For IMMEDIATE Release

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Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College turns 105 years old today. The historic rededication ceremony for the college’s newly-renovated original buildings will be held on March 1. (Top) The college’s original buildings – Tift, Herring, and Lewis Halls - in 1911 and (bottom) the buildings today.
ABAC Turns 105 on February 20

TIFFON – On Feb. 20, 1908, a total of 27 students walked up the front steps of Tift Hall to attend classes at the Second District Agricultural and Mechanical School. That school eventually became ABAC. Today, ABAC turns 105 years old.

“It’s a great day to look back, remember our roots, and appreciate the excellent foundation established by the Agricultural and Mechanical School students, faculty, and administration,” ABAC President David Bridges said. “ABAC today is a lot different than it was in 1908. But we still maintain those core values and the promise of a quality education for every student who walks in a classroom building on our campus.”

Tift, Lewis, and Herring Halls were showplaces when they opened in 1908. Today, all three buildings are completing a rehabilitation process so they will again become the heartbeat of the ABAC campus. The Historic Front of Campus Rededication Ceremony is set for 1:30 p.m. on March 1 so the public can view the revitalized buildings.

During the fall term, ABAC enrolled 3,225 students from 151 Georgia counties, 22 states, and 25 countries. Over 1,200 of the students live on campus in modern housing complexes at ABAC Place and ABAC Lakeside.

The Georgia Museum of Agriculture and Historic Village is now a part of the ABAC campus as well as the Forest Lakes Golf Club. ABAC also enrolls almost 200 students for classes at ABAC on the Square in downtown Moultrie. A recent study showed the impact of ABAC on the south Georgia economy to be over $280 million on an annual basis.
ABAC offers bachelor’s degrees in Diversified Agriculture, Turfgrass and Golf Course Management, Biology, Forestry, and Wildlife Management as well as Social and Community Development, Politics and Modern Culture, Writing and Communication, and Business and Economic Development under the broad umbrella of Rural Studies.

The birth of the Second District A&M School actually took place on Aug. 18, 1906 when the Georgia General Assembly enacted Public Law 448. This bill established a state-run Agricultural and Mechanical School in each of Georgia’s 12 congressional districts.

The schools were designed by a single architect so the main campus buildings statewide were almost identical. They were actually college preparatory boarding schools and included students from 14-21 years old.

The course work contained agriculture classes for boys and home economics classes for girls. At the Second District A&M School, only boys were allowed to board during the first term. Students lived in Herring Hall and Lewis Hall and attended classes in Tift Hall.

The City of Tifton actually had to bid against Albany, Camilla, Pelham, and Ashburn for the right to host the school. Thanks to Captain H.H. Tift, the founder of Tifton, and other community leaders, Tifton won the bid on the eighth balloting at a meeting in Albany on Nov. 23, 1906. The final vote came down to Tifton and Pelham.

Opening day of the Second District A&M School was declared a holiday in Tifton. Stores and the public school were closed. A special train ran to the campus from downtown Tifton and some 1,200 people attended the opening day ceremony.
Professor W.W. Driskell was the first principal of the Second District A&M School. The first class to graduate on June 14, 1910 included Joel Davis and Maude Paulk from Tift County and Charles Hinson from Grady County.

In 1924, a bill passed the Georgia legislature to change the high school to a college called the South Georgia A&M College. S.L. Lewis, who had been the principal at the high school on two different occasions, was selected as the first president of the college.

In 1929, the name of the college was changed again to the Georgia State College for Men. Dr. Frank G. Branch was the first and only president. GSCM had a broad range of athletics including a football team. The Rams’ biggest win was a 13-12 victory over the University of Miami on Oct. 16, 1931.

In 1933, the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia was formed and changed the name of the college again, this time to Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College. It became a two-year college named after a Georgia signer of the U.S. Constitution and the first president of the University of Georgia. Dr. J.G. Woodroof was the first president of ABAC.

ABAC returned to four-year college status on May 16, 2006 when the Board of Regents named it a State College of the University System.

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