New faculty get boost from AU’s Biggio Center

Fall enrollment sets new record, applications up

Pioneering work with technology wins honors

Huffman receives lifetime award for achievements

Tops in teaching, research and outreach

Four AU faculty members were honored in a special ceremony on Thursday as the best at Auburn in either teaching, research or outreach for 2006. Joseph Kicklighter of History and Robert Lishak of Biological Sciences received the Gerald and Emily Leischuck Endowed Presidential Awards for Excellence in Teaching, S.D. Worley of Chemistry and Biochemistry received the Creative Research and Scholarship Award and David Bransby received the Award for Excellence in Faculty Outreach. In the top photo are, from left, Emily Leischuck, Lishak, President Ed Richardson, Kicklighter and Gerald Leischuck. The Leischucks are emeritus senior administrators who endowed the teaching awards in 2005. In the photo below are, from left, Assistant Vice President for Outreach Royrickers Cook, Bransby, Richardson, Worley and Vice President for Research Mike Moriarty. This was the first year in which AU presented its highest faculty awards in a communitywide ceremony.
New Faculty Scholars

Auburn program helps new faculty develop teaching skills, strategies

In a comprehensive effort that is rare on college campuses, an Auburn program is helping new faculty through what is often a daunting, overwhelming, years-long process of college teaching. The New Faculty Scholars Program, now in its third year, is a year-long process of seminars, workshops, retreats and mentoring for up to 30 new faculty members each year through AU’s Biggio Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning.

While nearly every new faculty member receives advice from colleagues in his or her academic department, Biggio Center Director James Groccia noted that new faculty members at every college and university face immense challenges in organizing course materials, managing class sizes, starting a research program, performing university service and community service and, most importantly, teaching, advising and motivating students.

“The first year can be difficult for any faculty,” said Groccia. “The second year can be difficult for them to help them reach their potential, the better off they and their students will be.”

James Groccia

“The sooner we can help them reach their potential, the better off they and their students will be.”

The New Faculty Scholars Program is designed for full-time faculty members, either in a tenure track position or a clinician faculty position with continuing appointment. The program includes research and outreach activities, but Groccia noted that the primary focus is on classroom performance and meeting stringent requirements for tenure.

“The development of programs that start the year in late August with a day-long retreat focusing on course design, and then finish the program in late spring with seminars and workshops, is a comprehensive transition program for new faculty,” Groccia said. “In between the participants take part in seminars and workshops on such topics as effective teaching strategies, diverse learning styles, student assessment, peer review and steps toward tenure and promotion.

Another key part of the program involves college circles, groups of four to six new faculty members from a variety of disciplines who discuss issues they have in common with one another. Two-year end evaluations, ad hoc seminars. In between, the faculty fellow associate director at the Biggio Center said the college circles and mentors help the participants overcome the sense of isolation that many new faculty face during their first few years in an academic department, when they have little time and few opportunities to form friendships outside the department.

“This program has been very successful in building a sense of community across disciplines,” Groccia said. “It helps the individual and it also helps the university build a more cohesive faculty.”

Faculty development, Groccia noted, is central to the mission of the Biggio Center. “Our mission is to support the professional development of faculty and instructional support staff with the ultimate goal of enhancing the quality of education for students.”

The first two classes of faculty in the New Scholars Program gave the program high marks in their evaluations, averaging 9.0 of a possible 10, for overall effectiveness.

Typical comments include: “I have always considered myself to be a good teacher, but I understand now that the personal perception is not always the reality. My students will benefit, I hope, from my new immersion into a new view of what it takes to teach and my expectations for their learning.”

Many faculty have also identified techniques to restructure and refine elements of my course and better understand how students learn.

“The faculty has convinced me that there are ‘forces’ on campus that value teaching. With this in mind, I have devoted much time and effort into developing and understanding the forces in my teaching and my teaching techniques.”

“I think it really changed the way I think, and it has helped to reinforce some of my approaches. I have become more comfortable incorporating some of the non-traditional methods into my classes, such as active learning, peer teaching. It has made me feel more comfortable about incorporating these methods versus traditional methods.”

Upcoming Events

ART EXHIBIT: Ceramics, prints and drawings by Susan O’Brien and Jon Swindler, Biggin Gallery, through Oct. 6

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SEMINAR: "Structuring the Messiness of Writing and Learning," noon-1:30 p.m., Foy 208; open to all faculty, staff and graduate students; bring your lunch

Tuesday, September 12

Sesquicentennial Lecture: “Auburn University Dosequagers,” Harold Franklin, the first African American student to attend AU, and Martin Olliff, author of Just Another Day on the Plains: The Desegregation of Auburn University, 4 p.m., Special Collections, Draughon Library

Wednesday, September 13

FIRSTERS MARKET: Fresh produce, farm goods from area growers, 3 p.m.-6 p.m., Ag Heritage Park, West Samford Avenue

Friday, September 15


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“Indicators for Auburn’s future are very bright and our record enrollment is an example of that,” Richardson said. “These numbers are evidence that there is still a great demand for an Auburn education. In fact, our demand for 2007 is already exceeding what we would have expected.”

A record 691 minority freshmen this fall represents a 20 percent increase over last year’s 574 minority freshmen. There are 483 minority freshmen this year, up from last year’s 398.

Auburn enrolled 2,472 new freshmen from in-state, a slight increase over the 2,468 in-state freshman of fall 2005 and 1,620 non-state freshmen compared to last fall’s 1,729.

AU’s freshman class has a 24.3 ACT score and a 3.56 high school grade-point average.

Magazine cites Auburn for use of latest technologies in teaching public relations

A national professional magazine, PR Week, recently recognized Auburn among a small group of universities that are leaders in the use of modern technology, tools and trends in teaching public relations.

“Reporting systems we use are dynamic and interactive,” said James Groccia, acting chair of the Department of Communication and Journalism at Auburn University. “The publishing systems we use are dynamic and interactive.”

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First eagle of the year was buzzing about the origins of the War Eagle logo. AU athletic director said the college’s first documented eagle "mascot," or "symbol" as he called it, was used at Auburn in the early 1900s. This golden eagle was used as a mascot in 1930. A local business leader bought the eagle for $10 and donated it to the A-Club that year.

Today, several eagles are housed at AU’s Southeastern Raptor Center.

AU sets new enrollment record

Auburn sets new enrollment record
Two honored for pioneering teaching tools

Thomas Walter Professors P.K. Raju and Chetan Sankar won international recognition this summer for their pioneering development of interactive technology for students in engineering and business.

Raju, from AU’s Samuel Ginn College of Engineering, and Sankar, from the College of Business, received a leadership recognition award from the International Network for Engineering Education and Research at the organization’s annual meeting in Puerto Rico. The two were cited for their work, both individually and collaboratively, toward integrating business and engineering issues into undergraduate curricula internationally.

Working across academic disciplines, Raju and Sankar established and direct Auburn’s interdisciplinary Laboratory for Innovative Technology and Engineering Education, which is widely known by its acronym, LITEE.

Auburn’s LITEE was among three organizations recognized by INEER this year from a pool of nominations worldwide. The international organization cited the Auburn center for developing innovative teaching and learning methodologies that impact engineering education worldwide.

Working closely with colleagues and industry leaders, the center develops course materials consisting of multimedia case studies that discuss “real-world” industry problems and provide scenarios in which students can participate in the decision-making process by playing the roles of engineers and managers involved in solving the problems.

Kai Chang named chair of department in Engineering

Kai Chang has been named chair of the Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering in Auburn’s Samuel Ginn College of Engineering.

He succeeds James Cross, who has returned to full-time teaching and research duties. “Dr. Cross has done an outstanding job as chair, particularly as it relates to the implementation of our new wireless engineering program,” said Engineering Dean Larry Benefield. “He has given Dr. Chang a firm foundation on which to build.”

An Auburn faculty member since 1986, Chang has won three Outstanding Faculty awards, holds an Alumni Professorship and has served a summer faculty fellowship with NASA’s Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville. He holds a doctorate from the University of Cincinnati.

Bird watching

Marianne Murphy, a raptor education biologist with AU’s Southeastern Raptor Center, shows visitors a great horned owl. Murphy and the bird recently participated in “Football, Fans and Feathers,” an educational, birds-in-flight raptor program that is being held each Friday before home football games.

Huffman wins lifetime achievement award

Dale Huffman, professor emeritus in the AU College of Agriculture, recently received the 2006 R.C. Pollock Award of the American Meat Science Association.

The Pollock Award honors a lifetime of achievement and service to AMSA and to the international meat and poultry industry.

In 1963, with a Ph.D. from the University of Florida, Huffman joined the AU faculty in the Department of Animal Sciences, where he taught undergraduate and graduate courses and directed a research program that led to many breakthroughs in the meat industry. He worked closely with various meat and livestock companies to develop practical applications for his research findings, with the work resulting in two patents and new beef and pork products, including McDonald’s McRib and McLean Deluxe sandwiches.

Huffman retired from Auburn in 1995 and founded a private consulting firm serving clients in the fast food and food safety industries until his second retirement in 2004.

In addition to the latest honor, Huffman has received the AMSA’s Signal Service and Distinguished Meat Processing awards, the Institute of Food Technologists’ Food Technology Industrial Achievement Award and the AU Ag Alumni Association’s Special Recognition Award.