



# Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College

## INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND STUDENT BODY PROFILE

Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College (ABAC) is a residential institution offering baccalaureate degrees in targeted fields, transfer associate degrees, non-transfer associate degrees, and a limited number of certificate programs. ABAC's state-wide mission in Agriculture and Natural Resources gives the college a unique identity among USG state colleges, but ABAC is also known for its strong nursing program as well as its traditional associate degrees with studies in the liberal arts, the natural and physical sciences, mathematics, and the social sciences. The reputation of the Stafford School of Business is developing rapidly with the addition of a baccalaureate degree in business with a focus on small business and economic development. With its diverse array of quality programs, ABAC's overall goal is to be a strategic partner within the University System of Georgia to help create a more educated Georgia.

Total enrollment at ABAC in fall 2013 was 3391, an increase of approximately 5% over fall 2012 enrollment. Of the 3391, 79.03% were white, 12.03% were Black (non-Hispanic), and 5.63% were Hispanic, comprising the three largest ethnic groups. Students over the age of 25 made up 13.54% of enrollment in fall 2013, and 34.09% of all students were first-generation college students. In fall 2013, 46.06% of students were Pell eligible. Students enrolled in more than 12 credit hours fall 2013 made up 69.21% of total enrollment.

The overall increase in enrollment, the growth of baccalaureate enrollment (926 in fall 2013, up 43% from the previous year), an 11% increase in the AY13-14 graduation rate over the AY12-13, an all-time high of 205 students participating in dual enrollment in spring 2014, and a doubling of students in the Honors Program indicate that ABAC's goals and strategies for Complete College Georgia are having a positive impact on college success and completion. Therefore, the College will continue to pursue the goals and strategies outlined in its 2012 report and 2013 update but will focus during the 2014-2015 academic year on five goals and strategies which the College believes will have a high impact on college completion.

Although overall enrollment increased from fall 2011 to fall 2013, Black non-Hispanic enrollment as a percentage of total enrollment declined slightly, from 17.89% in 2011 to 12.03% in fall 2013, while Hispanic enrollment increased slightly, from 4.25% to 5.63%. The percentage of students over the age of 25 declined (17.96% to 13.54%) from 2011 to 2013, as did the percentage of first-generation college students (39.11 to 34.09). These enrollment trends suggest that strategies which focus on college completion for these groups could positively impact ABAC's completion goals.

In addition to targeting these groups, for the past several years ABAC has focused on increasing access to college for area high school students through an expansion of its dual enrollment program. By serving a large number of dual enrollment students on campus, providing courses on site at several area high schools (currently Baconton Community Charter School, Colquitt County High School, Fitzgerald High School, and Tiftarea Academy), and by waiving mandatory fees not covered by Accel, ABAC has removed barriers to earning college credits while in high school for students in these rural high schools. Plans are underway to expand on-site dual enrollment to Cook County High School in spring 2015.

## INSTITUTIONAL COMPLETION GOALS AND STRATEGIES

### Goal 1: Increase the number of undergraduate degrees

*High-Impact Strategy: Increase degree completion in STEM fields*

ABAC has various programs in place which support degree completion in STEM fields.

The addition of a baccalaureate degree in biology has been very successful in attracting students, with enrollment increasing in just one year from 151 in spring 2013 to 198 in spring 2014. In fall 2014, 661 students (19%) out of total enrollment of 3458 are pursuing a STEM major. Only the School of Agriculture and Natural Resources, with 1103 students enrolled, has more students. Agriculture is a key component of our mission as a college; in fact, in fall of 2013, the USG recognized ABAC as the "State's Agricultural College." The emphasis on STEM completion supports our mission as the "State's Agricultural College" since a number of agricultural disciplines (e.g. Forestry, Wildlife, Agricultural Engineering, Turfgrass) are strongly linked with science and mathematics fields of study. Thus, both the School of Agriculture and Natural Resources and the School of Science and Mathematics, which together comprise about half of ABAC's total enrollment, produce graduates who work in the state's number-one industry – agriculture.

Through an NSF grant, ABAC offers up to 10 scholarships annually – up to \$6,000 per student – to promising science, technology, engineering, and math students in the ASSETS Scholars Program. In order to receive one of these scholarships, students must have demonstrated financial need, be a US citizen or resident alien, and be enrolled full time in a STEM area of study at ABAC. Recipients must participate in a mentoring program, attend science/math seminars, retain membership in the Science Affiliates Club, conduct undergraduate research activities with the University

of Georgia Tifton Campus, and participate in the School of Science and Mathematics travel program. Participants are evaluated at the end of each academic year to determine eligibility to continue in the program.

ABAC also participates in the Regents Engineering Transfer Program, which allows students to complete their first two years of studies at ABAC and then transfer to Georgia Tech to complete their engineering degree. In addition to regular ABAC students who have taken advantage of this program, two dual enrollment students in the past two years have graduated from ABAC the same year they graduated from high school and are currently completing their degree in engineering at Georgia Tech.

Both the ASSETS Scholars Program and the Regents Engineering Transfer Program employ intrusive advising and program maps to keep students on track. With these programs in place, the College is in a strong position to recruit, retain, and graduate students in STEM fields.

### **Goal 2: Decrease excess credits earned on the path to getting a degree.**

*High-Impact Strategy: Offer block schedules for students in metamajors or majors for the first semester or first year*

For fall semester 2013, ABAC's Academic Support Counselors produced a block schedule for each student who tested into one or more Learning Support courses. This process kept LS students from enrolling in courses for which there are LS prerequisites, a scheduling error which often put students in a situation of having to change their schedules at the beginning of the semester when few classes were available. Registering LS students ahead of time also helped them get a full schedule. Because of the success of this pilot program, for fall 2014, each academic school created block schedules for incoming freshmen with declared majors in their schools.

Challenges to producing block schedules for a year are the frequency with which students change majors and the shortage of core curriculum classes which results when virtually all first-year students are given a schedule of 15 credit hours or more per semester. The College will address these challenges by requiring students who want to change their major to undergo comprehensive academic and financial aid advising before being allowed to change. Adjustments in scheduling to optimize class size and faculty load will help address the shortage of core classes. For example, in creating schedules for fall 2014, advisors placed a majority of students in US History, a required course, while fewer students were placed into POLS 1101, another required core class. The result was overloads among history faculty, hiring of additional part-time faculty, and large class sizes in US History in the fall. Another consequence is that scheduled US History classes for spring semester have a number of empty spaces while all POLS 1101 sections were filled by the second day of early registration. Efforts to coordinate scheduling among advisors to ensure a balance among core classes will help to avoid these unintended negative consequences in the future.

### **Goal 3: Provide intrusive advising to keep students on**

### **track to graduate.**

*High-Impact Strategy: Ensure that students who meet off-track criteria receive timely and targeted advising intervention.*

Being placed on academic probation is a sure indicator that a student is off track to complete college. Without intervention, many students placed on academic probation will fail to improve their grades and will lose financial aid eligibility or even be academically suspended from college. To help get students back on track, ABAC implemented a multi-faceted early intervention program during AY13-14. Of the 142 first-time freshmen who were placed on probation at the end of fall semester 2013, all enrolled in the intervention program; 110 passed the intervention class, and of the 110 who passed, 56 (51%) improved their performance during spring semester and avoided suspension. Before implementation of this program, approximately 25% of students placed on probation after their first semester avoided suspension after the second semester. ABAC will continue this intervention program during AY14-15 and will seek to reduce further the number of students placed on suspension at the end of their first year.

The main challenge to intervention programs is getting students to take advantage of them. ABAC provides four full-time Academic Support Counselors, whose role it is to monitor student progress and to implement programming to keep students on track. This significant commitment of resources on the part of the College to student retention, progression, and graduation helps keep ABAC at the top of the state college sector in retention and graduation rates.

### **Goal 4: Shorten time to degree completion through programs that allow students to earn college credit while still in high school and by awarding credit for prior learning that is verified by appropriate assessment.**

*High-Impact Strategy: Participate in dual enrollment programs for high school students.*

One of the most effective ways to shorten time to degree completion is through dual enrollment. In the past two years, two area high school students have graduated from ABAC the same year they graduated from high school. Both students went on to Georgia Tech and are pursuing engineering degrees. Other students have acquired enough hours through dual enrollment to begin professional school only two to three years following high school graduation. Because ABAC recognizes the advantages of dual enrollment for both students and their parents, the College has worked to expand opportunities for dual enrollment among area high schools. Consequently, the program has grown from 53 participants in fall 2011 to 205 in spring 2014. The College's goal is to continue to expand dual enrollment participation by offering classes at additional locations and by increasing the number of students who attend classes on the ABAC campus and enjoy the advantage of participating in Baldwin Academy, a program which provides dual enrollment students the opportunity to participate in Honors Program classes and extra-curricular activities and to move seamlessly upon high

school graduation into the ABAC Honors Program. Although the College will continue to expand opportunities for dual enrollment, ABAC will shift its focus to tracking dual enrollment students to determine college completion rates for this group.

The resources required to operate an effective dual enrollment program are a challenge. ABAC waives all mandatory fees except class lab fees for dual enrollment students to make the program affordable for all qualified students. Also, because classes on high school campuses usually have lower enrollment than the same classes on ABAC's campus, the cost of instruction is higher. ABAC has addressed these challenges by utilizing appropriately credentialed high school faculty to teach the classes at some high school locations, a strategy which increases support among high school faculty for dual enrollment.

**Goal 5: Increase the likelihood of degree completion by transforming the way that remediation is accomplished.**

*High-Impact Strategy: Enroll most students in need of remediation in gateway collegiate courses in English and mathematics with co-requisite Learning Support.*

Just as dual enrollment shortens the time to degree completion, being placed into Learning Support classes in

college delays time to completion. Therefore, efforts to transform remediation should contribute significantly to college completion. With leadership provided by the University System of Georgia, ABAC has begun to change its Learning Support structure. After successfully piloting a co-requisite ENGL 1101/ENGL 0099 section in AY13-14, ABAC is moving toward full implementation of a co-requisite model for remediation. For fall 2014, English and Reading remediation have been combined into one course, ENGL 0999. Of the 41 students identified thus far as needing remediation in English or Reading, 27 have been placed in a co-requisite ENGL 0999/ENGL 1101. In addition, three math classes have been designated as co-requisite courses, one combining MATH 1001/MATH 0997 and two combining MATH 1111/MATH 0999. As of July 11, 67 of the 142 first-time entering students with math LS requirements have been placed into the co-requisite classes.

Challenges to implementing the co-requisite model of remediation include identifying best practices in supplementing college-level instruction in the co-requisite course and scheduling issues. ABAC math and English faculty are actively engaged in research to determine how best to structure these courses for student success.

**SUMMARY OF GOALS, HIGH-IMPACT STRATEGIES, AND ACTIVITIES**

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**Goal 1 Increase the number of undergraduate degrees.**

High-impact strategy	Increase degree completion in STEM fields.
Summary of Activities	ASSETS Program, RETP, Recruiting students for B.S. degree in Biology
Interim Measures of Progress	29 STEM graduates in fall 2013
Measures of Success	Increase number of STEM graduates by 5% spring 2015

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**Goal 2 Decrease excess credits earned on the path to getting a degree**

High-impact strategy	Offer block schedules for students in metamajors or majors for the first semester or year
Summary of Activities	Block schedules for Learning Support students fall 2013; block schedules of 15 credit hours for first-time entering fall 2014
Interim Measures of Progress	All students who attend orientation receive a schedule of 15 credit hours; very few schedule changes have been recorded thus far
Measures of Success	Increase number of students enrolling in 15 or more credit hours per semester (fall semester) Increase number of students successfully completing 30 collegiate credit hours their first academic year of enrollment

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**Goal 3 Provide intrusive advising to keep students on track to graduate**

High-impact strategy	Ensure that students who meet off-track criteria receive timely and targeted advising intervention
Summary of Activities	Multi-faceted intervention program targeting first semester freshmen placed on academic probation their second semester, AY2012-13
Interim Measures of Progress	31% reduction in number of students placed on academic suspension at the end of their freshman year for AY2012-13
Measures of Success	Increase retention among students who participate in the intervention program from 51% to 56%

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<b>Goal 4</b>	<b>Shorten time to degree completion through programs that allow students to earn college credit while still in high school and by awarding credit for prior learning that is verified by appropriate assessment</b>
High-impact strategy	Participate in dual enrollment programs for high school students
Summary of Activities	Offer dual enrollment classes at four high schools, ABAC on the Square in Moultrie, and the Tifton campus; institution of Baldwin Academy to connect dual enrollment with the ABAC Honors Program
Interim Measures of Progress	Increase in DE enrollment from 53 in fall 2011 to 205 in spring 2014; two students earn associate degrees simultaneously with high school graduation
Measures of Success	Increase % of courses completed vs. courses attempted for dual enrollment students Increase number of dual enrolled students who attend a post-secondary institution following high school graduation

<b>Goal 5</b>	<b>Increase the likelihood of degree completion by transforming the way that remediation is accomplished.</b>
High-impact strategy	Enroll most students in need of remediation in gateway collegiate courses in English and mathematics, with co-requisite Learning Support
Summary of Activities	Successful pilot of co-req ENGL 1101/0099 in AY2012-13; combination of English/Reading remediation AY2014-15; three math pilots of co-req classes fall 2014
Interim Measures of Progress	Over one-half of students needing English or Reading remediation in co-req courses fall 2014
Measures of Success	Increase % of students who start in co-requisite remediation who complete degrees on time Increase % of students who start in co-requisite remediation who complete degrees in 150% of time frame

**OBSERVATIONS**

ABAC’s most successful CCG strategies are increasing enrollment in dual enrollment; targeted admissions based on institutional mission, programs, and needs of underserved student groups; reducing the number of students placed on academic suspension at the end of their first year; and instituting block scheduling for fall semester first-time entering freshmen.

Adjustments to completion strategies have been made based on evaluation of effectiveness, available resources, and changes in focus. For example, a financial aid study conducted by the president revealed a number of students with excessive hours and no degree. Therefore, the College has decided to focus on intrusive advising, especially for students not meeting SAP and those who request more than one major change; block schedules for all first-year students, and program maps for all majors or meta-majors.