The ABAC Concert Band is one of the many extracurricular activities offered through the School of Liberal Arts at ABAC. Members of the band major in many different fields of study at the college.

ABAC Graduates Well Versed in Communication Skills

TIFTON—In today’s fast-paced information world of Twitter and Facebook, college graduates must be well versed in communication skills whether they’re using computers, cell phones, or tablets. And perhaps most importantly, they must be masters of the spoken word in conversations with customers.
If you’re telling that to Dr. Bobbie Robinson, you’re preaching to the choir.

“What we know is that liberal arts graduates can think critically, write well, and communicate well,” Robinson, the Dean of the School of Liberal Arts at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College, said. “What we’re hearing from industry is to send us people with these types of skills. We can teach them the technology of their particular job.

“Employers are looking for these skills. They want personnel who can form that communication bridge between the public and their company.”

Robinson said she talked with more students this summer who declared for a liberal arts major than at any other time in recent history. She said the students picked majors ranging from English to music, including the fields of history, art, communication, and political science.

Students are gravitating toward the ABAC Rural Studies’ bachelor’s degree majors in Writing and Communication and Politics and Modern Cultures.

“Students in these majors graduate with practicum experience, a developed portfolio of projects they have worked on, and an internship in the area they want to pursue,” Robinson said. “The best thing is they are getting jobs.

“When someone gets a job, they have to write e-mails. They may have to solve a problem with a customer who comes in upset. Employees must be able to communicate a direct message and communicate it well. These are the skills that we teach.”

Like all the deans on campus, Robinson spends time each semester just listening to students and hearing about their goals in life. A unique partnership developed from one of those discussions.
“Some students come to ABAC to begin a course of study in agriculture because they have been in a setting of that nature all their lives,” Robinson said. “They have grown up in a rural setting. But then they decide they don’t want a specific job in production agriculture.

“This is where we come in. They get a strong foundation of agriculture classes with a heavy dose of liberal arts classes. They graduate with a bachelor’s degree in writing and communication which turns out to really be an agriculture communications degree.”

Robinson said student internships in liberal arts are “the most exciting thing I have worked with in my career.

“We are on the leading edge of schools adding internships to their programs which result in a baccalaureate degree. Depending on the size of the internship, these students have been in a job setting at least 160 hours. Several of them have had job offers from the internship or at least they have added a bullet on a resume.”

Robinson never ceases to be amazed at the wide range of extracurricular activities available to students at ABAC, particularly those with a liberal arts connection.

“Students don’t have to be majoring in these areas to participate,” Robinson said. “You can sing in the choir and major in biology. You can write for the paper and major in agriculture.

“We have art shows, an open microphone night at Rockin’ Joe’s coffee house, and the Baldwin Players are doing Shakespeare this fall. In the spring, they’re doing an open air production at the Museum of Agriculture.”

Robinson said that ABAC has an internationally known jazz band which has toured Europe on three occasions, a concert band, a concert choir, a jazz choir, a literary magazine, and even a radio station where students can host their own talk show.
Students interested in politics can get involved in the College Republicans or the Young Democrats. They can also run for office in the Student Government Association.

“To go into the liberal arts area, students bring a talent,” Robinson said. “Maybe it’s a talent for the written word, or art or music. At ABAC, we have lots of opportunities to develop those talents during the time they are here.”

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