

**AUBURN UNIVERSITY**

Samuel Ginn College of Engineering

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Auburn Engineering faculty named to 2022 promotion, tenure list

Published: Mar 17, 2022 2:00 PM

By Cassie Montgomery

Auburn University Provost Bill Hardgrave announced the names of faculty who have been awarded promotion, tenure or both for 2022. The following Auburn Engineering faculty received promotions or tenure:

[David Scarborough \(https://eng.auburn.edu/directory/des0018\)](https://eng.auburn.edu/directory/des0018), assistant professor of aerospace engineering, was promoted to associate professor with tenure. His research interests are in the areas of acoustics, combustion, thermo-acoustic instabilities and related phenomena, energy recovery and conversion, and compressible reacting/nonreacting flows. Scarborough directs the Auburn University Combustion Physics Laboratory to identify and understand the underlying physical phenomena associated with solid, liquid and gas phase combustion processes. Before joining the Auburn faculty in fall 2015, Scarborough was a senior research engineer and lab manager at the Ben T. Zinn Combustion Lab in the School of Aerospace Engineering at

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[Lauren Beckingham](https://eng.auburn.edu/directory/leb0071) , assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering, was promoted to associate professor with tenure. Her research focuses on subsurface water-rock interactions for energy-related systems as well as traditional environmental engineering problems. Beckingham received the prestigious National Science Foundation CAREER award in 2019 for her environmental engineering work. In 2021, Beckingham became the first recipient of the Emerging Investigator award from the Journal of Applied Geochemistry and was also named a Ginn Faculty Achievement Fellow. With her promotion, Beckingham becomes the only tenured woman faculty member in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering and only the second woman in the department's history to be granted tenure. She joined the Auburn faculty in spring 2016 after completing a postdoctoral position at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. Beckingham earned her doctorate in civil and environmental engineering from Princeton University.

[Jack Montgomery](https://eng.auburn.edu/directory/jzm0090) , assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering, was promoted to associate professor with tenure. His research is focused on designing and improving methods to analyze the response of geotechnical infrastructure systems, including dams, slopes, levees and transportation networks, to natural hazards, such as earthquakes, sinkholes and rainfall. Montgomery is a recipient of the prestigious National Science Foundation CAREER award and has participated on post-earthquake reconnaissance investigations in Mexico City in 2017; Palu, Indonesia in 2018; and Petrinja, Croatia in 2020 through the NSF-funded Geotechnical Extreme Events Reconnaissance Association. Montgomery was named a Ginn Faculty Achievement Fellow in 2021. He is a member of several civil engineering professional associations and serves on the board of the United States Universities Council on

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[Adriana Vargas-Nordcbeck](https://eng.auburn.edu/directory/vargaad) , assistant research professor of civil and environmental engineering, was promoted to associate research professor. Vargas-Nordcbeck's research at the National Center for Asphalt Technology focuses on performance of pavement preservation treatments and optimal timing for treatment application. She also leads all pavement preservation experiments in addition to teaching select civil engineering courses and continuing education courses. Vargas-Nordcbeck is an active member of numerous industry associations and is a board member of the Southeast Pavement Preservation Partnership. Prior to joining the Auburn faculty in fall 2016, she was a researcher and professor at the University of Costa Rica. Vargas-Nordcbeck earned a doctorate in civil engineering from Auburn University.

[Fan Yin](https://eng.auburn.edu/directory/f-yin) , assistant research professor of civil and environmental engineering, was promoted to associate research professor. Yin is an Assistant Director at the National Center for Asphalt Technology (NCAT), where he is responsible for leading research programs and fostering client relationships. He has been leading NCAT's research efforts in balanced mix design and use of recycled plastics in asphalt as well as NCAT's testing service for the National Transportation Product Evaluation Program's warm mix asphalt evaluation. Yin joined NCAT as a postdoctoral researcher in 2016. He earned a doctorate in civil engineering from Texas A&M University.

[Bryan Beckingham](https://eng.auburn.edu/directory/bsb0025) , assistant professor of chemical engineering, was promoted to associate professor with tenure. His research focuses on exploring the relationships between polymerization chemistry, polymer architecture and the resulting material properties with the goal of advancing the thoughtful design of polymeric materials for targeted applications. In 2020, Beckingham became the first

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Polymer Science Early-Career Investigator Special Issue. Prior to joining the Auburn Engineering faculty in spring 2016, Beckingham was a postdoctoral fellow at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. He earned a doctorate in chemical and materials engineering from Princeton University.

[Zhihua Jiang](https://eng.auburn.edu/directory/zzj0012) (<https://eng.auburn.edu/directory/zzj0012>) , the Auburn Pulp and Paper Foundation Assistant Professor of chemical engineering, was promoted to associate professor with tenure. Jiang directs the Alabama Center for Paper and Bioresource Engineering at Auburn University, a dynamic response organization focused on the needs of the pulp, paper and allied industries. His research aims to establish a leading program in the engineering of lignocellulosic biomass, focusing on developing novel green and renewable functional materials. Jiang is an active member of several industry associations, including the Technical Association of the Pulp and Paper Industry, the American Institute of Chemical Engineers and the American Chemical Society and serves on the board of directors of the Auburn Pulp and Paper Foundation. He joined the Auburn faculty in spring 2016 after spending more than 20 years in the pulp and paper industry. Jiang earned a doctorate in organic chemistry from McGill University.

[Bo Liu](https://eng.auburn.edu/directory/bzl0056) (<https://eng.auburn.edu/directory/bzl0056>) , assistant professor of computer science and software engineering, has been promoted to associate professor with tenure. Liu directs the Computational Automated Learning Laboratory and his current research focus centers around trustworthy artificial intelligence, interactive machine learning and neural-symbolic artificial intelligence. Liu is a recipient of the Amazon Research Award in 2018 and the Tencent Rhino-Bird Research Award in 2017. Liu is a member of several industry associations and was recently elected as a senior member of IEEE, the world's largest technical professional organization for the advancement of technology. Liu joined the Department

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Jakita Owensby Thomas (<https://eng.auburn.edu/directory/jnt0020>) , the Philpott-WestPoint Stevens Associate Professor of computer science and software engineering, was awarded tenure. Thomas is the director of the CULTuRally & SOcially Relevant (CURSOR) Computing Lab at Auburn. Her research interests include exploring the development of computational algorithmic thinking, Intersectional Computing, promoting access to healthcare information and services for under-served populations, improving reasoning using expert use cases, scientific reasoning, complex cognitive skills learning and computer-supported collaborative learning. She is a recipient of the prestigious National Science Foundation CAREER award and is also a recipient of the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers. Prior to joining the Auburn faculty in 2016, Thomas was a member of the Computer & Information Science faculty at Spelman College. She earned a doctorate of computer science from the Georgia Institute of Technology.

Michael Zabala (<https://eng.auburn.edu/directory/zabalme>) , assistant professor of mechanical engineering, has been promoted to associate professor with tenure. Zabala leads the AUBE Lab, a state-of-the-art biomechanics lab that focuses on human performance and injury prevention and aims to identify, study and help solve complex biomechanical problems in fields such as ACL injury prevention, exoskeleton technology, prosthetics and orthotics. His primary research focus is on the biomechanics of human motion, performance and injury prevention. In 2020, Zabala's work on the "RE-INVENT" CPAP-to-ventilator conversion device received a Commendation of Auburn Faculty for Rapid Response to COVID-19 Solutions from the Auburn University Student Senate and plans for the device were shared globally. He is the founder of XO Armor, a startup company that produces custom 3D-printed sports pads and guards. Zabala

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Several lecturers in the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering also received promotion to senior lecturer. Those faculty members include: Mary Hughes, civil and environmental engineering; Eldon Triggs, aerospace engineering; Anahita Awasoufi, mechanical engineering; Jordan Roberts, mechanical engineering; Jeffrey Rice, chemical engineering; and William Horne, chemical engineering.

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Numerous Auburn Engineering faculty received promotion, tenure or both in 2022.

FEATURED FACULTY

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**David Scarborough**

Aerospace Engineering

[\(http://eng.auburn.edu/directory/des0018\)](http://eng.auburn.edu/directory/des0018)**Lauren Beckingham**

Civil Engineering

[\(http://eng.auburn.edu/directory/leb0071\)](http://eng.auburn.edu/directory/leb0071)

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**Jack Montgomery**

Civil Engineering

[\(http://eng.auburn.edu/directory/jzm0090\)](http://eng.auburn.edu/directory/jzm0090)**Adriana Vargas**

National Center for Asphalt Technology

[\(http://eng.auburn.edu/directory/vargaad\)](http://eng.auburn.edu/directory/vargaad)

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<http://eng.auburn.edu/directory/f-yin>

Fan Yin

National Center for Asphalt Technology

(<http://eng.auburn.edu/directory/f-yin>)



Bryan Beckingham

Chemical Engineering

(<http://eng.auburn.edu/directory/bsb0025>)

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**Zhihua Jiang**

Chemical Engineering

[\(http://eng.auburn.edu/directory/zzj0012\)](http://eng.auburn.edu/directory/zzj0012)**Jakita Thomas**Computer Science and Software
Engineering[\(http://eng.auburn.edu/directory/jnt0020\)](http://eng.auburn.edu/directory/jnt0020)

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**Michael Zabala**

Mechanical Engineering

[\(http://eng.auburn.edu/directory/zabalme\)](http://eng.auburn.edu/directory/zabalme)**Mary Hughes**

Civil Engineering

[\(http://eng.auburn.edu/directory/hughema\)](http://eng.auburn.edu/directory/hughema)

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**Eldon Triggs**

Aerospace Engineering

[\(http://eng.auburn.edu/directory/trigged\)](http://eng.auburn.edu/directory/trigged)**Anahita Ayasoufi**

Mechanical Engineering

[\(http://eng.auburn.edu/directory/aza0082\)](http://eng.auburn.edu/directory/aza0082)

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**Jordan Roberts**

Mechanical Engineering

[\(http://eng.auburn.edu/directory/roberj4\)](http://eng.auburn.edu/directory/roberj4)**Jeffrey Rice**

Chemical Engineering

[\(http://eng.auburn.edu/directory/jjr0033\)](http://eng.auburn.edu/directory/jjr0033)

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**William Horne**

Chemical Engineering

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Auburn Engineering earns 10 communications and marketing awards

Auburn Engineering's Office of Communications and Marketing recently earned 10 Educational Advertising Awards – the largest educational advertising awards competition in the country.

(<http://eng.auburn.edu/news/2024/03/educational-advertising-awards.html>)

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Senior in bioprocess engineering is college's only Matthews Scholar Program fellow for 2023-24

Jada Neal, an Auburn University Undergraduate Research fellow, is using biopolymers to find skin care solutions.

(<http://eng.auburn.edu/news/2024/02/senior-in-bioprocess-engineering-recognized-as-matthews-fellow.html>)



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What to expect on the 251st episode of the best podcast in all of higher education? How about the origin story of geotechnical juggernaut Brian Anderson, a full-scale infrastructure inspiration who's girding the loins of this nation's foundations.

(<http://eng.auburn.edu/news/2024/03/ginning-podcast-brian-anderson.html>)

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