Alumni Association pledges $2.2 million for scholarships over the next two years

The Auburn Alumni Association has announced a major increase in scholarships for Auburn students, adding to a recent surge in scholarship money at AU.

The association’s board of directors on June 25 pledged more than $2.2 million over the next two years toward scholarships. Those funds will be in addition to a similar amount in new funds earmarked on June 17 by the Board of Trustees in a tuition increase this fall.

The money for the Alumni Association scholarships will come largely from savings in the association’s operating costs, from Auburn Clubs and from donations by current and former Alumni Association board members.

Interim Vice President Debbie Shaw said the savings in operating costs were made possible by the renewal of agreements between the association and AU through which the university helps cover the association’s salaries and other costs.

“This year, the Alumni Association Association can shift its priorities to the opportunity to provide scholarship monies for students,” Shaw said. “We’re initiating several new opportunities for alumni to support students. As a result, we should be able to generate the $2 million.”

Interim President Ed Richardson said the Auburn Alumni Association’s commitment illustrates the importance of a university and its alumni association maintaining a close working relationship. “It is important to have an alumni association that sees a need and moves to help fill it,” he said. “This is an example of how a strong, vibrant relationship with our alumni can help benefit the university,” Richardson added.

Andy Hornsby, president of the Auburn Alumni Association, said the association’s support for scholarships may expand in the future. “We are proud to help support deserving students,” Hornsby said. “Hopefully, that support will continue to grow as time goes on.”
Kochan named Education dean

Fan Kochan, former interim dean of the College of Education and a past director of Auburn’s Truman Pierce Institute, has been named dean of the AU College of Education.

AU Provost John Heilman announced the appointment Friday. Kochan’s appointment as dean culminates an internal selection process that began in May. She will have the full authority of the deanship and will serve until a national search results in the appointment by the provost of a permanent dean for the college.

Kochan, an Auburn faculty member since 1994, served as interim dean for the College of Education from August 2001 until September 2004. She served from 1997-2001 as director of the Truman Pierce Institute, devoted to building partnerships between AU and public school systems. She is a tenured professor in the Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership and Technology.

The selection process included evaluations by faculty who attended public presentations by the two finalists: Kochan and Bonnie White, who is the college’s most recent interim dean and a professor of curriculum and teaching.

“We had two outstanding candidates for this tenured deanship, both of whom made compelling public presentations,” Heilman said. “I thank Dr. Kochan for accepting this responsibility and know that the College of Education will be in excellent hands.”

Penn State dean to head AU Libraries

Bonnie MacEwan of Pennsylvania State University has been named dean of libraries at Auburn. She will begin her new position Sept. 1.

“I am pleased that Bonnie MacEwan has chosen to join us here at Auburn,” said AU Provost John Heilman. “She comes to us with a wealth of experience and an excellent reputation as a librarian.”

MacEwan, who is dean for collections and scholarly communications and co-director of digital scholarly publishing at Penn State libraries, said she was pleasantly surprised that Auburn’s Draughon Library seems a decidedly popular resource among undergraduates.

“I think it’s wonderful that the Auburn libraries have remained a popular destination for undergraduates. I’m looking forward to working with the excellent library staff and the other departments in the university to provide the students with the resources they need,” said MacEwan.

MacEwan joined the Penn State libraries in 1991, serving as the coordinator for collection development from 1991 to 1998 and as the dean for collections since 1998. Previously, she served at the University of Missouri libraries and at Central Missouri State University. She received a master’s degree in librarianship at the University of Denver.

The dean of libraries is responsible for Draughon Library and the two branch libraries: the Cary Veterinary Medical Library and the Library of Architecture, Design and Construction.
AU study confirms that image trumps issues in U.S. elections

A study of U.S. elections by a communication researcher at Auburn provides new evidence that image soundly trumps issues in today’s media-saturated political environment.

The results, published this spring in the Journal of Communication, an international academic journal for communication scholars, show that, other than college graduates, most voters did not pay much attention to the news media and had little knowledge of policy issues in the 2000 presidential elections.

“Issues simply do not play an important role,” said the study’s primary author, Sei-Hill Kim, an assistant professor in the Department of Communication and Journalism at AU.

“We may want campaigns to be about issues, but that is not the case; the winner is usually the candidate who is most successful in creating a persona that the voters like.”

Kim and two other researchers based their conclusions on data from the 2000 American National Election Study, which was funded by the National Science Foundation, but Kim said he expects similar results from the 2004 election. The study with co-authors Dietram Scheufele of the University of Wisconsin and James Shanahan of Cornell University shows that Republican George W. Bush and Democrat John Kerry attempting to discuss policy issues in the 2000 presidential campaign to be about party affiliation or personal values don’t pay much attention to issues, perhaps because they already know how they are going to vote,” Kim said. “They identify with their preferred candidate and assume he thinks like they do. They also believe the opponent will say anything to get elected, so they don’t see any need to listen to the issues, anyway.”

In the past two presidential elections, Bush sought to present an image of himself as a strong, stable leader and an image of his opponent as lacking those qualities. With the help of an expertly managed campaign team, Bush and the Republican Party stayed “on message,” painting a broad picture of a steady, determined leader at every opportunity, but he seldom discussed details of issues.

Meanwhile, Gore in 2000 and Kerry in 2004 lost momentum every time they tried to talk about specific issues, Kim said. Gore won the popular vote in 2000, but Bush carried more states and won the electoral college. In 2004, Bush beat Kerry in both the popular vote and the electoral college.

Writing extensively on communication topics, Kim also published a study in the journal Mass Communication and Society this spring examining social dynamics and respond by using the mass media, to define themselves and their opponents to voters through advertising and staged events.

“People who care most about party affiliation or personal values don’t pay much attention to issues,” Kim said. “They identify with their preferred candidate and assume he thinks like they do. They also believe the opponent will say anything to get elected, so they don’t see any need to listen to the issues, anyway.”

“We may want campaigns to be about issues, but that is not the case…”

Kim joined the AU faculty in 2004 after teaching at Saint Mary’s College in Indiana. He holds a master’s degree in advertising from Michigan State University and earned a Ph.D. in communication and Journalism at AU.

“People who care most about party affiliation or personal values don’t pay much attention to issues…”

Campus to lose electrical service on July 31

The Auburn campus will be without electrical power for about eight hours on Sunday, July 31.

Electrical service to campus will be shut down that day while work crews relocate a 44 KV transmission line to the electrical substation behind Plainsman Park.

The overhead line will be moved and placed underground so construction can begin in August on a parking deck at the southwest corner of Roosevelt and Duncan drives. The parking deck is the first of a sequence of projects leading to construction of a student center south of Haley Center to replace Foy Student Union.

All buildings on the main campus will lose electrical power during the outage, but the College of Veterinary Medicine will not be affected.

For additional information on the outage, contact Mike Harris, manager of AU Utilities, at 844-9500.