The “Pentagon” comes to AAMU

DoD joins University in Black History Month celebration

In collaboration with Alabama A&M University (AAMU), the United States Department of Defense (DoD) will bring its annual “Taking the Pentagon to the People” program to Alabama Feb. 25-26 in an initiative aimed at motivating youths from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) to seek career opportunities in service academies.

Under the theme “Reaching Out to Youth: A Strategy for Excellence,” the DoD will combine its Black History Month observance with AAMU’s outreach activities in programs that will include over 200 area middle and high school students, and over 100 college and university students. Also expected at the two-day event are presidents and administrators of HBCUs, representatives of local DoD organizations and agencies including the Redstone Arsenal, local government officials and community leaders.

According to Mr. Clarence A. Johnson, principal director of DoD see “Pentagon”...continued on page 4

AAMU gets “Center of Excellence” designation

First HBCU to become watershed management hub

Interim President Edmond receives a plaque from Jim Giattina, Director, EPA Region 4 Water Management Division following the signing of the MOU. Also in the photo are from left, Dr. Tsegaye, Dr. Taylor, Dr. Merriweather Orok, and Trey Glenn, Director of ADEM.

It is a big job, but Alabama A&M University says it is up to the task. With 77,000 miles of rivers and streams in Alabama, the University, already a major player in clean water studies, must now work closely with state and local residents to find ways to improve the water quality in the region.

In a landmark agreement signed Jan. 29 between senior officials of AAMU, the DoD see “Center of Excellence”...continued on page 2
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM), the institution now becomes the first historically black university (HBCU) to be designated as a federal “Center of Excellence” in watershed management.

AAMU Interim President Beverly Edmond; Jim Giattina, EPA Region 4 Water Management Division Director; Trey Glenn, director of ADEM; Dr. Robert W. Taylor, dean of the School of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences; Dr. Teresa Merriweather Orok, vice president for Institutional Research, Planning and Sponsored Programs; and Dr. Teferi Tsegaye, director of the new Center, signed a joint memorandum of understanding to designate AAMU as a Center of Excellence in Watershed Management.

"This is a very exciting day for our institution," said Tsegaye, who is the chair of the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences. "By fostering interaction between watershed stakeholders, academia, affiliated agencies, and local and regional governments, we will involve students, staff and faculty in applying research that solves issues associated with watershed management at the watershed scale."

Giattina said the Center designation is “a well-earned” distinction that will be monitored and evaluated for its effectiveness, adding that AAMU’s designation as a center of excellence is part of his agency’s strategy for solving the water problem facing the nation. “We estimate that 36 states will experience some level of water shortage over the next decade,” he said.

ADEM’s Glenn noted that local stakeholders must play a key role in helping to sustain and protect water quality. Dr. Edmond said “those who populate this planet have an awesome responsibility to leave the planet better off than it is today.” She said the new Center offers AAMU a unique and great opportunity to serve because “universities must use their intellectual capital to benefit society."

Dr. Orok, who as VP for IRPSP heads the university’s research endeavors, sees the center of excellence designation as a major opportunity “to let others know the caliber of expertise and research going on” at AAMU. "This gives us an added incentive to do more in an area we are already heavily involved in to make our water supply safe," she said.

Watershed management involves the development and implementation of plans that protect and improve large-area water drainage that impacts plant, animal and human communities within a massive but defined watershed boundary. Among the parts of a watershed such centers attempt to study and manage are water supply, water quality, water rights, drainage, storm water runoff, and the overall planning and utilization of watersheds. These centers play a major role in pulling together the key players in watershed management, including landowners, land use agencies, environmental specialists, and many others.

Jerome Saintjones contributed to this story.
Mo’ Money!

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Water Resource Project” – Texas A&M University (Sub.); Prof. Joseph Lee, $700,000, Institutional Research, Planning and Sponsored Programs – “AAMU Neighborhood Housing and Community Partnership” - HUD; Dr. Donnie Cook, $671,195, School of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences – “Nutritional Education Program” – Auburn University (Sub.); Dr. Duncan Chembezi, $300,000 and $75,000, School of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences - “Community Outreach for Small and Limited Resource Farmers and Ranchers” and “Rural Entrepreneurial Program Outreach Initiative,” respectively - USDA; Dr. Cathy Qian, $272,169, School of Engineering and Technology - “Science Collaboration: HBCU Partnership”

at AAMU Continuing High Performance” - DOE; Dr. Amir Mobasher, $210,407, School of Engineering and Technology - “Human Powered Lunar Rover Design” – University of Alabama in Huntsville (Sub.); Dr. Yong Wang, $199,592 and $50,000, School of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences - “Partnership and Recruitment for 21st Century Professionals in Food Agricultural Sciences” and “Herpetofauna Response to Regeneration Treatment for Oak Upland Hardwood Forest,” respectively – USDA; Dr. Allison Young, $195,340, School of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences - “Preparing Underrepresented Minorities for Entrance into Family and Consumer Sciences” – USDA; Dr. Amy Winebarger, $128,301, School of Arts and Sciences - “Center for Integrated Space Weather Modeling” - Boston University

Prof. Eric Ohene-Nyako, $131,500 and $118,327, School of Education - “Science In Motion,” and “Technology In Motion,” respectively – DoEd; Dr. Tammy Alexander, $123,200, School of Business - “ALDOT DBE Supportive Services Programs” - ALDOT; Dr. Srinivasa Mentreddy, $124,269, School of Engineering and Technology - “Pigeonpea Project” – Tennessee State University (Sub.); Dr. Venkata Atluri, $123,200, School of Engineering and Technology - “Renaming Digital Assets” - Lockheed Martin.

Others are: Dr. Ermson Nyakatawa, $40,000, School of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences - “Enhancing Environmental Quality through Cotton Production Systems in the Tennessee Valley” – USDA; Dr. Tianxi Zhang, $30,000, School of Arts and Sciences - “MDH Simulation of Non-Flux Rope CMEs Associated with Impulsive SEP Events” – University of Alabama in Huntsville (Sub.); and Dr. Koy Cook, $9,740, School of Engineering and Technology - “BallonSat at AAMU” - University of Alabama in Huntsville (Sub.).

The “Mo’ Money!” column is dedicated solely to highlighting the efforts of scientists, researchers and other individuals who undertake scholarly endeavors that bring extramural funding to Alabama A&M University.
The two-day DoD observance includes the following:

- Technical Assistance Workshop
- Welcome and Awards Ceremony
- DoD/HBCU Leadership Symposium
- Middle and High School/College Career Exposition
- African American History Month Observance Luncheon

Office of Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity, the program is part of a Presidential Executive Order to develop and execute activities geared toward advancing equal opportunity in higher education for HBCUs and to strengthen the capacity of those institutions to participate in and benefit from federal programs.

Dr. Teresa Merriweather Orok, vice president of Institutional Research, Planning and Sponsored Programs, and AAMU’s point-person for the activities, called the selection of “our institution” a great opportunity to showcase the University’s capabilities. “Certainly, the selection of Alabama A&M University as the site for the DoD Black History Month activities in conjunction with our own activities is a positive step,” says Orok. “With the expected number of HBCU presidents and students from other institutions and visitors converging on our campus, this provides a great opportunity for them to get a closer look at the kinds of programs we offer.”

The two-day DoD observance will begin Wednesday, February 25, with a 10 a.m. technical assistance workshop in the Learning Resources Center auditorium designed to provide university administrators and students information on obtaining surplus equipment, contracts and grants.

The culminating event of the first day is a welcome and awards ceremony at 7 p.m. in the Ernest L. Knight Reception Center. The ceremony will host HBCU presidents and administrators; local government officials; and community members and organizations. It will also recognize military award recipients engaged in the global war on terrorism. This event, a reception, will be sponsored by Team Redstone.

A DoD/HBCU Leadership Symposium is scheduled for Thursday, February 26, from 8-11 a.m., in the Clyde Foster Multipurpose Room of the School of Business. Senior DoD officials and HBCU presidents will discuss critical minority representation issues.

Two concurrent sessions also will run from 9-11:30 a.m. on Thursday. A student exposition for middle and high school students will be held in the auditorium of the School of Engineering and Technology.

The session will include presentations about opportunities for appointments at service academies, ROTC entry, and civilian careers. Students will also have a chance to tour exhibits. A similar college student career symposium will be held in the Dawson Building auditorium. Additional exhibits will be located in the Ernest L. Knight Reception Center on Wednesday and Thursday.

The joint DoD-AAMU Black History Month observance will conclude with a luncheon in the Ernest L. Knight Reception Center at 12 noon for HBCU officials and students.
The Alabama Space Grant Consortium (ASGC), a participant in the National Space Grant College and Fellowship Program (NSGCFP), announces its 2009 scholarship program with the addition of “outreach” to the list of qualifiers for funding. The eligibility requirements for the previous three graduate, undergraduate and pre-service remain the same.

The award for the outreach program is $5,000 per year. The other awards are: $24,000 fellowship for qualifying graduate (master or doctoral) students; $1,000 scholarship for undergraduate students pursuing space-related fields of study; and $1,000 undergraduate teacher education scholarship for pre-service teachers in science and mathematics who are on track leading to teacher certification in a pre-college setting. The application deadline is March 2, 2009.

AAMU, one of the ASGC member institutions, is encouraging its students to take part in the scholarship programs. Professors are also encouraged to recommend students to apply for the scholarships.

Space-related fields include academic disciplines or fields of study in the areas of physical, natural and biological sciences; engineering; education; economics; business; sociology; behavioral sciences; computer science; communications; law; international affairs; and public administration.

The goal of the NSGCFP is to encourage interdisciplinary training and research in aerospace-related fields. Innovative methods of teaching and promoting science in K-12 schools within the state are also encouraged.

Applicants for the graduate fellowship, and the undergraduate and pre-service scholarships must be full-time students who are U.S. citizens, and must be currently enrolled in a program of study at one of the seven ASGC universities or show evidence of having met the graduate entrance requirements of the member institution in which the applicant proposes to enroll. Applicants must have a minimum grade point average of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale.

Applicants should submit seven packets (one original plus six copies) of all materials (cover sheet with signatures, abstract, description of research, schedule, budget, personal references, brief student resume, official transcript and copy of GRE scores) by March 1 to the campus director where the applicant expects to undertake studies for a degree program and carry out the research program or plan of study.

The Alabama Space Grant Consortium is composed of seven Ph.D. granting universities in Alabama: Alabama A&M University, Auburn University, the University of Alabama, the University of Alabama at Birmingham, the University of Alabama in Huntsville, the University of South Alabama and Tuskegee University. The Consortium Director and a Campus Director on each of the seven campuses constitute the Consortium Management Team.

The campus director for AAMU is Dr. V. Trent Montgomery, dean, School of Engineering & Technology. Contact him at Room 226, ETB, P.O. Box 1148, Normal, AL 35762; Phone: (256) 372-5560, Fax: (256) 372-5580, trent.montgomery@aamu.edu. For more information, contact the campus director or go to http://www.uah.edu/ASGC/ for undergraduate application. You can also contact Emmanuel Freeman in the AAMU Office of Institutional Research, Planning and Sponsored Programs at (256) 372-5684 or emmanuel.freeman@aamu.edu.
When Dr. Ernst Cebert traveled on a business trip to Uganda and Kenya recently, the Alabama A&M University biofuels expert had no idea that, while journeying to the beginnings of mankind, he would also sit beside the family source of one of the most powerful individuals in the world.

Born in Haiti, Cebert was invited to take his first trip to Africa by EcoVerdance, an environmentally-minded Georgia-based company committed to cleaning the earth’s atmosphere and ending world hunger. The company’s major thrust at carbon-dioxide reduction is the introduction of a natural plant growth enhancer in developing countries.

The AAMU researcher visited Ugandan and Kenyan farmers who had been applying the product and had experienced increased crop yields. Cebert was also interested in the effect of the growth enhancer on the jatropha plant, a much-touted and easily grown weed credited with producing oil at one-third the cost of crude and without the environmental headaches associated with ethanol.

After leaving farms in Uganda, where he also visited the source of the ancient south-to-north flowing Nile River, Cebert expressed interest in and was taken to Kogelo, the native village of the late father of Barak Obama, the man who would become president of the United States. Cebert only had intended to take pictures of the home of family matriarch and grandmother Sarah Obama from the road side, but he was summoned by the Kenyan security assigned to the family to come forward, to present his passport and then was taken directly to meet “Mama Sarah.”

The chance encounter was the culminating event for his 11-day visit to the beautiful, vast and troubled continent, but Cebert knew the experience would be special even before he had set foot on African soil.

“As the plane landed in Nairobi from Amsterdam,” recalled Cebert, thinking back to his first day, “I felt so emotional that tears dropped from my eyes … To be in the mother country only weeks after Obama became President of the United States … I felt privileged, like I was stepping into history.”
The accolades keep piling up for Dr. Duncan Chembezi. Recognizing his unparalleled contribution to cooperative extension, public service and outreach, the Southern Rural Sociological Association (SRSA) has given the coveted 2009 “Excellence in Extension and Public Service Award” to the widely sought-after professor of agribusiness.

The award follows Chembezi’s appointment late last year to a three-year term on the Advisory Board of the Council on Food, Agricultural, and Resource Economics (C-FARE), as well as on the Advisory Council of the Southern Region Risk Management Education Center (SRRMEC). In 2005, Dr. Chembezi was one of only 12 agricultural economists in the nation accorded the “Outstanding Black Agricultural Economist Award” by the American Agricultural Economics Association’s (AAEA) Committee on the Opportunities and Status of Blacks in Agricultural Economics (COSBAE). For his “Excellence” award, Chembezi, director of the Small Farms Research Center at AAMU, was recognized at the annual meeting of the Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists (SAAS) in Atlanta recently.

“It feels good to be recognized by your own peers,” a modest Chembezi said after receiving the award. “I congratulate Dr. Chembezi for his continuous hard work and dedication to the delivery of great services to citizens throughout the communities in Alabama,” commented Dr. Robert W. Taylor, dean of the School of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. As a member of SRRMEC advisory council, Chembezi is responsible for helping to set broad policy goals and priorities needed to evaluate and deliver effective risk management information to producers based on expected outcomes and to provide direction for timely, effective center management. The 12 members of the advisory council are appointed by representatives of the 29 land-grant institutions in 13 Southern states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

Chembezi’s appointment to both organizations is based on his much-acclaimed contributions to the agricultural economics profession and his work in community outreach and risk management education programming.
The School of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (SAES), faced with the urgent need to compete for and retain its academic talent, has established a new Recruiting and Retention Unit (RRU), as well as strategies to increase new student enrollment, with a first-year goal of at least 30%.

Fall '08 student enrollment data has shown that the SAES experienced a 33% increase (144) in freshmen enrollment from (101) 2007. In addition, there was a 4% increase in returning student enrollment in the School. This suggests that the new strategies of the RRU, coordinated by Dr. Taylor Byrd, Jr., have been highly effective.

"Historically, agricultural career programs have been less attractive to potential candidates, because of limited career marketing and the stigma associated with the era of labor intensive farming and the perceived image that agriculture is farming," states Byrd. With this in mind, the new recruiting approach utilizes state-of-the-art multi-media, face-to-face and personal telephone contacts, along with e-mail to inform its audiences that agriculture has changed drastically over the last 20 years. Agriculture is more than farming; it is a business and a science, Byrd says.

The Recruitment and Retention Team (RRT) consists of at least two scientists from each of the five SAES departments, and a representative from AAMU’s Office of Admissions. During scheduled outings, the RRT meets with parents, high school students, and/or counselors.

Emphasis is placed on the scientific, business, and high-tech, professional careers and job opportunities, which present a vast array of options from production agriculture, animal science, and governmental agencies, to bio-systems, forestry management, remote sensing, food safety, air and water quality, bio-fuels, community planning, nutrition, family studies, fashion design, hospitality management, plant pathology, food and environmental science, pre-veterinarian medicine, biotechnology, and other areas. Additionally, the Team underscores the fact that these areas also come with multi-level degree offerings, to include the B.S., M.S., M.Ed., and Ph.D. degrees.

Byrd says that although the more "traditional" job opportunities exist (e.g., governmental agencies, cooperative extension, real estate development, nonprofit organizations, community development corporations, and private industry), the RRT emphasizes preparing students to build communities through critical thinking, application of knowledge, effective communication, and to be productive functioning members of the global society.