

HISTORY OF ABRAHAM BALDWIN AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE

The history of Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College began on November 23, 1906 when delegations from Albany, Camilla, Pelham, Tifton, and Ashburn met in Albany to submit bids for a district agricultural high school.

Tift County's delegation went to Albany with 30 representatives. This small party included H.H. Tift, who is recognized as the founder of Tifton. The party went with \$32,000, raised by individual subscriptions from the people of Tift County, to secure the location of the Agricultural School for the Second Congressional District, to be decided upon by the Board of Trustees. The Tifton Gazette reported the meeting as follows:

"Soon after the opening of the afternoon session, at 3 o'clock, the bids were submitted, the counties being called in alphabetical order.

"Dougherty came first with an offer of \$20,000, 200 acres of land, an artesian well and free lights and water for ten years.

"Camilla offered to raise \$51,000 in cash, donate 300 acres of land, buildings and timber estimated at \$4,000 and free lights and water for five years.

"Pelham offered a choice of several fine tracts of land, free lights and water and a certified check for \$19,000. The clerk that read Pelham's first offer erroneously read its cash contribution as \$100,000. This brought both wide eyes and gasps from both the general congregation and Pelham's own delegation.

"Tift County's offer was 315 acres of land lying along the Georgia Southern and Florida right-of-way which was one mile north of town, and \$30,000 in cash. This offer was signed by 28 names of the Tift County delegation, citizens worth an aggregate of \$10 million.

"Ashburn's offer was 250 acres of land, lights and water for five years and \$45,000 in cash.

"When he rose to fill five minutes of the time allotted Tift County, Mr. Tift presented an amended bid of \$55,000 in cash, free lights and water and telephone service for 10 years, a sewage system and 315 acres of land worth \$50 per acre. Later, learning that the timber on the land was desired for forestry study, he contributed this also, it being valued at \$4,500. The raise of \$25,000 at a jump caused the audience to catch its breath.

"After the committee went into executive session, Pelham's bid was raised to \$32,500 in cash, Camilla's bid to \$58,000 in cash, and Ashburn's bid to \$60,000 in cash.

"Mr. Tift gave out of his own pocket, having subscribed \$6,500 before going to Albany, a total of \$36,400 in cash, the land, \$4,500 worth of timber, and a portion of the light and water offer. It was estimated in the committee room that Tifton's offer now netted \$95,700. Mr. J.L. Phillips gave the phone service.

"Mr. Tift was willing, out of his own means, to again raise Tifton's bid, but the committee did not think it just for him to do so.

"After the financial question was settled, it was a tug of war between the personal influence of Mr. Tift and Mr. Hand (from Pelham), and in the end, when Tifton's progressiveness, excellent record and prohibition were thrown into the balance, they (the Tifton delegation) won the fight, the high moral integrity of Tift County and her citizenship being the deciding straw.

"Inside the committee room, Tifton led every ballot, and in the fifth had eight, while Pelham reached seven, its high-water mark. Finally, in the eighth, Tifton received eleven, one more than necessary."

The Tifton Gazette proclaimed "The Hallelujah Day Has Come, Tifton Lands the A&M School." And thus was born what today has become a unique center of learning - Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College.

Construction of the facility on the 315 acres given by Captain Tift was to continue for the next year, while the board went about appointing a faculty for the school and determining a method of selecting students to attend the first session.

Then, on February 20, 1908, the Second District A & M School opened for its first classes which were filled with 27 students. Only boys were allowed to board during the first term, but girls in the surrounding Tiftarea attended classes. Opening day was declared a holiday by Tifton. Stores and the public school were closed. A special train was run from Tifton to the school, and some 1,200 people attended.

Built on the campus were two fine dormitories (Herring Hall and Lewis Hall) and an academic building (Tift Hall). During the construction of these buildings, the contractors built a long, narrow building to store tools. This building was used as a dining hall until 1910, when it was replaced with a large wooden dining hall.

Professor W.W. Driskell was chosen as the first principal and served until June, 1909. He was succeeded by Professor W.G. Acree, who served for one year. After Acree, Professor Samuel L. Lewis served two years as principal and was succeeded by Professor Jack Hart, who served as president until June, 1914.

In September, 1914, Lewis again was elected president and served until June, 1924.

Among the first students were many illustrious Georgians who milked cows, cooked, tended farms and worked in various ways to finance their education.

These were the days when an education at the high school level in rural America provided the beginning of the realization of many dreams. Great numbers of A&M alumni have succeeded in fields of medicine, public office, business and commerce, as well as in farming.

The first class to graduate from the new school did so on June 14, 1910. The members were Joel Davis and Maude Paulk of Tift County and Charles Hinson of Grady County.

With the improvement of high school education in the rural areas, the need for maintaining district high schools decreased. For years it had been felt that a senior state college for men was needed in the southern part of Georgia.

Through the influence of R.C. Ellis in the House and John Adams in the Senate, a bill creating the South Georgia A & M College was passed in 1924. The Second District A & M School was renamed the South Georgia A & M College and began the gradual transition from high school to college work. It was a four-year school. Lewis continued as president until 1929.

Another name change, which indicated the growth and broadening of the institution, occurred in 1929 when it became the Georgia State College for Men. Frank G. Branch was its first and only president, serving from 1929-1933.

The college had two divisions: Liberal Arts and Sciences, leading to the A.B. and B.S. degrees and the Division of Agriculture, leading to a B.S. in Agriculture. Candidates for either degree could major in commerce or in education as well as in the liberal arts or sciences.

During its brief four years, GSCM made much progress. It grew in student enrollment from 101 with a graduating class of six in 1929 to 345 with 33 seniors in 1932. The college was admitted to the Georgia Association of Colleges in 1932, receiving unqualified endorsement from the newly established Board of Regents to place it in definite relation to the other branches of the University System under the direction of the Chancellor.

Two publications, "The Rambler," the college yearbook, and the "Ram's Horn," the semi-monthly college paper, added to the new life of student activities. There were five fraternities and two sororities established on campus. In sports, Coach Orion Mitchell's football team won for themselves the title of "Fighting Rams" as they accumulated a score of 205 points to opponents' 45 in 1932. The basketball team came out with a respectable 75 percent win average.

On October 16, 1931, the Georgia State College for Men football team defeated the University of Miami 13-12. An Associated Press story about the game ran in the Oct. 17 edition of the Tifton Gazette. According to that account, Miami went in front on a touchdown run in the second quarter. Down 6-0, the Rams of GSCM took the lead when Mike Donehon intercepted a pass and ran 70 yards for a touchdown.

Still in the second quarter, the Rams expanded the lead when Sherman England blocked a punt on the Hurricanes' 2 yard line and recovered it in the end zone for another touchdown. Miami had a 13-yard TD run in the third period but GSCM was able to hold on for the victory. Coach Mitchell was the head coach for the GSCM team. Other teams on the schedule that season included Oglethorpe College and Fort Benning.

The depression years brought financial troubles to many of the old "district" schools and, in 1933 Governor Eugene Talmadge granted the newly formed Board of Regents of the University System "power to consolidate, suspend, or discontinue institutions, and merge departments."

Dr. Phillip Weltner, then Chancellor of the University System, had said that in deciding what to do about the college at Tifton that several things were apparent: here was a community vitally interested in having a college, here was a section of the state with agricultural problems particular to its own geography, and here in the guise of the Coastal Plain Experiment Station was a ready-made laboratory for agricultural classes.

Consequently, Georgia State College For Men was changed to a two-year college stressing agriculture and home economics, and the name was changed to Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College to pay honor to the first president of the University of Georgia and a Georgia signer of the U.S. Constitution. The change in college status was somewhat of a shock to the people of Tifton who were justly proud of the four-year college. However, as they had always done, as soon as the objectives of the college became known, the citizens rallied to its support and have been to a large measure responsible for its success.

The first president of the two-year college was Dr. J.G. Woodroof, who served as president from 1933-34. The enrollment at the time was 99. A year later, Dr. Woodroof was succeeded by Dr. George H. King, who served as president from 1934 until 1947.

During his 13-year tenure, student enrollment increased from 188 in 1934-1935 to 468 in 1947. The later class contained an overflow unit of 150 male students (including many veterans from World War II) located at Spence Field in Moultrie. Paul Gaines, who later became the ABAC Registrar, helped to guide the students at Spence Field.

President King had also been serving as director of the Georgia Coastal Plain Experiment Station since 1942, and now the expanding of the Experiment Station required his fulltime leadership. The Regents placed the Station under the University of Georgia. In 1940, Tom Cordell was named dean and director of adult education. In 1947, the Regents named George P. Donaldson president of ABAC.

During the next 14 years, ABAC grew rapidly in student enrollment, faculty personnel and physical plant. The 616 students enrolled in 1961 showed a marked increase from the 468 in 1947. Through the help of the state administration and the Board of Regents, the physical plant was enlarged to accommodate these students. The additions from 1948-53 included a dormitory for girls (Creswell Hall), a modern shop building (AET), a new science building (Gray Hall), an adequate water system, and a new central heating system to replace the old potbelly stoves located in each room. The college also received a special allotment for the purchase of 109.6 acres of farm land during this period.

In December 1953, the college was admitted to the Southern Association of College and Secondary Schools. This recognition permitted Baldwin graduates to transfer to other colleges in the nation and in foreign countries without losing credits. The Board of Regents again granted permission for broadening the courses of instruction. Added this time was a Secretarial Science Department and a course in Farm Equipment Sales and Service. The Farm Equipment course was offered at only seven colleges in the United States.

During the next three years a modern Home Management House (Moore Building) was built on campus and the auditorium and gymnasium (Howard, Thrash) were remodeled. Construction began on an annex to Weltner Hall and a Rural Life Building, which was located on the site now occupied by the Carlton Center. The Rural Life Building was provided through the Governor's Emergency Fund.

President Donaldson also formed the first fundraising arm of the college in 1954, the Greater Baldwin Foundation. He wanted a way for businessmen to donate money to provide typewriters for the college secretarial science program.

At the anniversary celebrated in 1958, all these evidences of growth were observed. The enrollment that year was 492, the largest in 50 years. A favorite gathering place for students was the Log Cabin. Students could dance and listen to music.

The Short Course Program, begun in 1940 under the direction of Cordell, continued to grow in pace with the college. By 1958 over 55,000 people had attended the more than 50 short courses offered each year.

In the fall of 1960 Baldwin College was approved to be the first junior college in the state to offer Distributive Education courses through the Business Administration Division. The addition of this program was one more accomplishment by "Mr. Pete" before he retired in 1961.

Dr. J. Wilson Comer became president of Baldwin in July, 1961. Dr. Comer continued as president until his untimely death in December, 1963. During his administration, Dr. Comer reorganized the college into formal academic and administrative divisions to provide for growth and efficiency as the impact of the "population explosion" swelled.

Innovations to improve communications included a weekly administrative bulletin (now known as the *FOCUS*), publication of a student handbook, a faculty-staff social committee, a unit of GEA, and a women's group---the "Dames Club." For the first time academic regalia was worn at Commencement.

Several new buildings that were being constructed as "Mr. Pete" retired were accepted including the Baldwin Memorial Library, the dining hall, and a new men's dormitory (Comer Hall). Plans were also initiated for several other buildings.

Of great importance to President Comer were his plans for the Self-Study (for accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools) that would allow ABAC to expand its growth with fine quality instruction. Committees were appointed and had begun work during his lifetime. Dr. Comer believed in a beautiful environment for faculty and students. A horticulturist himself, he initiated plans for a college nursery and greenhouses.

One of his more modern innovations at ABAC was the installation of data processing equipment which served as the foundation for a Center for Automation. By the time of his death in December, 1963, Dr. Comer had envisioned the enlarging role ABAC should play as the unique college of all the units within the University System.

Dean Tom Cordell was appointed Acting President by the Board of Regents. During his interim until August, 1964, he continued to hold fast to the growth and development ABAC was experiencing. By the time Dr. J. Clyde Driggers reported for duty as the new President in 1964, the Self-Study was well underway and the addition to the Science and Classroom Building (Britt Hall), the Infirmary and the new gym (Gressette) were approved.

President Driggers was a dynamic leader who led the college to greater recognition, not only nationally but internationally. His leadership sparked the college into becoming Georgia's largest residential junior college with 2,143 students in 1972 and increased the college physical plant value to more than \$13 million.

Soon after taking office, President Driggers refined the organizational structure of the college to fulfill many emerging needs. Four mid-level administrators started reporting directly to the President. An Advisory Council to the President gave opportunity monthly to all faculty and staff for representative views.

Faculty and staff committees became more active in making plans for the various functions of the college. An Academic Assembly was formed to provide a formal voice for recommending ideas for growth and development. The Student Government Association and the Student Judiciary became realities as well. All in all, the administrative and academic structure for students, faculty, and staff solidified into an active, workable organization.

Accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in 1965 brought great satisfaction; yet it pointed out the need for continued study in order to keep abreast of new developments in the various fields of study. Consequently the majority of the faculty and some of the staff took advantage of leaves-of-absence or in-service training. Many faculty members now held doctorate degrees or had several months formal study in their respective fields at various universities in Georgia and abroad.

All six of the academic divisions expanded curriculums but of special interest was the growth of the Law Enforcement, Social Work, Horticulture, Wildlife, Music, Art, Secretarial, Home Economics, Data Processing, and Nursing Education programs, the latter of which guaranteed an

automatic commission in the U.S. Air Force or Army. In Adult Education and Public Services, the short course program was adapted to include night study for non-credit and credit. The Police Academy, established in 1970, continued to give immeasurable service to the State in the training of officers already in service for surrounding communities.

The physical plant also expanded during the 1970s. Several new dormitories were built (Mitchell, Branch, Fulwood, Chandler), several classroom buildings (Bowen, Conger), the Student Center (Branch Student Center), and the Chapel of All Faiths, also called the Driggers Lecture Hall. The building of the Chapel was quite an undertaking. President Driggers even wrote a book about it, "It Took A Miracle." The book detailed the many trials and tribulations the college went through to secure private funding.

Tractor pulls were very popular on the campus during the 1970s and 1980s. Jimmy Grubbs drove the ABAC pulling tractor called "Cracker Jack," sponsored by the AET Club. The pulls attracted thousands of spectators. Jesse Chambliss, Wright Crosby, and other instructors in the AET program assisted the club.

During his tenure, President Driggers hired the college's first full time Director of Public Relations, former student body president Tyron Spearman. President Driggers passed away in 1975. Dean Tom Cordell again served as acting president.

Dr. Stanley Anderson was selected as the ABAC president in 1975. Through his leadership, the college again greatly expanded its facilities and programs. During Anderson's first quarter at ABAC, the college experienced its largest enrollment to that date with 2,658 students.

Among his primary accomplishments at ABAC were the pursuit of academic excellence and the emphasis on quality education. Another area which Anderson touched was the beautification of the campus. He was responsible for the construction of the Baldwin Memorial Gardens which included a Gazebo. He actually planted many of the original flowers in the Gardens himself.

The Yow Building (Forestry/Wildlife) opened in 1980. The building was named for Vernon Yow, a longtime Professor of Forestry and a former Dean of Men. The 1980s also marked a significant achievement for the paving plans -- all student and faculty parking lots were blacktopped.

On March 6, 1982, Coach Donnie Veal's basketball Stallions defeated Gainesville 67-77 in Gressette Gym for the NJCAA Region XVII title. The Stallions then lost to Miami Dade in a national playoff game in Lake City, Fla. It proved to be the last state basketball championship for the Stallions before the program was dropped in 2008.

Under the leadership of Director of Student Publications Helen Strickland, the student newspaper called "The Stallion" gained tremendous attention for the college, being named the top junior

college paper in the state for many years. Strickland was also the advisor to the campus yearbook, "TABAC," which continued publication through 1984.

In 1984, ABAC won its first women's basketball state championship when Coach Keith Barr and the Fillies claimed the title in Gressette Gym. The Fillies finished seventh in the national tournament in Senatobia, Miss.

ABAC won its first national championship in any sport in 1984 when Coach Norman "Red" Hill and his team captured the National Junior College Athletic Association men's tennis title.

Dr. Anderson also placed much emphasis on ABAC's Development, Public Relations and Alumni programs. Melvin Merrill was hired as the Director of Development in 1978, Mike Chason as the Director of Public Relations in 1979 and Nancy Coleman as Director of Alumni Relations in 1984.

When Dr. Anderson retired on December 31, 1985, Academic Dean Frank Thomas served as interim president from January 1 through March 31, 1986.

President Wayne Curtis came to Abraham Baldwin on April 1, 1986. He brought his business school savvy along with him which sparked an aggressive marketing strategy for the college. He commissioned an image study designed to determine how the institution was perceived by various factions. Students, faculty, staff, employers of graduates, high school counselors, and area citizens participated in the study. From this study, a new marketing and promotional strategy was developed for the institution. New brochures and student search pieces were developed. A toll-free number for prospective students was established. A direct mail campaign was also developed that was based upon interest surveys purchased from SAT and ACT lists.

A strategic plan was also developed during the Curtis era. The goals and objectives of the college were written down, prioritized, and a means for achieving them developed. President Curtis also started the Enrichment Program. It began as an effort to attract youth to the campus, particularly during the summer. Evening and off-campus programs were also emphasized. Dr. Curtis also established the ABAC Ambassadors' program.

The ABAC Incentive Program was also developed during this time. When the program was initiated, it received widespread publicity; articles were written in "USA Today" and the "Chronicle of Higher Education." Over 600 students received help from this program. The program provided free tuition donated by the ABAC Foundation for one course for individuals who have not attended college within the past five years and have no more than 40 college quarter hours. They must also have been out of high school for at least five years. Dr. Curtis resigned, effective June 30, 1988, to become president of a bank in Alabama.

Dr. James A. Burran, Vice President and Dean of Academic Affairs, served the college as Acting President from July 1, 1988 through September 30, 1989. Under his leadership, the momentum

began during Dr. Curtis' tenure continued. Enrollment continued to increase and two new programs, Turfgrass Equipment Management and Golf Course Management, were introduced. During his tenure as Acting President, Dr. Burran also continued to strengthen the link between the college and the community. Burran was later selected as President of Dalton State College.

Dr. Harold J. Loyd was named President of Abraham Baldwin effective October 1, 1989. This was the first time since Dr. George P. Donaldson was named President in 1947 that someone from within the ranks of the faculty was selected to serve as President. The faculty and staff were quite enthusiastic with the selection. Dr. Loyd first joined the faculty in 1971 and was named Chairman of the Division of Business Administration in 1975. He also served as the Coordinator of Evening and Off-Campus Courses from 1986 until he took over as President. Dr. Loyd brought to the office of President an enthusiasm and a "love for ABAC" that few presidents could match.

Under his leadership the marketing strategy for the college continued and broadened. Enrollment continued to increase for 22 consecutive quarters until the summer of '93. Dr. Loyd believed that ABAC's customers--the students--were the V.I.P.'s on campus, and he believed in the special spirit that exists at Abraham Baldwin. He continued to promote that special spirit and the friendliness that exists between the faculty, staff, and students.

During his time as president, Dr. Loyd established a much needed Job Placement Center within the office of Counseling and Testing. Two external degree programs were approved for the Moultrie Center, and four-year degrees and graduate degrees were offered for the first time on the ABAC campus by nearby universities. Under his direction, the Strategic Vision for the college was updated, and Dr. Loyd accepted the challenge to communicate the vision of the college as embodied in the plan to all aspects of the college and to all of those who it serves.

The college took a tremendous jump in enrollment during Dr. Loyd's tenure, reaching an alltime high of 2,851 in the 1992 fall quarter. Enrollment declined slightly with the start of the semester system in 1998, but then began climbing again. Many new faculty, staff, and administrative positions were established.

Dr. Loyd also gave new life to the ABAC Foundation as he spent many hours talking to friends and alumni of the college about opportunities to set up scholarships. Membership in the Foundation's President's Club climbed at a rapid rate.

Dr. Loyd's 1994 endeavor was a fundraising campaign for a building in Moultrie to house Moultrie classes. The campaign was a great success, raising over \$220,000. The renovated building in Moultrie opened for classes during the 1997 spring term. The college actually began offering classes in Moultrie in 1987 at Moultrie Tech and the Moultrie Library. Longtime history professor and Moultrie Coordinator Merle Baker was instrumental in helping to secure funding for the new building as well as Melvin Merrill. This new building increased enrollment in Moultrie significantly. It is called ABAC on the Square.

J.G. Woodroof Scholars during this time period, recognized as the top academic student at ABAC at Honors Day, included Amy Denise Welsh in 1996, Tracy Lynn Chason in 1997, and Patricia D. Giddens in 1998.

Dr. Loyd also authorized two additional staff members in the admissions office to serve as recruiters in north Georgia and additional funds for a parttime recruiter in south Georgia. Under his leadership, ABAC gained two new majors, hospitality management and poultry technology. The college also offered courses in golf and grounds management at Sea Island on the Georgia coast. It was called ABAC on the Island.

At the 1999 Honors Day ceremony, Suzanne Evans, an English major from Tifton, was named the J.G. Woodroof Scholar. Faculty/staff award winners were Michael J. Curry, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Award for Teaching Excellence; and Mike Williams, Roy R. Jackson Award for Staff Excellence. The graduation speaker for the spring 1999 commencement ceremony was Georgia Secretary of State Cathy Cox, who was a member of the ABAC Class of 1978.

Coach Norman Hill won another national championship in men's tennis for ABAC in 1999 when his team captured the national crown on Hill's last day at ABAC before retirement. The college also won three national championships in women's slow pitch softball under the direction of three different coaches, Ellen Vickers (1991), Greg Tanner (1995), and Donna Campbell (1996).

When Dr. Loyd retired on July 31, 2000, ABAC came under the direction of Interim President Homer Day from August 1, 2000 to June 30, 2001. Dr. Day joined the college staff in 1972 and served in a variety of roles, including Director of Financial Aid and Director of College Services. He served the college admirably. On his last day before retirement, he spent the day working in the fields on the J.G. Woodroof Farm.

At the 2001 Honors Day ceremony, Mary H. Spurlock, a business information technology major from Moultrie, was named the J.G. Woodroof Scholar. Faculty/staff award winners were Nancy Scott, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Award for Teaching Excellence; Teresa Williams, Roy R. Jackson Award for Staff Excellence; Wasdon Graydon, E. Lanier Carson Award for administrators; and Lorie Felton, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Excellence in Advising Award.

The featured speaker for the 2001 spring graduation ceremony was Michael L. Thurmond, Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Labor.

Michael F. Vollmer became the ninth president in the history of ABAC on July 1, 2001. He was a Pennsylvania native who was graduated from Greensboro (N.C.) College. He received his law degree from John Marshall Law School in Atlanta.

Vollmer had served in state government for the previous 20 years. He was the first executive director of the HOPE Scholarship Program and the first executive director of the Pre-Kindergarten Program. Prior to taking over the ABAC presidency, Vollmer served as the Director of the Office of Educational Accountability.

President Vollmer was a true visionary. He mapped out plans for new buildings at the college, including a new Agricultural Sciences building, a new Health Sciences building, and the Pedestrian Mall.

Vollmer's first year as president was a very active one. The college opened the new Environmental Horticulture Building on August 15, 2001. The Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia also agreed to put Tift, Lewis, and Herring halls on the renovation list for a \$10 million renovation project at some point in the future. The college also received the \$1 million Forest Lakes Golf Club as a gift from Tifton ophthalmologist Larry Moorman and his wife, Debra, in January, 2002.

In March, 2002, Coach Julie Conner's basketball Fillies won the NJCAA Region XVII title for only the second time in ABAC history. The Fillies then lost the national tournament playoff game to Louisburg in Gressette Gym.

Vollmer also pushed hard for four-year degrees to be offered on campus. As a result, Valdosta State offered the junior classes, senior classes, and graduate classes necessary to obtain an undergraduate and graduate degree in education, Macon State offered the junior and senior level classes necessary to obtain a B.S. in information technology, and Georgia Southwestern offered all classes necessary to obtain a bachelor's degree in either accounting or management. Albany State also offered the classes necessary to obtain a master's degree in business administration on the ABAC campus.

At the 2002 Honors Day Ceremony, Leslie Ann Parrish, an animal science major from Savannah, was named the J.G. Woodroof Scholar. Faculty/staff award winners were Geoff Clement, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Award for Teaching Excellence; Van McGriff, Roy R. Jackson Award for Staff Excellence; Mike Chason, E. Lanier Carson Award for administrators; and Rebecca Arnold, Excellence in Advising Award.

ABAC broke ground on the \$7.1 million Ag Sciences building on April 6, 2002. The spring commencement ceremony featured Anna Marie Brown, an Early Childhood Education graduate at the ceremony, as the guest speaker.

The college had a "concrete cracking" to signal the beginning of the construction of the \$1.5 million Pedestrian Mall on August 5, 2002. John Hunt, an ABAC alumnus and a member of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, led the way with a sledge hammer. The ribbon was also cut to open the \$1 million Red Hill Athletic Center on August 27, 2002.

ABAC celebrated its 3000th student with a ceremony on the front steps of Tift Hall on September 12, 2002. Mande Smith was the 3000th student at ABAC. The fall 2002 commencement speaker was Regent John Hunt.

The college opened the first phase of the Pedestrian Mall at Homecoming on April 5, 2003.

At the 2003 Honors Day Ceremony, Jeanine Dorminey, a mathematics major from Tifton and a member of the Fillies' basketball team, was named the J.G. Woodroof Scholar. She was also the

speaker at the 2003 spring commencement ceremony. Faculty/staff award winners at Honors Day 2003 were Catherine Rogers, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Award for Teaching Excellence; Fran Kinchen, Roy R. Jackson Award for Staff Excellence; Bernice Hughes, E. Lanier Carson Award for administrators; and Pattie Clark, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Excellence in Advising Award.

In 2003, ABAC experienced its largest spring term enrollment, largest summer term enrollment, and began instituting a Maymester. ABAC opened Phase Two of the Pedestrian Mall on October 14, 2003, with Chancellor Thomas Meredith cutting the ribbon. The college also experienced its highest enrollment ever with 3,407 students during the 2003 fall term.

Beginning in the fall of 2003, the University of Georgia began offering all junior and senior level classes necessary to obtain a four-year degree in Agri-science and environmental systems in Tifton. In the spring of 2004, UGA began offering all junior and senior level classes necessary for an agriculture education degree in Tifton, and in August of 2005, UGA began offering all graduate classes leading to a master's degree in agricultural leadership.

Vollmer instigated the idea for a new campus sign system and helped to secure funding for two electronic signs which were turned on for the first time on November 5, 2003. Congressman Sanford Bishop and ABAC student Pippa Mpunzwana were the featured speakers for the December 16, 2003 commencement ceremony.

Vollmer and the ABAC Foundation developed the idea for the \$32 million ABAC Place apartments. All 835 students housed in the 14-acre complex have private rooms. Vollmer drove a bulldozer to break ground for ABAC Place on June 23, 2003. The first phase opened on January 9, 2004.

Vollmer also drove a backhoe to start the demolition of Chandler Hall on January 27, 2004. On the same day Chancellor Meredith cut the ribbon to officially open the new Agricultural Sciences Building. On February 18, 2004, ABAC celebrated its 400th student during any one semester at ABAC on the Square in Moultrie, Stephanie Withrow. The event was coordinated by ABAC on the Square Director Kay Powell. The college kicked off Phase Three of the Pedestrian Mall project at Homecoming on April 3, 2004.

At the 2004 Honors Day Ceremony, Jennifer Raynor, a nursing major from Fitzgerald, was named the J.G. Woodroof Scholar. Faculty/staff award winners were Joy Shurley, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Award for Teaching Excellence; Duane Weeks, Roy R. Jackson Award for Staff Excellence; Kay Powell, E. Lanier Carson Award for administrators; and Sue Wilson, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Excellence in Advising Award.

The 2004 spring commencement speaker was Joel McKie (Class of '04), National FFA organization vice-president for the southern region in 2002. The first three signs of the new campus outdoor sign system were installed July 14, 2004. On August 1, 2004, ABAC privatized its physical plant by contracting with Sodexo. The company took over all grounds maintenance, custodial, and physical plant duties.

The “glass-breaking” for the new Health Sciences Building was held on September 1, 2004. The “glass-breaking” involved Tift Regional Medical Center CEO Bill Richardson using a backhoe to crash through a window at the Moore Building, which was demolished along with Creswell Hall to make way for the new Health Sciences Building. Tift Regional committed \$1 million to the project.

The official grand opening for ABAC Place was held on September 23, 2004, with a speech by Chancellor Meredith.

Ironically, the dedication ceremony came after Vollmer left ABAC to become Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education on September 15, 2004. Vollmer will be long remembered as an ABAC President who accomplished a great deal in a relatively short period of time.

At the opening of ABAC Place, Meredith dedicated the John Hunt Town Center in honor of ABAC alumnus and Board of Regents member John Hunt, who passed away in 2003. Hunt’s wife, Julie, also an ABAC alumnus, took his place on the Board of Regents.

Vice President for Student and Enrollment Services Tom Call was named Interim President of ABAC, beginning September 15, 2004. He joined ABAC as a faculty member in the Division of Agriculture and Forest Resources in 1981. He entered the administrative ranks as the ABAC Registrar in 1996.

Call spoke at the dedication ceremony for the Steinway Grand Piano donated by the Stafford Foundation on September 21, 2004. He was also the featured speaker at the Sunbelt Expo Exhibitors’ Luncheon on October 19, 2004. ABAC was the featured exhibitor at the 2004 Expo and was honored for developing the farm show on its campus in the mid 1960s.

A new phone system went into effect at ABAC on November 16, 2004. Dr. Chrystle Ross, Executive Director of the Office of Information Technology, was the key person in the changeover from regular phone lines to Voice Over Internet Protocol.

In November, 2004, Call officially requested State College status for ABAC, paving the way for the college to offer four-year degrees of its own in Diversified Agriculture and Turfgrass and Golf Course Management. The University System gave ABAC approval to continue to develop its plans for State College status in April, 2005 but did not give the official sanction for State College status until May 16, 2006.

Fulwood Hall, Mitchell Hall, and Branch Hall were razed in the fall of 2004. Nancy Lott, a Nursing Honor graduate, was the featured speaker for the fall 2004 commencement ceremony.

Creswell Hall and the Moore Building were razed in the winter of 2005 to make way for the Health Sciences Building. ABAC brought back golf to the athletics’ program after a 10-year absence in the fall of 2005 with Herb Hendrix as coach.

A Board of Regents' study showed ABAC had an overall \$110 million annual impact on the south Georgia area in January, 2005. Construction on the Health Sciences Building began in February, 2005. Sodexo replaced Aramark as the ABAC food services provider on July 1, 2005.

At the 2005 Honors Day Ceremony, Kaedy Cawthon, an Early Childhood Education major from Jackson, was named the J.G. Woodroof Scholar. She was also the speaker for the 2005 spring commencement ceremony. Faculty/staff award winners at Honors Day were Dr. Kay Weeks, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Award for Teaching Excellence; Pathelyn Smith, Roy R. Jackson Award for Staff Excellence; Diane Kilgore, E. Lanier Carson Award for administrators; and Joy Shurley, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Excellence in Advising Award.

The college experienced another all time enrollment record in the fall of 2005 with 3,423 students from 149 Georgia counties, 16 other states, and 17 countries.

On November 30, 2005, Interim Chancellor Corliss Cummings charged the ABAC Presidential Search and Screening Committee with the task of finding ABAC a new president. Alumnus William Bowen, Jr., chaired the committee. Interim President Call issued a charge to the college's 100th birthday celebration committee on December 1, 2005 with Public Relations Director Mike Chason as chair. The 2005 fall commencement speaker was State Senator Joseph Carter.

The Master Plan for ABAC was approved by the Board of Regents after a presentation by Interim President Call and Master Plan Committee Chair Mike Chason on January 10, 2006. The plan called for extensive changes to the physical face of the campus including a new Perimeter Road and moving the Physical Plant facility.

At the 2006 Honors Day Ceremony, Michael Maw, a double major in Agronomy and Agricultural Communication from Tifton, was named the J.G. Woodroof Scholar. Faculty/staff award winners were Dr. Herbert Shippey, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Award for Teaching Excellence; Janice Payne, Roy R. Jackson Award for Staff Excellence; Bertha Daniel, E. Lanier Carson Award for administrators; and Dr. Luke Vassiliou, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Excellence in Advising Award.

Governor Sonny Perdue was the guest speaker at the spring graduation ceremony on May 9, 2006.

After months of searching and interviews, the Board of Regents named Dr. David C. Bridges as ABAC's 10th president on May 11, 2006. Bridges became the first alumnus ever to serve as president. The Parrott native was a member of the Class of 1978. He received his undergraduate and graduate degrees from Auburn University and his Ph.D. from Texas A&M University. He spoke to an enthusiastic ABAC crowd on the front steps of Tift Hall on the afternoon of May 11, 2006. His wife, Kim, is also an ABAC alumnus. In fact, they met in Rosalyn Donaldson's English class on the ABAC campus.

Trisha Yearwood performed for over 1,800 patrons at the largest Dollars for ABAC Scholars event in its history on May 12, 2006. Yearwood's father, Jack, was an ABAC alumnus. Assistant Development Director Betty McCorvey coordinated the event.

President-Elect Bridges and Interim President Call returned to the front porch of Tift Hall on May 17, 2006 for a celebration party when ABAC was named a State College by the Board of Regents. The announcement actually came at 2:03 p.m. on May 16, 2006 at the Regents' meeting in Atlanta. Interim President Call was in Atlanta for the historic announcement.

Call walked out of the president's office into retirement on June 30, 2006. He became the longest serving interim president in ABAC's history.

Bridges' first official day on the job was July 1, 2006. He became the first ABAC president to be formally inaugurated in an impressive ceremony on August 25, 2006 in Gressette Gym. The ceremony attracted presidents and representatives from 17 other colleges and universities. Bridges called it "a day I will never forget."

During his first year as president, Bridges evaluated every area of the college and set the stage for many changes. He announced a record enrollment at his first day of class press conference on August 21, 2006 of 3,574 students from 10 states, 11 countries, and 153 Georgia counties. He kicked a soccer ball into the net at the E.B. Hamilton Complex on August 26, 2006 to signal the opening of the first ever women's intercollegiate soccer season at ABAC. Under the direction of Coach Jimmy Ballenger, the Fillies recorded a first year record of 9-5-1.

Bridges was the keynote speaker when ABAC opened the \$7.2 million Health Sciences building on September 20, 2006. Tift Regional Medical Center provided \$1 million toward the construction of the building which involved a public-private partnership with the ABAC Foundation.

For the first time ever, the WALB-TV news team from Albany broadcast its evening newscast live on the ABAC campus on October 5, 2006. On October 23, 2006, Bridges and ABAC Foundation Board of Trustees Chair Ruth Raines pushed a plunger to set off a small charge of dynamite to signal the groundbreaking on the ABAC Lakeside apartments project on the north shore of Lake Baldwin.

On November 30, 2006, the groundbreaking ceremony for the soccer field/intramural fields project was held. A helicopter loaded with soccer balls flew over the ABAC intramural field and Public Relations Administrative Associate Pam Leonard pushed out the balls to signal the beginning of the groundbreaking on the \$1 million first phase of the project.

John Ellington (Class of '80), Judge for the Court of Appeals of the State of Georgia, served as the fall 2006 commencement speaker.

Under the direction of Coach Todd Sheppard, the men's basketball team at ABAC won the most games in the history of the program during the 2006-2007 season with a record of 27-5.

ABAC kicked off its 100th birthday celebration at the Homecoming luncheon on March 31, 2007 with a parade of students holding lighted birthday cakes and a short play which told the story of the bidding ceremony for the A&M School. Alumni Director Nancy Coleman coordinated the event.

At the 2007 Honors Day Ceremony, Casey Allison, a business administration major from Dahlonga, was named the J.G. Woodroof Scholar. Faculty/staff award winners were Beth Thornton, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Award for Teaching Excellence; Pam Leonard, Roy R. Jackson Award for Staff Excellence; Dr. Bobbie Robinson, E. Lanier Carson Award for administrators; and Kay Powell, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Excellence in Advising Award.

Alumnus George T. Smith was the guest speaker at the spring graduation ceremony on May 4, 2007. Smith (Class of 1940) is the only Georgian ever to be elected to all three branches of state government. He is a former Speaker of the House, Lt. Governor, and Supreme Court Justice. Smith was also selected for the Board of Regents Hall of Fame on March 3, 2007.

Amy Grant performed at the Dollars For ABAC Scholars Benefit Banquet and Show at the UGA Tifton Campus Conference Center on June 15, 2007. Sponsored by the ABAC Foundation, it was the last concert of its kind in the longtime Dollars For Scholars format.

On June 19, 2007, the president's office moved out of Tift Hall for the first time in the history of ABAC. The president's office, public relations office and fiscal affairs office relocated to Evans Hall, the former health center. Ashley Williamson joined the staff as the Public Relations Assistant on June 19 as well. Tift Hall was closed on July 25 when Procurement became the last office to move out of the building. Tift, Lewis, and Herring are now awaiting rehabilitation.

Dr. Niles Reddick became the vice president for academic affairs at ABAC on July 1, 2007 after the retirement of Dr. Caroline Helms. Dr. Bridges named him to the President's Cabinet along with Dr. Gail Dillard, vice president for student affairs; John Clemens, vice president for fiscal affairs, and Dr. Chrystle Ross, Chief Information Officer.

On July 1, 2007, ABAC took over management of the ABAC Place apartments from Place Properties. Director of Residence Life Bernice Hughes and her staff now direct all housing on the campus, including the new ABAC Lakeside complex.

The ABAC Jazz Band toured Europe in July, 2007 and actually played at the opening of the Tour de France bike race. Don Coates directed the band and coordinated the trip.

Classes opened for the 2007 fall term on August 20, 2007 with another all time enrollment record of 3,665 students from 154 Georgia counties, nine countries and 14 states. Bridges said in his first day of class press conference that the college also had a record number of students living on campus, almost 1,300 with the opening of ABAC Lakeside.

The dedication ceremony for the new soccer field was held on August 28, 2007 when the Fillies cut the ribbon on a gorgeous new field on the ABAC campus. The team then defeated Georgia Military College 3-0 in the first home game ever for women's soccer at ABAC.

One hundred green-and-gold balloons fell from the ceiling of the Grand Lobby of ABAC Lakeside on September 10, 2007 when President Bridges pulled the rope, signifying the opening of the \$17 million complex which features rooms for 489 students. Ruth Raines, chair of the ABAC Foundation, spoke on behalf of the Foundation, which again provided the funding for the project.

The 100th birthday celebration continued throughout the fall semester with a special ceremony at the ABAC Sunbelt Expo exhibit on October 17, 2007. As an extra added attraction to the celebration, ABAC was named the 10th best community college in the nation in a poll by the Washington Monthly Magazine. The associate degree Turfgrass Management program was rated seventh in the nation in another poll by "Turfnet Magazine," and the new four-year degree turfgrass program was rated 26th in the nation without a single class being taught.

President Bridges announced his Second Century Project in a Town Hall meeting in the Health Sciences Building on November 13, 2007. He outlined a plan for the college to grow and prosper in its second century of service and established a goal for ABAC to become "Georgia's State College of Choice."

Mike Chason and Ali Csinos were the emcees for the first ever students' iMovie Festival on November 8, 2007 in Howard Auditorium. Men's basketball coach Todd Sheppard was the fall 2007 commencement speaker.

Dr. Tim Marshall, chair of the Division of Agriculture and Forest Resources, cut the ribbon on January 7, 2008 to signal the first day of class for the brand new bachelor's degrees in diversified agriculture and turfgrass and golf course management. Dr. Renata Elad taught the first class.

The final days leading up to the Centennial Celebration of ABAC passed in a blur. Mike Chason, chair of the 100th birthday celebration committee, met with the group for the final time on January 8, 2008. Through the assistance of committee members and particularly the help of Public Relations Assistant Ashley Williamson and Executive Assistant to the President Pam Leonard, the details were hammered into place.

President Bridges made special arrangements for an entire ABAC contingent to travel to Atlanta on February 14, 2008 to meet with legislators at the state capitol. Senator Joseph Carter headed an effort to have ABAC recognized in the State Senate that morning, and Representatives Austin Scott and Jay Roberts arranged for a recognition ceremony in the State House later the same morning. Bridges and George T. Smith both spoke at the two ceremonies. They were surrounded by legislators who were ABAC alumni.

The entire ABAC group then went to Governor Sonny Perdue's office for a group photo. Those representing ABAC included President David Bridges, Vice President for Academic Affairs Niles Reddick, Vice President for Student Affairs Gail Dillard, Vice President for Fiscal Affairs

John Clemens, Chief Information Officer Chrystle Ross, ABAC Alumni Association President Joy Carter, ABAC Ambassadors President Ashton Harper, First Lady Kim Bridges, Chief Advancement Officer Melvin Merrill, Director of Grants and Development Betty McCorvey, Public Relations Assistant Ashley Williamson, and Public Relations Director Mike Chason.

It was a great day for ABAC under the Gold Dome! The event served as a prelude for a terrific week of the Centennial Celebration on February 18-22, 2008.

The Celebration Week began on February 18 with a breakfast in the Donaldson Dining Hall for the entire faculty and staff. It continued at noon on that day with the slicing of a birthday cake in Moultrie for all students at ABAC on the Square. Kay Powell, Director of ABAC on the Square, arranged for an impressive ceremony.

More birthday cakes were needed on February 19 when ABAC students were served cake in the dining hall. Also on that day, Bridges spoke to the ABAC Foundation Board of Trustees at their quarterly meeting and did a live WTIF radio show with Chason. The students enjoyed a Centennial Celebration parade around campus arranged by Dean of Students Bernice Hughes. Singer Corey Smith entertained over 1,200 spectators in the John Hunt Auditorium of the UGA Tifton Campus Conference Center that evening.

On February 20, 2008, the big moment arrived with a brilliant blue sky on a perfect 70-degree day. Exactly 100 years earlier, a total of 27 students had walked up the steps of Tift Hall for their first day of class at the Second District A&M School.

One century later, ABAC had a breakfast for retired faculty and staff, a presentation in Howard Auditorium featuring a fantastic documentary on the college's first 100 years by Cindy Barber from Media Services, a tribute to the college from George T. Smith, a speech by President Bridges which addressed the first century and the century to come, recognition of former presidents at the Presidential Plaza Dedication, and free rides on a hot air balloon. Mike Vollmer was the only former president to return but he was joined by former interim presidents Dr. Frank Thomas, Tom Call, and Dr. Homer Day.

ABAC alumnus Steven Meeks read a resolution in Howard Auditorium commending ABAC on its 100th birthday from United States Senators Saxby Chambliss and Johnny Isakson. Meeks works for Chambliss in his Atlanta office. A resolution was also received from United States Congressman Jim Marshall which was read on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives. ABAC was also honored by resolutions from the City of Tifton and the Tift County Board of Commissioners.

On the evening of February 20, 2008, Don Coates, Dr. Susan Roe, and Woody Leonard directed the ABAC Concert Band, Concert Choir, Jazz Band, Jazz Choir and Dixie Stallions Dixieland Band in a wonderful concert featuring "100 Years of Musical Memories" in Gressette Gym. Following the concert, an awe-inspiring fireworks display took place over Lake Baldwin in front of the ABAC Lakeside complex. Fireworks watchers were even treated to an eclipse of the moon after the fireworks had faded away.

On February 21, President Bridges and Chason addressed the Tifton-Tift County Chamber of Commerce luncheon on the 100th birthday celebration. Alumni Director Nancy Coleman and Athletics Director Alan Kramer coordinated a dinner for the first ever ABAC Athletics Hall of Fame. Chason conceived the idea for the Hall of Fame as a part of the 100th birthday celebration in a planning session with Ashley Williamson in November, 2007.

Six legends from the ABAC athletics program were recognized and presented crystal stallions between games of the ABAC-South Georgia Tech basketball matchups in Gressette Gym on February 21. Named to the first Hall of Fame were Orion Mitchell, Bruce Gressette, Thomas Cheney, Phillip Simpson, Norman "Red" Hill, and Milena Stanoytcheva. Mitchell, Gressette, Cheney, and Stanoytcheva were named to the Hall posthumously. The state runner-up team from 1958 was also recognized at halftime of the men's game that evening.

On February 22, the Centennial Celebration Week ended on the front steps of Tift Hall where ABAC student Sam Webb explained how ABAC students constructed ABAC's very own time capsule. Agriculture and Forest Resources Division faculty members John Franklin and Ray Lundy directed the design and construction of the capsule. The time capsule will be placed in the remodeled Tift Hall. The capsule is to be opened on February 20, 2108. The event ended when faculty members, staff members, administrators, and students gathered on the steps of Tift Hall to release 100 balloons into the gray south Georgia sky as a salute to the next 100 years of ABAC.

ABAC took a step toward the future on March 28-30, 2008 when a design team from the University of Georgia College of Environment and Design came to Tifton for the weekend to come up with a new design for the front of campus to include the three historic buildings of Tift, Lewis, and Herring halls. All three of the 100-year-old buildings are now vacant and awaiting rehabilitation.

The Centennial Celebration continued on Homecoming weekend on April 3-5, 2008 when Alumni Relations Director Nancy Coleman directed a jam-packed schedule which featured ABAC alumni from different decades adding candles to a gigantic birthday cake during a luncheon in Gressette Gym. The evening hours featured "Jukebox Saturday Night" and fireworks over Lake Baldwin. Former interim president Jim Burran returned for the Homecoming luncheon.

Copies of the "100 Years of ABAC Memories" book were sold for the first time at Homecoming. The book was edited by Mike Chason and designed by Ashley Williamson. President Bridges and ABAC Alumni Association President Joy Carter sealed the time capsule during the Homecoming luncheon in Gressette Gym.

At the 2008 Honors Day Ceremony, Christina Ann Norton, an art major from Tifton, was named the J.G. Woodroof Scholar. Faculty/staff award winners were Lorie Felton, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Award for Teaching Excellence; Jimmy Felton, Roy R. Jackson Award for Staff Excellence; Andrea Willis, E. Lanier Carson Award for administrators; and Tammy Dennis, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Excellence in Advising Award.

ABAC alumni were in the news in the spring of 2008 when Michael Johns, known as Michael Lee when he was an ABAC student in 1998, finished as one of the finalists in the nationwide “American Idol” competition. Another alumnus, Thomas “Boo” Weekley, won \$990,000 when he captured the title in the PGA Verizon Heritage golf tournament at Hilton Head, S.C., for the second year in a row.

The ABAC Cattleman’s Association won the prestigious “Chapter of the Year” award for the state of Georgia in 2008. Dr. Mary Ellen Hicks is the advisor for the chapter. Coach Alan Kramer and the Fillies’ tennis team won their 15th consecutive state title behind the outstanding play of freshman Monika Lalewicz, who went on to win the national championship at #1 singles. She was named the NJCAA Player of the Year. The Stallions’ Paul Fitzgerald was named men’s NJCAA Player of the Year. Fitzgerald led the Stallions to a third place finish in the national tournament.

For the first time ever, two members of the junior class were elected by the student body to lead the SGA when Nate Carney was elected president, and Dan Pennington was elected vice-president. U.S. Senator Saxby Chambliss from nearby Moultrie was the spring graduation speaker. He congratulated ABAC on its very successful first 100 years.

ABAC and Georgia Southwestern State University announced a joint agreement to offer junior and senior level classes in a bachelor’s degree in Resource Management at ABAC in May, 2008. Southwestern also offers junior and senior level classes in Management, Accounting, and Early Childhood Education at ABAC.

President Bridges and his wife, Kim, accepted the Arts Citizen of the Year award for ABAC from the Tift County Arts Council at the 2008 Love Affair festival, which actually began as the Arts Circus on the ABAC campus. Governor Sonny Perdue announced in May, 2008 that ABAC would receive \$6 million in funding in the 2008-09 state budget toward the rehabilitation of the three original buildings on the front of the campus.

Jessica Kalina from Williamson, Colton Farrow from Pitts, and Tanner Newhouse from Bonaire were named as the first three recipients of the Presidential Scholarships at ABAC in May, 2008.

ABAC began the 2008-09 academic year on July 1 with the news of a statewide five per cent budget cut, amounting to almost \$900,000 for the College. ABAC’s first response to the cut was leaving vacant positions unfilled. Two of those unfilled spots belonged to the two basketball coaches since Todd Sheppard had resigned to go into the business world, and Julie Conner had resigned to take the head girls’ basketball job at Tift County High School. President Bridges announced on July 14 that ABAC was dropping both its men’s and women’s basketball programs.

“The final decision and its timing was made because of three reasons,” Bridges said.

“Eliminating two of the eight intercollegiate athletic programs provided much needed financial relief for the remaining programs, without coaches we couldn’t run a program, and by not filling

the two positions we could maintain the flexibility to fill higher priority academic positions and meet forthcoming budget cuts.”

That left the College with six intercollegiate sports including soccer, softball and tennis for women, and baseball, golf, and tennis for the men.

ABAC alumna Cathy Cox was inaugurated as president of Young Harris College on July 26, 2008. Cox, the former Georgia Secretary of State, was an ABAC classmate of Dr. Bridges.

Nancy Coleman retired after 23 years of service as the only fulltime Director of Alumni Relations in the history of ABAC on July 31, 2008. Keith Barber was named Chief Development Officer at ABAC on August 1, 2008.

Karla Heath-Sands and the Reflections provided the entertainment for the first Evening For ABAC on September 18, 2008. College Advancement Officer Melvin Merrill said the event previously known as Dollars for ABAC Scholars had changed its scope “to provide greater benefit to the scholarship program at ABAC.” Dollars For Scholars had a 36-year run at ABAC, featuring such top name entertainment as Trisha Yearwood, Roy Clark, Ray Stevens, Debbie Reynolds, and many more.

A study commissioned by the Board of Regents showed that ABAC had a total economic impact of over \$237 million on Tifton and the surrounding area during 2007. Dr. Jeff Gibbs helped to develop the report. Dr. Bridges said the economic impact figure more than doubled since 2001.

Ashley Williamson headed a design team to design new logos and a new stallion mascot logo for the college. A total of 3,600 students were enrolled for the 2008 fall semester.

Alumnus Thomas “Boo” Weekley, a professional golfer on the PGA Tour, helped lead the United States to victory in the Ryder Cup matches. He later donated \$30,000 to the college through the Play Golf America University.

Tanya Rafferty was selected for the first four-year scholarship in the history of ABAC beginning with the 2008 fall term. She will receive a Regents’ Foundation Scholarship for the next four years. Rafferty was later selected as one of two students to be featured in a video at the annual Board of Regents Gala on March 28, 2009.

ABAC Police Chief Bryan Golden announced a new emergency messaging system called Connect-Ed, which was tested for the first time on October 22, 2008. The College used the system several times during the year to reach students when severe weather threatened the campus.

ABAC was selected for a Rapid Process Improvement project by the Governor’s Office of Customer Service in the fall of 2008. The nine-month project to benefit students in the enrollment and financial aid process was headed up on the campus by Dr. Chrystle Ross and Diane Kilgore.

Katrina Duncan-Marshalleck scored an all time record of 26 goals for the Fillies' soccer team, which finished with a best ever record of 13-6 in the 2008 season. Keegan Westberry was crowned Ms. ABAC 2009 on November 11, 2008. A new design on the ABAC web site went live for the first time on December 1, 2008.

Wasdon Graydon, ABAC's Director of Sponsored Programs and the Minority Advising Program, was the fall graduation speaker. Graydon, an ABAC alumnus (Class of 1970), closed out the 100th birthday celebration year. Lum Roberts and Duane Weeks from Sodexo put up new pole banners on the campus with the new "Georgia's State College of Choice" logo in December, 2008.

Director of Institutional Research Donna Miller passed away unexpectedly on January 4, 2009. She was an ABAC alumnus who had served in her Institutional Research position since July 1, 1993.

The second annual ABAC Athletics Hall of Fame event was held on February 13, 2009 when Ellen Vickers, Newell "Sarge" Dorsey, Cook Holliday, P.W. Bryan, Jr., Dorsey Brooks, and the national championship men's tennis team of 1984 were inducted in an impressive ceremony in the Grand Lobby of ABAC Lakeside. The inductees were then recognized on the tennis court during an ABAC tennis match.

President Bridges announced that ABAC's academic curriculum will now be divided into six schools of study including Agriculture and Natural Resources, Nursing and Health Sciences, Human Sciences, Liberal Arts, Science and Mathematics, and Business effective April 1, 2009. Deans selected for the schools included Dr. Tim Marshall, Agriculture and Natural Resources; Wanda Golden, Nursing and Health Sciences; Dr. Darby Sewell, Human Sciences; Dr. Bobbie Robinson, Liberal Arts; Dr. Ray Barber, Science and Mathematics; and Dr. Jeff Gibbs, Business.

The ABAC student newspaper, "The Stallion," was again named the best in the state of Georgia by the Georgia College Press Association in February, 2009. Dr. Eric Cash serves as the advisor for the newspaper.

Junior Chapman was selected as Mr. ABAC at the 18th annual competition. Governor Sonny Perdue named ABAC Police Chief Bryan Golden to the Georgia Peace Officers Standards and Training Council. Michael Arena from Fitzgerald was selected as the first Presidential Scholar for 2009-10.

Alumni were honored at the newly-titled Celebrate ABAC weekend on March 5-7. Award winners included Christa G. Steinkamp, Outstanding Young Alumnus; Debbie R. Phillips, Helen Brown Sasser Award; Dr. Peggy Ozias-Akins, J. Lamar Branch Award; Jack C. Drew, Jr., Outstanding Business Leader; Patrick Atwater, Jr., Outstanding Educator; Dick Byne, Master Farmer; Gene Ragan, Distinguished Alumnus; Andrea Willis and Melvin Merrill, Honorary Alumni, and the John and Clara Hollis Davis family, Family Legacy Award. The weekend replaced the traditional Homecoming weekend, which was usually in April.

Dr. Eddie Seagle took eight ABAC students to China on March 12-27, 2009 to present a program on golf course planning, construction and maintenance at the Nansha Golf Club and Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou, Peoples Republic of China. All the students were enrolled in the new bachelor's degree in turfgrass and golf course management. Seagle was presented a Customer Service Award from Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue on May 28 for his role in the expedition.

Under a brilliant blue sky, ABAC unveiled its bachelor's degree in Rural Studies on March 23, 2009. President Bridges and Vice President Reddick talked about the degree in front of a backdrop of a cotton wagon and two mules on loan from the Georgia Agrirama.

In March, 2009, ABAC received a \$76,425 Fulbright-Hays Grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Fifteen educators learned more about the people and culture of Brazil on June 4-July 3. ABAC faculty making the trip included Dr. Jeff Gibbs, Lorie Felton, Alan Kramer, Dr. Brian Ray, and Saj Rashti. Rashti coordinated the grant application.

Tifton ophthalmologist Larry Moorman and his wife, Debra, donated the clubhouse at Forest Lakes Golf Club to the ABAC Foundation in March, 2009 to complete the gift they started in 2001 with the donation of the nine-hole Forest Lakes Golf Club.

At the 2009 Honors Day ceremony, Hector Olguin, an engineering major from Ty Ty, received the J.G. Woodroof Scholar award. Faculty/staff award winners were Geoff Clement, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Award for Teaching Excellence; Shirley Wilson, Roy R. Jackson Sr., Award for Staff Excellence; Dr. Jeff Gibbs, E. Lanier Carson Award Leadership Award; and Dr. Jewrell Rivers, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Excellence in Advising Award.

Coach Alan Kramer's Fillies won their 16th consecutive NJCAA Region XVII women's tennis title at the Red Hill Athletic Center on April 25, 2009. The Stallions also captured the Region XVII crown behind the play of MVP Rasid Winklaar. ABAC's Monika Lalewicz was the MVP for the women for the second year in a row. Lalewicz finished second in the national tournament at #1 singles and received National Player of the Year honors for the second consecutive year. She was trying to become the first women's player at ABAC to win back-to-back national titles since Milena Stanoytcheva in 1999-2000. Matt Holland won the national championship at #6 singles for the Stallions, who finished third in the national tournament.

Director of Enrollment Services Donna Webb reported that ABAC had its highest spring semester enrollment in the history of the College with 3,234 students during the 2009 spring term.

Bachelor's degrees were awarded at ABAC for the first time at the graduation ceremony on May 7, 2009. Edwin Glover, Richard Irvin, Garrett Jones, and Joshua Lanier were the first bachelor's degree recipients. ABAC alumnus Jim Sparks was the guest speaker at the ceremony. Keith Lee, a political science major from Cartersville, won the Donaldson Award.

Andrea Willis retired on June 1, 2009 after 35 years as a faculty member and division chair at ABAC. She was best known as the director for the Fabulous Golddusters dance team for 26

years. The Golddusters performed all over Georgia, Florida, and Alabama on behalf of the college.

In July, 2009, ABAC received a \$411,354 grant from the United States Department of Education for the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP). This program assists freshman students from migrant farm worker families. The 2008-09 year represented the 10th year of CAMP at ABAC. Federal funding for the Classic and Tiftarea Upward Bound programs at ABAC was also announced in the amount of \$572,934. The Upward Bound program has been funded at ABAC every year since 1977.

Diane Kilgore, Director of the Public Service and Business Outreach Center, was selected as the quarterly recipient of the 2009 Governor's Commendation for Excellence in Customer Service. The Donaldson Dining Hall opened a new food service area on the north side of the building featuring Pizza Hut and Subconnection.

At a Town Hall meeting for all faculty and staff on July 28, 2009, President Bridges announced that because of state budget reductions, all employees would have to take six furlough days without pay during the year.

ABAC alumnae Jodie Rayl Snow was the guest speaker for the annual freshman convocation on August 14 in Gressette Gym. Dr. Brian Ray was named as the director of the ABAC Honors Program. The campus took precautions against a nationwide H1N1 (Swine Flu) outbreak. Very few ABAC students were affected.

The fall semester 2009 enrollment included 3,326 students from 17 states, 11 countries, and 152 Georgia counties.

The ABAC Alumni Association embarked on a new endeavor called the Alumni Connecting To Involved and Outstanding New Students (ACTIONS) team. Members included Gary Lee, Mike Davis, Beth Bland, Scott Carlson, Bobby Barber, Jr., George Granade, Steve Spooner, Frankie Hall, Brett Tucker, Chuck Scarborough, Kevin Morgan, Laura Beth Tucker, Barbara Grogan, Jodie Snow, Andrea Willis, Amber Davis Collins, and Kim Bridges. Their purpose is to attract academically talented and engaged students to ABAC.

Amy Howell was selected as the Director of Institutional Research and Planning. Dining Hall Director Kurt Hoffman passed away on August 19.

President Bridges taught an Introduction to Biofuels class during the 2009 fall semester, his first stint back in the classroom since being selected as the ABAC President. Students in the brand new Rural Studies bachelor's degree program began taking classes for the first time on August 17.

ABAC kicked off the Front of Campus project on September 8, 2009 with a ceremony on the front steps of Tift Hall. Greenline Architecture and J.T. Turner Construction, both from Savannah, will handle the renovation of Tift, Lewis, and Herring halls. Members of the faculty, staff, and administration gathered for a picture wearing gold plastic hard hats with the ABAC

logo on them. Melvin Merrill serves as the liaison to the architects and construction company for ABAC.

Rebecca Hamilton, Nicholas Urquart, Rebecca Cofer, and Derek Sutton joined the staff as the first ever Student Development Specialists in the Enrollment Services office. Their purpose is to serve as mentors for ABAC students from the beginning of their college careers all the way through graduation.

Chancellor Erroll B. Davis presented President Bridges with the Gold Outstanding Customer Service Leadership Award from the University System of Georgia on September 15. The award recognizes a leader who has made significant impact on customer service within the state. A new State of Georgia Employee Satisfaction Research Report showed that ABAC employees gave the institution top marks in regard to quality of the workplace and employee satisfaction. In a comparison with five other state agencies, ABAC earned the highest score.

ABAC students in the Rural Studies program traveled to Telfair County on September 22 to begin a semester-long project relating to tourism possibilities for the county. Alma Young became the first fulltime webmaster in the history of ABAC when the college closed the ABAC Information Center, and her duties were changed to maintaining the ABAC web site.

Javier Gonzalez, Director of HEP/CAMP, and Dr. Billy Reynolds, Interim Head of the Department of Literature and Language, were selected for the University System of Georgia Executive Leadership Institute. Keith Barber was named the Vice President of External Affairs and Advancement and became a member of the President's Cabinet.

A construction fence went up around the three original buildings on October 8, 2009 to signal the beginning of the renovation of Tift, Lewis, and Herring halls. Governor Sonny Perdue visited ABAC for a meeting in the Health Sciences Building on October 13.

Katrina Duncan-Marshalleck wound up with 23 goals in the 2009 season to finish her ABAC career with a school record 49 goals during her career with the Fillies' soccer team. President Bridges received the Honorary American FFA degree from the National FFA Organization in Indianapolis, Ind.

ABAC was one of the hosts for a speech by Dr. Harry Kroto, the 1996 Nobel Prize winner in Chemistry, on November 6. AT&T Georgia presented ABAC with a \$48,297 grant to expand the use of video instruction and communications at ABAC.

Javier Gonzalez, Director of the CAMP and HEP programs, was the guest speaker for the fall commencement ceremony. Sara Ervin, a Rural Studies major from Commerce, received the Donaldson Award. Alumnus Dan Miller returned to the campus as director of dining services for Sodexo. University System Chancellor Erroll Davis visited the campus on December 7. He said ABAC had developed a "statewide brand."

ABAC student Dorminey McCrae was selected for the National Association of Police Organization's "Top Cop" award for his heroism in a Tifton grocery store robbery. Former

ABAC Registrar Paul Gaines passed away on Christmas Day, 2009 at the age of 89. He was employed by ABAC from 1946 until 1982 and actually taught classes at Spence Field in Moultrie for servicemen returning from WWII.

President Bridges announced on January 14, 2010 that at the request of the Office of Planning and Budget and the Governor's Office, that he will begin working with legislators, local elected officials, and members of the Georgia Agrirama Development Authority to move management and operations of the Georgia Museum of Agriculture (Agrirama) to ABAC.

For the first time in many years, it snowed on the ABAC campus on February 12, 2010. Many ABAC students said they had never seen snow. They threw snowballs and built snowmen. Cain Thurmond from Jefferson was selected Mr. ABAC 2010. Savannah Brown from Wray was chosen as Ms. ABAC 2010. Both students are members of the ABAC Ambassadors.

The new ABAC Stallion mascot, "Thunder", has his debut at the Stallion Day event for prospective students on February 13.

For the third year in a row, "The Stallion", the ABAC student newspaper, was named the best in Georgia at the Georgia College Press Association competition. Amelia Gutierrez and Jacob McWhorter were the managing editors during the two semesters reviewed. The Southern Regional Press Institute also named the ABAC newspaper the best in Georgia. Dr. Eric Cash serves as faculty advisor.

The Celebrate ABAC Alumni Weekend on March 5-6 included the alumni awards ceremony where the winners were Dr. Paul Newberne and Dr. James Newberne, Distinguished Alumni; Ann Hammons and Dr. Eddie Seagle, Honorary Alumni; Nancy Coleman, Helen Brown Sasser Award; Dr. Jay Phillips, Outstanding Health Care Professional; Louis Perry, Jr., J. Lamar Branch Award; Beth Bland, Outstanding Young Alumnus; Rodney McDonald, Outstanding Business Leader; John Harrell, Master Farmer; and T. Lynn Barber, Outstanding Educator.

Selections for the third annual ABAC Athletics Hall of Fame were Thomas "Boo" Weekley, a member of the PGA Tour; former ABAC basketball player Joseph Grist; tennis booster Harley Klepfer; former ABAC golfer Jim Sparks; and the 1991 women's softball team, which was the first women's team at ABAC to win a national championship. The induction lunch and ceremony were held in a tent beside the softball field on March 6, 2010 as a part of the Celebrate ABAC Alumni Weekend activities. Ashley Williamson and Shirley Wilson coordinated the event.

On March 5, the Continuing Education Program had a 70th birthday party to commemorate the founding of the program by Dean Tom Cordell in 1940. Current Director Diane Kilgore and former directors Bob Keith and Jane Tanner were on hand to cut the cake. The ABAC Jazz Band and the Jazz Choir performed at the Evening for ABAC scholarship fundraiser, sponsored by the ABAC Foundation, which was the culminating event of the Celebrate ABAC Weekend on March 6.

Kilgore retired from ABAC on March 31. Director of Human Resources Bertha Williams and Student Support Services Director Wasdon Graydon also retired in March.

The Board of Regents approved a new Associate of Fine Arts in Music degree from the School of Liberal Arts on March 10. It is the only degree of its kind in the University System. ABAC students held a budget cuts protest rally in Howard Auditorium on March 11 to protest the proposed budget cuts to the ABAC state budget by legislators. As it turned out, the cuts were not as severe as anticipated, perhaps because of rallies such as this one across the state.

Dr. Niles Reddick, Vice-President for Academic Affairs, released his first novel in March, 2010, titled "Lead Me Home." He is also the author of a short story collection, titled "Road Kill Art and Other Oddities."

At the 2010 Honors Day Ceremony, David L. Chapman, an agricultural education major from Jasper, was named the J.G. Woodroof Scholar. Faculty/staff award winners were Melanie Partlow, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Award for Teaching Excellence; Judy Perry, Roy R. Jackson Award for Staff Excellence; Dr. Chrystle Ross, E. Lanier Carson Award for administrators; and Dr. Shelley Fandel, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Excellence in Advising Award.

Recipients of Presidential Scholarships at Honors Day for a third year of study were Colton Farrow from Pitts; Jessica Kalina from Williamson; and Tanner Newhouse from Bonaire. Recipients of Presidential Scholarships for a second year of study were Andrea Sweeney from Eatonton; Michael Arena from Fitzgerald; and Kayla Davenport from Hazlehurst.

Coach Alan Kramer's Fillies won the NJCAA Region XVII women's title for the 17th consecutive year at the Red Hill Athletics Center on April 17. Kramer's Stallions also won the region title behind the heroics of MVP Rasid Winklaar. Kramer was named the Coach of the Year for men and women.

The Ag Business Club at ABAC was named the National Outstanding Student Chapter by the National Agri-Marketing Association for 2009-10. Dustin Bass is the club advisor. Jazmin Thomas from Perry was elected president of the Student Government Association during the spring election.

ABAC finished second in the Hispanic College Quiz Bowl competition in Chicago. Team members were Karina Guerrero, Leandra Gonzales, Katia Arevalo, Juan Rico, Gabby Ramirez, and Felipe Pedraza.

Dr. Greg Anderson, a Tifton urologist, was the guest speaker at the spring commencement ceremony. He was a member of the Class of '78 at ABAC. David L. Chapman, an agricultural education major from Jasper, received the Donaldson Award.

Vice President for Student Affairs Gail Dillard announced in April, 2010 that Greek fraternities Kappa Sigma and Alpha Gamma Rho had been approved to establish colonies on the ABAC campus. They are the first Greek organizations at ABAC. Cain Thurmond from Jefferson is president of Alpha Gamma Rho, and Brent Wagner from Roswell is president of Kappa Sigma.

Alan Kramer was named to the NJCAA Women's Tennis Hall of Fame during the national women's tennis tournament in Tucson, Ariz. The Fillies finished 17th in the national tournament, and the Stallions finished eighth in the national men's tennis tournament.

The ABAC Jazz Ensemble was selected to perform on May 22, 2010 at the Jazz Education Network International Conference in St. Louis, Mo. Don Coates is the director.

Sara Beth Pelham from Bainbridge was selected as the recipient of the Presidential Scholarship for the upcoming year. ABAC students Savannah Brown from Wray, Jessica Gandy from Lenox, and Randi Walden from Stockbridge were selected for the Women's Leadership in Public Service Institute in Tallulah Falls. Deidra Jackson was named as the ABAC Comptroller on June 7.

The 2010-11 state budget signed by Governor Sonny Perdue on June 8 contained \$4.75 million toward the rehabilitation of the ABAC Front Campus. ABAC received an allocation of \$6 million in the FY 2009 budget to begin work on the mammoth project, which will restore Tift Hall, Lewis Hall, and Herring Hall, the three original buildings on campus.

Pulitzer-Prize nominated author Janice Daugharty will join the campus on July 1 as ABAC's first Writer-in-Residence. She is the author of "Earl in the Yellow Shirt", which was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in Fiction in 1997. Other books by Daugharty include "PawPaw Patch" and "Dark of the Moon."

ABAC took over the operation of the Georgia Museum of Agriculture and Historic Village on July 1, 2010. The change of control from the Georgia Agrirama Development Authority to ABAC has been in the works since Jan. 14 when the Office of Planning and Budget and the Governor's Office requested that President Bridges work with legislators, local elected officials, and members of the Authority to move management and operations to ABAC.

Georgia lawmakers passed House Bill 1090 on April 12 which paved the way to move all assets of the Museum to the University System of Georgia (USG). The bill was introduced by Representatives Austin Scott (153rd) and Jay Roberts (154th) with the support of other area representatives. The legislation was carried in the Senate by Senator John Crosby (13th District) and Senator John Bulloch (11th District).

The USG Board of Regents took action on May 12 to facilitate the transfer of assets, including land and buildings, from the Georgia Agrirama Development Authority to the USG. Governor Sonny Perdue signed the bill on May 20. Paul Willis, Director of College Enrichment, led the transition team for ABAC and was named as the director of the Museum.

On July 1, 2010, Vice President for External Affairs and Advancement Keith Barber announced that the ABAC Foundation had received a gift of \$1 million from the estate of Herbert and Meade Bynum. Herbert Bynum was a 1946 ABAC alumnus who was originally from Blakely but lived most of his life in Tampa, Fla., in the egg production business. Barber said the gift will be used as a student enhancement endowment for the Rural Studies program. It will be called "The Herbert and Meade Bynum Endowment for Student Enrichment in Rural Studies."

Dr. Ray Barber, Dean of the School of Science and Mathematics, announced on July 15 that ABAC will receive a \$600,000 National Science Foundation grant to attract students interested in careers in the science and mathematics fields. Students who receive the scholarships through the grant will be a part of the new Achievement through Student Support and Experiential Training in Sciences (ASSETS) program. The Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) scholarships will be awarded over a five-year period beginning Aug. 1.

ABAC softball player Alyssa Simmons from Lenox was named as an NJCAA Distinguished Academic All-America selection in July, 2010. ABAC golfers Kenneth Bragg of Peachtree City and Winston Gibbs from Hartwell were also named NJCAA Academic All-America selections.

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July 28, 2010

Edited by Michael D. Chason