ANDERSON - Homecoming festivities drew a big crowd to Anderson University’s sports campus Saturday.

The day kicked off with the annual Trojan BBQ Cook-Off, named in honor of the school mascot. That event attracted droves of students, graduates and families wanting to sample offerings from nearly 20 competitors. No Pig Left Behind, Backwoods Bar-B-Que, Big Dicks, Smokin’ Stacks and Pimp My Pigs all took home honors in the cook-off, which was sanctioned by the South Carolina Barbecue Association.

A crowd of more than 1,000 stayed to watch the men’s and women’s soccer doubleheader and the crowning of the homecoming court at midafternoon. Seniors Caleb Cash and Meredith McCray were crowned homecoming king and queen at a ceremony between the women’s and men’s soccer games.

Cash, a business major from Powdersville, was understandably honored.

“I love AU, I love being a part of the AU family, and every year here has been great,” he said.

McCray received her crown from 2013 Queen Lindsey Riley, who happens to be her old roommate.

“I think it’s crazy that I’m a senior and qualified to be homecoming queen,” said McCray, an interior design major from Boiling Springs, North Carolina.

Sarah Mudd, the university’s student activities director, said the turnout Saturday was a fitting conclusion to a good homecoming week.
“We had 850 students at the (homecoming) dance last night,” said Mudd. “There were huge turnouts for all of the student events this week.”

Homecoming at Anderson University doubles as a chance for the university to market itself to parents and family members. Wayne and Dawn Roberson came from Spartanburg to visit their freshman daughter, Rebecca, and meet some of her instructors.

“We’ve been very impressed, from start to finish, with the whole process of getting her here and getting her on campus, as well as the professors and teachers we have met,” Wayne Roberson said.

Anderson University President Evans Whitaker called homecoming a success.

“It’s been beautiful,” he said. “This weekend’s weather has been beautiful; the food was wonderful; the crowds have been huge; and the spirit has been great.”

Graduates and parents could also see progress on the new athletic facilities — softball stadium, tennis center and swimming pool — under construction on the old Anderson County fairgrounds property on Williamston Road.

“We still have a ways to go with construction, obviously, but it’s underway, and we’re very excited,” Whitaker said. “We’re also still on pace to begin constructing our new student center in late spring or early summer.”

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