Red soil flew into the air on Thursday morning at the groundbreaking ceremony for the new ABAC laboratory sciences building.

Construction Begins on ABAC Laboratory Sciences Building

TIFTON—Ten shovels filled with red soil worked in unison for a photo opportunity.

Then a yellow motor grader smoothed out the dirt as the real construction began on the new $8.5
million laboratory sciences building on a steamy hot Thursday morning at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College.

“It is more than symbolic that this building will stand at the academic crossroads of the ABAC campus,” ABAC President David Bridges said at the brief ceremony. “More than 80 percent of our students are enrolled in science, technology, engineering or mathematics disciplines.

“From biology to agriculture to natural resources to environmental horticulture to nursing, so many of our students’ futures are built on a solid foundation of science. We all should be filled with pride as we begin the process of developing the next academic quad on the historic ABAC campus with this building devoted to science education.”

Bridges thanked a long list of all those who helped to make construction funds for the building possible. Georgia legislators topped the list including Representative Penny Houston who was present for the ceremony. He also expressed his appreciation to Georgia Governor Nathan Deal, University System of Georgia (USG) Chancellor Hank Huckaby and members of the Board of Regents, USG staff including Michael Miller who was present for the ceremony, ABAC Capital Planning Director Melvin Merrill, and the trustees of the ABAC Foundation, who made a commitment of up to $1.5 million to complete the project.

Dr. Johnny Evans, Dean of the School of Science and Mathematics, said the 20,966 square-foot building will be utilized by every student who enrolls for classes at ABAC.

“This building will provide an amazing study space for students along with access to the most modern equipment and lab technologies,” Evans said. “It is focused on meeting students’ needs and providing a space for discovery, research, and creativity.
“The building represents the next phase of growth, change and impact on our students’ lives. All of us here today will reap the rewards of this impact as ABAC students become our community leaders, teachers, scientists, physicians, and business owners.”

Sarah Rooks, the only two-time recipient of the prestigious J.G. Woodroof Scholar Award in the history of ABAC, spoke from a student’s viewpoint.

“Frankly, I am a little jealous of the incoming students who will get to use these new labs,” Rooks, who graduated in May with her ABAC bachelor’s degree in biology, said. “There are times when you don’t truly learn something until you can put your hands on it and see it with your own eyes.

“Not only will these students have an awesome space to complete course work but they’ll have space to conduct their own experiments as well.”

International City Builders from Warner Robins was selected through a bid process to construct the building. The Georgia State Finance and Investment Commission will manage the construction process. Rob Evans from Ingram Parris Group in Valdosta is the architect for the project.

Merrill said the building will contain eight laboratories focusing on general biology, microbiology, molecular biology, general chemistry, tissue culture, organic chemistry, and anatomy/physiology. Preparation rooms will support each lab.

The building is scheduled to be ready for use by ABAC students during the 2016 fall semester.

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