AU ranked among best values

Kiplinger's magazine has ranked Auburn University among its best values in U.S. public colleges. In its November edition, the financial monthly ranked its top 100 schools according to their value for in-state and out-of-state students. Auburn was rated the 26th best value in the country for in-state students and the 31st best value for out-of-state students.

Among SEC-member institutions, only the universities of Georgia (fourth) and Florida (fifth) ranked above Auburn in value for in-state students. Georgia (sixth), Florida (12th) and Mississippi State (29th) ranked above Auburn in value for out-of-state students.

Kiplinger's evaluated all public colleges and universities in the nation and ranked them using criteria including the quality of the freshman class, admission rates, student-faculty ratios, percentage of faculty with terminal degrees, four- and six-year graduation rates and money spent on instruction and libraries.

The schools were then ranked according to in-state and out-of-state costs, factoring in student need, need met by financial aid and average total debt accumulation.

Kiplinger's top five values for in-state students were, in descending order: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, University of Virginia, College of William & Mary, University of Georgia and University of Florida.

The magazine's top five universities for out-of-state student value were the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Truman State University in Missouri, University of Texas at Austin, State University of New York at Binghamton and College of New Jersey.
State Senate inaction on nominees draws fire from University Senate

The University Senate, reacting to a new delay in the appointment of those new members of the Board of Trustees, passed by voice vote a resolution Tuesday calling upon the presiding officer of the Alabama Senate to resign from the Board. The resolution from the faculty organization carries no weight with the board or State Senate, but faculty senators said they wanted to express their displeasure with the State Senate for failing to confirm the nominations and with Sen. Lowell Barron, Alabama Senate president pro tem, for his role or lack of one in the process.

Barron, a state senator from northeast Alabama, is one of three board members whose term expired on Jan. 1 and are serving until their replacements are confirmed by the Alabama Senate. Barron, Rep. Jack Vermile of Tallasseo and Charles Glover will rotate off the board on Dec. 31, and the seats will be vacant until the State Senate approves appointments to those seats.

In August, the AU Trustee Selection Committee, headed by Gov. Bob Riley; nominated Charles Ball of Gadsden, Sarah Newton of Fayette and State Revenue Commissioner Dwight Carlisle for those positions. Ball would fill the seat now held by Barron.

Two earlier nominees were rejected by the Alabama Senate’s Confirmations Committee in the 2003 regular session. Last year, the nominees, both white men, did not add racial and gender diversity to the board. Among the new nominees are Ball is black, and Newton is female.

The new nominations were not included in the March 31 list of finalists prepared by the automatic system that selects finalists for non-student positions March 15. Barron denied opponents’ claims that he orchestrated the events that led to Senate inaction on the nominations.

The next opportunity for the Alabama Senate to consider the nominations is at the regular session of the Legislature in February.

In another matter related to the Board of Trustees, University Senate Chair John Mouton outlined the role of a special committee of faculty from Auburn and University-Montgomery. That committee will investigate recent allegations that some board members tried to change a student's grade at AUM in the mid-1990s.

The issue arose from statements attributed to former AU President William Muse, who recently resigned as chancellor at East Carolina University. Although the accusation involves an incident that occurred on another campus nearly a decade ago and was unsuccessful, Mouton said the accusation is too serious to ignore.

To serve on the special committee, Mouton appointed himself; AUM Faculty Chair Clara Young; Barbara Stroman of AU and Rosine Hall of AUM, faculty advisers to the Board of Trustees and faculty members Corner Bailey of the AUM College of Agriculture and Peter Zachar of AUM. The committee will function, at least initially, without a chairman.

Some University Senate members said the Senate chair went outside that body’s rules in appointing the committee, but Mouton said no rules or procedures exist for establishing a committee at Auburn University to investigate incidents that allegedly occurred in the Montgomery campus. Mouton said he established the committee after discussing the allegations with Earlon McWhorter, president pro tem of the Board of Trustees.

Association to present award for minority advancement

The Auburn Alumni Association seeks nominations of outstanding contributions toward the advancement and inclusion of minorities at Auburn University. The award honorees are Ball is black, and Newton is female.

The series opened Oct. 14 with “The Lan- guage We Cry In,” a film about the efforts of a Caro line Gullah family to trace their ancestry to Africa through music handed down through the genera
tion.

Upcoming films in the series are “The Shadow of Hate,” a Southern Poverty Law Center documentary about social intolerance, on Oct. 28, and “The Color of Fear,” an examination of racial discrimination, on Nov. 4.

All showings are at noon in Foy Ballroom. The presentations are “brown bag” events in which audience members may bring their lunches.

Film series at Foy examines diversity issues

The Auburn Film Society and the Department of Communication and Journalism will present “A Strong, Clear Vision,” the second feature in their Fall Diversity Film Festival, at noon Tuesday, in Foy Ballroom.

Tuesday’s documentary examines the influences on and impact of architect Minor Levy Lin, who designed the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington and the Civil Rights Memorial at the Southern Poverty Law Center.

The film series examines aspects of ethnic iden
tity, American history, racism, gender and immi
gration. The series opened Oct. 14 with “The Lan-

Spirit of Excellence awards to recognize top AU teachers

The Auburn Alumni Association is seeking nominations of AU faculty members for Undergraduate Teaching Excellence Awards. Nominations must be accompanied by a letter describing the person’s teaching performance, knowledge of subject, interest in students, influence on nominator’s personal educational experience, and influence within Auburn University to Liz Peel.

In the spirit of excellence, send a letter describing the person’s teaching performance, knowledge of subject, interest in students, influence on nominator’s personal educational experience, and influence within Auburn University to Liz Peel.

Each month, AU presents Spirit of Excellence awards to four staff members for outstanding performance. Winners for October are, from left, Katherine Jackson of Public Safety, Charlotte Wilson of Poulousance, Jerome Perry of Housing and Residence Life, and Vivian Miller of Business Outreach.

Program relieves pressure on new students to drop out in first term

A program designed to help freshmen adapt quickly to the academic pressures in three colleges at Auburn has passed a test of its own.

All of the approximately 150 freshmen in AU’s Learning Communities program for 2003 have suc
cessfully reached the final weeks of their first semes
ter, surviving the period when they are most vulner
able to dropping out, said Kathryn Jarvis, coordi
nator of the Student Success Center in the Division of Student Affairs.

“Data show that students are more likely to stay in school if they feel connected,” said Jarvis, citing studies by the Noell-Levitz higher education research service. “This program helps form that connection.”

The Learning Communities program assists freshmen who have declared majors in one of three AU colleges: Agriculture, Business or Liberal Arts.

With a goal of helping new students adjust to the college environment and boost retention, each col
gage accepts 50 students. They are divided into two groups of 25 and are enrolled in core classes their freshman year.

The College of Business extends the program into the sophomore year.

Changes in AU Research unit includes new name: Human Subjects Research

The Office of Human Subjects in the Office of the Vice President for Research has a new administra
tive structure and is now the Office of Human Subj ects Research.

The Office of Human Subjects Research and the Institutional Review Board are the research adminis trative units charged by federal law with the over
sight and compliance assurance of research activities involving the use of human subjects.

The Human Subjects Research office also pro
vides administrative support to the Institutional Review Board, which evaluates all projects involving human subjects for compliance with federal statutes, guidelines and regulations.

 Jarvis said the program is especially beneficial in colleges with large enrollments. “I think it is a good idea for bigger colleges, because it is so easy for freshmen to get lost,” she said.

Learning Communities is not a special-needs pro
gram, Jarvis said. “The selection process has nothing to do with SAT scores or GPA’s,” she said. “We are looking for students who are not different from the average student; they have just shown an interest in the program.”

Zach Rowe, a sophomore psychology major from Chicago, participated in Learning Communities last year, and now works in the Student Success Center, where he instructs a U1000 class.

“Learning Communities was an important factor in my decision to consider Auburn,” said Rowe. “And they helped me adjust to college life.”

The University Community was able to make a big campus into a group of 40 to 50 people,” Rowe said.

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Pulitzer-winning poet to present reading at AU

Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Carl Dennis will present a public reading at AU’s Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art this week as part of the Department of English Symposium Series. For more information, please contact JCSM info at 844-5844. Visit www.auburn.edu/museum for more information.

Outreach office launches new program to encourage, finance faculty projects

The Office of the Vice President for University Outreach will award $200,000 in grants to support outreach scholarship at Auburn faculty in 2003-04. I am pleased to introduce a new competitive grants program for Auburn faculty, and I invite their participation,” said David Wilson, vice president for University Outreach.

“The purpose of the grants is to encourage faculty initiative in addressing critical societal needs in our region to unite and develop its human and knowledge resources in the area.”

Auburn University President William Walker for the region to unite and develop its human and knowledge resources in the area. Auburn University and AU-Montgomery to discuss cooperative educational projects in connection with the startup of Hyundai Motors new plant in Montgomery. Chung, right, is shown meeting with AU President William Walker.

Upcoming Events

Tuesday, October 21
- Pharmacy Week Event: Body mass index screening, Foy Student Union, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Wednesday, October 22
- Pharmacy Week: HIV/AIDS Awareness display, Haley Concourse, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Thursday, October 23
- Auburn Film Society Symposium: Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Carl Dennis, 3 p.m., auditorium, Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art.

Friday, October 24
- Conference: “Disability Issues for AU Administrators, Faculty and Staff,” Sessions at 8:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Seating limited, call 844-5844 to reserve. Visit www.auburn.edu/ics/aac for more information.
- Pharmacy Week: Event: Health Fair, free screening includes blood glucose, body mass index, oesophoscopy. Frank Brown Recreation Center, Opleika Road, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Monday, October 27
- AU Report
- Library Book Club: Discussions of “Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal” by Eric Schlosser, 11:45 a.m. and 5 p.m., systems classroom, Draughon Library.
- Italian Film Festival: “The Garden of the Finzi Continis,” 4 p.m., Spidle 144. Sponsored by College of Humanities.

Tuesday, October 28

Panel selects consulting firm to assist planning for I-85 Corridor Initiative

Organizers of the I-85 Corridor Initiative have selected a consulting firm, OTF Group, of Watertown, Mass., to help the organization develop a regional strategy.

“The I-85 Corridor Initiative is a partnership among local government, private sector organizations and educational institutions committed to increasing the prosperity of communities along Interstate 85 from the Georgia state line to Montgomery.”

Leaders from East Alabama’s civic, business, education and political sectors organized the I-85 Corridor Initiative in July 2002, in response to a call from Auburn University President William Walker for the region to unite and develop its human and knowledge resources for the benefit of all local communities and the larger society.

The partnership, chaired by AU Vice President for Outreach David Wilson, includes leaders from organizations such as Auburn University, Industrial Development Authority of Montgomery, Macon, Lee and Chambers counties and representatives from higher education institutions as well as the private sector.

“We want to help the I-85 corridor committee develop a good regional strategy and help make sure that this becomes a good blueprint for action,” said Joe Balbec, OTF program manager.

The Massachusetts firm advises private sector, government and civic leaders on issues related to competitiveness and economic development. Clients of the OTF Group include regional and national leaders in North America, Europe, Africa and Latin America, and organizations such as the U.S. Council on Competitiveness and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Neurologist from Australia to present Goodwin Lecture in Vet Medicine

Neurologist Iain J. Clarke of Australia’s Monash Medical Centre will speak at AU’s College of Veterinary Medicine at noon Nov. 3 in Greve 203 as part of the college’s Joy Goodwin Lecture Series.

Clarke is the head of the neuroendocrinology section and director of biological resources of Prince Henry’s Institute of Medical Research, Monash Medical Centre, Australia.

He is a senior principal research fellow conducting fulltime research in neuroendocrinology.

Industrial Design team plays key role in Mobile Bay ecology center

The AU Department of Industrial Design and the Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve opened a new education and exhibit center on the east side of the Bay at Fairhope in late September.

The Weeks Bay initiative is an important component of the Weeks Bay Reserve Center at Fairhope prepared to update its exhibit area. Weeks Bay had some federal funding for the project, and Industrial Design faculty and students had experience with collaborative projects with partners that included NASA, Brother Inc., and Caruso Gaber.

In 2002 AU students drew up proposals for the exhibit area. “The students came up with four designs based on different themes: historic, contemporary, nautical and colonial,” said Britnell.

Officials from Weeks Bay chose a combination of the contemporary and the bayou themes using cypress in the traditional board-and-batten style. Over the next several months, the AU Industrial Design students worked on three phases of construction.

The project, which cost $139,000, was a challenge for the students, said Britnell. “They were a very demanding client, which was a good thing for us. They wanted it done right.”

For students training to enter the industry, the project was a great opportunity, Britnell added. “The planning stage came from students designed and built would be installed and used.”

“The scale of the project was a positive experience. We went from nothing but a concept to the solid exhibit,” said Industrial Design student Josh Logan.

“The college is very proud of the Industrial Design students and faculty that participated in this project. It is a positive contribution from the students to the state of Alabama,” said David Wilson, associate dean of the College of Architecture, Design and Construction.

“Auburn University and the Industrial Design students have done a wonderful job with this project,” said Weeks Bay Stewardship Coordinator Robert McCormack. “The students have impressed us all with their designs and the quality of their workmanship. We are pleased we had the opportunity to work together.”

The AU Report is published by the Office of Communications and is available for free at www.auburn.edu/aur. Applications received through Nov. 7 will be considered. For more information, see the AU Outreach Web site at www.auburn.edu/outreach/grants.pdf.
Building Science changes survey course to give students fast start

Many students in the Department of Building Science had a faster-than-normal start to fall semester this year through the department’s first full construction survey course.

In the past, students took a surveying course during the regular academic calendar year. In the new course, students cover material basic to their curriculum, but the traditional scheduling concept was not working, as well as faculty thought it should, said Department Head John Murphy.

“It is the classic use it or lose it principle,” Murphy said. “If our students have too much time in between later periods, then they don’t retain as much survey information. But with the intensive surveying camp for two weeks they live the fundamentals of surveying.”

Changing the format this year, a team of faculty and teaching assistants developed a more intensive program with condensed learning and practice time and more direct contact with faculty teaching the course.

“Building Science faculty members Paul Holley and Scott Fuller and teaching assistants Russ Doyle, Ross Campesi and Dustin Ranger designed and coordinated the survey camp to help the 92 students develop their surveying skills,” Holley said.

In the past, the department spread three classes over a year to accommodate the regular academic calendar. But having so many students at one time posed some technical difficulties in equipment procurement for the camp. Allen Precision Equipment, of Duluth, Ga., helped Building Science faculty acquire new TopCon surveying equipment for the survey parties to use.

“Our camp focuses almost entirely on construction-related surveying and layout. We also take the process past instrument-based survey into practical applications,” Holley said.

“These students learn skills to help them determine, contiguity, foundation locations, limits of excavation and layout,” he added.

Research unit adopts paperless system for document imaging, record keeping

The Office of Sponsored Programs in the Office of the Vice President for Research is moving toward a paperless record-keeping system with an expanded system for document imaging and storage.

The transition that will greatly improve the office’s record-keeping documentation for research, as well as customer service, said OSP Director Martha Taylor.

The implementation of STARRS document imaging system from California-based Hershey Business Systems is also in use in AU Human Resources and Admissions and at other universities and government offices.

“STARRS has features that make it a very attractive system for OSP records management,” Taylor said. “It will enable us to make public documents more accessible, including allowing real-time viewing of records.

Documents that in the past were photo-copied and distributed manually will be accessible on the Internet.

The OSP will begin using STARRS this semester. The office will offer user training for researchers and administrative departmental assistants during spring semester.

Agriculture conference to examine rural land use

Land-use issues in rural Alabama will be the focus of the AU College of Agriculture’s second annual Butler-Cunningham Conference on Agriculture and the Environment Nov. 3-4 at Embassy Suites in Montgomery.

The conference, “Trends and Opportunities for Rural Livelihood,” will outline the history and current status of rural land use, examine the new dynamics of rural property values and ownership, consider issues involving conflicts and political debates and discuss opportunities for productive and sustainable use of rural land in Alabama.

Griffin is keynote speaker at dedication

Brenda Griffin of the AU College of Veterinary Medicine was keynote speaker recently at the dedication of the Luke and Lily Lerner Spay and Neuter Clinic at Tuskegee University in Massachusetts.

She presented "Multiplying People instead of Pets: Community Solutions for Homeless Pets" on Sept. 29 to open the new clinic, which is named for deceased cats, Luke and Lily.

Tuscaloosa students will use the clinic for spaying and neutering cats and dogs that can be adopted from animal shelters.

Griffin is an assistant research professor in AU’s Scott-Kitchin Research Center. In July she was named the national companion animal veterinarian of the year by the American Veterinary Medical Association.

She established AU’s Operation Cat Nap, a program in which feral cats are trapped, neutered and returned to their home area.

On display at sport:

A display of historic items from the American Civil War, pictured at right, is one of many collections housed on the ground floor of Draughon Library. The Special Collections and Archives Department of AU Libraries maintains several permanent displays in addition to temporary displays that change every semester.

In biotechnology terms, the equivalent of a perfect mousetrap would be a sensor that could be posted at subway or carried by soldiers to detect potential deadly chemical or biological agents.

Scientists are not even close to developing such a sensor, however, and that’s likely to be the case for the foreseeable future, even though the federal government has doubled financing for this type of research.

“We’re still a long way from having a device or a trap that tells you what we need to know — let alone one that senses dangerous gases or biological substances and sets off an alarm,” said Jean Weese, an associate professor of nutrition and food science in the College of Human Sciences.

Weese, who is also a food and nutrition specialist with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, says the challenge has not deterred the search for a solution. One key problem, she said, is the intriguing tendency of many of these devices to overdo their job, sending false alarms when there is no danger.

The seeming impossibility of constructing a one-size-fits-all sensor that can detect a variety of threats is an additional problem, she said.

A sensor’s makeup depends on the type of sub- stance it is designed to detect. For example, projecting an ultraviolet laser beam will cause an approaching droplet of biological molecules to glow faintly, providing troops with a few minutes of warning on the battlefield.

However, the laser beam will not expose a cloud of toxic chemicals.

Weese’s experience with biodetectors involves work with other Auburn researchers on a biophotot that will detect potentially deadly pathogens such as E.coli O157:H7 in meat products.

The process involves a marriage of microchips and biology, Weese says.

Each of these chips would be equipped with antibodies so that when pathogens come in contact with them, the chip would be keyed. AU researchers say they hope to develop a chip that can be inserted into grocery store meats and, if pathogens are present, the chip would send an alarm warning signal during scanning at the check-out line.

The researchers have explored three approaches. One approach involves measuring weight, Weese says. When the antibody touches the pathogen, its weight increases and this, in turn, keys the sensor.

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The College of Human Sciences has launched a six-month Italian Film Festival to set the mood for its summer program in Ariccia, Italy. At 4 p.m. on 15 Mondays from Oct. 20 through March 22, the college’s Study Abroad program will present a mix of popular and classic motion pictures with Italian themes and settings in Spidle 144.

The first film, on Oct. 20, is “Roman Holiday,” a 1950s Hollywood view of romance in Rome that made Audrey Hepburn a star. “The Garden of the Finzi Continui” will air on Oct. 27. The classic film by director Vittorio de Sica, set during World War II, examines the disintegration of a peaceful society through totalitarianism and war. Future films in the series for fall semester include Roberto Rossellini’s neorealist classic “Open City,” set in World War II, on Nov. 3; Federico Fellini’s “Roma” on Nov. 10; Giuseppe Tornatore’s “Cinema Paradiso” on Nov. 17; and, on Dec. 1, Roberto Benigni’s Oscar-winning performance in “Life is Beautiful.”

Films for spring semester include “Three Coins in the Fountain,” “Tea with Mussolini,” “Cino, Professor,” Tornatore’s “Malena,” “The Bicycle Thief,” “Il Postino (The Postman),” “Two Women,” “A Room with a View” and “A Month by the Lake.”

The Provost’s Office has announced four new appointments to Alumni Professorships for 2003-04. The new Alumni Professors are Shabib Bhavnani of Mechanical Engineering, Dennis Ruth of Architecture and Samia Spencer of Foreign Languages and Literature.

Bhavnani, who holds a Ph.D. from Iowa State University, has been a member of the AU faculty since 1987. Gupta, with a Ph.D. from the University of Texas, joined the AU faculty in 1995. Ruth earned a master’s degree in architecture at Harvard University and has been a member of the AU faculty since 1989. Spencer, who holds a Ph.D. from the University of Illinois, has been a member of the AU faculty since 1972.

The four will serve four-year appointments. They join 22 other AU faculty members who hold the professorships funded by the Auburn Alumni Association.

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Garry Wills will speak at Exxon Conference Center at 4 p.m. on Tues., Oct. 29, as part of the Littleton-Franklin Lecture Series.

Wills, who won the Pulitzer Prize for “Lincoln at Gettysburg,” will speak on his new book “Negro President: Jefferson and the Slave Power.” The work examines slavery issues in the life and presidency of Thomas Jefferson.

Sanjeev Baskiyar, an assistant professor in the Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering, has received a gift of software valued at $1.4 million to aid research and teaching in “real-time” and embedded computing.

The WindRiver grant provides 40 sets of the VxWorks Developer’s Toolkit for five years. The VxWorks software, an in-kind gift from WindRiver Systems of Alameda, Calif., will help Baskiyar and others at AU in research involving the design of a specialized network of sensors.

When perfected, the sensors can be embedded in a person’s body and linked to external devices to help predict and avoid heart attacks. The tiny, embedded sensors could measure minute changes in the body that precede heart attacks and relay data to physicians or hospitals to enable them to provide assistance earlier, even in advance of a heart attack.

The VxWorks software will also be available to students in some graduate and outreach courses in Computer Science and Engineering.