



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. With its array of quality programs, an abundance of student organizations, a renowned music program, and various intercollegiate and intramural athletic teams, ABAC provides students with ample opportunities to learn and grow as individuals. In addition to delivering relevant experiences that prepare the graduate for life, ABAC is a strategic partner within the University System of Georgia to 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.

2019 ABAC Demographics

Total Fall Enrollment	3,922
Full-Time	63%
Part-Time	37%
Bachelor's Degree-Seeking	59%
Underserved Minority Population	21%
Pell Eligible	38%
First Generation	36%
Adult Learner (age 25+)	11%
Learning Support	8%

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. As of the 2019 fall semester, 50% of full-time first-year students were enrolled in 15 or more hours. Similarly, the number of full-time first-year students who earned 30 or more credits in their first academic year increased from 16.75% in 2012 to 25% in 2019.

Retention and graduation are two other areas worth noting due to our involvement with CCG. ABAC's first-year retention rate for all degree programs has risen from 49.2% for the 2011-12 academic year to 68.4% for the 2019-20 academic year. The USG State College average retention rate for 2019 was 58.3%. In 2012, the USG State College's four-year graduation rate was 4.0%, while ABAC's was 10.3%. The four-year graduation rate for the 2015 cohort was 6.7% and 19.2%, respectively—in part due to ABAC's and the University Systems' development and implementation of CCG initiatives.

The above data shows that on a global-level, ABAC is committed to helping students attain a college degree. Further dissection of the data reveals areas that require further attention. With the Momentum Approach implementation, ABAC is taking a more holistic approach to serving students, which was placed on hold during the Spring 2020 semester due to the pandemic. Efforts include focusing on second and third-year retention rates and reviewing policies and practices that may put an undue burden on underrepresented populations.

MOMENTUM UPDATE

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 49.2%. Since implementing the Momentum Year Approach, ABAC's overall retention rate is 68.4% and continues to rise. Similarly, second-year retention rates rose from 33.2% in 2011 to 44.5% in 2019. Below is a brief synopsis of each area of our current Momentum work, followed by data on our high-impact practices.

Purposeful Choice. Too many choices for a college major, in the absence of adequate information, can lead to excess credit or, worse, non-completion. 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. By the end of Fall 2018, ABAC implemented the following Academic Focus Areas based on our degree offerings:

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

Incoming students, including those who are undecided, are placed in a focus area based on their interest to allow for career exploration—with less risk of falling behind. Enrollment Counselors, Academic Support Counselors, and faculty advisors during orientation and advisement ask probing questions to determine a student's subject interest, career outlook, and hobbies. Based on this information, students are assigned to an appropriate focus area.

Transparent Pathways give incoming students a clear picture of what is required to graduate in four years with a bachelor's degree. 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 were implemented in Fall 2019 and can be found in ABAC's catalog at <https://catalog.abac.edu/>. Each program map contains the following:

- English and math requirement 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
- Research or internship requirement (bachelor programs)

Academic Mindset - ABAC administered the Academic Mindset Survey to 273 new students in Fall 2019. The Mindset Survey gives the institution a view of a student's growth mindset around academics and their resilience in the face of setbacks. Data from the Fall 2018 and Fall 2019 mindset surveys were shared with the Center for Teaching & Learning (CTL) to help inform and develop a series that focuses on pedagogical techniques to boost student success. The data is also being used by the Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs and the Assistant Vice President of Academic Affairs to build interconnecting programming to help students feel connected to the campus from Orientation & Welcome Week to graduation. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, these plans were temporarily shelved, and programming using the mindset data will be evaluated in Spring 2020.

MOMENTUM HIGH-IMPACT STRATEGIES

15 TO FINISH

ABAC continues to preregister first-year students before their scheduled orientation session. Ideally, 100% of incoming students would take 15 hours each term to complete a total of 30 hours by the end of each academic year; however, this is not a realistic expectation. ABAC's student body profile changed slightly due to consolidation in Fall 2018; however, ABAC strives to have 50% of all first-year students registered for 15 credit hours during their first term or complete 30 hours within their first year.

Currently, Academic Support preregisters all full-time new students for 15 hours; however, some opt 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, advising review sessions each fall and spring. Financial aid counselors encourage students to take 15 hours a semester to graduate on time. Also, our 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	919	458	50%	32%**	31%

*FYS = First-year students

**Based on Fall 2019 only

Measures of Success

- Increased number of first-year students enrolled in 15+ hours to 50%
- A slight increase in the number of first-year students completing 30 or more hours in their first year

Lessons Learned

ABAC has been consistent in delivering the message 15 hours a semester to graduate on-time. This message is delivered at orientation and welcome week and is repeated during advising, the first-year seminar series, and through published materials (e.g., Program Maps). Results can also be seen in our on-time graduation rates. The four-year graduation rate, in 2013, for bachelor's degree-seeking students was 7.5%. For 2015, the on-time graduation rate rose to 19.2%.

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 presenting the learning support success rates for first-year students starting at ABAC for the 2019-20 academic year:

Co-Req. Course	Students Enrolled	% Exited*
English Only	28	71%
Quant. Reasoning or College Algebra	171	71%
Both English & Math	76	74%

Measures of Success

- Demonstrated an overall increase in the number of students being registered for their appropriate learning support courses
- Percentage of first-year students satisfying their learning support requirement(s)

Lessons Learned

ABAC's student success rates for learning support have slowly risen since the implementation of co-requisite learning support. The increase in success is attributed to the English and Math faculty's restructuring of learning support, increased use of the Early Alert System, and preregistering students for their learning support requirements. Also, the Learning Support Coordinator has increased the monitoring of learning support students to provide additional support to those students at risk of withdrawing or failing.

ADDITIONAL HIGH-IMPACT STRATEGIES

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 audits 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 one 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	166*		
Spring 2020	**	-	-

*Data pulled after grade processing for Fall 2020

**Due to COVID-19 & campus closure, checks where not performed

The table above presents the number of students which were identified as being off-track for the term given, the number that graduated within one year of being identified as being off-track, followed by the percentage. This high-impact strategy continues to be a success for the students and the institution—as seen in the number of students who graduate within one-year after being identified as off-track.

Along with 90-hour checks, 30-hour checks are conducted on all students. This automated check determines and notifies students that they have not completed Area A of the USG core curriculum. Faculty advisors and Academic Support are notified of students off track, and appropriate outreach is conducted. The 30-hour check continues each term and is considered a best practice strategy.

Measures of Success

- Increase in third- and fourth-year retention rates
- A strong percentage of students graduating within one year after being identified as off-track
- An overall rise in ABAC's graduation rate for 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 reviews 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)

ABAC recognizes that life and setbacks can get in the way of student success. One way of ensuring success is by removing barriers and offering active academic support. ABAC's AIM program is a service to help our students develop the academic skills needed to be successful. The AIM program targets students placed on academic probation after their first semester of enrollment. To help get our first-time students who are on probation back on track to graduate, ABAC requires these students to participate in AIM (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	66	57%	29%

The AIM program continues to reveal some positive trends for our students. 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 continued faculty use of ABAC's Early Alert System. The number of students not suspended continues to increase and is well above the average (25%) before implementing the AIM program in 2012.

Measures of Success

- Decreased number of first-year students placed on academic probation after their first term
- Number of students continuing probation or returning to 'Good' academic standing after completing the program with ABAC (i.e., avoiding suspension)

Lessons Learned

During the Spring of 2019, Academic Support was down one position, which impacted the AIM program by taking time away from students. This impact can be seen in the data table above for 2018-19. With the position refilled, ABAC was able to fully engage our AIM students by allotting them the time and follow-up needed in helping these students learn how to be successful on their terms.

CAMPUS - WIDE MOMENTUM APPROACH

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." The momentum approach has proven successful in engaging students academically, and now ABAC looks to apply the same strategies cross-campus (e.g., financial aid, student life, etc.). ABAC's Momentum team attended the Momentum Summit III from January 28 to January 29, 2020, to determine areas in need of improvement; however, moving forward with our new Momentum Approach was put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic and campus closure shortly after the summit. Below is a brief discussion of ABAC's Momentum Approach.

Purpose

Priority Work	Development of Career Maps & Linking to Program Maps
Description of Activities	The Assistant Vice President of Academic Affairs is working with the deans, department heads, and faculty to develop career maps that list career opportunities and salary ranges based on a student's focus area or program. These career maps will then be linked to the established program maps in the ABAC catalog.
Activity status and plans for 2020	Some progress has been made toward the career maps; however, completion by the end of 2020 was not possible due to the pandemic. The momentum committee will reconvene to discuss a new timeline in January of 2021.

Priority Work	College-Wide Career Fair
Description of Activities	The inaugural campus-wide career fair was to be held in Spring 2020 but was canceled due to COVID-19.
Activity status and plans for 2020	Despite the setback, ABAC has continued to recruit employers and post-career opportunities within our platform, ABAC Connect (Purple Briefcase)—allowing students and potential employers to connect. The planning of the college-wide career fair is set to continue pending USG and CDC guidelines

Mindset

Priority Work	Momentum Liaison
Description of Activities	Feedback from faculty and staff indicated a need for additional information and transparency about the Complete College Georgia Initiative—Momentum. A faculty representative from each school or department was selected to serve as the momentum liaison to address this concern.
Activity status and plans for 2020	The deans and department heads of each school selected a faculty member to serve on the Momentum Committee and act as their liaison. Due to the pandemic, the newly formed Momentum Committee has not convened. The committee is expected to meet in January 2021 to evaluate the current Momentum Plan and develop a timeline for the new momentum work.

Priority Work	Faculty Mindset
Description of Activities	To work in line with the student Mindset Survey, the Center for Teaching & Learning will develop a survey to explore the faculty beliefs and perceptions of instruction and student learning.
Activity status and plans for 2020	The director for ABAC's Center of Teaching & Learning is actively involved with the Mindset initiative and is currently developing a survey.

Pathways

Priority Work	Study-Away, Study Abroad, & Program Maps
Description of Activities	The Assistant Vice President of Academic Affairs will work with each school's curriculum committees to find ways to add study-away and study abroad opportunities to a student's plan of study—four-year degree programs only.
Activity status and plans for 2020	Due to COVID-19, study-away & study abroad opportunities are restricted. This strategy will be revisited during the Momentum Committee's meeting in January 2021.

STUDENT SUCCESS AND COMPLETION TEAM

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