

The following is a brief synopsis of the A.C.C.A. history 1958-1990. Gathered from various records, the following relies heavily on the work of former Association historians Faye Grimmer, Ben Clements, Dr. Philip Royal, and Betty Marks.



Into the mid-twentieth century there was no formal professional development organization linking Alabama's junior or community colleges; in fact, there was only a loose administrative structure. College presidents would meet at the annual Alabama Education Association conference and discuss important issues, but still no formal or official collaborative organization existed. That changed in 1958 when six colleges met at the University of Montevallo and created the Alabama Association of Junior Colleges (A.A.J.C.). The group outlined and subsequently adopted "working rules" to govern the Association (after the 1972 revisions, the "working rules" evolved into the "constitution and by-laws"). The working rules supported the Association's purpose which was "to promote the common interest of junior colleges in Alabama through representation in other agencies interested in education; through coordination of efforts on behalf of their colleges; through collaboration in exchange of resources material and personnel and through public relations."

The working rules also called for the formation of an Executive Council which consisted of a president, vice-president, and a secretary/treasurer; a seat on the council would also be held by a representative from each member institution not represented by an elected officer. Thus, the 1958-9 Executive Council was six members strong. Dr. A. R. Van Cleave of Southern Union was elected the Association's first president; as detailed in the working rules, he would serve a one-year term.

Between 1958 and 1965 the leadership stemmed from the six charter member schools and meetings were usually attended by presidents and deans. The annual meetings were usually one-day affairs and consisted of a business meeting, a keynote address, and a musical performance.

Change came quick in the 1960s. One proverbial glass-ceiling was broken in 1963 when the Association elected its first female president Mary Lourdes of Sacred Heart College (located in Cullman at that time). Other changes affected education state-wide. In 1965 the Alabama Junior College System was created and with it came increased enrollment in individual schools; the A.A.J.C. benefited as well. The Association grew with the addition of eleven schools in 1965 alone. By 1970, the Association had twenty-two member institutions.

Before the 1960s were over other changes impacted the Association and the Executive Committee. Committees were established for Administrative and Faculty Affairs. These sub-groups were to ensure that faculty members throughout the System were represented on the Executive Committee and that their concerns were heard. Moreover; this would be a first step in providing a system-wide professional development opportunity for faculty members.

The changes caused a rewriting of the working-rules and the 1972 constitution (written by Auburn's "Bic" Moore and his students in the Education Leadership Department) reflected some of the changes that had come to the Association over its first fourteen years. Possibly the most notable change

was the name of the Association; the A.A.J.C. became the Alabama Junior College Association. Also included in this constitution were "Classes of Membership:" Individual, Associate, Institutional, and Affiliate. Although written into the by-laws, some of these were not offered or granted for several years.

Self-promotion and communication also became important to member institutions and for the System. To assist these efforts, the Association began publishing a Newsletter in late 1974 (this would be the precursor of the A.C.C.A.'s *Journal*). That same year, the duties of the secretary and treasurer were split; eventually it would be codified that the secretary would be appointed while the treasurer would remain an elected position.

The '72 constitution was shelved four years later and a new version was written so as to be more inclusive for- and representative of- all employees of the System. Moreover, it was in 1976 that the Association experienced another name change: Alabama Junior and Community College Association. "Interest Groups" definitions, roles, and responsibilities were also written into the document. A Parliamentarian became a fixture on the Executive Committee as well as a Publications Editor. It was in the bicentennial year when the first Affiliate Membership was granted (University of Montevallo); the following year Regional Technical Institute from Birmingham was recognized as our first Affiliate Member.

The System and the Association were doing well. By 1977 the A.J.C.C.A. had twenty-seven member institutions (20 public and 7 private) representing an employment of 4000 and a student population of 42,000. The 1977 annual conference (held in the spring) was a two-day affair, and its format became the norm for years to follow. It was also in 1977 that the Association adopted its first official logo.

The 1978 conference followed the success of '77 and was attended by upwards of 1400. It was also at the 1978 meeting when amendments were made to the constitution, detailing the roles of commissions, Interest Groups, Committees, and the Parliamentarian. The '78 conference was held in Birmingham; in fact, between 1959 and 1979 only four conferences were held outside of Birmingham. While it seemed things were indeed going well for our System and Association, the late 70s saw a financial crisis that affected education in Alabama. The 1979 conference was attended by only 300. A 1982 Association Newsletter paints a bleak but vivid picture: "I bring you bad news, with high unemployment, double-digit inflation, and the interest rates now, we have real problems."

Nonetheless and possibly in the face of that adversity, as the age of Disco was dying and the Reagan Revolution was about to begin, some positive things had occurred for the Association: the first organizational history was written and the A.J.C.C.A. became incorporated. Moreover, the governor's office and state legislature helped boost the visibility of our schools by proclaiming the first "Alabama Junior and Community College Week" in 1980; this became an annual resolution throughout the decade and often coincided with the A.J.C.C.A.'s conference.

The 1980s saw our member institutions fight for survival, experience growth and consolidations, ride waves of inflation, fight frightening unemployment figures, and continue to seek to serve the

mission of education while also training a workforce. As an example, the 1983 theme was “Putting Alabama Back to Work.”

Two developments emerged in the decade that had a significant impact on our Association: the withdrawal of private schools from the A.J.C.C.A. and the debate over inviting technical colleges to join the Association. The Chancellor’s office became an important voice in the talks concerning the technical colleges. Indeed, by the mid-1980s the Chancellor’s office was a distinct and arguably dominating force within the A.J.C.A.A. With all entities working together, the technical colleges were invited to join the Association in 1987.

In the second-half of the decade, the Executive Council took a lead in pressuring the legislature for a “Cadillac” hospitalization insurance plan and debated supporting a call for the creation of a separate Board of Education, an issue that periodically re-emerges. Through each of these issues, the schools, System, and Association continued their good works and services. Yet there were calls for change, and by 1988 many reforms had been pushed through; it seemed a corner had been turned. Association Historians Ben Clements and Philip Royal described the situation:

*Friday, April 8, 1988, was a beautiful day in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. The cloudless sky served as a portent for the AJCAA Business Meeting scheduled for 1:30pm in the Sellers Auditorium of the Bear Bryant Continuing Education Center. The outgoing president, Tom Umphrey, opened the session and various reports and comments were given. In due time Dr. Jim Krudop, Chairman of the Constitutional Revision Committee, presented that group’s unanimous recommendation that the constitution, as revised and circulated in accordance with Article XI of the Constitution and Bylaws of the AJCAA, be approved. There was minimal discussion, and no debate. The revision was passed overwhelmingly by the eight hundred plus members in attendance, and thus a new direction was chartered by the Association, now named the Alabama College Association. The authors noted the sharp contrast between this remarkable display of unity by the membership and the sharp division of three years past. We pondered what variables had come into play that caused the apparent complete reversal of sentiment, as the revision as passed in 1988 was a more complete rewriting than had been the one proposed and defeated on April 10, 1985. The basic intent, however, was the same in both cases—namely the eligibility of all postsecondary institutions under the Alabama State Board of Education for full participatory membership in the association.*

Indeed, the ’88 constitution recognized the marriage of technical colleges to the Association, which had also been renamed the Alabama College Association. 1988 was also an interesting year: in the span of just eight months, the Association held two conferences, one in the spring as had been the custom and one in the fall which subsequently became the norm. The fall conference would take first two and later three of the six professional development days mandated by the Chancellor’s office. The new constitution also established the historian as an Executive Committee member and set up the rotation for the commission chairs and vice-chairs. A Legislative Committee was also born and a chairperson was appointed; the Executive Committee was expanded to include ex-officio, non-voting members in the persons of representatives from the Department of Post-Secondary, A.C.H.E., and the

Presidents' Council. By the turn of the decade the Association seemed resolved to provide professional development opportunities to all members of the System.



This working history of the Association summarizes events to circa-1990. An analysis of the events 1990-2012 is currently being written by Association Historians Drs. Denny Smith and Kevin Windham.