ABAC student Andrew Smith consults with Senator Steve Henson as a part of his internship at Georgia’s state capitol. Smith will be assisting Henson for a portion of the semester through the Georgia Legislature Internship Program.

Internship Allows ABAC Student a Chance to Follow General Assembly

TIFTON – Andrew Smith, a rural studies major from Folkston at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College, is spending a portion of his spring semester in Atlanta as one of the participants in the 2014 Georgia Legislature Internship Program.
Smith is working in the office of Senator Steve Henson (D-Tucker), who serves as minority leader of the Georgia State Senate. Smith found out about the program from former ABAC student Brittany Trotter. She talked of the day-to-day aspects of the internship, and that is what drew him to the program.

Smith has always been interested in politics and started his career in the field at quite a young age.

“I started serving as a page when I was 12 years old and continued to do so until college,” Smith said. “I realized that is where I wanted to work – my dream job. This internship completes my dream.”

For 40 days, he will get the full general assembly experience and learn how the lawmakers operate in a full session.

“The people there inspire me,” Smith said. “I want to go up there and be a part of the process, not just be an observer.”

The Folkston native is now in his senior year as a student of ABAC, and he knows he made the right choice of colleges. His sister had attended ABAC, and he had also heard the college being praised from people he knew within the Charlton County Board of Commissioners, where he worked in high school.

Smith began his ABAC career in 2008 and will graduate in December with his bachelor’s degree in rural studies with a concentration in politics and modern cultures. While at ABAC, he has served in the political science club, served as president of the College Democrats, and is presently serving as a research assistant to two ABAC professors, Dr. Joseph Njoroge and Dr.
Hans Schmeisser. The professors are writing a supplemental textbook titled “Dynamics of Georgia Politics: Institutions and Foundations,” and Smith has played a vital role by providing a student point of view on the mechanics of the textbook.

“Student life at ABAC is part of what drew me to the college,” Smith said. “But the faculty interaction is what I enjoy most about ABAC. At a larger college, I don’t think I would have had the opportunities that I’ve been given. That interaction with the faculty is essential to a student’s development. That is why ABAC has been a perfect match for me.”

Smith said if it wasn’t for the relationships he has built with his professors, he would not have the chance to intern at the state capitol.

“I would like to thank all of the faculty members who have helped me throughout my ABAC career with special thanks to Dr. Njoroge, Dr. Schmeisser, Dr. Bobbie Robinson, Dr. Kay Weeks, and Dr. Joseph Brown,” Smith said.

When he has spare time, Smith volunteers on political campaigns and is a Civil War reenactor with the 26th Georgia Company K and the 61st Georgia/Georgia Volunteer Battalion.

Smith hopes that his aspirations for a life in politics will garner him one of several different career paths. These possibilities include a career as a county administrator in his home county of Charlton, working for another state agency, teaching political science at the post-secondary level, or serving a key role in the world of political campaigns.

###