The Georgia General Assembly planted the first seed that grew into Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College on August 18, 1906 when it enacted Public Law 448. This bill established a state-run agricultural and mechanical school in each of Georgia’s 12 congressional districts.

Called A&M schools, they were constructed on properties donated by their host counties, administered by the Georgia State College of Agriculture at the University of Georgia (UGA), funded by Department of Agriculture fees, and operated by a local Board of Trustees.

These schools filled a void at the time due to the lack of accredited statewide high schools. The schools were designed by a single architect so that the main campus buildings were almost identical statewide.

Construction on most of them began in 1907, and some opened for classes during the fall term of 1908. They were actually college preparatory boarding schools and included students from 14-21 years of age. The schools offered two and four-year programs with a study of agriculture for boys and a study of home economics for girls.

Some of the A&M schools operated until 1931 when the newly formed Board of Regents closed them as one of its first official acts. Because high school agricultural education programs had become so prevalent around the state by that time and because the number of accredited high schools had increased tremendously, the Regents believed the A&M schools had outlived their usefulness. The final classes graduated from the schools in 1933. Over the next two years, the state deeded the campus properties back to the host counties with the stipulation that they be used for educational purposes.

The First District A&M School in Statesboro became the South Georgia Teachers College. The Second District A&M School in Tifton became South Georgia A&M College. The Third District A&M School in Americus became the State Agricultural and Normal College. The Fourth District A&M School in Carrollton was converted for local use. The Fifth District A&M School in Monroe became the Georgia Vocational & Trades School. The Sixth District A&M School in Barnesville became the Georgia Industrial College. The Seventh District A&M School in Powder Springs, the Eighth District A&M School in Madison, the Ninth District A&M School in Clarkesville, and the Tenth District A&M School in Granite Hill were all converted to local use. The Eleventh District A&M School in Douglas became South Georgia State College. The Twelfth District A&M School in Cochran became Middle Georgia College.

1906-1923

Communities interested in serving as the site for an A&M School had to undergo a bidding process. On November 23, 1906, delegations from Albany, Camilla, Pelham, Tifton, and Ashburn met in Albany to submit bids for the Second District A&M School.
Thirty men made up Tift County's delegation to Albany. This small party included Henry Harding Tift, the founder of Tifton. The group went with $32,000, raised by individual subscriptions from the people of Tift County. The *Tifton Gazette* reported the meeting as follows:

"Soon after the opening of the afternoon session, at 3 o'clock, the bids were submitted, the counties being called in alphabetical order.

"Dougherty came first with an offer of $20,000, 200 acres of land, an artesian well and free lights and water for 10 years.

"Camilla offered to raise $51,000 in cash, donate 300 acres of land, buildings and timber estimated at $4,000 and free lights and water for five years.

"Pelham offered a choice of several fine tracts of land, free lights and water and a certified check for $19,000. The clerk that read Pelham's first offer erroneously read its cash contribution as $100,000. This brought both wide eyes and gasps from both the general congregation and Pelham's own delegation.

"Tift County's offer was 315 acres of land lying along the Georgia Southern and Florida right-of-way which was one mile north of town, and $30,000 in cash. This offer was signed by 28 names of the Tift County delegation, citizens worth an aggregate of $10 million.

"Ashburn's offer was 250 acres of land, lights and water for five years and $45,000 in cash.

"When he rose to fill five minutes of the time allotted Tift County, Mr. Tift presented an amended bid of $55,000 in cash, free lights and water and telephone service for 10 years, a sewage system and 315 acres of land worth $50 per acre. Later, learning that the timber on the land was desired for forestry study, he contributed this also, it being valued at $4,500. The raise of $25,000 at a jump caused the audience to catch its breath.

"After the committee went into executive session, Pelham's bid was raised to $32,500 in cash, Camilla's bid to $58,000 in cash, and Ashburn's bid to $60,000 in cash.

“Mr. Tift gave out of his own pocket, having subscribed $6,500 before going to Albany, a total of $36,400 in cash, the land, $4,500 worth of timber, and a portion of the light and water offer. It was estimated in the committee room that Tifton's offer now netted $95,700. Mr. J.L. Phillips gave the phone service.

"Mr. Tift was willing, out of his own means, to again raise Tifton's bid, but the committee did not think it just for him to do so.

"After the financial question was settled, it was a tug of war between the personal influence of Mr. Tift and Mr. Hand (from Pelham), and in the end, when Tifton's progressiveness, excellent
record and prohibition were thrown into the balance, they (the Tifton delegation) won the fight, the high moral integrity of Tift County and her citizenship being the deciding straw.

"Inside the committee room, Tifton led every ballot, and in the fifth balloting had eight votes, while Pelham reached seven votes, its high-water mark. Finally, in the eighth balloting, Tifton received eleven, one more than necessary."

The *Tifton Gazette* proclaimed “The Hallelujah Day Has Come, Tifton Lands the A&M School.” At a commencement ceremony years later, Tift said “of all the investments I have ever made, this school has brought me the biggest dividends.” Ironically, Tift was born in Mystic, Conn., a town located only 15 miles from Guilford, Conn., the birthplace of Abraham Baldwin, namesake for Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College. Tift Hall at ABAC is named in Tift’s honor.

Gresham Manufacturing Company from Griffin sent a letter to Georgia Governor J.M. Terrell on February 1, 1907 with a bid of $48,400 to construct “the academic building and two dormitories.” In the bid letter, J.W. Gresham said, “If your honorable board desires to beautify their buildings by using selected red front brick with stone sills and lentals over all the windows, we will furnish same and build the three buildings for the sum of $51,927. Unit brick work for the sum of thirty cents per cubic foot.”

According to the November 21, 1907 *Daily Bulletin of the Manufacturing Record*, Gresham did receive the bid soon after the bid letter was received by Governor Terrell. The architect for each of the 12 A&M schools was Haralson Bleckley from Empire Building in Atlanta.

Construction of the facility on the 315 acres given by Captain Tift continued for the next year, while the board went about appointing a faculty for the school and determining a method of selecting students to attend the first session.

On February 20, 1908, the Second District A & M School opened for its first classes which were filled with 27 students. Only boys were allowed to board during the first term, but girls in the surrounding area attended classes. Opening day was declared a holiday by Tifton. Stores and the public school were closed. A special train ran from Tifton to the school, and some 1,200 people attended.

Built on the campus were two fine dormitories (later named Herring Hall and Lewis Hall) and an academic building (later named Tift Hall). During the construction of these buildings, the contractors built a long, narrow building to store tools. This building was used as a dining hall until 1910, when it was replaced with a large wooden dining hall.

Professor W.W. Driskell was chosen as the first principal of the Second District A&M School and served until June, 1909. He was succeeded by Professor W.G. Acree, who served for one
year. Professor Samuel L. Lewis then served two years as principal and was succeeded by Professor Jack Hart, who served as principal until June, 1914.

In September, 1914, Lewis returned to the principal’s position until 1925. He then served as president when the area high school changed to college level work in 1925 under its new name of South Georgia Agricultural & Mechanical College. Lewis received his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from the University of Georgia. He also took special courses in agriculture at Cornell University. In honor of his accomplishments, UGA awarded him an honorary Doctorate of Education degree. Lewis was the principal of Madison (GA) High School and later served as superintendent of schools there before moving to his position in Tifton. After he retired as the South Georgia A&M College president, he served as principal of Campbell High School. Lewis was the featured speaker at A&M Day at ABAC on February 19, 1958. Lewis Hall on the ABAC campus is named in his honor.

Among the first students at the Second District A&M School were many illustrious Georgians who milked cows, cooked, tended farms and worked in various ways to finance their education.

Those were the days when an education at the high school level in rural America provided the beginning of the realization of many dreams. Great numbers of A&M alumni succeeded in fields of medicine, public office, business and commerce, as well as in farming. One of those successful alumni was Dr. George D. Conger, who founded the Conger Life Insurance Company in Miami, Fla. He was one of ABAC’s largest benefactors, and Conger Hall on campus is named in his honor.

The first class to graduate from the new school did so on June 14, 1910. Members of the graduating class were Joel Davis and Maude Paulk of Tift County and Charles Hinson of Grady County.

1924-1932

With the improvement of high school education in the rural areas, the need for maintaining district high schools decreased. For years it had been felt that a senior state college for men was needed in the southern part of Georgia.

Through the influence of R.C. Ellis in the House and John Adams in the Senate, a bill creating the South Georgia A&M College was passed in 1924. The Second District A&M School was renamed the South Georgia A&M College and began the gradual transition from high school to college work. By the beginning of the 1928-29 fall term, all high school classes had been eliminated. The first college class graduated in June, 1929. After serving as principal of the Second District A&M School, Lewis continued his service to the institution as the first and only president of the South Georgia A&M College.
Ironically, just as the first South Georgia A&M College class graduated, state legislators were working on another name change. In an effort to grow and broaden the institution, the college’s name was changed to the Georgia State College for Men (GSCM) in the summer of 1929. At the time, there was not a senior college for men south of Macon. The new school’s expanded curriculum was intended to serve communities in the southern region of the state.

Dr. Frank G. Branch was the first and only president of the Georgia State College for Men, serving from 1929-1933. Enrollment climbed steadily during Branch’s tenure from 101 students with a graduating class of six to 345 students with 33 seniors in 1932. Prior to moving to Tifton, Branch served as president of South Georgia College in McRae for five years and Andrew College in Cuthbert for 11 years. Branch was also the superintendent at Rockwell Academy in Putnam County, the first recognized and accredited consolidated school in Georgia.

Under Branch’s leadership, GSCM was admitted to the Georgia Association of Colleges in 1932, paving the way for the college to join the new University System of Georgia in 1933. Branch favored a broad spectrum of academic and extracurricular activities so students interested in literary pursuits attached themselves to The Rambler, the college yearbook or the Ram’s Horn, the semi-monthly college newspaper. When GSCM became Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in 1933, Branch was named president of North Georgia College, where he served for one year. Branch Hall, a former dormitory on campus, was named in his honor.

GSCM had two divisions: Liberal Arts and Sciences, leading to the A.B. and B.S. degrees and the Division of Agriculture, leading to a B.S. in Agriculture. Candidates for either degree could major in commerce or in education as well as in the liberal arts or sciences.

There were three fraternities and two sororities on the GSCM campus. The fraternities included Omega Epsilon Pi, Phi Kappa Rho, and Sigma Omega. The seeds of Sigma Omega were planted in the 1920s with the Sigma Club, a non-Greek honor society whose members were chosen with great care. The Sigma Club stressed leadership and academics. In the early 1930s, several members from the Sigma Club wanted something more than a strictly academic organization and decided it was time to form a social organization. These members formed Sigma Omega.

When GSCM became a two-year college in 1933, all fraternities and sororities were disbanded. Some of the Sigma Omega members transferred to North Georgia College, and in 1933 they formed a local fraternity called Sigma Theta. Later, Sigma Theta decided to go national and in doing so became Sigma Phi Epsilon.

Sororities at the Georgia State College for Men included Eta Tau Epsilon and Kappa Mu. In sports, Coach Orion Mitchell's football team won for themselves the title of "Fighting Rams" as they accumulated a score of 205 points to opponents' 45 in 1932. The basketball team came out with a respectable 75 percent win average.
On October 16, 1931, the Georgia State College for Men football team defeated the University of Miami 13-12. An Associated Press story about the game ran in the October 17th edition of the *Tifton Gazette*. According to that account, Miami went in front on a touchdown run in the second quarter. Down 6-0, the Rams of GSCM took the lead when Mike Donehon intercepted a pass and ran 70 yards for a touchdown.

Still in the second quarter, the Rams expanded the lead when Sherman England blocked a punt on the Hurricanes' two-yard line and recovered it in the end zone for another touchdown. Miami had a 13-yard TD run in the third period but GSCM was able to hold on for the victory. Coach Orion Mitchell was the head coach for the GSCM team. Other teams on the schedule that season included Oglethorpe College and Fort Benning.

Mitchell coached football, basketball, and baseball at GSCM and at ABAC from 1931-45. His 1937 and 1943 ABAC basketball teams were the Georgia junior college champions. Mitchell was an inaugural member of the ABAC Athletics Hall of Fame in 2008. Mitchell Hall, a former residence hall on the campus, was named in his honor.

1933-1946

The depression years brought financial troubles to many of the old "district" schools and, in 1933 Governor Eugene Talmadge granted the newly formed Board of Regents of the University System "power to consolidate, suspend, or discontinue institutions, and merge departments."

Dr. Phillip Weltner, Chancellor of the University System, said that in deciding what to do about the college at Tifton that several things were apparent: here was a community vitally interested in having a college, here was a section of the state with agricultural problems particular to its own geography, and here in the guise of the Coastal Plain Experiment Station was a ready-made laboratory for agricultural classes.

Consequently, Georgia State College for Men was changed to a two-year college stressing agriculture and home economics, and the name was changed to Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College to pay honor to Abraham Baldwin, the first president of the University of Georgia and a Georgia signer of the U.S. Constitution.

Born in 1754 as the son of a Connecticut blacksmith, Abraham Baldwin enrolled at Yale University at the age of 14 and completed his degree four years later. He then studied theology at Yale and became a minister. He served on George Washington’s staff as a chaplain during the Revolutionary War before beginning a study of law. After being admitted to the bar, he moved to Georgia in 1783 to set up a law practice near Augusta.

One year later, Baldwin was elected to the Georgia House of Assembly and in 1787 he represented Georgia as a member of the Constitutional Convention where he was one of the signers of the United States Constitution. In fact, he and William Few are the only Georgians
who signed the Constitution. Baldwin served as the first chief executive of the University of Georgia from 1785 until 1801. He later served Georgia as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate. On July 1, 1933, the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia closed the Georgia State College for Men and opened the institution as Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College, naming the college in Baldwin’s honor.

The change in college status was somewhat of a shock to the people of Tifton who were justly proud of the four-year college. However, as they had always done, as soon as the objectives of the college became known, the citizens rallied to its support and have been to a large measure responsible for its success.

The first president of ABAC was Dr. J.G. Woodroof, who served as president from 1933-34. The enrollment at the time was 99. Woodroof said “the principal objective will be to educate the boys and girls back to the farm.” Answering a question as to whether the new college would be co-ed, Woodroof said “farm life without women would offer no attraction, and therefore ABAC will enroll both boys and girls.”

At the age of 32, Woodroof was the youngest state college president in Georgia when he was selected for the position on May 10, 1933. A native of Mountville, Ga., in Meriwether County, he turned 33 on May 23, 1933. He received his doctorate degree from Michigan State University. Woodroof moved to Tifton from his research duties at the Griffin Experiment Station. After only one year, Woodroof announced on April 14, 1934 that he was stepping down to return to scientific research. He went on to have a brilliant research career, particularly in the area of blueberries. The 200-acre J.G. Woodroof Farm at ABAC is named in his honor, and the top academic student during the annual Honors Day ceremony receives an award in his memory.

Woodroof’s wife, the former Naomi Chapman, was also quite renowned. As a youngster, she crossed the Snake River daily by rowboat to attend school. She was the first female student and the first female graduate of the University of Idaho College of Agriculture and one of the first two females in the United States to hold a degree in Agriculture. She was also the first woman scientist at the Georgia Experiment Station, the first state-employed plant pathologist at the Coastal Plain Experiment Station, and the first female named to the Georgia Agricultural Hall of Fame. She married Dr. Woodroof in 1926.

Woodroof was succeeded by Dr. George H. King, who served as president from 1934 until 1947. King was serving as a Professor of Farm Management and Dean of Instruction at the college when he was selected as the second president in the history of ABAC. King received undergraduate and graduate degrees from UGA and did graduate work at Cornell. Student enrollment increased from 188 to 468 students during his tenure.

One of those students went on to become a World War II hero. Henry Will Jones, a Marine Captain from Lakeland, received the Silver Star posthumously for his bravery against the Japanese forces at Peleliu in the Palau Islands in the south Pacific in World War II.
At ABAC, he played the guard position for the basketball team on Coach Orion Mitchell’s 1937 state junior college champions. He also played on the 1937 ABAC baseball team and was a member of the 1936 football team, which was the last football team ABAC ever fielded after all the uniforms and equipment were destroyed in a fire after the season. He received the prestigious “B” for football and basketball. Captain Jones was selected posthumously to the 2013 ABAC Athletics Hall of Fame.

In 1937, Coach Orion Mitchell led the ABAC basketball team to a 25-24 victory over Gordon for the state championship.

In 1940, President King hired Tom Cordell, the principal at Morven High School, to direct a new adult and continuing education program at ABAC. The program was established from a grant from the Sears and Roebuck Foundation. It was the first program of its kind at a two-year college in the country. Classes were offered free to farmers who came to campus and stayed in the dormitories. In the first year, a total of 1,049 farmers attended some or all of the 20 classes available. With the advent of World War II, the classes took a brief hiatus. The classes resumed in 1946 when they became a part of the college’s budget. The number of courses increased until 1953 when they leveled off at 50 per year.

Through the vision of King and Cordell, the program had a tremendous impact on generations to come, including the agricultural interests of a future president of the United States, Jimmy Carter. He attended some of the short courses at ABAC when he was a peanut farmer in Plains. Cordell was named “Man of the Year” by the Progressive Farmer magazine in 1971. He received the Georgia Adult Education Council Citation in 1972.

Cordell was the only person to serve as acting president of ABAC on five different occasions. He served as Dean and Coordinator of the continuing education program until his retirement in 1979.

During the last year of King’s presidency, 150 male students, including many veterans from World War II, took classes at Spence Field near Moultrie. Paul Gaines, who later became the ABAC registrar, was an instructor there. In 1942, King’s duties expanded when he was named the director of the Coastal Plain Experiment Station, located adjacent to the ABAC campus. King became the full-time director of the agricultural research facility when he stepped down as the ABAC President in 1947. King Hall, an academic building in the center of campus, is named in his honor.

Coach Bruce Gressette joined the ABAC faculty in 1945. For the next 18 years, he achieved greatness not only in the classroom, where he was an excellent mathematics instructor, but on the basketball court and the track as well. His teams won Georgia junior college basketball titles in 1946, 1947, and 1949. The 1949 and 1952 teams won National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) region championships. Gressette’s track and field teams won state championships in 1961 and 1962. His cross country team won the state title in 1961. Gressette
was an inaugural member of the ABAC Athletics Hall of Fame in 2008. Gressette Gym is named in his honor.

**1947-1963**

In 1947, the Regents named George P. Donaldson president of ABAC. One of the most popular presidents in ABAC history, Donaldson joined ABAC in 1933 as a faculty member after serving two years as a Georgia legislator. He received his B.S. degree in Education from UGA and his M.S. degree from Ohio State University. Donaldson directed the first play in the history of the Baldwin Players on December 15, 1933 titled *Stop Thief*. He became Dean of Students and Director of Dramatics in 1935 and served in that capacity before beginning his presidency.

A big fan of the ABAC Glee Club, Donaldson led the singing at the Georgia State FFA Convention in 1954. He held honorary life memberships in FHA, FFA, and 4-H. *Progressive Farmer* magazine named him the 1955 Man of the Year in Service to Georgia Agriculture. Upon his retirement, Donaldson became the Executive Secretary for the Georgia Agricultural Commodity Commission for Peanuts. He was named an Honorary Alumnus of ABAC on April 5, 1980 at Homecoming. The Donaldson Dining Hall at ABAC is named in his honor, and the top award at every ABAC commencement ceremony is bestowed on a worthy graduate in his memory.

During Donaldson’s tenure, ABAC grew rapidly in student enrollment, faculty personnel and physical plant. Through the help of the state administration and the Board of Regents, the physical plant was enlarged to accommodate these students. The additions from 1948-53 included a dormitory for girls (later named Creswell Hall), a modern shop building (later named the Chambliss Building), a new science building (later named Gray Hall), an adequate water system, and a new central heating system to replace the old potbelly stoves located in each room. The college also received a special allotment for the purchase of 109.6 acres of farm land during this period.

The original design on Gray Hall provided for a much larger building. Because of a lack of available funds, the size of the building was cut, and that’s why it’s the only classroom building on campus where the doors open to an outside corridor instead of to an inside corridor. The building was named for Claude Gray, the ABAC Registrar from 1933-46. Gray Hall was connected to Britt Hall, the science and mathematics building named for Mary Lou Britt, professor of chemistry from 1946-58.

In 1952, Tom Cheney, a right hander from Morgan, Ga., pitched the ABAC baseball team to the state championship. Cheney later pitched in the major leagues for the Cardinals, Pirates, and Senators. He pitched in two games in the 1960 World Series which the Pirates won on Bill
Mazeroski’s walk-off home run. Cheney’s greatest day as a major leaguer took place on September 12, 1962 when he set the major league record for striking out the most batters in a single game. He struck out 21 members of the Baltimore Orioles in a 16-inning 2-1 win for the Senators. Cheney pitched all 16 innings. Cheney was an inaugural member of the ABAC Athletics Hall of Fame in 2008.

In December, 1953, the college was admitted to the Southern Association of College and Secondary Schools. This recognition permitted Baldwin graduates to transfer to other colleges in the nation and in foreign countries without losing credits. The Board of Regents again granted permission for broadening the courses of instruction. Added this time was a Secretarial Science Department and a course in Farm Equipment Sales and Service. The Farm Equipment course was offered at only seven colleges in the United States.

During the next three years a modern Home Management House (later named the Moore Building) was built on campus, and the auditorium and gymnasium (Howard, Thrash) were remodeled. Construction began on an annex to the Weltner Hall dormitory and a Rural Life Building, which was located on the site now occupied by the Carlton Center. Funding for the Rural Life Building was provided through the Governor's Emergency Fund.

Donaldson also formed the first fundraising arm of the college in 1954, the Greater Baldwin Foundation. He wanted a way for businessmen to donate money to ABAC to provide typewriters for the college’s secretarial science program.

In 1955, the Tifton Gazette reported that Ann McMillan scored 66 points while playing for the ABAC women’s basketball team in a game against Norman College. The team was called the Deers at that time. ABAC won the game 87-56 under the direction of Coach Charles A. Milford.

At the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second District A&M School in 1958, all these evidences of growth were observed. The enrollment that year was 492, the largest in 50 years.

A favorite gathering place for students was the Log Cabin. Students could dance and listen to music. Built in 1932, probably from trees cut on the campus, The Log served at various times as the campus post office, a recreation area, and a snack bar. It was dismantled in 1962 because of a termite infestation.

The Short Course Program, begun in 1940 under the direction of Cordell, continued to grow in pace with the college. By 1958 over 55,000 people had attended the more than 50 short courses offered each year.

In the fall of 1960, Baldwin College, as Donaldson often called it, was approved to be the first junior college in the state to offer Distributive Education courses through the Business Administration Division. The addition of this program was one more accomplishment by "Mr.
Pete" before he retired in 1961. During his tenure, enrollment increased from 468 in 1947 to 616 in 1961.

Dr. J. Wilson Comer became president of the college in July, 1961. Born on a farm near Gray, Ga., Comer received his undergraduate degree from UGA in agriculture and his master’s degree in horticulture, education, and home economics from the University of Tennessee. He received his Ph.D. from Ohio State University in 1953. He taught high school agriculture classes for five years before beginning a 19-year stay as a faculty member at the Georgia State College for Women in 1940. Comer was serving as the Dean of Columbus College when he was selected for the ABAC presidency.

During his administration, Comer reorganized ABAC into formal academic and administrative divisions to provide for growth and efficiency to handle the impact of the exploding population in the United States. New buildings which opened during Comer’s presidency included the dining hall, the Baldwin Memorial Library, and a men’s dormitory, which later was named in his honor as Comer Hall. A horticulturist, Comer initiated plans for a college nursery and greenhouses. He believed in a beautiful environment for faculty, staff, and students.

Comer geared ABAC up for the Self Study, which set the stage for re-accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools that would allow ABAC to expand with higher quality instruction. Committees were appointed and began work during his lifetime. He also brought ABAC up to date in the technology world with the installation of data processing equipment which served as the foundation for a Center for Automation.

Innovations to improve communications included a weekly administrative bulletin (now known as the FOCUS), publication of a student handbook, a faculty-staff social committee, a unit of Georgia Educators Association, and a women's group---the "Dames Club." For the first time academic regalia was worn at commencement.

During Comer’s tenure, ABAC student Cook Holliday from Rochelle made a name for himself and for ABAC. During his freshman year in 1963, he set the state junior college pole vault record. Holliday also became the first ABAC track athlete to qualify for the National Junior College track meet in Big Springs, Tex. En route, his steel pole was misplaced, and he used a borrowed pole to finish fifth in the nation. Holliday also played on the ABAC basketball team, earning the nickname, “The Baldwin Blaster,” for his shooting skills. He helped to lead the Stallions to the state basketball championship during his sophomore year in 1964. The University of Wyoming awarded Holliday a track scholarship. Holliday was selected for the ABAC Athletics Hall of Fame in 2009.

Comer passed away in December, 1963. During his presidency, he envisioned the larger role that ABAC should play as the unique college of all the units within the University System.
1964-1974

Dean Tom Cordell was appointed Acting President by the Board of Regents when Comer passed away. During his interim until August, 1964, Cordell continued to hold fast to the growth and development ABAC was experiencing.

By the time Dr. J. Clyde Driggers reported for duty as the new president in 1964, the Self-Study was well underway and the addition to the Science and Classroom Building (later named Britt Hall), the Infirmary (later named the E.L. Evans Health Center), and the new gym (later named Gressette Gym) were approved. Britt Hall was named for Mary Lou Britt, a former ABAC chemistry professor. The Evans Health Center was named for Dr. E.L. Evans, and Gressette Gym was named for Coach Bruce Gressette.

The Golden Stallions of Coach Benny Dees won the state basketball championship in 1964. Tommy Dial was named the Most Valuable Player of the state tournament, and Gwendell McSwain and Jimmy Scearce were named to the all-tournament team. In their highest scoring game of the regular season, the Stallions defeated Georgia Southwestern 133-96. Dees was selected for the ABAC Athletics Hall of Fame in 2011.

ABAC began awarding the Carlton Award for Faculty Excellence in 1965. The first recipient was Dr. Ernest Edwards, Jr. The award was named in honor of longtime ABAC benefactor, O.D. Carlton, II, from Albany.

According to the student newspaper, The Stallion, the first rodeo in the history of ABAC was held on May 24, 1969. It was sponsored by the Baldwin Rodeo Club, the Student Cabinet, and several ABAC alumni. Events included bronco bustin’, bull riding, bulldogging, and roping. Gerald Floyd was president of the Rodeo Club. The cost was $1.75 for adults and $1 for children.

A dynamic leader, Driggers focused on enrollment growth during his presidency, which led to a record of 2,143 students in 1972. ABAC became Georgia’s largest residential junior college. A University of Florida graduate, Driggers was a Professor of Poultry Science at the University of Florida and head of the Poultry Science Department at UGA prior to taking over at ABAC. Through his travels, ABAC became better known on the national and international scene. All six of the academic divisions of study expanded their curriculums. The value of the ABAC physical plant increased to more than $13 million during his tenure.

Driggers encouraged the Adult Education and Public Service program to stretch out to include night classes for both credit and non-credit courses. He welcomed the Police Academy as a part of the campus in 1970 for the purpose of training area law enforcement officers. Driggers promoted on-campus living with the opening of four dormitories (later named Fulwood, Branch, Mitchell, and Chandler halls) for students who traveled from all over the state and the world. He
also presided over the opening of two new classroom buildings (later named Bowen Hall and Conger Hall) as well as a new student center (later named the J. Lamar Branch Student Center).

Under Driggers’ direction, the ABAC Foundation began an annual fundraising event called “Dollars for Scholars” with Anita Bryant as the first performer on June 2, 1972. Driggers helped to secure private funding for the Chapel of All Faiths and chronicled the tremendous effort in his book, *It Took A Miracle*. The Chapel is named the Driggers Lecture Hall in his honor. Funds from the first few years of the “Dollars for Scholars” events were used to pay off the debt on the Chapel.

Soon after taking office, Driggers refined the organizational structure of the college to fulfill many emerging needs. Four mid-level administrators began reporting directly to the President. An Advisory Council to the President gave opportunity monthly to all faculty and staff for representative views.

Faculty and staff members in the agriculture division, particularly in the Agricultural Equipment Technology area, began a farm equipment show in the mid-1960s on the banks of Lake Baldwin called “Dealer Days.” This program eventually became the Sunbelt Agricultural Exposition, which opened at Spence Field near Moultrie in 1978. ABAC was one of the original sponsors for the show, and ABAC personnel including Jesse Chambliss, Wright Crosby, and Jimmy Grubbs helped to develop the Spence Field site for the Sunbelt Expo. This is the same former air base on which ABAC taught classes after World War II.

Faculty and staff committees became more active in making plans for the various functions of the college. An Academic Assembly was formed to provide a formal voice for recommending ideas for growth and development. The Student Government Association and the Student Judiciary became realities as well. The administrative and academic structure for students, faculty, and staff solidified into an active, workable organization.

Accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in 1965 brought great satisfaction; yet it pointed out the need for continued study in order to keep abreast of new developments in the various fields of study. Consequently the majority of the faculty and some of the staff took advantage of leaves-of-absence or in-service training. By then many faculty members held doctorate degrees or had several months of formal study in their respective fields at various universities in Georgia and abroad.

All six of the academic divisions expanded curriculums but of special interest was the growth of the Law Enforcement, Social Work, Horticulture, Wildlife, Music, Art, Secretarial, Home Economics, and Data Processing. ABAC began offering Nursing Education classes in 1966, and the first class graduated in 1968. At that time, nursing graduates were guaranteed an automatic commission in the U.S. Air Force or Army. In Adult Education and Public Service, the short course program was adapted to include night study for non-credit and credit.
Helen Strickland joined the ABAC faculty in 1968 as an instructor in the Humanities Division and as the Director of Student Publications. During her 31-year career, the ABAC student newspaper, *The Stallion*, gained tremendous attention for the college. It was named the top junior college paper in the state by the Georgia College Press Association 26 times from 1968 to 1999. Strickland, wife of ABAC alumnus John Strickland, drove to the campus every day from her home in Lakeland, Ga. She was also the advisor to the quarterly magazine, *The Agriculturist*, and to the campus yearbook, *TABAC*, which continued publication through 1986. The college discontinued publication of the yearbook because the students decided it was not a good use of the student activities funds.

*The Agriculturist* began in 1969 under the leadership of Director of Public Relations Tyron Spearman (Class of ’65) and student editor James L. Bramblett. The magazine focused on achievements in agriculture at ABAC and nationwide. It ceased publication in the early 1980s but resumed publication in 2013. Spearman was a former student body president and Mr. Baldwin. He also taught Poultry Science classes in addition to his public relations duties.

ABAC began its service as the host site for the Regional Police Academy in 1970. The Academy served as a source of intensive training and certification for area law enforcement personnel.

In 1973, ABAC began its presentation of the Carlton Award for Staff Excellence and the Carlton Award for Administrative Excellence. Cecile K. Bailey was the first recipient of the staff award, and J. Dale Sherman was the first recipient of the administrative award.

The first annual ABAC Tractor Pull was held at ABAC in 1974. Tractor pulls were very popular on the campus during the 1970s and 1980s. For many years, ABAC staff member Jimmy Grubbs drove the ABAC pulling tractor called “Cracker Jack,” sponsored by the AET Club. The pulls attracted thousands of spectators. Jesse Chambliss, Nolan Gibbons, Wright Crosby, Marshall Guill and other instructors in the AET program assisted the club.

**1975-1985**

President Driggers died of a massive coronary on April 29, 1975. According to the college yearbook, *TABAC*, Driggers’ casket was brought to the Chapel of All Faiths until the time for the funeral at the First Methodist Church. A memorial service for students, faculty, staff, administrators and alumni was held in the Chapel simultaneously with the interment in Wauchula, Fla. Dean Tom Cordell was again called on to serve as acting president.

Dr. Stanley Anderson was selected as the ABAC president in 1975. The pursuit of academic excellence and an emphasis on a quality education were Anderson’s goals during his tenure. A Michigan native, he and his wife, Dottie, moved to Tifton from his position as Dean of the
College of Agriculture at Texas A&I University. A very popular and outgoing “First Lady” of ABAC, Dottie once taught a belly dancing class for the continuing education program.

Anderson added his personal touch to the beautification of the campus so that it became one of the most picturesque in the University System of Georgia. He led the effort to establish the Baldwin Memorial Gardens, including the Gazebo and reflecting pool in front of the Chapel, and actually planted many of the original flowers in the Gardens himself.

Through his leadership, the college again greatly expanded its facilities and programs. During Anderson's first quarter at ABAC, the college experienced its largest enrollment to that date with 2,658 students.

The Forestry-Wildlife Building opened in 1980. The building was later named for Vernon Yow, a longtime Professor of Forestry and a former Dean of Men.

ABAC baseball player Ralph Bryant was drafted by the Los Angeles Dodgers in the first round of the 1981 amateur draft. The power-hitter from Fort Gaines made his professional debut with the Dodgers on September 8, 1985. He spent the next three years traveling between the major and minor leagues. Bryant then found a home with the Chunichi Dragons and the Kintetsu Buffaloes in Nippon Professional Baseball in Japan. He was the 1989 Pacific League Most Valuable Player when he hit 49 home runs and tied Sadaharu Oh’s career record by blasting three homers in a game on five different occasions. He retired in 1995 with 259 home runs for his career.

In the November 17, 1981 edition of The Stallion, Anderson said the fiber glass statue of the Golden Stallion mascot “would remain in storage indefinitely until the students can devise a plan to make sure the Stallion will not be damaged.” The Stallion statue was taken from its perch in front of the Student Center several times in 1981 with the last two thefts coming only 10 days apart. Stallion Editor Russell Camp suggested that the college get a bronze statue of the Stallion. Thirty-two years later, the college did just that.

Anderson selected Dr. Lew Akin as the chair for the ABAC Golden Anniversary Celebration committee in November, 1981. Anderson said the celebration would last from September, 1983 until June, 1984 when ABAC would celebrate 50 years as ABAC and 75 years as an institution. Other steering committee members were Lamar Branch, James Burran, Mike Chason, Ronald Faircloth, Marolyn Howell, Rosemary Johnson, Ron Jones, Tyron Spearman, and Joann Thornhill.

Internationally known theatrical performers Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee performed before a sellout crowd in Howard Auditorium on February 8, 1982. Davis is originally from Cogdell. He and Dee have been married for 33 years. Kris Kristofferson performed in Gressette Gym at ABAC on February 17, 1982 in a concert sponsored by the Student Union.
On March 6, 1982, Coach Donnie Veal’s basketball Stallions defeated Gainesville 67-66 in Gressette Gym for the NJCAA Region XVII title. Marshall Taylor, a 5-foot-9 sophomore from Enigma, was named the Most Valuable Player of the tournament. He scored 25 points in the championship game. The Stallions then lost to Miami-Dade North Community College 56-54 in a national playoff game in Lake City, Fla. Miami-Dade was 29-0 and ranked number one in the nation. The Fabulous Golddusters dance team under the direction of advisor Andrea Pate Willis performed at halftime of that game. It proved to be the last state basketball championship for the Stallions before the program was dropped in 2008. ABAC rode a 17-game winning streak during the season to a final record of 25-5. Taylor and Willis were both selected for the ABAC Athletics Hall of Fame in 2014.

ABAC student Sherry Morris from Blue Ridge became the first student ever selected for the Georgia Phi Theta Kappa Hall of Honor in 1982. Jenni Collins from Cotton was crowned Miss Homecoming at the 14th annual TABAC Beauty Revue on April 2, 1982. She was also the Most Valuable Player for the ABAC women’s basketball team in 1981 and 1982.

Comptroller J. Talmadge Webb told alumni at the 1982 Homecoming that the value of the physical plant at ABAC was $2 million in 1959 and $18 million in 1981. Homecoming award winners in 1982 included William T. Greer, Distinguished Alumnus; Glenn Parkman, Outstanding Young Alumnus; Mary Grimsley, Master Homemaker; Larry McMillan, Master Young Farmer; Marshall Bennett, Master Farmer; and John Henry Davis, Outstanding Alumnus in Business. O.D. Carlton II and Jesse Chambliss were named Honorary Alumni.

The ninth annual ABAC Tractor Pull was held May 8-9, 1982. Louise Mandrell was the featured performer at the 11th annual Dollars for Scholars event on May 28, 1982.

On September 14, 1983, Dr. J. Gordon Brackett, an Atlanta physician, donated his African collection of exotic animal mounts, including heads, hooves, and skins, to the ABAC Foundation for display in Britt Hall. Valued at over $250,000 at the time, the collection included two elephant tusks which weighed 110 pounds each. The collection also included the head of a black rhino, which the Smithsonian Institute reportedly wanted for display, but Brackett did not want to break up the collection. Dr. George Powell, chair of the Division of Science and Mathematics, said the collection would be utilized in ABAC classes and would be available for tours by school groups.

ABAC won its first national championship in any sport in 1984 when Coach Norman “Red” Hill and his team captured the National Junior College Athletic Association men’s tennis title in Ocala, Fla. The top six players received All-America recognition in singles and doubles. Team members included Carlos Perez, John Luc Dumont, Michael Rice, Pat Breen, Chris Demarta, and Tony Giorgetti. Other members of the team who did not compete in the national tournament were Richard Carr, York Carter, and Reg Holden. The team was inducted into the ABAC Athletics Hall of Fame in 2009. The Stallions also won the state title.
“Winning the championship has to be the greatest moment of my life,” Hill told a reporter for The Stallion after the victory. “These ABAC players have given everything a human being could possible give. It was so great for these players to be rewarded for the work they have done.”

The national title by the Stallions capped off an amazing year in 1984 for the ABAC intercollegiate athletic teams.

ABAC won its first women’s basketball state championship in 1984 when Coach Keith Barr and the Fillies claimed the title with a 62-60 victory over Emanuel College in Gressette Gym. Terri Lee scored 14 points and hit two free throws with 11 seconds to play to seal the win. Rose Wilcher had 14 points, Jernese Thomas had 13, and Peggy McConnell had 10 to contribute to the victory. ABAC defeated Gainesville 68-52 and Truett McConnell 62-57 to earn its berth in the title game. Cynthia Hargrove, a 5-foot-9 sophomore from Eatonton, was named the Most Valuable Player for the tournament. The Fillies finished seventh in the double elimination national tournament in Senatobia, Miss., where they beat Lakeland 63-60, lost to Northwest Mississippi 60-51, lost to Moberly 88-80, and defeated Gadsden 62-55. In Barr’s third year as head coach, the Fillies wound up with a 20-8 overall record.

Coach Ellen Vickers’ Fillies tennis team also won the state title and finished seventh in the national tournament in 1984. Coach Wayne Cooper’s ABAC golf team also won the state championship and finished fourth in the national tournament. With four teams finishing in the Top 10 in the nation, Representatives Henry Bostick and Hanson Carter sponsored a resolution in the Georgia House of Representatives honoring the ABAC teams on their accomplishments.

After the golf season, Chad Willis became the first and perhaps the only ABAC golfer to sign a scholarship with Ohio State University. He was the first junior college golfer ever signed by the Buckeyes.

After the spring quarter ended in 1984, James “Sonny” Burt submitted his resignation as the ABAC theatre director and associate professor of speech and drama. He directed and produced over 40 plays with the Baldwin Players from the time he joined the faculty in 1969.

“My work at ABAC has been a tremendous, interesting, and hair-raising 15 years,” Burt said.

During his presidency, Anderson also placed much emphasis on ABAC’s Development, Public Relations and Alumni programs. Melvin Merrill was hired as the Director of Development in 1978 to replace Bob Ragsdale who had moved to a position at the Rural Development Center. Mike Chason was hired as the Director of Public Relations in 1979 to replace Jim McDonald who had a brief stint as the public relations director when Tyron Spearman left the position to head up the Georgia Peanut Commission in 1976. Nancy Coleman (Class of ’75) was hired as the first fulltime Director of Alumni Relations in 1985. An alumni fundraising campaign called the “Magic 300” helped to raise funds for Coleman’s salary.
ABAC initiated the Tom M. Cordel Lecture Series in Cordell’s honor on October 1, 1985. The first speaker in Howard Auditorium was internationally known geneticist Dr. Glenn Burton from the Coastal Plain Experiment Station. Other speakers in the series included former U.S. Attorney General Griffin Bell in 1987, Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young in 1988, Chick-Fil-A founder Truett Cathy in 1989, author Ferrol Sams in 1990, author Clyde Edgerton in 1993, Atlanta Opera Artistic Director William Fred Scott in 1995, author Janice Daugharty in 1996, Human Development Consultant William Parker in 1997, BellSouth Senior Vice President Carl Swearingen in 1999 and many others.

On October 30-November 1, 1985, Dr. Hal Henderson (Class of ’62) and Dr. Gary Roberts (Class of ’62), two professors in the Division of Social Science, organized a very impressive symposium titled “Georgia Governors in an Age of Change: From Ellis Arnall to George Busbee.” Former Georgia governors on stage in the Donaldson Dining Hall on one night of the symposium were Carl Sanders, Lester Maddox, Ernest Vandiver, and Herman Talmadge. Ric Allen, political editor from the Atlanta Constitution, was the moderator. The event was taped by Georgia Public Television. Henderson and Roberts used their research to write a book on the symposium which was published by the University of Georgia Press.

Dr. and Mrs. Anderson moved to their home in Sun City Center, Florida when he retired on December 31, 1985.

1986-1988

Academic Dean Frank Thomas served as interim president from January 1-March 31, 1986.

Dr. Wayne Curtis became president of Abraham Baldwin on April 1, 1986. An Alabama native, Curtis earned a bachelor’s and a master’s degree at Auburn University and a doctoral degree from Mississippi State University. He and his wife, Seretha, and their children were the last occupants of the President’s home on Lake Baldwin during his presidency. Driggers, Anderson, and their families had also lived in the house during their presidencies. The ABAC president’s home later became the office for the College Advancement operation including the ABAC Foundation and the ABAC Alumni Association. When Dr. Harold J. Loyd was selected as president in 1989, he already had a home in the community.

Building on his background as Dean of the College of Business at Troy State University, Curtis commissioned an Image Study to determine how ABAC was perceived by faculty, staff, students, employers, high school counselors and area citizens. From this study, Curtis launched an aggressive marketing and promotional campaign which included new brochures, a direct mail campaign based upon interest surveys purchased from a list of SAT and ACT test-takers, and ABAC’s first toll-free telephone number for admissions. Through this new marketing approach,
the college was referred to as Abraham Baldwin in much of the literature. Advertisements emphasized that the college had agriculture and many more majors.

After the Image Study was completed, Curtis appointed a campus-wide committee to develop a Strategic Plan for ABAC to determine the goals and objectives of the College. These goals and objectives were written down, prioritized, and a means for achieving them developed.

Curtis originated the idea of a new Enrichment Program to attract young people to the campus during the summer. He also emphasized evening and off-campus programs. Curtis initiated much change at ABAC, laying the groundwork for future enrollment growth.

Former Academic Dean Loyal Norman and his wife, Dorothy, were killed in an automobile accident on September 23, 1986. Norman was the ABAC Academic Dean from Sept. 1, 1965 until he retired in December, 1975.

On the same night of September 23, 1986, one or more persons cut their way into the ABAC Deer Pen and killed one of the deer using a bow and arrow and crippled two others. Assistant Professor of Wildlife Dick Payne said a reward of $4,000 was offered for information leading to the arrest and conviction of those responsible. The perpetrators were never found.

Dr. Vernon Yow, at one time the Dean of Men and a longtime professor in the forestry program, passed away on December 19, 1987. Yow received his forestry degree from Yale University. ABAC stories abound about how Dean Yow hid in the bushes beside Creswell Hall to catch unsuspecting males trying to sneak in the lower floor windows of the girls’ dormitory. The Yow Forestry-Wildlife Building was named in his honor at Homecoming on April 23, 1988.

At the ABAC Alumni Association board meeting on January 8, 1988, Curtis announced that Peach State Radio, the public radio network in Georgia, was coming to ABAC. He said that the radio tower was supposed to be placed on University of Georgia property but due to a surveyor’s error, the site was placed in an ABAC pasture. The error was not discovered until the site had been approved by the Federal Communications Commission and the Federal Aviation Administration. He said that because the site had already been printed on navigation maps, the FAA decided the tower must be constructed on that site.

In return for the tower being placed on the ABAC property, ABAC gained a 2500-watt public radio station on campus. The frequency was 91.1 FM, and it was called WABR. The 10-watt student radio station continued to operate under the new call letters of WPLH. Tom Call, later the interim president of ABAC, helped to get the public radio station off the ground.

With assistance from Director of Admissions Garth Webb and Director of Public Relations Mike Chason, Curtis established the ABAC Ambassadors’ leadership program during the winter quarter of 1988. The first six Ambassadors were Mildred Alexander, Scott Chandler, Toby Carmichael, James Nash, Laura Tucker, and Pam Wood. Admissions counselor Bruce
Applewhite was the primary advisor to the group. Tucker later became president of the ABAC Alumni Association.

Women’s slow pitch softball joined the ABAC intercollegiate sports lineup during the 1988 winter quarter. Ellen Vickers was the first coach.

The ABAC Incentive Program was also developed during the Curtis presidency. When the program was initiated, it received widespread publicity with stories in *USA Today* and the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Over 600 students received help from this program. The program provided free tuition donated by the ABAC Foundation for one course for individuals who had not attended college within the past five years and had no more than 40 college quarter hours. Participants in the program must also have been out of high school for at least five years.

ABAC opened a new Olympic-size swimming pool on the west side of Gressette Gym on April 11, 1988. The old pool was filled in and covered by dirt and fresh sod. It was located on the north side of Thrash Gym.

Curtis resigned as the ABAC president, effective June 30, 1988, to become president of a bank in Brundidge, Alabama. Although enrollment didn’t increase during his presidency, it went up significantly after he left the president’s office because of the strategies he put into place.

Dr. James A. Burran, Vice President and Dean of Academic Affairs, served the college as Acting President from July 1, 1988 through September 30, 1989. Under his leadership, the momentum began during Curtis’ tenure continued. Enrollment went up, and two new programs, Turfgrass Equipment Management and Golf Course Management, were introduced. During his tenure as Acting President, Burran also continued to strengthen the link between the college and the community. Burran was later selected as President of Dalton State College.

A dedication ceremony was held on November 6, 1988 to officially name the student center building in honor of J. Lamar Branch, an ABAC alumnus (Class of ’37) who was at one time the State Director of Vocational Education programs in Georgia.

**1989-1998**

On April 28, 1989, a building dedication ceremony was held at Homecoming to name the Business-Humanities Building in honor of Second District A&M School alumnus George D. Conger, who was a longtime benefactor of ABAC. Conger was the founder of the Conger Life Insurance Company in Miami.

Dr. Harold J. Loyd was named President of ABAC, effective October 1, 1989. This was the first time since George P. Donaldson’s selection in 1947 that someone from within the ranks of the faculty was selected to serve as president. The faculty and staff were quite enthusiastic with the
selection. Employees in the news room at the Tifton Gazette actually broke out in applause upon hearing the announcement.

A Missouri native, Loyd received his undergraduate degree from Southwest Missouri State and his graduate and doctorate degrees from the University of Missouri. His wife, Rowena, worked in the ABAC Computer Center.

ABAC won four national intercollegiate sports championships during Loyd’s tenure, three in women’s slow pitch softball and another in men’s tennis. The college also added two new programs of study and even offered turfgrass classes at Sea Island on the Georgia coast.

Loyd joined the ABAC faculty in 1971 and was named Chairman of the Division of Business Administration in 1975. He also served as the Coordinator of Evening and Off-Campus Courses from 1986 until he took over as president. Loyd brought an enthusiasm and a "love for ABAC" that few presidents could match.

Under his leadership the marketing strategy for the college continued and broadened. Enrollment continued to increase for 22 consecutive quarters until the summer of '93. Loyd believed that ABAC’s customers--the students--were the V.I.P.'s on campus, and he believed in the special spirit that exists at Abraham Baldwin. He continued to promote that special spirit and the friendliness that exists between the faculty, staff, and students.

During his time as president, Loyd established a much needed Job Placement Center within the office of Counseling and Testing. Two external degree programs were approved for the ABAC location in Moultrie, and four-year degrees and graduate degrees were offered for the first time on the ABAC campus by nearby universities. Under his direction, the Strategic Vision for the college was updated, and Loyd accepted the challenge to communicate the vision of the college as embodied in the plan to all aspects of the college and to all of those to whom it serves.

In 1990, Coach Ellen Vickers’ ABAC slow-pitch softball team finished second in the national tournament. The Fillies went one step further in 1991, winning the national championship. Members of the team included Patty Beasley, Kelly Britsky, Kelly Burch, Dawn Lingo, Pam Purcell, Edy Leverette, Daphne Covington, April Crane, Wendi Ward, Lacy Whitley, Leeanne Yeager, and Amy White. The championship was the second national title in the history of ABAC, preceded only by the 1984 men’s tennis team. The team was selected for the ABAC Athletics Hall of Fame in 2010.

Vickers was named the National Junior College Athletic Association National Coach of the Year in 1991. She was also Coach of the Year in Region XVII after her teams won state softball titles in 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, and 1994. Vickers was also Region XVII Coach of the Year in women’s tennis when the Fillies won state titles in 1984, 1985, and 1986. She retired in 1994 and was selected for the ABAC Athletics Hall of Fame in 2009.
The college took a tremendous jump in enrollment during Loyd's tenure, reaching an all-time high of 2,851 students in the 1992 fall quarter. Many new faculty, staff, and administrative positions were established. Enrollment declined slightly when the University System of Georgia switched from the quarter system to the semester system at the beginning of the 1998 fall term. Loyd also gave new life to the ABAC Foundation as he spent many hours talking to friends and alumni of the college about opportunities to set up scholarships. Membership in the Foundation's President's Club climbed at a rapid rate.

In 1993, Ryan Beard from Royston was named Mr. ABAC in the fourth annual contest. Dr. George Powell received the Teaching Excellence Award at the 1993 Honors Day, and Donnie Stone received the Roy Jackson Award for Staff Excellence.

ARA Dining Services Manager Kevin Humphreys was charged with the fatal shooting of Lee Strickland in an incident which occurred at approximately 2:15 a.m. on May 2, 1993 behind the Donaldson Dining Hall. A Tifton jury later determined that Humphreys acted in self defense.

The ABAC baseball team won the NJCAA Region XVII championship in 1993, and Coach Craig Young was named the Coach of the Year. Perry Shiver of the Stallions was named the Most Valuable Player of the tournament. The ABAC golf team under the direction of Coach Tom Moody also won the state title. Chris Newsham from ABAC was the medalist of the tourney. Mark James and Boo Weekley of ABAC tied for fourth place. Weekley went on to have a very successful career on the PGA Tour. Coach Norman “Red” Hill and the ABAC men’s tennis team also won the state championship for the 11th consecutive year. The Stallions have now won the title 22 times in 27 years under Hill’s direction.

Loyd's 1994 endeavor was a fundraising campaign for a building in Moultrie to house Moultrie classes. The campaign was a great success, raising over $220,000. The renovated building in Moultrie opened for classes during the 1997 spring term. The college actually began offering classes in Moultrie in 1987 at Moultrie Tech and the Moultrie Library. Longtime history professor and Moultrie Coordinator Merle Baker was instrumental in helping to secure funding for the new building as well as Director of Development Melvin Merrill. The new building increased enrollment in Moultrie significantly. It is still called ABAC on the Square today.

The ABAC Fillies’ softball team captured another national championship in 1995 under the leadership of Coach Greg Tanner. Members of the team included Heather Beck, Sonia Bell, Lana Conner, Teresa Cromer, Amanda Gibbs, Mia Gomez, Tonya Greene, Allison Hooks, Amy Johnson, Amy Norton, Tiffany Perry, Christa Timms, and Buffi Whitley. The team was selected for the ABAC Athletics Hall of Fame in 2011. Tanner left ABAC after one year to take a job with the Coffee County School System. He was elected to the ABAC Athletics Hall of Fame in 2012.
Coach Donna Campbell continued the run of success on the softball field in 1996 when the Fillies won another national championship in her first year as the ABAC head coach. Players on the team included Tiffany McMillian, Paula Simmons, Sonya Chambliss, Deanna Roberson, Christa Timms, Tiffany Perry, Michelle Jackson, Ingram Perry, Kim Schell, Karla Santiago, Amy Johnson, Buffi Whitley, Anna Stripling, Alana Loper, and Dana Kay Eunice. The 1996 Fillies compiled a record of 44-12 and defeated Meridian (Miss.) Community College for the national title. The team was selected for the ABAC Athletics Hall of Fame in 2012.

Campbell led the Fillies into the fast pitch era of softball in 1997.

J.G. Woodroof Scholars during this time period, recognized as the top academic student at ABAC at Honors Day, included Amy Denise Welsh in 1996, Tracy Lynn Chason in 1997, and Patricia D. Giddens in 1998.

During his tenure, Loyd authorized two additional staff members in the admissions office to serve as recruiters in north Georgia and additional funds for a part time recruiter in South Georgia. Under his leadership, ABAC gained two new majors, hospitality management and poultry technology. The college also offered courses in golf and grounds management at Sea Island on the Georgia coast. It was called ABAC on the Island.

1999

At the 1999 Honors Day ceremony, Suzanne Evans, an English major from Tifton, was named the J.G. Woodroof Scholar. Faculty/staff award winners were Michael J. Curry, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Award for Teaching Excellence; and Mike Williams, Roy R. Jackson Award for Staff Excellence.

The graduation speaker for the spring 1999 commencement ceremony was Georgia Secretary of State Cathy Cox, who was a member of the ABAC Class of 1978.

Crystal Hunter from Ocilla was selected as Ms. ABAC, and James Adair from Snellville was chosen as Mr. ABAC in 1999.

Coach Norman “Red” Hill won another national championship in men’s tennis for ABAC in 1999 when his team captured the national crown on Hill’s last day at ABAC before retirement. Members of the team were Richard Crabtree from England, Gildardo Lobo from Venezuela, Nathan Lundy from England, Eric Von Hellens from Australia, Glenn Allsop from Australia, Rajeev Rajapakse from Sri Lanka, and Richard Evans from England. The team was selected for the ABAC Athletics Hall of Fame in 2013.

Hill announced at the start of the 1998-99 academic year that he was retiring after the season. His players were well aware of that fact and wanted him to step into retirement in a grand style.
“I knew we had a chance to win it but I knew playing Tyler in Tyler, Texas was going to be hard,” Hill said. “It was just one of the most fantastic things that ever happened to me. To go out that way, the kids really played hard for the school and for me.”

Hill said the regular season leading up to the national tournament was not a smooth ride. In fact, Evans, playing at number one singles, decided to give up on the Stallions and return to England during the spring break.

“They called me and asked me if he could come back,” Hill said. “I told him he had to start at number seven and play his way back up the ladder. Eric played really well at number one after Richard left.”

Evans did return and in a storybook ending, captured the most valuable player trophy at the national tournament.

Hill remembers the volume of the Tyler crowd.

“Sarge (Newell Dorsey) and I started rubbing empty tennis cans across the chain link fence every time we got a point to try to make some noise of our own,” Hill said.

Good strategy. The Stallions won the championship, lifted Hill on their shoulders, and they all went to Outback Steakhouse to celebrate. When they got back to Tifton, members of the faculty, staff, and student body celebrated with the champions when their van pulled up in front of Tift Hall.

ABAC retirees in 1999 included Ed Byers (26 years), Dr. Libby Campbell (33 years), Wayne Cooper (30 years), Jeanie Doss (23 years), Norman Hill (34 years), Helen Strickland (31 years), Joann Sumner (26 years), and Sarah Willis (30 years).

The first fall semester commencement ceremony in the history of ABAC took place on December 18, 1999 in Gressette Gym. There was no speaker for this first ceremony.

2000

At the 2000 Honors Day ceremony, award winners included Dr. Larry McGruder, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Award for Teaching Excellence; Charles Griffin, Roy Jackson Award for Staff Excellence; and Dr. Larry Allen, E. Lanier Carson Leadership Award for administrators. Jodie Rayl from Fitzgerald was named the J.G. Woodroof Scholar at the ceremony. A member of the Fillies’ tennis team, she was also named the Donaldson Award winner at the spring commencement ceremony.

Dr. and Mrs. Loyd moved back to their home state of Missouri when he retired on July 31, 2000.

Dr. Homer Day began serving as Interim President on August 1. Day joined the college administration in 1972 and held a variety of leadership positions including Director of College Services and Coordinator of Federal Programs and as the Director of Financial Aid. He had also
served as Interim Vice President and Dean of Academic Affairs. Day became the first African American to lead the institution in either the role of president or interim president.

2001

At the 2001 Honors Day ceremony, Mary H. Spurlock, a business information technology major from Moultrie, was named the J.G. Woodroof Scholar. Faculty/staff award winners were Nancy Scott, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Award for Teaching Excellence; Teresa Williams, Roy R. Jackson Award for Staff Excellence; Wasdon Graydon, E. Lanier Carson Award for administrators; and Lorie Felton, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Excellence in Advising Award.

The featured speaker at the spring graduation ceremony was Michael L. Thurmond, Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Labor.

Day retired from ABAC on June 30, 2001 when his time as Interim President ended. He and his wife, Caroline, continued to live in Tifton.

Michael F. Vollmer became the ninth president in the history of ABAC on July 1, 2001. He was a Pennsylvania native who graduated from Greensboro (N.C.) College. He received his law degree from John Marshall Law School in Atlanta. He and his wife, Lennie, brought a lot of energy to ABAC.

Vollmer had served in state government for the previous 20 years. He was the first executive director of the HOPE Scholarship Program and the first executive director of the Pre-Kindergarten Program. Prior to taking over the ABAC presidency, Vollmer served as the Director of the Office of Educational Accountability for the State of Georgia.

Vollmer engaged the ABAC Foundation in an ambitious project to bring new student housing to the campus. The $32 million ABAC Place apartments now stand tall on the west side of ABAC as a result of Vollmer’s persistence. Under Vollmer’s leadership, ABAC’s enrollment climbed to over 3,000 students for the first time ever during the 2002 fall term, and then skyrocketed to 3,407 students during the 2003 fall semester. Upon Vollmer’s invitation, Valdosta State, Georgia Southwestern, and Macon State began offering junior and senior level classes on the ABAC campus. ABAC on the Square in Moultrie experienced its largest enrollment ever with over 400 students during the 2004 spring term.

Vollmer was a true visionary. He mapped out plans for new buildings at the college, including a new Agricultural Sciences building, a new Health Sciences building, and the Pedestrian Mall.

Vollmer’s first year as president was a very active one. The college opened the new Environmental Horticulture Building on August 15. The Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia also agreed to put Tift, Lewis, and Herring halls on the renovation list for a $10 million renovation project at some point in the future.
Rebecca Paul, President/Chief Executive Officer of the Georgia Lottery Corporation, was the fall commencement speaker.

2002

The ABAC Foundation received the $1 million Forest Lakes Golf Club as a gift from Tifton ophthalmologist Larry Moorman and his wife, Debra, in January, 2002. The college operates the golf course as a public course but also uses it as a teaching laboratory for students in a variety of majors.

In March, 2002, Coach Julie Conner’s basketball Fillies won the NJCAA Region XVII title for only the second women’s state basketball championship in the history of ABAC. Coach Keith Barr and the Fillies won the first one in 1984. The Fillies lost the national tournament playoff game to Louisburg (N.C.) in Gressette Gym. It is the only women’s national tournament basketball game involving the Fillies ever played on the ABAC campus.

Vollmer pushed hard for bachelor’s degrees to be offered on the ABAC campus by other colleges and universities. As a result, Valdosta State offered the junior, senior, and graduate level classes necessary to obtain an undergraduate and graduate degree in education, Macon State offered the junior and senior level classes necessary to obtain a B.S. in information technology, and Georgia Southwestern offered all classes necessary to obtain a bachelor’s degree in either accounting or management. Albany State also offered the classes necessary to obtain a master’s degree in business administration on the ABAC campus.

At the 2002 Honors Day Ceremony, Leslie Ann Parrish, an animal science major from Savannah, was named the J.G. Woodroof Scholar. Faculty/staff award winners were Geoff Clement, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Award for Teaching Excellence; Van McGriff, Roy R. Jackson Award for Staff Excellence; Mike Chason, E. Lanier Carson Award for administrators; and Rebecca Arnold, Excellence in Advising Award.

ABAC broke ground on the $7.1 million Ag Sciences building on April 6, 2002. The spring commencement ceremony featured Anna Marie Brown, an Early Childhood Education graduate at the ceremony, as the guest speaker.

The college had a “concrete cracking” to signal the beginning of the construction of the $1.5 million Pedestrian Mall project on August 5, 2002. John Hunt, an ABAC alumnus and a member of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, led the way with a sledge hammer. The ribbon was also cut to open the $1 million Red Hill Athletic Center in honor of legendary tennis coach Norman “Red” Hill on August 27, 2002.

ABAC celebrated its 3000th student with a ceremony on the front steps of Tift Hall on September 12, 2002. Mandee Smith was the 3000th student at ABAC that semester. The 2002 fall semester marked the first time in the college’s history that over 3,000 students were enrolled. The official fall enrollment was 3,033. The fall 2002 commencement speaker was Regent John Hunt.
2003

The college opened the first phase of the Pedestrian Mall at Homecoming on April 5, 2003.

At the 2003 Honors Day Ceremony, Jeanine Dorminey, a mathematics major from Tifton and a member of the Fillies’ basketball team, was named the J.G. Woodroof Scholar. She was also the speaker at the 2003 spring commencement ceremony.

Faculty and staff award winners at Honors Day 2003 were Cathy Rogers, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Award for Teaching Excellence; Fran Kinchen, Roy R. Jackson Award for Staff Excellence; Bernice Hughes, E. Lanier Carson Award for administrators; and Pattie Clark, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Excellence in Advising Award.

Vollmer and the ABAC Foundation developed the idea for the $32 million ABAC Place apartments. All 835 students housed in the 14-acre complex have private rooms. Most units are four-bedroom, two-bath. Every unit has a complete kitchen. Vollmer drove a bulldozer to break ground for ABAC Place in a ceremony on June 23, 2003.

In 2003, ABAC experienced its largest spring term enrollment and largest summer term enrollment. The college also began instituting a Maymester, a short session where students could pick up one or two classes in a very condensed schedule. ABAC opened Phase Two of the Pedestrian Mall on October 14, 2003, with Chancellor Thomas Meredith cutting the ribbon. The college also experienced its highest enrollment ever with 3,407 students during the 2003 fall term.

Vollmer instigated the idea for a new campus sign system and helped to secure funding for two electronic signs which were turned on for the first time on November 5, 2003. Congressman Sanford Bishop and ABAC student Pippa Mpunzwana were the featured speakers for the December 16, 2003 commencement ceremony. Mpunzwana was also selected as Ms. ABAC in 2004.

2004

The first phase of the $32 million ABAC Place complex opened on a rainy January 9, 2004. The first residents and their parents pushed shopping carts full of their belongings through the rain with big smiles on their faces.

Vollmer drove a backhoe to start the demolition of Chandler Hall on January 27, 2004. On the same day Chancellor Thomas Meredith cut the ribbon to officially open the new $7.1 million Agricultural Sciences Building.

On February 18, 2004, ABAC celebrated its 400th student during any one semester at ABAC on the Square in Moultrie. Stephanie Withrow was that student. The event was coordinated by ABAC on the Square Director Kay Powell. The college kicked off Phase Three of the Pedestrian Mall project at Homecoming on April 3, 2004.
At the 2004 Honors Day Ceremony, Jennifer Raynor, a nursing major from Fitzgerald, was named the J.G. Woodroof Scholar. Faculty and staff award winners were Joy Shurley, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Award for Teaching Excellence; Duane Weeks, Roy R. Jackson Award for Staff Excellence; Kay Powell, E. Lanier Carson Award for administrators; and Sue Wilson, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Excellence in Advising Award.

The 2004 spring commencement speaker was Joel McKie (Class of ’04), National FFA organization vice-president for the southern region in 2002. The first three signs of the new campus outdoor sign system were installed July 14, 2004.

On July 16, 2004, former Georgia Governor George Busbee passed away. He was a member of the ABAC Class of 1944. Busbee made history when he became the first Georgia governor to serve consecutive terms from 1975-1983.

On August 1, 2004, ABAC privatized its physical plant by contracting with Sodexho. The company took over all grounds maintenance, custodial work, and physical plant duties.

The “glass-breaking” for the new $7.2 million Health Sciences Building was held on September 1, 2004. The “glass-breaking” involved Tift Regional Medical Center CEO Bill Richardson using a backhoe to crash through a window at the Moore Building, which was demolished along with Creswell Hall to make way for the new Health Sciences Building.

Vollmer’s last day as president of ABAC was on September 14, 2004. He became Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education on September 15, 2004. He will always be remembered as a president who accomplished a great deal in a relatively short period of time.

Vice President for Student and Enrollment Services Tom Call was named Interim President of ABAC, beginning September 15, 2004. He joined ABAC as a faculty member in the Division of Agriculture and Forest Resources in 1981. He entered the administrative ranks as the ABAC Registrar in 1996.

The official grand opening for ABAC Place was held on September 23, 2004, with a speech by Chancellor Thomas Meredith. At the ceremony, Meredith dedicated the John Hunt Town Center in honor of ABAC alumnus and Board of Regents member John Hunt (Class of ’59), who passed away in 2003. Hunt’s wife, Julie, also an ABAC alumnus (Class of ’65), took his place on the Board of Regents.

Call spoke at the dedication ceremony for the Steinway Grand Piano donated by the Stafford Foundation on September 21, 2004. He was also the featured speaker at the Sunbelt Expo Exhibitors’ Luncheon on October 19, 2004. ABAC was the featured exhibitor at the 2004 Expo and was honored for developing the farm show on its campus in the mid-1960s.

A new phone system went into effect at ABAC on November 16, 2004. Dr. Chrystle Ross, Executive Director of the Office of Information Technology, was the key person in the changeover from regular phone lines to Voice Over Internet Protocol.
In November, 2004, Call officially requested State College status for ABAC, paving the way for the college to offer four-year degrees of its own in Diversified Agriculture and Turfgrass and Golf Course Management. The University System gave ABAC approval to continue to develop its plans for State College status in April, 2005 but did not give the official sanction for State College status until May 16, 2006.

Fulwood Hall, Mitchell Hall, and Branch Hall were razed in the fall of 2004. Nancy Lott, an Honor graduate in nursing, was the featured speaker for the fall 2004 commencement ceremony.

2005

Creswell Hall and the Moore Building were razed in the winter of 2005 to make way for the Health Sciences Building. ABAC brought back golf to the athletics’ program after a 10-year absence in the fall of 2005 with Herb Hendrix as coach.

A Board of Regents’ study showed ABAC had an overall $110 million annual impact on the South Georgia area in January, 2005. Construction on the Health Sciences Building began in February, 2005. Sodexho replaced Aramark as the ABAC food services provider on July 1, 2005.

At the 2005 Honors Day Ceremony, Kaedy Cawthon, an Early Childhood Education major from Jackson, was named the J.G. Woodroof Scholar. She was also the speaker for the 2005 spring commencement ceremony.

Faculty and staff award winners at Honors Day 2005 were Dr. Kay Weeks, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Award for Teaching Excellence; Pathelyn Smith, Roy R. Jackson Award for Staff Excellence; Diane Kilgore, E. Lanier Carson Award for administrators; and Joy Shurley, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Excellence in Advising Award.

The college experienced another all time enrollment record in the fall of 2005 with 3,423 students from 149 Georgia counties, 16 other states, and 17 countries.

On November 30, 2005, Interim Chancellor Corliss Cummings charged the ABAC Presidential Search and Screening Committee with the task of finding ABAC a new president. Alumnus William Bowen, Jr., chaired the committee. Call issued a charge to the college’s 100th birthday celebration committee on December 1, 2005 with Public Relations Director Mike Chason as chair. The 2005 fall commencement speaker was State Senator Joseph Carter.

2006

The Master Plan for ABAC was approved by the Board of Regents after a presentation by Interim President Call and Master Plan Committee Chair Mike Chason in Atlanta on January 10, 2006. The plan called for extensive changes to the physical face of the campus including a new Perimeter Road and moving the Physical Plant facility.
At the 2006 Honors Day Ceremony, Michael Maw, a double major in Agronomy and Agricultural Communication from Tifton, was named the J.G. Woodroof Scholar. Faculty and staff award winners were Dr. Herbert Shippey, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Award for Teaching Excellence; Janice Payne, Roy R. Jackson Award for Staff Excellence; Bertha Daniel, E. Lanier Carson Award for administrators; and Dr. Luke Vassiliou, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Excellence in Advising Award.

Governor Sonny Perdue was the guest speaker at the spring graduation ceremony on May 9, 2006.

After months of searching and interviews, the Board of Regents named Dr. David C. Bridges as ABAC’s 10th president on May 11, 2006. Bridges became the first alumnus ever to serve as president. The Parrott native was a member of the Class of 1978. He received his undergraduate and graduate degrees from Auburn University and his Ph.D. from Texas A&M University. He spoke to an enthusiastic ABAC crowd on the front steps of Tift Hall on the afternoon of May 11, 2006. His wife, Kim, is also an ABAC alumnus. In fact, they met in Rosalyn Donaldson’s English class on the ABAC campus.

Trisha Yearwood performed for over 1,800 patrons at the largest Dollars for ABAC Scholars event in its history on May 12, 2006. Yearwood’s father, Jack, was an ABAC alumnus. Assistant Development Director Betty McCorvey coordinated the event.

President-Elect Bridges and Interim President Call returned to the front porch of Tift Hall on May 17, 2006 for a celebration party when ABAC was named a State College by the Board of Regents. The announcement actually came at 2:03 p.m. on May 16, 2006 at the Regents’ meeting in Atlanta. Interim President Call was in Atlanta for the historic announcement.

Call walked out of the president’s office into retirement on June 30, 2006. He became the longest serving interim president in ABAC’s history. He and his wife, Judy, continued to live in Tifton.

Bridges’ first official day on the job was July 1, 2006. He became the first ABAC president to be formally inaugurated in an impressive ceremony on August 25, 2006 in Gressette Gym. The ceremony attracted presidents and representatives from 17 other colleges and universities. Bridges called it “a day I will never forget.”

During his first year as president, Bridges evaluated every area of the college and set the stage for many changes. He announced a record enrollment at his first day of class press conference on August 21, 2006 of 3,574 students from 10 states, 11 countries, and 153 Georgia counties. He kicked a soccer ball into the net at the E.B. Hamilton Complex on August 26, 2006 to signal the opening of the first ever women’s intercollegiate soccer season at ABAC. Under the direction of Coach Jimmy Ballenger, the Fillies recorded a first year record of 9-5-1.

Bridges was the keynote speaker when ABAC opened the $7.2 million Health Sciences building on September 20, 2006. Tift Regional Medical Center provided $1 million toward the
construction of the building which involved a public-private partnership with the ABAC Foundation.

For the first time ever, the WALB-TV news team from Albany broadcast its evening newscast live on the ABAC campus on October 5, 2006. On October 23, 2006, Bridges and ABAC Foundation Board of Trustees Chair Ruth Raines pushed a plunger to set off a small charge of dynamite to signal the groundbreaking on the ABAC Lakeside student housing project on the north shore of Lake Baldwin.

On November 30, 2006, the groundbreaking ceremony for the soccer field/intramural fields project was held. A helicopter loaded with soccer balls flew over the ABAC intramural field and Public Relations Administrative Associate Pam Leonard pushed out the balls to signal the beginning of the groundbreaking on the $1 million first phase of the project.

John Ellington (Class of ’80), Judge for the Court of Appeals of the State of Georgia, served as the fall 2006 commencement speaker.

2007

Under the direction of Coach Todd Sheppard, the men’s basketball team at ABAC won the most games in the history of the program during the 2006-2007 season with a record of 27-5. The Stallions lost in the state title game to Georgia Perimeter. ABAC also lost twice to Georgia Perimeter during the regular season.

ABAC kicked off its 100th birthday celebration at the Homecoming luncheon on March 31, 2007 with a parade of students holding lighted birthday cakes and a short play which told the story of the bidding ceremony for the A&M School. Alumni Director Nancy Coleman coordinated the event.

At the 2007 Honors Day Ceremony, Casey Allison, a business administration major from Dahlonega, was named the J.G. Woodroof Scholar. Faculty/staff award winners were Beth Thornton, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Award for Teaching Excellence; Pam Leonard, Roy R. Jackson Award for Staff Excellence; Dr. Bobbie Robinson, E. Lanier Carson Award for administrators; and Kay Powell, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Excellence in Advising Award.

Alumnus George T. Smith was the guest speaker at the spring graduation ceremony on May 4, 2007. Smith (Class of 1940) is the only Georgian ever to win contested elections to all three branches of state government. He is a former Speaker of the House, Lieutenant Governor, and Supreme Court Justice. Smith was also selected for the Board of Regents Hall of Fame on March 3, 2007.

Amy Grant performed at the Dollars for ABAC Scholars Benefit Banquet and Show at the UGA Tifton Campus Conference Center on June 15, 2007. Sponsored by the ABAC Foundation, it was the last concert of its kind in the longtime Dollars for Scholars format. Dollars for Scholars
began in 1972 with Anita Bryant as the first performer in an effort to raise funds to build the Chapel of All Faiths.

On June 19, 2007, the president’s office moved out of Tift Hall for the first time in the history of ABAC. The president’s office, public relations office and fiscal affairs office relocated to Evans Hall, the former health center. Ashley Williamson joined the staff as the Public Relations Assistant on June 19. Tift Hall was closed on July 25, 2007 when Procurement became the last office to move out of the building. Tift, Lewis, and Herring are now awaiting rehabilitation.

Dr. Niles Reddick became the vice president for academic affairs at ABAC on July 1, 2007 after the retirement of Dr. Caroline Helms. Dr. Bridges named him to the President’s Cabinet along with Dr. Gail Dillard, vice president for student affairs; John Clemens, vice president for fiscal affairs, and Dr. Chrystle Ross, Chief Information Officer.

On July 1, 2007, ABAC took over management of the ABAC Place apartments from Place Properties. Director of Residence Life Bernice Hughes and her staff now direct all housing on the campus, including the new ABAC Lakeside complex.

The ABAC Jazz Band toured Europe in July, 2007 and actually played at the opening of the Tour de France bike race. Don Coates directed the band and coordinated the trip.

Classes opened for the 2007 fall term on August 20, 2007 with another all time enrollment record of 3,665 students from 154 Georgia counties, nine countries and 14 states. Bridges said in his first day of class press conference that the college also had a record number of students living on campus, almost 1,300 with the opening of ABAC Lakeside.

The dedication ceremony for the new soccer field was held on August 28, 2007 when the Fillies cut the ribbon on a gorgeous new field on the ABAC campus. The team then defeated Georgia Military College 3-0 in the first home game ever for women’s soccer at ABAC.

One hundred green-and-gold balloons fell from the ceiling of the Grand Lobby of ABAC Lakeside on September 10, 2007 when President Bridges pulled the rope, signifying the opening of the $17 million complex which features rooms for 489 students. Ruth Raines, chair of the ABAC Foundation, spoke on behalf of the Foundation, which again helped to provide the funding for the project.

The 100th birthday celebration continued throughout the fall semester with a special ceremony at the ABAC Sunbelt Expo exhibit on October 17, 2007. As an extra added attraction to the celebration, ABAC was named the 10th best community college in the nation in a poll by the Washington Monthly Magazine. The associate degree Turfgrass Management program was rated seventh in the nation in another poll by Turfnet Magazine, and the new four-year degree turfgrass program was rated 26th in the nation without a single class being taught.

President Bridges announced his Second Century Project in a Town Hall meeting in the Health Sciences Building on November 13, 2007. He outlined a plan for the college to grow and
prosper in its second century of service and established a goal for ABAC to become “Georgia’s State College of Choice.”

Mike Chason and Ali Csinos were the emcees for the first ever students’ iMovie Festival on November 8, 2007 in Howard Auditorium. Men’s basketball coach Todd Sheppard was the fall 2007 commencement speaker.

2008

Dr. Tim Marshall, chair of the Division of Agriculture and Forest Resources, cut the ribbon on January 7, 2008 to signal the first day of class for the brand new bachelor’s degrees in diversified agriculture and turfgrass and golf course management. Dr. Renata Elad taught the first class.

The final days leading up to the Centennial Celebration of ABAC passed in a blur. Mike Chason, chair of the 100th birthday celebration committee, met with the group for the final time on January 8, 2008. Through the assistance of committee members and particularly the help of Public Relations Assistant Ashley Williamson and Executive Assistant to the President Pam Leonard, the details were hammered into place.

President Bridges made special arrangements for an entire ABAC contingent to travel to Atlanta on February 14, 2008 to meet with legislators at the state capitol. Senator Joseph Carter headed an effort to have ABAC recognized in the State Senate that morning, and Representatives Austin Scott and Jay Roberts arranged for a recognition ceremony in the State House later the same morning. Bridges and George T. Smith both spoke at the two ceremonies. They were surrounded by legislators who were ABAC alumni.

The entire ABAC group then went to Governor Sonny Perdue’s office for a group photo. Those representing ABAC included President David Bridges, Vice President for Academic Affairs Niles Reddick, Vice President for Student Affairs Gail Dillard, Vice President for Fiscal Affairs John Clemens, Chief Information Officer Chrystle Ross, ABAC Alumni Association President Joy Carter, ABAC Ambassadors President Ashton Harper, First Lady Kim Bridges, Chief Advancement Officer Melvin Merrill, Director of Grants and Development Betty McCorvey, Public Relations Assistant Ashley Williamson, and Public Relations Director Mike Chason.

It was a great day for ABAC under the Gold Dome! The event served as a prelude for a terrific week of the Centennial Celebration on February 18-22, 2008.

The Celebration Week began on February 18 with a breakfast in the Donaldson Dining Hall for the entire faculty and staff. It continued at noon on that day with the slicing of a birthday cake in Moultrie for all students at ABAC on the Square. Kay Powell, Director of ABAC on the Square, arranged for an impressive ceremony.

More birthday cakes were needed on February 19 when ABAC students were served cake in the dining hall. Also on that day, Bridges spoke to the ABAC Foundation Board of Trustees at their quarterly meeting and did a live WTIF radio show with Chason. The students enjoyed a
Centennial Celebration parade around campus arranged by Dean of Students Bernice Hughes. Singer Corey Smith entertained over 1,200 spectators in the John Hunt Auditorium of the UGA Tifton Campus Conference Center that evening.

On February 20, 2008, the big moment arrived with a brilliant blue sky on a perfect 70-degree day. Exactly 100 years earlier, a total of 27 students had walked up the steps of Tift Hall for their first day of class at the Second District A&M School.

One century later, ABAC had a breakfast for retired faculty and staff, a presentation in Howard Auditorium featuring a fantastic documentary on the college’s first 100 years by Cindy Barber from Media Services, a tribute to the college from George T. Smith, a speech by President Bridges which addressed the first century and the century to come, recognition of former presidents at the Presidential Plaza Dedication, and free rides on a hot air balloon. Mike Vollmer was the only former president to return but he was joined by former interim presidents Dr. Frank Thomas, Tom Call, and Dr. Homer Day.

ABAC alumnus Steven Meeks (Class of ’96) read a resolution in Howard Auditorium commending ABAC on its 100th birthday from United States Senators Saxby Chambliss and Johnny Isakson. Meeks works for Chambliss in his Atlanta office. A resolution was also received from United States Congressman Jim Marshall which was read on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives. ABAC was also honored by resolutions from the City of Tifton and the Tift County Board of Commissioners.

On the evening of February 20, 2008, Don Coates, Dr. Susan Roe, and Woody Leonard directed the ABAC Concert Band, Concert Choir, Jazz Band, Jazz Choir and Dixie Stallions Dixieland Band in a wonderful concert featuring “100 Years of Musical Memories” in Gressette Gym. Following the concert, an awe-inspiring fireworks display took place over Lake Baldwin in front of the ABAC Lakeside complex. Fireworks watchers were even treated to an eclipse of the moon after the fireworks had faded away.

On February 21, President Bridges and Chason addressed the Tifton-Tift County Chamber of Commerce luncheon on the 100th birthday celebration. Alumni Director Nancy Coleman and Athletics Director Alan Kramer coordinated a dinner for the first ever ABAC Athletics Hall of Fame. Chason conceived the idea for the Hall of Fame as a part of the 100th birthday celebration in a planning session with Ashley Williamson in November, 2007.

Six legends from the ABAC athletics program were recognized and presented crystal stallions between games of the ABAC-South Georgia Tech basketball matchups in Gressette Gym on February 21. Named to the first Hall of Fame were Orion Mitchell, Bruce Gressette, Thomas Cheney, Phillip Simpson, Norman “Red” Hill, and Milena Stanoytcheva. Mitchell, Gressette, Cheney, and Stanoytcheva were named to the Hall posthumously. The state runner-up team from 1958 was also recognized at halftime of the men’s game that evening.

On February 22, the Centennial Celebration Week ended on the front steps of Tift Hall where ABAC student Sam Webb explained how ABAC students constructed ABAC’s very own time
capsule. Agriculture and Forest Resources Division faculty members John Franklin and Ray Lundy directed the design and construction of the capsule. The time capsule will be placed in the remodeled Tift Hall. The capsule is to be opened on February 20, 2108. The event ended when faculty members, staff members, administrators, and students gathered on the steps of Tift Hall to release 100 balloons into the gray South Georgia sky as a salute to the next 100 years of ABAC.

ABAC took a step toward the future on March 28-30, 2008 when a design team from the University of Georgia College of Environment and Design came to Tifton for the weekend to come up with a new design for the front of campus to include the three historic buildings of Tift, Lewis, and Herring halls. All three of the 100-year-old buildings are now vacant and awaiting rehabilitation.

The Centennial Celebration continued on Homecoming weekend on April 3-5, 2008 when Alumni Relations Director Nancy Coleman directed a jam-packed schedule which featured ABAC alumni from different decades adding candles to a gigantic birthday cake during a luncheon in Gressette Gym. The evening hours featured “Jukebox Saturday Night” and fireworks over Lake Baldwin. Former interim president Jim Burran returned for the Homecoming luncheon.

Copies of the 100 Years of ABAC Memories book were sold for the first time at Homecoming. The book was edited by Mike Chason and designed by Ashley Williamson. President Bridges and ABAC Alumni Association President Joy Carter sealed the 100th birthday time capsule during the Homecoming luncheon in Gressette Gym.

At the 2008 Honors Day Ceremony, Christina Ann Norton, an art major from Tifton, was named the J.G. Woodroof Scholar. Faculty/staff award winners were Lorie Felton, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Award for Teaching Excellence; Jimmy Felton, Roy R. Jackson Award for Staff Excellence; Andrea Willis, E. Lanier Carson Award for administrators; and Tammy Dennis, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Excellence in Advising Award.

ABAC alumni were in the news in the spring of 2008 when Michael Johns, known as Michael Lee when he was an ABAC student in 1998, finished as one of the finalists in the nationwide “American Idol” competition. Another alumnus, Thomas “Boo” Weekley (Class of ’93), won $990,000 when he captured the title in the PGA Verizon Heritage golf tournament at Hilton Head, S.C., for the second year in a row.

The ABAC Cattleman’s Association won the prestigious “Chapter of the Year” award for the state of Georgia in 2008. Dr. Mary Ellen Hicks is the advisor for the chapter. Coach Alan Kramer and the Fillies’ tennis team won their 15th consecutive state title behind the outstanding play of freshman Monika Lalewicz, who went on to win the national championship at #1 singles. She was named the NJCAA Player of the Year. The Stallions’ Paul Fitzgerald was named men’s NJCAA Player of the Year. Fitzgerald led the Stallions to a third place finish in the national tournament.
For the first time ever, two members of the junior class were elected by the student body to lead the SGA when Nate Carney was elected president, and Dan Pennington was elected vice-president. U.S. Senator Saxby Chambliss from nearby Moultrie was the spring graduation speaker. He congratulated ABAC on its very successful first 100 years.

ABAC and Georgia Southwestern State University announced a joint agreement to offer junior and senior level classes in a bachelor’s degree in Resource Management at ABAC in May, 2008. Southwestern also offers junior and senior level classes in Management, Accounting, and Early Childhood Education at ABAC.

President Bridges and his wife, Kim, accepted the Arts Citizen of the Year award for ABAC from the Tift County Arts Council at the 2008 Love Affair festival, which actually began as the Arts Circus on the ABAC campus in an endeavor started by Syd Blackmarr. Blackmarr was the first director of Arts Experiment Station at ABAC.

Governor Sonny Perdue announced in May, 2008 that ABAC would receive $6 million in funding in the 2008-09 state budget toward the rehabilitation of the three original buildings on the front of the campus.

Jessica Kalina from Williamson, Colton Farrow from Pitts, and Tanner Newhouse from Bonaire were named as the first three recipients of the Presidential Scholarships at ABAC in May, 2008.

ABAC began the 2008-09 academic year on July 1 with the news of a statewide five per cent budget cut, amounting to almost $900,000 for the College. ABAC’s first response to the cut was leaving vacant positions unfilled. Two of those unfilled spots belonged to the two basketball coaches since Todd Sheppard had resigned to go into the business world, and Julie Conner had resigned to take the head girls’ basketball job at Tift County High School. President Bridges announced on July 14, 2008 that ABAC was dropping both its men’s and women’s basketball programs.

“The final decision and its timing were made because of three reasons,” Bridges said. “Eliminating two of the eight intercollegiate athletic programs provided much needed financial relief for the remaining programs, without coaches we couldn’t run a program, and by not filling the two positions we could maintain the flexibility to fill higher priority academic positions and meet forthcoming budget cuts.”

That left ABAC with six intercollegiate sports including soccer, softball and tennis for women, and baseball, golf, and tennis for the men.

ABAC alumna Cathy Cox was inaugurated as president of Young Harris College on July 26, 2008. Cox, the former Georgia Secretary of State, was an ABAC classmate of Dr. Bridges.

Nancy Coleman retired after 23 years of service as the only fulltime Director of Alumni Relations in the history of ABAC on July 31. Keith Barber was named Chief Development Officer at ABAC on August 1.
Karla Heath-Sands and the Reflections provided the entertainment for the first Evening for ABAC on September 18, 2008. College Advancement Officer Melvin Merrill said the event previously known as Dollars for ABAC Scholars had changed its scope “to provide greater benefit to the scholarship program at ABAC.” Dollars for Scholars had a 36-year run at ABAC, featuring such top name entertainment as Trisha Yearwood, Roy Clark, Ray Stevens, Debbie Reynolds, and many more.

A study commissioned by the Board of Regents showed that ABAC had a total economic impact of over $237 million on Tifton and the surrounding area during 2007. Dr. Jeff Gibbs helped to develop the report. Dr. Bridges said the economic impact figure more than doubled since 2001.

Ashley Williamson headed a design team to design new logos and a new stallion mascot logo for the college. A total of 3,600 students were enrolled for the 2008 fall semester.

Alumnus Thomas “Boo” Weekley (Class of ’93), a professional golfer on the PGA Tour, helped lead the United States to victory in the Ryder Cup matches. He later donated $30,000 to the college through the Play Golf America University.

Tanya Rafferty was selected for the first four-year scholarship in the history of ABAC beginning with the 2008 fall term. She received a Regents’ Foundation Scholarship for four years. Rafferty was later selected as one of two students to be featured in a video at the annual Board of Regents Gala on March 28, 2009.

ABAC Police Chief Bryan Golden announced a new emergency messaging system called Connect-Ed, which was tested for the first time on October 22, 2008. The College used the system several times during the year to reach students when severe weather threatened the campus.

ABAC was selected for a Rapid Process Improvement project by the Governor’s Office of Customer Service in the fall of 2008. The nine-month project to benefit students in the enrollment and financial aid process was headed up on the campus by Dr. Chrystle Ross and Diane Kilgore.

Katrina Duncan-Marshalleck scored an all time record of 26 goals for the Fillies’ soccer team, which finished with a best ever record of 13-6 in the 2008 season. Keegan Westberry was crowned Ms. ABAC 2009 on November 11. A new design on the ABAC web site went live for the first time on December 1, 2008.

Wasdon Graydon, ABAC’s Director of Sponsored Programs and the Minority Advising Program, was the fall graduation speaker. Graydon, an ABAC alumnus (Class of 1970), closed out the 100th birthday celebration year. Graydon was one of the first African American students to attend ABAC. Lum Roberts and Duane Weeks from Sodexo put up new pole banners on the campus with the new “Georgia’s State College of Choice” logo in December.
Director of Institutional Research Donna Miller passed away unexpectedly on January 4, 2009. She was an ABAC alumnus who had served in her Institutional Research position since July 1, 1993.

The second annual ABAC Athletics Hall of Fame event was held on February 13 when Ellen Vickers, Newell “Sarge” Dorsey, Cook Holliday, P.W. Bryan, Jr., Dorsey Brooks, and the national championship men’s tennis team of 1984 were inducted in an impressive ceremony in the Grand Lobby of ABAC Lakeside. The inductees were then recognized on the tennis court during an ABAC tennis match.

President Bridges announced that ABAC’s academic curriculum will now be divided into six schools of study including Agriculture and Natural Resources, Nursing and Health Sciences, Human Sciences, Liberal Arts, Science and Mathematics, and Business effective April 1. Deans selected for the schools included Dr. Tim Marshall, Agriculture and Natural Resources; Wanda Golden, Nursing and Health Sciences; Dr. Darby Sewell, Human Sciences; Dr. Bobbie Robinson, Liberal Arts; Dr. Ray Barber, Science and Mathematics; and Dr. Jeff Gibbs, Business.

The ABAC student newspaper, The Stallion, was again named the best in the state of Georgia by the Georgia College Press Association in February. Dr. Eric Cash served as the advisor for the newspaper.

Junior Chapman was selected as Mr. ABAC at the 18th annual competition. Governor Sonny Perdue named ABAC Police Chief Bryan Golden to the Georgia Peace Officers Standards and Training Council. Michael Arena from Fitzgerald was selected as the first Presidential Scholar for 2009-10.

Alumni were honored at the newly-titled Celebrate ABAC weekend on March 5-7. Award winners included Christa G. Steinkamp, Outstanding Young Alumnus; Debbie R. Phillips, Helen Brown Sasser Award; Dr. Peggy Ozias-Akins, J. Lamar Branch Award; Jack C. Drew, Jr., Outstanding Business Leader; Patrick Atwater, Jr., Outstanding Educator; Dick Byne, Master Farmer; Gene Ragan, Distinguished Alumnus; Andrea Willis and Melvin Merrill, Honorary Alumni, and the John and Clara Hollis Davis family, Family Legacy Award. The weekend replaced the traditional Homecoming weekend, which was usually in April.

Dr. Eddie Seagle took eight ABAC students to China on March 12-27, 2009 to present a program on golf course planning, construction and maintenance at the Nansha Golf Club and Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou, Peoples Republic of China. All the students were enrolled in the new bachelor’s degree in turfgrass and golf course management. Seagle was presented a Customer Service Award from Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue on May 28 for his role in the expedition.

Under a brilliant blue sky, ABAC unveiled its bachelor’s degree in Rural Studies on March 23, 2009. President Bridges and Vice President Reddick talked about the degree in front of a backdrop of a cotton wagon and two mules on loan from the Georgia Agrirama.

In March, ABAC received a $76,425 Fulbright-Hays Grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Fifteen educators learned more about the people and culture of Brazil on June 4-July
3. ABAC faculty making the trip included Dr. Jeff Gibbs, Lorie Felton, Alan Kramer, Dr. Brian Ray, and Saj Rashti. Rashti coordinated the grant application.

Tifton ophthalmologist Larry Moorman and his wife, Debra, donated the clubhouse at Forest Lakes Golf Club to the ABAC Foundation in March to complete the gift they started in 2002 with the donation of the nine-hole Forest Lakes Golf Club.

At the 2009 Honors Day ceremony, Hector Olguin, an engineering major from Ty Ty, received the J.G. Woodroof Scholar award. Faculty/staff award winners were Geoff Clement, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Award for Teaching Excellence; Shirley Wilson, Roy R. Jackson Sr., Award for Staff Excellence; Dr. Jeff Gibbs, E. Lanier Carson Award Leadership Award; and Dr. Jewrell Rivers, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Excellence in Advising Award.

Coach Alan Kramer’s Fillies won their 16th consecutive NJCAA Region XVII women’s tennis title at the Red Hill Athletic Center on April 25. The Stallions also captured the Region XVII crown behind the play of MVP Rasid Winklaar. ABAC’s Monika Lalewicz was the MVP for the women for the second year in a row. Lalewicz finished second in the national tournament at #1 singles and received National Player of the Year honors for the second consecutive year. She was trying to become the first women’s player at ABAC to win back-to-back national titles since Milena Stanoytcheva in 1999-2000. Matt Holland from Cochran won the national championship at #6 singles for the Stallions, who finished third in the national tournament.

Director of Enrollment Services Donna Webb reported that ABAC had its highest spring semester enrollment in the history of the College with 3,234 students during the 2009 spring term.

Bachelor’s degrees were awarded at ABAC for the first time at the graduation ceremony on May 7, 2009. Edwin Glover, Richard Irvin, Garrett Jones, and Joshua Lanier were the first bachelor’s degree recipients. ABAC alumnus Jim Sparks (Class of ’83) was the guest speaker at the ceremony. Keith Lee, a political science major from Cartersville, won the Donaldson Award.

Andrea Pate Willis retired on June 1 after 35 years as a faculty member and division chair at ABAC. She was perhaps best known as the director for the Fabulous Golddusters precision dance team for 26 years. The Golddusters performed all over Georgia, Florida, and Alabama on behalf of the college. They got their start by performing at halftime of ABAC basketball games. Under the leadership of Willis, the Golddusters danced annually at the Sunbelt Agricultural Exposition, at high school student recruitment shows, and at community festivals. She was named to the ABAC Athletics Hall of Fame in 2014.

In July, ABAC received a $411,354 grant from the United States Department of Education for the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP). This program assists freshman students from migrant farm worker families. The 2008-09 year represented the 10th year of CAMP at ABAC. Federal funding for the Classic and Tiftarea Upward Bound programs at ABAC was also announced in the amount of $572,934. The Upward Bound program has been funded at ABAC every year since 1977.
Diane Kilgore, Director of the Public Service and Business Outreach Center, was selected as the quarterly recipient of the 2009 Governor’s Commendation for Excellence in Customer Service. The Donaldson Dining Hall opened a new food service area on the north side of the building featuring Pizza Hut and Sub-Connection.

At a Town Hall meeting for all faculty and staff on July 28, President Bridges announced that because of state budget reductions, all employees would have to take six furlough days without pay during the year.

ABAC alumnae Jodie Rayl Snow (Class of 2000) was the guest speaker for the annual freshman convocation on August 14 in Gressette Gym. Dr. Brian Ray was named as the director of the ABAC Honors Program. The campus took precautions against a nationwide H1N1 (Swine Flu) outbreak. Fortunately, very few ABAC students were affected.

The fall semester 2009 enrollment included 3,326 students from 17 states, 11 countries, and 152 Georgia counties.

The ABAC Alumni Association embarked on a new endeavor called the Alumni Connecting To Involved and Outstanding New Students (ACTIONS) team. Members included Gary Lee, Mike Davis, Beth Bland, Scott Carlson, Bobby Barber, Jr., George Granade, Steve Spooner, Frankie Hall, Brett Tucker, Chuck Scarborough, Kevin Morgan, Laura Beth Tucker, Barbara Grogan, Jodie Snow, Andrea Willis, Amber Davis Collins, and Kim Bridges. Their purpose is to attract academically talented and engaged students to ABAC.

Amy Howell was selected as the Director of Institutional Research and Planning on August 10. Dining Hall Director Kurt Hoffman passed away on August 19.

President Bridges taught an Introduction to Biofuels class during the 2009 fall semester, his first stint back in the classroom since being selected as the ABAC President. Students in the brand new Rural Studies bachelor’s degree program began taking classes for the first time on August 17.

ABAC kicked off the Historic Front of Campus renovation project on September 8, 2009 with a ceremony on the front steps of Tift Hall. Greenline Architecture and J.T. Turner Construction, both from Savannah, will handle the renovation of Tift, Lewis, and Herring halls. Members of the faculty, staff, and administration gathered for a picture wearing gold plastic hard hats with the ABAC logo on them. Director of Capital Planning Melvin Merrill serves as the ABAC liaison to the architects and the construction company.

Rebecca Hamilton, Nicholas Urquart, Rebecca Cofer, and Derek Sutton joined the staff as the first ever Student Development Specialists in the Enrollment Services office. Their purpose is to serve as mentors for ABAC students from the beginning of their college careers all the way through graduation.

Chancellor Erroll B. Davis presented President Bridges with the Gold Outstanding Customer Service Leadership Award from the University System of Georgia on September 15. The award
recognizes a leader who has made significant impact on customer service within the state. A new State of Georgia Employee Satisfaction Research Report showed that ABAC employees gave the institution top marks in regard to quality of the workplace and employee satisfaction. In a comparison with five other state agencies, ABAC earned the highest score.

ABAC students in the Rural Studies program traveled to Telfair County on September 22 to begin a semester-long project relating to tourism possibilities for the county. Alma Young became the first fulltime webmaster in the history of ABAC when the college closed the ABAC Information Center on ABAC Circle, and her duties were changed to maintaining the ABAC web site.

Javier Gonzalez, Director of HEP/CAMP, and Dr. Billy Reynolds, Interim Head of the Department of Literature and Language, were selected for the University System of Georgia Executive Leadership Institute. Keith Barber was named the Vice President of External Affairs and Advancement and became a member of the President’s Cabinet.

A construction fence went up around the three original buildings, Tift, Lewis, and Herring, on October 8, 2009 to signal the beginning of the renovation of Tift, Lewis, and Herring halls. Governor Sonny Perdue visited ABAC for a meeting in the Health Sciences Building on October 13.

Katrina Duncan-Marshalleck wound up with 23 goals in the 2009 season to finish her ABAC career with a school record 49 goals during her time with the Fillies’ soccer team. President Bridges received the Honorary American FFA degree from the National FFA Organization in Indianapolis, Ind.

ABAC was one of the hosts for a speech by Dr. Harry Kroto, the 1996 Nobel Prize winner in Chemistry, on November 6. AT&T Georgia presented ABAC with a $48,297 grant to expand the use of video instruction and communications at ABAC.

Javier Gonzalez, Director of the CAMP and HEP programs, was the guest speaker for the fall commencement ceremony. Sara Ervin, a Rural Studies major from Commerce, received the Donaldson Award. Alumnus Dan Miller returned to the campus as director of dining services for Sodexo. University System Chancellor Erroll Davis visited the campus on December 7. He said ABAC had developed a “statewide brand.”

ABAC student Dorminey McCrae was selected for the National Association of Police Organization’s “Top Cop” award for his heroism in a Tifton grocery store robbery. Former ABAC Registrar Paul Gaines passed away on Christmas Day, 2009 at the age of 89. He was employed by ABAC from 1946 until 1982 and actually taught classes at Spence Field in Moultrie for servicemen returning from WWII.

2010
President Bridges announced on January 14 that at the request of the Office of Planning and Budget and the Governor’s Office, that he will begin working with legislators, local elected officials, and members of the Georgia Agrirama Development Authority to move management and operations of the Georgia Museum of Agriculture (Agrirama) to ABAC.

For the first time in many years, it snowed on the ABAC campus on February 12. Many ABAC students said they had never seen snow. They threw snowballs and built snowmen. Cain Thurmond from Jefferson was selected Mr. ABAC 2010. Savannah Brown from Wray was chosen as Ms. ABAC 2010. Both students are members of the ABAC Ambassadors.

The new ABAC Stallion mascot, “Thunder,” has his debut at the Stallion Day event for prospective students on February 13.

For the third year in a row, The Stallion, the ABAC student newspaper, was named the best in Georgia at the Georgia College Press Association competition. Amelia Gutierrez and Jacob McWhorter were the managing editors during the two semesters reviewed. The Southern Regional Press Institute also named the ABAC newspaper the best in Georgia. Dr. Eric Cash served as faculty advisor.

The Celebrate ABAC Alumni Weekend on March 5-6 included the alumni awards ceremony where the winners were Dr. Paul Newberne and Dr. James Newberne, Distinguished Alumni; Ann Hammons and Dr. Eddie Seagle, Honorary Alumni; Nancy Coleman, Helen Brown Sasser Award; Dr. Jay Phillips, Outstanding Health Care Professional; Louis Perry, Jr., J. Lamar Branch Award; Beth Bland, Outstanding Young Alumnus; Rodney McDonald, Outstanding Business Leader; John Harrell, Master Farmer; and T. Lynn Barber, Outstanding Educator.

Selections for the third annual ABAC Athletics Hall of Fame were Thomas “Boo” Weekley, a member of the PGA Tour; former ABAC basketball player Joseph Grist; tennis booster Harley Klepfer; former ABAC golfer Jim Sparks; and the 1991 women’s softball team, which was the first women’s team at ABAC to win a national championship. The induction lunch and ceremony were held in a tent beside the softball field on March 6 as a part of the Celebrate ABAC Alumni Weekend activities. Ashley Williamson and Shirley Wilson coordinated the event.

On March 5, the Continuing Education Program had a 70th birthday party to commemorate the founding of the program by Dean Tom Cordell in 1940. Current Director Diane Kilgore and former directors Bob Keith and Jane Tanner were on hand to cut the cake. The ABAC Jazz Band and the Jazz Choir performed at the Evening for ABAC scholarship fundraiser, sponsored by the ABAC Foundation, which was the culminating event of the Celebrate ABAC Weekend on March 6.

The Board of Regents approved a new Associate of Fine Arts in Music degree from the School of Liberal Arts on March 10. It is the only degree of its kind in the University System. ABAC students held a budget cuts protest rally in Howard Auditorium on March 11 to protest the proposed budget cuts to the ABAC state budget by legislators. As it turned out, the cuts were not as severe as anticipated, perhaps because of rallies such as this one across the state.
Dr. Niles Reddick, Vice-President for Academic Affairs, released his first novel in March, 2010, titled, *Lead Me Home*. He is also the author of a short story collection, titled *Road Kill Art and Other Oddities*.

Diane Kilgore retired from ABAC on March 31, 2010. Director of Human Resources Bertha Williams and Student Support Services Director Wasdon Graydon also retired in March.

At the 2010 Honors Day Ceremony, David L. Chapman, an agricultural education major from Jasper, was named the J.G. Woodroof Scholar. Faculty/staff award winners were Melanie Partlow, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Award for Teaching Excellence; Judy Perry, Roy R. Jackson Award for Staff Excellence; Dr. Chrystle Ross, E. Lanier Carson Award for administrators; and Dr. Shelley Fandel, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Excellence in Advising Award.

Recipients of Presidential Scholarships at Honors Day for a third year of study were Colton Farrow from Pitts; Jessica Kalina from Williamson; and Tanner Newhouse from Bonaire. Recipients of Presidential Scholarships for a second year of study were Andrea Sweeney from Eatonton; Michael Arena from Fitzgerald; and Kayla Davenport from Hazlehurst.

Coach Alan Kramer’s Fillies won the NJCAA Region XVII women’s title for the 17th consecutive year at the Red Hill Athletics Center on April 17. Kramer’s Stallions also won the region title behind the heroics of MVP Rasid Winklaar. Kramer was named the Coach of the Year for men and women.

The Ag Business Club at ABAC was named the National Outstanding Student Chapter by the National Agri-Marketing Association for 2009-10. Dustin Bass is the club advisor. Jazmin Thomas from Perry was elected president of the Student Government Association during the spring election.

ABAC finished second in the Hispanic College Quiz Bowl competition in Chicago. Team members were Karina Guerrero, Leandra Gonzales, Katia Arevalo, Juan Rico, Gabby Ramirez, and Felipe Pedraza.

Dr. Greg Anderson (Class of ’78), a Tifton urologist, was the guest speaker at the 2010 spring commencement ceremony. David L. Chapman, an agricultural education major from Jasper, received the Donaldson Award.

Vice President for Student Affairs Gail Dillard announced in April, 2010 that Greek fraternities Kappa Sigma and Alpha Gamma Rho had been approved to establish colonies on the ABAC campus. They are the first Greek organizations at ABAC. Cain Thurmond from Jefferson is president of Alpha Gamma Rho, and Brent Wagner from Roswell is president of Kappa Sigma.

Alan Kramer was named to the NJCAA Women’s Tennis Hall of Fame during the national women’s tennis tournament in Tucson, Ariz. The Fillies finished 17th in the national tournament, and the Stallions finished eighth in the national men’s tennis tournament.
The ABAC Jazz Ensemble was selected to perform on May 22 at the Jazz Education Network International Conference in St. Louis, Mo. Don Coates is the director.

Sara Beth Pelham from Bainbridge was selected as the recipient of the Presidential Scholarship for the upcoming year. ABAC students Savannah Brown from Wray, Jessica Gandy from Lenox, and Randi Walden from Stockbridge were selected for the Women’s Leadership in Public Service Institute in Tallulah Falls. Deidra Jackson was named as the ABAC Comptroller on June 7.

The 2010-11 state budget signed by Governor Sonny Perdue on June 8 contained $4.75 million toward the rehabilitation of the ABAC Front Campus. ABAC received an allocation of $6 million in the FY 2009 budget to begin work on the mammoth project, which will restore Tift Hall, Lewis Hall, and Herring Hall, the three original buildings on campus.

The new ABAC Bass Fishing Club won first and second place in a tournament at Lake Eufaula on June 26. Matt O’Dillon and Jake Holloway fished for ABAC.

Pulitzer-Prize nominated author Janice Daugharty joined the campus on July 1 as ABAC’s first Writer-in-Residence. She is the author of *Earl in the Yellow Shirt*, which was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in Fiction in 1997. Other books by Daugharty include *PawPaw Patch* and *Dark of the Moon*.

ABAC took over the operation of the Georgia Museum of Agriculture and Historic Village on July 1. The change of control from the Georgia Agrirama Development Authority to ABAC has been in the works since Jan. 14 when the Office of Planning and Budget and the Governor’s Office requested that President Bridges work with legislators, local elected officials, and members of the Authority to move management and operations to ABAC.

Georgia lawmakers passed House Bill 1090 on April 12 which paved the way to move all assets of the Museum to the University System of Georgia (USG). The bill was introduced by Representatives Austin Scott (153rd) and Jay Roberts (154th) with the support of other area representatives. The legislation was carried in the Senate by Senator John Crosby (13th District) and Senator John Bulloch (11th District).

The USG Board of Regents took action on May 12 to facilitate the transfer of assets, including land and buildings, from the Georgia Agrirama Development Authority to the USG. Governor Sonny Perdue signed the bill on May 20. Paul Willis, Director of College Enrichment, led the transition team for ABAC and was named as the director of the Museum.

On July 1, Vice President for External Affairs and Advancement Keith Barber announced that the ABAC Foundation had received a gift of $1 million from the estate of Herbert and Meade Bynum. Herbert Bynum was a 1946 ABAC alumnus who was originally from Blakely but lived most of his life in Tampa, Fla., in the egg production business. Barber said the gift will be used as a student enhancement endowment for the Rural Studies program. It will be called “The Herbert and Meade Bynum Endowment for Student Enrichment in Rural Studies.”
Dr. Ray Barber, Dean of the School of Science and Mathematics, announced on July 15 that ABAC will receive a $600,000 National Science Foundation grant to attract students interested in careers in the science and mathematics fields. Students who receive the scholarships through the grant will be a part of the new Achievement through Student Support and Experiential Training in Sciences (ASSETS) program. The Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) scholarships will be awarded over a five-year period beginning Aug. 1.

ABAC softball player Alyssa Simmons from Lenox was named as an NJCAA Distinguished Academic All-America selection in July. ABAC golfers Kenneth Bragg of Peachtree City and Winston Gibbs from Hartwell were also named NJCAA Academic All-America selections.

Vice President for External Affairs and Advancement Keith Barber was appointed to a one-year term on the Board of Directors for the National Agricultural Alumni and Development Association. ABAC faculty member Dustin Bass and ABAC student Jonathon Cassiday spent the summer of 2010 at Perrotis College in Thessaloniki, Greece in a study abroad program.

A study commissioned by the University System showed that ABAC had an economic impact of $251,799,738 on Tifton and the surrounding area. Dr. Jeff Gibbs, Dean of the School of Business, assisted with the data interpretation. The figure represents the highest economic impact in the history of the college.

Assistant Director of Housing Chris Kinsey and four members of the Student Financial Services team, Dr. Chrystle Ross, Gay Ann Hodge, Krystle Williams, and Stefane Whiddon, were named this quarter’s recipients of the 2010 Governor’s Commendation for Excellence in Customer Service.

Dr. Aercio Cunha, a Fulbright Scholar from Brazil, will teach business classes and rural studies classes at ABAC during the 2010-11 year. Richard Spancake was named the new Director of Human Resources.

ABAC received a National Science Foundation grant worth $204,435 to bring cutting edge technology to the J.G. Woodroof Farm. Dr. Renata Elad, professor of agricultural economics, is the primary contact for the grant.

Former ABAC Comptroller J. Talmadge Webb passed away on August 6. He served as the college’s chief business officer from 1958 through 1988. Former ABAC Ambassador Joel McKie (Class of ’04) was the guest speaker at the annual freshman convocation.

Javier Gonzalez is serving a term as president of the National HEP/CAMP association. He directs both programs at ABAC. Vice President for Academic Affairs Niles Reddick announced that ABAC will add a new major to the Rural Studies curriculum, titled Writing and Communication. It joins Business and Economic Development, Rural Arts and Culture, and Social and Community Affairs as Rural Studies majors.

Athletics Director Alan Kramer was named the 2009-10 Junior and Community Colleges Southeast Region Under Armour Athletic Director of the Year by the National Association of
Collegiate Directors of Athletics. He is a past recipient of the ITA/Wilson National Intercollegiate Women’s Tennis Coach of the Year in 1998 and 2007 and has been named the NJCAA Region XVII Coach of the Year 19 times.

ABAC alumnus George T. Smith passed away on August 23 at the age of 93. A member of the Class of 1940, he is the only person in the history of Georgia to win contested elections to all three branches of state government. He was a former Speaker of the House of Representatives, Lieutenant Governor, and Presiding Justice of the Georgia Supreme Court.

Vice President for Fiscal Affairs John Clemens and Physical Plant Director Andy Bihl honored Charles Turner for 40 years of service to ABAC at his retirement party on September 10.

President Bridges announced that the 2010 ABAC freshman class had the highest grade point average of any freshman class in the history of the college with a cumulative GPA of 2.97 on a 4.0 scale. ABAC enrolled 3,284 students during the fall term.

ABAC’s very first Family Weekend event was a tremendous success on October 1-2 at the Georgia Museum of Agriculture and Historic Village. The Georgia Intellectual Capital Partnership Program awarded ABAC a $234,000 grant to assist with the nursing program. Longtime Tifton resident Roger Dill began a two-year term as chair of the ABAC Foundation Board of Trustees on October 1.

Performers at the ABAC building at the Sunbelt Expo were the Bluegrass Band, the Jazz Choir, and the Thundering Herd Pep Band. Public Relations Director Mike Chason received a Legion of Honor award from the Tifton Kiwanis Club on September 28, 2010 for 30 years of service. He was also honored by the Georgia Education Advancement Council on November 18 with a Lifetime Achievement Award at the annual GEAC meeting at St. Simons Island.

ABAC signed an articulation agreement with the University of Florida to ensure a smooth transition for students who begin their careers at ABAC and transfer to the university.

The ABAC women’s soccer team defeated South Georgia 2-1 on October 26 in the first ever state playoff game on the ABAC soccer field. ABAC wound up its season with a 4-0 loss to Georgia Perimeter in the second round but still rolled up a 15-7 record, the most wins in Fillies’ soccer history.

ABAC students held a Campout for the Homeless on the ABAC Lakeside lawn on November 12. They spent the night in cardboard box “homes” and raised money for the Atlanta Children’s Center.

An exhibit at the Georgia Museum of Agriculture spotlighted the carvings collection of C.L. Morehead (Class of ’48). Each piece in the collection was carved by Randy Anthony from Fitzgerald.
Public Relations Assistant Ashley Williamson championed a campaign for ABAC to have its own license plate. After over a year’s worth of work, the first license plates were distributed in November.

William H. “Dink” NeSmith, Jr., a member of the Board of Regents, was the fall 2010 commencement speaker. Cody Seagraves, a forest resources major from Hull, received the Donaldson award.

For the first time ever, Dr. Bridges and his wife, Kim, hosted their annual holiday open house at the National Peanut Museum at the Georgia Museum of Agriculture.

The University System awarded ABAC and Tift County High School a Near Peer Service Learning Program grant to increase access and readiness for the college experience for students at TCHS. Dr. Darby Sewell, Dean of the School of Human Sciences, is the ABAC contact person for the program.

Dr. Eric Cash, faculty advisor for the award-winning ABAC student newspaper, passed away on December 18. Under Cash’s leadership, The Stallion was named the top paper in the state in its category in 2007, 2008, and 2009.

2011

ABAC opened the spring term by cancelling classes on January 10 because of inclement weather, which left the roads in the area iced over. Classes began on January 11.

Matthew Keen, a rural studies major from Nashville, won the $3,000 top award for the William Zimmer Prize in Art Criticism. Dr. Chrystle Ross, Chief Information Officer, announced a new website portal titled “myABAC” which is designed to make web access easier for ABAC students.

Dr. Bridges and Dr. Rod Brown helped forestry and wildlife industry officials saw a log in half as a symbolic start to the announcement of a new bachelor’s degree in Natural Resource Management with majors in Forestry and Wildlife Management on February 10.

Laurel Higginbotham from Baxley was crowned Ms. ABAC 2011. Bernard Green from Tifton was selected as Mr. ABAC 2011. Both students are members of the ABAC Ambassadors.

ABAC Alumni Association award winners at the annual Celebrate ABAC Weekend were Mack Crawford of Zebulon, Distinguished Alumnus; Jodi Rayl Snow from Belle Glade, Fla., Outstanding Young Alumnus; Terry Clark from Moultrie, Master Farmer; Dr. Jerry W. Johnson from Griffin, J. Lamar Branch Award; Suellen Coleman Perry from Moultrie, Outstanding Educator; Mark Mobley from Moultrie, Outstanding Business Leader; Dr. Jay Williams from Albany, Outstanding Health Care Professional; and Alan Kramer from Tifton and Tommy Irvin from Habersham County, Honorary Alumni. The Ollie E. McMillan family from Berrien County also received the Family Legacy Award.
Due to popular demand, the ABAC Alumni Association brought back a “Gee Haw, Whoa Back” rodeo to the Celebrate ABAC Weekend on March 4-5. Grand Ole Opry member Mike Snider headlined the “Evening for ABAC” Foundation scholarship fundraiser at the Museum on March 4.

The School of Science and Mathematics partnered with Georgia Tech through the Regents’ Engineering Program to better facilitate students who begin their engineering degree at ABAC and then transfer to Georgia Tech.

Dr. Bridges placed the 100th Birthday Time Capsule in a compartment in the history room of the renovated Tift Hall on March 8. The capsule was sealed on April 5, 2008 at the 100th birthday celebration at Homecoming.

Dr. Gail Dillard now directs all activities at ABAC on the Square in Moultrie, replacing Kay Powell who expressed a desire to return to the classroom. Dillard was previously the Vice President for Student Affairs. Academic Affairs Vice President Niles Reddick now handles those duties.

Melanie Partlow, assistant professor of mathematics and Quality Enhancement Plan Director at ABAC, received the 2011 Regents’ Teaching Excellence award at the seventh annual Regents’ Awards for Excellence in Education Celebration in Atlanta on March 26.

Ken Newkirk retired on March 31 after 35 years of service directing the Upward Bound Program. The AET Club debuted a new Agco Allis 9650 pulling tractor on March 19. The club also completed renovations to the original ABAC pulling tractor, “Cracker Jack.”

Inductees into the Athletics Hall of Fame included the 1995 national championship women’s softball team, Kyle Farnsworth, Benny Dees, Harley Stewart, and A.B. Malloy. The ceremony was held in the ABAC Lakeside Lobby on April 2. Alan Kramer, Ashley Williamson, and Shirley Wilson coordinated the event. Later on April 2, a new scoreboard for the ABAC Fillies’ softball team was dedicated in a ceremony which honored donors A.B. Malloy, the Spurlin family, and the ABAC Fillies softball alumnas.

Kevin Vantrees, a freshman from Douglasville, was elected president of the ABAC SGA in the spring election. Faculty member Dustin Bass received the Impact Award, and Director of Student Activities Kris Liebegott received the SGA President’s Award.

Michael Arena from Fitzgerald was selected as the top academic student at ABAC during the Honors Day ceremony when he was named the J.G. Woodroof Scholar. Faculty-staff award winners were Donna Hatcher, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Award for Teaching Excellence; Dr. Amy Willis, Roy R. Jackson, Sr., Award for Staff Excellence; Dr. Ray Barber, E. Lanier Carson Award for administrators; and Dr. Mary Ellen Hicks, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Excellence in Advising Award. Retirement plaques were presented to Stephanie Holcombe, Ken Newkirk, Jerry Edwards, Dr. Larry McGruder, and Mike Chason.
Most Valuable Player Chanel Cunningham led the Fillies to their 18th consecutive Region XVII state tennis championship on April 22. The Stallions also won the men’s title. Alan Kramer was named Coach of the Year for both women’s and men’s tennis in the state. The Fillies finished fifth, and the Stallions wound up eighth in their respective national tournaments.

Dustin Bass, instructor of agricultural business, was named the National Outstanding Advisor by the National Agri-Business Association in Kansas City. The ABAC Cattlemen’s Club won the College Aggies Online Scholarship Competition of the Animal Agriculture Alliance.

The ABAC English Department in the School of Liberal Arts won the Diana Hacker Outstanding Programs in English award at the 2011 Conference on College Composition and Communication ceremony.

Governor Nathan Deal was the guest speaker at the spring commencement ceremony. Cain Thurmond from Jefferson received the Donaldson Award. Thirty-one students received bachelor’s degrees, the largest number ever to receive bachelor’s degrees at an ABAC commencement.

Kristen Ray from Alma was one of six students nationwide selected to serve on the Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America Leadership Training Team. Ben Bennett from Valdosta received the Presidential Scholarship for 2011-12. He is the state FFA president.

Dr. Darby Sewell, Dean of the School of Human Sciences, graduated from the University System of Georgia Executive Leadership Institute.

The ABAC Chamber Singers performed at Lincoln Center in New York City on May 30. Dr. Susan Roe directs the group.

Mike Chason retired as the Director of Public Relations at ABAC on May 31, 2011. He began his ABAC career on May 15, 1979. Ashley Williamson was named Interim Director of Public Relations. Chason returned to the college to work in a part time capacity with the public relations office on July 1.

Governor Nathan Deal’s signature on the state budget allows ABAC to continue work on the historic front of campus project with $3.25 million in the budget to further the rehabilitation of Tift Hall, Lewis Hall, and Herring Hall.

ABAC unveiled a Bachelor of Science degree with a major in Biology in a press conference on June 9 in Evans Hall. Dr. Ray Barber, Dean of the School of Science and Mathematics, made the announcement.

The Natural Resources Conservation Workshop celebrated its 50th anniversary with its annual camp at ABAC on June 5-9. President Bridges attended the camp when he was a high school student in his first visit ever to ABAC.

Dr. Chrystle Ross retired on June 15 from her position of Chief Information Officer. She served the college in a variety of roles since her first day on the job on September 10, 1979.
Fireworks lit up the skies over the Georgia Museum of Agriculture and Historic Village on July 2 for the annual Independence Day Celebration at the site. Country music artist Kevin Sport headlined a concert that evening. It was the 35th anniversary of the founding of the museum, known originally as the Agrirama. A 400-pound cake made to resemble the Museum’s steam train was designed to feed over 600 people.

Four athletes at ABAC were selected for NJCAA Exemplary Academic Achievement Awards. They included Alexander Byrd from Byron on the baseball team, Case Gard from Lakeland, Fla., on the golf team, Charles Griffin, Jr., from Tifton on the men’s tennis team, and Darylanne Thompson from Perry on the softball team.

The U.S. Department of Education named ABAC as one of America’s Most Affordable Colleges in July. Tuition and fees for the 2009-10 year at ABAC were $2,696, well below the national average of $6,397.

Shawn Thomas was named the new Director of Student Financial Services on July 5. Dr. Jeff Newberry was selected to serve as the new faculty advisor to the student newspaper, The Stallion. He also advises the ABAC literary magazine, Pegasus.

Beth Bland Oleson (Class of ’99) was the guest speaker at the annual Freshman Convocation, which was moved to a Sunday afternoon for the first time on August 14.

The State Traditional Arts Research Archive is now on loan to ABAC and makes available to the community over 3,000 items including photos, videos, sound recordings, books, and research field notes.

Dr. Brian Ray spent the summer in London as a co-site director for the USG European Council for its England Summer Study Abroad Program.

Dr. Bobbie Robinson and Dr. John Farrar were selected for the USG Executive Leadership Institute. Van McGriff retired after 26 years at ABAC. Tarrah Mirus became the ABAC Registrar on September 1.

ABAC enrolled 3,248 students for the 2011 fall semester.

Former President Jimmy Carter cut the ribbon for an exhibit on his life at the Georgia Museum of Agriculture and Historic Village on October 8. The visit by Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, was the first time that a former U.S. President had ever been on the ABAC campus.

Melissa Johnson set the ABAC record for goals scored in a soccer season with 31 and was named the National Junior College Athletic Association Player of the Week. Attila Szekes was named the new general manager of Sodexo and Plant Operations at ABAC.

ABAC set the American record for the largest game of hide-and-seek on November 9 with 419 students participating. Dr. Niles Reddick was honored by the College of Arts and Sciences at Valdosta State University as an Outstanding Alumnus in the area of Philosophy.
Melvin Merrill received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Georgia Education Advancement Council at its annual meeting at the Brasstown Valley Resort on November 17, 2011. Merrill joined the ABAC administration on July 1, 1978 as Director of Development. He is now Director of Capital Planning.

AT&T Georgia presented ABAC with $2,500 to be used for the scholarship program. An ABAC team of Rural Studies students finished second in the USG Social Business and Microcredit Forum. Professor Muhammad Yunus, a former Nobel Prize recipient, judged the competition. Former ABAC President Stanley Anderson passed away on November 26, 2011. He served as president from 1975 through 1985.

Dr. Zsuzanna Boegre, a Fulbright Scholar from Hungary, will teach classes at ABAC during the fall and spring terms.

Medal of Honor recipient and retired Major General of the Marine Corps James Livingston was the fall commencement speaker on December 9. William Rogers from Brunswick received the Donaldson Award.

Sigma Alpha will become the first sorority on the ABAC campus on January 20, 2012. ABAC student Randi Walden received a Wine and Spirits Wholesalers scholarship worth $2,776. Marie Davis was named the interim director of the Baldwin Library.

2012

The Georgia Museum of Agriculture and Historic Village kicked off the new year with an exhibit titled “Tea for Three”, featuring the works of Mary Ann Cox, Dr. Vincent Keesee (longtime ABAC faculty member), and Anthony Scheffler.

ABAC enrolled 3,002 students for the 2012 spring semester.

Ashley Williamson Mock (married C.J. Mock on November 12, 2011) was named Director of Public Relations on February 1. Mock had been serving as Interim Director of Public Relations since the retirement of Mike Chason on June 1, 2011. Prior to that time she had been the Public Relations Assistant since June 19, 2007.

Keaton Griner, a sophomore Family and Consumer Sciences major from Moultrie, followed in her mother’s footsteps and won the Ms. ABAC title on February 23. Griner’s mother, Monika, won the title in 1987. Ironically, Mike Chason was the emcee for both events.

A play written by ABAC alumna Melita Easters (Class of ’74) served as the annual Evening for ABAC scholarship fundraiser on March 2. The one-woman show titled Mrs. John Marsh—The World Knew Her As Margaret Mitchell told the story of the reclusive author’s life before and after she became a publishing sensation with her novel, Gone With The Wind.

ABAC Alumni Association award winners at the “Celebrate ABAC” ceremony on March 3 included Cook Holliday of Monroe, Distinguished Alumnus; Nancy Gurley Jenkins of Moultrie,
Helen Brown Sasser Award; Barbara Grogan of Americus, Outstanding Young Alumnus; Von G. Peavy of Moultrie, J. Lamar Branch Award; Dr. Mary Ellen Hicks of Sycamore, Outstanding Educator; John Redding of Monroe, Outstanding Business Leader; and Garth Webb from Tifton, Honorary Alumnus. The Johnie Clark family from Colquitt County received the Family Legacy Award.

The “Peanuts, Mules, and Presidents” exhibit at the Museum Gallery received an excellence in planning award from the Georgia Association of Museums and Galleries.

Inductees for the 2012 Athletics Hall of Fame on March 3 were Greg Tanner, coach of the 1995 national championship softball team; longtime men’s basketball coach Donnie Veal, who led the Stallions to the state championship in 1982; tennis star Jean Francoise Lagloire, who won consecutive national championships at number one singles; William E. Batton, captain of the 1950 men’s basketball team; and the players on the 1996 national championship softball team, coached by Donna Campbell.

ABAC instituted a Near Peer program with Colquitt County High School (CCHS) which allowed five ABAC students to serve as mentors to CCHS students. Natalie Sconiers, Hannah Saunders, Tevores Sumlin, Carrie Carnes, and Candace Jackson were selected for the program.

The ABAC Bass Fishing team took first place in a tournament at Logan Martin Lake (Ala.). Matt O’Dillon and Jake Holloway led the way for ABAC.

ABAC took its college experience on the road on March 27 for a special student recruitment event at the Georgia National Fairgrounds in Perry.

Zebb Luster, a senior Diversified Agriculture major from Ft. Myers, Fla., won the Mr. ABAC title on March 29.

Award recipients at the Honors Day ceremony on April 11 were Dr. Sandra Giles, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Award for Teaching Excellence; Nancy Brannen, Roy R. Jackson, Sr., Award for Staff Excellence; Alan Kramer, E. Lanier Carson Leadership Award for College Administrators; and Amanda Urquhart, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Excellence in Advising Award. Brenda Doss received the J.G. Woodroof Scholar award presented to the top academic student at ABAC.

Dr. Jeff Gibbs, Dr. Ray Barber, and Joy Shurley retired at the end of the spring term with a combined 77 years of service to ABAC.

The women’s tennis team won its 19th consecutive state championship on April 21. The Stallions also won the state title. Alan Kramer was named Coach of the Year in the state for both men’s and women’s tennis. The Stallions finished seventh in the national tournament, and the Fillies wound up 11th in national play.

Dr. John Farrar and Dr. Bobbie Robinson graduated from the University System of Georgia Executive Leadership Institute.
The ABAC golf team won the state championship on April 21. Herb Hendrix was named Coach of the Year. The Stallions finished 12th in the national tournament.

The ABAC student newspaper presented Pacesetter Awards on April 25 to Bernice Hughes, Laquincia Brown, Penny Chesnut, Savannah Carter, Dr. Erin Campbell, Woody Leonard, Stephen Aaron, Austin Flanders and Dr. Chase Hagood. A Superior Pacesetter award went to Huong Pham.

Dr. Chris Kinsey received the SGA President’s Award, and Judy Perry received the SGA Impact Award at the Student Leadership Banquet on April 25. Stephen Aaron was sworn in as the President of the SGA for 2012-13.

Georgia Commissioner of Agriculture Gary Black was the speaker for the spring commencement ceremony on May 4. Randi Walden, a Diversified Agriculture major from Stockbridge, received the Donaldson Award.

Personnel in the offices of the President, Public Relations, Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Vice President for Planning and Operations moved back to Tift Hall on May 14. The building had been vacated in 2007 to prepare for renovation. President David Bridges announced that former public relations director Mike Chason had been granted emeritus status by the University System of Georgia on June 1. ABAC enrolled 1,051 students for the 2012 summer term.

Jodie Rayl Snow (Class of 2000) began duties on June 11 as the Chief Operating Officer of the ABAC Foundation. As a student, she was the recipient of the J.G. Woodroof Scholar award and the George P. Donaldson award. Dr. Joseph Brown was named as a Governor’s Teaching Fellow. Brown is an assistant professor of English in the School of Liberal Arts.

Vice President for External Affairs and Advancement and Chief Development Officer Keith Barber left ABAC to become the Vice Chancellor for Development for the Institute of Agriculture and the University of Tennessee Foundation on July 1. President David Bridges named Paul Willis the Vice President for External Affairs and Chief of Staff, effective July 1. Lindsey Roberts (Class of ’09) joined the staff as Public Relations Assistant on July 9.

Jacob Tompkins from the tennis team, Kelby Barber from the baseball team, and Aleisha Edenfield from the softball team received NJCAA Academic Student-Athlete awards. Mark “Dill” Driscoll and his wife, Susan, were named Deans of the ABAC School of Business on July 1. Marketing pioneers whose work spans 80 countries and five continents, the Driscolls have started many companies including the global marketing agency, “ignition”.

As a part of the Tift Hall renovation, information panels detailing the history of ABAC were installed on July 26-27 by Murphy & Orr Exhibits from Atlanta. Dr. Lisa Lishman and Mike Chason headed up the project. Lishman, curator at the Georgia Museum of Agriculture, spent many hours examining the ABAC archives in the Baldwin Library. She gathered information and memorabilia for the information panels on display in The History Room in Tift Hall. Lishman and Chason examined pictures, checked facts, and proof read the panels for the Tift
Hall lobby, The History Room, the Arts Alcove and the President’s Alcove on the second floor of Tift Hall, and eight Student Life panels on the first floor. Chason also researched and prepared information for small panels attached to each presidential portrait in the Presidential Gallery on Tift Hall’s second floor. Chason edited and Lishman designed a hard cover book titled *The Presidents* which was released as a part of the rededication of the front campus ceremony on March 1, 2013.

After a summer-long renovation, the new look Donaldson Dining Hall opened on August 6. Dr. Sandra Giles (Class of ’87) was the guest speaker at the annual Freshman Convocation ceremony in Gressette Gym on August 12.

ABAC began the fall semester on August 13 with a 30 per cent increase in the number of students majoring in baccalaureate degrees over the fall term of 2011. “These programs will shape the institution’s future for the next 100 years,” President David Bridges said. A total of 3,227 students enrolled for the fall term. The ABAC Public Relations Office and the ABAC Ambassadors began a new initiative by selling “Welcome Back ABAC Students” signs to local businesses. The green-and-gold signs dotted the Tifton landscape.

Dr. Brian Ray was named the new Theatre Director and Director of the Baldwin Players in the School of Liberal Arts. Dr. Cynthia Hall was selected as the new Director of the Honors Program. Traci Bryan was named Director of Student Financial Services.

President David Bridges, Melvin Merrill and Mike Chason visited Mary Threatte (Class of ’32) on her 99th birthday on August 22 in Lakeland, Ga. She is one of ABAC’s oldest living alumni. Threatte attended ABAC when it was called the Georgia State College For Men in 1932. Her husband, Jim, was also a GSCM alumnus (Class of ’32). He passed away on ABAC’s 100th birthday on February 20, 2008. Mrs. Threatte passed away on October 18, 2013. Chason was one of the speakers at a service celebrating her life on October 21 at the Threatte Center in Lakeland.

ABAC students gained another hands-on learning opportunity in September with the acquisition of a rare pitcher plant bog in Turner County. One half of the 8.74 acre tract was donated by Fitzgerald native Ben Mills, and the other half of the property was purchased by the ABAC Foundation with the help of several local conservationists including Dan and Ellen Corrie, Dr. and Mrs. Richard F. Davis, Brenda and Keith Douce, Lisa M. Kruse, Freda W. Massey, Karan Rawlins, Dr. Patricia Timper, Dr. and Mrs. Joseph M. Turner, Dr. Bret B. Wagenhorst, Julie Sharpe, and the Georgia Native Plant Society.

The School of Business began a new speakers’ series for students with Erik Daniels, Executive Vice President of Ronald Blue & Company. ABAC students Caitlin Rodgers and Kirsten Duncan partnered with ABAC President David Bridges and his wife, Kim, and Business School Deans Dill and Susan Driscoll to represent ABAC in the Game Ball Relay at the University of Georgia on September 1.
The Valdosta Symphony Orchestra kicked off the ABAC Arts Connection series titled “ABAC Presents”. Other performances in the series included Mike Wiley in “Dar He: The Story of Emmett Till,” Madame Butterfly by the Peach State Opera Company and the Vega String Quartet. Rural Studies students traveled to Pelham for a project to develop a plan for the use, funding, and marketing of the newly restored Hand Trading Company building. A one-man play by Dr. Brian Ray opened an exhibit at the Georgia Museum of Agriculture and Historic Village on the 150th anniversary of the signing of the Morrill Act.

ABAC had an economic impact of $281,563,172 on Tift County and the surrounding area according to a study by the University System of Georgia. Dr. Jeff Gibbs helped to analyze the information to determine ABAC’s total impact.

After 38 years of service to ABAC in the Computer Center and Business Office, Patsy Hembree (Class of ’74) retired in September. The WPLH radio tower and antenna were removed from the top of the J. Lamar Branch Student Center on October 2 after an estimated 44 years on top of the building. WPLH Advisor Keith Perry said a new tower will be installed atop the ABAC water tower.


Troy Spicer was selected as the Interim Dean of the School of Nursing and Health Sciences. Wanda Golden will continue to teach classes and serve as an outreach liaison. Six ABAC Turfgrass and Golf Course Management majors assisted with the McGladrey Classic at St. Simons Island on October 17-21.

Nikita Morris from Norfolk, England became the first ABAC soccer player to ever be named Player of the Year for the Georgia Collegiate Athletic Conference. Morris set the ABAC record for goals scored in a season with 34. She was also an All-Conference first team selection and an NJCAA All-America selection. The Fillies ended their season with a 12-8 record and advanced to the semifinal round of the state playoffs.

Jeff Kilgore was named interim coach of the Stallions’ baseball team, replacing Steve Janousek who moved to a full time faculty position in the School of Human Sciences. Kilgore had been the assistant coach since 2010.

In the first press conference ever held in The History Room in Tift Hall on November 7, President David Bridges announced that the college would honor ABAC’s largest benefactor by naming the business school the Stafford School of Business. DeNean Stafford, III, made remarks for the family at the ceremony, and Dill and Susan Driscoll, co-deans of the Stafford School of Business, talked about their plans for the future.

Director Alton Hudgins was held in the Chapel on November 20. Hudgins also coached the women’s tennis team and the women’s volleyball team during his ABAC career. He passed away on November 16. Faculty member Cathy Rogers retired in December after 22 years at ABAC.

ABAC alumna Niki Knox (Class of 2000), senior community economic development consultant for the Georgia Electric Membership Corporations, was the guest speaker at the fall commencement ceremony. Justin Gilliard from Nicholls, who earned his bachelor’s degree in diversified agriculture, received the George P. Donaldson Award. The Wildlife Society received the 2012 Southeastern Section of the Wildlife Society Student Chapter of the Year award at the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies conference in Hot Springs, Ark.

2013

The ABAC Jazz Ensemble was selected to perform at the International Jazz Educators Network Conference in Atlanta on January 4. Diane Jackson retired in January after 12 years at ABAC. ABAC implemented a new identification policy on January 14 to increase safety on campus. ABAC students, faculty, and staff are now required to clearly display their identification cards at nights and on weekends and holidays while on the campus.

Seven new trustees joined the ABAC Foundation on January 14. They included James Lee Adams, Jr., from Camilla; Greg Goggans from Douglas; James Holcombe from Savannah; Niki Knox from Peachtree City; John W. Langdale, III, from Valdosta; James H. Moore, III, from Albany; and Jim Sparks from Hendersonville, N.C.

Because of the dishwater gray skies, the first light of dawn came late to the campus of ABAC on January 17. But just as the eastern sky began to show its first glimmer of sunshine, a yellow Patten Seed/Super Sod Company tractor-trailer load of gigantic rolls of TifBlair centipede sod pulled to a stop on Moore Highway squaring up with the front lawn of the campus.

Before the truck had time to even settle in its tracks, a fork lift operator began lifting the rolls off the trailer onto the ground so that personnel from Landscape Associates in Tifton could begin the task of carpeting ABAC’s front yard with what Dr. Wayne Hanna calls the “most improved and only certified centipedegrass cultivar on the market.” It was developed in Tifton jointly by the University of Georgia and the United States Department of Agriculture Agricultural Research Service.

“It has superior seedling vigor and improved tolerance to low soil pH and cold temperatures,” Hanna, a longtime researcher at the Coastal Plain Experiment Station, said. “It prefers lower fertility and adapts well to dry conditions.”

Patten Seed/Super Sod President Ben Copeland, a 1964 graduate of ABAC, said 13 tractor-trailer loads of the sod, which will cover 130,000 square feet, arrived on the ABAC campus in a span of two days from the company’s fields in Lakeland, Ga. Copeland said TifGrand and Emerald will
also be used on the ABAC front lawn to enhance an already spectacular view of Tift Hall, Lewis Hall, and Herring Hall.

ABAC President David Bridges received the John Hunt Entrepreneur of the Year Award at the annual Tifton/Tift County Chamber of Commerce Banquet on January 24. Hunt was an ABAC alumnus who was also a member of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia.

J.T. Turner Construction Company employees lifted the new bronze Stallion Statue into place between the Student Center and Tift Hall on January 29, 2013. The statue weighs over 1,000 pounds. The aluminum Stallion Statue will be stored in the physical plant and used for special occasions such as the Expo. The Peach State Opera Company performed *Madame Butterfly* in Howard Auditorium on January 31 as a part of the “ABAC Presents” performing arts series.

*U.S. News & World Report* named ABAC one of the top public schools in the South Region of the United States in its annual “Best Colleges’ ranking. ABAC was ranked 14th in the poll. The Gallery at the Georgia Museum of Agriculture and Historic Village opened an exhibit titled “Dodd’s Cosmos” on February 1, featuring renowned Georgia artist Lamar Dodd. The pieces of art came from the collection of ABAC alumnus C. L. Morehead (Class of ’48).

Jimmy Harper (Class of ’07) was named interim registrar at ABAC on February 1. He replaced Tarrah Mirus, who left ABAC to take a position in Albany. Ashley Mock and Lindsey Roberts worked with Athens Social Media for six months to develop a new web site for ABAC. After many days of intense scrutiny, the new web site opened on February 3.

Plum Creek forester Rob Hicks presented a check for $9,982 from the Plum Creek Foundation to Dr. Rod Brown to fund new equipment and software license purchases for the forestry program.

ABAC sponsored 10 recruiting events around the state in February and March titled “ABAC In Your Town”. Counties involved included Tift, Houston, Colquitt, Coffee, Irwin, Ben Hill, Henry, Gwinnett, Thomas, Floyd, and Lowndes. Students from the School of Human Sciences partnered with the admissions office to contact 875 prospective students in a February calling campaign.

The top three academic students at Tiftarea Academy announced they were planning to attend ABAC. Valedictorian Caitlyn Morehead of Ocilla, Salutatorian Tiffany Tanner of Ty Ty, and Katy Johnson of Chula had their picture made with ABAC President David Bridges.

ABAC Foundation Chief Operating Office Jodie Snow and Honors Program Director Cynthia Hall presented Ashley Childs and Kira Carreira with $1,000 scholarships at the first ever Stallion Scholars Evening.

The ABAC Chapter of the Cattlemen’s Association was named the Georgia Cattlemen’s Association Chapter of the Year. Dr. Mary Ellen Hicks was the advisor for the club.

Kristen Ray, a junior Rural Studies major from Waycross, was crowned Ms. ABAC in the 44th annual contest on February 28.
Director of Public Relations Ashley Mock coordinated the Historic Front Campus Rededication Ceremony on March 1. As a build-up to the historic day, Murphy and Orr representatives returned to Tift Hall on January 30 and February 13 to complete the hanging of the historic panels, and Fitzgerald sculptor Randy Anthony delivered the busts of Abraham Baldwin and Henry Harding Tift to Tift Hall on February 26. The two busts were each carved from 500-pound blocks of Georgia Marble. Each bust weighs about 250 pounds, and the Georgia Marble pedestals on which they rest weigh 800 pounds each.

A reception was held for family members and special friends of George T. Smith on February 28 to open the George Thornewell Smith Parlor in Tift Hall. President David Bridges talked about Smith in a special ceremony in The History Room as a part of the evening. Other guests including Judge John Ellington (Class of ’80) shared poignant stories about Smith and his remarkable life. Nationally known portrait artist June Elizabeth Blackstock was on hand for the unveiling of her portrait of Smith from his days as Lieutenant Governor of Georgia. Smith’s widow, Joan, unveiled the portrait. Smith, a 1940 ABAC graduate, remains the only Georgian to win contested elections to all three branches of state government. He was Lieutenant Governor, Speaker of the House, and Presiding Justice of the Georgia Supreme Court.

Ashley Mock, Lindsey Roberts, and Mike Chason collaborated on the pictures and information on the Smith historic panels which now hang in the Smith Parlor. The Parlor includes a replica of a lawyer’s desk with nameplates from Smith’s years in state government and a story, picture, and cup from an ABAC episode in Smith’s life when he showed a prize-winning bull with the name of “Ferdinand.”

A clear and cold blue sky greeted the crowd of over 300 persons at the Front Campus Rededication Ceremony which began at 1:30 p.m. on March 1 on the front steps of Tift Hall. President David Bridges presided over the event which included the presentation of colors by the Marine Color Guard from Albany, the National Anthem by ABAC voice performance major Joseph Bishop, the Pledge of Allegiance by Police Chief Bryan Golden, and the invocation by Dr. Joseph Njoroge, professor of political science and religion.

ABAC Alumni Association President George Granade (Class of ’74) led the list of speakers followed by Director of Capital Planning Melvin Merrill, Greenline Architecture President Monica Matrianni, and J.T. Turner Construction Company Chief Operating Officer Tripp Turner. UGA Senior Vice President for External Affairs Tom Landrum offered remarks on the life of Abraham Baldwin, and Tommy Tift, grandson of Henry Harding Tift, talked about the Tift family. Bridges spoke on behalf of the college, and University System of Georgia Chancellor Hank Huckaby spoke on behalf of the System.

As a part of the ceremony, President Bridges directed three alumni, Cathy Cox (Class of ’78), A.J. Powell (Class of ’40), and Mamie Ethel Talley (Class of ’28) to ring the original bell that was on the campus in 1908 that summoned students to class and signaled the change of classes. At the age of 103, Talley could be ABAC’s oldest alumnus.
Ashley Mock tied the green-and-gold ribbon to the two newest pillars on the front porch of Tift Hall for the traditional ribbon-cutting. The two white pillars were made from Redwood trees from Washington. Tift Hall had four pillars in 1908 but sometime in the 1940s, two of the pillars were removed because of water damage. The two new pillars were added during the renovation.

After the cutting of the ribbon, everyone entered a renovated Tift Hall which looked quite a bit different than the structure did at its original opening on February 20, 1908. Former faculty members Rosalyn Donaldson, Gary Roberts and Hal Henderson conducted tours of the various areas of the building with assistance from Michelle Reddick, wife of Academic Affairs Vice President Niles Reddick; Kris Chason, wife of Director of Public Relations Emeritus Mike Chason; and the newly crowned Ms. ABAC, Kristen Ray.

Other events during the afternoon included the open house at Herring Hall, which now includes offices for admissions, human resources, and the business office. Members of the Stafford family were on hand for the opening of the Stafford School of Business at 3 p.m. in Lewis Hall. This ceremony also included the unveiling of a special painting by renowned artist, Steve Penley, which focused on the many faces of ABAC. A limited number of prints of the painting were made available for a contribution through the ABAC Foundation to the Stafford School of Business.

“MainStream” performed for ABAC students in The Meadows on the night of March 1. On the south side of the campus, many supporters of ABAC enjoyed the ABAC Jazz Band at the annual Evening for ABAC in Gressette Gym followed by a special tour of Tift Hall. Retired faculty member Leon Benefield portrayed Captain Tift on the back steps of Tift Hall to welcome the group. Fireworks over Tift Hall ended one of the most spectacular days in the history of ABAC.

ABAC Alumni Association award winners at the annual awards brunch at the Georgia Museum of Agriculture and Historic Village conference room on March 2 included C. L. Morehead, Jr., of Athens, Distinguished Alumnus; Sonya Dale Martin Aldridge of Pavo, Helen Brown Sasser Award; Catrina Kennedy Pollard from Waynesboro, Outstanding Young Alumnus; Elzie Argene Claxton of Perry, J. Lamar Branch Award; Ann Graham from Tifton, Outstanding Educator; Jeff Sinyard from Albany, Outstanding Business Leader; Patricia Barber from Tifton, Outstanding Health Care; Greg Crumley from Tifton, Master Farmer; and Jeff Gibbs from Tifton, Honorary Alumnus. The Grady and Mary Ann Medford Family from Eldorado received the Family Legacy Award.

Inductees for the 2013 class of the ABAC Athletics Hall of Fame in Gressette Gym on March 2 included members of the 1999 national championship men’s tennis team; Henry Will Jones from the 1936-37 baseball, basketball, and football teams; women’s basketball coach Julie Conner; baseball player Z.B. Hamilton, and tennis player Derrick Racine. The “Gee Haw, Who Back” rodeo brought alumni and friends back to the rodeo arena that evening and concluded on the afternoon of March 3.

ABAC President David Bridges accompanied members of the Student Government Association and the Political Science Club to Atlanta on March 7 to meet with Governor Nathan Deal,
Senator John Crosby, Senator Tyler Harper, Representative Penny Houston, Representative Jay Roberts, and Representative Sam Watson. Harper, Roberts, and Watson are ABAC alumni. Also attending from ABAC were Dr. Chris Kinsey, Dr. Hans Schmeisser, and Dr. Joseph Njoroge.

The Baldwin Players, under the direction of Dr. Brian Ray, presented The Glass Menagerie on March 7-9 in Howard Auditorium. Personnel moves at ABAC in March included Elaine Auger as the new marketing assistant at the Museum, Vonda Fenn (Class of ’85) as the program coordinator for the School of Agriculture and Natural Resources, and Lynda Fisher as the new assistant director of advancement.

The ABAC Bass Fishing Team ranked 16th in the nation in the latest Cabella’s Association of Collegiate Anglers poll. ABAC’s competition includes over 100 NCAA Division I universities. The ABAC Forestry Club and Society of American Foresters Student Chapter were accepted into the National Association of Southern Forestry Clubs by a unanimous vote. The national organization presented the ABAC club with a cross cut saw valued at $1,400 upon acceptance.

Logan Layne, a freshman rural studies major from Manning, S.C., won the Mr. ABAC competition on March 28. The Georgia Museum of Agriculture and Historic Village at ABAC welcomed over 700 visitors at the annual Folklife Festival on April 6.

The ABAC golf team finished second in the state tournament. Freshman Robbie Johnson earned All-Tournament honors and participated in the national tournament in Lubbock, Texas.


The Pegasus literary magazine celebrated its 40th year with a reading and reception at the annual George Scott Day Celebration of the Arts on April 18 and a Ruby Celebration on April 19 at the Peanut Museum at the Georgia Museum of Agriculture and Historic Village. Former faculty advisors Andrea Savage and Herbert Shippey were featured in a tribute in the 40th edition by student editor Angelo Smith. The Pegasus began in 1973 under the faculty leadership of Helen Strickland and Tom Liner and the student leadership of Ronnie Wheeler. Current advisors are Dr. Sandra Giles, Dr. Jeff Newberry, and Diantha Ellis.

ABAC’s award-winning student newspaper, The Stallion, extends Pacesetter recognition annually to those who have worked for ABAC through their actions and exemplary service. Pacesetters are chosen from the student body, the administration, the faculty, and the staff who, through their hard work, talent, and devotion, embody the spirit of the college.

The 2013 faculty and staff Pacesetter recipients included Dill and Susan Driscoll, Deans of the Stafford School of Business; Donna Webb, Director of Enrollment Management for the Office of Admissions; Nicholas Urquhart, Lead Academic Support Counselor for the Office of Academic Support; and Mary White, custodian in the Branch Student Center and Herring Hall.
Efrain Ruiz, a diversified agriculture major from Whitmire, S.C., received the Superior Pacesetter. The Superior Pacesetter is given to the person who students believe has done the most for the college during the year while exemplifying leadership and service to the campus.

Student Pacesetters included Suzanne Black, a diversified agriculture major from Clermont, Fla.; Devin Gibbs, a rural studies - writing and communication major from Doerun; Sue Mastrario, a rural studies – business and economic development major from Ashburn; Luis Mendez, a business administration major from Lizella; Jacob Nyhuis, a diversified agriculture major from Montverde, Fla.; and Kristen Ray, a rural studies – social and community affairs major from Waycross.

In the SGA spring election, Melissa Escobar was selected as the 2013-14 student body president. Both ABAC tennis teams finished second in the state tournament. The Fillies ended a string of 19 consecutive state titles. The Stallions finished 9th out of 26 teams in the national tournament in Plano, Texas. The Fillies did not participate in the national tournament.

At the annual Honors Day ceremony on April 24, 2013, Dr. Mary Ellen Hicks, Professor of Animal Science, received the W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Award for Teaching Excellence. Ernest Kelly, Senior Systems Administrator in the Office of Information Technology, was honored with the Roy R. Jackson, Sr., Award for Staff Excellence. Dr. Tim Marshall, Dean of the School of Agriculture and Natural Resources, received the E. Lanier Carson Leadership Award for College Administrators, and Lorie Felton, Associate Professor of Environmental Horticulture, received the W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Excellence in Advising Award. At the same ceremony, Sarah A. Rooks, a junior biology major from Ashburn, was selected as the J.G. Woodroof Scholar.

Six retirees were honored, and service awards were presented to 46 other employees at a picnic outside Gressette Gym after the Honors Day Ceremony. Retirees included Patricia Barber, Patsy Hembree, Dr. John Galyean, Bobby Mathis, Catherine Rogers, and Teresa Williams. Barber, an associate professor of nursing in the School of Nursing and Health Sciences, had 32 years of service. Hembree, the Information Services Coordinator for the Business Office, had 38 years of service, and Galyean, an associate professor of speech and theatre, was a faculty member for 14 years in the School of Liberal Arts.

Mathis, a staff member at the Forest Lakes Golf Course, had 31 years at ABAC. Rogers, an associate professor of reading, was a faculty member for 22 years in the School of Liberal Arts. Williams, the Senior Administrative Assistant in the Stafford School of Business, had 28 years at ABAC.

Melvin Merrill and Mike Williams were each honored for 35 years of service to the college. A 30-year service award went to Bobbie Baldree.

Jimmy Felton, Lori Felton, Alan Kramer, and Vicki Walker were recognized for 20 years of service to ABAC. Honored for 15 years of service were JoAnn Brannen, Nancy Brannen, Brenda
Doss, Bernice Hughes, Donna King, Melanie Partlow, Lori Pearman, Kay Powell, and Kim Talley.

Recognized for 10 years of service were Robert Carpenter, Robin Crumley, Dr. James Galt-Brown, Javier Gonzalez, Jokabeth Gutierrez, Mouyyed Hassouna, Todd Hicks, Rhonda Lewis, Dr. Barnabe Miburo, Alan Murphy, Keith Perry, Dr. Doris Roundtree, Reba Selph, and Troy Spicer.

Recognized for five years of service were Tonia Carpenter, Todd Daunhauer, Marie Davis, Dr. Susan Farmer, Gay Hodge, Holly Lawrence, Dr. Lisa Lishman, Ana Martinez, Dr. James McCrimmon, Ashley Mock, Dr. Niles Reddick, Theresa Ryan, Shawn Seat, Lawrence Shepherd, Vicki Sherling, and Amy Warren.

ABAC celebrated Arbor Day on April 26 by planting two Weeping Willow trees on the shore of Lake Baldwin.

ABAC faculty member Abul Sheikh was the first person to drive a vehicle on the new four-lane road on April 29 which connects Highway 41 to Moore Highway in front of ABAC. ABAC President David Bridges and ABAC Foundation President Roger Dill worked extensively to get the road changed from two lanes to four lanes.

United States Congressman and Tifton native Austin Scott was the guest speaker at the spring commencement ceremony in Gressette Gym on May 3. Of the 217 graduates participating in the ceremony, a total of 48 students received bachelor’s degrees including the first ABAC bachelor’s degrees ever awarded in Natural Resource Management (Forestry), Natural Resource Management (Wildlife) and Biology.

Elisabeth O’Quinn, a rural studies – business and economic development major from Fitzgerald, received the prestigious George P. Donaldson award at the ceremony. O’Quinn became the first Summa Cum Laude graduate in the history of ABAC with a grade point average of 3.94 on a 4.0 scale. To be eligible for the Summa Cum Laude distinction, graduates must complete a bachelor’s degree. ABAC awarded its first bachelor’s degree in 2009.

The ceremony was the first ever at ABAC to require tickets for admission. Each graduate could request seven tickets to the event. The ceremony was also broadcast live on television by Plant Telecommunications. A special live feed was also viewed by the overflow crowd in Howard Auditorium.

The Stafford School of Business partnered with State Farm Insurance agents Chad Sumner (Class of ’89) and Brent Dixon to place students in the State Farm Intern Program. Weltner Hall emptied in May when the ABAC Police Department moved to Evans Hall, the Office of Multicultural Education moved to Conger Hall, and the South Region Agricultural Education Office moved to the Chambliss Building. Due to a lack of interest by students during the 2012 Maymester, the college did not offer Maymester classes in 2013.
ABAC alumnus Thomas “Boo” Weekley (Class of ’93) won the Crowne Plaza Invitational at Colonial PGA tournament in Fort Worth, Texas on May 26. He received over $1.1 million for his third win on the PGA Tour. He also won at Harbour Town in 2007 and 2008.

ABAC enrolled 936 students for the 2013 summer term. Jeff Kilgore was named Head Coach of the ABAC baseball team on June 3 after serving as interim coach during the past year when the Stallions compiled a record of 21-27. Before June came to an end, Kilgore resigned the head coach’s job to take the head coaching job at his alma mater, Emmanuel College. The search for a new baseball coach began anew. High school students from 75 Georgia counties attended the annual Natural Resources Conservation Workshop at ABAC on June 9-13. President David Bridges stepped on the ABAC campus for the first time when he was a Natural Resources camper in the 1970s.

ABAC representatives including Dr. Tim Marshall and Donna Webb visited the FFA/FCCLA camp in Covington once a week during the summer to speak to potential ABAC students. Congressman Austin Scott wore an ABAC baseball jersey and cap during the annual Congressional baseball game in June between the Republicans and the Democrats in Washington D.C.

Georgia Power Company Area Manager Lynn Lovett presented a check for $3,000 to ABAC Foundation Chief Operating Officer Jodie Snow for the general scholarship fund on June 13. Dr. Johnny Evans assumed the position of Dean of the School of Science and Mathematics on July 1. He was a professor of chemistry and physics and the chemistry program coordinator at Lee University in Cleveland, Tenn., for the past 13 years.

Evans received his undergraduate degree in chemistry from Georgia College and State University and earned his Ph.D. in physical chemistry from the University of Florida. His father was in the military so he spent most of his formative years on the road, attending 13 different schools before his junior year of high school.

Alan Kramer gave up his role as the men’s and women’s tennis coach at ABAC on July 1 to become the Assistant Dean of Students. He will continue his duties as the ABAC Athletics Director. Kramer compiled a career record of 339 wins and 217 losses including a 191-110 record with the Fillies and a 148-107 record with the Stallions since he began his ABAC career in 1993. The Fillies won the Region XVII Championship 19 straight years before the streak ended this season when they finished second.

Kramer won 24 Region XVII Coach of the Year awards and led ABAC to 14 Fillies’ and 10 Stallions’ Georgia Collegiate Athletic Association (GCAA) Championships. Kramer’s women’s teams finished in the top 10 nationally 10 times, and his men’s teams finished in the top 10 nationally 12 times. Kramer was named the Under Armour Athletic Director of the Year for the Southeast Region in 2009-10.

Taking over as the head coach of the ABAC men’s and women’s tennis teams on July 1 was Dale White. He had served as Kramer’s assistant since 2008. Originally from Boston, England, White came to the United States on a tennis scholarship to Armstrong Atlantic State University where he was an All-America selection for three seasons. He earned his graduate degree in sports psychology from Georgia Southern University. He will also serve as an academic support counselor.

Nicholas Urquhart was named Director of Academic Support Services beginning July 1. Jackie Rose also began her duties as Migrant Education Consortium Coordinator on July 1. Elisabeth O’Quinn (Class of ’13) became the first ever Business Apprentice for the Stafford School of Business on July 1.

The Independence Day Celebration at the Georgia Museum of Agriculture and Historic Village was canceled due to stormy weather on July 3. The fireworks portion of the celebration was rescheduled for November 9 with the Veterans Day holiday.

A new art exhibit titled “Sullo’s South” began its run at the Museum Gallery on July 13. The exhibit features the works of New York native turned Georgian Joseph A. Sullo. Jimmy Harper resigned his position on July 13 to become the Chief Information Officer for South Georgia State College. Dr. Amy Willis (Class of ’89) was named Interim Chief Data Officer and Registrar.

On July 19, Sodexo announced the consolidation of its dining and facilities operations at ABAC. Prior to that time, the two divisions had been managed independently of each other. ABAC Vice President for Planning and Operations John Clemens said the consolidation will improve communication, reduce costs and improve services. Sodexo named Dan Miller as the new Director of ABAC Operations. Miller has been with the company since 2005 and at ABAC as director of dining operations for the past four years.

The ABAC Alumni Association and the admissions office hosted an event for alumni and prospective students in Chatsworth on July 20. Robert Morgan was named the head baseball coach and academic support counselor at ABAC on July 26. Morgan served as an assistant coach at Valdosta State University, Georgia Southwestern State University, and Georgia Perimeter College.

As a player at Valdosta State in 2004, Morgan set single season records with a .436 batting average, 32 doubles, 172 total bases, 49 extra base hits, and a 31-game hitting streak. With the 32 doubles, he also set an NCAA Division II record.
For his heroics on the field for the Blazers in 2004-05, Morgan was named to the All-America team in 2004, selected as the Gulf South Conference East Division Player of the Year in 2004, and was picked as the best shortstop in the 40-year history of Valdosta State baseball. He was also a member of the Gulf South Conference All-Decade team for 2000-2010. In 2013, Morgan was named to the Athletics Hall of Fame at Valdosta State. Morgan was also an All-Conference player for ABAC rival South Georgia College before transferring to Valdosta State.

Fall semester classes began on August 14 with 3,394 students in attendance, marking the first fall term enrollment increase since the alltime record of 3,665 students enrolled in the 2007 fall term. ABAC President David Bridges said every room was filled at ABAC Lakeside and ABAC Place. Almost 1,000 students were enrolled in bachelor’s degree programs, the highest number in the 105-year history of the college.

Only 13 colleges and universities in the 31-unit University System of Georgia reported enrollment increases for the 2013 fall term. Only two, Southern Polytechnic and Atlanta Metropolitan, topped the ABAC increase of five per cent. The ABAC enrollment included students from 151 of Georgia’s 159 counties, 19 states, and 24 countries. The states included Maine and Washington, and the countries included Japan, Jamaica, Australia, and Morocco.

The bachelor’s degree in biology is the fastest growing single major with 202 students enrolled in a program that began offering junior and senior level classes in the fall term of 2011. Six hundred of the 1,000-plus students in the School of Agriculture and Natural Resources are enrolled in bachelor’s degrees including 170 in Natural Resource Management. The number of Rural Studies majors has grown from 50 to almost 200. Fifty-four per cent of the students at ABAC are female.

At the August Board of Regents meeting, ABAC was designated as Georgia’s official agricultural state college. The honor coincided with the fact that the School of Agriculture and Natural Resources enrolled over 1,000 students for the first time ever. Andy Dunn, a diversified agriculture major from Menlo, was the 1,001st student to enroll in the school. To celebrate, Director of Public Relations Ashley Mock organized a press conference in the Ag Sciences Building on August 15 with 1,000 green-and-gold doughnuts and remarks by ABAC President David Bridges and Dr. Tim Marshall, Dean of the School of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Caroline Black (Class of ’09), the Education and Agritourism Coordinator at Jaemor Farms in Alto, was the guest speaker at the freshman convocation ceremony in Gressette Gym on August 16. Dr. Cyndy Hall, director of the ABAC Honors Program and a faculty member in the School of Liberal Arts, said 50 new students joined the Honors Program, up from 23 in 2012. She said there is a new Honors Hall in ABAC Lakeside and an Honors Lounge in Conger Hall. Academic Achievement Center Coordinator Rebecca Cofer said the AAC received the International Tutor Training Program Certification from the College Reading and Learning Association.
Stoney Hart joined the staff as the Recreational Sports Director. He had been the assistant director of facility operations and intramural/club sports at Southwestern Oklahoma State University. He had never seen a Georgia pine tree.

Assistant Director of Advancement Lynda Fisher coordinated the first ever Scholarship Milk and Cookies (MAC) Day at the Alumni House on August 27. Over 100 students attending ABAC on scholarships gathered to write personal letters of appreciation to individuals and companies who provided scholarship funding. The ABAC Alumni Association sponsored the event, and ABAC alumni baked homemade cookies for the occasion.

The Georgia Museum of Agriculture and Historic Village at ABAC received a surprise gift in August when Stephen Wehunt sent the Museum his dad’s 1898 Winchester squirrel rifle. Curator Polly Huff said Wehunt’s dad, Roy Dean Wehunt, served under General George Patton in World War II. Stephen Wehunt’s wife, Laveta Margret Waters, graduated from ABAC in 1969.

“My dad was a simple farm boy, and he loved farming,” Stephen Wehunt wrote in an accompanying letter. “I am sure if he had gone to college, he would have chosen ABAC.”

The Albany Symphony Orchestra opened the third season of the ABAC Presents! Performing Arts Series on Sept. 29. Twenty-nine high school students from Georgia, Alabama, Florida, and South Carolina participated in the second annual Stallion Scholars Evening on October 3 in Tift Hall. Dr. William Moore (Class of ’91) was named the Department Head for Forest Resources in the School of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

The total economic impact of ABAC on Tifton and the surrounding area during the 2012 fiscal year was $261,313,451, according to a study commissioned by the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia. Retired ABAC professor of economics Jeff Gibbs said ABAC sustained 15,205 jobs in Tifton and surrounding communities based on direct expenditures of $107,369,226 from student spending, personnel services, operating expenses, and capital outlays.

ABAC tennis player Josh Page won the men’s singles event at the ITA regional championship, earning an invitation to play in the Small College National Championship tournament. He wound up fifth in the nation in that tournament.

Georgia Governor Nathan Deal and Georgia Commissioner of Agriculture Gary Black visited with students at the ABAC building at the 36th annual Sunbelt Agricultural Exposition on October 15. The Expo began as a series of small equipment shows on the ABAC campus in the mid-1960s.

The Gallery at the Georgia Museum of Agriculture and Historic Village opened an exhibit titled “Back Roads of Georgia” on October 18 which highlighted photography and literary works depicting rural life and culture in Georgia. Traci Bryan stepped down as the Student Financial Services Director in October. She was replaced on a temporary basis by Bill Thumser.
ABAC students working at the Georgia Museum of Agriculture and Historic Village constructed a counterweight trebuchet, which they affectionately dubbed a “Pumpkin Chunker.” The Chunker tossed pumpkins hundreds of feet into the lake at the annual Fall Frolics. Thomas Jeffrey Vasseur, author of Discovering the World: Thirteen Stories, spoke at the annual Writers’ Harvest sponsored by the Pegasus literary magazine on October 22 at the Peanut Museum.

The Wildlife Society won first place in the annual Halloween Hay Bale competition. Chick-fil-A Vice President for Marketing David Salyers spoke at a Stafford School of Business seminar on steps to becoming “Remarkable” on October 23. The original Golden Stallion statue was erected in front of the Alumni House on Lake Baldwin in October. A new bronze stallion went up between the J. Lamar Branch Student Center and Tift Hall on January 29.

Tim Carpenter was named the Director of Housing Operations on November 1. He replaced Dr. Chris Kinsey, who moved to the position of Director of Residence Life. The Baldwin Players presented The Taming of the Shrew in Howard Auditorium on October 31-November 2. Former Navy SEAL team member Coleman Ruiz spoke to ABAC students on November 6. His visit was sponsored by the Stafford School of Business.

Michelle Sheffield, an animal science major, presented a poster at the National Collegiate Honors Conference in New Orleans on November 7 on behalf of the ABAC Honors Program. The Georgia Museum of Agriculture and Historic Village hosted a Salute to Veterans on November 9 topped off by fireworks. The fireworks display was originally scheduled for July 3 but was postponed due to inclimate weather.

Longtime ABAC benefactor Clarice Eubanks Turk passed away on November 10 at the age of 102. Dr. Tim Marshall, Dean of the School of Agriculture and Natural Resources, announced that he was stepping down from his position on June 30, 2014 to move to Virginia and marry Dr. Allison Faber.

ABAC received the Regents Award of Excellence from the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia for the Historic Front Campus Project. USG Vice Chancellor for Facilities Jim James said the Regents present the award for projects which redefine the “spirit of place” on a campus. Director of Capital Planning Melvin Merrill, who coordinated the project for ABAC, accepted the award.

George and Betty Turk established an ABAC endowment to fund enrichment opportunities for students in the School of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Mr. Turk was a member of the ABAC Class of 1952. Three generations of his family have attended ABAC.

Dr. Rod Brown was honored at a Professor Emeritus of Forestry ceremony in the Yow Forestry-Wildlife Building on November 20. President David Bridges presented him with a framed copy of his emeritus recognition letter, and Dean of Agriculture and Natural Resources Tim Marshall
presented him with an engraved Wise Old Owl. Brown was a faculty member at ABAC from 1982 until his retirement in July, 2013.

ABAC hosted the premier of the documentary, “deepsouth,” in Howard Auditorium on November 21. Lisa Biagiotti, who produced and directed the film, talked to several ABAC classes during the day before the screening. Education Department Coordinator Amy Warren coordinated the annual visit by 142 kindergarten students at ABAC on November 22. ABAC education majors arranged seven different stops on the tour.

Amanda Biondino, goal keeper on the women’s soccer team, was selected All-Region First Team for the Georgia Collegiate Athletic Association. ABAC Coach Jimmy Ballenger said Biondino was the best goal keeper in the eight-year history of the Fillies’ soccer program. ABAC missed the playoffs for only the second time in history with a 7-10 overall record.

Members of Alpha Beta Gamma and other students from the Stafford School of Business visited with Doug Ivester, the former chairman of the Coca-Cola Company, at his plantation near Albany in November. Dr. Larry Moorman and his wife, Debra, donated a ball-washing machine to the Forest Lakes Golf Club driving range. The Moormans donated the course to the ABAC Foundation in 2002 and the clubhouse at the course to the Foundation in 2009.

The Academic Support Center and Media Services sponsored a therapy session for ABAC students with six dogs from Therapy Dogs, Inc., on December 3. The dogs provided welcome relief for ABAC students preparing for final exams. President David Bridges and his wife, Kim, hosted their annual Holiday Open House in Tift Hall for the first time ever on December 3. The ABAC Presents! Performing Arts Series staged It’s a Wonderful Life: Live from the WVL Radio Theater on December 5. The family of Earl H. Bennett (Class of ’57) set up an ABAC Foundation endowment fund to assist ABAC forestry students.

Laura Daniel Major from LaGrange became the first student in the history of ABAC to receive two bachelor’s degrees at the same commencement ceremony on December 13. She completed degrees in diversified agriculture and rural studies. Major also received the Donaldson Award at the ceremony. She is the wife of Glen Major of LaGrange and the daughter of Larry (ABAC Class of ’78) and Ann Daniel. Dr. Tim Marshall, Dean of the School of Agriculture and Natural Resources, was the featured speaker. A total of 197 students received degrees.

2014

ABAC enrolled 3,132 students for the 2014 spring semester, a 7.2 per cent increase over the 2013 spring term enrollment. The increase was the second largest among the 31 units of the University System of Georgia. Only 16 members of the System had increases over the previous spring term.

Kevin Owens (Class of ’09) presented a $10,000 check from Agrium Tifton to Dr. Tim Marshall,
Dean of the School of Agriculture and Natural Resources. The funds will be used for student scholarships in Agriculture. ABAC students D.J. Thomas from Willacoochee and Charles Conger from Chula represented the ABAC Bass Fishing Club when they finished seventh in the Carhartt Bassmaster College Series in Lake Okeechobee, Fla. A total of 130 teams from 41 colleges and universities participated in the tournament. ABAC Bookstore Manager Tracy Dyal earned the designation of Certified Collegiate Retailer from the National Association of College Stores.

Mamie Ethel Arnold Talley, ABAC’s oldest living alumnus, celebrated her 104th birthday on January 22. She was a member of the Class of ’28 at South Georgia A&M College. She also attended the Second District A&M School. A “Women’s Faces” exhibit opened January 30, 2014 at the Georgia Museum of Agriculture and Historic Village.

ABAC President David Bridges (Class of ’78) received the Stafford Award at the Tifton-Tift County Chamber of Commerce Banquet on January 30. Dallas Hunt (Class of ’83) presented the award. Rural Studies major Andrew Smith from Folkston spent a portion of his spring semester in Atlanta as one of the participants in the Georgia Legislature Internship Program. Military Advanced Education awarded ABAC recognition as a 2014 Top Military-Friendly college.

Former ABAC business office accountant Lester Nalls passed away at the age of 88 on February 2, 2014. He was employed at ABAC from 1969 until his retirement in 1988. The ABAC Alumni Association hosted a regional roundup at the home of ABAC Foundation Board of Trustee member James Holcomb (Class of ’70) in Savannah. The ABAC performing arts series presented the Azalea Quartet on February 18. Sigma Alpha sorority members celebrated the 106th birthday of ABAC on February 20 with birthday cake and cupcakes in the dining hall.

Kristen Card from Cordele won the 45th Ms. ABAC crown in Howard Auditorium on February 25, 2014. She will also compete in the Miss Georgia pageant in June. Dr. Tim Marshall was awarded honorary membership in the Georgia Young Farmers.

The annual Evening for ABAC scholarship fundraiser netted over $48,000 for the ABAC Foundation on March 7. The guest performers were von Grey, a group of four classically trained sisters who formed an indie-alternative folk group. The Baldwin Players’ spring musical, Smoke on the Mountain, was held at the Georgia Museum of Agriculture.

Museum Curator Polly Huff and a group of ABAC English professors staged an incredible exhibit around a series of photographs taken by photographer Lewis Hine of the Tifton Cotton Mill Village in 1909. As a part of a Georgia Humanities Council grant, they brought together descendants of the Catherine Young family at the Museum on March 15, 2014. Young was pictured with nine of her 11 children in one of the photographs. Massachusetts historian Joe Manning worked diligently to write the story of the family and played a huge role in the reunion. One of the descendants was Dr. Earl Parker, a former ABAC Professor of Biology and Botany.
During the spring break in March, ABAC students headed to all points of the globe including the beef industry tour in Astoria, Ill., washing elephants in India, studying in Belize at the Jaguar Temple, and competing in the Forestry Conclave in Dublin, Va. Scott Blount was named Special Projects Coordinator at ABAC on March 6, 2014. The Arbor Day Foundation honored ABAC with Tree Campus USA recognition. Melvin Merrill was named Acting Vice President for Planning and Operations after the departure of John Clemens for Darton State.

On March 25, 2014, President David Bridges announced that the Stafford School of Business at ABAC had been approved by the Board of Regents to offer a Bachelor of Science degree in Business and Economic Development. A press conference and celebration was held on the lower floor of Lewis Hall which was jammed with students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

The Georgia Museum of Agriculture dedicated the Wiregrass Barn Quilt on March 29. Created by the Wiregrass Quilters Guild, the “Churn Dash” pattern will hang on the Wiregrass Opry Shelter. Also on March 29, the ABAC performing arts series presented the Fisk Jubilee Singers. Troy Spicer was named the Dean of the School of Nursing and Health Sciences on April 1, 2014. Spicer had served as the Interim Dean since October, 2012. He earned his associate degree in nursing from ABAC in 1982. His mother, Nellie Jo Spicer, was an ABAC nursing student in 1972.

Michael Wright assumed duties as the Student Financial Services Director at ABAC on April 1. Ross McClellan from Tifton was selected as Mr. ABAC on April 2. Savanna Thompson from Nicholls and Daniel Andrews from Jackson, S.C., were named Homecoming Queen and King on April 3 at the Ben Wells Concert at the rodeo arena.

ABAC Alumni Association award winners at Homecoming 2014 on April 4 included Dr. Tim Marshall, Distinguished Alumnus; Alisha Hall, Helen Brown Sasser Award; Niki Knox, Outstanding Young Alumnus; James Lee Hall, J. Lamar Branch Award; Lola Henning West, Outstanding Educator; James Holcomb, Outstanding Business Leader; Nancy Hilton, Outstanding Health Care Professional; David Moore, Master Farmer; and Dr. Rod Brown, Roger Dill, and DeNean Stafford, III, Honorary Alumnus status. The Gay and Howell families from Lincolnton, Gordon, Irwinville, and Athens received the Family Legacy Award.

For the first time ever, the ABAC Alumni Association awards were presented with the ABAC Athletics Hall of Fame awards in Gressette Gymnasium. Hall of Fame inductees for 2014 were Marshall Taylor, Andrea Pate Willis, and “Sarge’s Crew,” the 1993 State Intercollegiate Softball Champions.

The third annual Run for the Nurses on April 5 raised $10,000 for the Lisa Purvis Allison Spirit of Nursing Scholarship. The ABAC Ambassadors won the first ever Stallion Cup by being a part of activities during Homecoming Week.

Jordan Gill from Enigma received the J.G. Woodroof Scholar Award during the Honors Day
Ceremony on April 9. Other award winners were Amy Warren, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Award for Teaching Excellence; Brenda Doss, Roy R. Jackson, Sr., Award for Staff Excellence; Paul Willis, E. Lanier Carson Leadership Award for College Administrators; and Dr. Abul Sheikh, W. Bruce and Rosalyn Ray Donaldson Excellence in Advising Award. The Honors Day Ceremony was held at 3 p.m. for the first time ever.

At the annual service awards picnic after the Honors Day ceremony, four retirees were honored and service awards were presented to 30 other employees. Retirees included Dr. Rod Brown, Wanda Golden, Bobbie Baldree, and Dr. Doug Waid. Dr. Kay Weeks received a 35-year service award, and Shirley Wilson received a 30-year service award. Those recognized for 25 years of service were Cindy Barber, Janet Haughton, Dr. Mary Ellen Hicks, and Wayne Jones. Rebecca Arnold was recognized for 20 years of service.

Fifteen-year service awards went to Dr. Renata Elad, Anthony Fitzgerald, Philip Hightower, Katrina McCrae, and Beverly Wesley. Honored for 10 years of service were Nancy Anthony, Emily Cheek, Shawn Cox, Teri Mathis, Deborah Pyles, and Keisha Spears. Five-year service awards went to Elaine Auger, Christina Dent, Dr. Kingsley Dunkley, Dr. Cynthia Hall, Nicholas Hardin, Robbie Hawsey, Joseph Johnson, Debbie McComas, John Layton, Mickie Tompkins, Amanda Urquhart, and Donna Webb.

The Omega Delta Chapter of the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society at ABAC was named a Five-Star Chapter at the PTK regional conference. Roger Pemberton was the featured performer at the 36th annual ABAC Jazz Festival on April 17. The event was also a part of the ABAC performing arts series and marked the final concert for Don Coates, director of the ABAC Jazz Band since 1974. Coates retired from ABAC at the end of the spring term after 40 years of service with the music program. At his final concert, Coates was honored by letters from the United States Congress, the Georgia Senate and the Georgia Music Educators. Dr. Jeff Newberry was recognized as the first ever Poet-in-Residence at ABAC in a Tift Hall reception on April 23.

Dill and Susan Driscoll were selected as 2014 Superior Pacesetter Award winners by The Stallion staff. Pacesetter recipients were Stoney Hart, Alan Kramer, Dr. Jeff Newberry, Elisabeth O’Quinn, Judy Perry, Carlton Brooks, Shawn Burnette, Melody Harper, Trent Hester, and Andrea Smith. Dr. Chris Kinsey received the SGA President’s Award. Kevin Vantrees from Alpha Gamma Rho fraternity was named Greek Man of the Year, and Haley Webb from Sigma Alpha sorority was named Greek Woman of the Year.

Stafford Business School Dean Dill Driscoll headed an ABAC event from noon until 6 p.m. on April 24 as a part of the national Carry the Load program which honors the sacrifices of the military, law enforcement, firefighters, and rescue personnel while bringing back the true meaning of Memorial Day. Seven ABAC students will accompany Driscoll and Stafford School of Business Placement Coordinator Lyndsey Walters on a 2,000-mile trek from West Point, N.Y., to Dallas, Texas from April 29 to May 25 as a part of the National Carry the Load Relay.
Mike Williams retired after 36 years of service to ABAC on April 30. Robert Gerhart began his duties as Chief Information Officer at ABAC on May 1. Slayten Carter from Willacoochee received the Distinguished Ambassador Award for the 2013-14 year from the ABAC Ambassadors. She will serve as president of the group in 2014-15. Dr. Jordan Cofer, associate professor of English in the School of Liberal Arts, released a book titled *The Gospel According to Flannery O’Conner*.

The Sigma Chapter of Alpha Beta Gamma at ABAC won the national championship in the presentation competition at the Alpha Beta Gamma national convention in San Antonio. Lindsay Partridge from Bushnell, Fla., was selected as the national president of the organization, Colleen Leu from Chula was named National Marketing Director, and Melody Harper from Pelham was named as the National Secretary.

President David Bridges announced on May 7 that Vice President for Academic Affairs Niles Reddick had been selected as the Vice Provost/CEO for the University of Memphis at Lambuth campus in Jackson, Tenn., effective July 1. Reddick served seven years at ABAC.

Savannah Leigh Brown, a nursing major from Wray, received the George P. Donaldson Award at the spring commencement ceremony on May 8. Former Navy SEAL Coleman Ruiz was the guest speaker. A total of 319 students completed their requirements for graduation at the end of the spring term. Sixty-five students received bachelor’s degrees. One of the graduates who didn’t participate in the ceremony was Kay Parten Wylie, who received her ABAC associate degree in arts 59 years after she started classes at ABAC in 1955. She had already received degrees from Valdosta State and Georgia Southwestern but decided she wanted to transfer back some classes to get her degree from ABAC as well. At the age of 76, she got it.

Coach Donna Campbell’s ABAC Fillies’ softball team wound up second in the NJCAA Region XVII tournament. ABAC recorded a 29-16 overall record. Jenna Byrd from Macon and Rachel Hill from Snellville made first team all-region, and Brittany Davis from Lizella and Taylor Boyett from Fayetteville, Tenn., made second team all-region. Coach Robert Morgan’s ABAC baseball team made the state tournament, the first time the Stallions were in the tournament since 2010. ABAC wound up with a 21-29 overall record in Morgan’s first year at the helm. Christian Miller from Eastman made second team all-state with a .373 batting average.

The ABAC men’s tennis team won the 2014 state championship, and first year head coach Dale White won Coach of the Year honors. After winning Most Valuable Player honors at the state tournament, Josh Page, a freshman from the United Kingdom, blitzed the field at the national tournament to win the national championship at number one singles. He became the first ABAC player to win the national title at number one singles since Richard Evans led the Stallions to the national championship in 1999.

After winning the first set 6-4 in the national title match over Harry Busby from Cowley (Kans.)
College, Page fell behind 4-1 in the second and took a medical timeout for a painful blister on his left foot.

“I felt like he was in command of the match, and I was already thinking about the third set,” Page said. “Then I kind of loosened up, and he got a little tight.”

Page roared back for a 7-6 victory on the tiebreaker, and his teammates mobbed him on the court. The Stallions wound up fifth in the nation in the team standings by playing what White called “our best tennis all season.”

Page was also named the ITA Region IV Rookie of the Year at the national tournament. The ABAC Fillies’ tennis team finished second in the state tournament and 12th in the national tournament. Kelly Burge from the United Kingdom was named Region IV Rookie of the Year at the national tournament.

The ABAC golf team finished second in the state tournament and eighth in the district tournament. Chris Rogers from Dawson and Lee Wright from Moultrie were named first team All-Region selections. Jimmy Ballenger took over as coach of the golf team when Herb Hendrix retired during the season.

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