For IMMEDIATE Release

ABAC Students Make Headlines in 2014

TIFTON—Students from Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College dominated the headlines in 2014 when one student claimed a national championship on the tennis courts and two others were voted in as presidents of their national organizations.

Josh Page, a freshman journalism major from the United Kingdom, blitzed the field in the National Junior College Athletic Association national tennis tournament when he became the first ABAC player since Richard Evans in 1999 to win the national title at number one singles. Page also led the Stallions to the state title in Dale White’s first year as head coach.

Lindsay Partridge, a junior business and economic development major from Bushnell, Fla., was selected as the national president of Alpha Beta Gamma at the annual conference in San Antonio, Tex., and Andy Paul, a sophomore agricultural education major from Lexington, was named the president of the national FFA organization at the annual convention in Louisville, Ky.

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
ABAC enrollment continued to climb in the fall semester with 3,458 students, a 1.9 percent increase over the 2013 fall term. ABAC was the only college or university south of Macon in the University System to increase its enrollment in both the 2013 and 2014 fall semesters.

“It’s a remarkable achievement,” ABAC President David Bridges said. “That makes four consecutive semesters of enrollment increases and four consecutive semesters of increases in the number of graduates.

“It comes down to focus and mission. What has sustained us is the almost double digit growth in some of our upper division classes in agriculture, natural resources, and biology. Our next jump is probably going to be in the Stafford School of Business.”

Bridges based his prognostication on the fact that on March 25, the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia approved a Bachelor of Science degree in Business and Economic Development for ABAC. That degree has already led to an increased amount of interest in students staying at ABAC for four years to gain the baccalaureate degree in business.

“That degree is particularly appealing to students who have an interest in family-owned businesses,” Bridges said.

Other ABAC students capturing the spotlight in 2014 included Kristen Card from Cordele who was crowned Ms. ABAC in February. She gave up her crown in October when Marlee Mathis from Nashville was crowned Ms. ABAC 2015. Ross McClellan from Tifton was named Mr. ABAC 2014.

The student chapter of the National Wildlife Society at ABAC was named best in the nation at the annual conference in Pittsburgh, Penn. Troy Spicer was named Dean of the School of Nursing and Health Sciences on April 1, and Dr. Jerry Baker was selected as Dean of the
School of Agriculture and Natural Resources on July 1.

The annual Evening for ABAC scholarship fundraiser featuring von Grey netted over $48,000 for the ABAC Foundation on March 7. During the spring break in March, ABAC students headed to all points of the globe by taking 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.

ABAC Alumni Association award winners at Homecoming 2014 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.

Athletics Hall of Fame inductees for 2014 were Marshall Taylor, Andrea Pate Willis, and “Sarge’s Crew,” the 1993 State Intercollegiate Softball Champions.

Jordan Gill from Enigma received the J.G. Woodroof Scholar Award during the 2014 Honors Day Ceremony. 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 Omega Delta Chapter of the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society at ABAC was named a Five-Star Chapter at the PTK regional conference. Don Coates retired after 40 years of heading up the ABAC music program. The Alpha Beta Gamma chapter won the national title in the
presentation competition at the national conference.

Robert Gerhart began his duties as Chief Information Officer at ABAC on May 1. Dr. Jordan Cofer, associate professor of English in the School of Liberal Arts, released a book titled “The Gospel According to Flannery O’Conner.”

Savannah Leigh Brown, a nursing major from Wray, received the George P. Donaldson Award at the spring commencement ceremony, and Retha Martin, a business major from Moultrie, was the Donaldson winner at the fall ceremony. Andrea Smith, a biology major from Fitzgerald, received the first ever ABAC Alumni Association Award for bachelor’s degree graduates at the fall commencement ceremony.

President Jimmy Carter enthralled a standing room only audience in Howard Auditorium on Oct. 28 when he spoke on the Carter Center and his life after the White House. Dr. Jeff Newberry was recognized as the first ever Poet-in-Residence at ABAC in a Tift Hall reception on April 23.

Former Arts Experiment Station Director Syd Blackmarr was selected as one of 13 recipients for the Governor’s Awards for the Arts and Humanities by Governor Nathan Deal. Paul W. Williams was selected as Interim Vice President for External Affairs. On Oct. 1, every campus in the University System of Georgia adopted a tobacco and smoke-free campus policy.

Garrett Boone was named the Director of Georgia Museum of Agriculture and Historic Village on Aug. 1. ABAC was named a Best Value School by the University Research and Review. Dr. Gail Dillard was named as Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs. ABAC softball coach Donna Campbell announced that she would be retiring from coaching after the 2015 season.

Classes begin for the 2015 spring term at ABAC on Jan. 8.