Happy 150th Birthday, Auburn!
As Auburn University celebrated its 150th anniversary last week, the Board of Trustees received a plan that recommended major changes for the future.

A special committee of the AU Board of trustees will prioritize a nationally prominent educator’s recommendations for reshaping the university’s system of governance and present a plan to the board on or before April 14.

Committee member Sam Ginn told other trustees on Thursday that the panel will develop an implementation plan for the most important of the 142 recommendations in consultant James L. Fisher’s 140-page report by the next scheduled board meeting.

Other trustees on the special committee are Charles McCrary, Sarah Newton and AU Board President Pro Tem Earlars McWhorter, the committee chair, who is recuperating from surgery.

McWhorter said earlier in the week that the board looks to the report to help the university prepare for a new president. Interim President Ed Richardson, who has served since February 2006, has said he would like for AU to select his successor by the end of 2006.

Fisher, author of 10 books on higher education governance, previously said the university can expect a high correlation between its success in implementing his team’s recommendations and AU’s success in attracting and retaining the type of leader it desires as the university’s next president.

A himself a former university president, Fisher said his team of current and former university administrators, including four other former presidents or chancellors, found AU to be a bustling university institution with many accomplishments. However, he added, the team viewed the university as operating below its potential due to a wide range of problems associated with AU’s organizational structure, authority under the Alabama Constitution and conflicts among various groups over the role and authority of each.

For AU to secure a strong leader as president, the report said, the university will have to strengthen the office of the presidency. To do so, the report recommends that the Board of Trustees, Alumni Board and University Senate act to structural and philosophical changes to prevent future internal struggles over governance issues.

The team submitted its recommendations in late January, after reviewing a wide range of documents and interviewing more than 250 persons, both inside and outside the university. Most of those interviews were conducted during an intensive four-day visit by the eight-member team in December.

The complete report is available online through the AU Home Page at www.auburn.edu/administration/governance/.

Many of the Fisher team’s recommendations provided details for the team’s second and broadest recommendation. In stating that recommendation and its rationale, the Fisher team said:

“Our view, based upon the individuals to whom we have talked both on- and off-campus, the materials we have read, and external rankings we have seen, is that the institution has underperformed in recent decades relative to its overall potential.

“The reasons for this are many, but problems of leadership, governance and perception feature prominently on that list. Fundamental reforms, visible to all, are necessary if this situation is to be reversed. Reformulating governance, followed by the appointment of a strong, visionary and exceptional new President from outside of the institution are the two primary needs.

“Some of the proposals would require changes in the Alabama Constitution, which, the report said, the board authority that the president needs in order to lead the institution. “Auburn’s constitutional premises are fundamentally problematic for they significantly reduce the legitimacy of the President and invite inevitable conflict between the invested parties,” the report said. “The most important functions of the governing Board should be the appointment and evaluation of the President who should be exclusively accountable for the conduct of the university.”

“Although many of Fisher’s proposals would require action by the Board of Trustees, the report said administrators, faculty and alumni also need to make fundamental changes in attitude and operations if Auburn is to rise to the top ranks of major universities. If leaders of each constituency make and abide by that commitment, the report said, AU has an excellent chance to reach its potential under the next president.

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Celebrating 150th anniversary at Toomer’s Corner

Upcoming Events

Wednesday, February 8

PUBLIC HEALTH CAREERS DAY Speakers discuss public health careers in federal and state agencies, 1 p.m.-4 p.m., Overton Auditorium

BLACK HISTORY SPEAKER “The Rosenwald School Building Fund: A Benchmark in the History of Black Education,” Dorothy Walker of the Alabama Historical Commission, 3 p.m., Special Collections, Draughon Library

BIGDO BOOK GROUP “Alternative Strategies for Evaluating Student Learning: New Directions for Teaching and Learning,” 5 p.m., Draughon Library

FACULTY RECITAL Ramon Vasquez, trumpet, 7:30 p.m., Goodwin Recital Hall

Thursday, February 9

MEETING AND ELECTION Administrative & Professional Assembly, 3 p.m., Foy 213

BLACK HISTORY SPEAKER “Overcoming Life’s Challenges: Fighting Against the Odds,” Judge Greg Mathis, 7 p.m., Ballroom A, AU Hotel

Saturday, February 11

CONCERT AU Symphonic Band, AU Jazz Band, 7:30 p.m., Student Activities Center

Sunday, February 12

PUBLIC LECTURE “The Almost Bloody Church: Church First that Led to the Founding of Auburn University,” William C. Davis and Carolyn Lipscomb, 2 p.m., Auburn United Methodist Church

Monday, February 13

NEXT AU Report

Tuesday, February 14

MEETING University Senate, 3 p.m., auditorium, Brown Hall, agenda at www.auburn.edu/administration/governance/senate

Scenes from Founders Day, Birthday Bash, Block Party

Thom Gossom emceed the “It Begins at Auburn’ dinner on Friday, kicking off the active phase of The Campaign for Auburn University.

David House and James E. Foy were among 10 persons who recited the Auburn Creed at Saturday’s Birthday Bash.

Neil Richardson, AU’s first lady, helps interim President Ed Richardson cut AU’s sesquicentennial cake at Wednesday’s Founders Day ceremony.

The Alabama Blues Brothers Band was one of several musical groups entertaining the crowd.
Ribbon cutting
Alumni and friends of the Harrison School of Pharmacy joined AU officials and Pharmacy faculty, staff and students last week in dedicating the new Education and Clinic Wing of the school’s W.W. Walker Building. Shown from left are Mac Jones, chair of the Dean’s Advisory Council; interim AU President Ed Richardson; James I. Harrison Jr., representing the Harrison Family Foundation; Pharmacy Dean Lee Evans; Virginia Thompson of the AU Board of Trustees; and Darrell Childress, president of the Pharmacy Student Council.

'War Eagle' tv spot, other marketing, communication efforts win awards

The AU Office of Communications and Marketing receives five awards for program quality this week at the 2006 Southeastern regional meeting in Nashville of the Council for the Advancement and Support of Higher Education.

Communications and Marketing won a Grand Award for the top entry in the television category with the “Two Words” commercial, which shows a chance encounter of two over-stressed individuals in an airport. The exchange of two words, “War Eagle,” brightens the mood of both people, illustrating the unity of the Auburn family.

Broadcast communications staff in OCM coordinated the “Two Words” production with Wannabe Films of Birmingham. Creative Services and Marketing staff members also played a key role in producing the commercial.

AU also won two Awards of Excellence and two Special Merit Awards from CASE.

The association is presenting an Award of Excellence for Auburn’s internal communications program, which includes AUDaily electronic mail, AU Report faculty-staff newsletter, bus signage, Campus Connection electronic mail to students and AU Commons print and electronic newsletters to alumni.

Another Award of Excellence recognizes AU for the print advertisement “Auburn: Welcome to our UniverCity,” which OCM marketing and creative services staff developed for the Auburn Chamber of Commerce’s guide for new residents.

AU was to receive a Special Merit Award for student recruiting publications, which are a joint project of OCM and Enrollment Management. Those publications include the viewbook, direct mail materials, a college fair booklet and related materials.

Another Special Merit Award recognizes AU for promotional brochures that OCM developed for the President’s Office to mail to presidents and provosts of colleges and universities across the United States. CASE, with 3,200 member institutions, is the primary association for education professionals in communications and advancement fields. AU is in District III, which represents most colleges and universities and other educational institutions in eight Southeastern states.

ISO offering faculty, staff, students free classes in Chinese, Arabic, Russian

Want to learn the basics of Arabic, Chinese or Russian language?

The International Student Organization and the Office of International Student Life are offering free classes in each of those languages for all interested faculty, staff and students.

All sessions are at 5 p.m. or 6 p.m., depending on the language, and are in Foy 204. Chinese language classes start Monday, Feb. 13. Arabic starts Wednesday, and Russian classes started on Monday, but both classes will accept persons who start next week.

For information about the classes or registration, contact Nejla Orgen at orgenny@auburn.edu.