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PRCM 3000

March 27, 2017

DR. JAY GOGUE REFLECTS ON TIME AT AUBURN

“Other universities have pretty buildings and sports, but what makes Auburn special is the people.” Dr. Jay Gogue sits in his office in the most iconic of Auburn buildings, Samford Hall. He is in the final months of his tenure at the university, and although he says he is looking forward to having more free time, he is not particularly excited about retiring from his role as president.

Gogue has worked in higher education administration for over 30 years, so he has become accustomed to spending the majority of his time serving students, faculty and alumni. “I’ve always gotten up every morning and gone to work. I guess I’m looking forward to having more free time to do the things I would not do normally,” says Gogue.

As an Auburn graduate himself, Gogue’s time at Auburn will not end upon his retirement. He plans to take a study leave to travel, golf and spend time with his family. He and his wife, Susie, are the parents of three children and have two grandchildren. He is not leaving Auburn, however, and will return to teach higher education administration courses after his sabbatical.

From a student perspective, Gogue’s tenure at Auburn has been positive. He has contributed to growth and success of the university. “Dr. Gogue is Auburn’s number one fan. It is his mission to see Auburn better in all aspects to make sure we are the most competitive, diverse, and well-rounded campus in the country,” says Cody Bass, a senior

in media studies who works in the Office of the President. Bass has worked alongside Gogue since the spring of 2016 and has become close to Dr. Gogue and his wife, Susie. “When Dr. Gogue and Mrs. Susie first got to campus, they saw many ways Auburn could improve. One of those ways was having a specific office especially charged with creating a positive representation of Auburn through hospitality. The Special Events Office plans events in support of the Office of the President and the Board of Trustees. This office has been a huge asset in making Auburn resemble a real family because of their professionalism and expertise of individuals and their needs,” says Bass.

While the students are impressed by Gogue’s time at Auburn, Gogue attributes Auburn’s success to them. “Students at Auburn are bright, courteous and want to do something with their lives,” he says. He says compared to other universities he has worked for and observed, the faculty are more interested and want to spend more time with students. He says this faculty engagement with students makes a remarkable difference and contributes to student success at Auburn. To further demonstrate this, the accreditation process to evaluate colleges and universities includes a question posed to alumni five years after graduation: “would you come back to your university and do it the same?” The question aims to answer if the alumnus is satisfied with their degree from Auburn and their field of study. “The rule of thumb for a state school is having 80 percent of your graduates say they’d come back and do it the same way,” explains Gogue. Comparable schools to Auburn such as Texas A&M University and Clemson University received 84 and 82 percent ratings respectively. “Ivy League school’s numbers typically score between 88 and 90 percent,” explained Gogue. “When I first came to Auburn, over 96 percent of graduates said they would come back to Auburn and do it the exact same

way,” he says. “My wife told me that no matter what I did, I could not mess up that score. We are not sure why that number is so high. It is an outlier among public universities. This may tell you more about Auburn than anything.”

He says his biggest goal at Auburn was to decentralize the university management. He aimed to give more power to each individual department to make decisions. “For example, the Political Science department should make decisions for its own department. It encourages growth and encourages faculty to take ownership of their jobs,” says Gogue.

His favorite experience during his tenure as president has been observing student achievement. “It has been remarkable to watch our students achieve,” he says. He is impressed with the amount of students who have been awarded post-graduate fellowships. “We have seen an increase in Truman, Gates-Millennium, Fulbright and Rhodes scholarships, for example. Ten years ago, we had about four students that would be recognized for this. Now we have about 40 students a year receive these awards,” he says.

Bass says Gogue has created tangible change during his time at Auburn. Upon reflecting on Gogue’s impression at Auburn, Bass remarks: “Dr. Gogue’s biggest asset is his ability to be a steward. He is a steward for all facets of campus and hosts everyone that is a part of the Auburn Family. Whether it is donor making a contribution because of his involvement with the Because This Is Auburn Campaign, hosting the public safety community of Auburn at his home for dinner, or even teaching a leadership class in the College of Liberal Arts, he makes it his mission to extend to every part of the Auburn family.”

Gogue knows that the future of Auburn is bright. He knows the quality of students will continue to increase under the leadership of the newly selected president, Dr. Steven Leath from Iowa State University. “We are extremely fortunate that the groups who come to campus to hire students are particularly positive about Auburn students. The value of a degree from Auburn continues to grow.”

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Bibliography

Biography. (2016, September 15). Retrieved March 31, 2017, from <http://www.auburn.edu/administration/president/bio.html>

The audience for this article would be primarily Auburn students, faculty and alumni.

This article could be published in the Plainsman, Opelika-Auburn News, AL.com or the university's website and social media platforms.