ABAC Project Receives Highest Honor from Board of Regents

TIFTON – For Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College, the Historic Front Campus Project revitalized the “front door” of ABAC in a landmark fashion. For that monumental endeavor which culminated with a rededication ceremony on March 1, ABAC has received the Regents Award of Excellence from the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia.

ABAC’s historic rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of Tift, Lewis and Herring halls and the front of campus revitalization was the basis for the award. USG Vice Chancellor for Facilities Jim James said the Regents present the award for projects which redefine the “spirit of place” on a campus.
“It creates or re-creates and embodies the special atmosphere of that campus, that particular place,” James said during the presentation at the recent statewide facilities conference in Atlanta. “It is more than a group of buildings. It is the space between the buildings, and the totality of experiences created there.”

ABAC Director of Capital Planning Melvin Merrill, who was the campus liaison for the project, said the massive undertaking involved the rehabilitation of the circular drive in front of ABAC, called the “sweetheart circle”, the front lawn, the three signature buildings, and the area directly behind the buildings.

Tift, Lewis and Herring were three of the original buildings on campus at the 1908 opening of the Second District Agricultural & Mechanical School. Over the years, the three buildings fell into a state of disrepair and the last of the three, Tift Hall, closed in 2007.

Tift, Lewis and Herring now house the ABAC History Room, administrative offices, student services and the Stafford School of Business. The campus “sweetheart circle” and front grounds have been revitalized with new landscape, hardscape and signage features.

Greenline Architecture and J.T. Turner Construction, both of Savannah, were responsible for the architectural design and general contracting services. Jones Construction Company in Tifton served as the project’s local liaison.

“The renovation and reuse of Tift, Lewis and Herring was truly a once-in-a-lifetime project,” said Monica Mastrianni, Greenline Architecture President. “We are honored to have had the opportunity to work with members of the ABAC community and the Board of Regents to create a project that breathes new life into the campus.”

Lauded for its revitalization of ABAC’s “front door”, James recognized the Historic Front Campus Project for exemplifying the notion that the “whole is indeed greater than the sum of its parts.”

“The restoration of ABAC’s historic front campus was a monumental project that we can all be proud of and that is paying huge dividends for the College,” ABAC President David Bridges said. “I can’t
overstate the positive impact it has had on recruitment, alumni relations and our prospects for raising friends and funds.”

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