A four-year study launched last year is helping AU identify areas to emphasize in future changes to its academic program.

Results from the first year’s use of the Collegiate Learning Assessment confirm that many high school graduates are entering Auburn with inadequate skills in analytical reasoning and written communication. During discussion of the study’s initial results at the AU Board of Trustees session on Nov. 10, administrators and trustees said they will look to Auburn faculty to find ways to help students further improve their performance in those areas.

Auburn is among the first universities in the South — and the first in Alabama — to use the CLA, which evaluates the skills of freshmen in certain areas critical to their education and evaluates the university’s success in helping students improve those skills by the time they are seniors.

In testing freshmen and seniors, the CLA provides a value-added assessment of student skills in critical thinking, analytical reasoning and written communication.

Assessing a sample of 450 randomly selected freshmen and seniors in 2005-06, the CLA revealed that many freshmen did not display the writing proficiency predicted by their ACT/SAT scores. Drew Clark, director of the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, said the four-year study will provide a more complete picture, but the initial results will provide an early alert so faculty members can develop strategies to help students.

Although the study showed significantly better results for seniors, indicating that the current academic program is having a positive effect, Trustee Jack Miller of Mobile, chair of the board’s Academic Affairs Committee, said much more needs to be done. Stressing that writing skills are essential for career
Writing assessment continued from page 1

success, Miller said, “We’ve got to pick up the pace on teaching them how to write.”

Trustee Sarah Newton of Fayette, an elementary school principal, pointed out that many students in Alabama enter college at a disadvantage because they graduate from high school with insufficient training in grammar and written communication. While AU can help students improve their writing proficiency, Newton said public schools also need to ensure that students have those skills before they graduate.

Miller suggested that Auburn test all new stude- nts for writing proficiency and retest them as ne- cessary. He also suggested that AU create a program for students whose writing skills are lacking.

Clark, himself an English professor, said the CLA is a boon for faculty because it helps identify areas where students in 1978 but who had died in 1980, served as dean of women and dean of student life. Foy retired as dean of students in 1978 but remained active on behalf of student orga- nizations until recent years. Recently, the uni- versity and community helped Foy celebrate his 90th birthday.

Legend of the AU symbol

AU’s core curriculum includes two courses in writing requirements across the curriculum. He said the CLA is an important first step in identifying and addressing the academic needs of undergraduates, adding that those needs could extend beyond writing skills into various aspects of the core curriculum. Richardson added that many issues emerge when a university updates its core curriculum. For instance, Trustee Paul Spina of Hoover expressed concern that many young people lack a clear understanding of their role as citizens in a democracy. Richardson noted that other frequently cited issues include geography and history.

Auburn’s core curriculum amounts to one-third of total credit hours toward graduation in most majors. The basic elements have been in place since 1992, when AU passed most rigorous requirements, following two decades in which students had a wide range of options. Revised further during the switch from quarters to semesters in 2000, the core curriculum includes multiple courses in written composition, literature, philosophy, fine arts, history, mathematics, cultural studies and social sciences. A 14-member faculty committee headed by Linda Glaze, who is an associate professor and associate provost for undergraduate studies, monitors the effectiveness of the core curriculum and periodically recommends changes. The committee reports its findings to the University Senate, which advises the provost and president on curriculum changes.

Upcoming Events

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<th>Monday, November 20</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Thanksgiving Holiday</strong> No classes this week; offices open Monday-Tuesday</td>
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<td>Monday, December 4</td>
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<td><strong>First AU Report after Thanksgiving</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Thursday, December 7</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Sesquicentennial Lecture</strong> “The President’s Home and Auburn’s First Ladies,” AU First Lady Nell Richardson, 2 p.m., Special Collections and Archives, Draughon Library</td>
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<td><strong>Monday, December 11</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Final AU Report of fall semester</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Friday, December 15</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Graduation 2 p.m., Coliseum</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Friday, December 22</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Holidays AU offices closed</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Wednesday, January 3</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Spring Semester Preparation AU offices reopen</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Monday, January 8</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Spring Semester Classes start</strong></td>
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Architecture professors, students honored for modular house design

Auburn School of Architecture professors David Hinson and Stacy Norman and the students recently won the 2006 Honor Award of the Alabama Council of the American Institute of Architects for their work on the Designhabitat 2 house in Greensboro.

The Designhabitat program is a partnership between the School of Architecture and the Alabama Association of Habitat Affiliates. For the award-winning project, the AU archi- tecture group and the modular housing industry formed a partnership to search for ways Habitat could build more homes with fewer volunteer re- sources to meet the housing demand along the Gulf Coast following the hurricanes of 2005.

The AU students focused on energy efficiency in their design for the 1,180-square-foot house. They used alternative siding and roofing materials that were both durable and energy efficient, and they placed the house to minimize the amount of heat generated from direct sunlight.

Foundation, Association

AU awarded Hudson an honorary doctorate in 1992 in recognition of his career achievements and service to the university.

Jordan is the son of AU’s legendary football coach from the 1950s-70s. An environmental scientist for the Tennessee Valley Authority, he majored in zoology and entomology at Auburn. He is a life member of the Auburn Alumni As- sociation and has served on the organization’s board since 2001, most recently as vice president.

Jordan also serves on the Science and Mathematics Advisory Council and AU’s National Campaign Committee.

Auburn University website

Images from AU’s first 150 years

AU Report November 20, 2006

AU Report November 20, 2006
Series to conclude with lecture on AU President’s Home

Auburn’s Sesquicentennial Lecture Series will conclude on Dec. 7 with a presentation by AU First Lady Nell Campbell Richardson on “The President’s Home and Auburn’s First Ladies.”

She will speak at 2 p.m. in the Special Collections and Archives Department of Draughon Library. A reception will follow at the President’s Home, and a shuttle will be available to transport guests from the library.

In addition to comments on the nine families who have lived in the President’s Home since President Luther Duncan had the house built in 1939, the current first lady will talk about the setting of the house and its structure, garden and furnishings. She will also discuss the first ladies who lived there, noting their contributions to the town and university community.

Nell Richardson is honorary chair of AU’s Sesquicentennial Committee. A native of Selma, she earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Auburn. She taught English and French in Alabama schools before retiring in 2004.

Llanes named head of EFLT Department

Jose Llanes has been named head of the Department of Educational Leadership Foundations and Technology in Auburn’s College of Education. He succeeds William Spencer who had served as department head since 2001 and this fall returned to full-time teaching and research. “Dr. Spencer’s leadership has proved to be a tremendous asset to our college,” said Dean Frances K. Kochan.

An authority on systems theory in learning organizations, Llanes joins AU from the University of Texas System, where he was chair of the Educational Leadership Department at UT’s Pan American campus in Edinburg, Texas.

Owsley named leader of Extension System program

Frank Owsley, an Alabama Cooperative Extension System animal scientist and an associate professor of animal sciences in the AU College of Agriculture, has been appointed ACES program leader for environmental stewardship and animal agriculture.

“Two of the biggest things we’ve lacked until now are research and extension efforts more closely tailored to the needs of our livestock efforts and stronger dialogue with our federal and state regulatory agencies,” Owsley said.

In his new role, Owsley will integrate research and extension activities involving environmental stewardship and animal agriculture in a multi-disciplinary program. The work will also involve strengthening the link between Auburn’s environmental stewardship programs and livestock producers across the state.

Owsley also will serve as a liaison with federal and state regulatory agencies, representing livestock producers, AU researchers and ACES faculty on issues related to environmental stewardship and animal science. In addition to his work in Alabama, Owsley will represent the ACES environmental stewardship program throughout the region and nation. He also will work with researchers and farmers to address emerging issues in the field.