Celebrating championship

Thousands of alumni, students and other fans massed along the south side of Jordan-Hare Stadium on Jan. 22, to give a final sendoff to the National Champion 2010 Auburn Tigers with a Reverse Tiger Walk, symbolizing the closing of one of the most dynamic chapters in the history of Auburn football.

The size and enthusiasm of this crowd was like that of the crowds that line the way for the Tiger Walk as the team enters the stadium before each home game. The team’s march through the crowd followed a ceremony celebrating a championship season in which the Tigers went undefeated through all 14 games, including the Southeastern Conference Championship game against South Carolina and the BCS National Championship game against Oregon.

New Alabama Gov. Robert Bentley and other dignitaries joined 78,000 fans in Jordan-Hare Stadium to commend the team and watch Auburn coaches and players receive the BCS crystal football, and other national championship trophies, including the MacArthur Bowl, the Associated Press trophy and the Grantland Rice Football Writers trophy.

Task force to seek savings from greater efficiency

Provost Mary Ellen Mazey has announced formation of a task force to lead a comprehensive search for ways that Auburn can achieve maximum efficiency in all internal operations.

Auburn established the task force this month, after President Jay Gogue and Mazey attended a recent meeting of the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities at which the successes of similar task forces at other institutions were examined.

The Efficiency Task Force will examine actions by other universities to improve their internal efficiencies and adapt the best practices for application at Auburn.

Writer to discuss role of media in Civil Rights Era

Journalist Earl Caldwell, who chronicled some of the most significant events of the Civil Rights Era, will speak as part of the Neil O. and Henrietta Davis Lecture Series at 6 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 2, in the auditorium of The Hotel at Auburn University.

The public lecture series is sponsored by the Department of Communication and Journalism in Auburn’s College of Liberal Arts.

Caldwell, who began at The New York Times in 1967, was the only reporter to witness the 1968 assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in Memphis.

In addition, Caldwell helped define reporters’ rights in a historic court case. Caldwell refused to appear before a federal grand jury and disclose confidential information involving the Black Panther Party. When the case came before the U.S. Supreme Court, the court consolidated three cases involving reporters’ rights, one of which was United States v. Caldwell. In a 5-4 decision, the court ruled reporters must testify before federal grand juries. That 1972 decision led to the enactment of shield laws in many states that allow reporters to protect sources and information.

Caldwell’s other notable accomplishments include covering the race riots in the summers of 1967 and 1968; reporting on the riots in Chicago during the 1968 Democratic National Convention; covering the Atlanta child murders and the trial of convicted killer Wayne Williams; and traveling the campaign trail in 1984 with Jesse Jackson during Jackson’s bid for the presidency.

In 1979, he joined the New York Daily News to become the first black journalist to write a regular column in a major daily newspaper, a position he held until 1991.

At Hampton University, Caldwell is an assistant professor of journalism in the Scripps Howard School of Journalism and Communications. The National Association of Black Journalists bestowed its President’s Award to Caldwell in 1995, calling him “one of the most important journalists of the last 50 years.”

He is writer-in-residence at the Robert C. Maynard Institute for Journalism Education in Oakland, Calif., where he is writing a serialized account of the black journalist movement spawned by the 1960s civil rights movement.

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Auburn’s home page on web has new look after redesign

For the first time since 2005, the Auburn University home page has a new look. The site, www.auburn.edu, officially launched on Sunday, Jan. 23.

The launch event capped a two-year process for Auburn’s Office of Communications and Marketing and Office of Information Technology.

“The new page is the result of the efforts of many people,” said Mike Clardy, director of university communications. “From designers and programmers to focus groups made up of students, faculty, alumni and others, many members of the Auburn family contributed, and each of them shares in the success of the new site.”

One of the first things readers will see is large, inviting images that link to stories about Auburn people and their accomplishments. The stories will be updated regularly and will include photos and videos. In the top right, readers can click on the new “Take 5” feature. A different member of the Auburn family will be highlighted each week.

“The new site allows us to do a better job telling the Auburn story,” said Brock Parker, multimedia specialist and the website’s content manager. “Before, we relied mainly on one-dimensional news releases. With this site, we are staying ahead of the curve by moving to a multimedia approach. Nowadays, people expect more when they log on.”

Drawing from feedback from the site’s users, the navigational structure remains similar to the previous site.

“We don’t want people to have to do a lot of searching for what they are looking for,” Parker said. “We know they are used to finding things in certain places. The new look – while much improved in design – allows them comfort in the familiarity.”

The new website also enables the university to stay with the times in other areas, including mobile applications.

“With mobile devices so common, especially among prospective students and their parents, we wanted to be sure people see us as cutting-edge,” said Seth Humphrey, information technology specialist and lead designer for the site. “We’ve tailored the site for enhanced performance in the mobile device arena, and we’ll continue to do so as we move forward.”

Provost seeks nominations for 2011 Leischuck Awards

The Office of the Provost requests nominations from deans, department heads and chairs, faculty, student organizations and alumni for the Gerald and Emily Leischuck Endowed Presidential Awards for Excellence in Teaching. These $10,000 awards honor teaching excellence by Auburn University faculty who have demonstrated a commitment to student success through effective and innovative teaching and through advising and mentoring inside and outside the classroom.

The two awards, at least one of which is to recognize undergraduate teaching, are open to full-time, tenured Auburn University faculty with a minimum of three years service at Auburn. Nominees must hold at least a 50 percent teaching load in the 2010-11 academic year, must have demonstrated a commitment to Auburn University, and must not have accepted an early retirement option. Previous recipients are ineligible for five years after receiving the award.

Nomination packets must be submitted online instead of on paper this year. All nomination packets should be uploaded at https://fp.auburn.edu/provost/drop-box/ on or before March 1.

The nomination package consists of a letter of nomination, letters of support, a reflective statement of teaching philosophy and methodology, samples of course syllabi and teaching materials, a curriculum vitae (including evidence of recognition by the national professional community and of leadership and initiative in educational service to Auburn University and the Auburn community) and student evaluations.
Profiles in Excellence

Research shapes teaching for award-winning professor

While gaining international stature over four decades as a literary scholar, Auburn’s Paula Backscheider has adopted a teaching approach designed to help students learn far more than the material they are studying in class.

To find the original meaning and context of historic works of English literature, students must first get past centuries of reinterpretation and, even, dismissal by critics and society, says Backscheider, the Philpott-Stevens Eminent Scholar in the College of Liberal Arts. The objective, she says, is to help students develop new ways of looking at the material, including the twists and turns in its path to the present day.

Backscheider, winner of Auburn’s 2010 Creative Research and Scholarship Award, melds instruction in research method with the subject matter in her upper-level and graduate classes in the Department of English. The creative works that students examine in a class provide an initial learning opportunity, while an enhanced understanding of the research process will help them throughout life, she says.

“The approach is both analytical and practical,” Backscheider explained. “For instance, Daniel Defoe’s “Moll Flanders” and Oliver Goldsmith’s “The Vicar of Wakefield” give us a glimpse into social issues of the time, and we can see how those have evolved since then by looking at how they are viewed by later generations.”

While the works examined in class will vary from semester to semester, the research methods that students learn there can be applied to any future studies, she notes. “I encourage students to get increasingly creative to find new ways of looking at the material and think in terms of what else was going on at the time,” she said. “I also want them to think in terms of what else was going on later that could influence the way the work is interpreted at different periods in history.”

She added, “I want them to think about what people, not just writers, do and why they do it.”

Backscheider won Auburn’s top research award last fall for a body of work that included the recent books “Reflections on Biography,” which was a Choice Outstanding Book selection, and “Eighteenth Century Women Poets and Their Poetry.”

The latter work, co-winner of the Modern Language Association’s James Russell Lowell Prize in 2007, received international recognition for resurrecting a once prominent literary genre from the “Age of Reason” that was nearly buried amid the shift of public tastes toward romanticism and conservative social mores in the early 19th century in England and America. Among these 18th century writers were socially assertive women poets who had been more successful in England than their male counterparts in the 1770s, at a time of rising sexual equality in the arts, but who were dismissed as “second-rate” and “unladylike,” if mentioned at all, during the retrenchment of the early 1800s.

In her research, Backscheider documented ways in which attitudes in society in one era can distort the literary record of a previous era.

The literary gatekeepers of the more conservative 19th century largely succeeded in pushing into obscurity activist women writers, poets, playwrights and actresses who advocated social reform, Backscheider said. She noted that 18th century reform-minded women such as those who composed ballads against the British Navy press men into involuntary service were nearly wiped from the literary canon during the 19th century heyday of the British Empire; according to societal standards of that latter era, women writers were expected to confine their subject matter to village and family and leave politics to the men.

Similarly, her recent studies of women in 17th and 18th century theatre found evidence of a rapid rise of female writers and actors in the late 1600s, when much of their most popular work was favorable to the crown, and their continuing popularity despite more socially and politically adventurous productions through most of the 1700s.

But after the bloody French Revolution, as more conservative attitudes took hold in British and American society, women who had been hailed for their beauty and forceful stage performances became increasingly portrayed by critics as overly masculine and overbearing if they continued in the previously praised manner. The disappearance of major women authors, poets and playwrights of the 1700s from the literary canon during the 19th century was not a conspiracy of critics, she adds. Instead, women of that era were victims of bad timing as well as changing social attitudes. Backscheider notes that many of the leading female literary figures of the 18th century were still alive at the end of the century, and, at that time, living figures were usually not included in anthologies. By the time anthologies of the 19th century were written, several major women literary figures had faded from memory.

Last fall was the second time that Backscheider received Auburn’s top research award. Previously, she won the 2001 Creative Research and Scholarship Award for her earlier studies of Defoe and other major writers of the 17th and 18th centuries who captured both the spirit and the issues of their time.

“I want them to think about what people, not just writers, do and why they do it.”

– Roy Summerford

Editor’s Note: Profiles in Excellence is a periodic feature of the Auburn Report presenting faculty or others who have been honored by the university or nationally for the top level of achievement in their field.

Efficiency Task Force

Continued from Page 1

Mazey will chair Auburn’s Efficiency Task Force. Other task force members include Bliss Bailey of Information Technology; Deedie Dowdle of Communications and Marketing; Agriculture Dean Bill Batchelor; Marcie Smith of Business and Finance; Vice President Ainsley Carry of Student Affairs; Gregg Ruff of Samuel Ginn College of Engineering Outreach; Kick Battye of the Auburn Technical Assistance Center; Claire Crutchley of the University Senate; Liberal Arts Dean Anne-Katrin Gramberg; David Hennessy of the Administrative and Professional Assembly; Joel Hunter of the Staff Council; Lynne Hammond of Human Resources; Drew Clark of Institutional Research and Assessment; Kurt Sasser of the Student Government Association; and Jeff Elwell, provost at Auburn Montgomery.
Campus News Briefs

Provost Office announces Faculty International Travel Grant recipients

The Office of the Provost has announced Faculty International Travel Grant recipients. They are: Conner Bailey, Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology; Geoffrey Hill, Biological Sciences; Nannan Liu, Entomology and Plant Pathology; Fereshteh Rostampour, Theatre; Hareesh Tippur, Mechanical Engineering; Maobing Tu, Forestry and Wildlife Sciences; and Salisa Westrick, Pharmacy Care Systems.

The grant is designed to enhance faculty members’ international understanding and awareness and is part of Auburn’s Strategic Plan.

Grace period for 2011 Healthy Tigers Initiative runs through March

Employees who were not screened in 2010 have until March 31 to be screened and to qualify for the premium discount for the remainder of 2011.

The discount will take effect the month after the screening process is completed. Employees with Auburn University Blue Cross Blue Shield individual coverage screened during the grace period will be qualified for the discount for the remainder of 2011 as well as 2012. Those with Auburn University Blue Cross Blue Shield family coverage must also have spouses screened in 2011 to qualify for the discount in premiums during 2012.

Healthy Tigers screening appointments are available through the Healthy Tigers website, https://tiger-mail.auburn.edu/gw/webacc. For more information, contact the Auburn University Pharmaceutical Care Center at 844-4099 or e-mail at auupcc4u@auburn.edu.

Lecture series to present ‘Intelligent Molecules and the Emergence of Life’

David Lynn and his research group at Emory University are working to understand the ways in which molecules are able to organize themselves into wholes and function collaboratively. He and his colleagues hope that these investigations can provide a deeper understanding of diseases, such as Alzheimer’s and other neurodegenerative diseases, in order to develop treatment.

Lynn, the Asa Griggs Professor of Chemistry and Biology at Emory and a Howard Hughes Medical Institute Professor, will be at Auburn to discuss his research on Feb. 8 at 4 p.m. in the Sciences Center Auditorium.

His lecture, “Intelligent Molecules and the Emergence of Life,” is being sponsored by the Littleton-Franklin Lecture Series in the College of Liberal Arts.

Biggio Center to offer professional development seminar on grants

As the grant submission deadline of March 1 approaches, the Biggio Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning is offering “Tips for Writing a Successful Breeden Grant,” the next in its series of professional development seminars.

The seminar will be from 12:15-1:30 p.m. Monday, Jan. 31, in Student Center 2222, featuring a panel with Biggio Center staff and former Breeden Grant award recipients, who will discuss their Breeden Grant experience and answer questions.

For information, contact the Biggio Center at 844-8530 or e-mail biggio1@auburn.edu.

CADC professor to receive association’s Outstanding Educator Award

Paul Holley, Aderholdt Professor in the College of Architecture, Design and Construction’s McWhorter School of Building Science, will receive the Associated Schools of Construction’s Outstanding Educator Award at the ASC International Conference in Nebraska in April. The award recognizes the faculty member’s contribution to construction education, excellence in teaching, service to the ASC and dedication to the construction profession.

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