Leischucks endow major new awards to recognize top teachers at Auburn

Auburn has launched a new presidential awards program to recognize and reward the university’s best teachers through a major endowment from two emeritus senior administrators. Later this year, interim President Ed Richardson will present the inaugural Gerald and Emily Leischuck Endowed Presidential Awards for Excellence in Teaching, which include a $10,000 stipend with each award. The annual awards will go to two full-time, tenured faculty members who have demonstrated effective and innovative teaching methods and a continuing commitment to student success through advising and mentoring inside and outside the classroom. At least one award will recognize undergraduate teaching.

“Auburn University is extremely grateful to Gerald and Emily Leischuck for endowing this awards program for us to provide a much higher degree of recognition to teaching excellence,” said Richardson. “Gerald and Emily demonstrated a deep and abiding love for the university during their many years of service under six Auburn presidents, and they continue to put the best interests of the university first in all that they do,” Richardson added. “With this endowment, they will continue to have a very positive influence on this university, the faculty and students for generations to come.”

Although the Leischucks had professional careers in administration at Auburn, both are former teachers who came to AU in pursuit of graduate degrees in education. Emily Leischuck taught in Prattville and Auburn City Schools, and Gerald Leischuck taught in Colorado and California public schools.

Coming together
As the new south wing of the W.W. Walker Building takes shape, construction crews work on the connection between the pharmacy building and the 44,000-square-foot wing. A wing on the north side of the building will add another 9,900 square feet.

Speaker to discuss culture conflicts
Becky Matthews, a professor of history at Columbus State University, will present a Women’s History Month Lecture at AU on Thursday. Matthews will speak on “Capable of Christianization and Civilization: Crow and Euro-American Women in the Early 20th Century,” at 3 p.m. in the Special Collections and Archives room of Draughon Library. The public lecture is sponsored by the Women’s Studies Program, the Department of History and AU Libraries.
Richardson says diversity plan will help AU set measurable, achievable goals

Interim AU President Ed Richardson told the University Senate last week that a strategic diversity plan he received on March 2 will help the university set measurable and achievable goals for diversity across the spectrum of campus life. The Multicultural Diversity Commission’s 31-page “AU Strategic Diversity Plan” is posted on the web at www.auburn.edu/administration/specialprograms/diversity_plan/.

Kelly Alley, chair of the Multicultural Diversity Commission, said the commission’s report incorporated much of the work of the Diversity Leadership Council, which examined diversity at Auburn two years earlier.

Richardson said many of the commission’s recommendations will show up again in a report he will present to the Board of Trustees on April 22. He said African American administrators have also offered suggestions that he will fold into his presentation.

A strength of the reports, he said, is that the recommendations go beyond discussions of race to offer ways for Auburn to increase representation of all under-represented minorities in all phases of university governance and social structure.

A high priority, he said, is to embed diversity goals in the university’s strategic plan. Richardson said he is seeking to ensure continuity by establishing goals for improving diversity that can be measured year by year without interruption during changes in administration.

Editor’s Note: On page 4 of this edition of the AU Report, interim President Ed Richardson discusses steps toward implementing diversity initiatives throughout the university.

In April meetings

Biggio Book Group to discuss ‘Active Learning’

The Biggio Book Group will meet in April for discussions of “Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom” by Charles C. Bonwell and James A. Eison. The 80-page book provides advice on how to incorporate active learning activities into various academic settings, including large lecture classes.

Meeting times will be noon and 5 p.m. on April 14 and 5 p.m. on April 15. The sessions are open to all faculty and others interested in a discussion of teaching techniques and strategies that the authors present in their book.

For information and to receive a discount coupon toward purchase of the book at the AU Bookstore, contact Isabelle Thompson, faculty fellow at the Biggio Center, by electronic mail at thompis@auburn.edu.

Speaker to discuss war and empire in late 20th century

Wayne Flynt, Distinguished University Professor of History at Auburn, will discuss his new book, “Alabama in the 20th Century,” in a public lecture at 4 p.m. Thursday at the Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art.

Flynt, a former head of AU’s History Department, is editor-in-chief of the Encyclopedia of Alabama and was president of the Southern Historical Society in 2003-04. He is the author of 11 books of history, including “Proud But Proud: Alabama’s Poor Whites,” “Confederate Politics of ‘Alabama in the 20th Century,’” “Flynt won the 2004 Ane B. and James B. McMillan Prize from the University of Alabama. A member of the AU faculty since 1977, Flynt earned a Ph.D. in history from Florida State University in 1965.

“A Speech production is probably the most complex motor activity you are ever called upon to perform,” Lawrence Molt

Researcher testing long-term success of device that helps prevent stuttering

Auburn student Neely Phillips began to cry; her mother began to cry; even the clinician who inserted the anti-stuttering device into the young woman’s ear began to cry. There wasn’t a dry eye in the room as words flowed effortlessly from her mouth, without a trace of the stuttering problem she has struggled with all her life. Neely and her mother hugged each other as tears trailed down their cheeks.

All this took place recently at AU’s Speech and Hearing Clinic where department chair and researcher Lawrence Molt is studying the long-term effectiveness of a device with the trademarked name “SpeechEasy.”

Molt is seeking up to 22 more people with stuttering or stammering problems to test the device, which was developed at East Carolina University and is marketed by the Janus Development Group Inc. He also needs a control group of 10 people with normal speech. Study participants must be at least 16 years old. Since not everyone benefits from the device, Molt performs an initial test with each volunteer to determine whether to proceed. “The device has to give some type of benefit with their speech,” he said.

“SpeechEasy” first hit the market in August 2002. Typically when a new device comes on the market, the developers will do the first, or alpha, testing. The second analysis is called beta testing, and Auburn is the first site to conduct official clinical trials on the “SpeechEasy” device.

“Speaking fluently is something that most people don’t even think about, but it is actually quite complicated,” Molt said.

“The device Molt is testing is so small that it fits almost entirely in the ear canal, with only a small portion visible. “It delays speech by a fraction of a second, with Delayed Altered Feedback and the Frequency-Altered Feedback changes the perceived pitch of the voice,” he said.

AU author Flynt to discuss his latest book about state

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Anti-stuttering device

Researcher Lawrence Molt holds the device that helps some people overcome stuttering disorders.

The device can provide significant benefit for one-third to one-half of the people who try it. Just as it did for Neely Phillips. Approximately one-third receive some benefit, and the remainder are not helped.

Molt, who is head of the Fluency Division of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, said researchers of speech disorders are still trying to determine why the device works for some and not others.

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From the President

Commitment: AU will increase diversity among its faculty, staff and students

By Edward R. Richardson

Interim President

Over the course of the next several months, Auburn University will begin to implement a comprehensive strategic plan designed to establish diversity among its core values at all levels of the institution.

Put more simply, Auburn will soon begin to pursue increased diversity among faculty, staff and students in a more organized fashion and with the benefit of certain established goals by which it may measure its success.

However, it is important for all to know that the journey is not just beginning. For some time now, this university has known where it wanted – needed – to go. And we have been moving generally in the right direction.

What is different now is that we will have a map.

Our path to a more diverse Auburn – and to a culture that is more respectful of that diversity and its necessity in an increasingly global society – will not always be easy. Auburn will likely take baby steps before it can begin to take leaps. The competition for qualified minority students, faculty and administrators is fierce. Colleges and universities throughout the country are striving to realize the benefits of diversity to their missions and to seek out the best qualified, most motivated minority students and faculty. But, as more and more African American students populate our campus, as more and more women are given positions of authority, the pace of increasing diversity should gain momentum.

Auburn is well positioned with regard to implementing its diversity plan. AU has hubs for diversity throughout the university where it was needed – to go. And we have been moving generally in the right direction.

What is different now is that we will have a map.

Our path to a more diverse Auburn – and to a culture that is more respectful of that diversity and its necessity in an increasingly global society – will not always be easy. Auburn will likely take baby steps before it can begin to take leaps. The competition for qualified minority students, faculty and administrators is fierce. Colleges and universities throughout the country are striving to realize the benefits of diversity to their missions and to seek out the best qualified, most motivated minority students and faculty. But, as more and more African American students populate our campus, as more and more women are given positions of authority, the pace of increasing diversity should gain momentum.

Auburn is well positioned with regard to implementing its diversity plan. AU has hubs for diversity-related activities in place in both the Provost’s Office and its Center for Diversity and Race Relations. Also, the university now has staff among its recruiters who work specifically to recruit qualified minority students.

Already, the university has in place programs in the College of Engineering, College of Education and College of Sciences and Mathematics that are designed specifically to recruit and retain minority students. The BellSouth Minority Engineering Program in the Sam Ginn College of Engineering has proven particularly effective. In 2004, thanks largely to this program and the helping hand it offers minority students in the early phases of the engineering curriculum, Auburn ranked 17th nationally in graduation of African American and Hispanic students in bachelor’s degrees in engineering – ahead of such schools as Ohio State, Virginia Tech, Purdue and Stanford.

There are also efforts to attract qualified minority faculty and retain those who are already in place at Auburn. AU’s College of Business participates annually in the Ph.D. Project, a program that is designed to increase the diversity of its faculty by attracting African Americans, Hispanic Americans and Native Americans to business doctoral programs and that provides support while they are enrolled.

These programs are exemplars for AU schools and colleges that have not yet taken equal steps. Recently, AU’s Athletics Department completed a thorough reorganization designed to more clearly define lines of communication and chains of command. The changes made in athletics were subtle when compared to those in the university office. Unfortu- nately, three jobs were eliminated, including two held by African American coaches. At the same time, however, an African American, Virgil Stark, was named a senior associate athletics director, a position immediately below that of athletics director, making Stark the highest-ranking African American ever in the department.

In fact, when the reorganization was complete, women and minorities held a full 44 percent of non-clerical positions within the Athletics Department. Of Auburn’s eight upper-level athletics administrators, two are African American and two are women.

It is my sincere hope and belief that, where this “controversy” is concerned, cooler and more diplomatic heads will prevail. Auburn can and will reach its diversity goals. Now, with a strategic plan that contains both action items and clear goals necessary to ensure, we can continue our journey.

We know where we need to go. We know why we need to go there. Now, we have a map.

Gerald Leischuck said the endowment is an outgrowth of an early and ongoing interest in the quality of teaching in general and especially for AU students. “Auburn’s legacy has always been high-quality teaching, especially undergraduate teaching,” he said.

“What we see the presidential awards as a way to emphasize instructional excellence, enhance the teaching of students and reward faculty for the outstanding job that they do.”

Emily Leischuck added, “We want to do our part to ensure that these students will continue to receive the high quality of instruction that they need and deserve that we are so proud of at Auburn.”

At AU, Emily Leischuck earned a master’s degree from the College of Education and served nine years in student affairs programs, where she was Panhellenic advisor and assistant to the dean of women, followed by 12 years in the Office of the President. During those years, she served as assistant to the AU president and the Board of Trustees, retiring in 1995 with emeritus status. Long-supportive of student organizations and a frequent leader in community-service activities, she was a 1996 recipient of AU’s Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award for Humanitarian Leadership. In recognition of her efforts on behalf of Auburn students and the entire Auburn family, the university named a residence hall, Emily Reaves Leischuck Hall, in her honor in 1998.

Gerald Leischuck began his 35-year Auburn career as an administrative assistant in the College of Education. Shortly after earning an Ed.D. in educational leadership in 1964, he joined the staff of what is now Institutional Research and Assessment.

He served as executive director of that office from 1966-89 and as secretary to the Board of Trustees from 1989-97. From 1992 until retiring to emeritus status in 1997, he also served as executive assistant to the president. After retirement, he returned for two years as a consultant to the Board of Trustees.

He also served on the Auburn City Board of Education from 1977-87 and was its president from 1980-85. In 2003, AU presented an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree to Gerald Leischuck in recognition of his career achievements and service to the university. The presidential awards are the second set of awards for quality of teaching at AU named for the Leischuck couple. The top two teaching awards in the College of Education are partially funded by the Leischucks; those awards go annually to one faculty member each for undergraduate teaching and for graduate instruction.

The Leischucks have also endowed the Leis- chuck-Reaves Endowment for Scholarships at Auburn in honor of their parents, Claude and Emily Tyson Reaves and Steve and Nellie Leischuck. Also, the couple has established or provided for scholarship programs at Huntington College, Birmingham-Southern College and the University of Northern Colorado.

“Auburn’s legacy has always been high-quality teaching, especially undergraduate teaching.”

Gerald Leischuck

Teaching endowment

continued from page 1

Upcoming Events

Tuesday, March 15

• Distance Learning Seminar: “Online Learning and Communication: Keys to Student Success,” 1 p.m., O.D. Smith 328. Contact: Prasanthi Pallapa at pallapa@auburn.edu or 844-3476.

• Meeting: University Faculty, 3 p.m., auditorium, Broun Hall. Includes installation of new officers.

Wednesday, March 16


• Auburn Shorts Film Festival: Top entries from the Movie Gallery Student Video Competition, 7 p.m.-9:30 p.m., Dixon Conference Center.

Thursday, March 17

• Meeting: Administrative and Professional Assembly, Human Resources update on Compensation Project, 2 p.m., Foy 207.


• Author’s Reading: “Alabama in the 20th Century.” Distinguished University Professor Wayne Flynt, 4 p.m., Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art.


Monday, March 21

• Next AU Report.

Monday, March 23

• Public Lecture: “Empires and War in the Late 20th Century.” Jeremy Black, author and professor at the University of Exeter in England, 4 p.m., Haley 1203.

Monday, March 28

• Spring Break: No classes; offices maintain regular hours.

AU Report

Editor: Roy Summerford. Contributing editors and writers: David Granger, Katie Wilker and Diane Clifton, AU Communications; and Jamie Crearson, Agriculture; and Cheryl Cobb, Engineering. Photography: Jeff Ethridge, Mike Morgan, Dave Clifton (page 3), Sam Ginn, Mike Messenger, Kavon, Heather Brooks, Darin Brinkman, AADL (page 7, top).

Assistant Vice President for Communications and Marketing: John Hachelt. Director of Communications: Dewelle Dowdle.

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Spirit of Excellence

Each month, AU recognizes outstanding performance with Spirit of Excellence awards to four staff members. Recipients for February were, from left, Martha Combs of Building Services, Mindy Hart of Cooperative Extension, Frances Collins of the English Department and Shirley Lyles of Mechanical Engineering.
Don’t send your kids packing: research provides clues to parenting problems

Ever wish you could pack your kids off to Japan, Switzerland or some other place where, you’ve heard, children always behave perfectly and never talk back to their parents? Research by Auburn faculty member supports you may have better luck closer to home.

One consistent thing Alexander Vazsonyi, an associate professor in AU’s College of Human Sciences, has found in nearly a decade of research on parenting and adolescent development around the world is that a child’s impulsiveness and the parenting skills of adults count for far more than the local culture in nearly all situations. In other words, if you and your children drive each other crazy in Alabama, you would probably do the same in Albania.

Vazsonyi, who is editor of The Journal of Early Adolescence, is conducting research to help social scientists and counselors determine when to concentrate on individual and family behavior and when to look at larger social influences on adolescent behavior.

An AU faculty member since 1996, the Michigan native recently returned to Auburn after a semester in Slovenia as a Fulbright Scholar under a U.S.-Switzerland exchange program. While most parents would agree with that thought, many, especially in the United States, also harbor the thought that they could do a better job of child-rearing if not for the temptations of American culture.

Vazsonyi noted the emergence of a global youth culture. For instance, Slovenian youths listen to the same music, watch the same American films in the English language and dress similarly to their American counterparts. “Cultural differences still exist but the similarities are overwhelming,” he said.

However, in all the cultures he has studied so far, Vazsonyi has found a close link between a child’s fear of sanctions and his or her level of self-control. While sanctions can come from peers or the community — areas in which more restrictive cultures enjoy an advantage — Vazsonyi said the most consistent factor in all cultures is the child’s concern about possible sanctions from his or her parents.

“Everywhere I have looked, parental monitoring and discipline practices are very important for preventing delinquent behavior,” Vazsonyi said. “They appear to be universal.”

Whether they are in rural or small-town Alabama or a Japanese city or the Balkans in Europe, youths who are closely monitored by their parents or the rules of society than their less-supervised peers. The findings are not limited to the subject of parental supervision. The Auburn researcher has also published reports on part-time work, leisure time, youth violence, crime and other factors in the daily life of adolescents.

Vazsonyi said researchers still have years of work ahead to test and refine ideas related to similarities and differences in local cultures within the United States and among cultures worldwide. “The comparative approach is just a methodolgy to uncover potential similarities and differences in the development of children and adolescents,” he said. “What is much more important is how we use that information.”
Goodbye to winter color
While spring is commonly regarded as the most colorful season, the onset of consistently warm temperatures will soon bring an end to the cool, crisp conditions of early and late winter that produce blazing sunsets in Auburn orange.

Performers bringing out their dancing shoes for musical theatre production
AU Theatre will present its third annual dance concert, “Daunce III,” at Telfair Peet Theatre at 7:30 p.m. Thursday-Saturday and 2:30 p.m. Sunday.

With music ranging from Buxtehude to Irving Berlin, “Daunce III” features members of AU’s student dance company and four professional national and international dance artists: Meredith Barnes, Jill Echo, Satu Hummasti and Takehiro Ueyama. “It is a wonderful gift to be able to offer our students a chance to work with artists of this magnitude and a rare opportunity for Auburn audiences to see some of the finest work being done in American dance today,” said the production’s director, Judith Nelson, who is an associate professor in the Department of Theatre.

Theatre Department Chair Worth Gardner added, “By producing this event as a part of our season, we recognize and celebrate the role of movement and choreography in performance art.” Concert highlights include the premieres of two works by Nelson — “Collateral Damage” and “Web” — and “The Great Race” by Meredith Barnes, who has taught, choreographed and performed throughout the United States and in Europe.

For ticket information, call the AU Theatre box office at 844-4154.

Centers record history of end of segregation in Tuskegee
Volunteers, faculty and staff at two centers at Auburn are recording memories of witnesses to the end of segregation in the Tuskegee area as part of an effort to preserve an oral history of the era.

The Center for Diversity and Race Relations and the Center for Arts and Humanities have established the Tuskegee Remembrances Project. The project involves audio recordings and transcribing oral histories of people who attended Tuskegee High School before desegregation in the 1960s.

The project also includes interviewing people who participated in efforts to integrate public schools in Tuskegee in the 1960s and earlier.

Members of the Tuskegee Remembrances Consortium are also participating in the project. The consortium consists of archivists, Civil Rights activists and scholars from Alabama State University, Auburn University, Maxwell Air Force Base, Trenholm State Technical College and the Tuskegee Human and Civil Rights Multicultural Center. The project is funded by a grant from the Alabama Humanities Foundation, the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

For information or to participate in the Tuskegee Remembrances Project, contact Jay Lamar at 844-4947 or Robin Sabino at 844-2946.