Stafford School of Business Forging Ahead in a Big Way

TIFTON—Coming from the lightning quick pace of international marketing, Dill and Susan Driscoll are accustomed to making things happen in a big way in a big hurry.

In their second year as Deans of the Stafford School of Business at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College, they have big plans at a slightly more controlled pace for the days ahead.

“Last year was a very busy year for us,” Susan Driscoll said. “It’s not quite the pace we’re used to in the business world but I have been told that we have gotten a lot done.”
Building on a long standing relationship with the Coca-Cola Company and an eye-popping list of other clients, the Driscolls literally traveled the world with their marketing company, *ignition*. After selling *ignition*, it was perfect timing when ABAC invited them to the world of academia.

“It was really a pretty, simple decision,” Dill Driscoll said. “I had spent 35 years training over 400,000 young adults to do experiential marketing. I’ve always been a teacher and a coach. We live over in Osierfield, Georgia, and ABAC is basically right across the street, 30 miles away.”

Dill said a business school in Florida became interested in them because of their success in the business world. He said that contact sparked their interest in running a business school at a college. And the results are already showing in the 2013 fall term.

“We are up 55 per cent over last year’s freshman class and 13 per cent overall in the Stafford School of Business,” Dill said. “We are very excited about that.”

“We had worked with the Terry College of Business at the University of Georgia in the past,” Susan said. “Because of that, we had really good expectations of what the students were going to be like. There’s something new every day, and we have wonderful students at ABAC. I can tell you that we are going to be very proud of our future generation of business leaders in South Georgia.”

Shaping the business curriculum to prepare students for the business world of tomorrow and beyond was the Driscolls’ focus last year. With the ABAC bachelor’s degree in Business and Economic Development under the Rural Studies umbrella now firmly in place, they both believe enrollment is about to zoom into a new dimension.
“The curriculum now is at a level where graduates can start their own businesses, continue with the second, third, or fourth generation of their family businesses or just be sound business managers,” Susan said. “Some of them will like living in rural communities, and others will prefer Atlanta or even London.

“We’re very excited that we have been able to create the curriculum so that our students will be ready for the real world.”

The Driscolls are accustomed to innovation, and that’s why they have no qualms about a new creation at ABAC called “Stafford Hall”.

“It’s going to be an amazing experiment,” Dill said. “It will offer value-based room reduction for 120 students. They will be athletes, nursing students, agriculture students, music majors, science kids, and business majors. It’s just a cross section of the campus.”

The students in Stafford Hall will divide into four teams of 30 students each. Throughout the fall semester they will be involved in competitions including fun activities such as a field day, a scavenger hunt, and a talent show as well as grade competitions and business projects. A humanitarian program just before Thanksgiving will involve raising $3,000 for three pallets of food to feed 300 families.

Judging by their excitement about Stafford Hall, the Driscolls are obviously planning for the project to be a huge success. Then they’ll fine tune it, and make it bigger and better in the future. And they believe the future of the Stafford School of Business is very bright indeed.

“We want these young people to interact with business people, with legislators, and whoever else,” Dill said. “We have lots of contacts in 190 countries around the world. We’ll get the students ready, and then we’ll place them in internships. We’ll do everything possible to find them a job.”
Running the Stafford School of Business is definitely a team effort for the Driscolls. But when it comes to decision-making, who’s the boss?

“We are a great team,” Susan said. “He is very creative and energetic and passionate. He also has a huge heart for the students. I’m more analytical and maybe a little bit quieter but I love the kids too.

“Even in our business, we complemented each other with our skills. It’s just always worked.”

In their second year at ABAC, the Driscolls are counting on seeing some of that work pay big dividends for the students in the Stafford School of Business.

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