ABRAHAM BALDWIN AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE

INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND STUDENT BODY PROFILE

Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College (ABAC) is a residential institution that has long been the higher education destination for students in the southeast who want to study agriculture and natural resources. Today, ABAC has grown to become a destination for students seeking a wide variety of baccalaureate programs from a broad range of academic disciplines. ABAC provides students with ample opportunities to learn and grow as individuals with its array of quality programs, an abundance of student organizations, a renowned music program, and various intercollegiate and intramural athletic teams. In addition to delivering relevant experiences that prepare the graduate for life, ABAC is a strategic partner within the University System of Georgia to help create a more educated Georgia.

> ***ABAC's mission*** *is to provide excellent education by engaging, teaching, coaching, mentoring, and providing relevant experiences that prepare the graduate for life.*

2020 ABAC Demographics

Total Fall Enrollment	3,985
Full-Time	62%
Part-Time	38%
Bachelor's Degree-Seeking	59%
Underserved Minority Population	21%
Pell Eligible	37%
First Generation	28%
Adult Learner (age 25+)	10%
Learning Support	5%

IMPROVEMENT PRACTICES

ABAC's involvement with Complete College Georgia (CCG) has allowed us to expand successful initiatives beyond a student's first year to increase on-time graduation and prepare our graduates for a career. ABAC's CCG team is a collaboration and partnership between Academic Affairs, Student Support Services, Financial Aid, Student Affairs, Housing & Residence Life, faculty, and students. The core objectives of Complete College Georgia are to support and implement strategies and policies so more students can reach their goal of attaining a college degree. Our most successful CCG strategies, which have positively impacted our retention and graduation rates, include fully implementing the Momentum Year (15-to-Finish, Pathway Maps, and Learning Support Transformation) and transitioning to a more holistic approach with the Momentum Approach.

A review of the University System of Georgia's (USG) complete college data reveals how the CCG process has increased student success, retention, and graduation. For the 2012 fall semester, only 27% of full-time first-year students were enrolled in 15 or more hours. The fall of 2020 presented some unique challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. On-campus orientation events and visitations were restricted, which required increased virtual communication. Despite the challenges presented by the pandemic, 51% of full-time first-year students were enrolled in 15 or more hours. Similarly, the percentage of full-time first-year students who earned 30 or more credits in their first academic year increased from 16.75% in 2012 to 28% in 2020. The percentage of students who completed 30 or more hours for the 2019 academic year was 25%.

Retention and graduation continue to be areas worth noting due to our involvement with CCG. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on first-year retention rates can be seen in the system-wide CCG data for the University System of Georgia—dropping from 74% to 69%. Similarly, ABAC's first-year retention rate fell from 68% in 2019 to 60% in 2020. Despite the decrease in retention, overall, first-year retention is up, from 49% for the 2011 academic year, due to our continued CCG initiatives. The USG State College

average retention rate for 2020 was 53%. In 2012, the USG State College's four-year graduation rate was 4%, while ABAC's was 10%. The four-year graduation rate for the 2016 cohort was 7% and 17%, respectively–in part due to ABAC's and the University Systems' development and implementation of CCG initiatives.

Data for these findings are pulled from several sources. For the 15-to-Finish initiative, data are retrieved from ABAC's Argos reporting system and reports created by the Registrar's Office. Each of these reporting methods relies on the Banner Student Information System. The analysis is performed in a statistical program (Excel, SPSS, etc.). Data on retention and graduation are pulled from the USG's Qlik program, containing institution-specific and system-wide CCG data.

The above data shows ABAC's commitment to helping students attain a college degree on a global level. Further dissection of the information also reveals areas that require further attention. With the Momentum Approach implementation, ABAC continues to move toward a more holistic approach to serving students. Efforts include focusing on established CCG practices and integrating additional support services from Student Affairs and the Center for Teaching and Learning to review policies and practices that may put an undue burden on underrepresented populations.

ABAC'S BIG IDEA

ABAC's big idea during the Momentum Summit was to "close the loop." The phrase "close the loop" pertains to effective use of institutional data to inform academic and career planning decisions. ABAC has implemented its Momentum Year and Approach plans; however, the institution has not fully analyzed its results for revising the plan and projecting growth opportunities. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic led to a temporary hold on progressing with ideas from the previous Momentum Summit. To achieve this big idea of closing the loop, the committee focused on three priorities—Data Collection, Analysis, and Management; Communication; and Career Exploration via Expanded Program Maps. In the absence of a centralized institutional research unit, committee members agreed that the data collection, analysis, and management work is the top priority 2021-2022 Momentum plan. Thus, all other priorities and activities will be informed based on priority one.

ABAC's CCG committee has accomplished the following activities toward our big idea of closing the loop:

Diverse data sources, to include student and community inputs, related to ABAC's Momentum efforts were identified— Analyze Student Engagement Programs (Quality Enhancement Programs) data, Mindset Survey data, Complete College GA data (Qlik), Internship participation numbers, 2021 Virtual Career Connections Fair analytics, and School/Dept Graduation Surveys.

The next steps include the best platform or method to consolidate and analyze these data sources to allow for easier consumption

The framework for a responsive institutional-wide online graduation application, including a graduation survey, has been created. School-specific and institutional questions have been developed for the graduation survey, based on a student's degree program. The goal is to test and fully implement by the Fall 2022 semester.

The School of Business created a new template for program maps that include career and student-life-focused milestones (see Appendix A & B). Next steps involve updating all program maps to the new format, holding student focus groups on the usefulness and utilization of program maps, and working with the Center for Teaching and Learning to incorporate faculty/advisor training on the use of program maps.

ABAC's CCG will begin working on the Momentum Communication Plan in January 2022. The committee will develop and implement a plan to share analyzed data with the campus community to facilitate making effective programmatic decisions in academic and student affairs.

MOMENTUM WORK RESILIENCE UPDATE

The COVID-19 pandemic presented the ABAC community with some unprecedented challenges. Additional considerations and plans had to be implemented to not only keep students, faculty, and staff safe, but to allow us to continue to help our students succeed. The resilience strategies listed were implemented to ensure that the Momentum efforts would continue:

Strategy/Activity	Update/Progress
Redesigning Fall 2020 & Spring 2021 schedule	Department Chairs & Deans for each school worked with the Director of Facilities to implement a COVID plan that reduced class sizes and allowed for social distancing. The Registrar's Office developed a *Master COVID Schedule* that showed live course enrollment, COVID

	CAPS, and Regular Room CAPS. In addition, notifications were sent to the appropriate administrator. Given the reduced course size, online and hybrid courses were offered to ensure new students could follow the Momentum Approach (English/Math, Learning Support, 15 hours, etc.).
Study Abroad	Study Abroad programs were halted by the USG; however, interest meetings and planning for future travel continued and looked ahead toward the Summer 2021 semester and beyond.
Internships & Research	The number of in-person internships was reduced due to the pandemic. To offset this decline and keep our upper-level students on track, deans & chairs encourage faculty to ramp up faculty-mentored research. In addition, faculty advisors worked with students to offset internships, as applicable, for a future semester. Moving into Spring 2021, deans, chairs, and faculty worked with business partners and the surrounding community to ensure students had a sufficient number of internship opportunities/choices.
Preregistration of new students	Campus visits and in-person Orientation sessions were halted going into fall 2020. To help keep first-year students on track, Academic Support worked with Admissions to develop a communication and advising plan to register students in 15 hours that focused on Area A and nine credit hours toward the student's program.

GLOBAL MOMENTUM SUPPORT

Developing a clear and focused communication plan that incorporates more units across the campus (e.g., Enrollment, Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, Business & Finance Operations, Technology) is a high priority for ABAC. The need for such communication was identified at the Momentum Summit; however, staffing shortages and conditions related to other initiatives (e.g., Mental Health) have delayed progress on fully implementing our global strategy. The following strategies have been identified as part of the CCG Global Communication Plan:

Activity	Process/Steps
Expand the CCG committee	Currently, the CCG committee members are primarily from Academic Affairs. Working with the Provost and the Assistant Vice Presidents, additional members from Student Affairs, Enrollment, Business, and Technology will be added.
Monthly meetings with institutional representatives on Momentum	Use Data CAM (see Big Idea) to organize topics for discussion. Organize around topics informed by the data in "small bites." Committee members would then disseminate information to corresponding units.
Career Exploration	Evaluate the need for centralized career counseling/service

The following challenges have also been identified that will need to be addressed for the global communication plan to be successful:

- Regular communication from VPs to direct reports regarding the priorities of the College
- More up and down communication on the alignment of college priorities and Momentum priorities
- Facilitated communication and cooperation among all units (e.g., Enrollment, Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, Business & Finance Operations, Technology) to improve student retention and success

Work on the global communication plan is expected to begin after classes begin for Spring 2022.

MOMENTUM YEAR UPDATES

The Momentum Year practices have had a positive impact on helping students progress to their second year. **Academic Focus Areas**, **Program Maps**, and **Academic Mindset** have become a permanent part of our students' first-year experience. In 2011, ABAC's overall first-year retention rate was 49%. Since implementing the Momentum Year Approach, ABAC's overall retention rate has

climbed to 60% and shows promise of continued growth. Similarly, second-year retention rates rose from 33% in 2011 to 47% in 2020—an increase over 2019. Below is an update for each element of the initiative.

PURPOSEFUL CHOICE

Academic Focus Areas group programs to better help students who are floundering with their degree path choose coursework that contributes to college completion and provides exposure to potential majors and careers. Implemented during the Fall 2018 semester, the following Academic Focus Areas are based on our degree offerings:

- Liberal Arts
- Agriculture and Natural Resources
- Business
- Arts
- Communications
- STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, & Mathematics)
- Health Professions

The Academic Focus Areas went into effect for new students starting Spring 2019. Students who have decided on a major are automatically placed into the corresponding focus area. Enrollment Management and Academic Support call those students who indicate they are undeclared. Probing questions are used to determine a student's subject interest, career outlook, and hobbies. Based on this information, students are assigned to an appropriate focus area. Incoming students are provided relevant information about their pathway, expectations, and career outlook based on their focus area.

TRANSPARENT PATHWAYS

Program Maps give incoming students a clear picture of what is required to graduate with a bachelor's degree in four years. A well-designed program map properly sequences courses based on prerequisites, has students complete at least 30 hours each year, and requires them to complete their English and math requirements within the first year. Program maps are housed on the online catalog, which can be found at https://catalog.abac.edu/. Each program map contains the following:
English and math requirements during the first term

At least 30 hours per academic year

Properly sequenced classes to include those only offered during specific terms

Degree appropriate milestones

For the current Momentum Plan, the School of Business created a new program map template that includes career and student-life-focused milestones (see Appendix A & B). The updated program map will be implemented for all programs by fall 2022. Additionally, each program map provides the course requirement and the milestones to indicate when the student needs to see their respective faculty advisor to plan for their internship or research requirement.

HIGH-IMPACT STRATEGY UPDATES

15 TO FINISH

ABAC continues to preregister first-year students before their scheduled orientation session. Currently, Academic Support preregisters all full-time first-year students for 15 hours; however, several of these students choose to take less than 15 hours. The importance of 15-to-finish begins with the information given to interested students before admission and is incorporated into new faculty advisor training each fall and advising review sessions each fall and spring. Financial aid counselors also encourage students to take 15 hours a semester to graduate on time. Plus, the program maps incorporate the 15-to-Finish initiative. Below is a chart showing ABAC's progress toward this goal:

Academic Year (AY)	Total FYS*	FYS registered for 15+	Percentage of FYS 15+	% FYS completed 30+ in AY	Total Student Body in 15+
2014 – 2015	863	389	45%	20%	30%

2015 – 2016	849	410	48%	24%	32%
2016 – 2017	815	340	42%	29%	31%
2017 – 2018	661	286	43%	27%	31%
2018 – 2019	717	321	45%	31%	26%
2019 – 2020	614	320	52%	25%	31%
2020 – 2021	562	286	51%	28%	30%

Note. FYS = First-year students

Measures of Success

- The number of first-year students taking 15 or more hours their first semester remained above the 50% mark – which was the original stretch goal for the 15-to-Finish initiative
- Slight increase in the number of students completing 30 hours within their first academic year

Lessons Learned

ABAC has been consistent in delivering the message 15 hours a semester to graduate on time. Due to a restriction to on-campus orientation for new students this message was incorporated into our online orientation videos. We have incorporated this initiative into advisor training and the online first-year seminar series. This initiative is also a part of our published materials (e.g., Program Maps, Financial Aid Materials). The 15-to-Finish initiative began in 2012 and has become part of the ABAC culture and a norm for full-time first-year students.

CO-REQUISITE LEARNING SUPPORT

ABAC has fully implemented co-requisite learning support to increase the likelihood of degree completion for students who require developmental studies. This high-impact strategy seeks to improve progression and retention by preregistering all students with a learning support requirement in English or Math for the appropriate co-requisite course. ABAC engaged in the following activities to support its attainment goal of 100%:

- Continued implementation of USG placement guidelines
- Co-requisite only options for English and math
- New students who require learning support for English or math were preregistered for the required co-requisite

Below is a chart showing ABAC's progress for new students starting ABAC for the 2020-21 academic year:

Co-Req. Course	Number	Students Required	Number registered for Co-req	Percentage
English	ENGL 1101	37	25	68%
Quant. Reasoning or College Algebra	MATH 1001 or MATH 1111	91	80	88%

Lessons Learned

ABAC strives to have 100% of students placed into their required learning support requirements; however, some challenges prevent us from obtaining this goal. The pandemic limited the number of in-person fall courses, and many students opted to take their support course(s) face-to-face. Given the seat availability challenges, several students were allowed to take their co-requisite requirement in spring 2021. Additionally, 38% of our population is considered part-time. Several working students focus on one or two classes per term, which meets their work-life balance. At least five of the students who did not take their required co-requisite English course opted to focus on their co-requisite Math course. The same concern also applies to the co-requisite math course. Also, a few students managed to drop their co-requisite requirements or were verified out for non-attendance.

90-HOUR CHECKS

ABAC realizes that the path to graduation should be easy for students to navigate; however, changes in policies and programs can occasionally throw a student off-track. ABAC has helped remove barriers to graduation by implementing 90-hour checks for all students who have earned 90 or more credit hours. These 90-hour checkpoints are performed each fall and spring semester for baccalaureate-degree-seeking students. The checks ensure that each student is on-track to graduate within one academic year. Below are the updated results for the 90-hour checks:

	Off Track	Graduated within 1 year	Percentage graduated
Spring 2015	62	41	66%
Fall 2015	92	57	62%
Spring 2016	39	20	51%
Fall 2016	106	81	76%
Spring 2017	75	46	61%
Fall 2017	212	192	91%
Spring 2018	180	154	86%
Fall 2018	213	192	88%
Spring 2019	105	86	82%
Fall 2019	230	197	86%
Spring 2020	*	*	*
Fall 2020	116		
Spring 2021	101		

The table above shows the number of students identified as being off-track for the term given, the number that graduated within one year of being off-track, followed by the percentage. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 90-hour checks were not completed for spring 2020 due to the campus closure and other high-priority needs upon reopening. For fall 2020 and spring 2021, the data will be reported after one year – end of fall 2021 and spring 2022, respectively. This high-impact strategy continues to be a success for the students and the institution by keeping students on track to graduate

Measures of Success
- Increase in third- and fourth-year retention rates
- Growth in the number of students graduating within one year after being identified as being off-track
- An overall increase in the conferment of bachelor's degrees

Lessons Learned
During the 2014-15 academic year, the number of baccalaureate students who reached 90-hours without completing high school requirements or the core curriculum was alarming. Due to these deficiencies, Academic Support implemented 90-hour checks to keep students on track for graduation. The effects of the 90-hour checks can be seen in the number of students graduating within one academic year after being identified. Academic Support, Department Heads, and faculty advisors continue to work with students who are determined to be off-track and get them registered for the required courses the following semester.

ACADEMIC INTERVENTION MANAGEMENT (AIM)
In addition to the 90-hour checks described above, ABAC targets students placed on academic probation after their first semester of enrollment. ABAC requires these students to participate in AIM to help get first-time students on probation back on track to graduate (Academic Intervention Management). This program engages the student in academic interventions, offered both face-to-face and online, with the express purpose of helping students improve their grade point average (GPA) to avoid suspension after their second semester. Below are the results from the past five academic years:

Academic Year	Participants	Completed AIM	Percentage Not Suspended	Percentage Returned to 'Good' Standing
2015-16	39	20	51%	18%
2016-17	164	123	46%	24%
2017 -18	160	132	51%	25%
2018-19	130	91	49%	19%
2019-20	115	98	57%	29%
2020-21	110	91	57%	30%

The result of the AIM program for the 2020-21 academic year reveals continued positive trends. According to our data, the number of first-year students who go on suspension appears to be trending down. Part of this downward trend is attributed to increased faculty use of ABAC's Early Alert System to help us identify students in need of assistance before being placed on probation. The number of students not suspended has remained consistent and well above the average (25%) before implementing the AIM program.

Measures of Success

- Decreased number of first-year students placed on academic probation after their first term
- Number of students continuing on probation or returning to 'Good' academic standing after completing the program with ABAC

Lessons Learned

Losing students due to poor academic performance affects the college both academically and financially. While the AIM program has been successful in helping students rebound from poor academic performance, the approach is still reactive. To better aid students who are not performing to their full potential, ABAC has increased its efforts in utilizing an early alert system. The early alert system, combined with the AIM program, further aids the college in improving retention and helping students progress toward graduation.

OBSERVATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

The high-impact strategies listed above have proven to be successful for ABAC and tie into our institutional mission, "To engage, teach, coach, mentor, and provide relevant experiences that prepare the graduate for life." Our success comes from faculty and staff collaboration and administrative support to increase student persistence and retention. Moving forward, ABAC is looking to further deepen the Momentum Approach using shared data and further expanding campus and community partners. Below are the next steps ABAC will take in addition to some of the practices defined above:

- Update all programs maps to the new format to include career and Student Affairs milestones
- Move forward on the campus Global Communication Plan
  - Utilizing the described Data-CAM to have conversations with campus partners
- Continuation with the Momentum Approach & High Impact Practices
  - Deepen purposeful choices
  - Cultivate productive Academic Mindsets
  - Maintain full momentum along a Clear Pathway
  - Heighten academic engagement
  - Complete critical milestones

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