New scholarships
Interim AU President Ed Richardson unveiled two new scholarship programs last week during a presentation in Elmore County at Wetumpka High School. The scholarships are available to top seniors from schools on the state's academic-priority list and other high-achievers at schools throughout Alabama.

AU starts new scholarship programs
Interim AU President Ed Richardson last week announced two new freshman scholarship programs for Alabama residents. The programs are among the largest of their type in AU history.

AU will award $2 million over four years to 400 students, beginning with 100 students in the 2004-05 academic year.

Richardson made the announcement at Wetumpka High School, one of the Alabama State Department of Education's 19 academic priority schools, all of which will benefit from the program.

Interim Alabama Superintendent of Education Joe Morton was present for the announcement on Tuesday.

Each year, the two programs will provide 100 students $5,000 each for up to four years.

Under the new Freshmen Opportunity Scholarship program, students from the 19 academic priority schools (as identified for 2002-03) will receive 30 awards each year.

The Freshmen Presidential Scholarship program will award 70 scholarships each year to students from Auburn's top 75 public and top 25 private high schools.

"The competition for the best prepared Alabama students is increasing, and with national college tuition prices rising, Auburn is committed to easing their investment in education," said Richardson.

"By the time this program is four years old, it will represent a $2 million investment in our most deserving young men and women, and a solid investment in Alabama's future," said Richardson.

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Experiment Station launches first test site for growing organic vegetables

A team of AU scientists will break ground this spring for the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station’s first research project devoted solely to organic vegetable production.

Plant pathologists, horticulturists, agronomists and agricultural economists will participate in the project on a three-acre plot at the AAES’s North Alabama Horticulture Research Unit in Cullman.

AU plant pathologist and research project coordinator Joe Kloeper said the project is a response to escalating consumer demand for organic produce and increasing interest among financially strapped small-scale Alabama vegetable growers.

The long-term project will yield comprehensive scientific data that will provide growers valuable information on transitioning to organic production, pursuing designation as a federally certified organic operation, maximizing production and profit, and marketing the organic crops they produce.

Calling organic farming “one of the bright spots in agriculture,” Kloeper said the AAES commitment to this project increased significantly after a meeting in Birmingham with landowners interested in organic vegetable production. An overflow crowd of nearly 100 landowners enthusiastically endorsed the research project.

“One of the unique aspects of this project is the diversity of the partners involved,” said John Fulton, director of the North Alabama Horticulture Research Unit.

Fletcher will discuss book ‘Sista Speak’ at two events

Author and linguist Jonja Lanehart will speak at two events Tuesday at AU.

Lanehart will discuss her book “Sista Speak” at 1:30 p.m. Tuesday in the first-floor systems classroom of Draughon Library in a public reading hosted by the AU Libraries Book Club and the Center for Diversity and Race Relations.

Lanehart will also present a public lecture at 4:30 p.m. in Foy 246 as part of the Inquiry Series of the Center for Diversity and Race Relations.

In her book, Lanehart, a University of Georgia linguist, explores how society’s expectations of “proper” English have affected the language, literacy, education and self-perception of five African-American women: her grandmother, moth- er, aunt and herself.

Through interviews and their own written statements, the book exam- ines each woman’s life and attitudes toward and use of language.

Construction start for new research award

St. Louis-based Novus International Inc., a global leader in the animal agriculture industry, has donated $100,000 to the Novus International Research Award in AU’s College of Agriculture.

The award will be given directly to a graduate student who has conducted advanced research in one or more of the following areas: animal nutrition, metabolism, growth and development, and health and disease. Students may submit written applica- tions for the award or be nominated by their major professors.

The recipient will be chosen by a selection com- mittee comprised of the College of Agriculture’s Awards Committee chairperson, two faculty mem- bers from the college and a representative of Novus International.

Steve Tyler, Novus International development officer, said the gift is contingent on AU raising an addition- al $100,000 in matching funds.

Scholarships

investment in the future of our state,” he added.

Wes Williams, AU vice president for Student Affairs, added, “Auburn is committed to attracting the best students from Alabama and solidifying its position as Alabama’s school of choice. This scholarship program is just the next step in that direction.”

All students who applied for admission during high school and who meet the minimum criteria for the scholarships will be considered. Once at Auburn, recipients will attend directives from around the country,” said Bruce Lindsey, dean of the School of Architecture, Design and Construc- tion.

Although the search for intelligence beyond Earth is a staple of science-fiction, Tartar takes a scientific approach to the subject, including interviews with the world’s largest radio telescope in Puerto Rico for transmissions from other solar systems.

She has won awards from NASA and other science-based organiza- tions for her research in the field of extraterrestrial studies.

Tarter holds a bache- lor’s degree in engineer- ing physics from Cor- nell and a Ph.D. in astro- nomy from the University of California.

In addition to her extraterrestrial research, Tarter has won honors for her science and nominations as one of the 50 most interesting people by Time magazine and woman, editor and self- herself. Through interviews and their own written statements, the book exam- ines each woman’s life and attitudes toward and use of language.

Making comparisons and contrasts among them, she shows how, even within a single family, a range of electrical and experi- mental attitudes exist. These differences impact on women’s life experi- ences and needs, she said, and the current research on women’s science-based opportunities and social cir- cumstances can lead to different ability definitions and comfort in using language to navigate daily life.

The architecture profession’s publication Design- Intelligence has ranked Auburn’s School of Archi- tecture as the No. 1 school in the South for preparing its graduates for the professional field.

In addition, the school was ranked No. 10 in value nationally. AU’s Interior Architecture program was ranked 9th nationally, up from a ranking of 13th last year.

This was the fifth annual set of rankings of U.S. architecture and design schools by DesignIntelligence.

AU’s School of Architecture was rated ahead of such regional schools as North Carolina State Uni- versity, the University of Tennessee, Virginia Tech, Georgia Tech, Tulane and the University of Florida.

“The significance of these rankings is that they are determined by responses from a large number of professional practitioners from around the country,” said James McHale, director of the School of Architecture, Design and Construc- tion.

Grant to help scientists in pollution research

A team of Auburn scientists has received a one- year, $25,000 grant from the Alabama Water Resources Research Institute to support their search for a process to remove a noxious chemical from Alabama drinking water.

With the AWRRI grant, engineering faculty mem- bers Don Zhao, Willie Harper and Alicea McClain will focus on perchlorate, a key ingredient in solid- rocket fuel and a substance that has been found at dangerously high levels in drinking water in Alabama and 21 other states. Perchlorate poses serious thyroid-related health risks, especially in newborns, children and pregnant women, and can cause physi- cal and mental retardation.

The goal of the AU engineers is to formulate a new chemical that will remove perchlorate from the water supply and destroy it in an environmentally safe way. Because of the wide- spread nature of the perchlorate problem, success of the AWRRI-funded project could help the AU engineering team secure additional research dollars from various outside funding agencies.

Auburn was one of 21 proposals for the 2004 State Water Resources Competitive Grants Program. Another AU grant went to Luke Marzen of Geology and Environmental Science for a study of the use of remote sensing methods to estimate sur- face moisture conditions as indicators of drought.
Larkin says changes will enhance Senate’s role in AU governance

After a year as chair-elect of the AU Faculty and the University Senate, Willie D. Larkin will move into the top leadership positions of the faculty and its sister body on March 16 with the SACS decision to place the university on probation.

Larkin has certain expectations of me on the basis of initiatives I proposed when I agreed to become a candidate for chair-elect,” Larkin said. “I promised I would move quickly to implement those initiatives, and I intend to keep that promise.”

Those initiatives (online at www.ocm.auburn.edu/AU_report/AU-Candidates03.html) include establishing a standing, long-range planning committee to be chaired by the Senate’s chair-elect, placing a box at the back of the room at Senate meetings to receive suggestions not expressed or discussed during the meeting, conducting an orientation session for new senators and creating a mentoring program to help junior faculty, especially women and minorities, with the tenure and promotion process.

“Frequently they have certain expectations of me on the basis of initiatives I proposed when I agreed to become a candidate for chair-elect,” Larkin said. “I promised I would move quickly to implement those initiatives, and I intend to keep that promise.”

Larkin said he will also continue the work of his predecessor, John Mouton, on priority issues for the faculty. Those include working with the administration, faculty and the Board of Trustees to get AU off probation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools; transforming principles of governance from shared governance to actual practice shared governance; and focusing on the issues of academics at the university.

“My ultimate goal as chair will be to provide a positive, thought-provoking, business-oriented environment where important issues are introduced, debated and the best decisions are made,” said Larkin.

Noting interim President Ed Richardson’s recent recommendation to the University Faculty, Larkin said, “If we are going to hold Dr. Richardson to his commitment to shared governance, we need to get all our committees fully operational and larger numbers of the faculty fully involved in deliberation of the issues.

With the search for a new president to start early next year, Larkin said the Senate should start this spring preparing for an active role in the search. “That is one thing we cannot delay. We should use this time to make sure that we have clear priorities and sound suggestions that will enhance the faculty role in the search and help the university find the right person for the job,” he said.

“Additionally, I’d like to get our faculty back focusing on the issues of academics at the university,” said Larkin who holds a dual appointment with the School of Art and the College of Architecture, Design and Construction. “I want to make sure that the administration creates a new opportunity for the faculty to assert its role as the most knowledgeable source in all matters involving policy. It’s time for the faculty to become full partners in Auburn’s future,” he said. “I feel very confident that President Richardson wants to bring the faculty into the mix as we grapple with some major issues over the next few months.”

“Not only must the Senate be a part but my leadership of the Senate is a team effort, Larkin said, citing the roles of the Rules Committee, the Steering Committee and the Senate secretary. Secretary-Elect Debra Cobia will play a crucial leadership role during the coming year, as Paula Sullivanler has done this year, he added. The Senate is important if we are to tackle the challenges that lie ahead of us,” Larkin said. “However, we cannot do it alone. We need the help of the Senate committee, other members of the Senate and the faculty as a whole. I have received a lot of pledges of support, and I find that very encouraging.”

John Mouton expected an eventful year when he took office in 11 months ago. With his year as leader of the faculty and Senate ending on March 15, Mouton said, “There were a lot of concerns, especially with SACS (the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools), at this time last year, but it would have been hard to imagine so much happening in such a short time,” Mouton said, looking back on his year as faculty leader.

“The SACS situation, even before probation, and the presidential change created a lot of turmoil for the faculty and siphoned off a lot of our time and energy,” he said. “I went into office with some organizational goals that I had to put aside in order to adequately address these issues.”

However, Mouton added, he advised the faculty two years ago, before the faculty chose him as chair-elect, that accreditation was paramount. He said that he also discussed that at this time his views on shared governance and his plans to actively represent the faculty to the administration and the Board of Trustees. (Online, see www.auburn.edu/administration/univrel/news/02-25-03.html)

The most enjoyable aspect of the year, he said, was working with Senate Secretary Paula Sullivanler and the Senate Steering Committee. He added that Sullivanler and the Steering Committee went to heroic efforts to organize a special meeting of the Senate in early December to discuss the administration’s handling of academic issues and a special meeting of the University Faculty this month to discuss the SACS situation and to place the university on academic probation.

“I have the privilege of working with a group of very dedicated and very accomplished individuals this year,” Mouton said. “They are an invaluable resource for the Senate and for the university.”

Also, Mouton said, he has been criticism from faculty members who advocate a more adversarial relationship between faculty leaders and the administration, but the intensity of their criticism was disturbing, he said.

“Before I was elected, I advised the faculty of what I was going to do and how I was going to do it,” he added. “My perspective of shared governance is that sharing requires direct communication and a reasonable degree of cooperation. I promised the Senate that I would engage the administration on behalf of all the faculty, not just those who are the angriest, and that is what I have done.”

“The Senate at times represents the faculty’s interests directly to the Board of Trustees, he said. “It is this board that will determine which initiatives will be implemented, including faculty initiatives. Faculty leaders must engage trustees on matters that concern them.”

Before taking office, Mouton and Sullivanler visited most academic departments. The predominant perspective expressed to us in those visits was not the one advocated by the most vocal and necessarily vociferous critics,” he said.

Mouton said his critics misrepresented his contacts with the president, saying that many of his contacts have been straightforward and on behalf of all the Senate. “I don’t see how we can effectively present our interests or have an impact on outcomes if we don’t deal with them one-on-one.”

Mouton said, he refused to become involved in campus governance because they want no part of an ongoing verbal war between a coalition of about 10 percent of faculty, who have very strong opinions, one side and some trustees and administrator with equally strong opinions on the other.

“Many of our faculty are apolitical but they are not apathetic; they just feel that there is not a viable opportunity to express their views.”

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Milton Bright, managing editor, Auburn University, 301 Samford Hall, Auburn, AL 36849.


An anthropologist to help develop NPR series on religion, pollution

An AU faculty member will play a major role in developing a National Public Radio series and Web-based in-house products on the relationship between religious purity and environmental pollution in India.

The three-year project, funded in part by a National Science Foundation grant of $767,000, will use the Ganges River as the setting for an examination of universal issues of religion, ecology and culture, said Kelly Alley, director of the anthropological program in the College of Liberal Arts.

Alley will provide expertise to independent documentary maker Julian Crandall Hollick, whose program will examine many of the issues raised by Alley in her book "On the Banks of the Ganges: When Wastewater Meets a Sacred River." The book was published in 2002 by The University of Michigan Press, adding to a collection of book chapters and articles in which Alley uses India as a setting for broader studies of cultural and environmental issues.

Alley is one of three academic experts who will work with Hollick as co-principal investigators for the series. Two of the other experts are in India. The AU associate professor’s work in India examines the interaction of science and environmental issues within a deeply religious culture. Although heavily polluted by cities and industries along its banks, the Ganges, or Ganga as it is known in India, remains a sacred symbol of purity for hundreds of millions of Hindus.

Due to the divergent views of the same river, environmental scientists have been frustrated in their attempts to clean up the Ganges. The barrier to communication between science and religion is present in many cultures but India provides one of the most prominent examples of the complexity of that relationship, Alley said.

Alley, who teaches in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work, said issues examined in the public radio series and educational package for high school teachers and students are important to social and environmental scientists worldwide.

"What Indians face today in terms of the diminishing availability of fresh water supplies may be conditions not too far down the road for American citizens if new ideas about sustainability are not forged fairly soon," she said.

"A radio series exploring the conflicting scientific, religious and activist approaches to understanding the river Ganga and using her waters can be presented to American listeners as a reexamination of their own consumption patterns and the ways they link these patterns to status and power," she added.

Modern dance master to perform at Peet Theatre in March

AU’s Biggio Center for the Enhancement of Dance Teaching and Learning is accepting applications for competitive grants for teaching enhancement.

The grants are available from the Daniel F. Breeden Endowment for Faculty Enhancement.

Deadline for applications is 4:55 p.m. on March 19.

Information about the grants and application forms are available at the Biggio Center’s Web site at www.aurn.edu/biggio or the center’s office in Room 4011 of Draughon Library.

The AU Teaching Effectiveness Committee will review proposals for the grants for up to $2,000 each for one-year projects. The applications must be submitted by April 15.

The Biggio Center, added, “The program is a great opportunity for students who might not have been able to in the past,” said Gladys Breeden, who currently writes poetry as well as teaching about it.

"The Alabama Prison Arts Initiative is about plant- ing seeds of vision through intellectual and creative discovery. It is about helping people find hope within themselves and offering a foundational education- al background in writing," said Stevens, who frequently writes poetry as well as teaching about it.

"These writing courses give [incarcerated women] a means to express emotions and thoughts they might not have been able to in the past," said Gladys Deese, warden of the Julia Tutwiler Prison for Women.

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Arts and Humanities project wins grant

The National Endowment for the Arts has awarded the AU Center for the Arts and Humanities a $20,000 grant for the Alabama Prison Arts Initiative, a writing program for inmates in correctional facilities.

The Center for the Arts and Humanities, in part- nership with Aid to Inmate Mothers and the Alabama Writers’ Forum, has maintained a creative writ- ing program in the Julia Tutwiler Prison and Annex for Women in Wetumpka since 1999. A similar pro- gram recently began at the Frank Lee Youth Center in Prattville, Ala.

The Alabama Prison Arts Initiative also sponsors library development at these facilities and has received more than 1,000 books as donations.

Previously, the program’s sponsors offered two creative writing courses per year. With the NEA funding for 2003-04, at least four courses will be offered this year for up to 150 inmates.

Jay Lamar, associate director of the Center for the Arts and Humanities, said the NEA funding will expand the students’ understanding of the world and their place in it. The classes focus on the creative process, self-discovery and writing improvement.

With a background in English and history, Kyes Stevens teaches many of the creative writing classes. Her efforts on behalf of the Arts and Humanities partnership is in addition to her regular duties with the College of Architecture, Design and Con- struction, where she is coordinator of external affairs.

Stevens credits the college’s dean, Dan Bennett, with scheduling flexibility that enables her to assist the Prisons Arts Initiative, a program that she says is important to the lives it touches.

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Students cited by USA Today

Two Auburn students have been given honorable mention on the All-USA Today College Academic All-Star team for 2004. Joshua Clanton, a senior from Alexander City, and Leslie McCall, a senior from Birmingham, were selected to the prestigious team from 600 nominees nationwide.

Clanton is majoring in electrical engineering, while McCall is a physics major and in the pre-medical certificate curriculum. Clanton is an undergraduate research assistant with a software group developing computer programming for low-gravity instrumentation. The work will enable multiple measurements on cast-metal samples in outer space, minimizing variabilities and reducing the need for large quantities. Experiments in the low-gravity environment of space will provide rigorous tests of theoretical concepts and help advance existing commercial casting methods, said Tony Overfelt, a member of the Mechanical Engineering faculty and director of AU’s Solidification Design Center.

"Josh’s software has been described to experts in NASA, and we are excited that his results may be made available to other research groups across the country for use in their own space research," said Overfelt.

The instrument package is scheduled for launch to the International Space Station. It will house 18 samples and will be controlled by Auburn scientists and engineers via tele-operation, or remote control. McCall, an Honors College student with a 4.0 grade point average, was named the Outstanding Junior in AU’s College of Sciences and Mathematics in 2003.

Last summer the Vestavia Hills High School graduate did research for the National Institutes of Health. McCall has also been an undergraduate teaching assistant at AU in entry-level electricity and magnetism.

McCall has received the National Merit Finalist Scholarship, William R. & Fay Ireland Endowed Scholarship, McWane Foundation Scholarship, the Dr. William Allsup Endowment Scholarship, the Howard Earl Carr Scholarship, the Fred Allison Scholarship and the Robert C. Byrd Scholarship. She is also a member of the Society of Physics Students, Mortar Board and Cardinal Key.

After she receives her degree from AU in May, McCall plans to enroll in medical school. Each February, USA Today announces a 60-member academic team of collegiate undergraduates. The magazine’s staff develops criteria for the team in consultation with the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges and other education organizations.

Winner of Pulitzer Prize to visit AU next week

Anthony Hecht, a Pulitzer Prize-winning poet, will present public readings of his work and visit with students and faculty at Auburn on March 3-4.

Hecht will visit campus as part of the Poetry Project in the Department of English and the College of Liberal Arts. At 7 p.m. March 3 in Foy 217, Hecht will present a journal reading, "Speaking the Un-speakable," in which he describes scenes he witnessed during the liberation of Nazi death camps at the end World War II. Paul J. Filben, chairman of the Alabama Holocaust Commission, will also participate in the program. The presentation is sponsored by AU’s Center for Diversity and Race Relations and the College of Liberal Arts.

The 80-year-old poet will also read from his recent works at 4:30 p.m. on March 4 at the Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art and participate in the museum’s "After Hours" program afterward.

Among America’s most prominent living poets, Hecht has published collections of poems and other writings since the early 1950s and received the Pulitzer Prize in 1968 for "The Hard Hours."