Mock Passed By Her ABAC Future Many Times
TIFTON—When Ashley Mock was a college student, she passed by Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College multiple times on Interstate 75 without a second glance. Now her entire working life involves getting people to take a long look at ABAC.

Mock, the Director of Public Relations at ABAC since Feb. 1, 2012, spent her entire college career at Valdosta State University after graduating from North Gwinnett High School in 2003. She zipped right by the ABAC sign while traveling from Atlanta to Valdosta and back.

“I never saw it,” Mock, who was hired as Public Relations Assistant at ABAC in 2007 only days after she had received her bachelor’s degree in Speech Communication from VSU, said. “I didn’t know anything about it. Now I can’t imagine my life without ABAC. I love it.”

Mock chose to get her college degree at VSU because “it was the longest distance from home where I could stay in Georgia and use my HOPE Scholarship.” Now there’s no getting her back to the Atlanta traffic.

“I told my parents I was not ever coming back to Gwinnett County to live, so they moved to Valdosta,” Mock said with a laugh.

The 29-year-old dark-haired daughter of Mickey and Beverly Williamson also found her future husband in South Georgia. She married Valdosta native C.J. Mock on Nov. 12, 2011. He is a Physician’s Assistant of Anesthesia at Archbold Medical Center in Thomasville. They live in Valdosta and take off in different directions each morning.

“The best thing about my job is there is something different every day,” Mock said. “The communications and information business is always changing. There’s always a new story we can share with people.”
Mock has been in on the ground floor of ABAC’s transition from a two-year college to a bachelor’s degree granting institution.

“Since we became a four-year college, ABAC has grown a lot,” Mock said. “I get to know our students better because they’re here for four years.”

Mock has had a part in shaping ABAC’s history since she joined the staff. She played in a key role in the 100th birthday celebration in 2008 and chaired the committee which organized the Historic Front Campus event on March 1, 2013. That event signaled a change in the look of the front door of ABAC when Herring Hall and Lewis Hall reopened to join Tift Hall in an astounding revitalization project.

In between, she redesigned the campus logo and launched an information campaign on bachelor’s degrees at ABAC. Mock and Public Relations Assistant Lindsey Roberts also led the charge in working with a company which redesigned the ABAC web site. On a regular basis, she works with ABAC President David Bridges on projects which enhance the reputation of the college.

In the seven years she has been at the college, Mock has seen the public relations world change dramatically.

“Social media is much more important now than when I came in 2007,” Mock, who earned a graduate degree in communication from VSU in 2011, said. “That’s good in one way because we can distribute positive information about the college very quickly. It’s bad in another way because someone can post a negative comment that gets a lot of attention in a very short period of time.”
“We use Facebook and Twitter every day to make sure everyone knows what’s happening at ABAC. And believe me, we have a lot going on all the time.”

As a part of her duties, Mock serves as the chief advisor to the ABAC Ambassadors, a select group of students who assist the public relations office with a variety of tasks, all aimed at painting a positive picture of the 106-year-old institution.

“They keep me young,” Mock, who enjoys planning weddings and traveling in her time away from ABAC, said. “They also keep me in the know about what students are really thinking.”

Since it wasn’t that long ago that she was a college student, Mock is quick to pass along advice to the Ambassadors.

“I encourage them to seek out internships in their field of study,” Mock said. “They need to get hands-on experience outside of the classroom.”

Mock relishes the idea of spending many more of her working days writing e-mails, sending a message on Facebook or Twitter, talking on the phone, or just chatting with an alumnus about his glory days at ABAC.

“Dr. Bridges always says that ‘there are two types of people, those that went to ABAC and those that wish they had,’” Mock said. “Since I didn’t go to ABAC, I’m just glad I get to work here every day.”

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