Senate candidates share views with faculty before March election

With Richard Penaskovic and Kathryn Flynn moving into the two top elected positions of the University Faculty and the University Senate on March 14, who will succeed them in 2007?

This issue of the AU Report provides statements from and biographical information about the four nominees for chair-elect and secretary-elect offices in the University Faculty, which includes everyone classified as faculty at Auburn, and the University Senate, the faculty’s representative body. A committee of the University Faculty nominated two professors for each position.

Nominees for chair-elect are Cindy Brunner of Pathobiology and David Cicci of Aerospace Engineering. Nominees for secretary-elect are Ann Beth Presley of Consumer Affairs and David Sutton of Communication and Journalism.

Faculty will vote electronically March 9 through March 13 for a chair-elect and secretary-elect to succeed Penaskovic and Flynn, respectively, in those positions and eventually move into the top positions. The results will be announced at the University Faculty meeting on March 14, when Penaskovic succeeds Conner Bailey as University Faculty and University Senate chair and Flynn succeeds Patricia Duffy as secretary of the faculty and its representative body.

The chair presides over meetings of both the University Faculty and the University Senate and is the primary faculty representative to the university president and administration. Besides maintaining records for the University Faculty and the senate, the secretary assists the chair in representing the faculty and serves on the senate’s Rules and Steering committees.

As immediate past-chair, Bailey will represent the faculty for a year as adviser to the Board of Trustees, succeeding Willie Larkin in that role.

The senate will release information about voting procedures closer to the start of voting. The faculty used electronic voting for the first time in 2004.

Surveying Switchgrass
U.S. Senator Jeff Sessions, R-Alabama, and interim AU President Ed Richardson (left) discuss alternative fuel sources in a field of nine-foot-tall switchgrass at E.V. Smith Research Center near Tallahassee. Sessions and Richardson were joined by Douglas L. Faulkner, assistant U.S. Secretary of Energy for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, AU switchgrass expert David Bransby and others at a briefing on several biomass fuel technologies Thursday.
The past year has been relatively free from one of AU’s most controversial issues in a decade. Nevertheless, significant changes are coming, and the greatest challenge will be to navigate them wisely while honoring the principles of shared governance.

The most fundamental task AU faces in the near future is to find a new president. The timeline offered by interim President Richardson holds, the successful candidates in this faculty chair will be selected after a successful search by the Faculty Senate and the Board of Trustees. AU’s Faculty Senate is the only fully elected body at AU, and it is charged with selecting the next president.

The justification for eliminating those positions is that they are no longer necessary in light of the need for a strong faculty voice in the governance process. As AU celebrates a history that is rich with diversity, faculty leaders need to ensure that whatever the outcome, the academic world and academic priorities are maintained.

The AU faculty only recently received ex-officio, non-voting status on the board and its committees. The justification for eliminating those positions is that AU must ensure that the board and the faculty are thoroughly, fully engaged in the governance process. As AU celebrates a history that is rich with diversity, faculty leaders need to ensure that whatever the outcome, the academic world and academic priorities are maintained.
AU alumni gives $1 million gift to Veterinary Medicine for professorship

Retired veterinarian Bruce Pratt of Beaufort, S.C., has donated $1 million to Auburn University’s College of Veterinary Medicine to fund an endowed professorship.

The gift will help recruit and retain top faculty in the Department of Clinical Sciences, which consists of both large and small animal teaching hospitals and a radiology section.

“I appreciate Auburn and the veterinary education I received,” said Pratt, a member of the class of 1953. “I have met and shaken hands with five out of Auburn’s six veterinary deans, all except the first one. Dean (Timothy) Boosinger has continued the excellence and I am confident my gift will be put to good use and will help future generations.”

Officials with the College recently presented Pratt with a commemorative, engraved chair and announced the formal naming of the Bruce C. Pratt Distinguished Professorship in Veterinary Medicine.

“Private gifts, such as the one by Dr. Pratt, leave a legacy for all future veterinarians,” Dean Frazier said. “Endowed professorships are becoming more and more important for educational institutions. They make the difference between having good programs and great programs.”

Pratt, who moved to Beaufort, S.C., from Wisconsin when he was 7 years old, graduated high school from The Hill School in Pottstown, Pa. He then served in the U.S. Air Force for three years. Upon graduation from Auburn in 1953, he returned to Beaufort and operated Holly Hall Animal Hospital until 1993.

He inherited the $1 million he donated from his grandparents. His grandfather was one of the founders of Fenestent, a laxative firm, which ultimately became Schering-Plough, a pharmaceutical company. Pratt’s grandmother founded the Rockland County, N.Y., Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Pratt said his classmate, Peter Muller, encouraged him two years ago to join the College of Veterinary Medicine’s Centennial Club, a group devoted to raising support for the college. “I wanted to support Auburn even more, which led to this gift,” Pratt said.

The veterinary program at Auburn University is the oldest in the South and has been a continuous program since 1892. More than 5,600 doctors of veterinary medicine have graduated since the first degrees were officially awarded in 1909.
University Faculty Secretary-Elect Candidate

Ann Beth Presley in her own words

As a candidate for secretary-elect of the Auburn University Faculty Senate, I feel honored to have been nominated and, at the same time, overwhlemed by the enormity of the responsibility. Having served as faculty representative to the University Senate, I am well aware to its role in the university. It is essential that every representative exercise critical thinking, respect for diverse viewpoints and a willingness to verbalize opinions consistently with the university and in a conscientious manner. For elected Senate leadership positions, these responsibilities are heightened and expanded. As secretary I would not only assist the chair in representing faculty, but also would serve on the Senate’s Rules and Steering Committee and be responsible for keeping accurate, timely and unbiased record of all proceedings of these governance entities.

In recent years, Auburn University has experienced a great deal of turbulence and uncertainty. In 2007, when offices from the current election will take office, Auburn should be under the leadership of a new president. This president will be selected through a national search, following the appropriate procedures. With a new president in place, it will be feasible and imperative for the university to move forward. I would relish the opportunity to be involved in this process. High level priorities must be addressed and all interim positions must be filled with permanent people. These positions must be filled with the highest quality candidates with a dedication to the success of Auburn University. The new president and administration must be committed to shared governance and to working with the University Faculty Senate and other constituents to set a sound and futuristic/progressive agenda for Auburn University. These changes should empower the university to steadily move forward to achieve its mission.

I see building an atmosphere of trust, ridding the university of the environment of mistrust, having Auburn in research, teaching, and outreach as vital to our advancement as a land-grant university.

Bio: Ann Beth Presley

Ann Beth Presley is an associate professor in the College of Human Sciences. She has been a member of the faculty since 1992, and earned degrees from Western Kentucky University, Ohio State University, and a Ph.D. from the University of Maryland, College Park, the latter in textile science. Presley teaches undergraduate and graduate classes in textile science and apparel design. In addition, she teaches graduate classes in quality control and assurance. She also directs research activities, particularly with the International Foulard Apparel Association, the Costume Society and the American Apparel and Footwear Association (AAA). She has served on the AAA Education Committee with responsibilities for the curricula for AAA-approved university programs in apparel production. She also chaired the Auburn University Accreditation Report for approval of Auburn’s program. She has been involved in programs in Italy and Mexico, as well as work in industry. Her publications are in textile science and history of dress and gender. She has represented the college in the University Senate and has served as past chair of the Insurance and Benefits Committee, as well as the Calender Committee and in other roles.

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New azaleas on landscape horizon

As harbingers of spring, no plants have enjoyed as prominent a spot in the Southern landscape as azaleas.

In recent years, however, the reliable ornamentals have waned in popularity, as home gardeners and landscape professionals alike have grown disillusioned with azaleas’ brief bloom times and the lack of different cultivars available to choose from.

But a study by Auburn University horticulturists should bring a plethora of new colors and new and improved azaleas to the market soon.

The research project, headed by AU horticulture professor and Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station scientist Gary Keever, was launched in 1999 in response to Alabama nursery growers’ increasing concern over weakening markets and declining prices for what had been mainstays of their industry.

“The aim of this long-term azalea evaluation is to identify and then promote new, superior azalea selections that will take Alabama’s azalea industry beyond ‘Coral Bells’ and ‘Formosa,’” Keever said.

Coral Bells is the familiar compact, salmon-pink azalea and Formosa is the tall-growing, often gangly, magenta-colored cultivar so prominent traditionally in lawns and gardens in Alabama.

Included in the study are some 900 cultivars not widely available in the commercial industry.

“We take cuttings of cultivars from nurserymen and other sources around the country and propagate these at the Ornamental Horticulture Research Center in Mobile,” Keever said. The young shrubs then are planted at a 16-acre test site at an AAES research substation located in Tallapoosa County’s Camp Hill community.

The azaleas are being rated on everything from rootstocking success and growth rate to flowering time and cold hardiness.

“It’s exciting because we’re finding a large number of cultivars that offer much-improved blooms, more compact size, denser growth and overall greatly enhanced landscape appeal over what we have available today,” Keever said.

Throughout the study, nursery operators have visited the trial site to help identify the cultivars they find most appealing and promising.

Some of the first cultivars from the evaluation could be on the market within two years, Keever said.

Meanwhile, to view the blooms of select cultivars in the study online, go to http://www.ag.auburn.edu/hort/landscape/CampHillAzaleas.html.

Auburn's JCSM hosts first Art In Bloom exhibition

AU’s Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art hosted its first Art In Bloom Exhibition this past weekend. The event included a series of lectures, demonstrations and social events.

The exhibition also featured a unique floral design competition, as well as an interesting, fresh way to look at works of art.

The series of events began with the Opening Night Cocktail Party and Silent Auction on Thursday, which included an exclusive preview of the exhibition. Music was provided by the Robert Orr jazz trio. The auction included items donated by Ware Jewelers and Robinson Iron as well as original art by Nancy Hartsfield, Nan Cunningham and Malby Sykes.

Friday’s events included a lecture by Jason Powell, manager of Petals of the Past Inc., titled “Heritage Roses” and afternoon tea at the home of interim AU President Ed Richardson and his wife Nell.

Sybil Sylvester, owner of Wildflower Designs LLC in Birmingham, spoke Saturday about floral design. Sylvester has worked as a photo stylist for “Southern Living” and “Southern Accents.” Her work has also been featured in “Southern Living Weddings,” “Southern Accents” and “Coastal Living.”

David Williams, professor of horticulture with AU’s Department of Horticulture, delivered Sunday’s lecture titled “Quick and Easy Floral Design for Special Occasions.”

Article by AU's Simonian named to ScienceDirect's TOP25 List

An article by Alex Simonian, an associate professor in the Department of Mechanical Engineering, has been named to ScienceDirect’s TOP25 Hottest Articles list. Titled “Nanoparticle-based optical biosensors for the direct detection of organophosphate chemical warfare agents and pesticides,” the piece was included in the journal Analytica Chimica Acta in April.

The article details a strategy for the detection of pesticides and chemical warfare agents using gold nanoparticles and fluorescent beacons.

To determine its TOP25, ScienceDirect tracks the number of times scientific articles are downloaded from its informational Web site.

How Auburn Stacks Up

Undergraduate, first-professional enrollment*

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<th>College</th>
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<th>First-Professional</th>
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<td>Agriculture &amp; Life Sci</td>
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<td>Engineering</td>
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* Numbers are for AU colleges and schools with the smallest undergraduate and/or first-professional student numbers; some limit enrollment to meet accreditation standards; other AU colleges were compared in 02-13 and 02-20 editions.

Source: Institutional Research and Assessment

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