Elisabeth O’Quinn (right), a rural studies – business and economic development major from Fitzgerald, received the prestigious George P. Donaldson award at the spring commencement ceremony on Friday at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College. ABAC President David Bridges (left) and Alumni President Keith Rucker (center) presented her with the award.
Fitzgerald Student Wins Top Award at ABAC Commencement

TIFFTON – Elisabeth O’Quinn, a rural studies – business and economic development major from Fitzgerald, received the prestigious George P. Donaldson award at the spring commencement ceremony on Friday at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College.

O’Quinn became the first Summa Cum Laude graduate in the history of ABAC with a grade point average over 3.9 on a 4.0 scale. To be eligible for the Summa Cum Laude distinction, graduates must complete a bachelor’s degree. ABAC awarded its first bachelor’s degree in May of 2009.

A total of 217 graduates participated in the ceremony. Forty-eight students received bachelor’s degrees including the first ABAC bachelor’s degrees ever awarded in Natural Resource Management (Forestry), Natural Resource Management (Wildlife) and Biology.

The guest speaker at the event was Congressman Austin Scott. He challenged the students to find their pathways to success.

“You will wake up in the morning with a college diploma,” Scott, the U.S. Representative for Georgia’s Eighth Congressional District, said. “When you wake up, you will face the future with a thousand different paths you can take.

“Each path will have its challenges. I can tell you that change happens very fast in all of those paths. Never let a fear of failure determine your path.”

Scott told the graduates that the most important first step was to “get started. It doesn’t matter where you start but continual improvement should be your goal. Get better every day in whatever you do. If you say you’re going to do something, do it.”
O’Quinn began her ABAC career in 2009 as an interior design major. She graduated with her associate’s degree in family and consumer sciences—interior design with high honors in 2011 and immediately began course work toward her bachelor’s degree in rural studies.

O’Quinn is an ABAC Foundation Scholarship recipient and has been named to the Dean’s List or President’s List every semester she has attended ABAC. She received the top award, the Award of Distinction, from the Stafford School of Business in 2013 and the Divisional Discipline award in rural studies – business and economic development in 2012. She was also the recipient of the Rural Studies Division Scholarship in 2013.

Serving as vice-president of the Rural Studies Club this year headed up a long list of campus involvement. She has also served as secretary of the Family and Consumer Sciences Club and as a member of the Phi Theta Kappa and Alpha Beta Gamma honor organizations.

O’Quinn represented ABAC with a speech at the Tift County Rotary Club and in Pelham as a part of a group sharing a marketing plan for the Hand Trading Company building. She also assisted at Lewis Hall in the Campus Rededication Ceremony and assisted with mentoring project resources for the United Way of South Central Georgia.

O’Quinn expanded her leadership skills with a one-year internship at the Georgia Peanut Commission during her college career. She is now working with the Stafford School of Business at ABAC.

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