

SHARPENING OUR FOCUS ON THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Alabama Community College Association

ACCA

Spring 2020

ACCA Journal



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The ACCA Executive Committee met in February to plan the activities for this year which will culminate in the annual conference at the Sheraton Birmingham Hotel/Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex, November 22-24. During the February meeting, we wore our 2020 glasses as we focused on what was important to us collectively as a system, and we decided it is the experience the student has at our institutions. The Committee selected *Sharpening Our Focus on the Student Experience* as the theme for 2020. Little did we know what challenges each of our colleges would face the following month as our students approached spring break. This issue of the ACCA Journal gives insight into some of the transformations we have made in order to deliver instruction as well as support services to both students and communities from our respective campuses.



Many of you may not feel comfortable getting out of your house right now, much less attending a conference. However, we are looking toward a brighter and better future and continue to plan for the November meeting. The proposal process is open and you are encouraged to submit a presentation for consideration. By attending the conference, you will have the opportunity to network with other employees from across our state to share experiences, discuss ideas, and learn about topics that may help you in your daily work. Without your participation, the conference will not be as strong since you are a part of what makes the Alabama Community College System so important.

I hope that everyone stays safe and healthy throughout the summer and that we can look forward to a return to a more normal life in the fall.

Ben Jordan
2020 ACCA President

COVID-19 STATEMENT

The health and safety of our community and event attendees is our highest priority. As we continue to monitor guidance related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the System Office, we are committed to taking appropriate precautions to provide a safe environment that does not place our ACCA committee members or event attendees at undue risk. At this time, the CDC has not indicated that organizations in the United States should consider postponing or canceling events that occur in November. Given the evolving nature of COVID-19, we will continue to closely monitor developments. Should we receive information that would prompt us to make adjustments to our event schedule, we will immediately notify all impacted parties through email and post updates on our website.



2020 ACCA CONFERENCE

**SHERATON BIRMINGHAM HOTEL
& BJCC CONVENTION CENTER
BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA**

NOVEMBER 22-24, 2020

REGISTRATION:

SEPTEMBER 1 - OCTOBER 31.....	\$175.00
NOVEMBER 1 - CONFERENCE DATES....	\$200.00

BEVILL STATE

SUPPORTING STUDENTS NO MATTER WHAT

The goal of TRiO Student Support Services (TRiO SSS) at Bevill State Community College has always been to provide limited income, first-generation, and disabled students with opportunities for academic development and to motivate students toward the successful completion of their post-secondary education.

During this trying time, that goal remains the same. Students, across the United States and at Bevill State Community College are facing challenges that they have never faced before. Their traditional classes have moved to an online format, and an inability to digitally connect is a challenge many of our students face. Students are struggling with feelings of isolation and are longing to be active with fellow students, faculty, and staff.

In TRiO Student Support Services, we are choosing to be creative in the ways we engage with students, to ensure their success remains a top priority. First, we communicate with students and ask them how we can be of service. Most students have advised that communication is key and they enjoy how TRiO SSS breaks down need to know information to them. Secondly, in our efforts to stay engaged and connected, we have scheduled a semiweekly Zoom Session, affectionately titled Café SSS Jasper. During Café SSS Jasper, TRiO SSS participants are encouraged to check into the zoom meeting and experience the face to face connection they are missing while completing classes remotely. Students can talk with SSS Director, Jaleesa L. Ivy, SSS Academic Advisor, Ebonee Horn, and myself, as well as other students in our program. This has been a hugely successful interaction for our students. In TRiO SSS, we realize that relationships and connectivity assist our participants in accomplishing the goals they have set for themselves. Lastly, TRiO SSS Participants know we are only a call, text, or email away. With our support, students know they do not have to face any challenge alone. TRiO SSS is always willing and ready to assist participants in becoming the greatest version of themselves.

If COVID-19 has taught us anything, it is that student success will always be the priority for Bevill State Community College and TRiO Student Support Services.

Written by:
Tiffany Higgins
Record Coordinator
TRiO Student Support Services
Bevill State Community College-Jasper Campus



BISHOP STATE

SUPPORTING STUDENTS DURING COVID-19 THROUGH THE ARTS

One of the biggest challenges COVID-19 has presented to the education world is taking face-to-face courses and transferring them into a fully online format. This was the challenge Bishop State's art department faced, but the instructors worked together to find creative ways to not only teach but also cultivate a safe classroom-like atmosphere for students.

Mary Kimbrough and Lydia Host are two art instructors at Bishop State who both have experience using technology in the classroom. However, the COVID-19 crisis pushed them to find ways to reach students beyond the textbook and incorporate students' everyday "new normal" into their class and artwork.

"My painting [class], at first, all they wanted to do was visit because I think they couldn't see any options as a painting class that didn't have paint anymore," says Kimbrough. "They didn't have a studio or that vibe we always had in the studio. I had to go about it a different way. So everything that I've given them to do has been in relation to COVID. Like document your week... take a photograph every day and tell us what you have been doing in relation to the situation we are in. Next week, they will do some kind of response that is an art project whether it's a collage or a drawing or something they can do at home."



Host has incorporated a self-care discussion thread into her weekly assignments as an outlet for students. The thread has links with information about self-care and also allows students to share what they are doing to take care of themselves during this time.

"So many students have loved that and given me great feedback, but it's interesting," Host recounts. "One class is all about family and sharing pictures of their families and kids and partners. Another class is about what tv shows they are binge-watching. It's been an outreach to our students that they have responded to in every class."

Host says she also set up virtual office hours via Zoom and invited students in all of her classes, including the fully-online classes, to join her if they wanted. To her surprise, she says students from her online class showed up and seemed to appreciate the human touch.

"I think I'll always use something like Zoom, even with my online classes from here forward," says Host after the experience. "That's going to be a permanent change. I really miss my classroom. I really miss my students. Zoom is a good replicator for the classroom. It recreates a sense of community that's really important for our face-to-face classes."

"A lot of our students are struggling because of this crisis. We're all struggling," says Kimbrough. "I guess one of the things I have emphasized with my communication is that there is a person behind these messages that [they're] getting who actually is also experiencing this stuff and is also sympathetic to [them] and understands and actually cares about [their] struggles."

CALHOUN

SOCIAL DISTANCING IS TOP PRIORITY WITH NEW 100% ONLINE MEDICAL BILLING PROGRAM AT CALHOUN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Calhoun Community College has a strong impactful saying we share interchangeably across our three locations and that is, “Student Success is everyone’s Business”. In light of the many changes surrounding COVID-19, that saying has become more prevalent each day that we interact with our students and hear more stories about job loss, decreased wages, and most importantly, those who are seeking job security in a world full of uncertainty. It is during this time that our faculty and staff have rolled up their sleeves and truly began to focus on sharpening the experience for every student seeking our services.

According to information released by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment prospects in the medical billing industry are projected to grow by at least 22 percent over the next few years. To answer this demand, Calhoun is introducing a new fully online Medical Billing certificate program that will go live in the fall of 2020.

The program will be offered by the College’s Business Administration department. According to Dr. James Payne, Calhoun’s Dean of Business and Computer Information Systems, the program is designed to be completed in two semesters. It includes preparation for the Medicare Billing Certificate and the Certified Medical Reimbursement Specialist (CMRS) credentials. All required coursework for this program can be completed exclusively online.

As unemployment in North Alabama continues to rise, there still remains a strong local demand for trained medical billing specialists in our region. “To assist in filling those industry gaps, Calhoun has taken this opportunity to expand its course offerings in the health field by developing this new short certificate program,” commented Dr. Joe Burke, Calhoun’s Interim President. “The coursework will guide students toward the skill set and credentials needed for a career in medical billing and will introduce them to related careers including medical coding and management of electronic health records,” commented Payne.

Payne says that the program is open to anyone interested in pursuing a career in the medical billing field. The Medical Billing Specialist certificate includes coursework in essential office skills, medical knowledge, and is designed for someone who is just starting their studies. He states, “The Medical Billing Essentials certificate, which consists of only the core billing courses, is a great choice for people who are already working in the healthcare field and want to obtain additional skills for promotion.”

Students who have begun coursework, but have not completed a healthcare degree can use either program to build on existing skills and start their career in the medical industry. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the local median pay for those employed in the medical records field is \$40,620 per year.



CENTRAL ALABAMA

CORONAVIRUS CONUNDRUM: WHICH CLEANERS TO USE?

Scientifically speaking, what is the best way to sanitize your home and workspace? One approach is to look for EPA Registration numbers on cleaning product labels. If this number appears on List N of the EPA website, it's regarded as meeting the criteria for use against the coronavirus. The most recent list can be accessed by entering the following TinyURL into any web browser: <https://tinyurl.com/EPAListN>.

Considering that many retailers are running low on cleaning products, many scientists are suggesting the public work with whatever resources are available. Based on reliable, scientific sources, we have compiled a list of cleaners that are considered effective against the coronavirus.

You should mind two, important points. First, cleaners are chemicals, and when they're combined, even under absolutely careful conditions, new, highly dangerous chemicals can form. Second, when disinfecting, always work under good ventilation and wear gloves and safety glasses. Many cleaners are irritating to the skin, eyes, and respiratory tract.

Effective Cleaners

Alcohol. Both isopropyl alcohol (rubbing alcohol) and ethyl alcohol (ethanol) are known to inactivate the coronavirus. The CDC advises using at least 70% alcohol and water. However, use them carefully because in high concentration, alcohols are flammable, dehydrating to the skin, irritating.

Bleach. One recent study found that dilute bleach could disinfect non-porous surfaces in 1 minute. The CDC advises preparing bleach solutions by adding 5 tablespoons ($\frac{1}{3}$ cup) of household bleach per gallon of water. Keep in mind that bleach is potentially irritating to the eyes, skin, nose, throat and lungs. Also, mixing bleach with other cleaners can create highly toxic gases.

Hydrogen Peroxide. The CDC has reported that 3% hydrogen peroxide will inactivate viruses. However, hydrogen peroxide can be toxic if ingested or inhaled, and its fumes can cause respiratory irritation. When hydrogen peroxide is mixed with other cleaners, the resulting solution is potentially dangerous!

Quaternary ammonium cleaners. These products are also known as "quats" and are found in products like disinfecting wipes and Formula 409. Many manufacturers advise applying "quats" to a surface, letting it sit for 60 seconds, and then wiping the surface clean. The hazards associated with using "quats" include skin and eye irritation.

Soap & Water. One recommendation that countless experts are making is to use soap and water. Soap contains molecules called "surfactants" that can disrupt the protective coating of most microorganisms. Soap and water are effective in cleaning non-porous surfaces, skin, hair, and laundry.

As information about the coronavirus continues to flow, it is becoming increasingly harder to separate truth from fact. Nowhere is this notion more apparent than in the discussion about best practice for disinfection. We hope that you find this information useful in cleaning your home and workspace!

By: Zayne Adkins, CJ Clifton, Christiana Ekelem, Jarrett Hill, Graysn Hughes, Andrew Meadows, Jennifer Orona, Brooks Parker, Annie Pham, Ali Richardson, Corbin Shivers, Ethan Taunton, Jayde Trapp, Campbell Woods, Michael Wurtz, Jeremy M. Carr (Spring 2020 CHM112 Course, Central Alabama Community College)

CHATTAHOOCHEE VALLEY

WHETHER ON CAMPUS OR ONLINE, CVCC SHOWS SUPPORT FOR ITS STUDENTS AND THE COMMUNITY

Aurelia Smith wears several hats at Chattahoochee Valley Community College. She serves as a Computer Information Systems (CIS) instructor, Online Learning Coordinator, and Blackboard Administrator. She's used to being flexible in her work while juggling different projects at one time, but like everyone else, she never expected anything like the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, she had to respond quickly in getting CVCC transitioned to functioning completely online.

"It was a lot of work to get the online classes going, but when I think of how at one time, I wanted to be a nurse, I realize this is a lot less stressful in comparison to what our medical providers are going through now. I salute them," she said.

Although Ms. Smith is not on the frontlines working in the medical field, CVCC administrators say she has been on the frontlines of making sure the College smoothly transitioned within a matter of just a couple of days.

"Ms. Smith was the catalyst in bringing our online classes to full capacity," said Dr. Chantae Calhoun, Dean of Instruction. "She immediately went to work developing faculty training to include instructions, videos, and examples of how to teach and advise online. Our department chairs have shown such great leadership, ensuring their areas had what was needed to be successful. The impact our instructors have made on our students is a bright light in a difficult time. They have gone above and beyond to make sure students continue to get a quality education in the midst of such a quick transition."

Students like Alana Joseph know first-hand how instructors have made the difference in getting through this trying time. She said when the campus first closed its doors in mid-March, she was "devastated."

"I went from being on campus four days a week, to not coming at all," she said. "I am not the best online student, so I was worried that I would miss due dates and that my academic performance would fall due to lack of contact with my teachers. I was wrong to say the least. My teachers have been hands-on and available any time I have reached out to them."

In addition to instructors doing their part, the College implemented and developed a modified instructional and service delivery plan to address everything from advising to doing classwork. The College also created a COVID-19 response team, developed a COVID-19 Web page, and even created a YouTube video that creatively and humorously emphasized the steps for virtual advisement and summer registration. Additionally, CVCC continues its support of the community. The Health Sciences and Public Safety departments donated Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to the Russell County Emergency Management Agency to help with the shortage.

"I'm extremely proud of the work CVCC is doing during this unprecedented time for our students and the community as a whole," said President Jackie Screws. "Challenges like these test us in ways we could have never imagined, and CVCC continues to pass the test."



COASTAL ALABAMA

COASTAL ALABAMA ENSURES CONTINUED STUDENT SUCCESS

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit the Coastal Alabama area, students were faced with doubt about their academic success. Transitioning from a traditional seated course to an all-online course is a big ask. One could imagine the immense stress that such a change could be on a student, especially if they were already struggling with their classes. However, the faculty and staff of Coastal Alabama Community College have come through in a huge way to ensure the academic success of the students.

In just two days, the network's digital enrollment more than doubled as over 4,000 Coastal Alabama Community College students continued their spring semester studies online. Support staff remained accessible to help faculty continue delivering coursework and instruction. And, advisors continued to maintain relationships with students through phone calls, emails, and video chatting. It's these relationships that faculty and staff have maintained with students that have helped this transition be a nearly seamless one.

Jennifer Barrett, a non-traditional student, works full-time and has been taking classes at night and online since she began in Fall 2016. After graduating high school nearly twenty years ago, Barrett decided to attend Coastal Alabama's Brewton campus to pursue her degree. Her relationship with Kina Burkett, Brewton's Director of Student Support Services, has always been special; however, during the pandemic, Burkett's encouragement helped Barrett stay on track while transitioning to online classes.



"Mrs. Kina Burkett is a true inspiration and divine guidance. Through all the adjustments and struggles Mrs. Burkett's kind words, encouraging characteristics and immediate availability for help were the reasons I knew I could obtain my degree," Barrett says.

Burkett's genuine dedication to her students is shown through her positive attitude. Barrett states, "Her ability to help others see their future is one of her greatest gifts. As we go through struggles with our academics or even in life as we have with the current pandemic of COVID-19, Mrs. Burkett has been our strength in the times of uncertainty."

Barrett thanks Mrs. Burkett for her commitment to her students' futures, countless hours of being a mentor, and the immeasurable support she has provided for her students.

President Craig Pouncey commends all of the College's employees for their hard work and dedication to the thousands of students it serves day in and day out. Coastal Alabama Community College has been at the forefront of response, not only in advocacy of its thousands of students, but the greater communities in which it serves.

DRAKE STATE

DRAKE STATE EMPLOYS OUTREACH CAMPAIGN TO HELP STUDENTS

A deeply collaborative effort at Drake State Community & Technical College is emerging as an effective way to shepherd students through the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the direction of the Alabama Community College System, Drake State shifted to online learning on March 18 and quickly put into place strategies to address anticipated challenges. The Office of Instruction developed policies and provided training to faculty to help transform every classroom into a virtual one. The IT and Operations Departments added curbside internet. Student Services staff distributed more than 80 bags of food to students in need. An informational web page was to the College website. A centralized phone number and email address were established for students who had questions or concerns.

While similar efforts were being made at colleges across the state, Drake State's team knew it needed to do more. The majority of the College's students are working full-time, single parents, considered low income or are first generation college students. These students might experience additional hardships which could derail their education.

"We needed an outreach campaign that would meet students where they are," said Drake State President Dr. Patricia Sims. "Our campus is small so there's an intimate feel to it. We needed to keep that personal connection going."

The College's outreach campaign created as many touch points as possible so students can request help and access resources in a variety of ways, but the primary contact is through coordinated phone calls or texts to students. "It's really a customer service mind frame," said Dean of Student Services Regina Burden. "We're calling to check in with students and help with any challenges they have."

Ronald Allison, 32, an Electrical Technology student in his first semester at Drake State received one of those calls and says it made all the difference. "I was failing one of my classes. She pretty much coached me through getting my attitude right," he said. "It made me feel like people at the College really cared. I got my grade up to a B."

Helping each student individually requires faculty and staff to work collaboratively and be in near constant communication with each other. It's a proactive and thorough process which is repeated until barriers are removed and the student is able to be successful. Although each problem solved may feel like a small win, collectively the effort is making a big difference. "The collaboration between academics and student services is key," said Dean of Instruction Dr. Carolyn Henderson. "With everyone working together and communicating we can really tackle any problem."

When teachers and students do return to campus, it's likely that traditional classrooms will have evolved to a more hybrid learning environment. English instructor Ed Forbes says that his classroom will evolve in another way, too.

"The biggest takeaway for me, though, has been perspective. Times like these are useful in helping one truly realize what is and what is not important in life, and that lesson will most certainly carry over into my teaching."



ENTERPRISE STATE

ESCC TO REOPEN SCHOLARSHIPS, INCREASE FUNDING

Enterprise State Community College is proud to announce that it will reopen its scholarship application on April 1 and increase its total scholarship amount by an additional \$100,000.

“Our college has been blessed over the last two years through increased student enrollment and other efforts,” ESCC President Matt Rodgers said. “Our community is so supportive of us, and one way the College can give back is by increasing our scholarship amounts to support our community and students.”

The scholarship application will reopen on Wednesday, April 1, at escc.edu/admissions/scholar-ships. The new deadline to apply will be Monday, June 1.

For students who previously applied for a scholarship, recipients will be notified by Tuesday, March 31. If a student previously applied for a scholarship but did not receive one, his or her name will be kept in the applicant pool for consideration after the June 1 deadline.

“This is a stressful time and there is a lot of uncertainty, but we are here to serve our community in any way we can,” Rodgers said.

ESCC and the Alabama Aviation College, a unit of Enterprise State, are also continuing to serve their current students while campuses are closed, and instruction is provided online. Student support staff and instructors are reaching out to students to make sure the transition to online learning is as smooth as possible, connecting them with staff members who can answer their questions about technology, Canvas or other campus updates. Dual enrollment staff are also continuing to work with partner high schools to help those students have the opportunity to enroll in courses for the upcoming summer and fall semesters.

Additionally, resources typically available to students on campus were adapted for online and Canvas use while campuses were closed. These include learning resources for research, which are available through the ESCC library, the campus bookstore and VitalSource, the Alabama Virtual Library and other sources.

Free tutoring services offered through ESCC’s Boll Weevil Central are also available through Canvas so that students are still able to receive assistance with coursework virtually.

“I am proud of the dedicated team of educators and staff members who have done so much to make this transition as smooth as possible,” Rodgers said. “I also want to thank our current students for their hard work during this time and encourage them to keep it up to end the semester strong.”

“We strive to provide excellent instruction and student support services, and we will continue to do so as we look forward to the summer and next fall.”

“Whether you’ve been with us in the past or you’re thinking about starting a degree or certificate program, we’re here to help you keep your momentum going,” Rodgers said.



GADSDEN STATE

CARDINAL TUTORING CENTER STILL DELIVERS IN ONLINE ENVIRONMENT

Lessie Couch knew it wasn't going to be easy but she was prepared to do her best. She knew some students approached online learning with trepidation but she was going to try her hardest to help them. She knew that she and other tutors had their work cut out for them but they were ready to meet the challenge.

Couch, a sophomore at Gadsden State Community College, and her fellow peer tutors at the Cardinal Tutoring Center knew their roles were as important as ever after Gadsden State transitioned to online instruction exclusively on March 17.

"We know there are students who are not familiar or comfortable with online learning," she said. "We understand some students are stressed about whether or not they are going to be successful online learners."

The Cardinal Tutoring Center provides one-on-one tutoring services to Gadsden State students. Previous to campus closures due to COVID-19, students could visit one of three centers to receive tutoring in a variety of areas as well as through an online program called Upswing.

"Upswing allows us to provide free, confidential and convenient academic support to Gadsden State students in an online environment," said Kenneth Smith, director of the CTC.

Couch said students can log into Upswing and see which tutors are available. Tutors are also contacting students to offer support through the online program. "Tutoring is still an option, and we need them to know that," she said. "We are here to help them with the transition to online learning, and we can help them prepare for finals. A lot of us are being more flexible with our time so we can help more students."

The CTC has had about 450 online tutoring sessions since Gadsden State instruction went to online only. "I'm so proud of the tutors and the students who continue to work towards their educational goals by utilizing tutoring services," Smith said. "Everything continues to run smoothly, and we are thankful for that."

Couch said that tutoring has brought some normalcy to her day, and she finds it rewarding. "To me, tutoring is a way to serve my community," she said. "Sure, I receive a half-tuition scholarship for being a tutor but that's not what it's all about. It's about helping others; helping my peers succeed."

And, she is getting as much from the students she tutors as they are getting from her.

"I've learned a lot about myself through the Cardinal Tutoring Center," she said. "I've tutored people from different backgrounds, ages and cultures. I've grown as a person. This has been a good life experience for me."

Smith said he's proud of those tutors who are going above and beyond to help others during this trying time. "They are making sure the students' needs are being met," he said. "Our students know the CTC is here and our tutors are ready to serve just as though our tutoring centers were open on campus. The CTC is, as always, ready to serve our amazing students."



INGRAM STATE

ISTC STUDENT REPRESENTED OTHERS WHO HAVE TURNED LIVES AROUND THROUGH EDUCATION

When she was recognized by Governor Kay Ivey during the 2020 “state of the state” address, Ingram State Technical College logistics student Brandi McCain represented hundreds of Alabamians who have turned their lives around through education.

McCain, who attended ISTC in 2018, was one of four featured guests at the event, during which the governor discussed the importance of education in building a world class workforce. While McCain described herself as “really surprised” at the invitation to be part of the event, logistics instructor Matt Poole was not. “Brandie was a leader in her class, always up for a challenge and focused on success.”

McCain, is quick to point out that she knew very little about the burgeoning logistics industry when she enrolled at Ingram. “I chose logistics because I wanted something completely different from any of my previous jobs,” she explained.

Within a year, she completed the coursework needed for three short certificates. McCain credits Poole with helping her gain the skills she needed to compete in the job market. “My experience was nothing short of excellent,” she said. “Mr. Poole taught me more than I could have imagined.” McCain was also among the first group of ISTC students to earn the nationally recognized Certified Logistics Associate credential from the Manufacturing Skills Standards Council (MSSC). “In addition to reaffirming to the students what they have learned in the program, the certification process also lightens the training load for employers,” Poole explained.

ISTC president Annette Funderburk said the MSSC credential is one of several industry certifications available to students. “We have worked diligently to integrate industry recognized certifications into all of our career technical programs,” she said. “Experience has shown us that the credentials help graduates overcome barriers to employment.”

Knowing she would be released before completing her program of study, McCain met with Ingram’s job placement team for assistance in locating a job where she could use her newly acquired skills. “The staff made me feel like someone special, and cared about my future,” she explained. “They wanted me to succeed.”

Following a lead provided by Career Coach Joanne Young, McCain applied for and secured a job at Wright Way Staffing in Fairfield as a logistics coordinator. Poole incorporated McCain’s experience in her new job into classroom activities. “Our students aren’t eligible to participate in co-op learning, but we could view the company website, and Brandie sent updates about different projects she worked on.”

When the company closed their logistics division, Brandie was invited to move into an office administrator/staffing recruiter job at Wright Way. These days she keeps in touch with Poole, and with the job placement specialists at Ingram who helped her find a job – in her new role as an employer looking to hire other qualified ISTC graduates.



JEFFERSON STATE

JEFFERSON STATE PROVIDES VENTILATORS TO HELP FIGHT COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Jefferson State Community College provided much needed respiratory ventilators to East Alabama Medical Center recently to help patients during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Jefferson State is here to assist our community and state as a whole, particularly in crises like this,” said Jefferson State President Keith Brown. “It takes all of us working together and we are pleased to provide ventilators to support our healthcare workers and help those affected by the coronavirus.”

The ventilators were provided from Jefferson State’s Respiratory Therapy Program which celebrated its first graduates in 2019. The program uses these ventilators in simulated healthcare laboratories, where students learn and train for healthcare careers. The equipment from these student labs is the same as those used in fighting the coronavirus across the nation.

“The Respiratory Therapy Program was a direct response to the needs of our healthcare community because of the shortage of qualified respiratory therapists,” said Jefferson State’s Director of Community and Media Relations David Bobo. “Today, by providing ventilators, we are proud Jefferson State’s program is helping our communities in even more ways than originally expected.”

Jefferson State will continue to work with the Alabama Community College System and area hospitals to help ensure the safety of students and the community. For the latest information regarding the college’s coronavirus efforts, go to Jefferson State’s COVID-19 Response website.



LAWSON STATE

LAWSON STATE EMBRACES REMOTE LEARNING AMID CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Lawson State Community College has quickly implemented ways to remain engaged with students while they're away from campus amid the coronavirus pandemic. Like so many other institutions of higher education, Lawson State pivoted from traditional classroom learning to virtual in a matter of days due to COVID-19. While coping with the need for rapid adjustments, the college's focus to address the needs of students has been at its center since the global crisis reached the state of Alabama.

Starting the week of March 16th, college administrators, staff, and instructors have worked diligently to establish outreach efforts to communicate with students remotely. Online instruction officially moved to Blackboard for all students enrolled at LSCC—regardless of discipline. The new infrastructure includes a once a week invitation where students are encouraged to participate in live conference calls to address any questions about the transition to online learning and to address their concerns and anxieties related to the switch.



Victoria Barnes, a sophomore, pre-nursing major from Birmingham, has had to contact the college several times for virtual tutoring and advising since starting online classes from home. "This is hard, but it's not going to take me out. Just because I'm not physically on campus doesn't mean that I can't keep the same discipline," she said. Barnes also commended the efforts of the college adding, "You can tell that our administration is giving their all to set us up for success. My teachers have been nothing but helpful and compassionate."

"Our focus is clear--we want to engage our students one-on-one using remote means. This is important for it not only helps to better mimic a regular classroom experience, but it engages our students in a truly meaningful and beneficial way," said Dr. Sherri Davis, academic dean of the college. "We want to touch as many students as we can, and we believe virtually learning does just that," Davis continued.

"I am so pleased with the response of the entire college through this transition and proud of the innovation that is taking place. We've found creative ways to keep our momentum going to the benefit of our students," said Dr. Perry W. Ward, president of Lawson State Community College.

"I've been encouraged through this whole process because we are getting direct information from the college and are doing the classwork required to earn our credits," said sophomore Derrick Lee, a native of Adamsville who studies secondary education. Lee added, "All the administrators and instructors are making sure that we are still getting what we need for the remainder of this semester, so we can get to that finish line and earn our diplomas."

Summer Registration is currently open, and the Financial Aid Department is still accepting institutional scholarship applications through May 1, 2020. In addition to addressing the needs of current students, Lawson State remains committed to helping prospective students navigate college entry. To help the high school graduating class of 2020, the Lawson State is working to develop Virtual College Fairs.

LURLEEN B. WALLACE

LBW REMAINS RESILIENT

Resilience is defined as “an ability to recover from or adjust easily to change.” Faced with the challenges associated with the COVID-19 outbreak, Interim President Dr. Chris Cox referred to the entire LBW team as just that – resilient. Overcoming the unforeseen obstacles involving virtual learning, recruitment, and everyday operations required creative tactics and a very resilient team.

As instruction transitioned to virtual learning for the remainder of the semester, faculty began to develop unique ways of presenting coursework. Programs that are best completed in a face-to-face environment such as industrial electronics, welding and cosmetology, required instructors to remain resilient by exploring various methods of instruction.

Instructional videos for the welding and electronics programs were created and uploaded to become permanently available for students online. These groundbreaking modifications to coursework will be beneficial to students who miss a class or need additional instruction in future semesters. A variety of creative instruction techniques were developed in the cosmetology program. Through videos, pictures, and submitted summaries, students were able to showcase and personalize their completed work. These innovative updates to virtual instruction will lead to more opportunities in additional courses and permanently enhance the future of these programs.



It was imperative that LBW staff remained accessible and provided constant resources to current and potential students, especially during an unprecedented time. A helpline providing one-on-one virtual instruction assistance was developed for students experiencing technical difficulties. Average recruitment methods also posed a challenge, so personalized efforts were made in recruiting and advising students. Staff formed targeted teams to maintain direct contact with current and potential students. Knowledgeable faculty were able to reach out and answer questions of over 2,500 students. To further assist with communications, an email account for admission inquiries was developed to ensure timely and direct responses. Reaching new enrollment records proved that a resilient approach was successful in adapting to recruitment changes.

LBW has continued to maintain the same exceptional level of operations while staying committed to future projects, programs, and the communities we serve. As our team, the ACCS, the state, the country, and the entire world continues to fight against the COVID-19 outbreak and adapt to the new challenges, we encourage you to remain resilient too.

MARION MILITARY INSTITUTE

MMI CONDUCTS CALL CAMPAIGN TO CURRENT CADETS

In conjunction with the remote learning transition at Marion Military Institute (MMI) due to COVID-19, the college responded with an old-fashioned form of communication—a phone call to check on each and every student. With MMI cadets representing more than 40 U.S. states and territories, college staff would gather information on how students were handling online classes and life under social distancing measures back home.

COL Ed Passmore, USA (Ret.), MMI's Senior V.P. & Commandant of Cadets, explains the motivation for the campaign: "MMI prides itself in providing a very personal touch for all our cadets. We know them all. Our military model encourages community approaches to problem solving. We didn't want to lose that connection with our cadets. Additionally, the outreach accomplishes some other goals. We received good feedback from cadets for issues they've had getting online. This allows us to either fix an issue on our end or help them overcome a challenge on their end—all with the goal to provide them the best online experience possible. We want to help them stay focused and motivated. Sometimes these are just words of encouragement, but our Academic Success Center and other support staff are still very much engaged with the cadets through tutoring, advising and mentoring. Although they are not on campus, we want to assure our cadets that all the resources that they enjoyed at Marion are still available to them."



To that end, COL Passmore tasked out 23 callers representing various campus departments, from coaches and Army ROTC cadre to Commandant's and Advancement staff. Calls began on March 30 and will continue through the end of the semester. By April 7, MMI had gotten in touch with approximately 75% of the student body. The general consensus heard was what cadets miss most: being on campus, their peers and friends, and in-class connections with instructors.

MMI's Mrs. Jillian Stone summarized her contact with 25 students: "As the Academic Success Specialist, I am constantly meeting with students about their grades and how they are doing in classes. Things have gone a little differently since the quarantine. In this time where people are craving normality and human contact, I have had the pleasure to look at a cadet's newly bleached head, hear the story of an (almost) hog attack during a turkey hunt, listen to the stress of juggling a new job and family problems, and hopefully, help alleviate some of the complications of facing online courses. During this time it is important to remember, not only classwork and schedules, but to be kind and thoughtful to each other."

The ROTC department reported on several of their cadets who were, not surprisingly, stepping up to help others during this pandemic. One was recording workout videos to share with battle buddies to stay in shape; two were serving with local EMTs; yet another was working at Amazon on evenings/weekends to support his family.

COL Passmore concludes: "Our minimum goal was to reach out, personally, to each and every cadet during the remaining weeks of the semester. The real results are far more important. The cadets have strongly indicated that the personal touch of this campaign has made them feel connected and valued, which in turn, helps them to keep focused and able to finish the semester strong."

NORTHEAST ALABAMA

NORTHEAST ALABAMA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SERVES STUDENTS THROUGH PANDEMIC

The past few weeks have been anything but ordinary for community colleges across Alabama. As the nation experiences an unprecedented pandemic, the leadership, faculty, and staff at Northeast Alabama Community College (NACC) have remained laser-focused on their students.

For the faculty and staff at NACC, being well prepared is the key to success. Northeast President, Dr. David Campbell, spoke of NACC's ability to adapt to the situation, "Our faculty and staff are using our educational technology support (ETS) to provide a quality education for students during these trying times. Our ETS staff has kept us going in this effort. I commend everyone's dedication to helping our students."

At Northeast, technology resources are second to none. The Learning Management System (LMS) allows instructors to hold virtual classes much in the same manner as their on-classes. Instructors can create video lectures including quizzes using Canvas Studio. Students can submit all work online as well. NACC also offers secure online exams using proctoring tools, allowing courses to continue as normal.



Amid the sudden change of scenery, faculty and staff at Northeast were well equipped as they transitioned to working remotely. NACC's ETS department quickly implemented a "grab and go" program, putting computers in the hands of every staff member and student in need. This program created a seamless transition to online instruction, and students continued in their courses without hiccups. Having over 600 computers readily available allowed this program to be successful.

NACC's technology has allowed the nursing program to continue as well. Recorded lectures, web-based assignments, virtual student meetings, and more are being utilized by the nursing faculty. NACC has also adapted clinical hours for students, which are being met using virtual simulations with facilitation by the nursing faculty. Program Director Dr. Myrna Williamson is confident in their ability to adapt, stating, "The changes we have faced as a college have only strengthened this particular group of instructors."

Northeast Art Instructor Barbara Kilgore is thankful for the ability to keep in touch with her students. "Our students take on-campus courses for a reason. They need someone to be there for them and to hold them accountable," says Kilgore. She has used Zoom, email, FaceTime, and more to meet with students. "My students may not be learning the way they usually do, but this experience is making me a better teacher," Kilgore states.

ETS Director Patricia Falk is proud of the way Northeast has come together to meet the challenge of this situation. "In so many ways, we were ahead of the technology game," Falk says. "Many schools were lacking necessary tools to continue educational operations. If not for a president like Dr. Campbell that supports the use of technology, we would not be where we are today."

Dr. Campbell is appreciative of Northeast's dedication to student success, stating, "We have the best tech support system. Working remotely is not ideal, but NACC's faculty and staff are coming together and making it work as a team."

NORTHWEST-SHOALS

NW-SCC HVAC PROGRAM OFFERS VIRTUAL INSTRUCTION AND ON-THE-JOB TRAINING

Northwest-Shoals Community College (NW-SCC) officially started the Power5 Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) Apprenticeship Program in January. At the time Randy Corsbie, HVAC Instructor, had no idea what challenges were ahead for his program with the COVID-19 Pandemic this spring.

Corsbie quickly adjusted delivery for related technical instruction. "Technology has made it easy for us to adapt quickly," said Corsbie. "Our Power5 students have been able to continue their on-the-job training as I inspect their work live through FaceTime."

The Power5 HVAC Apprenticeship Program prepares students for a career in HVAC by synchronizing related technical instruction at NW-SCC and on-the-job training at a sponsoring local business. Currently, the Power5 HVAC program has 14 sponsoring businesses with 23 student apprentices.

According to Corsbie, he began corresponding with his students through FaceTime as a way to check in with them. However, it quickly turned in to a personal lecture for each student and they in turn, posed different questions related to their job. "One of the best things that has resulted from this difficult situation is that several of my students are more engaged now," said Corsbie. "Through FaceTime and the one-on-one lectures, some are asking more questions that they would not ask in the classroom setting out of embarrassment."

The Alabama Community College System (ACCS) and the Alabama Office of Apprenticeships have identified the NW-SCC Power5 HVAC Apprenticeship Program as the first competency-based model for HVAC apprenticeship. Other apprenticeship programs in the state are time-based, meaning apprentices can only advance once a certain amount of time passes. The competency-based model requires students to prove mastery of a set list of skills. As students progress, their wage will increase. Once approved, the competency list, wage progression, and apprenticeship standards can be used as a model for other colleges, on the state and national level.

In March, ACCS visited the Shoals campus to shoot an apprenticeship training video for community colleges across the state. For more information on the NW-SCC Power5 HVAC Program, contact Alisyn Jackson at alisyn.jackson@nwscce.edu.



SHELTON STATE

SHELTON STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE READY TO WORK TRAINING GOES ONLINE

In its continuing efforts to meet the needs of the West Alabama community during the COVID-19/ Coronavirus pandemic, Shelton State Community College recently began enrolling students in an online version of free Ready to Work training.

More than sixty students enrolled in the cohort that began in early April, and they are completing requirements using a smartphone or a personal computer. Class participants meet together with an instructor via Zoom, and assignments are completed independently. Course topics include workplace communication, workplace behavior, problem solving, computer literacy, and financial literacy. The course can be completed in three weeks.

“We are excited to offer an online version of Ready to Work to any displaced worker during the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Nicole DuBose, Shelton State’s Director of Training for Business and Industry. “We’ve adjusted course delivery and assignments so that students can complete the course remotely, and all students are assigned an instructor who will guide them through this updated version of training.”



Alabama’s Ready to Work program provides a career pathway for individuals with limited education and employment experience and entry-level skills needed for employment with most businesses and industries in the state. This training is provided at no cost to participants.

“Some of our industries are at a greater need for employees during the COVID-19 crisis, but we need a way to prepare those workers for their careers. Virtual Ready to Work allows us to do just that,” stated Donny Jones, Chief Operating Officer of the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama and Executive Director of the Region 3 Workforce Development Council/West Alabama Works. “This is also a way to help individuals who may have lost their jobs due to the pandemic. They can receive great training while remaining safe and practicing social distancing.”

Transitioning to the online environment has been of great benefit to participants. “This pandemic came out of nowhere,” said Albert Lee, a current participant in the online Ready to Work cohort. “I received a message that I could take the Ready to Work classes online, and I was supremely elated!”

New online cohorts will be launched as the COVID-19/Coronavirus situation continues.

“I have always been proud of the way our instructors and staff prioritize the individual needs of students,” noted Jason Moore, Dean of Economic and Workforce Development. “During this situation, I’ve continued to see that on a heightened level. I couldn’t be more grateful for the ongoing efforts of our employees, and I am also extremely proud of the commitment of our students.”

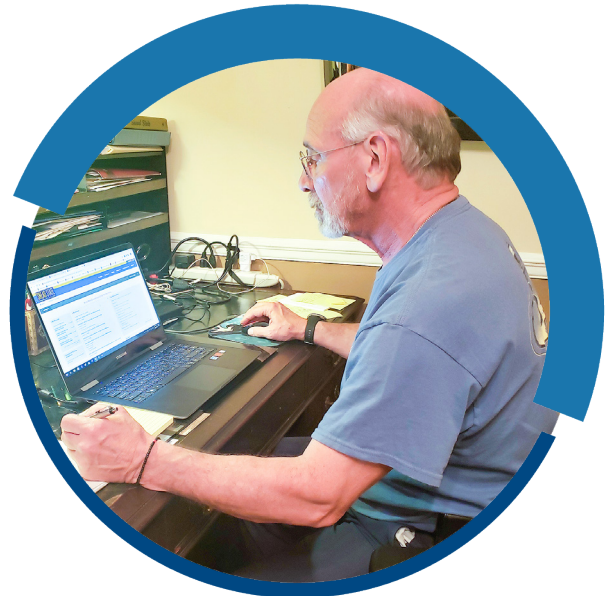
SNEAD STATE

SNEAD STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE RELIES ON 20 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE TO MAKE ONLINE TRANSITION SEAMLESS

When the call was made to move all instruction online in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Snead State Community College relied on its 21 years of experience in delivering distance education. Not only was the transition seamless, but the cutting-edge technology provided students with important online interaction with their instructors and advisors.

Snead State launched Blackboard Collaborate Ultra to support live online lectures, remote advising, virtual tutoring, and more. Faculty have been advising and working with students using e-mail, phone and video tools, and they are using Blackboard Collaborate Ultra to do one-on-one meetings with students and holding virtual meetings/classes.

"All divisions have created a division group within Blackboard Collaborate and included all adjunct faculty so they can do division meetings and include all faculty. They've also used the software in creative ways to benefit students," said Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Annette Cederholm.



Music Program Chair Dr. Barbara Hudson has conducted live session voice lessons using Collaborate, so students can continue their training. Biology Instructor Taylor Robertson has set up a weekly review in Collaborate for his Microbiology and Human Anatomy II courses that began the semester face-to-face and now are completely online. Mr. Robertson said, "I already had my lectures and PowerPoint presentations available online to students in the courses, and by adding this video option, students can feel like they are part of a discussion again."

Director of Workforce Development Teresa Walker has worked with her staff to transition its successful Ready to Work course to online instruction. The content was uploaded in Collaborate to be utilized to provide students with interactive lectures.

Snead State offered its first online classes in 1999 and has since been expanding its curriculum to become a leader in distance education. The College not only offers hundreds of online courses, but also has programs that allow students to earn Associate degrees all online, include an Associate in Applied Science degree in Applied Business. "In this time of almost immediate transition, it has been extremely easy for my live classes to make the transition without losing any time or missing any course material," said Dr. Jonathan Watts, Snead State's Humanities and Fine Arts Division Director.

"When we received word that all our institutions would be moving to an online platform, my response to Dr. Exley was, 'Snead is probably the best prepared college to make this move.' Snead has been a leader in distance learning and that capability makes this transition much less painful."

"Most of our students' schedules already included online courses, so they are acquainted with the BlackBoard LMS," Business Program Director Dr. Meredith Jackson said. "I teach on-campus and online courses each semester, so my transition to online was very easy. My on-campus students already had access to all of my online content including lecture videos, online video links, chapter slides, and other handouts. All I had to do to move our on-campus class online was add assignments and create a schedule for the students."

SOUTHERN UNION

SOUTHERN UNION STRIVING TO KEEP THE BISON SPIRIT STRONG

Southern Union is striving to keep the Bison Spirit strong during the “new normal” of spring semester.

“I cannot say enough how proud I am of each faculty and staff member at SU. They have handled the unprecedented situation we are currently facing with determination and patience, coming together in such a way that the transition of our daily activities was almost seamless. I especially appreciate the flexibility that has been shown, and the encouragement shown to our students, which helps make this experience positive for them,” said SU President Todd Shackett.

Ensuring student success and wellbeing, in all respects, continues to be the college’s main focus. To stay connected, instructors and staff members are doing things such as sending words of encouragement to the SU family through social media. To ease the stress of the transition to online classes, the Student Life Coordinator and SGA officers coordinated a “What I Love Most about SU” video and circulated it amongst the student body. And, though they may look a little different, activities are moving forward. Athletic teams are still meeting via Zoom or Google Meet; honors recognition will be conducted via a virtual platform; and cheerleader tryouts are being coordinated virtually.

Southern Union has also shared its resources during this time, donating supplies, such as gloves and personal protection equipment, from the health sciences division to East Alabama Medical Center in Opelika and Jack Hughston Memorial Hospital in Phenix City. The college dining hall donated perishable food items to the East Alabama Food Bank, and Southern Union truck driving instructors are helping with the distribution of food for the food bank. After all, community is our middle name!



TRENHOLM STATE

ENGAGING STUDENTS THROUGH THE COVID-19 CRISIS

“Shelter in place” and “social distancing” are the new phrases in our lexicon as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak and have become our new normal. But that hasn’t stopped Trenholm State Community College (TSCC) from ensuring that students have all the tools they need to achieve. Even before the COVID-19 crisis began, TSCC was working on expanding the online curriculum and the availability of student services to best accommodate record increases in enrollment. The pandemic put the expansion on the fast track, and our Information Technology (IT) department was ready to respond with a solution.

Recently, TSCC switched to a cloud-based operating system, Microsoft 365, which proved to be a great decision. The operating system offers countless apps, which have become the cornerstone of the Colleges educational/communications platform. “Switching to the cloud was a critical move because we wanted faculty and staff to have access to their email and files 24/7,” said Robert Rollins, TSCC’s Director of Information Systems. “Once the health crisis hit, we were prepared to offer training on the apps provided through Microsoft 365 to faculty, staff, and students, which have helped them remain socially connected.”

Core features in Microsoft 365 like Yammer, Teams, Sway, and Stream have allowed TSCC to connect to students in real-time. Instructors can meet individually with students using Teams, or they can host a live chat with their classes. Student Services offers informational webinars through Teams to new students in order to discuss registration, financial aid, scholarships, and the enrollment process. Yammer is used as an internal discussion forum that allows students to create groups where they can discuss issues and give solutions to each other.

COVID-19 has forced us to distance ourselves from family, friends, and familiar places, so we work to maintain a strong sense of community at Trenholm State. We strive to help our students stay engaged and not feel isolated.



WALLACE – DOTHAN

WCC FACULTY/STAFF GEAR UP FOR ONLINE CLASSES!

Wallace Community College – Dothan (WCCD) faculty and staff quickly geared up for the switch to online classes, but not without careful planning from all stakeholders to brace for the COVID-19 health crisis. It was a plan that came together to support student success, safety, and on-time completion for spring.

Instructors from the Wallace Campus and Sparks Campus attended training sessions on March 17 in computer labs around the Dothan campus. The sessions were designed to help instructors update their online teaching skills and to help their students learn online.

“These are certainly unprecedented times, but they offer us a unique opportunity ‘to rise to the occasion’ and fully live out the mission of our calling as educators,” said Dr. Linda Young, WCCD president. “And, make no mistake, we are all educators, from the first person a student encounters at Wallace in Admissions to security to maintenance and office staff.”

The instructor training was a collaborative effort between Information Technology Services (ITS) and Instruction.

“These training sessions provide information and assistance on using resources and testing products incorporated into our courses as we continue online instruction,” said Leslie Reeder, dean of instruction.

ITS stepped up and made online courses a reality. The ITS staff quickly repurposed laptops to support employees and reallocated resources to support a remote operational presence. ITS also created a virtual desktop pool, allowing employees and students to access a full Windows 10 desktop and software. Beginning March 30, the College began offering WiFi in parking lots on both campuses for students who have little or no internet access.

The online learning experience offers an opportunity to create a virtual community. “My instructors are in communication with us and use various tools to continue to hold classes,” said Aleigh Lanier. “Even though we can’t meet face-to-face, my study group continues to meet using Microsoft Teams.” Lanier is an Associate Degree Nursing major.

“I’m continually amazed by Wallace’s faculty. I always adored them, but I respect them even more because of their tenacity in tackling this crazy online adventure, while many of them are homeschooling their kids,” Tweeted WCCD student Grace Poynter.

Maintaining communication with students is crucial. Essential personnel are available daily. Admissions and financial aid are accessible online. The WCC Helpdesk provides technical assistance to faculty and students. Emails and voicemail messages are checked several times a day, and instructors are available via email and Blackboard.

“Through this crisis, we are educating our students how to meet challenges head on and be better and stronger because of it,” said Young. “Over the last several days, I have watched so many of our faculty and staff work tirelessly to ensure the success of our students. They have ‘rolled with the punches’ and moved forward—exactly what I know we will all be doing in the days to come.”



WALLACE STATE

WALLACE STATE OFFERING FREE COUNSELING SERVICES TO STUDENTS

Wallace State Community College is now offering free counseling services to students, and in the current crisis, these services are being offered in a virtual environment. David A. Smith, M.S., LPC-S, of Wellstone Behavioral Health is available four days a week to assist students, no matter how big or small their issue may be.

In his first few weeks with the college, Smith said a common issue among the students he's seen has been related to adjustment and students feeling overwhelmed. He added he's fully prepared to deal with any issues a student may be facing.

Smith said there are many reasons someone may seek out therapy - grief, anxiety, depression, trauma, addiction, and relationships are among the most common. However, these few examples do not encompass the multitude of reasons why someone may see therapy, he added.

"Everyone needs an outlet, ideally a mental health professional, with whom they can unload all the 'heavy stuff,'" Smith said. "Talking about your problems without censoring any of the sensitive details can be liberating and cathartic.

"Regardless of the problem, stressor or hardship you may be experiencing, everyone can benefit from seeing a therapist. Therapy can help you overcome current stressors and arm you with the skills to effectively manage in the future."

All students who see Smith through the college will receive those services free of charge. He can refer them to Wellstone if additional counseling or medication is needed at the student's expense or through insurance. Smith is available to students Monday through Thursday from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. His on-campus office is located on the third floor of the Bailey Center, office 306. While working remotely during the COVID-19 crisis, he can be reached at david.smith@wallacestate.edu and is scheduling virtual counseling sessions over Skype or other means available to students.

The counseling services are offered as part of the college's participation in the Caring Campus Initiative with the Institute for Evidence-Based Change (IEBC). Wallace State is one of 10 community colleges in the first cohort across the United States chosen to participate. Supported by IEBC coaching and guidance, professional staff teams at Wallace State will engage in work developing specific behavioral commitments, helping staff to better connect with, and support, students to help them reach their educational goals.

Funded through a \$1 million grant from Ascendium Education Group, one of the nation's leading higher education philanthropies, the objective of IEBC's Caring Campus program is to increase student retention and success in community colleges by creating and cultivating Caring Campus environments through the intentional inclusion of all staff in student success efforts. Under the grant, IEBC will work with colleges across the U.S. including Wallace State. Each campus agrees to participate in the Caring Campus Initiative, a coaching-based approach ensuring all staff play a role in enabling students to achieve success.

Other services offered to Wallace State students include a food pantry to address hunger among students; a center for career and workforce development, including a work wardrobe where students can find clothes for interviewing; success coaching; a Veteran's meeting area; and the college has worked with the Wallace State Future Foundation to make emergency funds available for essential needs like transportation.

WALLACE - SELMA

EARLY ONLINE PRESENCE PREPARED WCCS FOR COVID19 CRISIS

In 2002, while most community colleges' primary focus was adding new technical and traditional programs, Wallace Community College Selma began shifting its focus to adding online instruction for both technical and academic courses. "Although during that time online education was not popular for traditional colleges, I clearly understood that online education would provide access to more students in the black belt and surrounding areas where transportation was often a barrier," said Dr. James Mitchell, WCCS President.

The College continued to increase variety and frequency of online course offerings and according to Mr. Raji Gouridine, Dean of Technical Programs and SACS Liaison, the College received approval from SACS to transition AA and AS degree programs fully online in 2008. The popularity of WCCS online program became evident by 2005 when students began to embrace online education. To date, almost two decades later, the momentum has continued as more than 95% of all WCCS students are enrolled in online courses. The College started early establishing a culture that embraces online learning by requiring all courses to have an online shell.



Dr. Tammie Briggs, Dean of Instruction, indicated "it was this early planning that set the stage for a seamless transition during the COVID-19. Because a well-established online infrastructure was already in place, the faculty was able to place emphasis on making student engagement the top priority in this transition." Strategies used to bolster student/faculty engagement included: increased infusion of instructor created videos in online courses, scheduled video conference class meetings, and increased frequency of individual faculty and student conferences.

"Technical instructors are accustomed to blended courses which combine online courses and on campus lab instruction, but during this pandemic; instructors are embracing the alternative method of instructing. However, it is our goal to get students back into the lab as soon as possible, while maintaining an online presence," said Gouridine.

We understand that the success of students largely depends on how well students can manage external factors that impede progress. The College understood the importance of expanding access and revising its method of delivery for support services such as: online student coaching services,

advising, financial, etc. "Student support has become an integral part of student success at WCCS. We have to deal with academic and non-academic issues," said, Dr. Donitha Griffin, Dean of Students.

The College's early and current investments are already seeing positive results. As noted by a student on social media "a huge shout out to Wallace's teachers...they are doing a great job handling classes during this pandemic." Although, some of the traditional students were nervous about online courses, they were able to quickly adjust. "After I heard the news about switching to online learning, I was a little worried. I am only use to taking on-campus classes, so I didn't know how this would affect me," said freshman Semira Jones. "However, my professors were extremely understanding by giving the class several ways to contact them at any time of the day.

AFFILIATES AND SPONSORS



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SOUTHERN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS



TRAINING CONSULTANTS



CHANGING THE WAY AMERICA LEARNS



The UNIVERSITY of WEST ALABAMA