Shining bright
The M. Miller Gorrie Center adds a bright touch to the Auburn landscape at dusk along Samford Avenue. Leaders in architecture and construction from around Alabama joined AU faculty, staff, students and administrators Friday in dedicating the new home for the Department of Building Science in the College of Architecture, Design and Construction.

AU restructures program, adds new emphasis to recruiting top students

Auburn is restructuring its student recruiting operations as part of an increased emphasis on recruiting more academic all-stars, starting with next fall’s freshman class.

The reorganization involves expanding AU’s enrollment management operations to identify and actively recruit high-achieving students in high school and earlier, using $2 million in new scholarship funds and several million dollars more in other scholarships to full advantage. Auburn’s total scholarship spending next year is projected to exceed $15.5 million.

President Ed Richardson described the enrollment management restructuring as the latest step in efforts to meet a goal established by the Board of Trustees to raise Auburn’s academic reputation from among the nation’s top 50 public institutions to the top tier of all educational institutions.

He noted that the $2 million in new funding for merit scholarships is part of the board’s commitment, as is the planned construction of new student housing that will group residents, especially freshmen, in learning communities around common academic interests.

Noting that Auburn already is widely recognized for academic quality, Richardson said the university is raising its standards in all areas, from admissions through graduation, to help its students, Alabama and the nation succeed in a global economy.

“Future generations are going to compete on knowledge and innovation,” he said. “Our students will meet the challenge of higher standards, and, when they graduate, they will have the knowledge and skills to help this state and nation thrive in a highly competitive global community.”

The new organizational structure for enrollment management followed several months of study by AU and consultants from the Noel-Levitz agency, the most prominent consulting agency in the enrollment management field.

AU’s new Office of Enrollment Management will be headed by a dean, who will report directly to the president. The dean of enrollment management will lead AU’s operations in recruiting, admissions, scholarship and financial aid and the newly renamed registrar’s office, which manages student records.
AU researcher solves key riddle in fight against diabetes, obesity

Research by Auburn nutrition scientist Suresh Mathews in AU’s College of Human Sciences has solved a medical riddle that could lead to better health and longer lives for millions of people suffering from or at risk of diabetes, obesity or both.

Mathews’ research with mice shows that the ability to turn off fetuin improves the body’s insulin sensitivity and creates the position of director of recruitment to work management and enrollment management. John Fletcher continues

The key piece of the puzzle involves fetuin, a protein that is found in blood and may play a significant role in the regulation of glucose disposal, insulin sensitivity, weight gain and fat accumulation in the body.

Although most laymen consider diabetes to be a single disease, doctors and researchers regard it as a group of diseases marked by high levels of blood glucose resulting from defects in the body’s insulin production, insulin action or both.

Research by Mathews and his colleagues targets type 2 diabetes, which usually occurs in adults and has a direct link to obesity. Type 2 diabetes accounts for up to 95 percent of diagnosed cases, and once usually occurs when cells do not properly use the body’s naturally produced insulin.

Noting that fetuin is secreted by the liver, Mathews, a faculty member in the Department of Nutrition and Food Science, said, “Once it enters the circulation system, it acts as a regulator of insulin action. Think of it as a timing-off mechanism. It is not good for insulin to be on all the time.”

Mathews’ research with mice shows that the ability to turn off fetuin improves the body’s insulin sensitivity, increases glucose utilization and improves obesity resistance.

Mathews said the Auburn research has led to significant discoveries concerning the process in animals. “The next step is to examine this phenomenon in humans.”

He added, “If we can find a mechanism to block this protein in humans, it could lead to development of a treatment for type 2 diabetes and obesity.”

Upcoming Events

R

ersachers in Auburn’s Samuel Ginn College of Engineering are working with colleagues in the AU Center for Governmental Services, technology giant IBM and Indiana University to develop an advanced electronic voting system that enables people with a variety of disabilities to easily cast their ballot in private on Election Day.

By providing voting methods to members of society who can’t read, can’t hear, or can’t see, we have broadened the voting community,” said Juan Gilbert, project director and head of the Human Centered Computing Lab. “We put in a lot of effort so that we could reach these individuals.”

All with a grant from the AU Outreach office, graduate students and faculty members in the Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering are developing the Prime Voting System, or Prime III, an innovative, multimodal electronic system for electronic voting.

Addressing the security issue, the team has devised ways to protect voter privacy by using randomly generated numbers as the voter views or hears the options. A printed ballot and a barcode system help ensure accuracy of vote counts and help protect against manipulation of the numbers.

“Numerous checks make it tougher to break in and change the data,” said Vince Cross, a graduate student involved in the software development part of the project.

A security evaluation will be performed jointly by researchers from AU and Indiana University, with the team going so far as to send the system to actual hackers for testing. Further evaluation will help the researchers determine if the system is physically tamper-proof.

The program is under an extensive evaluation during the 2006-07 academic year, with simultaneous studies taking place in Haley Center at AU and in Linwood in Barbour County. Instead of voting for political candidates, however, participants will choose between types of food.

The usability tests will use food as its candidates instead of actual people and parties, ensuring that the personal political views of those participating in the tests remain private.

If the system passes the tests, the Center for Governmental Services will work with the research team to seek its approval for use in elections.

“The system comes from the research institution not linked to a particular party or candidate, we think people will be more likely to embrace it,” Gilbert said. “It is not for sale and we are not looking for a profit. We are just hoping to offer a secure alternative that enables a larger base of voters to participate in the electoral process.”

For more information, visit the Prime III Web site at www.primevotingsystem.com.

AU researcher solves key riddle in fight against diabetes, obesity

Students recruiting continued from page 1

The new dean’s position will parallel that of the dean of student affairs, who administers programs for currently enrolled students.

Reporting to the new dean will be the executive director of recruitment and admissions, which was formerly assistant vice president for student affairs and enrollment management. John Fletcher continues in that position, which involves coordinating recruiting efforts of the colleges and schools and the work of the director of recruitment, a new position.

Nolev-Lelitzt consultants recommended that AU create the position of director of recruitment to implement recruiting initiatives that will follow what the firm identifies as the best practices in use by colleges and universities across the United States. The goal is to strengthen recruitment and increase AU’s regional competitiveness.

An internal search is under way to fill the positions of dean of enrollment management and director of recruitment. Richardson said he expects those positions to be filled by the next Board of Trustees meeting, Nov. 9.
Multi-faceted Nobel Prize-winner to speak at Auburn on Tuesday

A Nobel Prize-winning chemist who is also a poet, playwright, philosopher and Holocaust survivor will speak at Auburn on Tuesday as part of the Littleton-Franklin Lectures in Science and Humanities.

Roald Hoffmann will speak at 4 p.m. in the auditorium of the new Sciences Laboratory Center in the College of Sciences and Mathematics. In the public lecture, “One Culture,” Hoffmann will draw upon his life experiences as well as his philosophy of the interplay of science and the humanities.

Hoffman won the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1981 for developing theories that increased scientists’ understanding of chemical reactions. His work continues to influence scientists in studies of life processes and in developing new drugs.

Although Hoffman is widely known in the sciences for his work in chemistry, the Cornell University professor is also well-known in the humanities for works in poetry and theatre. Born in 1937 in Poland, he spent his early years in a Nazi labor camp. His mother escaped with him in 1943, but his father was killed by the Nazis.

Surviving members of the family eventually made it to the United States, and Roald, a gifted student, learned English as his sixth language. Educated at Columbia and Harvard, he joined the faculty at Cornell in 1965.

While becoming internationally recognized for his work in chemistry, Hoffman also began writing popularly received poetry, philosophical treatises and plays as a means of personal expression.

His published works include The Same and Not the Same, in which he examines the sociology, psychology, ethics and philosophy of chemistry. His plays include “Oxygen,” about the nature of discovery in science, and “Should’ve,” about the social responsibilities of scientists and artists.

Ruth wins career-achievement award from institute

D.K. Ruth of the AU College of Architecture, Design and Construction has received the 2006 Distinguished Design-Build Leadership Award in the faculty category from the Design-Build Institute of America.

Ruth, who is head of the college’s design-build graduate program, won for demonstrated leadership in the advancement of best design-build practices and of design-build as the project delivery method of choice.

Faculty nominees for the award are judged by the overall impact of their research and teaching careers. They are evaluated in terms of their achievements in furthering design-build as a delivery method as demonstrated in one or more of the following areas: development of a series of courses or a curriculum on design-build; research and development in the promotion of design-build and design-build best practices; involvement in the design-build industry; mentoring students in design-build; encouragement and active involvement in DBIA student chapters and vocal and written advocacy of design-build.

Ruth, an Alumni Professor and Wiatt Professor in Architecture in the college, has served as head of the School of Architecture and interim dean of the College of Architecture Design and Construction. He also was the co-founder of AU’s Rural Studio and a recipient of the Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award for humanitarian service.

He has held architectural license status in Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia and Tennessee as well as national certification.