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Ocilla Internship Pays Dividends for ABAC Student

TIFTON—When John Flinn graduates from Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in December, he wants to develop his own small business so that he can build web sites and mobile apps. Thanks to an internship with the Ocilla-Irwin County Chamber of Commerce, he’s well on his way.

“They had a web site but it hadn’t been updated in several years,” Flinn, a 37-year-old native of Idaho, said. “The internship gave me invaluable experience with what I want to do with my business. Mostly local businesses will be my target market.”
Internships in all fields of study are now integral parts of an ABAC education for the college’s 3,458 students. Dill and Susan Driscoll are the deans of the Stafford School of Business at ABAC. They are constantly looking for internship opportunities for ABAC students.

“We had students intern in London last year,” Susan Driscoll said. “Not only did they get a real life experience, they did it in an international setting.”

The Driscolls, who live in nearby Osierfield, traveled all over the world with their marketing company when they were in private business. Now they use those contacts to help ABAC students.

“We want these students to interact with business people, with legislators, and whoever else can help them,” Dill Driscoll 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.”

ABAC faculty members across the campus combined their skills and classes to make the Ocilla project work. A year-long endeavor by Earl Denham’s class focused on identifying assets in Ocilla, finding a way to utilize them, and then marketing them to various publics on a variety of platforms. Denham said Ocilla was just one example of the practical application of economic development principles and the collaboration of ABAC faculty since 2009.

Dr. Tom Grant’s journalism class developed content for the website, and Flinn plugged in the information with assistance from Dr. Abul Sheikh.
“The journalism class wrote stories on all the local businesses in Ocilla,” Flinn said. “We also had other stories about local life and stories about Jefferson Davis State Park. ABAC provided all the content.”

Flinn said the ABAC web site design class taught by Sheikh and JoAnn Brannen came up with some terrific ideas for the site which is located at www.ocillachamber.net.

“I took those ideas and implemented them into the web site,” Flinn said. “Dr. Sheikh really helped me out. He was really instrumental in getting the whole thing done.”

Flinn moved to Tifton from Idaho 20 years ago. His original ambition was to be an engineer.

“I got into Georgia Tech but then I had a few family issues to take care of,” Flinn said. “That’s why I was so glad that ABAC offered this new four-year degree in business and economic development. I am looking forward to graduating in December.”

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