

Introduction

This document is not *the* history of the Alabama Community College Association, but *a* history, a historical augmentation of three organizational histories previously written. The last of these was written in 1990 by Ben Clements; however, it was not widely distributed. Previous to that work, Clements and Dr. Philip Royal had the task of collecting data and writing a history of the Association. Their account spans the years 1979-1988, and supplemented the work of Faye Grimmer who wrote the first history of the Association, covering the years 1958-1979. All credit is due these scholars.

The Alabama Community College Association (ACCA) was established January 18, 1958, and was known then as the Alabama Association of Junior Colleges. The organization's mission was "to promote the common interests of junior colleges in Alabama through representation on other agencies interested in education; through coordination of efforts on behalf of the junior colleges; through collaboration in exchange of resource material and personnel and through relations."¹ In 1963 the Alabama Junior College System was created, facilitating and accelerating the growth of the Association. In 1972 the Association altered its name—Alabama Junior College Association—seemingly to align with the System's. This was followed by yet another name change in 1976 when the designation Alabama Junior and Community College Association was adopted. Twelve years later, in 1988, the name changed once again to Alabama College

¹ Ben A. Clements and Philip Royal, *The History of The Alabama Junior and Community College Association: A Continuation*, (Birmingham: Jefferson State Junior College, 1988), 6-7. They quoted directly from the "Working Rules" of the Association, March 28, 1958.

Association. And most recently—in 2008—the Association adopted its current name, the Alabama Community College Association.

- The constitution reveals the Purpose of the Association is
- to promote development and advancement of postsecondary education throughout the Alabama Community College System by:
- a. Promoting professional service;
 - b. Encouraging professional growth;
 - c. Improving articulation and cooperation with all levels of education;
 - d. Identifying needs and problems of the Alabama Community College System and communicating them to appropriate agencies for action;
 - e. Providing communication through the Alabama Community College System;
 - f. Promoting public recognition of the Alabama Community College System.

What follows is—in general—a chronological study of the ACCA for the years 1990-2015. A summary for each year is provided and is written by using Association minutes, meeting agendas, various correspondences, personal interview notes, and the Association's newsletter *Journal*.

November 1989 – November 1990

The 1990 ACA Annual Conference was held November 19-20 at the Birmingham-Jefferson Civic Center. The theme proclaimed the decade's approach toward the millennium: "New Decade—New Dimension." It was indeed a new age for the Association and its member institutions. Dr. Larry McCoy served as president and helped plan a successful Conference. Through the help of Dr. Judy Merritt who was serving as an American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (AACJA) board member, Dale Parnell—president of the AACJA—agreed to be the keynote speaker for the ACA's opening session. He was joined by commission speakers Dr. Peter Ewell of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (who spoke to administrators), John Tyson, Jr. of the Tyson and Tyson Law Firm, (who shared with support staff), Dr. Phillip Norris of the University of South Alabama (who presented information—based on his work in job-search—to the commission on students), and Dr. Jerry Patterson the Administrative Associate and Director of Organizational Development and Education for the University of Alabama Hospital (who talked with the faculty commission). In addition to those speakers, there were ninety-two "interest group" sessions spread across the two-day conference. The term "interest group" often carries negative connotations; however, in this instance, these sessions were meetings designed for faculty, staff, and administrators based upon their discipline, work area or focus, or position within their specific college or with the System. These professional development workshops, round-table discussions, and presentations were preceded by a pre-conference session discussing "Determining Institutional Effectiveness" prepared by

the Department of Post-Secondary Education and Chancellor Fred Gainous. All sessions ran concurrently with vendor exhibits which were coordinated by Athens State's Susan Parker.

There was also a movement in 1990 to provide the Association with an executive director. As the *Journal* notes:

The ad'hoc' committee has been carefully preparing a proposal for a full-time executive director and staff for the ACA. The committee will propose job descriptions, site suggestion, a pay benefits schedule, and operating budget. As well, a fee structure will be proposed to fund this project. With the growth of the two-year college system, ACA can become the ideal professional development vehicle for an on-going program ending in our annual conference rather than the conference being our one and only professional development activity during the year. After presenting the proposal to the Presidents in their October meeting, the full membership will receive the recommended proposal in November.²

According to Executive Committee minutes (July 12, 1991), the ad' hoc' committee led by Dr. Larry McCoy reported and recommended that the search for a director be delayed and for the issue to be reassessed at the November 1991 meeting. The Fall 1991 *Journal* indicated that this delay did not "constitute a reconsideration of the decision to hire a director but merely a delay in the search itself until the economic environment became more favorable."³ The issue of hiring a director would remain with the Association for many years.

² *ACA Journal*, vol XVII (Summer 1990), 10.

³ *ACA Journal*, vol XVIII (Fall 1991), 4.

November 1990 – November 1991

With the theme “Diversity and Flexibility: Keys to Professional Excellence” the 1991 Executive Committee confronted a real possibility throughout the year that proration would cause the Association to cancel the annual conference. ACA President Dr. Ann Chard notes in the *Journal*, “This was an option so distasteful that the Committee decided instead to adapt and streamline the convention so that it would be less costly yet still provide professional development activities of high quality.”⁴ To assist member schools with the financial burden—mainly travel expenses—the conference was moved from Huntsville to Hoover’s Winfrey Hotel. Also the two-day conference opened on the afternoon of Monday, November 25 alleviating the need of most travelers from coming a day early. The general session keynote speaker was Dr. Willard Daggett, an administrator and educator at both the secondary and postsecondary levels in the New York State Education Department. The traditional reception planned for the opening night was also cancelled to cut costs. Chard clearly understood such cuts were necessary and that it was simply another example of educators being flexible. However, she writes passionately to the system’s employees:

I am impressed with the willingness to help, the optimism, the enthusiasm, the competence with which these people—you—go about accomplishing the tasks that need to be accomplished. The ongoing strength of our System lies in the resourcefulness and commitment of faculty, staff, and administrators at each college. In tough economic times, that realization provides us with hope, for unless we allow it, no one can prorate our spirit or our willingness and our determination to achieve significant things.⁵

⁴ Ibid., 2.

⁵ Ibid.

There is no indication in Executive Committee minutes that the cuts made or the overall shortening of the conference was negatively received. Chancellor Gainous concluded the conference by congratulating the Chancellor's Award winners. It seems the Association was able to meet its mission in 1991.

November 1991 – November 1992

Dr. Thomas McLeod led the Association in a year dedicated to “Expanding Learning Through Technology.” Yet it was a year still impacted by the previous year’s economic strain. The state’s budget had indeed been prorated as 1991 ACA President Chard had feared. Despite the challenges, McLeod was optimistic that the Association could again be flexible and meet the needs of system employees. Like 1991, cuts were made to assist member institutions in promoting, supporting, and ultimately sending their employees to the annual conference. The conference was kept in a central location, as the Executive Committee elected to use Hoover’s Winfrey Hotel for a second year in a row. Moreover, like 1991, the committee chose to publish the *Journal* only three times during the year; publication costs were estimated at \$5000 per-publication. The \$5000 “saved” was conserved for conference expenses. The 1991 conference cost \$14,347.98 thus in keeping the registration dues at \$35, the Executive Committee rested on the hope that at least 410 employees would attend; institutional, affiliate, and associate membership dues would offset any losses if the attendees numbered less than 410. Yet, as the Executive Committee continued to plan for the fall conference, they understood the possibility of the conference being cancelled.

The issue of hiring an executive director for the Association remained on the agenda for the Executive Committee, System, Chancellor, and Board of Education. According to Executive Committee minutes, McLeod reported that the Chancellor’s office was concerned with the salary for the position. As he noted, the ad’ hoc’ committee of ACA “has asked that the Chancellor’s office fund \$50,000.00 for the salary.

[However] It was decided to postpone the discussion of whether or not to hire an Executive Director until a decision was made on the salary. The feasibility of charging each member institution for the Executive Director's salary was discussed, but Dr. [Larry] McCoy did not want to do this for at least one year."⁶ Minutes from the May 15 meeting show that McLeod reported that the "Chancellor expressed to him that as the present time he did not have funds available to hire an Executive Director for ACA. The Chancellor asked that the Committee wait another year to see what fiscal shape the budget is in at that time."⁷ The issue remained tabled.

The ACA Executive Committee also defended itself and the System in 1992. The Chancellor of the four-year Alabama System gave a speech which offended many in the two-year system and especially within the Association. At the July Executive Committee meeting, Dr. Gary Branch informed the group of Dr. Philip Austin's speech and "made a motion that on behalf of the Association Dr. McLeod write a very strong letter expressing the Association's concern."⁸ Dr. George Chard asked McLeod to indicate to Austin the scope of work performed by the employees of the System. McLeod said he would draft a letter but would coordinate with the Chancellor's office when sending the letter to Dr. Austin. Unfortunately the historical record is devoid of the specifics of Dr. Austin's speech or of the contents of McLeod's response. However, it is impressive that the Executive Committee took steps to defend employees of the System and their good works.

⁶ Executive Committee Minutes, March 20, 1992, 2.

⁷ Executive Committee Minutes, May 15, 1992, 2.

⁸ Executive Committee Minutes, July 24, 1992, 4.

At the November 25th-26th conference, general session speakers included Dr. Fred T. Hoffstetter (Director of Institutional Technology at the University of Delaware), Dr. Robert L. Vogt (I.B.M.'s Academic Information System and an I.B.M. Community College Academic Specialist), and Dr. Diana G. Ovlinger (also of the I.B.M.'s Academic Information System and their Director of the Institute for Academic Technology at the University of North Carolina). I.B.M. or "Big Blue" hosted twelve break-out sessions during the conference as well. Moreover, 1992 seems to be the first year CEUs (i.e. continuing educational unit) were awarded for conference attendees. The conference seemed to be a success with ACA documents showing that the expected attendance of 400 and the needed 410 (to meet the conference budget's break-even mark) was surpassed; 651 names are included on the conference registration list. Dr. McLeod's optimism was rewarded.

November 1992 – November 1993

Following the tenure of Dr. McLeod, ACA was led by Lawson State's president, Dr. Perry Ward. His stewardship kept the Association on a sure—albeit necessarily tight—financial path, and helped shift the focus of not only the mission and objectives of the ACA but also of the entire Alabama College System. Member institutions had begun to adopt and apply the ideas and ideals of the Total Quality Movement (TQM) for their purposes. As Dr. Ward explains:

Several years ago, the acronym TQM began to surface and to become quite visible in many business and industry publications. Since then, the Total Quality Management movement has become very popular in higher education. Many tools and techniques used by TQM gurus have been adopted for use in two-year colleges and senior institutions. Colleges and universities have learned what the corporate world has known for years—quality counts. The ultimate challenge is to relate the TQM philosophies to the special needs of an academic environment.⁹

In selecting “Continuous Quality Improvement, An Understanding for Two-Year Colleges,” the Executive Committee sought to provide an efficient and effective conference. Moreover, in the Association's adopted theme, one can see a shift in the quality movement itself. An ideological change moved from the idea of “total quality” which implied a finite end to “continuous quality improvement” which stresses an incessant, infinite striving for betterment.

The keynote address for the conference's first general session was made by the duo Drs. Randi Levitz and Lee Noel. The commissions also used the quality theme as the

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commission of administration invited Dr. Bettye Burkhalter of Auburn's EDI to present. Her presentation was entitled "The Evolution of a Quality Management Process in a Postsecondary Setting: A Working Model for Consideration." Likewise, the commission on faculty invited Dr. John Harris, Samford University's assistant to the provost, who presented "Quality Improvement in the Academic Arena." The commission on students had Ms. Nancy Boothe speak on "Quality Improvement: Overcoming Barriers to Creativity."

The site of the conference was again Birmingham; however, the Winfrey Hotel was exchanged for the Birmingham Sheraton Civic Center. Minutes do not reflect the number of attendees; furthermore, there were no major concerns stemming from the conference addressed by the Executive Committee. It seems that the November 21-23, 1993 conference was received well and successful.

November, 1993 – November 1994

Association President Jane Stonebreaker succeeded Dr. Ward and in the April edition of the *Journal*, she pointedly summarizes the mission behind the Association's primary purpose and the impact it can have on the Alabama College System and the students it educates. She notes,

The Alabama College System has a unique role in the education of the populace of the State. We were created on the premise that all individuals have the right to a quality education that is also affordable. With our open door policy, we have students from a variety of backgrounds with a variety of needs. I believe that the Alabama College System is uniquely adapted for serving those individuals and their needs. But, in order to maintain that uniqueness and to be able to continue to fulfill our mission, we all must continually supplement and enhance our own education. One of the ways that we all can do that is to support the Alabama College Association. It is the only professional development organization in the state exclusively for all employees of the Alabama College System: faculty, staff, and administrators. I challenge each of you to take an active role in **your** association. It is only with your support and active participation that we can continue to provide these opportunities.¹⁰

The annual conference removed from Birmingham to Mobile and met November 20th-22nd under the theme of "Panorama of Productivity and Performance." It also convened with a renewed sense of mission. The momentum from the previous year's dedication to performance development through the Continuous Quality Management ideals continued and inspired the Executive Committee to compile a "Planning Manual" in which the purpose and mission of the ACA was clear to all. Its Introduction reads in part:

The Alabama College Association (ACA) is a professional organization composed of individuals, institutions, and organizations whose professional

¹⁰ *ACA Journal*, vol XXI (Summer 1990), 10.

activities are recognized as being closely related to the functions and purposes of the Alabama College System. The purpose of ACA is to promote development and advancement of Alabama education through the Alabama College System by:

1. promoting professional service;
2. encouraging professional growth
3. improving articulation and cooperation with all levels of education;
4. identifying needs and problems of the Alabama College System and communicating them to appropriate agencies for action;
5. providing communication throughout the Alabama College System; and
6. promoting public recognition of the Alabama College System

The Association accomplishes its goal through the dedicated professionals from the Alabama College System who volunteer their time and expertise to develop and implement the annual professional development conference for their colleagues in the system. Organizing this major professional development conference requires systematic communication with all of the personnel in the Alabama College System. It requires a great deal of advanced planning for program development, site preparation, publicity, and registration activities.¹¹

It is possible that the professional development manual was produced partially in response to “some concern and unrest in relation to the purpose of the Executive Committee.”¹² Moreover, to answer the concern(s), the Executive Committee suggested that the ACA president attend one of the Presidents’ Association meetings.

Moreover, despite whatever “unrest” existed, Chancellor Gainous looked for aid from the ACA in providing a theme and helping to orchestrate an exhibit at the Alabama Center for Commerce where the Department of Postsecondary Education was located at the time. A steering committee was selected, a theme for the exhibit adopted, a mission statement crafted, the budget set, and a system-wide plan of promotion developed. The unveiling was scheduled for March 1995 and the exhibit remained in place until July.

¹¹ Alabama College Association Professional Development Planning Manual, 1994: 1.

¹² Executive Committee Minutes, January 14, 1994, 2. In a February 24, 1994 memorandum from Sandra Flowers there is reference to a training session held for the Executive Committee where the manual was used.

While this committee stood apart of the ACA it buttressed the ideals of the Association, even using the same theme identified for the annual conference. The exhibitions were intended “to show The Alabama College System in the best possible light,” highlighting the system’s strengths.¹³ The art exhibit was eventually wedded to the Association’s conference.

Commission speakers at the ACA conference included Dr. Malcom Portera, Vice-Chancellor for the University of Alabama System, Dr. Leah Rawls Atkins of Auburn’s Center for the Arts and Humanities, Dr. Jerry Patterson from Birmingham-Southern College, and retired Andalusia City School’s Superintendent John Osburn.

¹³ Report of The Alabama College System Exhibition Steering Committee, September 12, 1994: 7.

November 1994 – November 1995

While continuing to battle financial constraints lingering from the first-half of the decade, Association president Dr. Jorge Kuzmicic was quite optimistic. In a June message he addressed the state of affairs:

We know that community colleges in Alabama are being asked to accomplish more with less...The “glory days” of higher education may be over...We are now facing waves of change in the economy, technology, demographics, social values, and the new political realities of both Washington and [Montgomery]...It is clear these significant forces will demand changes in the way educational institutions in Alabama operate in the near future...Nevertheless, change we must in a proactive way rather than being dragged into the future by the horses of consequences.¹⁴

Dr. Kuzmicic continues in his *Journal* remarks, rallying the proverbial troops,

One clear and imminent change is the struggle we face with the dismal educational dollars in the 1995-96 educational budget that is now being debated in the State Legislature and the courts. This gives us an opportunity to act proactively to work as a team in preserving and securing the Alabama two-year colleges. It is essential that each one of us becomes an active advocate in our community with political, educational, and business leaders in sharing the ACA and the Alabama College System success story and sharing the impact that two-year colleges have had on the citizens of Alabama in the last 30 years. “No one else can do it better than you.” Let’s make this an exciting year of concerted, positive efforts to make ourselves, our colleges, our System, and our Association better. Where they are difficulties and obstacles, let’s seek solutions. And where change is needed, let’s join hands to effect this change.¹⁵

Chancellor Gainous echoed Dr. Kuzmicic’s sentiments noting, “It is gratifying to be a part of a system of colleges that has such a vital role to play in the democratization of education in the State of Alabama. With our collective efforts and support of access to

¹⁴ *ACA Journal*, vol XXII (June 1995), 1.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

and quality of education, The Alabama College System will continue to provide an entry point to higher education for thousands of Alabamians.”¹⁶

Change and flexibility had been a part of The Alabama College System and the Association since their inceptions; the Continuous Quality Movement had helped members, schools, and governing bodies see that change in policies, procedures, and systems can be “a good thing,” and produce positive results. In a proactive step to better market and communicate the System’s missions, vision, and values the Jackhammer Group from Birmingham was employed to survey and analyze the strategies and concepts being used throughout the System, mainly by the ACSPPA (i.e. the public relations association). Their report, sent to Mr. Doug Freeland the Manager of Media Services for AIDTI (Alabama Industrial Development Training Institute), notes a number of ideas that individual colleges could use in becoming “strongly competitive, proactive, and when possible—preemptive” in their advertisement, marketing, and branding. The report shared strategies and made suggestions to institutions, encouraging them to spend monies more effectively and efficiently, enhance or eliminate classes or programs, target potential students differently, and to begin using the Internet. While this report may seem ancillary to the mission Association, it was anything but. Unfortunately, there is nothing in the Association’s Executive Committee’s minutes that reflect reception of the report (or subsequent findings) or any discussion of its contents. The inclusion of the report into the Association’s historical records may have been accidental; however, the report reveals the shifts in marketing, advertising, and overall recruiting methodologies. Drs. Kuzmicic and Ganius were right about the needs for change and this report is one

¹⁶ Ibid., 2.

example of why change was necessary and how those changes could be implemented; there is little doubt the Association was instrumental in providing the professional development to System employees called for by the report and the Chancellor.¹⁷

Indeed, “change” was a powerful force and it was even incorporated into the Association’s theme for 1995: “Changing for the Future.” The Association invited Drs. John Roueche of the University of Texas’ Community College Leadership Program and Cuyahoga Community College’s President Jerry Sue Thornton to be the keynote speakers at the general sessions at the November 19th-21st annual conference in Birmingham. Kuzmivic announced them as speakers noting, “These are two of the finest, nationally recognized speakers in higher education regarding the current state of community, junior, and technical colleges and their ability to prepare students for the future.”¹⁸ Commission speakers included Neal Wade, C.E.O. of the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama, Inc., UAB’s Professor of History Dr. Horace Huntley, and John Moser of Leadership Development, Inc.

“Changing for the future” would prove to be an appropriate theme for the Association, and despite the challenges that often accompany change, the Executive Committee seems to have met the challenges of 1994-5 and provided an adequate conference.

¹⁷ Report from the Jackhammer Group: Advertising and Marketing with Impact, Birmingham Alabama, August 16, 1995.

¹⁸ *ACA Journal*, vol XXII (October 1995), 1.

This entry from a 1995 *Journal* provides a snap-shot of challenges facing education in the State of Alabama. Dr. Gainous' words are not minced. One can certainly understand the challenges and fear felt by individuals and schools within the System.

Message from the Chancellor

The colleges in the Alabama College System are increasingly aware that, due to budgetary restraints, they will have to undertake more and more fundamental changes in the next decade than at any time in the past quarter century. Our limited funding could restrict the ability of the state's Community, Junior, and Technical Colleges to continue to serve the education and training needs of our citizens. Our colleges currently face some of the most difficult challenges in their history. Increases in student enrollment, diversity, and under-preparedness combined with decreasing budgets and heavy workloads will create a tremendous burden for our faculty, staff and administrators.

At a time when our colleges are being called upon to play a major role in work force training, school to work and tech prep initiatives, the success of our students who use these experiences as an avenue to finding the American dream should serve as a constant reminder of the value that the Alabama College System plays in Alabama's higher education.

Our colleges exist exclusively to meet the needs of our communities. We serve students, businesses, and industries in a partnership which promotes the American dream. That dream has always been fueled by education. As educators, we have an obligation to our students, present and future, to ensure that they have access to the means for their advancement in life. Every Alabamian has a vested interest in the existence and success of this system, and they have a right to expect the best of our collective abilities. Our colleges are open to all people of this state. They bring people together. They are Alabama at its best. Alabamians should make every effort to keep the doors open to their educational opportunities.

Alabama Community, Junior, and Technical Colleges have historically been places where transfer programs, personal interest classes, and career training courses have coexisted. Our comprehensive mission is to make higher education more accessible, a goal which we should preserve despite funding cuts.

The Alabama College System has had a significant impact on the state of Alabama since it opened its doors with an initial enrollment of 9,487. Today, with an annual enrollment of over 100,000, the Alabama College System serves more students than the largest state university systems combined. Sixty-five percent of all freshmen and sophomores enrolled in higher education in Alabama are two-year college students.

Although these profound enrollment increases are impressive, students would not continue to enroll if they were not getting a return on their investment. Alabama's two-year colleges are a good investment for all Alabamians.¹⁹

¹⁹ *ACA Journal*, vol XXII (October 1995), 4.

November 1995 – November 1996

Dr. Ed Meadows succeeded Kuzmicic and led the ACA as it accepted “Developing Industry for Global Challenges” as the mid-decade theme. Meadows felt the theme “is a springboard from last year’s theme which focused on change.”²⁰ In the October *Journal*, he, Governor Fob James, Chancellor Gainous, and State Board of Education Vice-President Ethel Hall all commented on the various changes facing education. James notes, “The development of worldwide competition brought about by technological advances in transportation, communication, and other areas of our lives brings many challenges to us as a state and the nation. We must all respond to the need to meet these challenges brought about by a global economy.”²¹ And Gainous added that the key to meeting these challenges is education: we, the Alabama College System,

must emphasize problem solving, abstract thinking...and application of new technology to increasing complex problems. We must involve workers in our efforts to ensure a more competitive workforce; emphasize shared learning and teamwork; cultivate appreciation of communication, cooperation and collaboration; emphasize lifelong learning; achieve active participation of employers in integrating work- and school-based learning; and stress the integration of academic and vocational learning.²²

Tying-in with the theme, Gainous continues by stressing that “we must instill in our students a new world view where they understand that change is constant and growth and adaptability are essential.”²³ Meadows and the ACA indeed had (and arguably continue to have) the daunting challenge to meet the demands of the world markets and global

²⁰ *ACA Journal*, vol XXIII (October 1996), 4.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

economic community at the local level: “As we adopt to a larger world view, professional development of our faculty and staff is essential if we are to fulfill the Alabama College System mission of enhancing the quality of life for the people of Alabama and maintain and improve upon the public’s confidence in public higher education to deliver the services required to compete in a global economy.”²⁴ Meadows’ sentiments echoed words he shared earlier in the year: “Our career, of course, is education and, as professionals, we must continuously ask ourselves if we are, in fact, making a difference...With good intentions, sincere effort, intelligent direction, and skillful execution, we all can be successful in accomplishing this commitment to make a difference in a global society.”²⁵

To allow System employees access to the State Board of Education, Dr. Martha Allen suggested the annual conference include a forum or panel discussion by board members. After Executive Committee discussion and subsequent talks with Chancellor Gainous and board members, a ninety-minute “State Board Forum” was inserted into the annual conference program.²⁶ According to participants who submitted comments in their survey of the annual conference, some felt the forum was the “best part of [the] convention;” however, others pointed out some logistic constraints (e.g. each board member needed a microphone); others suggested that questions should have be submitted ahead of time for the board members to address.²⁷ General session speakers at the conference included Dr. Craig Pace (Covey Leadership Center, Inc.), Dr. Belle Wheelan (President of Central Virginia Community College), and Dr. Douglas Covington

²⁴ Ibid., 5.

²⁵ *ACA Journal*, vol XXIII (April 1996), 1.

²⁶ Executive Committee Minutes, May 16, 1996, 2.

²⁷ Summary Analysis: 1996 ACA Conference Evaluations, January 31, 1997.

(Radford University's President). Commission speakers were Dr. Imogene Mixson (interim-President of Alabama Aviation and Technical College), Robert Holmes, Jr. (Alabama Power), and Joyce Whitt (President of Whitt Management Consulting, Inc.). Overall, the state board forum and the annual conference, held November 24th-26th in Birmingham, was well received and the idea was proposed to hold the forum again in 1997.

November 1996 – November 1997

“Change” had been a theme ringing through the Executive Committee for several years, and the ACA engaged a series of major changes in the late-1990s. Some issues were “carry-overs” from previous years while new challenges confronted the Association—including having some System employees question the viability of the Association—and consumed its time, efforts, and resources.

The global economy continued as an acute focus in 1996 and in the October 1997 *Journal* Dr. Ethel Hall notes that in meeting the challenges of the world markets, there had been a lack of coordination between business and industry and education:

More than ever now, our two year colleges must provide comprehensive training, retraining, and upgrading. We recognize the importance of working with those who employ individuals trained at our colleges but the need is urgent that we continue to plan with business and industry to assure that needs and training are coordinated and complemented. Likewise, it is important that business and industry keep us informed of their needs and of their assessment of our graduates.²⁸

In leading ACA, President Martha Allen echoed Hall’s sentiments, by stressing that the Association was dedicated to the theme: “A.C.A.: A 21st Century Vision” and to helping the System be one “that moves into the next century fluidly, adapting continuously to change. To become such a system we must 1) embrace a future that is driven by technology and business and industry, 2) learn to value what the market values and 3) adjust curricula and teaching methods accordingly.”²⁹ She continues by explaining that “This year’s convention will provide a special opportunity to hear from industry.

²⁸ *ACA Journal*, vol XXIV (October 1997), 7.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

Corporate executives along with members of the state Board of Education will share visions of the next century and ideas on ways to enhance partnerships.³⁰ Dr. Allen invited the state board back for another forum and they were joined by John C. Adams of the Russell Corporation, William Michael Warren, Jr. of Alabama Gas, Charles D. McCrary of Alabama Power, and Mercedes-Benz U.S. International's F. Emmett Meyer, Jr. The Association wanted to coordinate the communication between business and industry and the two-year colleges and they used the annual conference as one vehicle for that bridge.

There was a noticeable need for professional development to aid in further evolving the relationships between member schools and business and industry. To assist in developing the System's structures and aid in training faculty of the system, on January 31, 1997 Dr. Allen addressed a letter to the Executive Committee noting that Chancellor Gainous had given "his full support" for workshops to be hosted by four of the Alabama Technology Network (ATN) Centers for Excellence with assistance from ACA "to ensure that the Centers address some of the needs of the two-year college system and encourage cross-over of technical and academic faculty at these workshops."³¹ For example, it was suggested that the Electronics Center could invite physics, electrical technology, mathematics, computer science, and drafting instructors to work together. "The intent of these workshops is not to focus on the Centers but to provide instructional information which can be taken back to the classroom."³²

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Allen, Martha. Letter to Chancellor Fred Gainous and the Executive Committee of the Alabama College Association, January 31, 1997.

³² Ibid.

In 1997, the Association was confronted with a new issue that caused significant changes for the Association. Two years earlier, Ed Meadows, Eva Sasser, and Jorge Kuzmivic helped spur Chancellor Gainous to establish The Alabama College System Teaching and Learning Initiative. The Initiative was “to create a climate for effective teaching and learning by developing system-wide activities and practices through broad-based involvement of faculty and administrators.”³³ Five models were developed: the Master Teacher Concept, Faculty-to-Faculty Mentoring, Faculty Evaluation, Professional Development and Outcome Measurements. Funding was provided by the Department of Postsecondary Education, the Presidents’ Association, the Deans of Student Affairs Association, the Instructional Officers Association, the Financial Management Association, and the ACA. After planning retreats and the hiring of out-side consultants, the first Teaching and Learning Symposium was held in April 1996:

Dr. Terry O’Banion, Executive Director of the League for Innovation in the Community Colleges, and Ms. Mardee Jenrette, Director of The Teaching Learning Enterprise, Miami-Dade Community College, spoke to more than 325 personnel representing every college in The Alabama College System. From this symposium came the final version of the System’s value and quality statements and a list of exemplary teaching and learning practices which ultimately led to the development of exemplary models of teaching and learning.

The second symposium was held May 15-16, 1997. While the conference “is a professional development activity open to all employees of the Alabama College System,” it focused on faculty professional development.³⁴ More than 300 attended the 1997 Teaching and Learning Symposium; however, in January 1997 there were decisions being made by the Executive Committee of ACA about merging the Teaching and

³³ *ACA Journal*, vol XXV (Fall 1998), 3.

³⁴ Meadows, Ed. Letter to Martha Allen, March 21, 1997.

Learning Symposium with the objectives of the Association. Executive Committee minutes reflect that with the transition from quarters to semesters, future ACA conferences could be moved from the fall to the spring and thus the Teaching and Learning Symposium could be held in the fall semester. A “Teaching and Learning Transition and Implementation Committee” was formed to ease the fusion of the Teaching and Learning into the ACA.³⁵

A June 11 letter from Chancellor Gainous notes:

We must continue to encourage colleges to showcase and highlight their exemplary programs, and through the continuation of the symposium we build a network of like-minded people who share information concerning improvements in teaching and learning. It is critical to our System to provide professional developmental opportunities in support of experimentation with new teaching and learning methodology.³⁶

Therefore, the chancellor requested that ACA explore the possibility to assuming the responsibility for planning and conducting the Teaching and Learning Symposium. His thinking was that the symposium would be a different event from the annual conference and planned by a distinct faculty committee; this reflected the ideas circulating through the Executive Committee in January. As Gainous notes, “With A.C.A.’s involvement we can be assured that this needed professional development opportunity for faculty will be sustained and would also mark a very important milestone in the expanded growth of the Alabama College Association as an organization dedicated to presenting professional development opportunities to system employees.”³⁷ Gainous continues, ensuring that his office would consider altering the number of professional development days which could

³⁵ Executive Committee Minutes, January 31, 1997, 2.

³⁶ Fred Gainous, Letter to Martha Allen and the Executive Committee, June 11, 1997.

³⁷ Ibid.

assist in keeping classroom conflicts from occurring, hopefully maximizing symposium attendance.

July 25 Executive Committee minutes indicate that ACA would indeed consume the Teaching and Learning Symposium. However, the symposium would eventually be included in the annual ACA conference by adding a third day; it seemed too expensive to hold both a fall and spring conference.³⁸ Altering the schedule would take some time; therefore, the 1998 Teaching and Learning Symposium would be held October 29-30 and the ACA conference was pushed to March 24-26, 1999.³⁹

The 1997 ACA was held in Birmingham for a third straight year, November 23rd-25th. In addition to the forum mentioned earlier, Stephen Gower, founder of the Gower Group, Inc. and Dr. Jacquelyn Belcher, President of DeKalb College gave keynote address during the general sessions. Gower also served as a commission speaker along with Dr. Belle Wheelan, Dr. Doris Vaughn, and Gertrude Baker. Wheelan was in high demand from her appearance at the 1996 conference; Vaughn served with Educational Opportunity Centers Programs, and Baker was director of Head Start for Mobile Community Action Agency, Inc. While they were well received, the times were indeed changing.

³⁸ Executive Committee Minutes, July 25, 1997, 2.

³⁹ Executive Committee Minutes, September 19, 1997, 2.

November 1997- March 1999

Dr. Brenda Kennedy succeeded Martha Allen at the November 1997 ACA conference and she was quick to note several achievements attained during the previous year: the Teaching and Learning Symposium had been joined to Association; Autocad, Welding, and Programmable Control departments held workshops; financial assistance was extended to the All-Alabama Academic Team Foundation; the largest number of vendors ever attended the conference; the Association supported the Chancellor's Art Exhibit; the Executive Committee held a training session for over seventy Interest Chairs and vice-Chairs; and the first Industry and State Board of Education Forum was held at the conference. Kennedy nonetheless presided over an Association in flux: member schools were transitioning to the semester system, the Teaching and Learning Symposium was still finding its place within the ACA, and the Association was wrestling with moving the annual conference to the spring while also hosting a fall Teaching and Learning convention.

The spring *Journal* announced the complete merger of the Teaching and Learning Symposium with the Association:

After two successful years of operating as a professional development initiative under the sponsorship of the Department of Postsecondary Education, the Teaching and Learning Symposium has been incorporated into the functions of the Alabama College Association. 'This arrangement will ensure the longevity of the Teaching and Learning Symposium and provide it with the resources it needs to enhance the quality of workshops and programs,' said John Reutter, 1997 Symposium chair.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ *ACA Journal*, vol XXV (Spring 1998), 6.

The *Journal* continues detailing that the Association's Constitution would be amended, organizing the symposium as a "special purpose commission" responsible for planning its annual meeting. The purpose of the symposium would not change: "The ACA Executive Committee has agreed that the symposium should remain committed to serving the professional development needs of faculty."⁴¹

The ACA's Teaching and Learning Symposium was held October 29-30 and the meeting's program has Kennedy noting

Fully cognizant that the linal method of teaching is imminently becoming obsolete, we cheerfully embrace a method of teaching requiring a successful "marriage" of instructional technologies and instructional philosophies. It is our mission to "seek to provide accessible quality educational growth, and enhance the quality of life for the people of Alabama." Therefore, toward the goal of fulfilling our mission and meeting the needs of our students by equipping them with the technical skills and ability to complete in a global market, we have so structured and organized the present Symposium to emphasize "Strategies and Technologies to Enhance Teaching and Learning."⁴²

By the spring of 1999, Kennedy was able to announce "As it stands now, the Teaching and Learning Symposium will officially end its transitional year once the proposed amended Constitution is ratified."⁴³ President Kennedy also announced that the ACA Executive Committee would take over the responsibilities of the faculty committee which had been planning the symposium. As the agency charged with providing professional development for the System, it did not seem prudent to have a separate planning committee for the symposium. However, it seemed it would remain a separate conference.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² 1998 Teaching and Learning Symposium Program, October 29-30, 1998, 1.

⁴³ *ACA Journal*, vol XXV (February 1999), 1.

There were other changes made to the annual conference. The March 24-26, 1999 conference began in the middle of the week as opposed to the norm of beginning on a Sunday. Typically the conference began with the Chancellor's Awards; however, the '99 conference—held in Birmingham—began with a plenary session keynote by the University of Maryland Baltimore County's president, Dr. Freeman A. Hrabowski; the presentation was followed by the Chancellor's Awards later that evening. Kennedy explains,

Previously, during the second day of our annual convention, Interest Groups provided presenters to address their respective groups' disciplines. However, the present convention will cut across discipline lines and simply provide professional development workshops that run concurrently. Participants will select from a wide variety of topics in choosing sessions to attend or they may shop around and attend several sessions during the allotted time period.⁴⁴

Each of the developments reflected the ACA conference theme: "The Dawn of a New Millennium." Dr. George Autry of the Manpower Development Corporation delivered the keynote at the second plenary session, and commission speakers included Dr. John Gardner the executive director of University 101 (based in South Carolina), Dr. Terry Whisnant, president of Horizon Seminars, and Sylvia Kelly of May Kay. A third keynote address was delivered by Bill O'Conner, president of the Business Council of Alabama. Despite the challenges to the Association and System was positioning itself to answer the question: "What's ahead for the Alabama College System in the new millennium?"

⁴⁴ Ibid.

March 1999 – March 2000

The newly installed Executive Committee took their positions following the March conference. However, the leadership of the ACA had been looking ahead for quite some time. Succeeding Kennedy was Mike Bailey. In a February letter to Chancellor Gainous Bailey writes:

There is a growing concern that the Alabama College Association is about to encounter some serious problems that may impact the future survival of the organization. The major factors behind this concern include: the dramatic **decrease** in attendance at the past two ACA conferences; the growth in attendance at the last Teaching and Learning Symposium; and the large **spending deficit** from the Teaching and Learning Symposium which had to be absorbed by the ACA. Among our concerns, we fear that the two conferences will continue to divide system participation. Some presidents are requiring their employees to choose between the two meetings. Additionally, with ACA being responsible for two major conferences, if attendance is split between the two, there is concern that eventually we will not have the resources to offer the quality professional development programs for system employees.⁴⁵

Bailey's letter continues, asking the chancellor to consider holding fall professional development days for local in-service activities and to allow the Teaching and Learning Symposium to coincide with the annual ACA conference scheduled for March 2000.

Bailey was deeply concerned for the Association.

In the summer's *Journal*, Bailey notes, "ACA's theme for Conference 2000 is The Alabama College System: Change, Challenge, and Opportunity. The theme is an affirmation of Dr. Gainous' comment when he said, in February, 'Rarely in the long and

⁴⁵ Letter from Mike Bailey to Fred Gainous, February 5, 1999. The 1997 Teaching and Learning Symposium was attended by 320 persons; the 1998 symposium by 350. The 1998 symposium brought in revenue of \$41,525 but had expenses totaling \$62,416.89. See December 4, 1998 Executive Committee Minutes.

successful saga of the development of two-year colleges have the opportunities been more abundant or the challenges more significant’.”⁴⁶ Bailey continues the notation,

The purpose of the Alabama College Association is to promote development and advancement of post-secondary education throughout the Alabama College System. The Association’s constitution lists six ways we can accomplish our purpose. Those ways include: promoting professional service and encouraging professional growth. This year’s ACA executive committee is focusing on professional growth as it plans Conference 2000. Professional growth for ACA members will prepare us for professional service and the changes, challenges, and opportunities which lie ahead.⁴⁷

The *Journal* continues detailing that the Teaching and Learning Symposium would indeed be included as a part of the ACA’s March 2000 conference. Apparently, the chancellor agreed with Bailey and encouraged the complete merger. However, one aspect or element of the Teaching and Learning Initiative, the Master Teacher Seminar, was continued; it was held in June 1999 at the Walker College Campus of Beville State Community College (it should be noted that as of the production of this history, the Master Teacher Seminar continues to be held in the summer).

The continuation of the Master Teacher Seminar and the conjoining of the Teaching and Learning Symposium into the ACA conference allowed Bailey to share that the March 2000 activities “are designed to help two-year colleges explore the change, challenge, and opportunity of becoming a ‘learning college’.”⁴⁸ Bailey wanted to position the ACA as the driving force for professional development within the system, whereby “Students First” was to become the ideal. “This simple statement is designed to keep student learning in the forefront of every decision. However, to truly make a paradigm

⁴⁶ *ACA Journal*, vol XXV (Summer 2000), 1.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *ACA Journal*, vol XXVI (Winter 1999), 6. The numbering of the *Journal* became problematic at this time. The numbering here is what was indicated on the published item.

shift, colleges must engage everyone—students, staff, and community—in learning. Only then will our institutions become ‘Learning Colleges’.”⁴⁹ It was felt that incorporating the Teaching and Learning Symposium into the ACA conference could help rededicate the Association’s mission to providing for the students within the system by offering quality professional development activities.

The March 2000 Teaching and Learning Symposium and ACA conference was—for the first time—a four day affair. Mobile was the host city and the Adam’s Mark Hotel and Mobile Convention Center provided the conference site. The Teaching and Learning segment featured Dr. Irving McPhail, Chancellor of the Community College of Maryland; Dr. George Baker III of North Carolina State University; Dr. John Tagg, Associate Professor of English and Dr. Robert Barr, Director of Institutional Research and Planning at Polomar College in San Marcus, California. The ACA’s sessions featured Dr. Terry Whisnant, President Horizon Seminars (Virginia); Sylvia Kelly, Sr. Sales Director Mary Kay Cosmetics; and Dr. Martha Nesbitt, President of Gainesville College (Georgia). According to the conference’s evaluations, overall the conference ran smoothly. However, the next year would not be as fortunate.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

March 2000 - March 2001

Using feedback from the March 2000 conference evaluations, as early as May ACA President Nancy Chandler looked to reorganize the annual conference. While still incorporating Teaching and Learning elements, the Executive Committee discussed the structure of the conference.⁵⁰ Questions centered on the length of the conference, conference fees (there were separate fees for the March 2000 conferences), and the overall format. To meet the purpose of the Association, the Executive Committee produced a series of goals for the year. As Executive Committee minutes show, the goals included:

1. Provide sound fiscal management that results in a positive cash flow for 2000-2001.
2. Plan and produce the 2000-2001 ACA Conference so that it is a professional growth and personally rewarding experience for attendees to the extent that the number of participants is greater than the 1999-2000 level and the overall evaluation meets or exceeds 1999-2000 level.
3. Continue to build in a positive manner the sponsorship of the Teaching and Learning Symposium to the extent that the planners of T&L and ACA work effectively as one team with a common purpose.
4. Initiate additional professional development opportunities that would include:
 - a. Providing industry certification training opportunities for a minimum of 10
 - b. Using technology to enhance instruction in the Alabama College System training opportunities for a minimum of 10
 - c. Including a track on student retention at the 2000-2001 ACA Conference
 - d. Providing local, specialized training in technology for staff
5. Increase awareness of the Alabama College System's positive impact through the System institutions and our business communities through the publication of a minimum of four ACA journals.
6. Evaluate the Affiliate Membership effort developed and initiated during 1999-2000 and revise as appropriate.
7. Increase the number of Affiliate memberships by 100% over 1999-2000 level.

⁵⁰ Executive Committee Minutes, May 1, 2000, 2.

8. Produce a Policies and Procedures Manual for ACA Executive Committee to document and record practices and procedures from year to year.
9. Make serving on the ACA Executive Committee a professional growth and personally rewarding experience for each member.⁵¹

Building on these goals, a constitutional amendment was introduced calling for a new commission on “Faculty and Teaching and Learning;” and, the Commission on Students would be renamed to incorporate a focus on student retention. Voting on these amendments was scheduled to take place at the March 2002 annual conference. In the mean-time the Executive Committee continued its normal planning regimen, preparing for the March 2001 conference.

In January 2001, the Executive Committee also voted to facilitate a series of one-day, drive-in workshops to be held in the summer. This would allow those who could not attend the conference in March to experience professional development opportunities. These were led by Dr. Devin Stephenson. These meetings were tentatively scheduled because the proverbial storm clouds of proration were approaching at the time. Fear of proration caused the Executive Committee to also take action in January 2001—just 60 days before the annual conference—to cut the conference to three days rather than four. Drs. John E. Roueche and Alan November were the slated keynote speakers for the conference. Roueche was a professor in- and Director of the Community College Leadership Program at the University of Texas; November was also a professor in the same program. They pledged to use the conference theme “2001: An Educational Odyssey—A Journey of Dedication, Innovation, and Transformation” as the focus of their keynote.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Between the January and February meetings, the state government prorated budgets. Chancellor Gainous and college presidents felt the cuts sharply. The February minutes reflect that a poll had been taken of the college presidents to see how many employees they would send to the ACA conference the following month. The news was bleak: most said they could afford to send only two or three; others said they could not send a single employee. Dr. Chandler recommended the conference be cancelled. The minutes record part of the Executive Committee's subsequent discussion on her motion: The "pre-conference cancellation costs are estimated at \$35,000. It will cost approximately \$67,000 to hold the conference. Attendance projected from the President's poll would not offset the conference production costs. Dr. C[handler] said the long-term interests of the ACA and the Alabama College System must be the deciding factor in our decision."⁵² A motion was made, seconded, and the vote was unanimous; the conference was cancelled. Further discussion focused on cancelling agreements with keynote and commission speakers and offsetting as much of the hotel and convention center costs. The drive-in workshops were also cancelled. It was decided that the 2000-2001 Executive Committee members would remain in their positions until the next annual conference with the exception of the top elected positions.

Dr. Chandler issued a letter in early March notifying the member institutions—and System employees by extension—of the cancellation. To offset some of the losses, she asked for the System's professional organizations and groups to hold any spring meetings in conjunction with the ACA Executive Committee's March 21 meeting. The hope was to occupy some of the hotel space allotted for conference programs, thus

⁵² Executive Committee Minutes, February 16, 2001, 2.

absorbing those costs and keeping the loss to a minimum.⁵³ It was about the same time that Dr. Chandler addressed a longer, more formal letter to the System's presidents. She thanked them for their support, expressed how painful the decision was to cancel the conference, and assured the presidents that the ACA remained dedicated to its purpose.

The March 21, 2001 business meeting was held in Mobile and Dr. Chandler was succeeded by Mr. Mark Shope; however, he stepped down shortly after assuming the presidency. Dr. Vicki Hawsey, the 2000-2001 Second Vice-President thus by-passed the position of First Vice-President position and became the ACA's president.

⁵³ Letter to Public Relations Directors from Nancy Chandler, March 2001.

March 2001 - November 2002

As the new millennium dawned, one of the first decisions made by Dr. Hawsey and the Executive Committee was to move the annual conference from the tentative March 2002 date to November 2002. In a measure to keep costs loss to a minimum, the conference was again scheduled for the Adams Mark Hotel in Mobile. Despite the move of the date, the Association facilitated a number of professional development workshops (as had been done before) in the spring. These were one-day affairs hosted by Jefferson State Community College; from the host-site, video conferencing was connected to Jefferson Davis Community College, Bishop State Community College, and Enterprise State Junior College. Those not able to go to Jefferson State could participate via video conference at one of these other sites. Evaluations from the faculty and staff who attended the workshops or who participated via video-conferencing were positive and reflect that the content of the sessions was beneficial.

Hawsey, despite not having the opportunity to normally progress through the leadership positions of the Executive Committee was deeply dedicated to the mission and purpose of ACA.⁵⁴ She performed her tasks admirably. She led the Association in a time of transition and uncertainty to a rededication to its mission and purpose; she trained the

⁵⁴ Due to Mr. Shope's resignation Hawsey was not able to see all aspects of conference planning through from the earliest stages to the end of a conference; nor was she able to serve in the capacity of first vice-president (i.e. the position whose primary function had evolved into being the one to issue the "call for proposals" for the annual conference and allotting the space and time for each approved proposal. By not experiencing the fullness of these offices, as ACA president, she faced unfamiliar challenges.

Association's eye on "Transforming Alabama's Communities through Visionary Education," which was the adopted theme for the year.

At the annual conference, the Association was treated to speakers including Dr. Mark Milliron from the League of Innovation, Dr. John Roueche of the University of Texas at Austin, Dr. John Gardner of the National Resource Center on the First-Year Freshman Experience, and Dr. Hunter Boylan of the Center for Developmental Education. Four tracks were offered at the conference: Teaching and Learning, Leadership, Student Success, and Staff Development. Break-out sessions and Association speakers were aligned to each track.

From a review of the conference evaluations, the annual conference was a success. At the conclusion of the conference, which was attended by 577 members, Dr. Hawsey was succeeded by Cynthia Anthony.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Executive Committee Minutes, April 25, 2003, 2

November 2002 - November 2003

Under the theme of “Connecting Colleges, Communities, and Careers” President Cynthia Anthony encouraged the Alabama College System to take notice that it was “the vital link that connects these elements [i.e. colleges, communities, and careers] and ensures the success of those who take advantage of its opportunities.”⁵⁶ In the early stages of planning for the annual conference, Dr. Anthony and the Executive Committee adopted a series of goals to direct their efforts. Among them were:

Provide professional development opportunities that emphasize: a) Enhancing the integration of instructional technology and distance learning at system colleges; b) Enhancing student retention efforts throughout the Alabama College System; c) Broadening and strengthening activities that enhance student development and leadership; d) Workforce development initiatives designed to meet the demand of Alabama’s current and future employers.⁵⁷

Throughout the year, Dr. Anthony kept the ACA on schedule for hosting a three-day conference (again in November) in Birmingham during which U.S. Congressman Artur Davis, Mr. Greg Gray of Renaissance Unlimited, and Chancellor Roy Johnson gave keynote addresses. Johnson succeeded Dr. Gainous as chancellor in May 2002. Greg Gray, President of Renaissance Unlimited spoke to the Commission on Support, Assistant Professor Dr. Clair Major of The University of Alabama’s Higher Education Administration program spoke to the commission on faculty, and Dr. Zelema Harris, President of Parkland College spoke to the commissions on administration and students.

⁵⁶ *ACA Journal*, vol XIX (Spring 2003), 8.

⁵⁷ ACA Draft Goals, 2002-2003, Executive Committee Papers.

Dr. Johnson also addressed ACA members in the Conference-edition of the *ACA's Journal*. He notes,

Challenges confront us in the form of uncertain state and federal funding, competition for scarce resources, and growing demands for our services. We dare not fail those who need us most. For some, a local community college is the first choice for college and opens a door that allows an easier transition to continuing postsecondary studies. For others, a local two-year college makes it possible to hold down a job and still pursue a technical degree or certificate to maintain a job or seek advancement. Still others benefit from easy access to quality educational opportunities in noncredit courses and adult education programs. Quite simply, the Alabama College System is making life better for Alabama citizens.⁵⁸

The chancellor continued, stressing the importance of the ACA and the annual conference. He writes that it “provides an important infusion of professional development that helps our employees stay focused on the mission of The Alabama College System.”⁵⁹ He further asked the attendees to remember why they were at the conference. In encouraging System employees to keep a focus on the students, he implied that professional development opportunities would enable those within the system to “make a difference in the lives of thousands who count on us.”⁶⁰

These sentiments were synonymous with Dr. Anthony's. In the same *Journal* she reminded attendees of the conference theme and their mission:

Your attendance at this conference is the final step in enhancing the connection we all share. Each day as members of the administration, faculty, and staff of the institutions that make up the Alabama College System, we are connecting colleges, communities, and careers...I know you will enjoy your stay and that you will find your own individual ways to strengthen your personal connections to the Alabama College System and make them as

⁵⁸ *ACA Journal*, vol XIX (Nov 2003), 4.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

strong as the connection our system has to the communities we serve, and to our students who receive the education needed for successful careers.⁶¹

The Executive Committee was dealt a harsh blow in September when long-time Executive Committee member June Mayfield Hester died. Dr. Anthony notes that Hester's death deeply affected the Executive Committee. At the time of her death, Mrs. Hester served as door-prize coordinator for ACA and was employed at Northwest Shoals Community College. The 2002-2003 ACA Conference was dedicated to her memory.

Overall, the conference was a success as the evaluations indicate.⁶²

⁶¹ Ibid., 2.

⁶² ACA Executive Committee Minutes, February 13, 2004.

November 2003 - November 2004

At the annual business meeting, which is the final function of the Executive Committee for the year, Dr. Stafford Thompson succeeded Dr. Anthony as president of ACA. His earnest work began immediately and by the first meeting in February 2004, he introduced eight goals and suggested a slate of conference themes. However, after discussions with Chancellor Johnson, the eighth goal was struck. This objective regarded the creation of a long-term Executive Assistant position for ACA. Chancellor Johnson wanted the Executive Committee to continue functioning as a volunteer group. Nonetheless, “The Alabama College System: Foundation for Success” was adopted as the theme, and conference planning continued.

Indeed, Dr. Thompson and the Executive Committee went about their work throughout the year with due diligence and invited Belle Wheelan, the Secretary of Education for the Commonwealth of Virginia and Chancellor Roy Johnson as keynote speakers. Invited commission speakers included Dr. Zelema Harris, President of Parkland College (who also spoke the previous year); Chancellor Johnson; and Devin Stephenson, President of Snead State. In addition to the keynote and commission speakers, former System employee, college president, and ACA president Dr. Ann Chard was invited to hold a workshop. Dr. Chard had left the System for a position with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. These were the larger draws for the conference, which had approximately 1000 attendees visit 35 break-out sessions divided in four tracks designed by the committee: Teaching and Learning, Student Success, Staff Development, and Leadership. Dr. Thompson felt whole-heartedly that the ACA

conference would provide an opportunity for employees to meet the ever-constant need for professional development. He tied that ideal to the conference theme in a *Journal* message: “Building strong foundations is not a new concept for employees if the Alabama College System. Each day we continue a tradition of providing foundations for success. This success is enjoyed by our institutions’ communities, by our employees, and most importantly, by our students.”⁶³

Dr. Johnson, just into his second year as Chancellor, took an active role at the conference, held November 21st-23rd in Birmingham, and in his own *Journal* note he stresses a goal to have the Alabama College System capable of filling eighty-percent of the new jobs in Alabama within a decade. “Our graduates will provide the skilled workforce that will enable Alabama to grow and prosper, making life better for all of us through a stronger economy.”⁶⁴ By 2004, the Alabama College System was serving 250,000 students.

As an aside, in July 2004, Dr. Thompson announced he would like to introduce a pin into the traditions of the ACA. The pin would be worn by past-presidents. The tradition of awarding the “Past-President’s Pin” at the ACA Conference began when incoming president, Dr. Jim Prucnal awarded the pin to Dr. Thompson.

⁶³ *ACA Journal*, vol XX (November 2004), 2.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

November 2004 - November 2005

From pinning Dr. Thompson, newly-installed ACA President Dr. Jim Prucnal turned his attention to plans for the 2005 conference. Building off the success of the 2004 conference, Dr. Prucnal was excited by the opportunities for the System and its employees: “Opportunities and the Alabama College System are synonymous. Every day we give the citizens of Alabama greater opportunity to enrich their lives, reach their goals, and have hope in a better future.”⁶⁵ By spring he announced the adoption of the year’s theme: “Enriching Lives by Expanding Opportunities.”

By the summer, the ACA was “expanding” itself. The Central Alabama Skills Training Consortium and the Alabama Community College Conference became members of the Association and were active at the November conference in Birmingham. Moreover, the Alabama Technology Network had also become a regular fixture at ACA functions by 2004. At the November 20th-22nd conference held in Birmingham, keynote addresses were given by Chancellor Johnson and Chancellor Malcolm Portera; Dr. Portera was then the chancellor of the University of Alabama System. Commission speakers included President of Valencia Community College Dr. Sanford Shugart, Shelton State business instructor Martha Ann Hill, and Bonnie Powell of UAB’s Human Resource Management Development and Training Department. The conference was a grand success. Over 1500 people attended (1464 ACA members) and participated in association meeting, commissions, and 105 break-out sessions. Participants were also

⁶⁵ *ACA Journal*, vol XXI (Spring 2005), 2.

able to visit with the thirty-two vendors and sixteen affiliate members who attended and displayed their products and services. Their participation caused a call for a larger vendor area at the 2006 conference.⁶⁶

During the early stages of conference planning, Dr. Prucnal reported that the Association had been asked to lend aid to other entities and associations within the System. \$5,000 was given to the Student Leadership Institute, \$10,000 to the All-Alabama Academic Team Board, \$4,500 for three G.E.D. scholarships (requested by the Chancellor's Office), and \$1,000 was given to the Alabama College System Public Relations Association to aid their conference. Benevolent gifts had been given by the Association in the past; however, few to-date had been so substantial. These gifts show the ACA's support of other agents of the System who are also dedicated to the success of the System, its colleges, and the students.

⁶⁶ ACA Executive Committee Minutes, February 17, 2006.

November 2005 - November 2006

Dr. Linda Hooton began her tenure as ACA President in November 2005 and under the theme “The Alabama College System: Focusing on the Future” she and the Executive Committee began the ardent work of planning the 2006 conference. As per the norm, Dr. Hooton met with the chancellor to receive his feedback on the previous year’s conference, his ideas for the next conference, and his blessing for the ACA to hold its conference. February minutes of the Executive Committee show that the meeting with Dr. Johnson went very well. He was pleased specifically with the Alabama Technology Network’s involvement and was interested to see Alabama Industrial Development Training (AIDT) become involved. She and the chancellor “discussed community college prison programs, STARS advising, accountability workshops, Adult Education, and Health programs participation.”⁶⁷ Thus, the first steps toward another successful conference began, one “focusing on the future.”

One new development for the Association was constructing a website for the ACA. Until 2006, ACA news, calls for proposals, and other announcements were printed in the *Journal* and placed on the Alabama College System’s website. After discussion, it was decided to have Public Relations Coordinator, Chris Franklin, work with a company to construct and launch the Association’s stand-alone website. In the *Journal*, Dr. Hooton is quoted, “We are very excited with this additional promotional tool for ACA... With the website, we will not only be able to promote ACA’s mission and that of the Alabama

⁶⁷ Ibid.

College System, but we will be able to provide continual information about our annual conference with updates throughout the year.”⁶⁸

As planning moved forward throughout the year, various decisions were made to incorporate changes that had come to the Association over the previous years. In another innovation, under Dr. Hooton’s leadership, a new commission was developed. The Commission on Workforce Development joined commissions on Administration, Faculty, Students, and Support; the commissions on faculty and administration had been wedded sometime before 2006; however, it was decided to re-divide them and provide professional development opportunities for employees of each group.

The Association also continued its benevolent activities with other entities associated with the System. The ACA Executive Committee voted to award one-time grants to the All-Alabama Academic Endowment (\$18,000), the Student Leadership Institute (\$5,000), and monies (\$4,500) were given to the Chancellor’s Office for three G.E.D. graduate scholarships. Those receiving the funds were grateful, as Executive Committee minutes reflect.

While planning continued, the System experienced a change in leadership when Dr. Thomas Corts was named interim chancellor on August 15th. Dr. Hooton met with Dr. Corts and reported to the Executive Committee in September that conference

⁶⁸ *ACA Journal*, vol XXXIII (Summer 2006), 3. For unexplained reasons, the *Journal* was re- or mis-numbered in 2006. Sequentially, the 2006 *Journals* should have been volume XXII. The numbering in this *History* will follow the published volumes printed on the *Journal*.

planning would continue, as Dr. Corts had given his full support to ACA and for the conference.⁶⁹ Moreover, he agreed to be a keynote speaker at the November conference.

The November 19th-21st conference was a resounding success. Mason Bishop, Deputy Assistant Secretary for the U.S. Department of Labor also gave a keynote address. Commission speakers included Hartnell College's President Dr. Edward J. Valeau, Somerset Community College's President Dr. Jo Marshall (who was a former System employee), Professor Emeritus of the University of Georgia Dr. D. Parker Young, Renaissance Unlimited's Greg Gray, and Dr. Tim Alford, Director of the Office of Workforce Development for the Alabama Community College System. Thirty-three vendors and sixteen affiliate members participated; overall, 1521 total attendees (including student ambassadors and vendors) experienced the 2006 conference in Birmingham.⁷⁰ A success indeed, Dr. Hooton passed the torch of leadership to first vice-president, president-elect Jackie Screws at the conclusion of the conference.

⁶⁹ ACA Executive Committee Minutes, September 21, 2006, 2.

⁷⁰ ACA Executive Committee Minutes, February 20, 2007, 2.

November 2006 - November 2007

One of the first items of business for President Screws was to meet with the interim chancellor, Dr. Corts. He expressed his pleasure with the 2006 conference, and pledged his support for the 2007 conference and the professional development opportunities provided by the ACA. With his support, President Screws began the serious work of preparing for the November conference.⁷¹ One early achievement was the selection, recruitment, and retention of Mr. Stedman Graham as a keynote speaker for the conference.

While conference planning continued into the spring, the Executive Committee—and the College System as a whole—was dealt another emotional blow with the passing of Dr. Anthony Molina. As the *Journal* notes:

On April 8, the employees of the Alabama College System lost a friend and supporter in Dr. Anthony Molina, President of Trenholm State Technical College and First Vice President/President Elect of the Alabama College Association. For anyone who knew Dr. Molina, they will remember his engaging and friendly smile as well as his dedication to our system, his college, and the students he served. Dr. Molina's legacy will be one of inclusion and service. He will be missed.⁷²

A moment of silence was held at the April meeting of the Executive Committee and a donation was made by the Association to the Trenholm Foundation in memory of Dr. Molina. Dr. Humphrey Lee assumed the position of first vice president/ president elect and Dr. Jim Krudop was appointed to fill Dr. Lee's chair as second vice president.

⁷¹ Ibid. The meeting with Dr. Corts took place on January 31, 2007.

⁷² *ACA Journal*, vol XXXIV (Spring 2007), 3.

Dr. Molina's death posed an emotional challenge, yet the Committee was inspired to continue their arduous work. They adopted "Rising to the Challenge" as the 2006-2007 conference theme and continued their solemn work. As President Screws states: "We face challenges every day. We face challenges of providing quality, affordable, and accessible education for the many students we serve... We face the challenge of cultivating the professionals who are employed in our system. Yes, we face a myriad of challenges, but we always rise to meet them."⁷³ Screws also notes, quoting Michael F. Staley, "'There is no challenge more challenging than the challenge to improve yourself.' Through challenges, we focus on goals, discover opportunities, and receive inspiration in order to reach our potential. As employees of the Alabama College System, we are fortunate to be afforded the opportunity to rise to the challenges we face through focus, discovery, and inspiration."⁷⁴ Therefore, Screws stresses, "If you are an administrator, faculty member, or a support staff employee, there are challenges that you encounter everyday at your institution. The Alabama College Association is here to provide professional development and training that will assist you in your efforts to effectively address your challenges and to grow as a professional."⁷⁵

As conference planning continued through the summer, Screws met again with the chancellor; however, this meeting took place with newly installed chancellor, Bradley Byrne. The meeting was productive and the new chancellor was enthusiastic about the Executive Committee's work and encouraged President Screws to continue the plans for

⁷³ Ibid., 2.

⁷⁴ *ACA Journal*, vol XXXIV (Summer 2007), 2.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

the fall conference.⁷⁶ He was also surely appreciative of gifts the Executive Committee had made: \$7500 to the Student Leadership Institute, \$500 to the Trenholm Foundation, and most notably \$25,000 to the All-Alabama endowment.

Conference planning continued and as of November 18 (the conference's opening day), there were 126 meeting sessions and forums scheduled with 1068 room-nights booked in Birmingham's Sheraton; Necedah Henderson reported (a week before the conference) that 1521 persons had registered, "making it the largest, most comprehensive conference program yet."⁷⁷ Commission speakers at the conference included Dr. Tony Zeiss (President of Central Piedmont Community College), Drs. Rena Palloff and Keith Pratt (managing partners for Crossroads Consulting Group), Ralph L. Hatley (C.E.O. of Security Operational Solutions, Inc.), Bobbe White (President of Try Laughter!, Inc.), and Dr. Frederick Kendrick (Bayer Material Science Talent Management). The conference "went off" without incident and was another success, with a total of 1609 persons attending (including 195 new attendees). Survey results were favorable, quantifying the success of the conference and providing positive momentum for the Association.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ ACA Executive Committee Minutes, July 24, 2007, 2.

⁷⁷ ACA Executive Committee Minutes, November 18, 2007, 1.

⁷⁸ ACA Executive Committee Minutes, February 29, 2008, 1-3.

November 2007-November 2008

As the new year dawned ACA President Humphrey Lee notes:

As with each new beginning, the opportunity to examine our past accomplishments as well as our future plans presents itself. Part of these past accomplishments includes one of the most successful professional development conferences conducted by our organization. Using this as a foundation, the ACA Executive committee will create the future plans that ensure another successful conference.⁷⁹

In the earliest planning stages, Lee and other Executive Committee members met, as had become customary by this point, with the chancellor. In that February 21st meeting, Chancellor Byrne applauded the 2006-7 Executive Committee and complimented them on the conference. Their discussion then turned to moving the conference from Birmingham to a more southern venue for the 2008 conference. The issue was brought before the Executive Committee at its February meeting where Dr. Lee proposed that moving the conference to Mobile would increase travel costs for System colleges by \$200,000, \$100,000 if it was moved to Montgomery. There was also a concern about the number of attendees if a move occurred. Dr. Hooton explained that overall attendance—based on past performance—would not decrease. However, there would be a shift in representation to more local colleges (i.e. the colleges closer to Mobile or Montgomery would have a greater representation while those from the northern sections of the state

⁷⁹ *ACA Journal*, vol XXXV (Spring 2008), 2.

would have fewer attendees).⁸⁰ The issue was settled by the March meeting when it was announced the November conference would be held in Mobile.⁸¹

Over the course of the spring and summer, conference planning continued. In April the Executive Committee selected “The Alabama Community College System: Developing Champions” as the theme. As noticed in this theme, the System had changed its name. The chancellor then asked the Executive Committee to alter the Association’s name to correspond. It was voted upon and the motion carried in July to change the name to “Alabama Community College Association;” this required a change to the constitution and the full membership to vote. The amendment was posted and the vote was held at the November conference. With no objections, the name became official upon that November vote.

Under President Lee’s leadership, the Association continued its philanthropic benevolence. \$5,000 was donated to both the Student Leadership Institute and the All-Alabama Academic Foundation. These good-will gestures were considered, in-part, as a way of “Developing Champions.” As President Lee notes, “The Alabama Community College System has many champions. Some champions provide leadership within our colleges and organizations. Some develop our students into champions and ready them for careers as well as the continuation of their educational goals.” The Executive Committee was proving its willingness to be at the fore in helping to develop those champions.

⁸⁰ ACA Executive Committee Minutes, February 29, 2008, 1-3.

⁸¹ ACA Executive Committee Minutes, March 14, 2008, 2.

The November 23rd-25th conference was held at Mobile's Renaissance Riverview Plaza Hotel and the adjoining Arthur R. Outlaw Convention Center. In addition to a "Q & A" session hosted by Chancellor Byrne, the five commission speakers included Stephen M. Gower the CSP and President of the Gower Group, Inc., Postsecondary's Assistant Director of Career and Technical Education Dave Layton, former Auburn and New York Giant quarterback Stan White, Funny Works, Inc.'s C.E.O. Clair Berger, and William J. Flynn the Managing Director of the National Council for Continuing Education and Training. A memorable keynote address was also delivered by Vince Lombardi, Jr.

November 2008 – November 2009

Newly installed ACCA President Jim Krudop met with Chancellor Byrne on January 14. In the meeting the chancellor “suggested a shortened conference; [and asked the Executive Committee to] provide a location more conducive for state travel, and [to] reduce the registration fee for the conference.”⁸² President Krudop pledged that the Executive Committee would do everything in its power to provide a quality professional development conference on par with previous years’ while considering cost-cutting measures. It was with those tasks in mind that the Executive Committee adopted the 2009 theme: “Committed to the Stars,” seeing both the students and employees of the System as stars:

The ACCS has many stars. There are the shining stars we educate. There are the star programs that offer the most innovative and needed skills in our communities. There are the brightest stars of all, the dedicated employees of our System. With all this talent, and all these stars, our System’s employees deserve a professional development organization that is committed to their needs. This year, the Executive Committee of the ACCA plans to provide the best professional development available to our members, and show we are committed to our stars.⁸³

Moreover, at the January meeting, the location of the 2009 conference was selected. The Renaissance Hotel in Montgomery would host a condensed, two-day, conference November 23-24. Other significant changes announced at the meeting included the adoption of the new ACCA logo (to note the name-change of the Association) and the similar change in the Association’s Internet web address.

⁸² ACCA Executive Committee Minutes, January 27, 2009, 2.

⁸³ *ACCA Journal*, vol XXXVI (Spring 2009), 2.

Throughout the spring and summer the Executive Committee kept a steady pace, planning for the November conference. Pulitzer Prize winner, Rick Bragg was selected as the keynote speaker. The various commissions also selected their speakers/presenters: Chattahoochee Valley Community College President Laurel Blackwell, Snead State Community College President Robert Exley, Lawson State Community College Perry Ward, Rick Bragg, John S. Riley, SACS's Vice-President of Commission on Colleges Rudolph S. Jackson, and Professor Emeritus Jerry Ingram of Auburn University Montgomery. Other plans included a "Q&A" session with the chancellor; however, this plan was altered in late May when Chancellor Byrne resigned. Joan Davis was named interim chancellor; she pledged to continue Post-Secondary's support of the Association and looked forward to keeping the "Q&A" session on schedule. However, this session was eventually cancelled. Nonetheless, Interim Chancellor Davis remained a staunch champion for the ACCA and its mission. In a message to conference attendees she writes, "In the ACCS, we provide citizens of Alabama with the promise of opportunities, growth, and a better future. Our responsibility to the people of this state is greater than ever before. As you participate in the conference activities, remember that our ability to truly be effective in our charge hinges on each and every one of us working together."⁸⁴

Krudop echoed these sentiments in a conference message printed in the *Journal*:

By attending the various sessions, commission meetings, and other events of the conference, you are afforded the opportunity to see firsthand the dedication our stars show to the students and communities we serve. All conference activities have been designed for the stars of our system. I hope you take advantage of the professional development opportunities of the conference because your involvement in this conference is the key to its success.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ *ACCA Journal*, vol XXXVI (Conference Edition 2009), 3.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

Minutes show that 756 attended the conference; 84 vendors, affiliates, and ambassadors were not included in that total. Impressively, 141 attendees were first-time attendees. This number indicates that even in a year of transitions between chancellors, when debates over federal stimulus monies and deep concern over state budgets dominated the System, the Association could still keep an eye on progress, growth, and continued professional development.

November 2009 – November 2010

Dr. Amelia Pearson, who succeeded Dr. Krudop at the November 2009 conference, met with recently installed Chancellor Freida Hill in January. Pearson gave the new chancellor an overview of the Association's history, its mission, and her goals for the coming year. Dr. Pearson reports, "Dr. Hill is very positive about professional development. She has two concerns: (a) the Presidents should be surveyed to see if they are willing to send employees to the 2010 conference and (b) the committee should hold off signing a contract with a hotel for the conference for as long as possible."⁸⁶ Overall, the chancellor was supportive of the Association and its professional development aims. However, she shared her concern about the budget constraints gripping the System and its member institutions; proration was a present possibility. As Executive Committee minutes reflect:

The Education budget did pass the House with level funding. Currently, we do not expect proration this year. Last year there was 7.5 percent proration but this year there will be level funding on last year's budget. College Presidents are spending a great deal of time at the legislature. Postsecondary's budget has been cut one million dollars for the 2011 year. Senate Education Committee cut Postsecondary budget and put the million dollars in Adult Education which would be restricted funds. The million dollar cut could result in staff cuts at Postsecondary.⁸⁷

Early plans for the conference were made with a buy-out or cancellation clause (if a two-day conference was cancelled it would cost the Association \$35,000 and a three day

⁸⁶ ACCA Executive Committee Minutes, February 26, 2010, 2.

⁸⁷ ACCA Executive Committee Minutes, April 2, 2010, 2.

conference \$40,000); in light of only a \$5000 difference, the Association began planning for a three day conference, with the 2008-2009 registration fee of \$75.

Despite bleak financial conditions, the Association continued its support of student-development groups within the System. A \$5000 donation was made to the All-Alabama Academic Foundation and a \$1000 donation was made to the Student Leadership Conference. The gifts not only fit within the mission of the Association, but also they were in-line with the theme selected for the 2010 conference: “Meeting the Challenge.”

The three-day conference was held November 21st-23rd at Montgomery’s Renaissance Hotel, and Dr. Pearson’s “Presidential Welcome” reflects the reality of the economic recession gripping the nation and also the positive ethos of the conference theme:

For the next three days you will have the opportunity to learn how our system’s employees meet the challenges they face. There are challenges, but there are also successes, and we plan to celebrate these as well while we prepare for the challenges to come. Professional development is a powerful tool to possess in meeting challenges. It provides us with understanding and inspires us toward improvement...I am confident that we can continue to meet our challenges and build on the traditions that have made the Alabama Community College System one that allows our students to not only meet their challenges, but conquer them.⁸⁸

Over 800 members attended the conference, and many checked-in on Facebook (the Association had joined the social-media site in the summer of 2010). Commission speakers at the conference consisted of J.F. Drake Middle School (Auburn) Principal and *Survivor* contestant Debra Beebe, South Carolina educator Dr. Frankie K. Williams,

⁸⁸ *ACCA Journal*, vol XXXVII (Conference Edition 2010), 2.

author and New Jersey talk show host Yvonne Harvey Williams, Gold Drops of Life founder Cedric Pendleton, and business and technology educator Kathy Yeager. The keynote address delivered at the first general session was given by Dr. Gerald Amanda who spoke on student behavior and “the disruptive college student.” At the conclusion of the conference, Dr. Pearson installed Dr. Patricia Sims as the new ACCA president.

November 2010 – November 2012

During the final months of 2010 the economic recession gripping the state (and nation as a whole) did not ease. After conferencing with Chancellor Hill in January 2011, it was decided to cancel the November conference for that year. The ACCA Constitution allowed for the elected and appointed members slated for the 2010-2011 year to remain in their positions for the 2011-2012 year. Conference planning was begun in earnest at a retreat in February 2012 with the blessing of Chancellor Hill.

Also at the February meeting, a “re-boot” of sorts was conducted for the Association. At the retreat, hosted by Wallace-Selma, the Executive Committee reviewed the roles and responsibilities for elected and appointed members; a review of the ACCA Constitution was also conducted during which the Legislative Affairs and Nominations Coordinators were removed as the duties associated with them were being fulfilled by other committee members. Workforce Development positions were also added. Changes were made and submitted to the membership; all changes were approved at the November 2012 conference. Moreover, the Executive Committee looked to answer various questions in planning for the 2012 Conference including: What are we doing great with the ACCA Conference? In what areas do we need to develop and enhance our conference?; and, What are some new ideas to implement for future conferences? Among other decision made by the Executive Committee included returning the Conference to a three-day format and reverting to the \$100 registration fee (it had been lowered in 2009).

Not only had the Executive Committee returned to conference planning in 2012, including choosing “Educating for Success” as the theme, but it also continued its generosity; the Committee voted to give \$3000 to the ACCS Legislative Leadership Day and \$5000 to the All Alabama Foundation. Moreover, the Executive Committee, and specifically the Publications Coordinator, Dr. Chris Franklin, worked to upgrade the Association’s website: “New features include online elections, online registration for attendees and affiliate and exhibitors, plus a content management system that will allow us to run various reports.”⁸⁹ Indeed, the ACCA website has become instrumental in conference planning and as a communication vehicle for members, member institutions, affiliates, and friends of the Association.

The Conference was held November 18th-20th at Birmingham’s Sheraton and the adjoining Birmingham-Jefferson Civic Center with Belle Wheelan as the keynote speaker; commission speakers included Stephen Foster Black, President of Impact Alabama, LSU’s Assistant Vice-Chancellor Sandra Yancy McGuire, CareerCore, Inc.’s C.E.O Ronald Mitchell, the Center of Servant Leadership’s Director Kelvin A. Redd, and the Executive Director of The University of Alabama’s Entrepreneurship Institute Ron Davis. Chancellor Mark Heinrich also gave a “State of the System” address; Heinrich was named chancellor in September 2012. The Association provided a comprehensive conference.

⁸⁹ ACCA Executive Committee Minutes, June 20, 2012, 5.

November 2012 – November 2013

Barbara Anne Spears succeeded Dr. Sims as the Association’s president and looked to continue the momentum garnered in 2012. In January 2013 Spears and Second Vice-President Bruce Crawford met with Chancellor Heinrich. Minutes reflect that the chancellor was supportive and looked forward to the Association playing a leading role in celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Alabama College System. The Association agreed with his sentiments and by February “Celebrating Golden Opportunities for Excellence” was selected as the theme for the 2013 conference.⁹⁰ The theme was reflected by President Spears in a note to members:

Alabama Community College The Association always celebrates opportunities. However, this year, we are celebrating the special golden opportunities that come with a fiftieth anniversary. When the Alabama Community College System was founded 50 years ago, few could have imagined the system that we have today. It is a system that changes lives for the better, improves business and industry, and supports the communities it serves. Our system is filled with opportunities that deserve to be celebrated.⁹¹

During their January meeting, the chancellor also asked the Executive Committee to “think outside of the box” and try to bring new offerings to the November conference. Sub-committees were created at a January retreat to consider options for the conference.⁹² Throughout the year these committees looked into creating an app (i.e. mobile application) for conference attendees to use with their smart phones, tablets, etc..., using Twitter to update attendees about conference events, marking the anniversary with a lapel

⁹⁰ ACCA Executive Committee Minutes, February 21, 2013, 2.

⁹¹ *ACCA Journal*, vol XL (Spring 2013), 2

⁹² ACCA Executive Committee Minutes, February 21, 2013, 2.

pin, inviting previously under-represented groups to attend, and increasing the presence of other groups at the conference. Due to dedicated planning, Tweets were sent and Facebook updates were made to the ACCA's group page during the conference; anniversary lapel pins were given to all attendees, librarians attended the conference in greater than normal numbers and attended break-out sessions relevant to their departments, and Workforce Development departments submitted panel presentations for consideration.

Over 800 individuals met in Birmingham and attended the November 24th-26th conference, which included commission speakers Margarita Sarmiento of ITK Consultants, Troy University's Professor Jonathan E. Taylor, Faulkner State Community College's President Dr. Gray Branch, Alabama Power Foundation's John Hudson, and Phifer, Inc.'s Director of Human Resources Russell Dubose. One keynote address was delivered by Tools for School's Mark Perna while a second was a joint presentation by Chancellor Heinrich and Superintendent Dr. Tommy Bice. Their presentation highlighted, among other opportunities, the need for the System and member institutions to continue to grow dual credit and accelerated high school programs. Through dual enrollment, the System can offer outstanding educational opportunities to the high school students of the state and, in so doing, can buttress high school graduation rates, achieve recruitment goals for System colleges, aid retention rates, fill programs with eager students, and help educate and train students. Anecdotal reviews reflect that the coordination between the Department of Postsecondary Education and the State Superintendent of Education's offices was refreshing, exciting, and shows optimism for the growth and development of the dual enrollment programs. Moreover, evident from

submitted surveys, their presentation was received favorably as was the conference as a whole. According to February 2014 minutes, 785 attended the 2013 conference. It was indeed a golden year for the System as it celebrated its Golden Anniversary.

November 2013-2014

Dr. David Campbell succeeded Barbara Anne Spears as ACCA President. At the February planning retreat he announced that the conference would be held November 23-25 in Birmingham again and that Dr. Walter Bumpus had already been secured for a keynote address. Dr. Bumpus is the President and CEO of the American Association of Community Colleges. Also, Dr. Campbell relayed that he and others had met with Chancellor Heinrich about the 2013 conference and listened to his thoughts for the present year. As in the past, the chancellor offered “generous support” for the conference. At the retreat, with the chancellor’s ideas, feedback from 2013 conference survey results, and information shared by Mr. Don Dukemineer (Convention Sales Manager with the Huntsville/Madison County Convention and Visitors Bureau), the Executive Committee looked at how to make the 2014 conference better. Association minutes from the planning retreat show a litany of topics addressed by the group. Moving the Chancellor’s Awards to a luncheon and providing a kick-off event were just two of the changes suggested and adopted to the format of the conference. Other items adopted shaped the contract with the Sheraton and Birmingham Jefferson Civic Center (e.g. offering free wifi to conference attendees), looked to help with more signage at the conference, and addressed technical support needs for break-out session presenters. Various other tasks were assigned to sub-committees and conference themes were suggested before the retreat concluded.⁹³

⁹³ ACCA Executive Committee Minutes, February 20-21, 2014.

Spring and summer conference planning witnessed the adoption of the conference theme: Reclaiming the Dream. As Dr. Campbell notes in the *Journal*,

Indeed, community colleges are being called on as never before nationwide to lead the way back to those days when the ‘American Dream’ flourished and there was opportunity to pursue a better, fulfilling life. Our challenge as community college educators is to reclaim that ‘Dream’ for our students and communities through our workforce training, adult education, and academic transfer programs. Few have any greater calling than the responsibility that rests with us.⁹⁴

With that in mind, the Executive Committee looked to provide a comprehensive and fun conference. They elected to host a kick-off reception at the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame, which is adjacent to the Sheraton and Birmingham-Jefferson Civic Center. Chancellor Heinrich was also asked to give a “State of the System” keynote. Prior to the conference, upgrades and adjustments were made to the ACCA website (which offered online conference registration) and to the Guidebook app which is used to help facilitate the conference. The calls for conference proposals were met with great success: 81 proposals for six tracks were submitted of which 57 were eventually selected for at the conference. The Executive Committee also began the process of selecting a new logo for the Association, but because of late alterations it could not be submitted for adoption at the 2014 conference; it was eventually adopted in 2015.

In addition to the keynotes by Dr. Bumphus and Chancellor Heinrich (with David Dodson of MDC), Iyisha Smith (Managing Partner of CASTAL Resources), Robert Carrow (from the Carrow Group International, LLC), Marquita Furness Davis (Executive Director of Jefferson County Committee for Economic Opportunity), Pete Blank (former

⁹⁴ *ACCA Journal*, vol XLI (Spring 2014), 2

Disney University Leader), Zeke Smith (Alabama Power's Executive Vice President for External Affairs) spoke to the five commissions. Just under 800 attended the conference.

November 2014-2015

Dr. David Campbell passed the mantle of leadership to Dr. Bruce Crawford at the 2014 conference. After discussions with Chancellor Heinrich and preliminary work achieved at a February planning retreat, the theme “Building Alabama’s Future through Education and Workforce Development” was adopted as the theme for the conference which was slated for Birmingham, November 22-24. Conference planning proceeded through the traditional during the spring, summer and early fall. Commission speakers were selected and contracted, the band for the conference’s dance was booked, updates were made to the website, and keynote speakers were secured. Changes were also made to the constitution, most notably the election of the treasurer. Traditionally, the treasurer position had been elected by state-wide vote for a two year term. After discussions and motions, it was decided to have the treasure nominated and elected by the Executive Committee. The constitutional change was submitted to the entire membership and was adopted at the conference.

Commission speakers included Dr. Jack Hawkins the Chancellor of the Troy University System, Associate Dean of Co-Curricular Programs and Director of the Learning Commons at Lenoir-Rhyne University Dr. Leonard Geddes, Brian Johnson an author and the founder of LiveYourDreamsOutLoud.com, Human Growth and Development Instructor Dr. Allen Mallory of Shelton State, and Jen Worth the Senior Vice President for Workforce and Economic Development for the AACC. Keynote addresses at the conference were offered by Chancellor Heinrich, author Wil Haygood,

and League for Innovation President Dr. Terry O'Banion. These speakers were large draws for the attendees—nearly 850—who also could experience eight association meetings, the Chancellors' Awards, and attend several of the 79 break-out concurrent sessions offered. The keynotes, commissions, and several of the break-out sessions focused on the conference theme. Dr. Crawford noted in the conference edition of the *Journal*

“Building Alabama’s Future through Education and Workforce Development,” sets the tone of our conference. As we all know, community college graduates are the backbone of Alabama’s workforce and its future economic development opportunities. Statewide, there is an upward mobility trend validating that credentials, certificates, and degrees earned by our students make a tremendous difference in the quality of life they may have as fellow citizens. Additionally, attainment of these milestones has proven to be an incentive to propel our students toward advanced degrees. Therefore, the professional growth and development of those who contribute so much to the success of our graduates and the satisfaction of our clients are essential to our success as a System guided by three pillars – Adult Education, Academic Education, and Workforce Development.⁹⁵

These sentiments were echoed by the Chancellor who noted,

Each year, the ACCA Conference provides a wonderfully unique opportunity for the very dedicated and committed employees of this great System to come together to discuss, share ideas and hear from others the latest and greatest information within the world of higher education, and more specifically, on what impacts and influences our community colleges. At no other time in our history has the importance of our nation’s community colleges been more significant.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ *ACCA Journal*, vol XLII (Conference Edition 2015), 2.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

The 2015 conference was deemed to be a success by the attendees and as Dr. Chris Franklin succeeded Dr. Crawford, plans began to be made for the 2016 conference.

Conclusion

What is provided in the previous pages is an historical interpretation of the Alabama Community College Association. Founded in 1958, the Association is a living organization of members and member institutions. It has as its Purpose

to promote development and advancement of postsecondary education throughout the Alabama Community College System by:

- a) Promoting professional service;
- b) Encouraging professional growth;
- c) Improving articulation and cooperation with all levels of education;
- d) Identifying needs and problems of the Alabama Community College System and communicating them to appropriate agencies for action;
- e) Providing communication through the Alabama Community College System;
- f) Promoting public recognition of the Alabama Community College System.

This Purpose is reflected in and by the history of the community and junior colleges in the state of Alabama. Chancellor Mark Heinrich notes:

Community colleges were created in part to provide accessible and cost effective higher education aimed at providing a highly trained workforce for America's booming economy. Fifty years later, the Alabama Community College System is better positioned than ever to exceed this lofty goal. Today, the Alabama Community College System family can celebrate the fact that we offer high-quality, low-cost access to state-of-the-art education, cutting-edge workforce development, and progressive adult education.⁹⁷

The Chancellor continues: "I am absolutely convinced that we are extremely well positioned to deliver exactly what the citizens of Alabama need and expects as they

⁹⁷ *ACCA Journal*, vol XL (Conference Edition 2013), 2

navigate their educational and training needs. As long as the Alabama Community College System plans and works together, no goal is unattainable.”⁹⁸

The System is well poised to do great works. Its past is invaluable in informing members of its foundation and the efforts made to educate students and train System employees. A view of the past helps to better understand where the System is currently. Such an understanding serves to help individuals make better decisions about how to achieve the Purpose of the Association and the Mission of the Alabama College System. The past, as deep, rich, complicated, storied, and complex as it is, serves as prologue to the new chapters of history that will be written by its employees and the students it serves.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

Appendix I

Housing of Documents

As the Association's Historian, part of the duties is to maintain the records of the organization. Historical records have been housed at various member institutions over the decades. Until 2006 most records were in storage at Jefferson State Community College. The 2005-2006 ACCA President Dr. Linda Hooton had historical records inventoried, sorted, and stored. At that same time, other records were held at Athens State which at the time was the upper-division college within the System. The documents from Athens State had been stored by long-time Association Historian Betty Marks. In 2006, the files were removed, consolidated with those from Jefferson State, placed in filing cabinets, and then ultimately removed to Shelton State Community College. Contemporary records are added to those existing records; at the conclusion of each annual conference, publications (e.g. the *ACCA Journal*), Executive Committee meeting agendas and minutes, and other documents are filed for the historical record.

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