“Imagination has brought mankind through the dark ages to its present state of civilization. Imagination led Columbus to discover America. Imagination led Franklin to discover electricity.”

L. Frank Baum
Imagine.

Imagine a university where talented and motivated students are nurtured by equally talented and motivated faculty and become successful entrepreneurs, public servants, and scientists on the front lines in the fight against world hunger and disease.

Imagine a university where first-generation college students inspire new family education traditions and where working professionals get the tools needed to advance in their careers.

Imagine a university that boasts four generations of success and an untold future of unlimited accomplishment.

Auburn University at Montgomery is such a university, but it can be so much more. For more than 40 years, AUM has provided an outstanding education to students studying nursing, science, business, education, and the liberal arts. Our alumni have gone out into the world and made a difference in their communities.

As the university continues to grow and recruit the best and brightest students at home and abroad, imagine if more scholarship opportunities were available to these future leaders. Imagine how new and improved facilities would help AUM faculty make new discoveries benefitting all of humanity.

That’s what *Imagine. Invest. Inspire.* is all about — providing Auburn Montgomery’s students and faculty the resources to excel in the classroom and, as a result, in life.

Auburn Montgomery has done much already, but there is far more our university can do. There is so much more that our university can be.

*Imagine!*
“Only through the gift of scholarship was I able to fulfill my dream for my family. I’m giving back by providing the best nursing care I can to people in need.”

Kimberly Gordon
Kimberly Gordon
Elizabeth L. and Lanier Y. Roton Scholar

In 2002, life was good for Kimberly Gordon. At 27, she was both a wife and a mother. She had just graduated from Auburn Montgomery with a degree in business administration. The future seemed bright and boundless – but then life took an unexpected turn.

“I was diagnosed with a benign tumor surrounding my left kidney and part of my abdominal aorta,” Kimberly said. “I had to undergo multiple surgeries. Ultimately, my case was presented to the nephrology specialists at UAB and they decided to remove my left kidney.”

Kimberly’s kidney removal resulted in her being hospitalized for two weeks, incurring six-figure medical bills her insurance company refused to cover. She was unable to work, and she and her husband had two small children to care for. Though the family’s financial situation looked dire, Kimberly’s hospital stay had inspired her.

“That experience sparked a deep desire to work in the medical field,” Kimberly said. “I know first-hand how vulnerable patients feel and how much we depend on nurses.”

Kimberly wanted to go back to school and get a nursing degree. “Of course, tuition and other costs were standing in my way,” Kimberly said. “My employer was willing to work around my demanding school schedule, but only a small amount of government loans were left.”

So Kimberly applied for a scholarship and was chosen as the first recipient of the Elizabeth L. and Lanier Y. Roton Annual Scholarship in the AUM School of Nursing. She went on to complete her degree – which included a preceptorship at Tallassee’s Community Hospital. She is now employed as a registered nurse at HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hospital of Montgomery.

“Only through the gift of scholarship was I able to fulfill my dream for my family,” said Kimberly. “I’m giving back by providing the best nursing care I can to people in need. I’m making a difference in the lives of others and, hopefully, making the Roton family proud.”

Today, the trials of 2002 seem far away for Kimberly, her husband Milledge, and their children Gabe, 14, and Ariel, 10. Though she has only 50 percent function in her remaining kidney, Kimberly experiences no symptoms and is not required to undergo dialysis. Life is good again, she says. And she’s fulfilling her dream, thanks to the kindness of strangers and the Auburn Montgomery School of Nursing.

“Auburn Montgomery is one of the top nursing schools in the state,” Kimberly said. “The curriculum is more than challenging and the instructors are the best and expect the best from their students. They offered me the necessary guidance and support to endure the ongoing stress of my multiple roles as a student, mother, wife and employee.

“People ask nursing students all the time ‘Why do you want to be a nurse?’ For me, it was a spiritual calling. I’ll always be thankful to the Roton family for this precious opportunity.”
“Once the first generation of a family starts going to college, then maybe their kids can go to college and the family will become more successful.”

April Yates
April Yates, who is one of the first in her family to attend college and the first recipient of the Energen First Scholarship at AUM, wants to be a veterinarian.

“My major is biology,” said April. “Once I finish my degree here, I plan on applying to Auburn to go to veterinary school. I’ve always had animals, always loved them and always been interested in them. I guess I got that from my grandma. She has the same interests as me. She loves animals, too.”

Like many AUM students, April, the daughter of an electrician and a church secretary, works on the days she doesn’t have classes. Predictably, she works at Blue Ridge Kennels, cleaning the kennels and feeding and caring for the animals there. Consider it practice of a sort.

April, whose twin sister Ashley is also a freshman at Auburn Montgomery, already had earned two smaller scholarships. But when the provost called her to inform her she’d been awarded the Energen First Scholarship, she was excited and relieved.

“It helped me out a lot,” April said. “Without it, I would have had to have taken out a student loan. I was worried about that. I’ve heard the horror stories about people still paying back student loans years after they got out of school. With the Energen First Scholarship, I don’t have that hanging over my head.”

Education is the cornerstone of Energen’s giving. The company launched the Energen First Scholarship program in 2008. Through partnerships with the University of Alabama, Auburn University, UAB and now Auburn Montgomery, many first-generation students will get the financial help needed to receive a college education.

“These scholarships demonstrate Energen’s commitment to the value and importance of educating our future leaders,” said James McManus, chief executive officer of Energen. “The role of education cannot be overstated and not only affects an individual’s life, but also the lives of future generations.”

April sees the value of Energen’s investment in first-generation students, too. Looking beyond her own experiences, she sees how scholarships targeted toward first-generation college students like her can impact future society.

“Once the first generation of a family starts going to college, then maybe their kids can go to college and the family will become more successful,” April said. “There’s the potential for a real snowball effect.”

In other words, April gets it. And she’s working hard at taking full advantage of the opportunity she’s been given.

“I came in thinking college life was going to be fun,” she said. “And it is, but it’s more stressful than I thought, too. All the homework, studying. Sometimes I get overwhelmed, but my grades are really good so far.”

And with April’s desire and determination, that’s not going to change.
Invest in an organization that changes the lives of students of all ages and backgrounds, putting them on the path to greatness.

Invest in a university with a stellar reputation. Auburn Montgomery trains nurses, business professionals, scientists, educators, legislators and artists whose accomplishments rival those of graduates from much larger schools.

The AUM School of Business is ranked among the top 1 percent of business schools in the world, as evidence by its accreditation from the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business. The AUM Nonprofit Leadership Alliance, which trains future nonprofit leaders, was named the nation’s top program in 2011. And when the Japanese government needed help assessing the damage following its recent tsunami disaster, AUM’s Geographic Information Systems (GIS) program was one of four American universities asked to aid in the efforts.

Invest at a time when your support is needed most. State support of higher education continues to decline and universities are becoming ever more dependent on private funding. Whether you are counted among our alumni or our friends, you know AUM’s power to change lives. With your help, we can do even more. We invite you to visit the Office of Advancement and talk with a development officer. Even better, let us arrange for you to meet with our students and faculty. Find out more about their dreams and aspirations – their imaginings. Let their dreams and aspirations be your guide as you decide what you can do to help.

Together, we can change lives.

Invest!

“We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give.”

Winston Churchill
“There is no greater gift than a good education.”

Carl Whatley
Marjorie and Carl (’83) Whatley

Carl Whatley’s heart led him to Auburn Montgomery. After meeting his wife, Marjorie, his future father-in-law told him if he wanted to marry his daughter he needed to get a college education. Certain that he had found his partner in life, Carl needed to select the right university where he could pursue the education needed to gain her father’s blessing.

“I chose AUM, and the faculty I met there and the education I got there showed me that I could succeed at whatever I chose to do with my life,” Carl said. “My professors believed in me and, what’s more, helped me to believe in myself. I left there much more confident in my abilities than when I started.”

Carl graduated from AUM in 1983 with a B.A. in general studies. He began his career in pharmaceuticals at Wyeth Laboratories and worked there for 20 years until founding ProEthic Pharmaceuticals in 2001. He went on to establish Midlothian Laboratories LLC in 2003, which sells and markets generic pharmaceutical products.

Carl grew ProEthic into a $40 million company before selling it to Kowa Pharmaceuticals in 2008. He retired as chairman and CEO of ProEthic in 2009. He is currently serving as chief executive officer of Cendalor Partners, which he founded to identify and invest in companies developing niche pharmaceutical products for the U.S. market.

Carl is chair of Auburn Montgomery’s Imagine. Invest. Inspire. campaign. He serves on the university’s Chancellor’s Advisory Board and he and Marjorie are members of the AUM Chancellor’s Society and 1967 Society. They are also life members of the AUM and Auburn University alumni associations.

“I enjoy staying connected to an institution that means so much to me,” Carl said. “I’m convinced that AUM is already the crown jewel of higher education in the River Region and, still, it is teeming with even more potential. I’m also convinced that, through continued involvement with the university, AUM’s alumni and friends can help it reach that potential.”

Carl and Marjorie have pledged $1.25 million to Auburn Montgomery to support AUM’s Schools of Business, Education and Liberal Arts, the AUM Library, and the AUM Wellness Center. He encourages others with the means to make a gift to the university as well.

“I can think of few investments that are more satisfying or worthwhile,” Carl said. “You can rest in the knowledge that your gift will be used according to your wishes and that many will benefit for years to come. There is no greater gift than a good education.”
“If others out there have the means and the connection to the university, I would ask them what is keeping them from making a gift.”

Dottie Blair
When retired Montgomery businesswoman Dottie Kenady Blair was considering a pledge to Auburn Montgomery, she worried about making a commitment that her estate may not be able to honor one day.

“I was concerned that I might establish an endowment and then, for some reason such as medical bills or long-term care expenses, the money wouldn’t be there upon my death,” Dottie said.

However, after talking with AUM Advancement, she learned that a pledge does not encumber her assets - it only applies to funds remaining after expenses are settled. So, Dottie pledged a total of $1.1 million in support of AUM’s School of Business, School of Nursing and Wellness Center.

“If others out there have the means and the connection to the university, I would ask them what is keeping them from making a gift,” Dottie said.

Dottie, former president of Central Alabama Nursing Services Inc., is a graduate of Auburn Montgomery, receiving her bachelor's degree in Business Administration in 1981 and her M.B.A in 1988.

Dottie has pledged $1 million to support a $500,000 endowment for a professorship and a $500,000 endowment for a full four-year scholarship. Both the professorship and the scholarship will alternate on a four-year basis between the AUM School of Business and the AUM School of Nursing.

Dottie’s $100,000 cash gift will support the AUM Wellness Center. In recognition of that gift, the exercise garden in the Wellness Center has been named in her honor.

Dottie wanted the endowments to rotate between the Schools of Business and Nursing because she is a two-time graduate of the School of Business and has long admired the School of Nursing’s reputation for producing excellent nurses.

“I just feel I got a very good education in the AUM School of Business,” Dottie said. “In addition, the School of Nursing has always had such a good track record of graduates passing the nursing exam, and since I owned a business in the nursing field, I had a great appreciation for the quality of education in the School of Nursing. I also know how important it will be as we Baby Boomers grow older to have great nurses to take care of us.”

In addition to being an alumna of Auburn Montgomery, Dottie has also served the university through her membership in the Chancellor’s Society and her time on the Chancellor’s Advisory Board. She is also a life member of the Auburn Montgomery Alumni Association.

“Dottie’s gift is just one example of her dedication to Auburn Montgomery,” said AUM Chancellor John Veres. “Her selflessness and willingness to give of her time and money so that our students may thrive is commendable.”
“Even a small gift will make a significant impact to deserving students, not to mention the blessing you will receive as the donor.”

Tricia Grier
Frank and Tricia Grier understand that the path from high school graduation to college commencement doesn’t always run smoothly.

A Wetumpka native, Frank was the first person in his family to go to college, earning a B.S. in design, technology and innovation from Troy University and an M.S. in human environmental sciences from the University of Alabama.

Frank met Tricia who was working full-time at AmSouth Bank while attending Auburn Montgomery. They married in 1990 and, with the support of Frank, Tricia graduated from AUM in 1992.

“I have to give a lot of credit to actually finishing my degree to my best friend, my husband,” Tricia said. “I had already been going to school for ten long years when Frank and I married. It would have been very easy to quit once we met and married, but during the time we dated he occasionally drove by the business school parking lot to leave a sweet note or something special for me to find on my car when I got out of class at 10 p.m. He was also supportive during our first two years of marriage, when working full-time and taking classes every evening left very little time for anything else.”

Frank is currently Director of Institutional Technology at Huntingdon College, where Tricia serves as Director of Travel and Event Planning. They have pledged a generous bequest to AUM to fund the Frank and Tricia Grier Endowed Fellowship in the AUM School of Business.

“Our education set the stage for what we would accomplish the rest of our lives,” Tricia said. “When we started to explore how to expend our assets once our Lord decides our time on earth is done, since we have no children of our own, we knew we wanted to do something that could make a huge impact in the lives of others. To choose the establishment of endowed scholarships seemed the obvious choice to pay forward the blessings we received in our education.”

The Griers encourage others to consider making a gift to AUM and other higher education institutions. They believe, in these difficult economic times, higher education is key to the sustainable recovery of the national and global economy.

“Don’t tell yourself that what you have to give is not enough to make a difference,” Tricia said. “Most people don’t understand how endowed scholarships work and immediately think the agreements are too complicated and only for wealthy folks – wrong! Call the Advancement Office and find out just how far a minimum endowment will grow and continue to give for years to come. Even a small gift will make a significant impact to deserving students, not to mention the blessing you will receive as the donor.”
Honors students visited the site of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, thanks to funds provided by The Daniel Foundation of Alabama.

“The lives of these students will never be the same.”

Elizabeth Woodworth, Assistant Professor of English
Donnie Nobles and students in Auburn Montgomery’s University Honors Program know well the importance of private support to the university. Recently, the Honors Program received a $100,000 grant from The Daniel Foundation of Alabama to fund travel, study abroad and research opportunities for AUM honors students.

Donnie, an Associate Professor in the Department of Communication and Dramatic Arts and Director of the University Honors Program, said the gift will allow honors students opportunities that would not otherwise have been available.

“This generous gift will fund student research and travel and bring speakers to campus,” said Donnie. “None of these things would be possible without this remarkable and thoughtful contribution to the program. We have high expectations of honors students, and The Daniel Foundation of Alabama is providing opportunities for them to explore what is new, share the results of their research at conferences, and continue to develop a better sense of what’s out there in the world.”

Donnie cited a spring 2012 opportunity that allowed honors English students to travel to Oklahoma City for the 17th anniversary of the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building. They participated in a remembrance ceremony held at the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum and met with students at Oklahoma City University.

“The two classes met by Skype and examined the theme ‘Memory and Memorials’ and discussed the Civil Rights Memorial here and the bombing memorial there,” Donnie said.

Assistant Professor of English Elizabeth Woodworth served as the faculty advisor on the trip out to Oklahoma. She said, “The lives of these students will never be the same. They were babies when the bombing happened, but they were moved to tears by what they saw and heard. We couldn’t even speak to each other while we were there.”

The students will soon present research conclusions and their experiences at the National Collegiate Honors Council in Boston.

The Daniel Foundation of Alabama is named for the Daniel family. Hugh Daniel was a native of Elberton, Ga., who was raised in South Carolina, attended The Citadel, and later had construction and banking interests in Birmingham. The foundation was originally created in South Carolina, but the family later split the assets between South Carolina and Alabama, creating foundations in each state. It’s mission is to strengthen communities and improve the quality of life for citizens through the support of quality educational programs, arts and culture, civic and community programs, and medical care and research.

Since 1981, the University Honors Program has provided AUM’s brightest students with special courses and opportunities to enhance their studies. They conduct research, enroll in challenging honors courses, and engage in international travel and public service.
Inspire the next generation of leaders by supporting the education of students through scholarship endowments.

Inspire important accomplishments and new discoveries by investing in faculty research and campus facilities.

Inspire others to give back to their communities by seeing your commitment to Auburn Montgomery.

Your generosity will impact generations. Much like a pebble dropped into a pond, your gift will ripple outward into our community, state, nation, and beyond. Your loyalty and commitment will touch the lives of students and faculty and all those they come in contact with. Wherever they go, whatever they accomplish, you will be a part of it.

Inspire!

“Our chief want is someone who will inspire us to be what we know we could be.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson.
“I want my students to remember that I got them excited about science and that they left my class maybe not loving it as much as I do, but at least appreciating it more.”

Chelsea Ward
Dr. Chelsea Ward
Associate Professor of Biology

Chelsea Ward describes herself as “a crazy girl that stands up in her red Chuck Taylors and gets way too excited about dorky things.”

In reality, the things that excite her aren’t dorky at all. Instead, her research in stress physiology touches on serious issues such as health and conservation.

“Everybody’s stressed,” Chelsea said. “Everything, really. Animals, plants, insects, they all have a reaction to stress. In the animal world, everyone kind of reacts the same way to stress. There’s actually a hormone that you release when you get stressed that causes your body to conserve energy so that you can respond to whatever is causing your stress. That process was built for times when lions chased us on the savanna or when food was scarce or the weather changed. Of course, now, when we think about stress it’s school and work and all of those things and stress has a negative connotation.

“What I look at is how it was a positive thing for the body. Now, I’m looking at how that stress response and the immune response are interacting. When you get stressed out, you want to spend all of your energy dealing with what’s making you stressed and you kind of shut out everything that’s extraneous. The immune system is one of those things that gets shut down and, when it’s time for finals, everyone gets sick because everybody is worried about their finals and they spend the energy on that instead of as fuel for their immune system.”

Spend a few minutes talking to Chelsea and it’s easy to see how she’s one of the most popular instructors on campus. She’s not far removed from college herself, having earned her Ph.D. in biology from Auburn University in 2005. In fact, with Auburn Montgomery’s large number of nontraditional students, many of her students are actually older than she.

“Nontraditional students are interesting because they’re older and bring real-life experiences to the classroom,” Chelsea said. “A lot them will have stories of stuff that happens on their job that they can share, things that even I haven’t experienced. So sometimes they can become teachers, too, not just students. It’s always nice when you learn something from your students.”

Perhaps because she’s a product of a smaller university (she got her bachelor’s degree in marine biology at Florida Institute of Technology, or Florida Tech, in Melbourne, Fla.), Chelsea seems to enjoy the experience of teaching at a smaller university like Auburn Montgomery.

“The students are much more involved in their classes than students elsewhere,” Chelsea said. “I get to see and interact with the students a lot. I know all of their names, which is kind of cool. They stop by my office to say hi. I get emails from them after they graduate and they tell me what they’re up to, which is always nice to know. I don’t know if you would get that at a big school.”

Chelsea also knows that smaller schools sometimes have more funding woes than larger universities and that every little bit of funding helps. That’s why she served as a co-chair of the 2011 Auburn Montgomery Family Campaign, which resulted in 85 percent of all Auburn Montgomery employees, including Chelsea, making financial gifts to the university.

“I know that if I had more money, I could do more research,” Chelsea said. “Right now, I fund my research using in-house grants and I’m working on getting a bigger grant, but that money is hard to come by. So private funding could help me run my research longer. Also, because we don’t have graduate students in biology, I do all of my work with undergrads and I could support more undergrads, which means more of our undergrads are exposed to research they can include on their resumes when they apply to graduate or professional schools.”

And additional funding would also mean more of an opportunity for Chelsea to transfer to her students her excitement about and love for science.

“I want my students to remember that I got them excited about science and that they left my class maybe not loving it as much as I do, but at least appreciating it more,” Chelsea said. “I want them to see science doesn’t have to be something boring or black-and-white on a page, that it’s living and breathing and growing and changing. And it can be fun.”
“I’ve been pleased and heartened by the number of former students who choose to stay in touch. I have a godson who is the child of a former student…I have been a reader in a couple of my former students’ weddings.”

Nancy Anderson
Nancy Anderson
Associate Professor of English

“Dear Ms. Nancy: I am glad that you are my teacher. I am glad that you like to teach me, and I love to come here every Wednesday. I am glad that you like to do this for us. I am glad that I came here today.”

Nancy Anderson, AUM Associate Professor of English, loves getting letters like these from Montgomery area elementary school children – not because they’re flattering, but because they exercise the use of proper grammar, spelling and style.

For the past 15 years, Nancy has offered a free after-school writing enrichment program to children ages 6-12 residing in Montgomery’s low-income housing communities. Two days a week the young writers gather at the Molina Learning Center in Southlawn Commons to work with Nancy on their poetry and prose. An anthology of their writings is compiled each summer. The 2009 collection received a personal letter of recognition from President Barack Obama.

When Nancy isn’t volunteering at the Molina Center, she’s on campus at AUM teaching writing and literature courses. She said what she enjoys most about teaching at Auburn Montgomery is its diverse mix of traditional and nontraditional students.

“There’s something wonderfully enriching about having the mixture in the classroom,” Nancy said. “I love to see at least one nontraditional student in each class. Having one or two of those in a class who have been working and chosen to go back to school moves the bar up a bit for everyone and makes for some wonderful class discussions.”

Nancy has been on faculty at AUM since 1973. She holds a B.A. from Millsaps College and an M.A. from the University of Virginia. The Mississippi native taught in her home state, Virginia, California, South Carolina and Germany before settling in Montgomery.

Her students call her “The Dragon Lady,” a nickname derived from a sea serpent-shaped piece of jewelry that’s become her trademark. Many of her former students still keep in touch with the Dragon Lady.

“I’ve been pleased and heartened by the number of former students who choose to stay in touch,” Nancy said. “I have a godson who is the child of a former student and I’m very much a part of his world and life. I have been a reader in a couple of my former students’ weddings – and I get the occasional emails, visits, and notes on the door.”

Perhaps what Nancy enjoys most is her friendship with and study of legendary Alabama author Harper Lee. Nancy first met the author of “To Kill a Mockingbird” in the 1980s when the two spoke at the Eufaula History and Heritage Festival. It was a rare public appearance for the reclusive Lee, and Nancy served as the warm-up act for the Pulitzer Prize winner. The two have stayed in touch since that time.

A noted scholar on the life and works of Lee, Nancy wrote the “Encyclopedia of Alabama” entry on her and is a guest speaker at the celebration of “To Kill a Mockingbird” held in Lee’s hometown, Monroeville, Ala., each summer. Relevant to the AUM Imagine. Invest. Inspire. campaign, one of Nancy’s favorite Harper Lee short stories is “Christmas to Me,” which shows how a gift to anyone bent on a dream – whether an award-winning novelist or hard-working college student – can help that dream come true.

“It’s her story of how she became able to write ‘To Kill a Mockingbird’, ” Nancy said. “She was living in a cold-water flat in New York and was befriended by a family in the city. At Christmas, there was an envelope left under the tree with her name on it. They had given her enough money to allow her to quit her job and finish her book. They had given her the gift of time.”

This tale by one of the nation’s most celebrated authors illustrates what Imagine. Invest. Inspire. is all about. Imagine what could happen if you give a young person a scholarship to fund their education. Who knows? Your investment could inspire the next Harper Lee!
“I tell my students that these are the things they’re going to get from me – passion, dedication, availability and fairness.”

Mike Esco
Mike Esco ('02, '04)
Associate Professor of Physical Education and Exercise Science

For four years as a college student, Mike Esco was lost.

“I didn’t know what I wanted to do and, as a consequence, I wasn’t making good grades,” said Mike, currently an associate professor of physical education and exercise science at Auburn Montgomery. “But when I found this field (exercise physiology) and fell in love with it, I got that passion that jump-started me. If I can instill just a little bit of that passion in my students, I feel like I’ve done my job. Give me passion over pure brains any day.”

Passion. It’s a word Mike uses a lot. He found the passion as an undergraduate student at Auburn Montgomery and used it as motivation to continue his education and earn a master’s at AUM and his doctorate at Auburn.

“I work hard and I really enjoy this field,” Mike said. “AUM is home. I really enjoy this place. I enjoy the people that I work with, all the faculty and staff in the department. They’re like family.”

And, with the fall 2012 opening of Auburn Montgomery’s new Wellness Center, the Exercise Science family got a new home. The 73,000-square-foot fitness and learning center includes classrooms and office space for the Exercise Science faculty and a new, roomier Human Performance Lab, where Mike can continue and expand his research on physiological systems (primarily the cardiovascular system) and their responses to exercise.

“We were just drooling waiting to get into that place,” Mike said. “Before it opened, just looking at the plans, the human performance lab, the classrooms and, of course, everything else that’s in there and knowing how nice it was going to be, we were just excited. Now we’ve discovered that it’s everything we hoped for, and more.”

And the Wellness Center means more than just nicer surroundings for Mike and his department colleagues. It also means more research opportunities, some of which could bring much-needed funding to the department.

“It’s going to explode what we’re currently doing in the lab as far as outreach and research,” Mike said. “When I write a grant to try to get equipment that I need, one key component is where that equipment is going to be housed. Now I can fully pursue the type of projects that I want to pursue. Inadequate facilities were holding me back, primarily from a methodology perspective, and everything begins with that. If I don’t have the materials and the equipment, I can’t get the subjects to do the research. With the bigger facility, I now have that capacity.”

Mike is – here comes that word again – passionate about his research, but he’s also passionate about teaching.

“I think my passion comes through in the classroom, because that’s what drives me,” Mike said. “It drives my lesson plans and everything I do. I think my students appreciate my dedication and my straightforward way of teaching. They know that I’m available to them and that I will be fair.

“I tell my students that these are the things they’re going to get from me — passion, dedication, availability and fairness. And if I’m honest about that and they realize that, then that earns their respect.”
“When you help a student at AUM you are really changing the trajectory of their lives.”

Venessa Funches
Staff Sergeant Chris Martin had big plans for his daughter, Venessa. A jumpmaster for the U.S. Army – who spent his career teaching soldiers how to parachute out of aircraft – the proud father encouraged his daughter to join him in military service. Little did he know that he was unconsciously preparing her for a career in marketing.

“Growing up, we always watched the Clio Awards together on TV and he is one of those people who watches the Super Bowl for the commercials,” she said. “I went to Tulane University on an ROTC scholarship, but by the end of my freshman year I realized I wanted to do something where my personality would be an asset. I changed my major to business.”

After a career in corporate marketing for companies including Philip Morris USA and Nationwide Financial, Dr. Venessa Funches has put her vivacious personality to good use as one of Auburn Montgomery’s most popular professors, teaching marketing and business courses to undergraduate and graduate students.

Despite being recently promoted to head of the Department of Marketing, she continues to teach as many as five classes a semester – a feat unheard of at most universities, where administrators seldom enter the classroom. She sees mentoring students as one of her most important roles, both professionally and personally.

“When you help a student at AUM you are really changing the trajectory of their lives,” Venessa said, pointing to the large number of first generation students she sees in her classroom. “A college education makes a big difference. Nobody in my family went to college, so I can relate.”

Venessa can also relate to the university’s many nontraditional students. After earning a B.S. in business from Tulane in 1995, she relocated to Birmingham with her husband, Stanley. She earned an M.B.A. from the University of Alabama at Birmingham in 2001, becoming a mother to their first child, Ashli, in the process. She went on to become the first African-American woman to receive a Ph.D. in marketing from the University of Alabama – and did so while commuting from Helena to Tuscaloosa and welcoming two more children into the family: T.J. and Christopher.

With a talent for juggling career, education and family demands, it should be no surprise that Venessa made a unique decision when accepting her first faculty position in 2006 at Auburn Montgomery. Turning down job offers at several universities much closer to home, she took the position in AUM’s business school and commutes nearly three hours round-trip each day to AUM. The arrangement allows her to work where she feels she is most needed while, at the same time, her family doesn’t have to leave the close-knit community where they have put down roots.

“I thought I could be more effective here,” she said. “I wake up in the morning and am excited to come to work.”

That enthusiasm is contagious.

“Dr. Funches is a great asset to the university,” said Dr. Rhea Ingram, dean of the School of Business. “Her passion comes through in all that she does and she is admired by students and faculty alike. She could have worked anywhere – I am so glad she chose AUM.”
“It’s rewarding to know that I indirectly care for thousands, touching the lives of all the patients our students touch.”

Ramona Lazenby
At some point during childhood, most little girls toy with the idea of becoming a nurse when they grow up. Dr. Ramona Lazenby – who has taught nursing for nearly 30 years at Auburn Montgomery – meant it.

“For as long as I can remember, I have always wanted to be a nurse. I never considered anything else,” she said.

Ramona earned a nursing degree from the University of Alabama at Birmingham in 1980 and started out as a critical care nurse at Montgomery’s Baptist Medical Center South. She began assisting Auburn Montgomery nursing students with their clinicals and discovered a new passion.

“I loved the students,” she said. “I loved seeing them make that connection. It’s rewarding to know that I indirectly care for thousands, touching the lives of all the patients our students touch.”

Ramona began teaching classes in the AUM School of Nursing in 1984 and was hired as nursing lab coordinator in 1986. After earning a master’s degree in nursing from Troy University, she was hired on as a full-time member of the AUM faculty in 1989. She earned an Ed.D. in curriculum and supervision from Auburn University in 2004 and has been a certified family nurse practitioner since 1996. Today she serves as professor and associate dean of nursing.

Over the years, Ramona estimates she has taught roughly 3,000 nurses, including four who have gone on to become AUM nursing professors: Cam Hamilton, Ginny Langham, Allison Terry and Jud McCartha.

“Dr. Lazenby is an example to me of someone who constantly aspires to embody all that is positive about the profession of nursing,” said Allison Terry, Assistant Professor of Nursing. “She brings out the best in those of us who have the privilege of working with her. I consider her to be a daily role model for me, inspiring me to give the university and the profession my best just as she does.”

Ramona has written a textbook, “The Handbook of Pathophysiology,” which is used in medical and nursing programs across the U.S. She is also an accomplished researcher, publishing numerous journal articles in her fields of interest – pathophysiology, or disease processes, and end of life care.

Despite her academic success, Ramona has never gotten away from her first love – nursing. She continues to care for patients as a nurse practitioner on evenings and weekends for PPR Healthcare. She has also, on a personal level, added to the next generation of caregivers. She and her husband of 32 years, John, have three children who have inherited their mother’s nurturing spirit: Brittany, a nurse at Baptist Hospital East; Emily, a social worker; and Matthew, an accountant at ALFA. Her daughter-in-law, Mehgan, is a nurse practitioner; her son-in-law, Ben, is in medical school; and her other son-in-law, Jonathan, is an AUM student who works for a radiology group.

“Because of Dr. Lazenby’s example and influence many years ago, I chose to become a nurse educator,” said Ginny Langham, Assistant Professor of Nursing. “She continues to inspire me with her selfless demonstration of caring and nurturing others while exhibiting the ultimate characteristics of professionalism. She is an institution at AUM, embodying all that is best about nursing.”
## Ways To Give

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<tr>
<th>To Give</th>
<th>Do This</th>
<th>Savings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cash</td>
<td>Give by check or other means of giving cash.</td>
<td>Deduct gifts up to 50% of your adjusted gross income in any one year. Carry over any excess into as many as five tax years.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Securities</td>
<td>Send an unendorsed stock certificate in one envelope and a signed stock power form in another envelope. The gift is complete on the postmarked date of the later envelope.</td>
<td>Deduct the full current value of the stock and bypass any capital gains tax, which might be due on a sale. Deduct such gifts up to 30% of your adjusted gross income in any one year. Carry over any excess into as many as five tax years. Securities must be long-term (held longer than a year) to qualify for favorable tax treatment.</td>
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<td>Personal Property Given for a Related Use</td>
<td>Deed or deliver property to Auburn University Foundation.*</td>
<td>Deduct the current value of your cost in the asset, depending upon how the asset will be used. Inquire for details. Note: A qualified appraisal is required if you are claiming a charitable deduction of $5,000 or more.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Life Insurance</td>
<td>Name the Auburn University Foundation* as owner and beneficiary of a new or existing policy.</td>
<td>Take a deduction if you name a charitable owner and beneficiary. Inquire for details.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bequest</td>
<td>Include AUM in your will for a specific amount, a percentage of your estate, or a remainder gift after bequests to individuals have been paid.</td>
<td>Take an estate tax deduction for full value of your bequest to AUM.</td>
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* The Auburn University Foundation was established to receive charitable support for the benefit of Auburn University at Montgomery and Auburn University. This information is for illustration purposes only. Please consult your tax advisor for tax advice as it applies to your individual situation.
**Endowment Opportunities**

An endowment is a fund created by financial gifts that are permanently set aside for Auburn University at Montgomery by the Auburn University Foundation to provide benefits to students, faculty, or programs year after year, generation after generation. With any endowment, the principle is invested and only a certain percentage of the interest income may be used, with the remaining income being reinvested. In the current economic downturn — and with state funds dwindling each year — the importance of endowments only increases. Auburn University at Montgomery offers several endowment opportunities, all of which are vital to its mission.

The area of largest need is undergraduate student support ($4.7 million), which includes funds for academic and athletic scholarships as well as the university’s efforts in international education.

- **Named Endowed Presidential Chairs**: $5,000,000
- **Named Endowed Eminent Scholar Chairs**: $2,000,000
- **Named Endowed Faculty Chairs**: $1,000,000
- **Named Endowed Professorships**: $300,000 *
- **Named Endowed Graduate Fellowships**
  - (3-year Continuing Fellowship): $200,000
- **Named Endowed Graduate Assistantships**
  - (3-year Continuing Assistantship): $200,000
- **Named Endowed Presidential Scholarships**
  - (4-year Continuing Scholarship): $600,000 *
- **Named Endowed Tuition Scholarships**
  - (Academic and Athletic): $100,000
- **Named Library Endowments**: $10,000
- **Named Partial Scholarships, Awards and Other Special Endowments**: $25,000
- **Named Endowed Centers and Institutes**: Produce one-half of annual operating budget

*To be adjusted periodically.

Endowment levels approved by the Auburn University Board of Trustees on October 25, 1991, and adjusted on September 22, 1997, and February 7, 2003. Naming of buildings is covered by Board of Trustees policies and requires their approval.

**Wellness Center**

Located south of the Taylor Road entrance to campus, the Wellness Center serves as Auburn University at Montgomery’s front-door facility, providing a fresh, modern image for the University. The Wellness Center provides an exciting new gathering place for today’s fitness-conscious students and offers fitness memberships to the AUM community, including discounted memberships for Auburn University at Montgomery alumni and friends. Amenities include a swimming pool, workout facilities, a rock-climbing wall, a second-level running track that overlooks activities below, two multi-sport indoor courts, and a juice/smoothie bar. In addition, the center is the new home of the School of Education’s Department of Physical Education and Exercise Science and includes five classrooms, office space for faculty, and AUM’s state-of-the-art Human Performance Laboratory.

**Funds For Excellence**

Gifts to Auburn University at Montgomery’s Funds for Excellence will provide a source of funds that may be used to address emerging opportunities in a timely and efficient manner. Such ability is essential for Auburn University at Montgomery to remain competitive in today’s higher education market. The chancellor or any of Auburn University at Montgomery’s five schools may use these gifts to fund new academic programs, research, lecture series, visiting scholars or artists, equipment and study abroad opportunities.

Additionally, these funds may be used to support athletics, the university’s diversity efforts, and Auburn University at Montgomery’s new emphases on international education and international student recruitment.

**Academic Building**

Academic Building gifts are to provide support as Auburn Montgomery begins the foundation for building a new facility for teaching, research, and other university priorities. State-of-the-art classroom and science laboratory space will help the university attract highly qualified students and outstanding faculty and will position Auburn Montgomery to compete on a national level in both education and research.