ABAC Spring Term Classes Begin Wednesday

Spring semester classes begin on Wednesday at ABAC.

Spring term classes will continue through April 27 with final exams set for April 28-29 and May 2-3. The spring commencement ceremony will be held at 10 a.m. on May 5. The only time during the term when the entire campus will be closed is on Jan. 18 for the Martin Luther King, Jr., holiday. Faculty and students will be away for spring break on March 14-18.

Other activities on the campus this spring include the annual Evening for ABAC scholarship fundraiser featuring the Fabulous Equinox Orchestra on March 4, Stallion Days for prospective students on Feb. 13 and April 2, the regional science fair on Feb. 12, the Mr. ABAC contest on March 30, Honors Day on April 6, and the annual jazz band concert on April 21. The Georgia Museum of Agriculture and Historic Village at ABAC will also host the annual Folklife Festival on April 9.

Homecoming Week on April 1-2 will feature the Alumni Awards Luncheon, the ABAC Athletics Hall of Fame induction ceremony, the Gee Haw Whoa Back Rodeo, the Students versus Alumni Softball Game and the Run for the Nurses 5K and half-mile marathon.

First Tuesday Concert Series performances for the spring term include “A Night with Duo-Allant” on Feb. 2, “A Night of a Choral Music” on March 1, and “A Night of Broadway Music” on April 5. All First Tuesday performances will be held at the Chapel of All Faiths on the ABAC campus at 7 p.m. The concerts are open to the public at no charge.

Other performances during the spring term include the Spring Choral Concert on April 7, the Spring Band Concert on April 11-12, the Spring Music Recitals on April 19 and 25, and the Spring Music Student Ensemble Recital on April 26.

The ABAC Presents! Performing Arts Series will offer a wide variety of entertainment beginning with the Peach State Opera’s “Don Giovanni”

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Three New Trustees Join ABAC Foundation

Three new faces will join the ranks of the trustees of the ABAC Foundation, Inc., effective Jan. 1, according to an announcement from ABAC Foundation Chair Lynn Lovett. She also said that another trustee has agreed to a new four-year term on the board.

“We are always looking for trustees who have the time and energy to devote to furthering the goals of the ABAC Foundation,” Lovett said. “All of our trustees are committed to the advancement of ABAC with a variety of different publics they represent.”

The new trustees included Emily Watson from Moultrie, Dr. Beverly Sparks from Athens, and Michelle Higdon from Clemson, S.C. John W. Langdale, III, from Valdosta has committed to a new term on the board.

Watson serves as Marketing Director for Colquitt Regional Medical Center. Prior to joining the administration of Colquitt Regional in 2014, she was the Archway Public Health Professional for Colquitt County for seven years. Watson has also served on the staff of Congressman Jack Kingston, first as a legislative aide in Washington, D.C. and later as a field representative/ag liaison in his Valdosta office.

A 2003 graduate of the University of Georgia (UGA) College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences where she majored in Agribusiness, Watson is married to Rep. Sam Watson, and they have two daughters, Lily and Lucy. The Watsons reside in Colquitt County where they are involved in the production of vegetables, cattle and hay.

Sparks recently retired as the Associate Dean for the UGA Cooperative Extension Service. She is a 1976 ABAC graduate, earning her associate degree in agricultural science. She received a bachelor’s degree in horticulture and a master’s degree in entomology from UGA. She earned her Ph.D. in entomology from Louisiana State University.

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An extension urban entomologist at Texas A&M University from 1983-89, Sparks was the first female extension agricultural specialist for the university’s agricultural extension service. She was also the first female president of the Southeastern Branch of the Entomological Society of America and the first female Associate Dean for Extension at UGA.

At UGA, Sparks served as an Extension Entomologist from 1989-95 before becoming Extension Program Coordinator for Entomology from 1996-2002. From 2002-2006, she was District Extension Director for the North and Northeast districts. She was Assistant Dean and Interim Associate Dean for Cooperative Extension from 2006-2007 and Associate Dean for Cooperative Extension from 2007 until her retirement.

In 1994, Sparks was recognized as the Outstanding Young Professional by the Georgia Association of County Agricultural Agents. In 1998 she was awarded the Walter B. Hill Award for Public Service at UGA. Named a Walter B. Hill Fellow in 1999, Sparks was recognized for Outstanding Service to the Georgia Pest Control Industry in 2002. She also received the Georgia Power Woman of the Year award in 2006 and was the recipient of the UGA College of Agriculture Service Medallion in 2014.

Sparks was the recipient of the ABAC Distinguished Alumnus Award on April 10 and was the guest speaker at the ABAC spring commencement on May 7. She has five other family members who have graduated from ABAC. Her husband, Allen Tibbetts, is also a 1976 ABAC alumnus.

Higdon is the former Chief Executive Officer and currently an advisor for Solid Gold Pet, a premium pet food provider. As CEO, she led the turnaround of a 40-year-old brand by developing a professional management team to lead growth, develop a more contemporary brand strategy, update packaging, and achieve distribution expansion within the pet specialty retail channel.

Higdon is also the former President/Chief Operating Officer for Waggin’ Train LLC, now a wholly owned operating subsidiary of Nestlé, and has 15 years of experience in the management of sales, marketing and operations in consumer packaged goods.

At Waggin’ Train, Higdon was responsible for all operations in the U.S. and abroad including global procurement, distribution, inventory control, supply chain, and finance. She was directly active with several national accounts such as Wal-Mart, Dollar General, and Sam’s Club.

Prior to her leadership at Waggin’ Train, Higdon was President of Ultra Pet, LLC, a pet products company which marketed premium cat litter, Litter Pearls, Ultra Pearls, and Cedar Fresh, as well as dog treats. Before joining Ultra Pet, she held the position of Vice President of Marketing and then Managing Director of Greased Lightning Household brands.

A 1986 graduate of ABAC, Higdon and her husband, Dr. Lee Higdon, Ph.D., have two children, Guy, who attended ABAC before transferring to Clemson University in 2013, and Gail, currently a student at Furman University. Michelle Higdon received her bachelor’s degree in Food and Resource Economics from the University of Florida. The Higdons live in Clemson, S.C. They have funded an endowment for the School of Agriculture & Natural Resources at ABAC.

Langdale is the president of The Langdale Company in Valdosta. He represents the fourth generation of family leadership for the company, which was founded in 1894. The Langdale Company is a highly diversified enterprise that includes forestry, forest products and other affiliate companies that span the automotive, banking, hospitality and land development industries.

In the company’s first half century, it created economic opportunities for the communities in which it operated through the naval stores business. Since then, the company has moved aggressively into manufacturing and other areas.

The company’s evolution has followed an unceasing quest to make the most of limited natural and human resources via innovation. Every year since the 1930s, the company has planted more trees than it has harvested, and it is now approaching the planting of its hundred millionth seedling. That progressive environmental stewardship provides wildlife habitat, clean air and water.

Langdale attended ABAC and UGA, where he received his B.A. in Speech Communications. He serves as Chairman of the Board of the Georgia Forestry Commission. He is also a board member of the Georgia Forestry Association and the Georgia Conservancy. Langdale also serves as a Steering Committee Member for the Greater Okefenokee Association of Landowners.

Langdale and his wife, Kimberly, have two children, Caroline and John.
ABAC Receives $4,620 Grant from the Governor’s Office of Hwy. Safety

The Governor’s Office of Highway Safety (GOHS) is proud to announce the receipt of a $4,620 grant to ABAC for participation in the GOHS Georgia Young Adult Program.

The GOHS addresses young adult driver crashes, injuries and fatalities and partners with colleges and universities throughout the state to implement the Georgia Young Adult Program (GYAP). This program has proven to be successful using strategies such as peer education, providing educational speakers to schools, and encouraging schools to develop creative, innovative techniques to reduce young adult crashes, injuries and fatalities in their communities.

“The Governor’s Office of Highway Safety is committed to changing the tragic trend of young adult driver deaths in Georgia,” said GOHS Director Harris Blackwood. “We’re here to make changes and I believe the students at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College can help us achieve the goal of lowering driver, crash, injury and fatality rates statewide. Who better to address the challenges and dangers facing young adults than their peers? I’m confident these students can convince their peers to be safer, more conscientious drivers.”

The GYAP program at ABAC coordinates events such as impaired driving prevention programs including DUI simulators or professional speakers. Programming often surrounds events such as National Collegiate Alcohol Awareness Week, Safe Spring Break, graduation, and summer orientation. Programs involve collaborations with the campus Greek community, student athletes, camps, police, health and wellness departments, and counseling services.

The grant runs October 1, 2015 through September 30, 2016.

ABAC Accepting Athletics Hall of Fame Nominations

Nominations are now being accepted for the Athletics Hall of Fame at ABAC. The deadline for nominations is Jan. 15.

ABAC Athletics Director Alan Kramer said any individual, living or deceased, may be considered for induction into the ABAC Athletics Hall of Fame. Individuals are nominated in one of three categories: Athlete, Coach, or Contributor.

The induction ceremony for the 2016 class is scheduled for April 1 as a part of the ABAC Homecoming week.

For a complete list of previous inductees, please visit www.abac.edu/athletics/hall-of-fame/previous-inductees.

Kramer said athletic achievement as well as integrity, sportsmanship, and character will be considered. He said the college is also looking for individuals who may have been good athletes while at ABAC, but who went on to coach high school or college teams to state or national titles.

Alumni as well as the general public are encouraged to nominate individuals for this honor. Hall of Fame criteria and a nomination form can be found at www.abac.edu/athletics/hall-of-fame/submit-a-nomination. For more information on the 2016 Athletics Hall of Fame, interested persons can contact Shirley Wilson in the Office of Athletics at (229) 391-4930.

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by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart on Feb. 11 at 7 p.m. in Howard Auditorium, followed by the Dallas Brass on March 8 at 7 p.m. in the Tift County High School Center for Performing Arts, and saxophonist Greg Tardy with the ABAC Jazz Band on April 21. Tickets are required for each of these arts series events and can be purchased by phone at (229) 391-4895.

The Baldwin Players’ spring production of “Nunsense” will take place at Howard Auditorium March 31-April 2 at 7 p.m. and on April 3 at 3 p.m. Tickets are $7 and can be purchased online at www.purplepass.com/abac.

The Virtuoso Chamber Music series will feature pianist Jasmin Arakawa on Jan. 19 at 7 p.m. in Howard Auditorium. This concert is free of charge.

Athletic events include softball and baseball games, tennis matches, and golf tournaments as five of the six intercollegiate sports teams at ABAC swing into action. Dates and times for all events are subject to change. For more information about ABAC events, visit the website at www.abac.edu.