



# FOCUS

## ABRAHAM BALDWIN AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE

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### ABAC Enrollment Up for 4<sup>th</sup> Consecutive Semester

Spring semester 2015 numbers show that the enrollment at ABAC is on the rise for the fourth consecutive term.

ABAC President David Bridges couldn't be happier about that fact.

"It's really remarkable when you consider the enrollment situation

across the University System," Bridges said. "We have an identity. We have a legacy. People know who we are."

A total of 3,138 students are enrolled for the 2015 spring term, a slight increase over the 3,132 students enrolled during the 2014 spring semester. ABAC was the only college or university south of Macon in the University System of Georgia to increase its enrollment in both the 2013 and 2014 fall semesters.

"It comes down to focus and mission," Bridges said. "That's the reality of the situation. What has

sustained us is the almost double digit growth in some of our upper division classes in agriculture, natural resources, and biology."

ABAC has more than 1,000 students enrolled in Bachelor's degree programs.

"Our new strategic plan is titled 'Destination ABAC' for a lot of

different reasons but the number one reason is that we want ABAC to become a destination college," Bridges said. "With a shrinking number of high school graduates in Georgia, the top students will have more and more choices. We want them to make ABAC their first choice."

Bridges said the strategic plan actually places more emphasis on graduating students from ABAC than it does on enrolling students as freshmen.

"We have had four consecutive semesters where the number of graduates increased over the

previous year," Bridges said.

"That's the kind of numbers that are good for ABAC, for the community and for the state of Georgia.

"Think about it. When students stay at ABAC for four years to get one of our bachelor's degrees, they are much more likely to stay in this area, find employment, and raise families."

Bridges said the ABAC graduation rate is twice the average graduation rate of the 13 state colleges in the University System of Georgia.

In the 2012 fiscal year, ABAC's economic impact on Tifton and the surrounding area was \$261,313,451.

"We have some businesses in Tift County that have been here a long time," Bridges said. "That's great for the community. But we have other businesses that are gone before you know it. Businesses come and go. Colleges come and grow. It's a win-win situation for ABAC and this area."



### Stallion Newspaper Awarded by Georgia College Press Association

The ABAC student newspaper received four overall awards and nine individual awards at the Georgia College Press Association (GCPA) competition on Saturday in Athens.

Dr. Thomas Grant, advisor to "The Stallion," said the publication received third place for Best News among four-year institutions, a first for ABAC's student newspaper. Other overall awards were second place honors for Best Features, General Advertising, and General Photography.

In individual categories, the ABAC newspaper claimed nine awards.

Jason Brown, a rural studies major from Ashburn, received second place for Best Entertainment Story. Shelby Evans, a writing and communications major from Fitzgerald, won first place for Best Entertainment Story and third place for Best Column. Dixon Fletcher, a journalism and mass media major from Tifton, received second place for Best Investigative News, and Rachel Frantz, an English major from Sylvester, took second place for Best Review and third place for Best Feature Story.

In the photography division, Grace Holland, a journalism and mass media major from Tifton, took top honors with first place for Best Photograph-News and Best Photograph-Editorial/Feature. Austin Morris, current editor of "The Stallion," won third place for Best Photograph-Editorial. Morris is a business major from Ocilla.

Honorable mentions received by the ABAC newspaper included Evans for her "Stallion Style" column and an anonymous writer for the "Dear Filly" advice column.

## Graydon's Education Mission Started at ABAC in 1968

When Wasdon Graydon, Jr., attended his first day of college classes as a student at ABAC during the fall quarter of 1968, he never dreamed that one day he would put together a 37-year career at the institution and serve as the commencement speaker in the final event of ABAC's 100th birthday celebration.



that year," Graydon said. "We had good days and bad days. You have to consider the culture of ABAC at the time."

Graydon, son of the late Wasdon Graydon, Sr., and Lenora "Doll" Graydon, received his diploma from ABAC in 1970.

"ABAC gave me a good foundation," Graydon said. "I got a real good base."

After earning his bachelor's degree from Georgia Southern and his master's degree from Valdosta State, Graydon came back to ABAC on Sept. 1, 1973 as the Director of Student Support Services, fulfilling a tongue-in-cheek vow that he had made to ABAC President Clyde Driggers when Graydon received his diploma in 1970.

"I told Dr. Driggers on graduation day he would be hiring me in three years," Graydon said with a smile. "I came back because I wanted to help students have a proper higher education experience at ABAC."

One of the brightest moments of Graydon's career came on Dec. 12, 2008, when ABAC President

David Bridges asked him to be the fall commencement speaker in the closing moment of ABAC's 100th birthday celebration.

"That was another one of those humbling experiences that showed how hard work and going about it the right way can lead you to that graduation speaker's podium," Graydon said. "Never in my wildest imagination did I think I would be given such an opportunity."

Many job possibilities came Graydon's way before he retired from ABAC in 2010. He turned them all down because he decided Tifton was going to be home for his family, which includes his wife, Veronica, their daughter Jasmine, and for his son Tremayne, daughter-in-law Rechara, and grandchildren Amora and Nelina when they visited.

Because of that decision to make Tifton his home, Graydon became involved not only in the future of ABAC but the future of Tift County. He was elected for two terms as a County Commissioner. Today, he serves on the board of directors of First Community Bank and Tift Regional Medical Center. Additionally, he has always been active in Everette Temple Christian Methodist Episcopal Church.

But he did because he was a man on a mission.

"My mission was to come to ABAC, get my education and move on," Graydon, now 64, said in a recent interview. "I chose to stay in Tifton and go to ABAC because it was cost effective. I was the oldest of five siblings. I wanted them to have the chance to go to college as well."

Black History Month activities abound at ABAC this month just as they do every year during February. Graydon helped to make some of that history. Unlike today, Graydon didn't see a single African-American instructor when he went to freshman year classes in 1968.

"I think there were eight of us

## Black History Month Events Continue Tuesday at ABAC

Black History Month events are in full swing at ABAC. On Tuesday, a screening of the film "Dear White People" will be held at 7 p.m. in Bowen Hall, Room 100. Refreshments and a discussion will follow the movie. At 6:30 p.m. on Feb. 17, students can come to the Nickelodeon for "Get Fit, Y'all," a motivation and Hip-Hop aerobics class with Reggie the Trainer.

At 11:30 a.m. on Feb. 18, an Inspirational Tribute to Our Ancestors will be held in the Donaldson Dining Hall. The Annual Black History Month Awards Celebration will be held at 7 p.m. on Feb. 18 in Howard Auditorium. The event will include a one act play, "A Day without Black People and Wondrous Inventions."

Students can perform an original or borrowed song, poem, or speech at the Wording Word on Feb. 24 at 5 p.m. in the Nickelodeon. This event will be followed by a Peace Circle of Hope. The month's events will culminate with a cookout and candlelight vigil on Feb. 27 at 5 p.m. at the Town Hall.

All activities are collaborative efforts of the Campus Activities Board, Student Diversity Alliance, Sister to Sister, Cultura Latino, the ABAC Diversity Committee and Christian Student Fellowship and free of charge.

For more information on these events, contact Dean of Students Bernice Hughes at [bhughes@abac.edu](mailto:bhughes@abac.edu).

# Schedule for Stallion Day on Saturday

Join the office on Enrollment Management as they welcome hundreds of prospective students and their families to Stallion Day.

Contact Brooke Jernigan for more information at [bjernigan@abac.edu](mailto:bjernigan@abac.edu)

TIME	ACTIVITY	LOCATION
8:00 – 9:00	Check-in & Tours	Donaldson Dining Hall
9:00 - 9:20	Welcome & Overview of the Day	Donaldson Dining Hall
9:30 – 10:40  Pick 2 sessions to attend <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 9:30-10:00</li> <li>▪ 10:10-10:40</li> </ul>	Student Conversation Corner  Join the experts and have your questions answered on these areas from faculty, staff, and students.	Health Sciences Building: 4 YR: Agriculture & Natural Resources, 237 4 YR: Biology, 114 4 YR: Business & Economic Development, 108 4 YR: Rural Studies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community &amp; Social Development, 240</li> <li>• Politics &amp; Modern Cultures AND Writing &amp; Communications, 242</li> </ul> Honors, 259 Nursing, 156 Student Life, 254 <b>OR</b> 249
9:30-10:40	Parent Conversation Corner	Howard Auditorium
10:45- 11:50	Stallion Marketplace & Tours	Gressette Gymnasium
12:00 – 1:00	Lunch	Donaldson Dining Hall
1:15	Financial Aid Sessions 1:15, 1:45, or 2:15 1:30, 2:00, or 2:30 VA Information Session 1:15 or 1:45 Admissions & Scholarship Q&A Housing Q & A/Lakeside Tours	Ag Sciences Building: Room 131 Room 137 Room 133  Room 143 Lakeside Multipurpose Room

## Mr. ABAC Applications Now Available - Sign-up Today!

Mark your calendars for Mr. ABAC on Monday, April 6 at 7 p.m. in Howard Auditorium. The theme for the event is Black Tie Affair. Sponsor's agreement, entry fees, typed contestant information sheets, and contestant class schedule must be turned in to the Dr. Darby Sewell in Bowen 205 by 3 p.m. on Wednesday, March 4. Clubs can sponsor more than one contestant. Call 229.391.4810 or email Sewell at [dsewell@abac.edu](mailto:dsewell@abac.edu), Cindy Epperly at [cepperly@abac.edu](mailto:cepperly@abac.edu) or Ashleigh Childs [achilds@stallions.abac.edu](mailto:achilds@stallions.abac.edu) for more information. Applications are posted on the ABAC homepage and the Family and Consumer Sciences club's webpage.

Is your sweet tooth speaking to you this week? Join the Ag Business Club on **Wednesday at 6 p.m.** in the Ag Science Building for the **Sweetie Pie Baking Contest**. For \$5 you can enjoy all of the items submitted. Entries must be checked-in by 5:45. All proceeds help support the NAMA students attending national competition.



## Roy R. Jackson, Sr. Award for Staff Excellence

Take time to nominate a deserving staff member for the Roy R. Jackson, Sr. award. Criteria for this award as well as a list of eligible staff members and past winners can be found on the Staff Forum website at <http://www.abac.edu/more/employees/staff-forum>. This year you will be able to nominate an individual online by completing the Nomination Form and submitting it no later than 5 p.m. March 2. For more information, contact Dr. Chris Kinsey at [ckinsey@abac.edu](mailto:ckinsey@abac.edu)

## ABAC Students Chosen To Participate in All College Choir

Eight auditioned ABAC voice majors joined other auditioned students from programs across the state in the All-College Choir at the recent Georgia Music Educators Association (GMEA) In-Service Conference in Savannah.



Pictured (front row: l-r) Travius Burch, Quist, Terrence Gibson, Jr., (soloist), and Lauren Lever, (back row: l-r) Erica Humbert (soloist), Mariah Slaughter, Matthew Fuller, Cody Cone, and Holly Huggins.

their education in the music industry including music business, education, performance, conducting and many other aspects. The conference is scheduled to move from its longtime home

Brandon Waddles and Humbert sang the soprano solo in "Veni Sanctus Spiritus" by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

Other voice majors who attended the conference were Travius Burch, a voice major from Sylvester; Cody Cone, a voice major from Poulan; Lauren Lever, a voice major from Tifton; Matthew Fuller, a voice major from Macon; Holly Huggins, a voice major from Fitzgerald; and Mariah Slaughter, a voice major from Cairo. They performed under the direction of Dr. Amanda Quist, a faculty member of Westminster Choir College at Rider University.

Kaycee Johnson, a trumpet major from Tifton, also attended the conference for select music education sessions and workshops of specific interest to her field.

ABAC Music Program Director Susan Roe said GMEA is comprised of over 4,100 teachers in the areas of band, orchestra, chorus, general music and piano from elementary schools to colleges. At the conference, all the students had the privilege of viewing exhibits that furthered

in Savannah to Athens in 2016. Terrence Gibson, Jr., a voice major from Baxley, and Erica Humbert, a voice major from Thomasville, auditioned against singers from across the state and earned places to perform as soloists. Gibson sang the bass solo in "Ride in the Chariot" by

## Don't Forget to Purchase Some "Sweets for Your Sweetie"

The ABAC Ambassadors will be selling Candy-Grams

From now through Wednesday from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. in the Dining Hall

\$1-Sweets or \$2 Sweets & Balloons



Please submit information by **Thursday at noon** to Lindsey Roberts at [lroberts@abac.edu](mailto:lroberts@abac.edu) for inclusion in the next edition of the FOCUS.

## ABAC BIRTHDAYS

9 Johnny Folsom    10 Renaldo Arroya  
12 Todd Hicks    15 Christina Dent