



FOCUS

ABRAHAM BALDWIN AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE

VOLUME LII

ISSUE 20

December 12, 2016

Students Receive Top Awards at Fall Commencement Ceremony

Two students received top honors as the most outstanding graduates during Thursday's fall commencement ceremony at ABAC.

Hillery Reeves, an agricultural communications major from Rebecca, received the Alumni Association Award for bachelor's degree graduates, and Madison Thornhill, a writing and communications major from Tifton, received the George P. Donaldson award for associate degree graduates.

Each recipient was selected through an application and interview process conducted by the ABAC Alumni Association, which provided a plaque and a check for \$500 for each of the recipients.

ABAC Alumni Director Lynda Fisher said the Donaldson Award has been a part of the commencement ceremony for many years, and the Alumni Association decided to add the additional award for bachelor's degree graduates in the fall 2014 ceremony.

Matt Bentley, a 1988 ABAC

graduate, was the commencement speaker. He gave the graduates five keys to fulfillment in their careers.

"Take charge of your life," Bentley said. "You have to take responsibility for your actions. Improve your people skills. Build your career. Don't expect to start at the top.

"You must be able to evaluate yourself. Lead by example. And finally, give back to the community. Do something for other people."

Reeves has been a part of many student organizations at ABAC including the ABAC Ambassadors where she served as parliamentarian. She was



ABAC President David Bridges (left) and ABAC Alumni Association President Chuck Scarborough (far right) congratulate Hillery Reeves (second from left) and Madison Thornhill after the ABAC commencement ceremony.

also one of the founding members and president of the Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow Club, wrote for the student newspaper, "The Stallion," and was a member of Phi Theta Kappa honor society, the Collegiate FFA, the Rural Studies Club, and the Georgia Association of

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ABAC Named a Top Military-Friendly College

Military Advanced Education (MAE) has awarded ABAC recognition as a Top School in the 2017 Military Advanced Education and Transition for the fourth year in a row. ABAC has also been named a 2016 Military Friendly® School by Victory Media for a second time.

MAE's Guide provides potential students with information about institutions that give back to our men and women in uniform. The



Guide is released in print and available online at www.mae-kmi.com.

"Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College is honored to again receive these military accolades," said Veterans Affairs Certifying Official and Student Veterans Organization Advisor Jessica Swords. "Our military and veteran students have served our country, and now we are privileged to serve them

through assisting in their educational success.

"The addition of the Freedom Gallery this year only helps to illustrate our commitment to veterans and military members, as well as their families. The increase in military-related students this year, partnered with the increased participation within our Student Veterans Organization demonstrates that our efforts are having a positive impact."

Military Advanced Education

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Educators Student Program.

Displaying her academic prowess, Reeves has been named to the President's List, the Dean's List, and the Distinguished List. She has also been named as an Honor Student.

Reeves has received two Harold Ragan Scholarships and three Bynum Rural Studies Scholarships. She was presented the discipline award from the School of Liberal Arts for excellence in rural studies and honored with a Pacesetter award "for being a model student in agricultural communications and for dedicating free time to ensuring the success of the Agriculture Communicators of Tomorrow Club, all the while remaining involved in her surrounding community."

That community involvement for the past three years focused on Suitcases for Kids sponsored through the Patticake House. The project makes sure children of abuse receive clothing and gifts

during the holiday season. She has also mentored for the Worth County High School Health Occupations Students of America program for the past two years and is a member of the Irwin County Cattlemen's Club.

Thornhill began her ABAC career as a dual enrolled student while still in high school at Tiftarea Academy. She spent four semesters as a dual-enrolled student and another three semesters as a full-time ABAC student.

A member of the ABAC Ambassadors since 2015, Thornhill currently serves as the organization's historian. She has also been a member of the Equus Dance Team, written for ABAC's student newspaper, and was a contestant in the 2016 Ms. ABAC Pageant when she was named the Essay Contest winner. She was also inducted into the Phi Theta Kappa Honors Society.

Thornhill has worked on the campus as a student worker in the Office of Admissions and the

Technology Support Center. Her academic career at ABAC includes recognition on the Distinguished Achievement List, the President's List, and as a Superior Honor Student. A recipient of the Foundation Scholarship, Thornhill also received the Loye Daniell Memorial Dance Scholarship, Colquitt EMC Scholarship, and the Sertoma Club Scholarship.

Outside of ABAC, Thornhill has been involved in the community service project Hands on Tifton, assisted with the Natural Resources Conservation Workshop, and helped with the YMCA Father-Daughter Dance. She also took part in Operation Christmas Child at the Atlanta Processing Center in 2014.

A total of 188 graduates participated in the ceremony. ABAC will close for the holidays on Dec. 23 and reopen on Jan. 3, 2017. Classes begin for the spring semester on Jan. 9, 2017.

Martin Discusses "Give Back to ABAC" Success at GEAC Conference

During the Georgia Educational Advancement Council conference held in Nov. in Savannah, Dr. Deidre Martin, Director of Development presented to the advancement and development officers from all over Georgia. Development professionals from across the state were anxious to hear her strategy that brought campus giving from an inactive program to a participation level of 73% in just the 2nd year since its revival. Martin spoke about the "Give Back to ABAC" campaign and the importance of the campus volunteers across campus and the sense of ownership that faculty and staff were taking in creating a culture of giving at ABAC.

Save the date for Spring Orientation on January 6, 2017. Check-in will be held in the Health Sciences Building beginning at 8 a.m. Contact the Office of Enrollment Management for more information 229.391.5004

Annual Holiday Luncheon to be Held on Tuesday

You are cordially invited to the ABAC Holiday Luncheon on Tuesday at 12 p.m. in the Nickelodeon. Take the time to come out and enjoy some delicious food and mingle with your co-workers. Staff Forum is asking all participants to bring a dish such as a vegetable/side, casserole, dessert, bread, drinks, etc. The President's Office is providing the meat (Boston butt, ham, and turkey) from Hog N Bones.

2016 Features History-Making Accomplishments for ABAC

An increase in enrollment, the addition of two new bachelor's degrees, and the opening of the laboratory sciences building and the Freedom Gallery highlighted the 2016 calendar year at ABAC.

The fall semester enrollment increase to 3,475 students was the third positive bump in the student population in the last four years for ABAC. The number of students enrolled in bachelor's degrees increased to 1,828, the highest in the history of the college.

"In 2008, we had 41 students in baccalaureate degree programs," ABAC President David Bridges said. "Now we have over 1,800 studying for bachelor's degrees. That is a stark contrast to most of the other state colleges in the University System of Georgia. Our vision is to be a destination college, and because of our affordability, I believe that will happen. Life is better at ABAC."

Bridges is hopeful that this year's announcements of new bachelor's degree programs in nursing and agricultural education will fuel the fire for future enrollment increases.

"Well qualified students pursuing bachelor's degrees is the future of ABAC," Bridges said. "We are proud of our heritage as an associate degree-granting institution for 75 years, but it's a new day at ABAC."

The announcement of the new nursing degree came during the 50th anniversary of the first students entering the associate degree in nursing program at the college. Now those Registered Nurses can return for a bachelor's degree.

"The ABAC nursing faculty designed the program to build on the current knowledge and professional experience of the practicing R.N.," Dr. Tami Dennis, professor of nursing, said. "The program will have the added feature of a focus and application to the student's existing place of employment."

Troy Spicer, Dean of the School of Nursing and Health Sciences,

knows there are prospects galore for the new degree.

"If you have breathed air in the last 50 years in South Georgia, you or a member of your family have had contact with an ABAC nursing graduate," Spicer, a 1982 ABAC nursing program graduate, said. "I would bet there is not a single person in South Georgia who has not been touched by a nurse who graduated from ABAC."

Dr. Jerry Baker, Dean of the School of Agriculture and Natural Resources, has already received quite a few inquiries about the new B.S. degree in agricultural education.

"We currently have 107 students at ABAC who have expressed interest in the pursuing the ag education major," Baker said. "We have seen growth in all our bachelor's degree programs because our graduates have good skills, and they are prepared for the work force."

Increasing the number of students majoring in the bachelor's degree in biology at ABAC is a primary focus of Dr. Johnny Evans, Dean of the School of Science and Mathematics. He believes the sparkling, new \$8.5 million laboratory sciences building will provide a springboard toward that goal.

"ABAC is now a destination for students who will find cures for diseases, invent amazing technology, and solve the toughest problems the world has ever faced," Evans said. "This new building is focused on meeting students' needs and providing space for discovery, research, and creativity."

Bridges has a different objective for the Freedom Gallery in Tift Hall, which opened in an impressive ceremony on Oct. 13.

"We are doing this because I want future generations of ABAC students to know that we respect the honor, the integrity, and the valor of those who serve in the

armed forces of our country," Bridges said. "We will continue to invest in those who invested so much in us. We must not forget that some of them invested their lives for our freedom."

One of those American heroes who gave his life for his country was ABAC alumnus Harold Bascom Durham, Jr., a posthumous Medal of Honor recipient whose life is detailed in the Freedom Gallery.

"In the Freedom Gallery, we wanted to tell the story of Second Lieutenant Durham, but we also wanted to convey the fact that he was just one of the many men and women who have sacrificed their lives for this country," Lindsey Roberts, director of marketing and communications for ABAC, said.

Roberts coordinated the mammoth project which also covers the contributions of all branches of the military including the courageous acts of Henry Will Jones, an ABAC alumnus from Lakeland, who received a posthumous Silver Star for his service in World War II.

Other highlights of the calendar year included the \$2.3 million grant renewal of the High School Equivalency Program (HEP) in the Office of Multicultural Education, the awarding of nursing scholarships to the entire inaugural class of bachelor's degree nursing students, and the announcement of a \$250,000 gift from the Harley Langdale, Jr. Foundation, Inc., to the ABAC Foundation for the Destination Ag project which will enhance agricultural and natural resource programming at the Georgia Museum of Agriculture and Historic Village at ABAC.

"Through the very generous support of the Harley Langdale, Jr. Foundation, ABAC will be planting seeds that will ensure the growth of Georgia's number one industry, agriculture, for the next generation and beyond," Bridges said. "Their support has made it possible for us to invest in the lives of these students who will be the agricultural leaders of this state 30 years from now."

Spring semester begin on Jan. 9.

Military Friendly from Page 1

(www.mae-kmi.com) serves educational service officers and transition officers at every U.S. military installation, along with the service members they counsel. Published 10 times a year, MAE's editorial coverage includes exclusive interviews with military executive leadership, educators, and members of Congress; best practices; career and transition spotlights, service member, school, and program profiles; and periodic special reports. KMI Media Group, Inc. (www.kmimediagroup.com) is the leading independent

publisher of targeted information about military requirements, technologies and operations. Serving as a unique forum for senior military and Department of Defense leadership, KMI focuses on distinct and essential communities within the defense market.

Victory Media is the leading trademarked program that targets and grades colleges and companies nationwide, helping veterans and military families make knowledgeable decisions about education and career opportunities. Its aim is to benchmark and identify the

institutions which have programs and procedures that lead to positive outcomes.

The Military Friendly® ratings and resources were developed through more than a decade of proprietary research. This service provides active and retired military with the transparent, accurate information needed to make decisions about civilian careers and educational opportunities.

For more information, interested persons can visit ABAC at www.abac.edu or www.mae-kmi.com for online access to the 2017 Guide to Military-Friendly Colleges and Universities.

Georgia Museum of Agriculture Closed for Holidays Dec. 24

The Georgia Museum of Agriculture and Historic Village will be closed from Dec. 24, 2016 through January 2, 2017 for the holidays. This closure includes, the Museum, Historic Village, Gallery, Country Store and Administrative Offices.

Hours of operation from January 3 -31, 2017 will be from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Tuesday-Friday for the Museum and Gallery only. Admission is reduced to \$4 per person. Children four and under are free.

The Country Store will reopen January 3 and remain open Monday – Saturday from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. during the month of January.

On Saturdays in January, the Museum, Gallery, Country Store and Historic Village will be open from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. The Vulcan Steam Train will be operating each Saturday in January. Admission on Saturday's in January is \$8 for seniors, \$10 for adults, \$5 for children five years of age and older, and free for children four years old and under. The Museum will resume normal operating hours on February 1, 2017.

For more information on the Museum, call (229) 391-5205 or visit www.abac.edu/museum.

There will not be another edition of the FOCUS until January. Please send submissions for that edition before January 2. Happy Holidays!

ABAC and ABAC on the Square Will Close for Holidays Dec. 24

All offices at ABAC and ABAC on the Square will close for the holidays beginning Dec. 24.

The college will resume its normal hours of operation on Jan. 3, 2017 from 8 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. on Monday-Thursday and 8 a.m. until 3 p.m. on Fridays.

Spring semester classes begin on Jan. 9, 2017. For more information on the spring term schedule, interested persons can visit www.abac.edu.

ABAC
Birthdays

12	Jason Scott	14	Sarah Beach	17	Marcie Smith
19	Ana Martinez	20	Donna Webb	20	Maria Aguilar
23	Ray Lundy	24	Kip Hall	25	Gwen Anderson
	25	Shubha Chatterjee	30	Avijit Kar	