Auburn orange sunset

Jeff Etheridge of AU Photographic Services captured this blazing orange sunset last week as a cold front moved through the area. Etheridge shot past Broun Hall, in the right corner, and over Jordan-Hare Stadium. The colors are as seen and were not digitally enhanced.

NSF awards $9 million grant to area partnership to improve math skills

The National Science Foundation has awarded a $9 million grant to the TEAM-Math partnership of Auburn University, Tuskegee University and 12 school districts. The grant to TEAM-Math (Transforming East Alabama Mathematics) supports the NSF’s Math and Science Partnership. The project’s goals include increasing the number of qualified teachers, developing mathematics teacher leadership, increasing administrators’ understanding of mathematics goals and priorities, redesigning the preparation of teachers and implementing other improvements to math education. The higher education partners include the AU colleges of Education and Sciences and Mathematics, along with the University’s Outreach Office; and Tuskegee University’s departments of Mathematics and Curriculum and Instruction.

“TEAM-Math and the Math and Science Partnership...” (See TEAM-Math, page 3)
Two appointed to endowed posts in wireless engineering program

Auburn University Engineering Dean Larry Benefield has announced the appointment of nationally prominent electronics researchers Vishwani Agrawal and Prathima Agrawal to named professorships in Auburn’s wireless engineering program.

Benefield named Prathima Agrawal, a leading researcher in Internet architecture and computer networking, as head of the wireless engineering program in the Samford Gin College of Engineering. She is also Auburn’s first Samuel Gin Distinguished Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering.

This engineering division named Vishwani Agrawal as the first Danaher Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering in the Gin College of Engineering.

The couple will start their new appointments later this month. Both will teach in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering.

Prathima Agrawal was formerly executive director of Telcordia Technologies’ Mobile Networking Research Department and assistant vice president of its Network Systems Research Laboratory in New Jersey.

Vishwani Agrawal previously taught in the Electrical and Computer Engineering Department at the University of Southern California.

Vishwani Agrawal was a member of the technical staff at Agere Systems and served in a similar capacity at Bell Labs, has also been a visiting professor at Rutgers’ Wireless Networking Laboratory.

The holder of 30 U.S. patents, she earned a doctorate in electrical and computer engineering at the University of Southern California.

Vishwani Agrawal was a member of the technical staff at Agere Systems and served in a similar capacity at Bell Labs, has also been a visiting professor at Rutgers University for more than a decade.

His research interests include VLSI circuits that are used in a wide variety of products ranging from cell phones to automobiles to home automation to literally thousands of other applications.

Vishwani Agrawal is a fellow of the Institute of Electrical and Computer Engineering.

The Agrawals are fellows of the Institute of Electrical and Computer Engineers.

Author to lecture on safety, protection

Author Tom Patire will present a public lecture, ‘Personal Protection: How to Avoid and Survive Robbery, Assault and Other Dangerous Situations,’’ at 2 p.m., Friday, in the University Bookstore in Haley Center.

Patire is a New York Times best-selling author, professor in Rutgers’ Wireless Networking Labortory, and has written numerous crime prevention books including “Personal Protection: How to Avoid and Survive Robbery, Assault, and Other Dangerous Situations.”

His research interests include VLSI circuits that are used in a wide variety of products ranging from cell phones to automobiles to home automation to literally thousands of other applications.

John Jarvis of the FBI’s Behavioral Science Unit is the invited lecturer, “Violent Crime and Behavioral Science Perspectives from the FBI,” at 2 p.m. Friday, in Foy 213.

Jarvis’ lecture is sponsored by the Criminology Club and Criminal Justice Program in the College of Liberal Arts.

A 12-year FBI veteran, Jarvis has a behavioral scientist in criminological studies for more than 20 years.

He is a training instructor in the Behavioral Science Unit at the FBI Academy, focusing on crime analysis, crime trend research and initiation and support of research by law enforcement.

Jarvis’ current criminological work involves examination of the reliability of national crime statistics, analyses of selected criminal crimes and measuring and exploring the behavior of computer criminals.

He holds a Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Virginia, and has written for publications such as The Journal of Homicide Studies, The Journal of Interpersonal Violence, and the Journal of Trauma, Violence and Abuse.

The Behavioral Science Unit is an instructor of the FBI’s Training Division at Quantico, Va.

Liu, who has internationally cited for his research in catfish genetics, serves as an adviser and international expert for Sichuan’s transgenic fish program and as an adjunct professor of molecular biology at Sichuan Agricultural University.

John Liu, a professor of fisheries and allied aquacultures in Auburn University’s College of Agriculture, has received the Sichuan Province of China’s Golden Summit Temple, which is more than 9,000 years old.

The province’s governor cited Liu’s “enthusiastic support to economic construction and social progress in the province.”

Liu’s award marks the second time in less than a month that a Chinese province has recognized an Auburn University College of Agriculture representative as its most outstanding foreign expert. In late September, Sichuan’s neighboring province, Hubei, presented its highest award to a foreign expert to Auburn College of Agriculture Associate Dean Richard Guthrie.

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Donor leaves estate to support AU’s new museum of fine art

Over the course of her short life, Susan Phillips had so much taken away from her prematurely. She lost her mother to a cerebral aneurysm just two days before Christmas of 1985. She then lost her son, Matthew Albert Tucker, to an aneurysm in 1994. He was only 10 years old.

Yet, despite enduring so much tragic loss, Susan Phillips found the strength to give. She gave to friends. She gave to charities. And she gave to Auburn University.

During her life, Phillips, who died July 5, at age 80, gave more than $300,000 personally to Auburn. She also gave art worth $1 million through the Anne Miller Phillips Foundation, which she established to honor her mother.

In addition, she gave Auburn 19 John James Audubon prints, now on permanent display at the Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art. The prints are renderings of birds, wildlife and plant life — are valued at more than $1 million. The prints include birds and other items in the museum’s Louise Hauss Phillips Collection.

Phillips also remembered Auburn in her will, naming the university as the primary beneficiary of her estate. The actual value of the large estate has yet to be determined.

During her lifetime, Susan gave generously to Auburn, said her friend, Dr. Patricia William Alford Woldring. “A decade ago, she provided one of the initial gifts, her grandparents’ collection of Audubon prints, and that really started us on the path to having a world-class art museum. All of us connected with Auburn have been touched by her gift. She graciously reflects her fondness for Auburn and are committed to making the best and most appropriate use of her bequest,” Phillips’ love for art was evident to anyone who spent time around her. And it was her love for art — coupled with her love for Auburn — that made her a pivotal player in the push to bring an art museum to Auburn.

“She was passionate about the art museum,” said Robert Pindzola, interim dean of the College of Liberal Arts. “It was really one of the main goals of her life to see the art museum become one of Auburn’s greatest monuments. Early on, she really was the critical impetus in pushing us to achieve what the museum is today.

Phillips was introduced to art through her grandparents and their collection, which included the Audubon prints, but became a more educated enthusiast when she began collecting her own pieces.

“I recall very fondly one of the building committee meetings when the museum was in the early architectural sketch phases,” said Pindzola. “She brought one of the metal plates that Audubon actually made one of his prints from. She showed us how Audubon would have made one of his prints,” Pindzola recalled. “She also brought Audubon prints that were paintings from her collection and talked about the artists’ lines and use of light. It was a very passionate presentation and when I think about what she did for Auburn and her love for art, I remember that meeting.”

Admissions adopts paperless record system

A new imaging system, adopted in September in Admission Records; and in Student Account Services, is Web-based software that allows student records to be incorporated into the imaging system, providing live and organized access to student records.

“The average student has five to eight pieces of student record information from different departments, such as student affairs, admissions, directory services, human resources, and financial aid management coordinator. “Then you add the drop-add forms, name change forms and financial aid forms (which can be over 20 pages long); we fill 15 forms. This is a real burden with the administration process and record protection, but it will also give the department even faster turnaround.

“The process more than 12,000 applications per year; with the imaging system, we can accept a student that applies in the morning by that same afternoon,” Allen said. Forms are processed faster, turnaround can be cut weeks for prospective students to find out whether they were accepted.

Upcoming Events

Tuesday, November 4

Wednesday, November 5
• Presidential Symposium: “War, Peace and Justice in the Middle East and Asia,” S. Ganguly Rabindranath Tagore, director of India Studies Program, Indiana University, and Husain Haqqani, visiting scholar, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 4 p.m. Brown 239.

Friday, November 7
• Meeting: Board of Trustees, 1 p.m., Dixon Conference Center
• Committee sessions start at 8:30 a.m.
• Public Lecture: “Violent Crime and Behavioral Science: Perspectives from the FBI,” John Jarvis, FBI Behavioral Science Unit, 2 p.m., Foy 213.
• Public Lecture and Book Signing: Author Tom Patte discusses personal safety and protection against crime, 3 p.m.-5:30 p.m., AU Bookstore.

Sunday, November 9
• Choral Concert: AU Concert Choir and the Women’s and Men’s Chorus, 2:30 p.m., Lakeview Baptist Church.

Monday, November 10
• Next AU Report.
• Italian Film Festival: Federico Fellini’s “Roma,” 4 p.m., Spidle 114.

Tuesday, November 11
• Meeting: University Council, 10 a.m., Broun 239.
• Health Insurance: Blue Cross-Blue Shield representative available for consultation, 10 a.m.-11:45 a.m., Ingram 212. No appointment needed.

Wednesday, November 12
• AU Theatre Premiere: “Freekepal,” Jan Dempsey Center, 222 E. Drake Drive, 7:30 p.m. Also Nov. 13-15 and Nov. 19-21 and 2 p.m. Nov. 16. Call 844-4154 for ticket information.

New course will examine cultures of Middle East

A new course in the College of Liberal Arts in spring semester will offer Auburn University students a look at social structures and cultures of the Middle East.

“The countries of the Middle East are very diverse in their cultures, history and social structures, yet most people in this country see the region only in terms of stereotypes,” said Sociology Professor Paul Starr, who developed the course, SOCY4970 /7970 for seniors and graduate students.

While radical Islamists have reinforced Western stereotypes of Arab societies as violent and cultural- ly rigid, those groups do not represent the broader culture of the region or even of Islam, said Starr. “There are groups and individuals who are very hostile to the West, but their strength varies from country to country and situation to situation. They are not monolithic.”

Starr, who has taught in Lebanon, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, said the course will help students develop a broader perspective on a part of the world that affects their lives daily but which remains largely a mystery to most Americans.

While the course will not gloss over issues of violence and culture-conflict, Starr said those matters will be presented in a broader context than students get through the mainstream media.” Violence is usually confined to a few hot spots, but that is mostly what we see on Western media,” he said. “There is a lot more stability in the region than Americans realize. The violence is not as widespread as it seems.”

The course is designed for students majoring in the social sciences but it could be an option for students in many other fields, he noted.

Students in the course will explore different cultures of the eastern Mediterranean, Arabian Peninsula and adjacent areas in terms of their historical social structures, identities, conflicts and customs.

Areas the course will explore include political and religious conflicts, the class will take a sociological approach to those issues, Starr said. He noted that a course in the Department of Political Science examines political issues of the Middle East in more detail and those departments provide perspectives on aspects of life in the region.

The course is designed, he said, by looking beyond the political debates to examine the texture of life in the Middle East. Students will gain an understanding of how and why certain beliefs help students gain a better understanding of the complexities and richness of the region’s cultures.

“The goal is to make students think about things not necessarily to change people’s opinions,” he said.

Auburn students to meet Friday, consider budget

The Auburn University Board of Trustees will meet at 1 p.m. Friday at Dixon Conference Center. The meeting will follow a series of committee sessions that begin at 8:30 a.m. with a session of the Budget Committee.

The board is scheduled to consider an AU operating budget for the 2004-05 fiscal year, which began on Oct. 1.

State appropriations account for approximately 40 percent of AU’s annual budget. When the Alabama Legislature delayed passage of the state education budget until late September, the AU Board voted to carry over Auburn’s 2002-03 budget to enable the university Budget Committee time to develop a financial plan for the current year.

Fall choral concert set for Sunday

The Department of Music in Auburn University’s College of Liberal Arts will present its annual free, fall concert of choral music Sunday, at 2:30 p.m. at Lakeview Baptist Church.

The AU Concert Choir, and the Women’s and Men’s Chorus will be scheduled to perform. William C. Powell conducts the choruses, and Thomas R. Smith directs the Concert Choir.
AU college honors Alabama’s first, oldest female architect

The Auburn University College of Architecture, Design and Construction will present its lifetime achievement award on Thursday to Helen Sellers Davis of Birmingham, the first woman registered as an architect in Alabama.

Davis will receive the award during the college’s annual awards banquet. Originally from Anniston, Davis graduated from Auburn in 1935, got her registration from the Alabama Board of Architects in 1936 and has been practicing her profession ever since.

In his 1935 letter of recommendation to the architects’ registration board, Dean Frederic Biggin praised Davis, noting that she won the first Alabama Chapter Design Prize.

At age 91, she can point to projects under way or completed in Anniston, Birmingham, Decatur, Fayette, Guntersville, Jasper, Point Clear and Talladega and in Georgia, North Carolina and Tennessee.

The State Board of Architects identifies Davis as the longest practicing woman architect in the nation.

The daughter of a physician, Davis says she knew from an early age that she wanted to be an architect. She recalled that as a child, she was intensely drawn to the mechanics of homebuilding.

After attending Ward Belmont, a women’s college in Tennessee, for two years, she transferred to Auburn, where her brother had been a student. She met her husband, Charles Davis, who was an architect in Tennessee, for two years, she transferred to the mechanics of homebuilding.

“We were in the middle of the Depression and were happy to have jobs when so many of our peers did not,” Davis continues to learn about new processes and methodologies, and a few years ago she took a course in computer-aided design.

Age is not a deterrent to the job, she says. “Sometimes you think that a person gets too old to dream, but you know what? I am still a dreamer.”

President gets new, expanded Web site

AU President William Wilson now has a new home in cyberspace. The Office of Communications and Marketing recently developed and launched the president’s new Web site at www.auburn.edu/president.

The site includes transcripts of major addresses delivered by Walker since he became AU’s president in 2001 and a pictorial of his predecessors.

School plans bus trip to Birmingham exhibition

School of Architecture faculty and staff have organized a bus trip on Oct. 13 to the Birmingham Museum of Art to visit the exhibit “Samuel Mockbee and the Rural Studio: Community Architecture.”

The cost is $25 per person and includes lunch at the Museum’s Terrace Café. The bus will leave at 6:30 a.m. from the intramural fields on Biggio Drive.

The Rural Studio exhibit opened in October and will be on view at the Birmingham museum through Jan. 4. It is the first comprehensive traveling exhibition to survey the work of the late Auburn architecture professor and his influence on the AU’s nationally prominent Rural Studio since his death on Dec. 30, 2001.

“The Rural Studio (Mockbee and the Rural Studio) includes three structures that viewers may enter and thus experience for themselves the impact of Mockbee’s architectural influence.

Also featured in the exhibition are a selection of his personal notebooks, a dozen models, and more than 100 photographs of completed projects.

For information on reserving a space on the bus tour, contact Melissa Denney at 844-5426.

Association presents award to Pat Wingfield

Pat Forbes Wingfield, coordinator of special events for the Office of the President at Auburn University, is the 2003 recipient of the Auburn Alumni Association’s Pam Sheffield Award.

She received the award during the pre-game ceremonies at Auburn’s homecoming football game against Louisiana-Monroe on Saturday.

The Auburn Alumni Association established the award in honor of Auburn class of 1965 alumna Pamela Wells Sheffield in 1991 to recognize Auburn women who embody its name-sake’s service and commitment to the university.

Wingfield is a familiar figure at campus events and other occasions in her role as the university’s official hostess. Wingfield came to Auburn in 1979 and joined the staff of the president’s office in 1997 as coordinator of special events.

She is a 1966 graduate of Sanford High School and did graduate work at Auburn in home economics education in 1966-67 and in special education in 1968-69.

Open enrollment period for benefits includes expanded dental insurance

During November, Auburn faculty and staff may sign up through the Office of Payroll and Employee Benefits for an expanded dental plan, add cancer insurance, sign up for tax-saving flexible spending accounts, enroll or make changes in their health insurance.

Those are among several plans which employees can add on or adjust during AU’s annual open enrollment period for employee benefit plans each November. Changes that faculty and staff make to those plans this month will be effective on Jan. 1, said Ronnie Herring, director of payroll and employee benefits.

The dental insurance option will expand beyond the current coverage for regular exams and related services to include fillings and teeth extractions and additional basic and mid-range restorative and supplemental services. A mailing to AU employees on Oct. 14 provided details on those options.

Herring said the university’s Insurance and Benefits Committee examined plans to cover major expenses such as braces and dentures and found that they were too expensive for most employees.

The mid-range plan adopted by the university will cost participating employees a 12-month rate of $16 per month for individual coverage and $49 a month for families. Under the basic plan, employees pay $19.50 and $50, respectively, for individual and family plans.

Approximately 1,100 faculty and staff maintain flexible spending accounts through Payroll and Employee Benefits.

PRCA elects Tullier president

Michael J. Tullier of Auburn University’s Detection and Food Safety Center, has been elected president of the Public Relations Council of Alabama.

A founding officer of the local chapter, Tullier also chaired the recent conference of the PRCA and Southern Public Relations Federation in Auburn. The PRCA also named Pete Fypinsky of AU Student Affairs as a vice president. The organization has 500 members in six Alabama chapters.
Theatre to premiere rock opera
‘Freakspiel!’ parody of trash TV

Auburn University Theatre will present the world premiere of the cabaret-style musical “Freakspiel! A Demolished Rock Opera” next week.

Performances of “Freakspiel!” are scheduled for 7:30 p.m. on Nov. 12-15 and Nov. 19-21, and 2 p.m. Nov. 16 at the City of Auburn’s Jan Dempsey Art Center, 222 E. Drake Avenue. The theatrical company is using the city facility during renovation of Vet Theatre on campus.

Worth Gardner, head of the Department of Theatre, describes the play as “edgy, experimental theatre” that some viewers may consider shocking and others will see as a satire on the extremes of popular culture.

“Freakspiel!” is a new and different kind of theatre from what most of the audience is used to experiencing,” said Gardner, who is also the play’s director and musical composer.

“We are warning people not to come if they are easily shocked or looking for soothing entertainment. And not to bring young children,” said Gard-ner. “This is anything but soothing; it is supposed to make people think.”

A parody of the mass media, the show mixes elements of 19th century “Punch and Judy” puppet shows, early 20th century vaudeville and cabaret and early 21st century reality television and confrontational talk shows. The result, Gardner said, will be a unique experience that will shock and delight others.

“The audience won’t know what to expect and we don’t know what to expect from them,” he said. “This has never been done before. It is truly a world premiere.”

Australian Bob Parsons introduced his specialty, puppets, into the production after discussing American cultural icons like the “Jerry Springer” show and “Ripley’s Believe It or Not” and how they are modern freak shows,” Gardner recalled. “I suggested to Bob Parsons that he ought to do something with that theme, and he immediately jumped at the idea.”

Parsons’ introduction of his specialty, puppets, into the play, bringing “Punch and Judy”/mayhem into a “Being John Malkovich” world of skewed reality. Working from skits developed by Parsons and Banks, Gardner created original music that he says will appeal to today’s youth rather than lovers of traditional musicals. “It is not ‘Show Boat.’ It is very MTV, very fast paced with an in-your-face sound that a lot of today’s kids will recognize. Some of it is cutting-edge Rave.”

The show will feature 18 actors in fast-paced skits emceed by the fictional Nick Dragon. Skits are built around an albino Venus de Milo who smokes with her toes, the “World’s Smallest Dog Boy” “Giantess Tess” and other “freaks” recast for audiences accustomed to reality television shows.

One theme of the play, Gardner said, is that the audiences in reality and trash talk shows are just as weird as the characters. “‘Freakspiel’ says we are all freaks in one way or another, and that is what makes human beings so thrilling to observe.”

Although the show will be edgier than typical theatre fare in East Alabama, Gardner said the production will be no more outlandish than the television shows it parodies. “In context, this is a true representation of an art form,” he said. “It is a phenomenally creative project.”

The AU Theatre box office is open from noon-5:30 p.m. Monday-Friday. Admission is $18 per person for faculty and staff, $15 for students and $20 for others. For tickets, call 844-4154.