Bachelor’s Degrees & Well Prepared Students Will Shape ABAC’s Future

When classes begin today for the 2012 fall semester at ABAC, almost 650 of the 3,200 ABAC students will be enrolled in bachelor’s degree programs. This is a 30% increase in baccalaureate students over last year.

ABAC now offers bachelor’s degrees in biology, diversified agriculture, turfgrass and golf course management, natural resource management with majors in forestry and wildlife, and four majors under the rural studies umbrella: social and community affairs, arts and culture, writing and communication, and business and economic development.

“These programs will shape the institution’s future for the second 100 years,” ABAC President David Bridges said. “We launched these baccalaureate programs in 2008 under some very difficult financial circumstances and most of the programs have doubled in enrollment since their conception.

The number of students seeking the BS in Biology nearly doubled, topping 150. Enrollment in 4-yr agriculture and natural resources programs will be approximately 450, an increase of about 25%.

“Now we’re seeing better prepared and more committed students choose ABAC as the place to go to college. The average GPA for transfer and incoming freshman this fall is above 3.0. I know that’s one reason why our retention and graduation rates are the highest of any state college in the University System.”

Bridges enters his seventh fall semester as ABAC’s president with many changes on the horizon. The most noticeable physical change to the face of the campus involves the front campus rehabilitation project.

Tift, Lewis, and Herring halls, three of the original buildings on the campus when it opened as the Second District A&M School in 1908, are undergoing extensive renovation. A part of the project includes the front lawn of the campus which will be transformed into a green vista with flowers, shrubs, and trees.

The President’s Office moved out of Tift Hall in 2007 for the first time in ABAC history and returned to a new look Tift Hall on May 14. The building also has offices for Vice President for Academic Affairs Niles Reddick, Vice President for Planning and Operations John Clemens, Vice President for External Affairs and Chief of Staff Paul Willis, and Director of Public Relations Ashley Mock.

When the renovation is complete, Tift Hall will also house an ABAC history room, a presidential gallery, meeting space, and a special area dedicated to the memory of ABAC alumnus George T. Smith, the only man in the history of Georgia to win contested elections to all three branches of state government.

When they re-open in 2013, Herring Hall will house the School of Business, and Lewis Hall will be the home for admissions and other student services operations.

ABAC students will see a new design to the interior of the Donaldson Dining Hall on Monday. With almost 1,300 students living on campus in either ABAC Lakeside or ABAC Place, the dining hall will be quite popular this week, not only for meals but as a social gathering spot.

Bridges always looks forward to seeing the new freshmen on the first day of classes.

“There’s a lot of anticipation on many fronts as we build up to the start of the semester,” Bridges said. “Walking around campus on that first day makes it all worth it.”

Fall semester classes continue through Nov. 30. The fall break will be on Oct. 15-16, and the autumn commencement ceremony is set for Dec. 7.

Town & Gown

This Thursday the ABAC community will be able to meet and talk with representatives from businesses, churches, banks and non-profits from around town.
The Town & Gown will be located in the Lamar Branch Student Center from 4 p.m.-6 p.m. The deadline to register your business is 4 p.m. today, ContactBernice Hughes at bhughes@abac.edu for more information.
Nature & History Come Alive with ABAC Trips this Fall

From the awe-inspiring depths of the Grand Canyon to the rich cultures of Spain and Portugal, the Office of External Affairs and Advance ment at ABAC will offer a large variety of travel opportuni ties for the fall season in cooperation with Kelly Tours and Collette Vacations.

Open to anyone with an enthusiasm for travel, the trips feature an educational experience loaded with fun and adventure. For more information on any of these excursions, interested persons can visit the ABAC travel site at http://www.abac.edu/travel, contact Diane Kilgore at dkilgore@abac.edu, or call (229) 391-5070. Prices for all trips listed below are per person rates and based on double occupancy.

The Maritime Provinces and Nova Scotia trip from Sept. 3-14 will kick off the fall travel season. Tourists will venture along the Eastern Corridor to the Hamptons, see the house made famous by the “Anne of Green Gables” series on Prince Edward Island, Halifax and its harbor, and Queen Elizabeth’s Canadian home. Also included in the trip are the 9 Mile Confederation Bridge, the Cabot Trail, and the Evangeline Trail. This trip is $2,350.

A trip to the French Riviera is set for Sept. 6-16, including a three-night stay in Paris. Visitors will take in the most popular sites of France with this excursion. Highlights will include the Rothschild Villa and Gardens; perfume-making in Grasse; St. Paul De Vence, home of the Fragonard Perfumierie; the principality of Monaco; the Roman Arena in Frejus; St. Jean-Cap-Ferrat’s flower market, and the seafront plazas of Promenade des Anglais and Place Massena.

Tourists will then spend three wonderful days in Paris taking in the “City of Lights” before departing for home. The cost of this trip is $4,048 and includes round-trip airfare, hotel accommodations, and 14 meals. An optional trip to Cannes and St. Tropez is also available to travelers for an extra fee of $75 per person.

The Grand Canyon and Albuquerque Balloon Festival trip will take place from Oct. 1-13, spotlighting Biloxi, San Antonio and The Alamo, New Mexico and Las Cruces, Red Rock Canyon, the Grand Canyon, the Four Corners, Mesa Verde National Park, and Paseo del Rio. On the return home, travelers will experience a world of color at the Mass Ascension of the Albuquerque Balloon Festival. This excursion is $2,199.

Experience the rich heritage of Spain’s Costa del Sol and the Portuguese Riviera from Oct. 18-30 with emphasis on Madrid, Granada, Cadiz, Seville, Lisbon, Fatima and more. Travelers will visit six United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage sites including a walking tour of Mezquita and the hilltop palace, Alhambra. This adventure includes 15 meals, round-trip airfare, and hotel accommodations for $3,799.

History buffs can journey into the past with the Riverboats, Trains and Civil War trip on Nov. 2-4. Visitors will travel to Chattanooga, Tenn., to commemorate 150 years of the Chickamauga Battlefield, spend two nights aboard the Delta Queen Riverboat, gaze at seven visible states atop Lookout Mountain, and experience the Civil War period at Button Willow Church. The cost of this trip is $499.
I would like to thank my ABAC family for the calls, visits, and beautiful flowers during my recent illness. Please don’t ignore the warning signs of heart problems, women have different symptoms from men. Please see your physician. Thanks again. - Bernice Hughes

The FOCUS is an 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.

President Dr. David Bridges called the 2012-2013 Academic year to session Sunday afternoon during the Freshman Convocation. Students, Faculty, and Staff were in attendance. Freshman had an opportunity to talk with ABAC faculty after the ceremony and received a commemorative lapel pin as an induction into the ABAC Community.

The ABAC Public Relations office and the ABAC Ambassadors are selling these “Welcome Back ABAC Students!” signs to local businesses. This sign campaign is to show students that businesses in the community are happy that they have returned, and welcome their business. The signs are $10 and the proceeds are going to benefit the ABAC Ambassadors. If you know of a business that would like to purchase a sign urge them to contact the Public Relations Office at 229.391.5055.

During the month of August, the Museum, Gallery, and Tift House will be open every Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. The Historic Village will be closed for the entire month. Conference facilities and the country store are still open for normal operation. For more information call 229.391.5205.