



Spirit of Excellence

Auburn University Human Resources has announced Spirit of Excellence winners for October, recognizing four staff members for outstanding service to the university. October's recipients were, from left, Jessica Holley of International Education, Scott Tisdale of Information System Services, Ellen McManus of the College of Human Sciences and, not pictured, Larry Pitts of Agricultural Land and Resource Management.

Melissa Humble, Photographic Services

Planning under way to replace Sewell Hall, old OIT buildings

Sewell Hall, which served for decades as Auburn's athletic dorm, could give way to a new student residence hall in the style of the Village residence complex by the fall of 2012, following action Feb. 4 by the Auburn University Board of Trustees.

The board, meeting at Auburn Montgomery, gave fast-track status to planning for a new residence hall on the Sewell Hall site and a parking facility on the opposite corner of Donahue Drive and Samford Avenue, on a site now occupied by the Office of Information Technology, which is moving to a new, larger facility north of Lem Morrison Drive.

The expedited status will enable university planners to move forward rapidly with the projects, combining several planning steps and potentially making the buildings available for use at least a year sooner than otherwise.

The project is limited at present to the schematic design phase; after that, the board will review the project's budget, funding plan and site plan before giving the go-ahead or putting a hold on construction.

The architectural firm of Goodwyn, Mills, Cawood of Birmingham was hired as design consults, and Harbert International of Birmingham will serve as construction managers. Both had been selected following screenings for an initial plan to renovate Sewell.

The proposed replacement of Sewell Hall followed a previous meeting at which the board had asked campus planners to rethink the renovation project in order to help meet the demand for more modern student housing, as well as more accommodations on campus. The addition of a new parking facility, which includes a bus transfer station, is part of an ongoing program to upgrade parking facilities and ease student access to the core of campus via Tiger Transit.

Sewell Hall, built in 1962, served for about three decades as Auburn's athletic dorm, until the NCAA ended the use of athletic dorms by its member schools in the 1990s. Since then, Sewell Hall residents have included non-athletes, and athletes have been mixed with non-athletes in other campus housing. The proposed facility would more than double the current building's capacity to 300 or 400 residents.

—Roy Summerford

Auburn senior receives coveted scholarship for Cambridge study

Auburn senior David Harris has been awarded a prestigious Gates Cambridge scholarship, a full-cost award for full-time graduate study and research at the University of Cambridge in England.

Harris, who will graduate in May, holds a 3.97 grade point average and is a senior in chemical engineering. He interviewed for the scholarship in New York last weekend and was one of 30 students out of 90 finalists chosen for the scholarship. He plans to pursue a master's degree in advanced chemical engineering at Cambridge.

"The chance to study at Cambridge is really a dream come true," said Harris. "Studying abroad at one of the oldest and most famous universities in the world will be an incredibly rewarding experience. I was thrilled to have the opportunity to interview for the scholarship last week in New York, and I was pleasantly surprised to hear the good news so quickly."

The scholarship program is funded by Bill and Melinda Gates through the Gates Cambridge Trust. Eighty to 100 students throughout the world receive the scholarships each year since the program began in 2000.

"David Harris is, without question, one of the best of the best, an absolute role model for a fine, well-rounded young man, one who, even at his young age, is vitally aware of who he is, where he comes from and where he would like to go, both personally and professionally," said Auburn Honors College Director Jim Hansen.

Gates Cambridge Scholarships are awarded on the basis of four criteria: intellectual ability; leadership capacity; a desire to use their knowledge to contribute to society throughout the world by providing service to their communities and applying their talents and knowledge to improve the lives of others; and demonstrating a good fit between the applicant's abilities and aspirations to the graduate program.

—Margaret Ann Killam

Campus Calendar

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 11

FILM AND DISCUSSION "Citizen Kane," 4 p.m., Multicultural Center Reading Room, Student Center 1330; part of the Watch and Learn Series

GUEST ARTIST RECITAL Nicole Agostino, piano, 7:30 p.m., Goodwin Recital Hall

CONCERT Auburn Symphonic Band and Auburn Jazz Band, Auburn High School Performing Arts Center

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 15

INDEPENDENT FILM "Abel Raises Cain," 6 p.m., Jule Collins Smith Museum, part of the Southern Circuit Tour of Independent Filmmakers

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 16

CHAMBER MUSIC St. Lawrence String Quartet, 7:30 p.m., Goodwin Music Hall

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 17

UNIVERSITY THEATRE "The Light in the Plaza," 7:30 p.m., Telfair Peet Theatre; also Feb. 18-19 and Feb. 23-26 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, Feb. 20 at 2:30 p.m.

JAZZ CONCERT Auburn Music Faculty, 7:30 p.m., Goodwin Recital Hall

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 18

CONCERT Auburn Concert Band and Auburn Jazz Band, 7:30 p.m., Auburn High School Performing Arts Center

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 24

GUEST ARTIST RECITAL Travis Bennett, horn, 7:30 p.m., Goodwin Recital Hall

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 25

NEXT Auburn Report

Auburn ranks fifth among public institutions in U.S. for National Merit Scholars

A new national report ranks Auburn University fifth out of 126 public institutions in the enrollment of National Merit Scholars. The university is third in the Southeastern Conference and 16th overall out of 343 public and private institutions where these scholars are enrolled.

The numbers come from the just-released 2009-10 National Merit Scholarship Corporation Annual Report.

Auburn enrolled 134 new scholars this summer and fall, which more than doubles last year's number of 64. Auburn moved up from fourth in the SEC and 34th overall last year.

"This achievement reflects an ongoing commitment by Auburn University to enroll some of the most outstanding students our state and nation have to offer," said Velda Rooker, director of university scholarships in Auburn's Office of Enrollment Services. "We are pleased that so many accomplished students recognize this commitment, along with the quality of Auburn's faculty and nationally ranked programs, and have chosen to become part of the Auburn family."

Auburn's 134 National Merit Scholars are from 20 states and are enrolled in nine of Auburn's 10 undergraduate colleges and schools.

The report also provides rankings for National Achievement Scholars numbers. Auburn is ranked number two among 77 public institutions that enroll these scholars, and is ranked number three in the SEC, and 13th overall of 189 institutions.

— Carol Nelson



PROUD AMERICAN

College of Liberal Arts Dean Anna Gramberg waves the American flag at a Feb. 1 ceremony at the federal courthouse in Montgomery at which she officially became an American citizen. A native of Germany, Gramberg joined the college's Foreign Languages and Literatures faculty in 1993 with a Ph.D. from Michigan State University and has served as dean since 2005. She now has dual citizenship in Germany and the United States. "I did not make a grand decision to stay when I came here," she recalled. "It's a big step to move from one culture to another, and I just let it happen. I fell completely in love with the country."

CLA photo

National report gives Auburn high marks as supportive campus

Auburn students give the university high marks as a supportive campus in a newly released national survey, which also provides evidence that Auburn freshmen are becoming more studious and more active learners.

The results are among findings in the 2010 National Survey of Student Engagement, a nationwide measure of students' involvement in their education. Drew Clark, director of Institutional Research and Assessment at Auburn, said the survey is the leading national source of information on how students spend their time, how involved they are in proven learning practices and to what extent they consider themselves challenged and supported by their university.

Clark said the NSSE helps the university measure how well it is doing in teaching and student services. Over the long-term, NSSE data provide valuable information for use in academic planning and development of support services, he added.

The National Survey of Student Engagement collects information on how much time freshmen and seniors devote to study and how else they spend their time.

The survey also gathers data on the kinds of intellectual activities their classes require; how much contact they have with faculty members; how often they take advantage of enrichment activities such as study abroad, service learning or student government; how they grade their own progress in terms of knowledge and skill; and how satisfied they are with their educational experience.

The NSSE study does provide comparisons among institutions but in a context more suitable for academic enhancement than the data produced by U.S. News & World Report and similar publications, Clark said. The latter are commercial publications that are targeted more toward parents, potential students and buyers of publications than toward faculty and academic planners.

The NSSE analysis provides a general picture of the institution's level of academic challenge, its encouragement of active and collaborative learning and student-faculty interaction and the extent to which it provides enriching campus environment.

The results are based on responses of a survey in

spring 2010 among freshmen and seniors. Results were compared between groups, over a trend line since 2006, against national norms and against Auburn's peer group of 61 institutions classified as research institutions by the Carnegie Foundation.

NSSE results are summarized in five benchmark scores. In 2010, Auburn freshmen measured slightly below the average of the peer group (52 vs. 54) on the benchmark for level of academic challenge, statistically even on measures of active learning, student-faculty interaction and enriching experience and above the peer group (66 vs. 62) on the supportive campus environment benchmark.

Auburn seniors also rated the institution slightly lower than the peer group in terms of academic challenge (55 vs. 57), tied for enriching experiences, and ahead in the other benchmark categories. In all cases, however, students at Auburn and elsewhere were rating their own institution against an idea of perfection, not against peer institutions.

— Roy Summerford