AU President William Walker has urged the entire university community to support Gov. Bob Riley’s statewide campaign for tax reform and accountability. In remarks to the University Senate, alumni organizations and civic groups across Alabama, Walker is saying passage of the reform package in a Sept. 9 statewide referendum would lead to rapid improvements in the quality of life in Alabama by improving education and state services. Failure of the reform package, Walker warns, would lead to rapid deterioration of public schools and basic state services. With passage, the state would gain $700 million in new revenue next year and $1.2 billion per year by 2009; if the package fails, Walker says tax reform vote could decide future of education, state and local services.

AU, UA join forces to target Black Belt

Chief academic officers from the Auburn University and University of Alabama systems have joined forces on behalf of their institutions against seemingly intractable problems in Alabama’s poorest counties.

The senior academic administrators began meeting in late May at the request of AU President William Walker and UA System Chancellor Malcolm Portera.

Through their combined efforts, the five universities in the two systems can have a greater impact on the educational, social, health and economic problems in the Black Belt than they can achieve individually, said interim AU Provost John Pritchett.

A combined effort against the problems of the state’s poorest region will also provide a model for the academic administrators to use as the universities expand their collective efforts to other issues that are too large for institutions to address individually, he added.

Pritchett and Charles Nash of the University of Alabama System were among six senior academic administrators who met in Birmingham to form closer links between the AU and UA systems. Other participants were Roger Ritvo of AU-Montgomery, (See Academic officers, page 2)
Referendum

(continued from page 1)

the state must slice up to $675 million from budgets for schools and basic services in the 2003-04 fiscal year, which starts Oct. 1.

“We must do all we can to campaign for support of these measures,” said Walker. “Passage of the governor’s reform package would have profound impact on the future of our state, and so would its defeat.”

Walker noted that the benefits to AU will be indirect through improvements in the quality of K-12 public schools and state services and through relief from ongoing state revenue declines that threaten the future for students in K-12 and higher education.

In addition, Auburn students would gain directly through a scholarship program linked to the funding package.

If the package fails at the polls in September, the effect will be immediate and disastrous for all of education, Walker said. He noted that the governor has warned of massive layoffs of public school teachers, widespread cancellation of band and football programs, mass releases of convicts from state prisons and loss of services at every level of state government.

By improving efficiency, setting aside a proration reserve and raising tuition, Auburn is prepared to weather a projected reduction of 6.34 percent in state funding in the 2003-04 budget year, but Walker said state funding problems will take a toll on Auburn if they continue beyond next year, as predicted.

The governor has been campaigning across the state on behalf of the reform package since the Legislature passed the package on June 7. Walker said all supporters of education in Alabama should unite in support of the campaign to win voter approval in the Sept. 9 referendum.

The package would raise state revenues by 14 percent through changes in income, property, utility, cigarette and other taxes. The constitutional amendment would also impose accountability measures on state government and school systems and would ban pass-through “pork” legislation, which legislators use to finance favored projects.

The amendment would also place all the new revenues in a separate Alabama Excellence Initiative Fund for targeted investments such as the Alabama Reading Initiative and college scholarships.

The Governor’s Office has details of the package on the Web at http://www.governor.state.al.us/.

Upcoming Events

Tuesday, June 24
• Classes begin for Summer Session II.

Wednesday, June 25
• Faculty Development’s “WebCT, Tricks and Tips,” noon, O.D. Smith 328. Hosted by AU Distance Learning.

Thursday, June 26
• Museum Tour: Tour of new Julie Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art, 4 p.m., South College Street. For tour reservation, call 844-1507.

Friday, July 4
• Independence Day holiday: No classes; offices closed.

Monday, July 7
• Next AU Report

Tuesday, July 8
• Meeting: University Senate, 3 p.m., Broun Hall auditorium.

Tuesday, July 29
• Classes end for summer term.

Wednesday, July 30
• Summer term finals through Aug. 1.

Monday, August 4
• Graduation: Ceremony at 2 p.m., Coliseum.

Wednesday, August 20
• First day of classes for fall semester, 2003-04 academic year.

Salary goals

Interim Provost John Pritchett outlined AU's goals for faculty salary improvement during this month's University Senate meeting. Pritchett noted that AU is within striking distance of its target of bringing faculty salaries to the regional average for Auburn's peer institutions.

Academic officers

(continued from page 1)

Judy L. Bonner of the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa, Eli Capilouto of UA Birmingham, and Lewis Radebaugh of UA Huntsville.

In their first initiative, the chief academic officers are conducting an inventory of AU and UA programs and departments that are in the Black Belt, which badly trails the rest of the state in education opportunities, government infrastructure and economic development. Although some counties in Southeast Alabama, such as Macon and Barbour, are included in the Black Belt, most of the region is in West Alabama in a triangle bordered by Montgomery, Mobile and Tuscaloosa.

The academic administrators agreed to examine their own programs in June and reconvene in June. “We will get back together to work out better coordination and plan additional initiatives once we identify what each of us is doing now,” Pritchett said.

Pritchett noted that Auburn already has some strong programs in the economically distressed region. Two of the most prominent are the School of Architecture’s Rural Studio and the West Alabama Learning Coalition, which is coordinated by the College of Education’s Truman Pierce Institute.

Pritchett noted that several other colleges and schools also have worked with AU Outreach and the Cooperative Extension System to provide services to the region.

Senior administrators say AU this summer will follow procedures established in 2002 for faculty salary increases last fall in determining increases for the 2003-04 fiscal year that starts Oct. 1.

In remarks to the University Senate on June 10, Executive Vice President Don L. Jones noted increases of 10.5 percent last year and said the benefit to AU would also impose accountability measures on state government and school systems and would ban pass-through “pork” legislation, which legislators use to finance favored projects.

The amendment would also place all the new revenues in a separate Alabama Excellence Initiative Fund for targeted investments such as the Alabama Reading Initiative and college scholarships.

Pritchett and the UA president also have strong programs in those counties, he noted.

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Engineer name astronaut to post

Astronaut Jim Voss has been named associate dean for external affairs in AU’s Samuel Ginn College of Engineering.

Voss will begin his duties on campus in August, at the beginning of fall semester. He will lead the college’s fund-raising efforts and teach a course in spacecraft design.

“Jim Voss has been a frequent and welcome visitor to the Auburn campus during his tenure at NASA, and has spoken with many of our students, alumni and faculty members,” Engineering Dean Larry Benefield said in making the announcement.

“He will bring a unique perspective to the engineering classroom,” Benefield added. “As a veteran astronaut, he offers an exciting viewpoint that will elevate our instructional program in a way that would not otherwise be possible.”

Voss, a retired U.S. Army colonel, earned a bache- lor’s degree in aerospace engineering from Auburn in 1972, when he received a commission as a second lieutenant in the Army. He earned a master’s degree in aerospace engineering from the University of Colorado in 1974 under the Army Graduate Fellowship Program.

NASA selected him for the astronaut program in 1987. A veteran of five space flights, Voss has logged 201 days in space, including four space walks totaling more than 22 hours.

Most recently he was a management astronaut working in the Space Station Program Mission Integration and Operations Office as a deputy for flight operations.

AU Theatre to present two plays off campus

In plays for its 2003-04 season, AU Theatre will feature a Carson McCullers drama, a rock opera, a musical based on a book about working and a doc- umentary exploring the murder of a social outcast in a small town.

Due to renovation of Telfair Peet Theatre, the first two plays in the new season will be off-campus at the Jan Dempsey Arts Center at 222 E. Drake Ave., approximately one mile northeast of campus.

The first play of the season will be “The Member of the Wedding,” in October. The play by McCullers, a Columbus, Ga., native, explores the loneliness of adolescence and the bond between blacks and whites in the mid-20th century South through the eyes of the groom’s younger sister.

“Freaks up! A Demented Rock Opera,” sched- uled for November and featuring puppetry, will also be at the Dempsey Arts Center.

The following two plays, “Working” and “The Laramie Project,” will be in Telfair Peet Theatre.

“Working,” scheduled for February, is an adapta- tion of Studs Turkel’s Pulitzer Prize-winning book, using music by James Taylor and Steven Schwartz. “The Laramie Project” is a theatrical documentary exploring the lives of the citizens of Laramie, Wyo., and events surrounding the murder of a homosexual man by two of the town’s residents.

AU Theatre has begun taking ticket orders for the upcoming season. Tickets for all four plays are $45 for students, $65 for faculty, staff and senior citizens and $70 general admission. For ticket information, call 844-4145.

Tax rates change on statements

Under tax reduction legislation signed May 28 by President Bush, the 2003 income tax rates are changed for most taxpayers.

The new tax rates are reflected in university employees’ salary and wage payments effective June 20.

Wang wins grant from Art Council

The Alabama State Council on the Arts has awarded a $5,000 fellow- ship grant to Assistant Professor Wei Wang of the Department of Art in AU’s College of Liberal Arts.

The one-year grant, effective this fall, will support Wang’s research in digital imag- ing, 2-D and 3-D animation, interactive multi- media and web design.

Communications & Marketing

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