AU warned of fiscal challenges

Despite currently sound finances, AU must act soon to prepare for major economic challenges over the next three to five years, says Executive Vice President Don Large.

In a report to the AU Board of Trustees on Friday, Large said the university must come up with an additional $29 million next year and similar amounts for the remainder of the decade to offset financial commitments transferred to AU by state government. Those commitments are tied to retiree expenditures, insurance and other expenses formerly covered by the state.

The current main-campus budget is $437 million. The $29 million additional commitment for next year is more than twice the $12.4 million in additional revenue projected for Auburn in the 2005 fiscal year, which starts Oct. 1.

Large, AU’s chief finance officer, said the university can meet its financial obligations next year but will need guidance from the board in developing revenue and spending priorities for future years.

The Board of Trustees will return for a special, called session on May 7 to discuss policy options for confronting the challenges. Interim President Ed Richardson said the May session will provide an opportunity for the board to begin discussions to help Auburn clarify its mission and set priorities while confronting the financial challenges.

Richardson and Large said the university needs to set policies and make decisions pertaining to tuition pricing, enrollment, cost containment and related issues for the next three to five years.

The tuition pricing issue includes decisions on the amount and timing of increases; availability of tuition assistance or waivers for students from low-income families; continuing with a goal of reaching the regional average for tuition, reducing that goal or exceeding the regional average; and increasing tuition for out-of-state students faster than for in-state students.

Other options include increasing enrollment to bring in more tuition or cutting it to decrease costs.

Large said the university could look at space utilization to determine ways to cut facilities costs, and Richardson said AU will examine non-academic programs to determine other ways to save money.
Changes announced in cabinet-level administrative positions at Auburn

Auburn last week saw two changes in cabinet-level administrative positions and the departure of the university's head basketball coach.

David Housel announced on Tuesday that he will step down as director of intercollegiate athletics next January, and interim President Ed Richardson on Wednesday appointed Debbie Shaw as interim vice president for Alumni Affairs.

Shaw, an AU staff member and administrator since 1983, replaces Betty DeMent, who had worked in Alumni Affairs since 1988 and had been a vice president since 1995. "Auburn is grateful to Mrs. DeMent for her service to the alumni," Richardson said.

Richardson said he will announce plans later for filling the athletic director's position.

Upcoming Events

• Meeting: Administrative and Professional Assembly, 2 p.m., Foy Conference Room, Draughon Library.
• Spring Break: No classes; offices remain open. Classes resume April 6-10. Box Office: 844-4154.
• Concert: AU Vocal Ensemble, 4:30 p.m., W. T. Smith Chapel.
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Auburn Alumni Association’s Lifetime Achievement Awards for 2004-05

The deadline is March 31 for nominations for the Auburn Alumni Association’s Lifetime Achievement Awards for 2004-05.

The annual award, now in its fourth year, recognizes extraordinary lifetime achievements by Auburn alumni, faculty or administrators for significant achievement in their professional lives or for distinguished human service.

Nominations must have attained prominence in their professional careers and must have demonstrated integrity, stature and capability to such a degree that the faculty, staff, students and alumni of Auburn will take pride in and be inspired by their recognition, said Liz Peel, director of the program.


To obtain a nomination form, call 844-1146 or see the Web site www.auaau.org.

Thompson named Fulbright Specialist

Henry Thompson, a professor of agricultural economics in AU’s College of Agriculture, has received a Fulbright Senior Specialist grant for work in economics at the University of Zagreb in Croatia.

The Fulbright program offers two- to six-week grants to leading U.S. academics and professionals to support curricular and faculty development and institutional planning at colleges and universities in 140 countries.

Thompson will present lectures on international economics and microeconomics and speak at seminars in Croatia and Slovenia.

"The countries in Eastern and Central Europe are making a transition away from government-managed socialism and toward more open market-oriented economies," Thompson said. "I will also collaborate with colleagues at the University of Zagreb's Graduate School of Economics and Business."

The Auburn professor said he also plans to finish work on a new edition of his textbook in international economics.

Faculty officers

Conner Bailey, top right, and Patricia Duffy, inset at right, were elected chair-elect and secretary-elect, respectively, of the AU Faculty and University Senate in electronic voting on March 15-11. Officers shown with Bailey are, from left, Paula Sullenger, immediate past secretary; John Mouton, immediate past chair; Debra Cobia, 2004-05 secretary; and Willie D. Larkin, 2004-05 chair. Larkin and Cobia assumed office on Tuesday.

Deadline near for Lifetime Achievement nominations

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Lifetime Achievement Awards for 2003-04 posthumously honored former AU President Ralph Brown Draughon and Westley H. Bailey, Auburn Rural Studio co-founder Samuel Mockbee and alumnus Roy Sewell, a leading industrialist and philanthropist of the mid-20th century.

To obtain a nomination form, call 844-1146 or see the Web site www.auaau.org.
Garden clubs federation donates funds from sale of home to endow scholarships in horticulture

The Montgomery Federation of Garden Clubs has donated $215,000 to establish an endowed fund for excellence in the AU College of Agriculture’s Department of Horticulture.

The gift was made possible by the federation’s sale of Hillcrest, a historic home in Montgomery’s Garden District that had served as the organization’s meeting place since 1962.

Charles Gilliam, chair of the AU horticulture department, said the gift is one of the largest donations in the history of the department.

Of the donation, $200,000 will be invested as an endowment for the Horticulture Department. Each year, earnings from the investment will go toward scholarships for six students majoring in horticulture and fellowship awards for two horticulture graduate students. The federation gave an additional $15,000 so that the awards could begin with the 2004-05 academic year.

A portion of the gift is earmarked for faculty development and support.

Under the agreement establishing the fund, qualified horticulture students from Montgomery and Elmore counties will be given priority consideration for the undergraduate scholarships. Nell Copeland, chair of the federation’s board of trustees, said the organization saw the endowment as a way to make a lasting contribution toward creating beautiful landscapes in Montgomery and beyond.

“We wanted to leave a legacy that would have an impact on future generations long after all of us are gone,” Copeland said. “We felt that the best way to do that was to enhance the horticulture program at Auburn and help provide learning opportunities for a number of young people who are interested, as we are, in improving and preserving the landscape.”

Hillcrest, a Montgomery landmark built in 1916 on South Court Street, was purchased in 1962 by the Montgomery Federation of Garden Clubs Inc., which recently sold the house. Hillcrest’s new owners are renovating the house and reportedly plan to lease the first floor for special events and turn the second floor into a bed-and-breakfast establishment.

“The decision to sell Hillcrest was a difficult one for the federation, but it has also been very rewarding,” said Federation President Nelma Ausley. “It offers new members, shown outside Samford Hall with interim President Ed Richardson, right, are, from left, Dwight Carlisle of Tallahassee, Sarah Newton of Fayetteville and Charles Ball of Gadsden.

New trustees

Three new AU trustees went through orientation on Thursday and attended their first meeting of the Board of Trustees on Friday. The new members, shown outside Samford Hall with interim President Ed Richardson, right, are, from left, Dwight Carlisle of Tallahassee, Sarah Newton of Fayette and Charles Ball of Gadsden.

Education accepting applications for Summer Reading Program

The AU College of Education is accepting applications from parents and guardians for the annual Summer Reading Program.

In the program, advanced undergraduates in the college and graduate students specializing in reading intervention will tutor beginning and struggling readers during June and July.

The Summer Reading Program, which is in its seventh year, is designed for children in the age group from kindergarten through second grade, especially those who are having difficulty learning to read through regular class instruction.

A few places are also available for children in grades three through six.

“Children thrive under the patient, positive, individual attention of a caring teacher,” said Program Coordinator Bruce Murray, an associate professor in the College of Education. “We typically see reading gains of slightly over one reading level after seven weeks of one-on-one instruction.”

For information, call 844-6934.

NASA vet, FDA official to speak at veterinary conference

A NASA veterinarian and the director of the Food and Drug Administration Center for Veterinary Medicine will serve as keynote speakers during the AU College of Veterinary Medicine’s 97th Annual Conference Thursday-Sunday at the Dixon Conference Center.

Alex Dunlap, a veterinarian and medical doctor with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, will present “NASA’s Neurolab: Animal Care in Outer Space” at 8:10 a.m. Friday. Dunlap will be followed at 9:30 a.m. by Stephen Sundlof of the FDA who will speak on “The FDA and Veterinary Medicine.”

More than 2,000 veterinarians, technicians and spouses are expected to attend the Auburn conference that will feature seminars, alumni awards presentations and 10 class reunions. For more information, call 844-3699.