A groundbreaking for the new laboratory sciences building at ABAC will take place on June 25 at 11:30 a.m.

Groundbreaking Set for New ABAC Lab Sciences Building

TIFTON—Upperclassmen enrolled in the bachelor’s degree in biology can access their research projects 24 hours a day, seven days a week in the new laboratory sciences building
which is about to rise from the ground on the north side of the Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College campus.

Dr. Johnny Evans, Dean of the School of Science and Mathematics, said a groundbreaking for the $8.5 million building will be held at 11:30 a.m. on June 25 at the construction site near Conger Hall.

“Biology majors will have access to the most current technology and techniques in these laboratories,” Evans said. “Upperclassmen will also have access any time of the day or night to complete research projects.”

Evans emphasized that the 20,966 square foot building will be utilized by students across all majors on campus.

“The building will have specialized labs for the science majors, however, all ABAC students will use the general biology, chemistry, and the anatomy and physiology labs while they complete their core requirements,” Evans said. “This is a facility that will engage all ABAC students in studying modern scientific techniques and topics.”

ABAC President David Bridges said the new building would not have been possible without the support of Governor Nathan Deal, members of the General Assembly and the Board of Regents.

“Projects of this nature don’t just happen,” Bridges said. “We have received plenty of help from the Governor and legislators as well as Chancellor Hank Huckaby and his staff. We are very fortunate to be able to see this project come to fruition.”
Bridges also directed special thanks to ABAC Foundation Chair Lynn Lovett and the Foundation Trustees.

“Seven million dollars of this project will come from the state through general obligation bonds, and we certainly appreciate that,” Bridges said. “The remainder of the project will be funded by the ABAC Foundation which shows yet again how crucial Foundation support is to this institution. The trustees really came through for us in a time when we needed them the most.”

ABAC Director of Capital Planning Melvin Merrill said 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.

“It’s a very compact building,” Merrill, who recently retired from ABAC but now works part time in the capital planning position, said. “It is designed to be very efficient. It has an unbelievable amount of usefulness per square foot.”

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 also support each lab. Several areas in the building are specifically designed for study and discussion among students.

“Because of the nature of the building, it has a very extensive heating, air, ventilating, plumbing, and electrical system,” Merrill said.

Evans believes the building is an indication of things to come at ABAC.
“This building is the first step in preparing the School of Science and Mathematics to be a foundation for the growth of ABAC,” Evans said. “This is a lab facility only, and as ABAC grows, this will be phase one of a science and mathematics complex.

“It will provide an attractive facility for incoming students, and I think it will be a deciding factor for students to choose ABAC.”

ABAC is the only college or university south of Macon in the University System of Georgia to experience enrollment growth in each of the last two fall semesters. The bachelor’s degree in biology has been extremely popular since it became a part of the ABAC curriculum in the 2011 fall term.

Evans said some classrooms in 63-year-old Gray Hall will be used for mathematics courses but the first floor labs will all be replaced by the modern labs in the new building.

“All the modern equipment for studying genetics, molecular biology and microbiology will be available for our students,” Evans said. “The tissue culture lab will be used to prepare plant samples for study.”

Merrill said construction of the facility should be completed by July, 2016 so that ABAC students can utilize the building in the 2016 fall term. Classes for the 2015 ABAC fall semester begin Aug. 12.

###