



Auburn Montgomery growing at an AUMazing pace

By Dr. John Veres, Chancellor

It all began just 40 years ago in a one-room facility on Bell Street in downtown Montgomery with about 600 students.

Today, Auburn University at Montgomery has grown into a thriving community partner, serving nearly 6,000 students from the U. S. and over 40 countries around the world, with a goal to reach an enrollment

of 8,000 in the next few years.

Auburn Montgomery has grown by every measure. Now included on our 500-acre campus are an iconic library tower and facilities for nursing, the sciences, business, education/liberal arts and physical education. The campus also features fields for baseball, softball and soccer; tennis courts; two residence halls; and the Taylor Center, which houses the cafeteria, Theatre AUM, student services, the campus bookstore, a computer lab and more.

The programs of study available at Auburn Montgomery have risen from 16 in the early days to more than 90 today, including new programs or options in hospitality and tourism, geographic information systems and organizational leadership at the undergraduate level, and innovative graduate programs/options in cybersystems and information security, nursing care and homeland security.

In February, Auburn Montgomery will break ground on a new Wellness Center. This 73,500-square-foot facility will provide students with more options for recreation and club meetings, not to mention a great place for them to hang out when they're not in class. The Wellness Center will house a pool, a healthy snack bar, weightlifting and aerobics rooms, a running track, basketball courts and a climbing wall.

The new facility will also be a great boon to our academic community, providing more space for our Physical Education and Exercise Science Department and classes as well as our Human Performance Lab, where nationally recognized exercise science professors conduct research, test fitness products and equipment, and offer fitness tests to the community. The center will also create a tremendous opportunity for faculty and staff to develop or maintain a healthy lifestyle and give alumni a reason to come back to campus since they, too, will be able to use the facility.

In a world that is actually getting smaller, Auburn Montgomery is working hard to enhance its already diverse campus by ramping up efforts to recruit international students. We are developing a kind of cultural diplomacy among students. The more countries represented on campus, the more our American students can learn about the world. The connections

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A Message from AURA's President...

Anytime is a good time for professors and teachers to retire, if they are too tired to profess or teach. Our universities and schools need all the intellectual vigor, rigor and fundamental solidarity that they can attract and support. Intellectual vitality, motivation and dedication play key roles together in the equation. Retirement age is not necessarily a contributing factor.

Retirement at any age for a professor or a teacher is an opportunity, and a propitious one, to attract intellectual energy and compassion to add substantially to needed higher standards and vitality. Otherwise, how will we fill all the classrooms and laboratories with qualified and motivated professors and teachers, and then how do we stimulate our colleges and schools to be charged-up for the challenges ahead?

The most expensive operating procedure would be to tolerate below-average standards and practices from our professors and teachers. Yes, that is the most expensive way, and we will never get where we need to go for our young people, for our industries, our infrastructure and government, if we tolerate it. It should be added with emphasis at this point, that simply more money is not the answer.

It goes like this... If we release through retirement, or otherwise, those ineffective professors and teachers, then hire the very best professors and teachers we can attract, and provide the classrooms and laboratories needed for their work. Then, and only then, do we have the opportunity to provide the best education we can afford for all Alabamians. That's not rocket science, is it?

Our education system is for everyone, and we should not be as proud of how many of our high school students go to out-of-state universities, as we are of how many finish their better-quality education in Alabama. With changes in our government leadership, we have the timely opportunity to tell our new Governor and Members of the Legislature just how important Universities and Schools are to Alabama! I plan to do that, and I hope you will too.

Sincerely yours,
Chester C. Carroll

Growing at an AUMazing pace Continued...

made between students work both ways – our international friends are also learning who we are and what we stand for as Americans.

Auburn Montgomery was conceived and created to positively impact the communities of the River Region, and we do that every day. From our partnerships with our business, nonprofit, government, and military neighbors, to our cultural and international offerings, to our caring and involved students, faculty, and staff, Auburn Montgomery continues to work with and for our communities. Our Nonprofit Leadership Alliance program earned the Alliance's Program Excellence Award for 2011 and AUM nursing student Donna Hajos took home the 2011 Internship of the Year Award, spotlighting AUM as a top training ground for future nonprofit leaders.

Auburn Montgomery has fulfilled the early vision of building strong undergraduate programs, providing opportunities for adult education, and developing graduate programs for business, government, public administration and education. However, we must continue to challenge ourselves to grow and improve. After all, it's our desire to improve that makes Auburn Montgomery an AUMazing place to learn and work. ♦



REPORT OF THE AURA LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

from Gerald Johnson

AU Emeritus Professor of Political

2010 ELECTION

The 2010 election significantly changed the Alabama political landscape. For the first time in modern history, over 136 years, the Republican Party has absolute majority control of both houses of the Alabama Legislature and holds all constitutional offices, including governor.

The impact of the political change was registered immediately, before new governor Robert Bentley assumed office and before the new Legislature meets in its first regular session in March. In December, in his last month in office, outgoing Governor Bob Riley called an unprecedented special session of the Legislature to address a variety of ethics reform proposals and legislation designed to reduce the power and influence of public and education employees in state politics.

2010 Special Session of the Legislature

The Republican controlled Legislature in the special session enacted seven bills proposed by Governor Riley on ethics, campaign finance, and other topics, including restrictions on the use of state and education employee payroll deducted membership dues and a ban on legislators holding state or education employment. Democrats voted for each of the ethics bills but, along with a number of Republicans, opposed and filibustered against the payroll deduction bill.

The seven bills enacted include:

SB 1 authorizes subpoena power for the State Ethics Commission, a power given to all but two state's ethics commissions.

SB 2 bans using state payroll deducted public and education employee membership dues for political purposes, broadly defined.

SB 3 bans legislators from holding public or education employment.

SB 14 limits lobbyist spending on legislators.

HB 9 bans PAC-to-PAC transfers.

HB 10 bans "pass-through pork" or discretionary spending of undefined appropriations in the budget.

HB 11 requires anyone who attempts to influence the awarding of contracts or grants to register as a lobbyist and requires ethics training.

Ethics and Campaign Finance Legislation

The newly enacted ethics legislation adds to and strengthens some key components of the current campaign and ethics laws. According to a December 17 article in *The Wall Street Journal*, "Alabama has lagged behind much of the country in ethics rules for public officials, but the new laws will put it in the top half among states, according to legal experts."

However, according to the *Journal*, "The new legislation contains loopholes. There is no spending limit for widely attended events hosted by lobbyists. Lobbyists also won't be required to disclose what they spend on lawmakers." Rep. Paul Demarco, R-Homewood, voted against the spending limit bill because it erased current lobbyists spending disclosure requirements.

Jim Sumner, director of the State Ethics Commission stated in *The Birmingham News* (December 17), "I think the whole package is a huge stride forward for the State of Alabama, in terms of ethics and accountability." Sumner noted, however, that the bills may have some loopholes. While the bill limits spending on legislators by lobbyists and the employer of lobbyists, it

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LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE REPORT CONTINUED...

might not limit spending on legislators by most people who are not registered lobbyists since the bill erased the definition of a lobbyist as anyone who spends more than \$100 a year to lobby.

Payroll Deduction Legislation

The special session on ethics also enacted a measure that makes it a criminal offense for state and education employees to use payroll-deducted membership dues for the purpose of political activity, including “engaging in or paying for public opinion polling.”

The law was enacted regardless of the facts that: payroll deduction is voluntary; imposes no additional costs on the state; dues are used for multiple professional programs and activities separate from political activity; state and education employees are targeted; other public organizations, such as police officers and firefighters, use payroll deduction membership dues for political purposes; and, the state allows deductions on income tax returns for clearly partisan political parties contributions.

The net result of the act, along with the ban on education employees from running for public office, will make it much more difficult, if not suppress, participation in democratic processes for a class of citizens. The act imposes an additional burden on state and education employees to participate in democratic processes and thereby restricts the participation of thousands in those processes.

A number of members of the Legislature who voted for the act have stated in various forums that the act had nothing to do with ethics legislation. Former Republican Senator Larry Dixon of Montgomery stated in the *Mobile Press Register* (January 9), “The repeal of Act 83-207 (payroll deduction act) passed in 1983 was not a part of what most people would consider ethics legislation.” Rather, the act was intended to remove the AEA and state employee opposition to the old Republican Party establishment and was “payback” for the role the AEA played in the election for governor.

Paul Hubbert, AEA Executive

Secretary, stated, “The only non-ethics bill of the special session was SB 2, a measure aimed at ending payroll deduction for membership dues for educators engaging in any type of advocacy for schools and the students they serve. The measure is retaliation to silence groups representing public employees. It is clear that the first priority of the special session on ethics was not about ending corruption. It was about political payback against AEA.

The ramifications of this bill are broad and repressive and AEA will take all necessary action to resolve issues related to this bill.”

2011 Legislature

The new Legislature will meet in regular session in March with a new governor and with the experience and lessons learned by the new members in the special session. The session will face huge financial challenges and, since the largest state budget by far is the education budget, including the state retirement systems and PEEHIP, the state’s public health insurance program, the implications for public education and specifically for members of AURA are direct and substantial.

Proposals have already been introduced to substantially change both public retirement and health policies and programs. It is a matter of record that AEA has been the sole major protector of the Education Trust Fund (ETF) and the policies and programs produced and funded through the ETF. Thus, a continued substantial role for AEA in the legislative processes is in the best interests of public education employees and retirees.

The hope and expectation is that a coalition of like minded Republican and Democratic legislators who are public education advocates, along with the active participation of AEA, AERA, and AURA members, will, under the leadership of Governor Bentley, face these challenges with integrity and fairness to provide for the continuation of progress in public education and the maintenance of essential services for education retirees. ♦



AU President Dr. Jay Gogue and
AURA President Chester Carroll



Herb and Freda White



Wilbur Tincher and Elsworth Steele



Don and Katherine Vives



Tiger Hosts with Past President Grady Cox



Dotty and Ray Cavender



Snooky Alverson, Barbara and Stan Wilson and Bill Alverson



Dean and Dave Elam



Gerald and Nadine Johnson



Curtis and Susan Smith



Art and Bonnie Call



Edna and Chester Carroll



Frances Hale, Helen Brown
and Julia Morgan



Bob Brewer, Margaret and Drew Brown



Ray Cavender, Bob Brewer
and Bill Alverson

A Message from Betty Burkhalter

Vice President, AURA and Chair of AURA Membership Committee



Dear Auburn University Retiree:

On behalf of the Auburn University Retirees Association (AURA) Board, this is a special invitation for you to become an active member of our association. As you transition from full-time employment with Auburn University into retirement, your health care and retirement benefits with the Teachers' Retirement System (TRS) will become a major focus of your attention. With the economic crisis we have all been a part of the past few years, many of us continue to watch with concern our fixed incomes and investments. For example, AURA retirees have not received a cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) since 2006, although there was a one-time payment made available in 2007. Alabama is not facing these type financial problems alone. The Ohio Retirement Teachers Association reported in 2010 that many states including Colorado, Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Rhode Island and South Dakota have enacted legislation to delay, reduce or eliminate COLA and retirement income increases to their state retirees. With serious budget issues facing many states across the country, it is going to take all of our efforts individually and collectively to make our case for a COLA increase in 2012, and to maintain our current retirement benefits with the Teachers Retirement System. In that the economy appears to be improving, there are reasons to believe that income to the Special Education Trust Fund will show some improvement in FY 2011 and subsequent years. AURA will join the Alabama Education Retirees Association (AERA), the Alabama Education Association, and the Teacher's Retirement System in working with the Legislature for improved benefits for education retirees. We need you, and we hope you will decide to become an active member of AURA. Numbers do matter when we work together as a united and cohesive group toward the same goal.

AURA is an independent organization with its own constitution and by-laws. As the present time we are funding three scholarships, and each year we also present the *Wilford S. Bailey Award* to a distinguished individual for his/her contributions to the society and welfare of retirees from the educational community. An AURA brochure and a copy of the AURA membership dues card are included for your convenience.

Although the transition from employment with Auburn University into retirement is a busy time for you, please take a few moments to consider becoming a member of your retirement organization that always has your best interest as its central focus. After reviewing the information, if you have any questions, or need further information about AURA, please feel free to contact me at 334.821.1086 or e-mail me at burkhbb@auburn.edu. ♦

AURA Enrollment Form on next page...

Thank You Monarch Estates!

Monarch Estates, known for “**Gracious Retirement Living**”, located at 1550 E. University; Auburn, has generously allowed the AURA Board of Directors to use their Eagles Nest Meeting Room for their monthly meetings for several years.

We would like to acknowledge this donation from Monarch and encourage anyone considering moving from their home to visit Monarch for a tour.

AURA Enrollment Form

Name _____ AU _____ AUM _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

_____ Single Retiree \$25.00 _____ Surviving Spouse \$10.00

_____ Retiree and Spouse \$25.00 _____ Sponsor \$25.00

_____ Retiree & Retiree Spouse.. \$25.00

\$ _____ Scholarship Contribution

You can tell if you have paid your dues by looking at your address label on this newsletter. If your name is followed by “(p).” we have received your payment as of January 20. If not, your name is followed by “(n),” and we encourage you to renew your membership if you have not already done so in the meantime.

*Please make check payable to **Auburn University Retiree Association or AURA** and mail to the address below:*



AURA
P.O. Box 1436
Auburn, AL 36831-1436

JAMES FRED O'BRIEN, JR.

By J. Herbert White

Fred O'Brien, 81, former president of AURA, died on Jan. 9, 2011 at the UAB Medical Center.

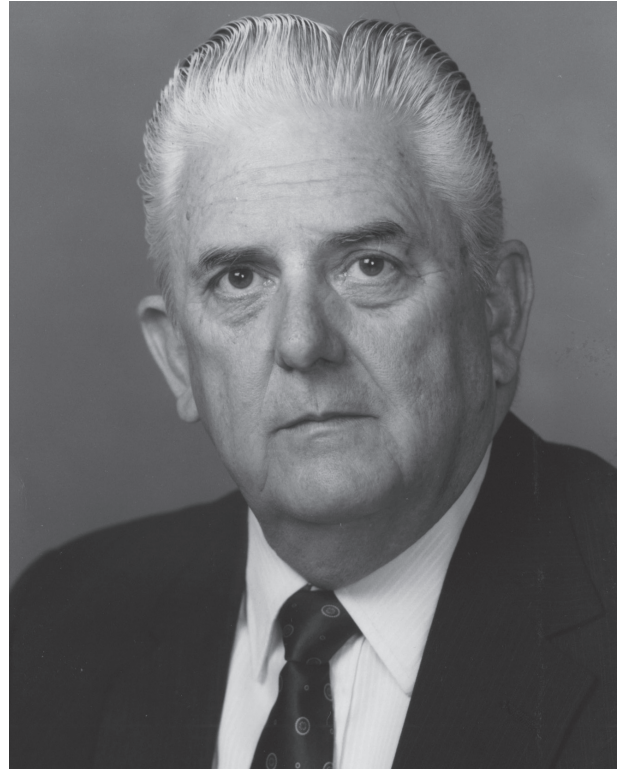
Fred joined the Auburn University staff in 1967 as director of the Engineering Extension Service where he enjoyed bridging the engineering industry with academic achievement. He retired in 1992 after an outstanding career.

Following retirement, he became active in AURA and served as president in 2004.

His time as president resulted in substantial progress in the association's march toward becoming the recognized and respected voice of Auburn Retirees.

During his term, the Wilford S. Bailey Award was established and has been presented annually to outstanding leaders who provide unusual and exemplary service to education retirees in Alabama.

Fred will be remembered as a person who loved Auburn and contributed a great deal toward its future.



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