessed a profusion of the season’s colors last week. These trees on the south side of Draughon Library were typical of the mix of bright and muted colors of trees and bushes across campus.

University Chapel service to memorialize professor

Friends, colleagues and family of Distinguished University Professor W. David Lewis, who died on Sept. 28, will hold a memorial service for him at 4 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 28, at the University Chapel.

Lewis served 35 years in the College of Liberal Arts’ Department of History, where he founded AU’s program in the history of technology, which served as a model for others around the country. A popular professor for two generations of Auburn students, Lewis also was a leading international figure as an aviation historian. His most recent book was a biography of aviation pioneer Eddie Rickenbacker, published in 2005 by Johns Hopkins Press.

University closing center of campus for much of week

With no classes this week due to Thanksgiving and university offices closed from Wednesday-Friday, AU has modified its game day plan for the days leading up to Saturday’s Auburn-Alabama football game.

The university will close the core of campus from 6 p.m. Tuesday through 6 a.m. Friday. The area is bounded by Samford Avenue, Wire Road, Magnolia Avenue and College Street. AU employees working on campus during this time must display an A or B zone hangtag and are prohibited from parking vehicles overnight.

Melvin Owens, AU’s executive director of security and public safety, said limited access to the center of campus during this period is necessary for campus security. “We are excited about hosting the Iron Bowl in its return to Thanksgiving weekend,” said Owens. “However, given the fact that the university will be closed during the week, we feel that it is in our best interest to close the core of campus in order to protect our buildings and other property.”

Game-related restrictions for this week include:

✦ No tailgate sites may be reserved in any manner until 6 a.m. Friday. Individuals and groups will not be permitted to loiter or sit on campus to reserve a preferred site until then. Tape, rope, chairs, small tents and other site markings placed earlier than Friday will be removed.

✦ Recreational vehicles’ early arrival time on campus will remain the same as in the past, 4 p.m. on Wednesday. Arrival will be regulated and RV parking will be limited to the hay fields along South Donahue Drive and Woodfield Drive.

✦ The City of Auburn is offering free, paved parking for RVs arriving Monday and Tuesday. The parking lot, which will stay open through the week, is at Duck Samford Park. The lot is accessed off Airport Road, north of Glenn Avenue.

More game day information is available online at www.auburn.edu/gameday.
Carolyn Draughon Center to renew ‘New Perspectives’ art series in ’08

The Caroline Marshall Draughon Center for the Arts and Humanities in the College of Liberal Arts has received grant funding from the Alabama Humanities Foundation for “New Perspectives: Alabama Art in the Open,” the center’s second annual art series focusing on the state’s artistic heritage.

The series, which explores Alabama’s contributions to the nation’s visual arts, will send scholars to communities throughout the state in 2008 for public discussions on historic architecture, public art, photography, environmental art and related topics.

The topics are grouped around the theme of art created for, in or about nature. The series will explore artists’ creative reactions to and interaction with the environment, in large and small scale, in public and private spaces, using traditional and technological methods. Subjects will include history, anthropology, art, art history and Native American and African American contributions to the region’s art and culture.

Scholars will discuss such concepts as the purpose and value of public art, the intersections of personal and cultural values in domestic landscapes as well as moral and spiritual purposes and a memorial stone wall constructed as a physical manifestation of culture and history.

The speakers represent universities, museums and art and preservation organizations. These include Georgine Clarke of the Alabama State Council on the Arts, Julian Cox of Atlanta’s High Museum of Art, Judith McWillie of the University of Georgia, John Sledge of the Mobile Historic Development Commission and Kelly Wacker of the University of Montevallo.

At AU, lectures will be scheduled for the Jule Collins Smith Museum between Feb. 5 and March 11. After premiering at Auburn, the lectures will be offered in cities across the state.

Besides the Caroline Marshall Draughon Center and the Alabama Humanities Foundation, co-sponsors include AU’s Jule Collins Smith Museum, Department of Art, College of Liberal Arts and Lifelong Learning Institute in University Outreach.

For additional information, call the Caroline Marshall Draughon Center at 844-4946.

AU Scholar at London conference challenges ‘Clash of Civilizations’

CLAIMS of a clash of civilizations between Islamic and Western cultures are vastly overstated but could become self-fulfilling if unchecked, says an Auburn authority on the world’s major religions.

Richard Pensakovic, religious studies professor in AU’s College of Liberal Arts, questioned the thesis of Sam Huntington’s best-selling book “Clash of Civilizations” at an invited presentation at a recent conference in London on a major movement among moderate Muslims. At the “Muslim World in Transition” conference, Pensakovic cited arguments by a leading moderate Muslim cleric who advocates peace among adherents of all religions.

“Terrorism exists as a political tool for extremists, but terrorism is incompatible with the Muslim faith, just as it is with other religions,” Pensakovic said.

Pensakovic, who is also immediate past chair of the University Senate at Auburn, was one of 49 experts from throughout the world invited to present papers and speak at the late October conference, which focused on the contributions of the Gulf Movement. Based on the teachings of Islamic scholar Fethullah Gulen, the movement encompasses five million Muslims in Turkey and numerous other religious moderates in other countries.

Although not widely known in the United States, where he now lives, Gulen has built a worldwide following for two primary reasons. One involves his repeated calls for adherence to the Koran’s teachings on tolerance, compassion and wisdom. The other involves Islamic schools his movement has established in Muslim communities worldwide that emphasize the sciences while sanctifying their curriculum.

“The biggest problem Muslims face in the United States is media misrepresentation,” said Pensakovic. “Terrorism exists as a political tool for extremists, but terrorism is incompatible with the Muslim faith, just as it is with other religions.”

Pensakovic said extreme views on either side of the issue can eventually become convinced that the “other” is an enemy rather than neighbors and friends with many overlapping beliefs and interests.

In his remarks at the London School of Economies, Pensakovic said Huntington’s arguments in “Clash of Civilizations” present Islam as monolithic and hostile to the West. Rejecting those arguments, Pensakovic supports Gulen’s contention that followers of Islam are as diverse as Christians in their religious beliefs and the vast majority reject the violent views of the radicals.

Pensakovic argues that cultures and civilizations borrow heavily from one another, and religions intersect peacefully in all parts of the world. Religious conflict between the largely Christian West and the mostly Islamic Middle East has been rare in comparison to religious wars each has endured among its own peoples, he notes. Much more common, he said, is that Muslims and Christians have moved freely back and forth from one culture to the other through most of history and especially in modern times.

The author of “Critical Thinking and the Academic Study of Religion,” Pensakovic said the London conference provided an opportunity to meet leading scholars on religion and international affairs from throughout the world. The conference proceedings have been published in a 754-page book by Leiden Metropolitan University Press.

The London conference was the first of two for the Auburn professor in connection with the Gulen Movement. He is scheduled to speak during Thanksgiving Week at Erasmus University in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, and to participate in a May conference in Turkey entitled “Fethullah Gulen’s Initiatives for Peace in the Contemporary World.”

Pensakovic, an Auburn professor since 1984, said perspectives presented at international conferences add a new dimension to his scholarship on world religions and help him develop new material for his classes on world religions and related courses in the Department of Philosophy. Those classes have been in heavy demand since 9-11 as students seek to understand more about the interaction and shared history of the world’s great religions.

Of particular note, Pensakovic said, is student interest in the historical intersection of religion and politics on the world stage, with politics usually proving to be the driving force.

Williams named interim associate dean in Agriculture

College of Agriculture Dean Richard Guthrie has announced the two-year appointment of David Williams as the college’s interim associate dean for instruction.

Williams, a Department of Horticulture faculty member since 1991, has served as head of the department for the past year and a half. He earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees in horticulture from Auburn in 1980 and 1985, respectively, and worked for several years as an Alabama Cooperative Extension System horticulture specialist at Auburn. He joined the Department of Horticulture faculty shortly after receiving his Ph.D. in horticulture from Ohio State University.

Before assuming department head duties in February 2006, Williams divided his time between teaching and advising graduate and undergraduate horticulture students and serving as a statewide landscape horticulture specialist for one year.

Williams fills the associate dean for instruction position left vacant in August when Bill Hardy, who had served in the role for seven years, returned full-time to the Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology faculty.
Extension to open new, environmentally friendly 4-H Center building next week

Alabama 4-H will dedicate its new environmental education building next week. The building is reportedly the first of its type in the eastern United States designed from the ground up to meet standards as a gold-certified Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) structure.

AU President Jay Gogue and U.S. Sen. Richard Shelby will participate in the 10 a.m. dedication ceremony Monday, Nov. 26. Alabama A&M President Robert Jennings, National 4-H representative Sharon Anderson and Alabama 4-H State Council member Ethan Parker of St. Clair County will also deliver remarks at the dedication.

Located at the Alabama 4-H Center at Lay Lake near Columbiana, the 17,500-square-foot, $5 million Alabama 4-H Environmental Science Education Center will serve Alabama school children, 4-H youth, business leaders and others with an interest in environmental education.

Headquartered at Auburn with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, Alabama 4-H serves youth in every county of the state and provides numerous educational programs at the Lay Lake site.

To symbolize 4-H’s commitment to the environment, the dedication day’s activities will include the release of several red-tailed hawks by the Southeastern Raptor Center, part of Auburn’s College of Veterinary Medicine.

“This is a special day in the life of Alabama 4-H,” said Jack Odle, chairman of the Alabama 4-H Club Foundation, the fundraising arm of Alabama 4-H. “Four-H’ers and all school children will be able to come to the 4-H Center and use this facility to better understand why it is more important than ever that we protect the environment.

“Through our educational programs and with this new facility, 4-H is making a significant commitment to the youth of our state,” Odle said. “We would not be able to achieve this without the support of the donors – corporations, foundations and individuals who have joined with us to build this learning center and to endow 4-H programs. We thank them.”

The LEED Green Building rating system is the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction and operation of high performance green buildings established by the U.S. Green Building Council.

LEED promotes a whole-building approach to sustainability by recognizing performance in five key areas of human and environmental health: sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection and indoor environmental quality.

To attain gold LEED certification, buildings are required to achieve a total of 39 points; the Alabama 4-H Environmental Science Education Center will apply for 45 points.

Environmental Science

AU President Jay Gogue, U.S. Sen. Richard Shelby and other officials will dedicate the new Environmental Science Education Building on Nov. 26 at the Alabama 4-H Center at Lay Lake near Columbiana.

Nearly every aspect of the construction and furnishings includes some degree of sustainable materials. When 4-H’ers and visitors walk into the center, they might not see green, but architects say the building and its furnishings will feature the highest environmental standards possible.

The building was designed by Davis Architects of Birmingham and constructed by B.L. Harbert International, also of Birmingham.

“Designing this building has been an exciting challenge because it needed to tell the story of why it was a green building and why that is important,” said Neil Davis, president of Davis Architects.

He added, “There will be many obvious things when you look at the building where you will immediately see that it is energy efficient, but other things in the building are not easily recognizable as being energy efficient.”

With this new facility, state 4-H leaders said Alabama 4-H’s Natural Resources and Environmental Education program will be equipped to teach Alabama youth and educators about protecting and enhancing the environment in a facility unlike anything currently in the state.

The facility was built with funds raised by the Campaign for Alabama 4-H through the Alabama 4-H Club Foundation. More than 700 corporations, foundations, organizations and individuals have supported the campaign, giving $5.7 million to date.

Author to discuss link between science and fine arts

A scientist, author and jazz musician whose career is an example of intellectual multitasking, will present a public lecture at Auburn on Dec. 4 as part of the Littleton-Franklin Lectures in Science and Humanities.

William T. Benzon – whose books span the fine arts, the humanities, cognitive science and computer science – will discuss “The Magic of the Bell: Music, the Spirit, and Human Nature” at 4 p.m. in the Science Auditorium of the AU College of Sciences and Mathematics.

Benzon’s latest book is “Beethoven’s Anvil: Music in Mind and Culture,” which explores the complex capacities, motivations and skills involved in musical performance and enjoyment. He is also co-author of “Visualization: the Second Computer Revolution,” a book about computer graphics and image-processing.

He also has published articles, reviews and technical reports on African-American music, literary analysis, cultural evolution, cognition and brain theory, visual thinking and technical communication.

Before joining the World Development Endowment Foundation in 2003, Benzon was a senior scientist in the healthcare technology industry.

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