

Alabama Community College Association



PATHWAYS TO POSSIBILITIES  
**REIMAGINING EDUCATION**

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A watercolor illustration of a library interior. It features a large, multi-paned window on the left, through which warm, golden light is streaming. To the right of the window is a tall, classical column. In the foreground, there are several stacks of books of various colors and thicknesses. A large, vibrant autumn leaf in shades of orange and yellow is positioned on the right side, partially overlapping the books. The overall style is soft and artistic, with visible brushstrokes and a warm, inviting atmosphere.

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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The Alabama Community College Association (ACCA) Executive Committee is excited for a year immersed full of knowledge and growth as we carve out new pathways towards a reimagined education system.

In 2024, ACCA is providing professional development through various webinars leading up to the annual conference on November 25-27. During the conference, hundreds of educational professionals from across the state come together to learn, debate, and plan the future of our profession. Our Executive Committee members are ready to provide remarkable roundtable discussions, enriching presentations, and impactful keynote speakers.

The opportunity to see your pride and commitment to serving the individuals of Alabama always leaves me encouraged. I know that together, our efforts result in positive outcomes for all those impacted by the Alabama Community College System.

The annual conference would not be possible without the hard work from the ACCA Executive Committee. All year long, committee members dedicate their time to plan a professional development conference that will strengthen our ability to better serve Alabama's communities.

Thanks to each of you for being an integral part in the success of community college students in Alabama. We look forward to seeing you in November!



**Annette Funderburk**  
**2024 ACCA President**



# CONFERENCE AGENDA AT A GLANCE

## Sunday, November 24, 2024

12:00 - 4:00 p.m.	Registration
1:00 - 1:45 p.m.	Association Meetings
1:00 - 2:00 p.m.	Newcomers' Meeting
2:30 - 3:30 p.m.	Chancellor's Awards
3:30 - 4:30 p.m.	Chancellor's Awards Reception

## Monday, November 25, 2024

7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.	Registration
7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.	Vendor Expo
7:15 - 8:00 a.m.	Light Breakfast
8:00 - 9:30 a.m.	General Session Speaker: Chris Stricklin, Founding President, Dunn University
10:00 - 10:45 a.m.	Breakout Session I
11:00 - 11:45 a.m.	Breakout Session II
12:00 - 1:00 p.m.	Networking Lunch
1:15 - 2:00 p.m.	Breakout Session III
2:15 - 3:35 p.m.	Keynote Address Speaker: Nick Saban, former Head Football Coach, The University of Alabama
3:45 - 4:00 p.m.	Refreshment Break
4:00 - 5:00 p.m.	Commission Meetings <b><i>Dinner is on your own</i></b>

## Tuesday, November 26, 2024

7:30 - 9:45 a.m.	Vendor Expo
7:45 - 8:30 a.m.	Light Breakfast
8:30 - 9:30 a.m.	Breakout Session IV
9:30 - 10:30 a.m.	General Session Speaker: Dr. MC Brown, Executive Director – Payne Center for Social Justice
10:30 - 11:00 a.m.	Closing Session Speaker: ACCS Chancellor Jimmy Baker
11:00 - 11:30 a.m.	ACCA Business meeting

\* Agenda is subject to change



# COMMISSION SPEAKERS



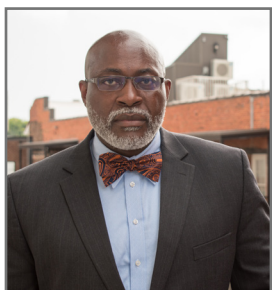
## COMMISSION ON WORKFORCE, LINDSAY CLINE

Lindsay Cline is spearheading workforce development initiatives for the U.S. Navy's Maritime Industrial Base across the Southeast region. With a bold vision of hiring 10,000 skilled professionals over the next decade, she is committed to fortifying the country's submarine production capabilities. Her role involves collaborating closely with schools, workforce and economic development agencies, government representatives, and industry across the Southeast United States to bolster manufacturing and engineering programs that support the workforce needs of shipbuilders and their supplier bases. Lindsay's work extends to guiding efforts that address the workforce needs of the Navy, ensuring alignment with state, local, and federal government representatives.



## COMMISSION ON SUPPORT, LEAVIE D. KING, III

Leavie D. King, III, is a dynamic award-winning speaker, trainer and coach, who possesses an inspiring gift for developing and delivering transformational messages that leave a life-changing impact on his audience. His experiences and accomplishments are diverse and vast, providing him with the unique ability to relate to all audiences. King graduated magna cum laude from Faulkner University, with a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration and a master's degree in management. King founded COACHEDUP where he serves as Founder & CEO, in 2003, to fulfill his passion as an entrepreneur, speaker and coach.



## COMMISSION ON FACULTY, LORENZA PHARRAMS, ED.D

Lorenza Pharrams, Ed.D. is a highly sought-after altruistic educational consultant who possesses compassion for all students but has a specific calling to work with at-risk populations. Dr. Pharrams is considered an expert in the field of at-risk and has dedicated 25 years of his career to working in some of the most challenging environments educators encounter. He is an advocate and proficient trainer in restorative practices. Additionally, he has conducted extensive research in the areas of student discipline and trauma. Throughout his journey in the field of education, he served students in Alabama in various capacities including, but not limited to, teacher, assistant principal, principal (16 years), principal mentor, and district director of At-Risk Students, Attendance, Virtual Learning, and Alternative Learning Programs. Additionally, Dr. Pharrams is a faculty member with the Association for Supervision of Curriculum and Development, (ASCD).



## COMMISSION ON ADMINISTRATION, LTG SEAN A. GAINEY

Lieutenant General Sean A. Gainey assumed command of the U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command and Joint Functional Component Command for Integrated Missile Defense on Jan. 9. In this role, he leads 2,600 military and civilian professionals in their no-fail mission of providing the Army and joint force trained and equipped space and global ballistic missile defense forces, and space, missile defense and high altitude capabilities. The command serves as the Army Service Component Command to U.S. Space Command and U.S. Strategic Command and as the ASCC for ground-based midcourse defense to U.S. Northern Command.

## COMMISSION ON STUDENTS, TO BE DETERMINED



# MONDAY MORNING CONFERENCE SPEAKER

# CHRIS STRICKLIN



Retired Air Force Colonel Chris Stricklin is the Founding President of Dunn University.

Before joining the Dunn Family of Businesses, he was a Partner at Afterburner, Inc, where he led a team of more than 70 former fighter pilots, Navy SEALs, and other Special Forces members to teach corporations around the world how to utilize the same techniques that created military leaders and developed elite teams in the high-stakes environment of combat. He is a combat-Proven Senior Military leader retiring after 23 years which culminated with CEO-Level leadership of a 7,000-person strong, \$7B worldwide organization. During this time, he was responsible for 11,383 personnel, \$323M Payroll, \$160M Contracts, Creation of 1,891 jobs and local economic impact of \$566M. His style combines his unique experience as a U.S.A.F. Thunderbird Solo coupled with CEO-Level duties and Pentagon-level strategic management of critical Air Force resources valued at \$840B,

multiple N.A.T.O. assignments, White House and DARPA fellowships, and command-experience in the United States Air Force to uniquely lead the Dunn team into their next century of construction excellence

Chris is a business executive and three-time bestselling leadership author as well as a highly sought after motivational keynote speaker. In his role as president of Dunn University, he has the responsibility to recruit, train, develop and retain the best workforce possible in the Southeast United States.

In this role, he partnered with the Alabama Community College System (ACCS) to pioneer revolutionary methods of training Alabamians in new careers with livable wages and career progression pathways. This not only allows Alabamians a plethora of new opportunities, but it also grows the trained workforce pool to enable expansion of Alabama industries and companies. As of April 2024, over 16,000 students have enrolled and over 5,000 credentials have been earned through these offerings at the ACCS Innovation Center. As a result of his workforce efforts, Chris has been appointed by Alabama Governor Kay Ivey to both the Alabama Workforce Council and the Alabama State Workforce Board.

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Speakers Presented by



**Paths for  
Success**  
FOUNDATION



# MONDAY AFTERNOON CONFERENCE KEYNOTE SPEAKER

# NICK SABAN



A man of vision who has a proven record of championship success, head coach Nick Saban returned The University of Alabama to the top of the college football landscape with his commitment to building the total program. After the victory over Ohio State in the 2021 College Football Playoff National Championship Game, Saban passed Paul “Bear” Bryant to become the only coach to win seven national titles in the poll era of college football.

In 1998, during their time at Michigan State University, Nick and Terry Saban established Nick’s Kids Foundation in honor of the late Nick Saban, Sr. Since then, the Sabans have maintained and supported their charity throughout their careers at Louisiana State University, the Miami Dolphins and at The University of Alabama. As the official charity of the Saban Family, Nick and Terry invest their time in hosting luncheons, golf tournaments, scrimmages, and other events to benefit the cause.

Saban’s uncompromising dedication to excellence in every phase of the program resulted in six national championships since 2009. A nine-time National Coach of the Year, Saban achieved resounding success as a head coach and earned a reputation as an outstanding tactician, leader, organizer, and motivator. Those qualities sparked impressive turnarounds at every stop of his career. Saban’s consistent approach and disciplined leadership are the reasons his teams are known for exhibiting grit, determination, and resilience, often overcoming adversity to achieve victory.

The 2021 season proved to one of Saban’s best coaching jobs, taking a team that lost 10 players to the NFL Draft – including eight in the first 38 picks and six in the first round – and leading them to an SEC Championship. The 2021 squad also used a victory in the College Football Playoff Semifinal at the Cotton Bowl to earn a spot in the 2022 CFP National Championship Game for the sixth time in the last seven seasons.

In his 28 seasons as a collegiate head coach, Saban compiled a 297-71-1 (.806) record, including a 206-29 (.877) mark in Tuscaloosa. His teams won 19 bowl/CFP games. Saban’s teams at Alabama have won nine SEC Championships while he has 11 SEC titles to his name (2001, 2003 at LSU) to go along with seven national championships (six at Alabama and one at LSU).

A native of Monongah, W. Va., Saban is a 1973 graduate of Kent State University where he earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Business. He earned a Master’s Degree in Sports Administration from Kent State in 1975. Born Oct. 31, 1951, Saban and his wife, the former Terry Constable, have two children, Nicholas and Kristen. They have been married for 52 years and are enjoying the company of their friends, children, granddaughter Amélie, daughter-in-law Samira, and grandson James.



## TUESDAY MORNING CONFERENCE SPEAKER

# DR. MC BROWN



M. C. Brown II serves as Executive Director of the Dr. N. Payne Center for Social Justice at the Thurgood Marshall College Fund. The Payne Center for Social Justice is devoted to independent research that leads to pragmatic and innovative ideas regarding the intractable problem of social justice facing society by conducting and commissioning policy studies and research from and about historically black colleges and universities.

Regarded as an international scholar in the areas of education policy, governance/administration, and institutional contexts, Dr. Brown has lectured and/or presented over 400 keynotes and research papers in various countries on six of seven continents. He is the Founder of the Atwood Institute on Race, Education, and the Democratic Ideal and the former Executive Director and Chief Research Scientist of the Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute of the United Negro College Fund. Dr. Brown's research has been funded by the Lumina Foundation, Spencer Foundation, AT&T Foundation, the Pew Charitable

Trusts, the Sallie Mae Fund, as well as other foundations and corporations.

He is the author/editor of 20 books and monographs, including two editions of the bestselling textbook, *Organization and Governance in Higher Education* – and over 100 journal articles, book chapters, and publications related to education and society. A two-time recipient of the Philip C. Chinn Book Award from the National Association for Multicultural Education, Dr. Brown also received the Association for the Study of Higher Education's Promising Scholar/Early Career Award and the AERA Committee on Scholars of Color Early Career Contribution Award.

Dr. Brown held full-time faculty appointments at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and The Pennsylvania State University and senior academic administrative roles at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas, Fisk University, and the Southern University and A & M College System. He served as president of both Alcorn State and Kentucky State Universities – both 1890 land-grant institutions. In the nonprofit sector, Dr. Brown also held executive appointments at the American Educational Research Association and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.

Dr. Brown received the Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from South Carolina State University, the Master of Science in Educational Policy and Evaluation from the University of Kentucky, and a Doctor of Philosophy in Higher Education from The Pennsylvania State University with a cognate in public administration and political science.



# ACCA ELECTION

ONLINE ELECTIONS FOR THE POSITION OF SECOND VICE-PRESIDENT WILL BE HELD IN OCTOBER. INFORMATION ABOUT THE CANDIDATES APPEARS BELOW :



## **DAVID ALLEN COLE DIRECTOR OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT REID STATE TECHNICAL COLLEGE**

David Allen Cole is a dedicated professional with a multifaceted career spanning military service, industry experience, and education. In 2021, David transitioned to the role of Workforce Development Director at Reid State, where he collaborated with the Alabama Office of Apprenticeship to launch the first CDL apprenticeship in the state of Alabama. In 2022, Reid State became a member of the National College Athletic Association (NCAA) and the Alabama Community College Conference (ACCC), with David taking on the roles of Athletic Director and Career and Technical Education (CTE) instructor.

David served in combat during Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm as a member of the 1st Armored Division stationed in Germany. Over his 26-year military career, he was deployed four times, serving nine years on active duty and 17 years with the Alabama Air National Guard and in the Alabama Army National Guard. David attended Reid State Technical College's ILT program and earned an Associate Degree. David earned his Bachelor's degree from Grand Canyon University in Educational Studies. He also earned his master's degree from Athens State University in Career in Technical Education.



## **BROCK KELLEY, PH.D. PRESIDENT LURLEEN B. WALLACE COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

Dr. Brock Kelley currently serves as President of Lurleen B. Wallace Community College (LBW). Most recently, Dr. Kelley served as Regional Director of Workforce Development for the Alabama Community College System. He founded the Alabama RISE Program at LBW which focuses on training individuals with disabilities for the workforce.

Before joining the community college system, Dr. Kelley served as the Director of Workforce Development for the Alabama Department of Education.

Prior to joining state-level government, Dr. Kelley worked just shy of a decade in K-12 where he served in numerous roles such as the Principal of Charles Henderson High School, and the System-wide Behavior Specialist with the Enterprise City Schools.

Dr. Kelley is a graduate of Lurleen B. Wallace Community College. Dr. Kelley completed a Bachelors in Collaborative K-6 and a Masters in Collaborative 6-12 from Troy University and earned his Ph.D. in Adult Education from Auburn University.

**Scan to vote  
Password is ACCA2024!**





# CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

## JOIN US AT ACCA

**Renaissance Montgomery Hotel and  
Spa at the Convention Center**

**November 24-26**

### CONFERENCE REGISTRATION:

Until November 15.....\$375

After November 15.....\$475

**Must register at the Conference after November 15**

Scan for registration information:



Scan here to book a room:







# ALABAMA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

## CHARLES BARKLEY: 'COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN ALABAMA 'MAKE LIFE BETTER'

Alabama's community colleges are a solid pathway to career opportunities that help residents make life better for themselves and for the state, according to NBA Hall of Famer and Emmy Award-winning sports analyst Charles Barkley.

Barkley shared his thoughts during a visit to Southern Union State Community College's Opelika campus on Friday, August 16, where he joined students and leaders throughout the Alabama Community College System to learn more about the system and its newest statewide ad campaign, Make Life Better.

"That's exactly what you all do at the Alabama Community College System – you make life better for people from all walks of life, and that's what education should be about when it comes to preparing people to be successful," said Barkley, an Auburn University alum.

Barkley's visit to Southern Union included meeting with students and leaders about how Alabama's community colleges strengthen communities. The state's community college system recently announced the colleges' largest enrollment in a decade, with more than 170,000 residents participating in noncredit workforce credentialing classes or pursuing dual enrollment, associate degrees, apprenticeships and transfer opportunities.

The colleges have a more than \$6.6 billion impact on Alabama, with more than 96 percent of the system's students currently living in Alabama and more than 70 percent of students remaining in Alabama to live and to work in the state after completing their studies.

Jimmy H. Baker, Chancellor of the Alabama Community College System, said both Barkley's visit and the system's tagline are among efforts to maximize awareness for what the system offers in academic and workforce development in Alabama.

"Make Life Better is both a call to action and a commitment from every community college in Alabama, and our expectation is that individuals hear Make Life Better and automatically connect the thought to everything their community college represents, from academic and workforce training to the corporate citizenship in service and economic development," he said.







# ALABAMA TECHNOLOGY NETWORK

## ATN IMPACTS ALABAMA

Alabama Technology Network (ATN) is an entity of the Alabama Community College System (ACCS). It serves as Alabama's center for the Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP), part of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST).

Located across the great State of Alabama, Alabama Technology Network is part of 15 Community Colleges and 3 University Campuses. With 54 employees, ATN's mission is to provide workforce training, technical assistance, and engineering services to incumbent workers statewide. ATN offers the most extensive training and service offerings for business and industry, including five primary delivery areas: continual improvement, industrial maintenance and technology, food safety, environmental health and safety, and leadership and management development.

A study published by the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research found that in 2018, ATN provides a sizable net positive economic impact to the State. The Upjohn study examined topline areas of ATN's projected economic impact to the State, including a contribution to Alabama's GDP of \$893 million, an additional personal income of \$437 million, and an effect on the State's gross output of \$2.26 billion. The study also reported that the \$1.8 million federal dollars invested in ATN during the calendar year 2018 generated nearly a 25.08:1 increase in state personal income tax. Then, the return on investment of state funds was 9.67:1. This created a net positive return to the state treasury of an estimated \$45 million.

In 2023, Alabama Technology Network managed to serve 218 different companies with 381 contract projects statewide.

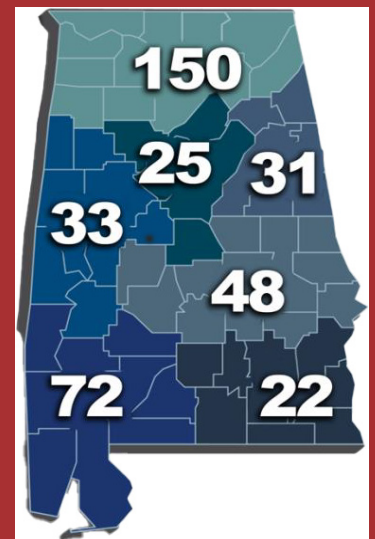
From 2015 through 2023, the following are client-reported economic impacts:

- 1,334 Independent Client Surveys Completed
  - 4,330 New Jobs
  - 16,881 Retained Jobs
  - \$2.7B Increased & Retained Sales
  - \$562M in New Client Investments
  - \$874M in Cost Savings & Avoidance
- Totals

- o 21,211 Jobs
- o \$4.2B Client Impacts

ATN has learned to perfect customer service. We pride ourselves on being a trusted local partner, to implement solutions and innovations for your company, to develop and train employees, and to assess and improve processes in the workforce, knowing you can count on Alabama Technology Network.

Contact us today at (334) 293-4671 or [www.atn.org](http://www.atn.org)





# BEVILL STATE

## BEVILL STATE ANNOUNCES PLANS FOR THE ALABAMA ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE TRAINING CENTER AND NETWORK

The Alabama Community College System and Bevill State Community College recently announced plans to develop the Alabama Energy Infrastructure Training Center and Network (AEITCN). The AEITCN is a new program aimed at equipping Alabama workers for the energy industry.

The training center's goal is to address the growing demand for skilled professionals in the energy sector by providing training opportunities that will help equip Alabama's workforce with the necessary skills to thrive in this dynamic industry. The primary location is an expansion of the HVAC Training Center in Jasper, AL — a long-standing partnership between Bevill State and Alabama Power — and will involve the construction of a new building.

The center will support the following training pathways: Electric Vehicles (EVs), Connectivity, PV Solar/Microgrid, HVAC, and Weatherization. In addition to the Bevill State location, the program will also include the ability to support remote training at community colleges across the state.

Senator Greg Reed remarked, "Providing young people the opportunity to gain skills for impactful careers is incredibly important for Alabama's future. Investing in our students today will position Alabama for a bright tomorrow. The Alabama Energy Infrastructure Training Center and Network at Bevill State will be a unique facility in Alabama for workforce development connecting talented job seekers and job creators across the southeast. This new facility will be impactful for our local communities and the state of Alabama, and I am proud of the efforts of Bevill State and Alabama Power to make this a reality."

"As we enter a transformative era in the energy sector, Bevill State is proud to help prepare our state for the jobs of the future. The AEITCN, a partnership with ACCS and Alabama Power, will equip individuals with the skills needed to thrive in the emerging energy-efficiency economy. With statistics indicating a substantial increase in demand for skilled professionals in this field, our commitment to providing cutting-edge training reflects our dedication to shaping a workforce that not only meets the demands of today but propels Alabama into an innovative future," commented Dr. Joel Hagood, President of Bevill State.

"Alabama's residents, businesses, and industry rely on their local community college to deliver relevant training programs because of our ability to seamlessly align the programs with the credentials that employers require for real careers, and our statewide footprint ensures that the Alabama Community College System can reach residents anywhere in the state," Jimmy Baker, ACCS Chancellor, said.

"We don't take lightly the trust invested in Bevill State to launch this venture alongside Alabama's legislative leaders and Alabama Power, and we look forward to continually expanding the AEITCN as the needs for such careers increase and evolve."





# BISHOP STATE

## BISHOP STATE RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS LEADERSHIP AWARD FROM NC3

Bishop State Community College has been awarded the prestigious Leadership Award by the National Coalition of Certification Centers (NC3) in recognition of its outstanding commitment to career and technical education.

Each year, NC3 recognizes the top-performing individuals and institutions for their leadership and innovation in CTE. The award was formally presented last week at the 2024 NC3 Annual Leadership Summit.

President Olivier Charles, along with other Bishop State staff, received the award on behalf of the college.

“We are honored to receive the Leadership Award from NC3 for our administration’s commitment to technical education,” Charles said. “I had the pleasure of receiving the award, but rest assured, this is because our technical faculty have bought in. They work tirelessly to ensure that our students earn multiple credentials while enrolled with us, thus making them more employable.”

NC3 is a non-profit that is funded through high school, community and technical college memberships and industry contributions. The national organization partners with educational and industry leaders through instructor readiness, lab solutions and facility planning, transforming training sites, theory and hands-on practice, and boosting awareness.

For the past several years, Bishop State has been one of the top schools in the country in terms of the number of NC3 credentials issued to students.

“We are extremely proud of this because it means we are teaching to our standards, plus industry standards,” Charles said.





# CALHOUN

## CALHOUN STUDENT SIMULTANEOUSLY EARNS ASSOCIATE AND BACHELOR'S DEGREES IN NURSING THROUGH UAH PARTNERSHIP

As the spring semester draws to a close at Calhoun Community College, Kehinde Oyediran stands on the brink of a significant milestone. Among the graduating students who will soon walk across the stage during the college's commencement ceremony, Oyediran's journey is particularly inspiring. Not only will he receive his associate's degree in Nursing from the college, but he also recently attained his bachelor's degree in nursing from The University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH) through the college's accelerated dual nursing degree partnership.

Reflecting on the difficult decision to take on such a demanding educational journey, Kehinde shares how this transformative experience changed his life. "Through this program not only have I learned to master my bedside skills training, and the management realm of nursing, but it also helped me gain a deeper understanding of what it truly means to embody the essence of a well-rounded nurse who practices in the real world," says Oyediran.



"The coursework and clinicals were challenging, but I managed by relying on lecture notes, practice problems, and resources from both programs. This decision was perfect for my future as a nurse," he said. "Procrastination can be detrimental in this program; staying on track is crucial," Oyediran added.

Dr. Lynn Hogan, Calhoun's Nursing Department Head, highlights that the partnership, announced in fall 2020, offers a seamless curriculum allowing students to complete their Associate Degree in Nursing at Calhoun and then continue at UAH for a Bachelor of Science in Nursing, earning both degrees in just five semesters. "This unique program is designed for students driven to pursue dual degrees in nursing," says Hogan. "Faculty at Calhoun and UAH collaborate closely on the application process and help students secure financial aid and scholarships to minimize costs," Hogan added.

For Oyediran, scholarships played a pivotal role in helping him achieve his academic aspirations. "Receiving Calhoun's Stacey M. Cernadas Scholarship was not only an honor, but it also alleviated the financial burden and allowed me to focus entirely on my studies as it covered the cost of tuition, fees and books," he shares. "Dying in the line of duty as a flight nurse, Stacey, inspired me even more to carry the torch and dedicate myself to serving those in need," he added.

"My goal is to provide the best care possible as a registered nurse," he affirms, "and then I plan to further my education to serve communities who have limited access to healthcare."

Oyediran shares that his twin brother, Taiwo, is also in the dual nursing program and will graduate in 6 months. "Seeing our shared goal come to fruition fills me with great pride," he says with a smile.



# CENTRAL ALABAMA

## CENTRAL ALABAMA COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADS THE WAY IN MARINE TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION

Central Alabama Community College (CACC) has been making waves in Marine Technology, establishing itself as a leader in this specialized area of education. The program began in 2020 as a non-credit offering and quickly gained traction as the first of its kind in Alabama. CACC collaborated closely with surrounding industries to understand their workforce needs, ensuring the program was tailored to meet the demands of the local marine industry.

“The program was a natural fit for our region, given the strong presence of marine industries around Lake Martin and beyond,” said President Jeff Lynn. “We saw an opportunity to provide targeted education that not only equips students with the necessary skills but also supports the economic development of our area.”

The initial success of the non-credit program led to the development of an Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degree in Marine Technology. Launched in January 2024, this degree program is the first in the state to offer a comprehensive curriculum that combines classroom instruction with hands-on training. Students can now pursue a five-semester credit program, including three short-term certificates, over 20 industry-recognized certifications, including Mercury University and NC3 credentials, and forklift certifications.



“The growth of the Marine Tech program has been remarkable,” noted Michael Barnette, Dean of Workforce and Economic Development Programs. “We’ve seen an increase in enrollment from both dual enrollment students and traditional college students. Financial aid availability has made this program accessible to more students, further fueling its expansion.”

One of the key strengths of CACC’s Marine Technology program is its strong connection to industry through work-based apprenticeships. Students can gain real-world experience while completing their degrees, making them job-ready upon graduation. “The partnership between the college and industry is a cornerstone of this program,” explained Will Holt, Marine Tech instructor. “Our students are not just learning in the classroom; they’re applying their knowledge in the field, which significantly enhances their employability.”

In January 2024, the Marine Technology program moved into a newly renovated facility on the Alexander City campus, providing state-of-the-art resources for students. The program continues to evolve, offering students the tools and experience they need to succeed in a rapidly growing industry. CACC’s Marine Technology program exemplifies the college’s commitment to providing cutting-edge education that meets the needs of students and the local economy. As the program grows, it remains a vital asset to the community, producing skilled professionals ready to contribute to Alabama’s thriving marine industry.





# CHATTAHOOCHEE VALLEY

## NAVIGATING SUCCESS: CHATTAHOOCHEE VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE'S QEP INITIATIVE

Chattahoochee Valley Community College (CVCC) is dedicated to fostering student success through its Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), known as COMPASS. This initiative is designed to guide students from the start of their college journey, providing them with the resources and support they need to achieve their academic and career goals. With a focus on increasing student retention, graduation rates, and overall academic success, COMPASS is proving to be a pivotal program at CVCC.

The impact of COMPASS is evident in the growing success rates of students, particularly in the orientation class, which is a critical first step in a student's academic journey. From Fall 2022 to Summer 2023, 74% of students passed the orientation class. The following year, from Fall 2023 to Summer 2024, this number rose to 78%, marking a 5.4% increase in the pass rate. This improvement reflects the effectiveness of the COMPASS initiative and the college's commitment to enhancing student preparedness and engagement from the outset. The goal is to achieve an 85% pass rate for the 2024-2025 school year, a target that CVCC is actively working towards through continuous program improvements and student support.



The objectives of the COMPASS initiative are clear: to improve student retention, increase graduation rates, and ensure that every student has the guidance and support needed to succeed. One of the most impactful aspects of the program is the role of the Success Coaches. These professionals are more than just academic advisors; they are mentors and advocates who provide personalized guidance to students. The coaches help students navigate the complexities of college life, from course selection and academic planning to accessing campus resources and managing personal challenges.

Sheinoura Wise-Nash, the QEP Director and a Success Coordinator at CVCC, emphasizes the importance of these initiatives in improving overall student success rates. "The COMPASS initiative is about more than just getting students through the door," she says. "It's about equipping them with the tools, knowledge, and support they need to succeed throughout their entire college experience. The increase in orientation pass rates and first-time student enrollment shows that we are on the right path, but we are continually striving to do even better."

As CVCC looks toward the future, the COMPASS initiative remains a cornerstone of the college's mission to support student success. With continued focus on enhancing the orientation experience, increasing first-time student enrollment, and providing personalized guidance through the navigators, CVCC is well on its way to achieving its ambitious goals and helping more students reach their full potential.



# COASTAL ALABAMA

## FAIRHOPE STUDENTS CREATE PODCAST TO SPARK ADDICTION AWARENESS

Students at Coastal Alabama Community College's Fairhope campus are harnessing the widespread popularity of podcasts to address critical issues such as substance abuse, suicide and the opioid epidemic. The college has partnered with the non-profit Baldwin County Community Alliance (BCCA) since 2017. This partnership began because of a grant that the BCCA received from the Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH) to combat the opioid epidemic in young adults. This is the second published season of the podcast What If You Knew? podcast which includes nine episodes created and hosted by seven Fairhope students featuring guests with first-hand experience in a wide range of important topics.

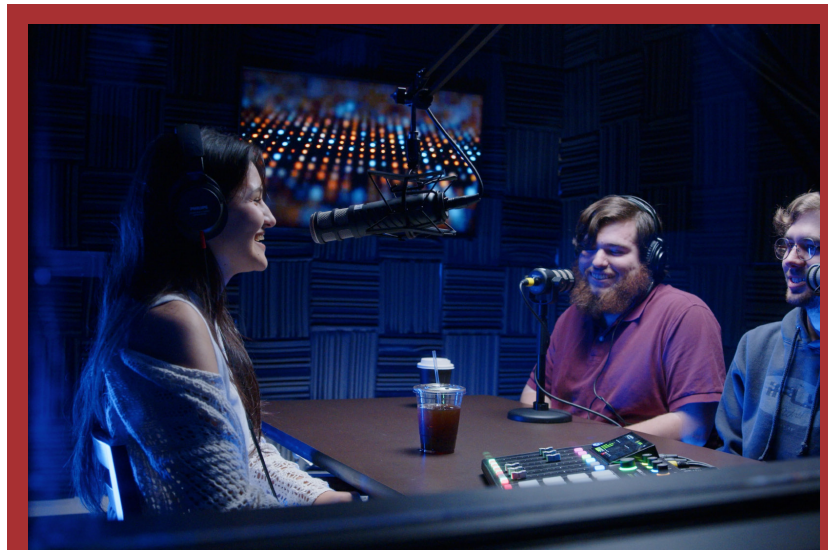
Through the ADMH grant funding, the BCCA anticipates funding the podcast through 2026. Seasons 1 and 2 are available on the BCCA website, [Proudtobefreebaldwin.org](http://Proudtobefreebaldwin.org), as well as the global iHeartRadio app, which gives the content tremendous reach. Mandy Bezeredi, Fairhope campus director for Coastal Alabama Community College, said the widespread reach of the content is critical to its intended impact, as is the podcast format on which it's produced.

"You have to rely on what the current trends are so you can meet students and others that could be impacted exactly where they are," Bezeredi said. "It gives the podcast a chance to make a bigger ripple effect, and not just affect our community, but also other college students elsewhere."

Last fall, as the podcast was in pre-production, the BCCA contracted with the Jennifer Claire Moore Foundation to host a podcast training. During the training, the students discussed which topics were most pertinent to college-aged students. The overarching theme they chose was mental health and substance abuse which includes relationships and suicide, fentanyl, opioid addiction, vaping and alcohol abuse.

While producing the podcast offers important experience to the students, their involvement with the BCCA and other community partners is only the beginning of their opportunities. Earlier this year, the students as well as certain supporting educators participated in the 34th annual Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) National Leadership Forum, the only youth representatives from Alabama to attend the Maryland event. The BCCA was able to send the seven members of the podcast team through their funding, and the Fairhope Police Department generously provided scholarships for the supporting educators involved with the initiative.

Two returning podcast members were recently sent to Chicago for the CADCA midyear conference, as well, to learn more about new drug trends and other issues to prepare for the next season of the What If You Knew? podcast.





# DRAKE STATE

## DRAKE STATE STUDENT NAMED A 2024 NEW CENTURY SCHOLAR

At Drake State Community and Technical College, we're incredibly proud to share the inspiring journey of one of our own, Jadyn Johnson, who has been named a 2024 New Century Workforce Scholar. This is more than just a title—it's a testament to Jadyn's determination, hard work, and the milestones she's achieved along the way. Along with this recognition, Jadyn received a \$1,500 scholarship, marking a significant milestone for her and all of us here at Drake State.

What makes Jadyn's journey even more remarkable is that she is excelling in our engineering design program, a field traditionally dominated by men. Her success is a powerful reminder that with passion and determination, there are no limits to what can be achieved. Jadyn is on track to graduate from the program in December 2024, and her future is as bright as it is promising. Jadyn's achievement is particularly special because the New Century Workforce Scholarship is the first of its kind to support students at associate degree-granting institutions on a national level, helping them transition smoothly into the workforce after completing their degrees or certificates. Sponsored by The Coca-Cola Foundation and the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society, this scholarship is a nod to Jadyn's academic excellence and her unwavering commitment to her future career.



Reflecting on her journey, Jadyn shared, "Receiving the 2024 New Century Workforce Scholar scholarship is more than just an honor; it's a validation of the hard work and dedication I've put into preparing for my career. I'm deeply thankful for the support from The Coca-Cola Foundation and Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society. This scholarship fuels my passion and drives me forward as I continue to strive for success in the workforce. Representing Drake State on this journey is a privilege, and I'm excited for what lies ahead."

Drake State's President, Dr. Patricia Sims, echoed these sentiments, stating, "We couldn't be more proud of Jadyn for being named a 2024 New Century Workforce Scholar. This scholarship is not just a recognition of her academic achievements but a celebration of her leadership, her dedication to her future, and her ability to transcend the classroom and make a real impact."

The journey to becoming a New Century Workforce Scholar is a rigorous one, with over 2,200 students from more than 1,300 college campuses nationwide vying for the honor. To be selected as the sole recipient from her state speaks volumes about Jadyn's capabilities and potential.

Jadyn's story is a shining example of what dedication and passion can achieve, and we at Drake State are excited to continue supporting her as she makes her mark on the world.



# ENTERPRISE STATE

## ESCC DESIGNATED AS NATIONAL CENTER OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE IN CYBER DEFENSE

In August 2023, Enterprise State Community College was officially designated as a National Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense (CAE-CD) by the National Centers of Academic Excellence in Cybersecurity (NCAE-C). According to the NCAE-C website:

“NCAE-C program aims to create and manage a collaborative cybersecurity educational program with community colleges, colleges, and universities that:

- Establishes standards for cybersecurity curriculum and academic excellence,
- Includes competency development among students and faculty,
- Values community outreach and leadership in professional development,
- Integrates cybersecurity practice within the institution across academic disciplines,
- Actively engages in solutions to challenges facing cybersecurity education.”

The CAE-CD designation is reserved for academic institutions that offer cybersecurity degrees or certificates at all degree levels. ESCC offers an associate of applied science in Computer Information Science (CIS) with an Information Security and Assurance (ISA) Option.



“It informs our students and the community that our CIS ISA degree is recognized by the National Security Agency (NSA) and the Department of Homeland Security to provide a quality education in cybersecurity,” CIS Instructor Rosalyn Warren, whose work led to ESCC receiving the CAE-CD designation, said. “It provides student scholarships, grant opportunities, networking events, cyber curricula, and professional development opportunities.”

Before applying for the designation, Warren and CIS Instructor Lee Scarborough worked with an advisory committee and partners like CompTIA, EC-Council, Cisco and Fortinet to offer industry-recognized certifications within the degree’s courses, and she had to ensure that the ISA degree curriculum met the National Institution for Cybersecurity Education (NICE) framework. “I’ve been working on the CAE-CD designation for about a year,” Warren said. “The National Security Agency (NSA) provides a schedule for each phase. We started in October 2022 and were awarded the designation in August 2023. The ISA program was validated by the NSA in February 2023 and designated in August 2023.”

In addition to the ISA program being validated by the NSA this year, ESCC also previously joined the Microsoft Learn for Educators program, which adds Microsoft certifications into CIS curriculum, and AWS (Amazon Web Services) Academy, which provides access to ready-to-teach cloud computing curriculum.

Warren said there will be more cybersecurity activities on ESCC’s campus to engage and educate students and the community because of this designation.





# INGRAM STATE

## INGRAM STATE RECEIVES SEAL OF EXCELLENCE FOR DIESEL MECHANIC APPRENTICESHIP

In 2024, Governor Kay Ivey awarded J.F. Ingram State Technical College the Alabama Office of Apprenticeship (AOA) Work Based Learning Seal of Excellence for the inaugural diesel mechanic apprenticeship with Montgomery-based FourStar Freightliner.

"It is an honor to receive the Seal of Excellence for the diesel mechanic apprenticeship," said President Annette Funderburk. "The partnership between the Alabama Office of Apprenticeship, Alabama Department of Corrections, and FourStar Freightliner established a high-quality apprenticeship program designed to create a workforce pathway for justice-involved individuals into a long-term career."

Alongside President Funderburk to accept the award was Dr. William Young, Dean of Instruction, LaShanda Hails, Director of Pardons and Paroles Programming, Dr. Ira Phillips, Workforce Coordinator, and apprentice student Price Jenkins.

Prince Jenkins provided his personal testimony during the conference. Mr. Jenkins has been an active apprentice since 2022, and is scheduled to graduate Ingram State in Summer 2024. He has successfully gained full-time employment at FourStar Freightliner.



The diesel mechanic apprenticeship is one part of a comprehensive program designed to prepare students for the transition from classroom to workforce. Participants will complete technical courses and earn select lab credit hours as apprentices through Four Star Freightliner.

During the in-field training, students will work with skilled professionals to maintain and repair diesel engines, as they would on the job. As they progress in the program their in-field hours will increase, enhancing their experience. Students who complete both the program of study and the apprenticeship will then become full-time employees at Four Star Freightliner through the ADOC work release program.



# GADSDEN STATE

## GADSDEN STATE LAUNCHES COMET

Gadsden State Community College hosted a signing event July 9 for the first cohort of students to be in the Consortium of Machining Education Training. Known as CoMeT, it is a hybrid work-based apprenticeship program that allows students to “earn while they learn.”

Alan Smith, dean of Workforce Development, said the program was developed in 2023 by Gadsden State employees to address the needs of the machining industry. “Gadsden State is teaming up with companies that need us to provide training to students who will go into their workforce,” he said. “We are providing a pipeline of skilled, highly trained precision machinists who are sure to be excellent employees.”

Seven industry partners signed 13 students and one alternate to be a part of the first cohort during a signing event at the Beck Conference Center on the Wallace Drive Campus. Through the CoMeT program, students will take classes at Gadsden State two days a week and work for an industry partner three days a week. “It’s not easy going to school and working at the same time,” Smith said. “This program allows students to do both while having a healthy work-life balance.” The students will be paid at least \$15 per hour by their employer during five semesters of training. “This will be the least amount of money you will ever make for the rest of your life,” Andy Robertson, Workforce Development coordinator, said during the signing event. “You will make more and more money as you progress through your training and your career. Your salary will increase as you gain experience.”



Completers of the program will graduate with an Associate in Applied Science in Precision Machining. “Upon graduation, the students have the potential to make at least \$50,000 a year right away,” Smith said. “Because they’ll have a valuable credential and two years of industry-verified experience, our graduates will be head-and-shoulders above everyone else.”

CoMeT is offered in the Precision Machining Building on the Ayers Campus and in the new Advanced Manufacturing Center on the East Broad Campus. The program is led by instructors Daniel Anderson and Peyton Amberson. They will oversee the students as they complete 1,776 hours in work-based learning as well as five projects. “The instructors are here to make sure that our students become successful employees,” Robertson said. “They are instrumental in the growth of our students and the growth of our program.” Smith said he expects all of the students to complete the program and graduate from Gadsden State. “If you study and work hard, you will make it through CoMeT with flying colors,” he said. “Find whatever it takes to finish this program and go onto a successful career.”

For more information, visit [www.GadsdenState.edu/CoMeT](http://www.GadsdenState.edu/CoMeT).



# JEFFERSON STATE

## JEFFERSON STATE EMBARKS ON INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIP WITH A PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL, AND LAUNCHES NEW SURGICAL TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM

New initiatives at Jefferson State will create additional pathways for I3 Academy high school students, and address a workforce shortage in the healthcare industry.

### I3 Academy

Jefferson State's partnership with I3 Academy – a tuition-free, public charter school in Birmingham – locates the I3 Academy high school on Jefferson State's campus and creates a kindergarten to college or career pipeline for students. "The new partnership with I3 Academy will introduce a new benchmark for education that provides exciting new pathways for high school students," said Jefferson State President Keith Brown. "The partnership eliminates barriers to education, and I look forward to the impact it will have on the lives of students and the community."

The Academy offers multiple avenues for dual enrollment opportunities, entering higher education, entering the workforce, and more. This partnership will create a culture of achievement for the high school students and continue the charter model of offering high-quality educational choices and new opportunities to students and their families. "Thanks to the leaders of these two institutions, Dr. Martin Nalls and President Keith Brown, a new model of opportunity has been created," said I3 Academy Board Chairman Dr. Tommy Bice. "This partnership affords students and their families a first of its kind high school and college experience in Alabama."



### Surgical Technology

The St. Vincent's Health System recently expressed a critical need to Jefferson State for employees with surgical technology certifications. By working together, Jefferson State quickly addressed this shortage and launched a new Surgical Technology program in early 2024.

"This is another opportunity where Jefferson State is meeting the needs of the local community," said President Brown. "These are good-paying jobs, and it's a career ladder for participants who will come through the program."

Surgical technologists prepare, maintain, monitor and enforce the sterile field and adherence to aseptic techniques by the surgical team personnel. Overall employment of surgical techs is projected to grow significantly, as the field has an immense shortage.

The program's state-of-the-art laboratory space is located on the Jefferson State Shelby-Hoover Campus and the certificate program can be completed in only two semesters. "We have the latest technology here in our newly constructed classroom and didactic lab," said Jefferson State Surgical Technology Program Director Donna Richardson. "We look forward to growing this much needed program not only for our students, but also area hospitals and the community."



# LAWSON STATE

## LAWSON STATE LAUNCHES NEW PARTNERSHIPS TO BENEFIT STUDENTS

New and expanded partnerships at Lawson State Community College are driving growth for the college and creating unique opportunities for students in the classroom and beyond.

“It’s all about building relationships,” says Dr. Cynthia T. Anthony, Lawson State president. “Successful collaborations with business, industry, and non-profit organizations come down to knowing our market and knowing what the market needs. Investing in relationships allows us to create meaningful experiences for students.”

One of those new relationships is with the Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCF), the nation’s largest organization representing the Black college community.

A spring TMCF “Campus Takeover” at Lawson created buzz and excitement about internships, scholarships and professional development opportunities offered through the partnership, and in July, the college collaborated with TMCF to host SOAR (Seeking, Observing, and Achieving Results), a residential college bootcamp for rising high school seniors. Participants lived on campus for a week as they learned about historically Black community colleges, funding resources, financial aid, the college admission process, career pathways and more. Partnering for positive change



The needs of rural Alabama residents are the focus of Lawson State’s new Dual Up LPN program and its new Center for Rural Healthcare Opportunities. Funded by a \$1,078,456 state grant, the center is a groundbreaking collaboration with UAB Medical West Hospital, UAB Medical West Vance Clinic, and UAB Medical West Tannehill Health Center.

Under the Dual Up LPN program, high school students who are dual enrolled in Lawson’s LPN studies will get an immersive learning experience, including classes taught on-site at UAB Medical West. Those who complete the three-semester program are encouraged to work within rural communities and continue their education through Lawson’s prestigious Registered Nurse (RN) program.



# LURLEEN B. WALLACE

## LBW COMMUNITY COLLEGE ANNOUNCES “REIGNITED” INITIATIVE WITH FREE COURSE OFFERING TO ENCOURAGE COLLEGE COMPLETION

In coordination with this year’s conference theme – Reimagining Education, LBW Community College is reigniting students to return to college.

In July, LBW announced the launch of its new initiative, “ReignitED,” aimed at assisting new or former students in returning to college to complete a certificate or degree. “ReignitED” encompasses a series of strategic programs and partnerships designed to foster student success and expand access to higher education.

Personalized support tailored to students’ specific needs is offered across areas including financial aid, enrollment, academics, social services, and more. Additionally, students participating in the program receive a scholarship covering one, three-credit-hour course free of charge.

LBW President, Dr. Brock Kelley, said, “We believe our non-traditional students are instrumental in increasing the state’s labor participation rate. We want to remove barriers to help people in our community receive the training and skills needed to gain employment. We are excited about the doors this initiative will open for students to succeed.”

Over the past two decades, more than 31 million students have enrolled in college but did not complete their degree or receive a certificate. This initiative is aimed at assisting those students complete college.

Latrece Hall, Student Services Counselor at LBW, serves as the point of contact for the program. Her pathway to higher education has been similar to that of ReignitED participants.





# MARION MILITARY

## FULL STEM AHEAD

## PLANS MOVE FORWARD FOR MMI'S NEW MATH & SCIENCE BUILDING

With \$35 Million in federal funding secured thanks to former U.S. Senator Richard Shelby from the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023, and the planning requirements met, Marion Military Institute is now positioned to construct its new Math & Science Building. Located behind Lovelace Hall and Rane Hall, right off the main quad, this 50,000-square-foot facility will house all Math and Science curricula, providing modern conveniences to enhance cadets' education. Designed by Barrett Architecture Studio to blend into the historic MMI Campus, the building will feature brick veneer, limestone accents, and a galvanized, standing-seam metal roof.

The two-story section of the building will accommodate most of the classrooms and labs, while the single-story portion will contain math classrooms and a lecture hall, which will also serve as the building's rated Storm Room. The building will include a walkout basement, which will house the new computer science area and a gaming area. According to architect Adam Kent, building amenities will include:

- Courtyard serving as an outdoor classroom and future event space.
- Lecture hall doubling as a multipurpose room for medium-sized events.
- Modernized laboratories.
- Lower-level computer science floor equipped with a competition-level gaming facility.



David Ivey, MMI's Chief Academic Officer, looks forward to all the ways the facility will enhance the college curriculum: "The new building will allow for improved instruction support capabilities for STEM courses and give us the opportunity to expand our range of computer science offerings, cyber security, physical science, and eventually lead to pre-engineering courses," he notes. "It will provide a much-improved instructional environment for the entire MMI Corps of Cadets and strengthen the STEM foundation for the Service Academy Program population. Lastly, the building will provide a much-needed resource to the local community by providing expanded dual-enrollment opportunities and other STEM-related resources."

Construction is slated to begin in the first quarter of 2025, with a tentative completion date of December 2026. funded by the Air Force, is designed to provide a 3-week introduction to flight for high school and college students.



# NORTHEAST ALABAMA

## NORTHEAST ALABAMA COMMUNITY COLLEGE BEGAN OFFERING COURSES AT MOON LAKE IN MENTONE THIS FALL

Northeast Alabama Community College (NACC) has partnered with the town of Mentone, Alabama, to offer courses at Mentone's Moon Lake School this fall. This announcement came on June 18 from NACC President Dr. David Campbell as a crowd gathered for the ribbon cutting of the sculpture garden in front of the campus.

Three years ago, students walked the halls of Moon Lake Elementary School in Mentone for what appeared to be the final time, following the county board of education's decision to close the campus at the end of the 2020-2021 school year. This fall, the historic school will once again be a center of learning for Lookout Mountain and beyond.

"We are very excited about providing these courses at Moon Lake School in Mentone," said President Dr. Campbell. "We are starting with courses that we think will be beneficial to traditional students and life-long learning community members as well. These courses include creative writing, music appreciation, vocal ensemble, and English 101." Campbell credits Mayor Rob Hammond, his staff, and community leaders for "working very hard and cooperatively to accomplish this."



The town and college began discussing the project in mid-spring. During this relatively short period, NACC has pursued the many approvals necessary to host classes on a site away from its main campus on the DeKalb/Jackson County line near Rainsville.

"Our staff has touched all the bases necessary in higher education to set up an off-site center, including those of the Southern Association of Schools Commission on Colleges, the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, and our own system, the Alabama Community College System," says Campbell. "All their regulations are being finalized."

The instructors will also be top-notch. Campbell says Dr. Kathy Adkins will teach a vocal ensemble class and music appreciation. She was part of the famed Forester Sisters, who charted five number-one hits and 15 total top-ten hits on the Billboard Hot Country charts in the 1980s and 1990s. The three-time Grammy-nominated group was named Group of the Year by the Academy of Country Music in 1986. Adkins has taught extensively at elementary, high school, and college levels, and has received numerous awards for her service and leadership.

Mentone has earned quite a reputation for cultivating, encouraging, and sustaining the arts. A popular place to visit, the town has been recognized for its artistic nature since its founding in the late 1800s. Mentone was recently named the best art town in Alabama by *al.com*. While the announcement is big news for Mentone, Campbell is already looking ahead. "I can really see a great future with this partnership with the Mentone community," he says.



# NORTHWESTSHOALS

## NWSCC TO OFFER MEDICAL LABORATORY TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM IN SPRING

Northwest Shoals Community College (NWSCC) will offer a new Medical Laboratory Technology associate degree program starting with the 2025 spring semester.

According to John McIntosh, NWSCC Dean of Workforce Development, Institutional Effectiveness, and Advancement, NWSCC works closely with our area hospitals and the healthcare industry to make sure the College trains students for the current and future workforce needs.

“Healthcare is constantly growing and evolving, and we (Northwest Shoals Community College) want to make sure we are training and graduating qualified workers for our healthcare partners in the areas that are needed,” stated McIntosh. “We recently hired Michelle Hayes as the program director, and she is doing a great job preparing the program to welcome students in the spring.”

Medical laboratory technicians work in medical labs and run tests for hospitals and medical offices. NWSCC plans to accept up to 10 students during the first year.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Statistics, employment of medical laboratory technicians is projected to grow five percent through 2032, faster than the average for all occupations.





# REID STATE

## REID STATE STUDENT SHOWS RESILIENCE IN ADVERSITY

Mary-Caitlyn Salter, a Summer 2024 graduate from Reid State Technical College (RSTC) in Cosmetology, exemplifies extraordinary courage and determination.

After being diagnosed with Dermatofibrosarcoma Protuberans (DFSP) Cancer in December 2023, Mary-Caitlyn faced a difficult journey that included undergoing abdominal surgery.

Despite the challenges of recovery, she returned to school with a steadfast commitment to completing her education alongside her peers.

Her journey was marked by unwavering resilience and deep faith, which played a crucial role in her recovery.

Supported by her family, friends, and the cosmetology community at RSTC, Mary-Caitlyn persevered through adversity, never losing sight of her goals. Now cancer-free, she serves as an inspiration to all, demonstrating the power of determination and faith in overcoming life's toughest obstacles.

Mary-Caitlyn is now preparing to take the State Board Exam with hopes of achieving her dream of becoming a salon owner. Her story is a testament to the strength of the human spirit and the importance of holding onto hope and resilience in the face of challenges.





# SHELTON STATE

## PATHWAYS TO POSSIBILITIES: REIMAGING WELDING EDUCATION THROUGH ACCESS

Shelton State Community College continues to reimagine education and enhance its successful Welding Technology Program with the implementation of a state-of-the-art welding trailer built by Pioneer Group. The trailer is a traveling classroom that provides hands on experience for the College's dual enrollment students.

The 53' tractor trailer contains eight welding booths. Each booth is equipped with a Lincoln Electric S350 Power Wave welding machine, a Lincoln Electric 84 Power Feed wire feeder, and flowmeters for GMAW, FCAW, and GTAW that are plumbed in from outside the trailer. Additionally, the booths have individual ventilation fans and a Lincoln Electric X-Tractor fume extraction system. The welding trailer has an on board Fike fire suppression system and two fire extinguishers. A Hypertherm Powermax 45 xp plasma cutter is utilized for outside cutting and gouging.



"This trailer has allowed us to reach younger students," said Jordan Vaughn, one of Shelton State's welding instructors. "By taking our program to the students, we provide accessibility that would not be available otherwise."

"This partnership with Shelton State has given our students the opportunity to get a head start on joining the welding workforce," said Lindsey Thompson, Northside High School Principal. "We have students that have said they disliked the school experience until they were able to start working on dual enrollment welding courses while at school. As educators, we should strive to help our students be the best members of society they can be. This is a step in the right direction." As one of Shelton State's most thriving programs, student interest continues to steadily grow. Additional equipment and teaching tools like the welding trailer will be added in the future so that more and more students can receive the training needed to be successful in the welding industry.

"The implementation of this state-of-the-art welding trailer in our dual enrollment program has been invaluable in a variety of ways," stated Dr. Jonathan Koh, President of Shelton State. "Alleviating transportation and capacity barriers for our partnering K-12 school systems has been a tremendous asset to engaging more students and growing the workforce locally. In addition, the unique learning platform and high-quality instruction has fostered a spirit of enthusiasm for the program and college in a community that is at the farthest corner of our service area. We stand ready to support our growing programs through similar innovative projects that create even greater access."



# SNEAD STATE

## SNEAD STATE HOLDS FALL CLASSES IN NEW TRAINING FACILITY

Snead State Community College broke ground in January on a much-needed skills training facility, and seven months later, the College welcomed its first group of students in the new Workforce and Career Institute.

When fall classes began Aug. 19, Snead State introduced two new Career and Technical Education programs to join two existing programs offered at the Institute.

“As with any construction project, you have ups and down, but the finished product is something we’re very proud of,” said Snead State President Dr. Joe Whitmore. “It’s a show piece to demonstrate to our students and our community that we are continuing to address the needs of business and industry by offering the type of training they are looking for with their employees.”

The 50,000-square-foot facility is located on U.S. Highway 431 between Albertville and Guntersville. The training facility has been the College administration’s vision since 2020.

In addition to faculty and staff offices, the \$30 million-dollar facility will include space and equipment for classes in Industrial Systems Technology, Welding Technology, and two new programs – Machine Tool Technology and Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration (HVAC/R).

“Our enrollment in the programs has gotten off to a great start, but we also have room to grow. This is just the beginning for Snead State as our goal is to create an institute that is the premier training facility in our area,” said Dean of Career and Technical Education/Workforce Development Dr. Greg Randall.

Industrial Systems trains students in the areas needed to keep an industry running, including basic electricity, robotics, and hydraulics. The Welding Technology program utilizes 32 welding stations and will incorporate training in all types of welding, including a new addition to the program – robotic welding.

The HVAC/R space has a lab with 10 units to train students to service both commercial and residential systems. According to Dr. Whitmore, HVAC/R is in high demand in the area due to the poultry and food industries. Machine Tool Technology will train students in developing tools according to specific specifications and will utilize state-of-the-art equipment such as CNC machines. A lab has been included to train students on producing quality tools.

“We’re a community college committed to providing cutting-edge training for our students, whether they’re traditional students, adult learners, or dual enrollment students. Our industry partners have given our students on-the-job experience by offering apprenticeships, so they can apply what they’ve learned and earn a wage while obtaining their degree,” said Dr. Whitmore.





# SOUTHERN UNION

## SOUTHERN UNION STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE LAUNCHES VET TECH PROGRAM

Southern Union State Community College welcomed its first cohort of veterinary technology students to campus this fall.

Fifteen students are enrolled in the program. Southern Union's Vet Tech Program is one of three programs in Alabama and is the only on-campus program in the state. On-campus paired with off-campus clinical site learning uniquely prepares students to be qualified veterinary professionals by the time they graduate. Program graduates will be equipped with the skills and education necessary to be leaders in practice management, animal behavior, veterinary technology education, specialized and general veterinary practice, companion and farm animal medicine, wildlife rehabilitation and conservation, zoo and shelter medicine, industry sales and business, research, military and government service, public health and safety and beyond.

"I am very excited to have such a large group for the inaugural class," said Program Director, Hayley Pritchard.

Veterinary Technicians are in high demand in Alabama with only 478 technicians and 1859 veterinarians reported by the State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners in 2023.

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics employment of veterinary technologists and technicians is projected to grow 20 percent from 2021 to 2031, much faster than the average for all occupations.

"It is very rewarding to help guide these students who are ready to make their mark in the world of animal care. It is the beginning of a journey dedicated to healing and advocacy for animals," said Pritchard.





# WALLACE - DOTHAN

## WCCD AWARDED \$2.9 MILLION GRANT TO ESTABLISH WIREGRASS CENTER FOR RURAL HEALTHCARE OPPORTUNITIES AT DALE MEDICAL CENTER

Wallace Community College-Dothan (WCCD) has been awarded a \$2.9 million grant from the Alabama Community College System (ACCS) as part of the Alabama Centers for Rural Healthcare Opportunity legislative appropriation. This grant will facilitate the establishment of the Wiregrass Center for Rural Healthcare Opportunities (the Center) on the campus of Dale Medical Center in Ozark, Alabama.

The Center is poised to make a significant impact in the Dale County area by serving as a career and workforce development hub for the high-demand healthcare professions of licensed practical nursing (LPN) and mental health technician (MHT), moving students from the earliest stages of healthcare career exploration through completion of a healthcare training program, successful certification/licensure to work in-field, and on to successful employment with a local rural healthcare employer. The Center is a community-wide collaboration between WCCD, multiple healthcare providers and high schools, local government, and regional workforce/economic developers.

"Wallace is proud to lead the way in expanding healthcare training and reducing worker shortages in the Wiregrass," said Dr. Linda C. Young, WCCD President. "With the funding of the innovative Wiregrass Center for Rural Health Opportunities at Dale County Medical Center in Ozark, residents of the greater Dale County and adjacent counties will be able to earn healthcare credentials and begin a healthcare career pathway closer to home."



"Every healthcare provider in our region has depended on WCCD to train our workforce over the years," said Vernon Johnson, Dale Medical Center Chief Executive Officer. "When we had the opportunity to join forces with WCCD to provide an on-site training program for Nurses and Certified Mental Health Technicians, we jumped at this opportunity to expand our existing partnership of developing and training a healthcare workforce that will benefit not only DMC but the entire Wiregrass Region."

The Center will focus on alleviating shortages of licensed practical nurses, nursing assistants, and mental health technicians currently in high demand in the greater Dale County area. WCCD intends to offer its Practical Nursing (PN) and Mental Health Technician (MHT) programs at the Center. Coursework that prepares students for the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) credential is embedded in both the PN and MHT curriculum and enables students to begin working in the healthcare field before graduation. The College will work directly with partner healthcare providers to match students up-front with employer sponsors for scholarships, internships, and job offers.

The Center will also function as a career pathways hub, raising awareness of healthcare professions while promoting local healthcare training and employment opportunities.



# WALLACE - SELMA

## BRIDGING THE SKIES: TRANSFORMING EDUCATION THROUGH AVIATION

Wallace Community College Selma (WCCS) is pioneering new educational pathways, with a unique focus on aviation as a gateway to diverse career possibilities for students in the Black Belt region. Through innovative programs and strategic partnerships, WCCS is revolutionizing education by integrating aviation into its curriculum, providing underrepresented students with access to an industry rich in opportunity.

One such groundbreaking initiative was the recent Aviation Day, a collaborative effort between WCCS and Craig Field Airport. This event, which drew over 700 middle and high school students, offered a rare and inspiring opportunity to explore the aviation world up close. Through flight simulations, drone demonstrations, and interactions with professionals, students were exposed to a wide array of aviation careers. This hands-on experience not only sparked interest in aviation but also underscored the importance of STEM education in pursuing these career paths. WCCS's unwavering commitment to fostering educational opportunities in aviation is a testament to its dedication. The college has forged partnerships with Craig Field and Marion Military Institute to form the Rural Aviation Consortium. This consortium, bolstered by a \$2 million appropriation secured by State Senator Robert Stewart, is dedicated to expanding career pathways in aviation for local students. By focusing on fields such as aviation mechanics, air traffic control, and piloting, the consortium aims to address the industry's workforce needs while providing rural youth with access to high-paying, stable careers.

Dr. James M. Mitchell, President of WCCS, has been a driving force behind these efforts, recognizing the dual benefit of enriching students' lives while addressing the critical shortage of African-American pilots and other aviation professionals. "We believe that aviation can be a powerful catalyst for change in our community," Dr. Mitchell said. "By opening up these pathways, we're not just preparing students for jobs—we're inspiring them to envision a future where they can soar to new heights."



This summer, WCCS took its educational mission further by launching its inaugural Aviation Summer Camp. This four-day program was a resounding success, immersing local middle and high school students in the aviation industry through practical activities, including flight simulations, drone coding, and field trips to crucial aviation sites. These experiences were designed to spark a passion for aviation, offering students a glimpse into the possibilities that await them.

WCCS's efforts in reimagining education through aviation represent more than just career training; they are about creating pathways to possibilities. By providing students with the skills and experiences needed to thrive in the aviation industry, WCCS is helping to build a brighter future for the Black Belt region, one that takes flight on the wings of education and opportunity.



# WALLACE STATE

## WALLACE STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE NAMED FINALIST FOR ASPEN PRIZE

Wallace State Community College has been recognized as a finalist for the 2025 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, a prestigious award that honors community colleges with outstanding performance in various educational and workforce metrics. The Aspen Prize, awarded biennially by the Aspen Institute, acknowledges colleges that excel in teaching, certificate and degree completion, transfer and bachelor's attainment, workforce success, and equitable outcomes for underrepresented students. The winner receives \$1 million to further these efforts.

Wallace State's journey toward this recognition began over two decades ago under the leadership of President Dr. Vicki Karolewics, who joined the college in 2003. She has been instrumental in transforming the institution's approach to student success through strategic planning and participation in national initiatives such as the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) Pathways Project and Achieving the Dream (ATD). Her leadership has helped create a supportive environment focused on enhancing the first-year experience for students, improving onboarding, orientation, and advising, and ensuring that all students "Start Early, Start Right, Finish, and Succeed."



Dr. Karolewics emphasized the collaborative efforts of faculty and staff in developing new strategies to help students achieve their academic goals more efficiently and affordably. "The complete redesign of the student experience through Guided Pathways has significantly improved student outcomes," she noted. "Our student success rate has steadily increased, far exceeding the national average, while we have also addressed the achievement gaps caused by poverty."

A key element of Wallace State's success has been the redesign of developmental education. The college established gateway English and math courses as the default pathway for students, reducing developmental courses to just one in each subject for those needing extra preparation. Additionally, a new tiered placement model was introduced, offering students multiple opportunities to avoid developmental courses. This model considers ACT scores, high school GPA, or placement test results to place students directly into gateway courses where they are most likely to succeed.

This approach has led to a significant reduction in the number of students placed in developmental programs, thereby accelerating their progress toward degree completion. Since the implementation of these reforms, Wallace State has seen a 60 percent decrease in students enrolled in developmental courses and a 65 percent reduction in the overall cost of these courses for students, saving them over \$571,000 compared to the 2013-2014 academic year.

The success of these initiatives has also had a broader impact. In 2017, Karolewics was appointed to lead the College Readiness Task Force by the Alabama Community College System, resulting in statewide developmental education reforms. These changes include co-requisite courses and a consolidated four-hour developmental course, further supporting student achievement.



# ACCA CONFERENCE VENDORS / AFFILIATES

