AU withdraws SACS lawsuit

Interim President Ed Richardson said Friday he is withdrawing AU’s lawsuit against its regional accrediting agency, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

In a report to the Board of Trustees, Richardson said the step is a reversal of action he supported two years ago, when SACS launched a special inquiry into AU governance. At that time, he recalled, the refusal of SACS leaders to allow a full 30 days for an AU response to the initial complaint raised concerns that AU would not receive a fair hearing.

Following hearings in the U.S. District Court in Atlanta, SACS turned its inquiry over to an outside investigator appointed by the court. Eventually, SACS placed AU on 12 months probation through December 2004.

Richardson said recent talks with SACS representatives and other college presidents have convinced him that the lawsuit had become an obstacle to removal of probation and should be ended. He predicted that remaining differences with SACS would be resolved quickly.

Richardson said several other concerns need quick attention, including financial trends that face higher education over the next three to five years.

The interim president said the board’s March 19 meeting would be a good time to start addressing some of those concerns. Over the next six to eight months, he said, the university needs to take a fresh look at its mission, goals and priorities, including priorities set by the board five years ago.

Among the issues that need to be considered, Richardson said, are tuition levels, faculty salaries, facilities maintenance and program viability.

Richardson noted that he was co-chair of a committee that identified programs for termination five years ago. He said the activity was painful for all involved and was not one he wanted to go through again. He added that AU may have no choice but to take a new look at program viability.

Richardson also announced that a final recommendation on a site for a new student center would come this spring. After seven and a half years of study, the matter needs to be settled, Richardson said.

In other activity, the board appointed Paul Spina to serve on the trustee selection committee, replacing Bobby Lowder, who resigned, citing time constraints.
Outsourcing issue poses major challenge to U.S. dominance

By Larry Benefield, Dean
Samuel Ginn College of Engineering
The U.S. has been exporting blue-collar jobs overseas for many years. But of late this offshore flow has included a large number of high-paying white-collar jobs in software design and engineering — jobs that were supposed to represent the future of white-collar jobs in software design and engineering has included an increasing number of high-paying

American jobs through limits on overseas trade — greatest threat to overtake America as the world's

The U.S. must acknowledge this fundamental shift to a global workplace and adapt quickly if we are to retain our status as the world's leading economic power. Depending on our actions over the next 20 years, America can build on its status as an economic giant or we can fall behind the blossoming economies of Asia. Educa-

The quality of engineering programs in Asian

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"...America can build on its status as an economic giant or we can fall behind the blossoming economies of Asia."
Work starts on new medical clinic

Work is under way on AU’s first new medical clinic since the 1930s, a project that the clinic’s director says will pay a dividend in better health care for Auburn students and others in need of medical services.

The construction at the northwest corner of an extended Duncan Avenue and Lem Morrison Drive will result in a move of the medical center from Drake Hall on the northern edge of campus to the southern edge, where parking is more plentiful.

The new, $8.7 million facility is scheduled to open next January.

Physician and Medical Center Director Fred Kam said the main reason to replace Drake is the lack of space and other limitations associated with the age of the current building. Completed in 1938 to meet early-20th century needs, Drake has been obsolete for decades.

“The practice of medicine has changed since Drake Hall was built, and it does not offer us enough space to practice,” Kam said. “We get 30,000 plus visits a year, and this facility was not designed for that.”

Kam said patients can expect modern equipment, easier access to medical services and faster health care delivery. The medical staff projects the average wait time to decrease to below 15 minutes from the current average of 22.5 minutes.

“When I came to Auburn, I had a vision for delivering health care services to the AU family, and this building is going to give us the physical environment to accomplish that,” Kam said.

The new clinic will accommodate the present visit load as well as the anticipated increases. It will include 39 exam rooms and six observation and IV beds, as opposed to the current 18 and three. Each medical provider’s exam rooms will increase from two to four, allowing them to provide more efficient care for their patients.

Kam said the new building will also be free of the flooding problem that has plagued Drake Hall for decades.

“The building is old, and it floods once or twice a year because it sits below all the buildings around it. So, when it rains, all the drainage flows into Drake Hall,” Kam said.

The added space will also allow for future expansions in the clinic’s services, as well as upgrades in equipment. Existing equipment, unlike the building, is already modern, he noted.

Theatre replaces musical with comedy

AU Theatre has canceled its mid-February production of the play “Working” and will replace it with “Anton in Show Business” on March 23-26 and April 6-10 in Telfair Peet Theatre.

The shift of “Freakspiel” from November to late January created a domino effect that led to cancellation and substitution of plays, said Linda Bell, marketing director for AU Theatre.

Theatre Department Head Worth Gardner, who directed the rock opera “Freakspiel,” was also the director for “Working,” a musical based on the book of the same title by Studs Turkel. Bell said the department needed more time between plays, especially musicals, which usually require more complex staging and direction than most other types of theatre.

“Aton in Show Business,” a comedy by playwright Jane Martin, was a hit at the Humana Festival of New American Plays in 2000 and winner of that year’s American Theatre Critics/Steinberg New Play Award.

“Aton” presents a satirical look at show business through a play within a play as a group of misfits struggle to produce an ill-fated version of Anton Chekov’s “The Three Sisters.” For ticket information, contact the AU Theatre Box Office at 844-4154.

Speakers to discuss voting rights, future of race issues

AU will host a public lecture and a public seminar this week in connection with Black History Month.

State Sen. Hank Sanders of Selma will present a public lecture at 5:30 p.m. Thursday in Foy 217.

At 7 p.m. Friday in the Foy Ballroom, two nationally prominent scholars and the editorial page editor of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution will lead a seminar on the future of race relations and diversity in America.

Sanders, who was Alabama’s first African American state senator of the 20th century from the Black Belt, will speak on “The Power of Our Vote.”

Friday’s seminar is titled “The Future of the Race The Dulkois and Washington Discussion in the 21st Century.” Leaders of the seminar are Princeton University Professor Cornel West, University of Texas Professor John Sibley Butler and AU graduate Cynthia Tucker, editor of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

Related activities are listed on the Web at www.auburn.edu/administration/ multicultural_affairs/odmac.html.