Looking Back at the 2011 ABAC Accomplishments

Two new bachelor’s degrees in the academic curriculum and a visit by a former president of the United States highlighted the 2011 calendar year at ABAC.

President David Bridges announced a new bachelor’s degree in Natural Resource Management with majors in forestry and wildlife management on Feb. 10 when he and Dr. Rod Brown sawed a log in half as a symbolic start to the program in the Agricultural Sciences building.

Bridges joined Dr. Ray Barber in Evans Hall on June 9 to announce another bachelor’s degree program in biology, designed for students pursuing a career in biology as well as for those who want to enter professional schools in such areas as medicine, dentistry, and veterinary medicine.

Former President Jimmy Carter cut the ribbon on an exhibit which honors his many accomplishments at the Georgia Museum of Agriculture and Historic Village on Oct. 8. The exhibit will remain on display through April, 2012. ABAC began offering a B.S. in Biology last fall.

Dr. Bridges and others sawed a log in half Feb. 10 to announce the new bachelor’s degree.

Dr. Bridges placed the 100th Birthday Time Capsule in a compartment in the history room of the renovated Tift Hall on March 8. The capsule was sealed on April 5, 2008 at the 100th birthday celebration at Homecoming.

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Gladiolus, Outstanding Young Alumnus; Terry Clark from Moultrie, Master Farmer; Dr. Jerry W. Johnson from Griffin, J. Lamar Branch Award; Suellen Coleman Perry from Moultrie, Outstanding Educator; Mark Mobley from Moultrie, Outstanding Business Leader; Dr. Jay Williams from Albany, Outstanding Health Care Professional; and Alan Kramer from Tifton and Tommy Irvin from Habersham County, Honorary Alumni. The Ollie E. McMillan family from Berrien County also received the Family Legacy Award.

Due to popular demand, the ABAC Alumni Association brought back a “Gee Haw, Whoa Back” rodeo to the Celebrate ABAC weekend. Grand Ole Opry member Mike Snider headlined the ABAC Foundation’s “Evening for ABAC” scholarship fundraiser at the Museum during the weekend.

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Dr. Gail Dillard took over the leadership of all activities at ABAC on the Square in Moultrie, replacing Kay Powell, who expressed a desire to return to the classroom. Dillard was previously the Vice President for Student Affairs. Academic Affairs Vice President Niles Reddick assumed those duties along with Dean of Students Bernice Hughes.

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Spring Orientation Thursday
ABAC will welcome around 104 new students for orientation on Thursday. You can view the schedule online at www.abac.edu/orientation
For more information contact the Academic Support Counselors at 391-4995 or email asc@abac.edu
The ABAC Chamber Singers performed at the Lincoln Center in NYC on May 30.

The ABAC Fillies won their 18th consecutive Region XVII state championship.

The AET Club debuted a new Agco Allis 9850 pulling tractor on March 19. The club also completed renovations to the original ABAC pulling tractor, “Cracker Jack.”

Melanie Partlow, assistant professor of mathematics and Quality Enhancement Plan Director, received the 2011 Regents’ Teaching Excellence award at the seventh annual Regents’ Awards for Excellence in Education Celebration on March 26. Ken Newkirk retired on March 31 after 35 years of service directing the Upward Bound Program.

Inductees into the Athletics Hall of Fame on April 2 included the 1995 national championship women’s softball team, Kyle Farnsworth, Benny Dees, Harley Stewart, and A.B. Malloy. On the same day, a new scoreboard for the ABAC Fillies’ softball team was dedicated in a ceremony which honored donors A.B. Malloy, the Spurlin family, and the ABAC Fillies softball alumnae.

Kevin Van-trees, a freshman from Douglasville, was elected president of the ABAC SGA in the spring election. Faculty member Dustin Bass received the Impact Award, and Director of Student Activities Kris Liebegott received the SGA President’s Award.

Michael Arena from Fitzgerald was selected as the top academic student at ABAC during the Honors Day ceremony when he was named the J.G. Woodroof Scholar. Faculty-staff award winners were Donna Hatcher, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Award for Teaching Excellence; Dr. Amy Willis, Roy R. Jackson, Sr., Award for Staff Excellence; Dr. Ray Barber, E. Lanier Carson Award for administrators; and Dr. Mary Ellen Hicks, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Excellence in Advising Award. Retirement plaques were presented to Stephanie Holcombe, Ken Newkirk, Jerry Edwards, Dr. Larry McGruder, and Mike Chason. Most Valuable Player Chanel Cunningham led the Fillies to their 18th consecutive Region XVII state tennis championship on April 22. The Stallions also won the men’s title. Alan Kramer was named Coach of the Year for both women’s and men’s tennis in the state. The Fillies finished fifth, and the Stallions wound up eighth in their respective national tournaments.

Bass was named the National Outstanding Advisor by the National Agriculture Business Association in Kansas City. The ABAC Cattlemen’s Club won the College Aggies Online Scholarship Competition of the Animal Agriculture Alliance. The ABAC English Department in the School of Liberal Arts received the Diana Hacker Outstanding Programs in English award at the 2011 Conference on College Composition and Communication.

Governor Nathan Deal was the guest speaker at the spring commencement ceremony. Cain Thurmond from Jefferson received the Donaldson Award. Thirty-one students received bachelor’s degrees, the largest number ever to receive bachelor’s degrees at an ABAC commencement.

Kristen Ray from Alma was one of six students nationwide selected to serve on the Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America Leadership Training Team. Ben Bennett from Valdosta received the Presidential Scholarship for 2011-12. He is the state FFA president.

Dr. Darby Sewell, Dean of the School of Human Sciences, graduated from the University System of Georgia (USG) Executive Leadership Institute. The ABAC Chamber Singers performed at Lincoln Center in New York City on May 30. Dr. Susan Roe directs the group.

Chason retired as the ABAC public relations director on June 1. He began his ABAC career on May 15, 1979. Ashley Williamson was named Interim Director of Public Relations.

Deal’s signature on the state budget allowed ABAC to continue work on the historic front of campus project with $3.25 million in the budget to further the rehabilitation of Tift Hall, Lewis Hall, and Herring Hall.

The Natural Resources Conservation Workshop celebrated its 50th anniversary with its annual camp at ABAC on June 5-9. Bridge attended the camp when he was a high school student.

Ross retired on June 15 from her position of Chief Information Officer. She served the college in a variety of roles since her first day on the job on Sept. 10, 1979.

Fireworks lit up the skies over the Georgia Museum of Agriculture and
Historic Village on July 2 for the annual Independence Day Celebration at the site. Country music artist Kevin Sport headlined a concert that evening. It was the 35th anniversary of the founding of the museum, known originally as the Agrirama. A 400-pound cake made to resemble the Museum’s steam train was designed to feed over 600 people.

Four athletes at ABAC were selected for NJCAA Exemplary Academic Achievement Awards. They included Alexander Byrd from Byron on the baseball team, Case Gard from Lakeland, Fla., on the golf team, Charles Griffin, Jr., from Tifton on the men’s tennis team, and Darylanne Thompson from Perry on the softball team.

The U.S. Department of Education named ABAC as one of America’s Most Affordable Colleges. Tuition and fees for the 2009-10 year at ABAC were $2,696, well below the national average of $6,397.

Shawn Thomas was named the new Director of Student Financial Services on July 5. Dr. Jeff Newberry was selected to serve as the new faculty advisor to the student newspaper, “The Stallion.” He also advises the ABAC literary magazine, “Pegasus”.

Beth Bland Oleson (Class of ’99) was the guest speaker at the annual Freshman Convocation on Aug. 14.

The State Traditional Arts Research Archive is now on loan to ABAC and makes available to the community over 3,000 items including photos, videos, sound recordings, books, and research field notes.

Dr. Brian Ray spent the summer in London as a co-site director for the USG European Council for its England Summer Study Abroad Program.

Dr. Bobbie Robinson and Dr. John Farrar were selected for the USG Executive Leadership Institute. Van McGriff retired after 26 years at ABAC. Tarrah Mirus became the ABAC Registrar on Sept. 1.

Melissa Johnson set the ABAC record for goals scored in a soccer season and was named the National Junior College Athletic Association Player of the Week. Attila Szekes was named the new general manager of Sedexo and Plant Operations at ABAC.

ABAC set the American record for the largest game of hide-and-seek on Nov. 9 with 419 students participating. Liebegott coordinated the event. Reddick was honored by the College of Arts and Sciences at Valdosta State University as an Outstanding Alumnus in the area of Philosophy.

Melvin Merrill received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Georgia Education Advancement Council.

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ABAC Birthdays

3 Gina Wilson
5 Ray Barber
5 Bobby Mathis

ABAC will be closed Jan. 16 in observance of the Martin Luther King holiday. Classes and normal business hours will resume on Jan. 17.

The FOCUS is a weekly electronic publication produced by the ABAC Public Relations Office.

Please submit information by Thursday at noon to Ashley Mock at amock@abac.edu for inclusion in the next FOCUS.