

# SACAD

Southern Association of Colleges with Associate Degrees

## NEWSLETTER

May 2025

Volume 11 Number 1

### 2024 SACAD ANNUAL LUNCHEON IN AUSTIN A HUGE SUCCESS

The SACAD annual membership luncheon was held on Sunday, December 8, 2024 in Austin, Texas and was well received by more than 100 attendees. The session was entitled: "Empowering Community Colleges Through Grassroots Advocacy." The presentation was described as follows: In today's dynamic policy environment, higher education institutions face growing challenges in advocating for the needs of their students, faculty, and communities. The presentation explored the critical role grassroots advocacy plays in shaping policy decisions, strengthening relationships with elected officials, and building sustained support for higher education.

The session focused on state-based initiatives designed to train institutional advocates through professional development and targeted advocacy programs. Attendees gained insight into best practices for advocacy training, equipping higher education professionals with the skills needed to lead efforts that influence policy decisions and foster lasting change. Key topics included the fundamentals of



Tyson Elbert

grassroots advocacy, with practical strategies to mobilize campus communities, engage diverse stakeholders, and amplify the voices of institutions.

The speaker for the luncheon was Tyson Elbert, the founder and Executive Director of AdvocacyBuild, LLC. Established in 2017 and based in Washington, DC, AdvocacyBuild works with education, philanthropic, non-

profit, and business communities to develop professional development experiences focusing on leadership, policy, networking, and advocacy. Through this work, Mr. Elbert directs state-based Policy Fellows Programs with education partners in Indiana, Kansas, Mississippi, and Missouri.

Prior to founding AdvocacyBuild, Mr. Elbert spent nearly two decades working in higher education, including the John C. Stennis Institute of Government and Community Development at Mississippi State University, the Education Policy Center at The University of Alabama, and the Rural Policy Research Institute at The University of Missouri.

The SACAD Board will be planning the 2025 Annual Membership Luncheon which will be held on December 7, 2025 in Nashville, Tennessee. The SACAD Annual Membership Luncheon is held each year in conjunction with the SACSCOC Annual Meeting. The theme for the SACSCOC conference is "Finding Harmony: Transforming Challenges into Opportunities."

The cost for the annual luncheon is \$40 and can be paid for by check or credit card through PayPal on the [sacad.org](https://sacad.org) website. Detailed information about the 2025 luncheon will be communicated in late summer. Please mark your calendars for the 2025 SACAD Annual Membership Luncheon in Nashville, Tennessee!

#### CURRENT MEMBERS RENEW MEMBERSHIP TODAY

The SACAD Board invites current members to renew their 2025-2026 membership with SACAD. Institutional dues are \$150.00. Dues notices will be mailed to the presidents/CEO's of all potential membership colleges by May 15, 2025. Dues may be paid by check or credit card.

Please contact Dr. George D. Edwards, SACAD Executive Secretary-Treasurer at [gdedwards930@gmail.com](mailto:gdedwards930@gmail.com) or by phone (606) 424-8867. Also, please see the website at [sacad.org](https://sacad.org) for more information.

## **SACAD BOARD AND OFFICERS SELECTED FOR 2025**

**PRESIDENT:** Dr. Cynthia S. Kelley  
Madisonville Community College, KY

**VICE PRESIDENT:** Dr. James David Campbell  
Northeast Alabama Community College, AL

**PAST PRESIDENT:** Dr. John Enamait  
Stanly Community College, NC

**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY/TREASURER:**  
Dr. George D. Edwards (Non-board member)



*Dr. Cynthia S.  
Kelley*



*Dr. James David  
Campbell*



*Dr. John  
Enamait*



*Dr. George D.  
Edwards*

### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

#### **Class of 2025**

Dr. John Enamait, President, Stanly Community College, NC  
Dr. Michael Torrence, President, Motlow State Community College, TN  
Dr. Brent Gregory, President, East Central Community College, MS  
Ms. DeAnnia Clements, Wiregrass Georgia Technical College, GA

#### **Class of 2026**

Dr. Cynthia S. Kelley, President, Madisonville Community College, KY  
Dr. Tonjua Williams, President, St. Petersburg College, FL  
Dr. Vincent Solis, President, Brazosport College, TX  
Louisiana Board member to be determined, LA

#### **Class of 2027**

Dr. Dean Sprinkle, President, Wytheville Community College, VA  
Dr. James David Campbell, Northeast Alabama Community College, AL  
Dr. Patricia A. Lee, Williamsburg Technical College, SC



*Ms. DeAnnia  
Clements*



*Dr. Brent  
Gregory*



*Dr. Patricia A.  
Lee*



*Dr. Vincent  
Solis*



*Dr. Dean  
Sprinkle*



*Dr. Michael  
Torrence*



*Dr. Tonjua  
Williams*

## ALABAMA

### Alabama's Community Colleges Unite for a Greener, Cleaner State

As April ushers in National Community College Month, community service projects are springing into action across Alabama. Students, faculty, and staff from Alabama's community colleges are joining forces to beautify their communities through a series of litter pickup events in partnership with Alabama People Against a Littered State (PALS) and the Coca-Cola UNITED spring cleanup, "Don't Drop It on Alabama."

"For more than 60 years, Alabama's community colleges have been a powerhouse for positive change across the state. Our collaboration with community partners is a testament to our promise to serving Alabama in meaningful ways – working together to make life better and drive success statewide," said Jimmy H. Baker, Chancellor of the ACCS.

In 2024, the Alabama Community College System (ACCS) collected 18,377 pounds (9 tons) of trash, debris, and recyclables during its spring cleanup, marking a remarkable 67% increase from the 2023 total of 11,000 pounds (5.5 tons). "Spring is a time of renewal, and what better way to embrace it than by uniting as a community?" said Jamie Mitchell, Executive Director of Alabama PALS. "It's inspiring to see people come together for this important cause, proving that we all have a role in keeping Alabama cleaner and greener. We are especially proud of our partnership with the ACCS and its colleges and the wonderful work they continue to do each year to eliminate litter in their communities."

This year's spring cleanup welcomes the Osprey Initiative, a champion of environmental stewardship, to enhance recycling efforts at 24 Alabama's community and technical colleges. This partnership will further strengthen waste reduction efforts throughout the state.

### ACCS Expands Healthcare Training Programs

The Alabama Community College System (ACCS) announced its intentions recently to expand its Health Science offerings across the state's community colleges in 2025, specifically showcasing the new Nursing Support Technician- Certified option in a press conference conducted at the Alabama Archives and History Auditorium.

"The Alabama Community College System constantly fulfills the needs of our business and industry partners and producing highly skilled individuals for the healthcare field is imperative. The opportunities we're featuring demonstrate the desire we have must make higher education accessible and attainable for all," said ACCS Chancellor Jimmy H. Baker.

Nursing Support Technicians are needed in every hospital, healthcare facility, home health and in numerous patient care organizations throughout the state. These workers, making up 12,000-14,000 nursing support staff in Alabama, gain advanced skills in tasks like drawing blood, assisting with respiratory care and other fundamental nursing functions.

The Alabama Board of Nursing announced the new nursing credential last week, aiming to fill more than 2,000 current vacancies in the state.

"For the past 10 years, the Alabama Board of Nursing has been committed to leading the way for a nation facing an ongoing nursing shortage," said Peggy Benson, Executive Officer for the Alabama Board of Nursing. "The NST-C gives us an opportunity to lead and create a dynamic shift in the nursing industry, and we are proud to explore creative, innovative and sound approaches to address the industry's toughest challenges."

The NST-C program is designed for individuals wishing to assist nurses as a multi-disciplinary technical worker, trained to provide basic nursing assistant care.

The ACCS's Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) grant program is another that's building momentum for 2025. There are currently 22 LPN programs, either standalone or LPN to RN mobility, or allied health/military medic to LPN bridge programs, offered at ACCS institutions.

Fourteen ACCS colleges featured registered LPN nursing apprenticeship with 62 employers across seven workforce regions, and overall, the ACCS has experienced a 150 percent increase in dual enrollment since 2015.

With recent approval from the Alabama Board of Nursing, the ACCS is introducing LPN dual enrollment programs this year, providing high school students with the opportunity to earn nursing credentials early, creating a direct pathway into the profession.

The ACCS offers more than 80 Health Science programs or courses among 22 of its 24 colleges, including fields like dental hygiene, health information technology, medical billing and coding, nursing and physical therapy assistant. Registered nursing, medical/clinical assistant and emergency medical technology (paramedic) feature the highest enrollments among healthcare fields across the system.

### Alabama's Community Colleges Generate Billions for Economy

According to an independent report by Lightcast, a global leader in labor market analytics, students and alumni of the Alabama Community College System (ACCS) contributed \$8.1 billion to the state's economy, an amount equal to about 3% of Alabama's total gross state product.





“The ACCS enriches the lives of students by raising their lifetime earnings and helping them achieve their individual potential,” the report states. “The colleges benefit state and local taxpayers through increased tax receipts and a reduced demand for government-supported social services.”

The report also states Alabama’s community colleges support 114,043 jobs in Alabama, which is equivalent to one in every 26 jobs. Some students, who might have otherwise left Alabama for higher education, stayed because of the opportunities available at the state’s community colleges. In the 2023-24 school year, 3% of ACCS students were from out of state, with some relocating to Alabama specifically to attend a community college.

While the ACCS plays a role in attracting and retaining talent, its greatest impact comes from its alumni. In FY 2023-24 alone, ACCS alumni generated \$6.9 billion in added income, supporting the equivalent of 96,200 jobs in Alabama.

Over the years, the ACCS has become the largest training entity in the state. Its graduates and students have gained valuable skills and knowledge, enabling them to contribute meaningfully to Alabama’s workforce.

Individually, students can expect a more than reasonable return on investment from their 2-year education. For every dollar a student invests in their education with the ACCS, they can expect to gain \$5.60 in lifetime earnings. Alabama’s 2-year college system generates more tax dollars than it takes. State taxpayers will see \$1.20 in added tax revenue and public sector savings for every dollar invested into the system. Society will also benefit \$6.50 in added incomes and social savings for every dollar.

### FLORIDA

#### Broward County Selects New President



*Torey Alston*

Broward College’s Board of Trustees voted unanimously to select Torey Alston the next president and chief executive officer of the College.

Alston comes to the College with both executive education and governmental experience. Most recently, he worked as the executive director and CEO of the Greater Miami Expressway Agency, an independent state agency. Previously, he served on

both the Broward County Commission and as chair of

the School Board of Broward County. Alston is a former trustee of Florida A&M University and served twice on the leadership team of Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

“God is so good and I want to thank the Broward College District Board of Trustees for their vote of support and confidence as I transition to President of Broward College,” Alston said. “As the son of two parents who attended community college including my father who completed the police academy forty years ago from then Broward Community College, I know the value of the state college system first-hand.”

Alston will succeed Dr. Donald P. Astrab, who has served as Interim President since 2024.

At the meeting, Vice Chair Zachariah “Reggie” P. Zachariah, Jr. made a motion which was agreed upon unanimously to allow the chair to begin negotiating an employment contract with Alston.

“This is a decision that my fellow trustees and I took very seriously,” said Board Chair Alexis Yarbrough. “We had two very strong candidates, but Mr. Alston’s legislative experience, coupled with his relationships in the community made him the obvious choice.”

### GEORGIA

#### Interim President Selected for Augusta Technical College



*Dr. Melissa Frank-Alston*

Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) Commissioner Greg Dozier has appointed Augusta Technical College Provost Dr. Melissa Frank-Alston as Interim President of Augusta Technical College, effective April 1, 2025. Dr. Frank-Alston will assume leadership following the appointment of Augusta Technical College President Dr. Jermaine Whirl as President of Savannah State University by the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia.

“Dr. Frank-Alston is a dedicated and accomplished leader with a deep commitment to student success and workforce development,” said TCSG Commissioner Greg Dozier. “Her decades of experience and leadership at Augusta Technical College will ensure a seamless transition as the college continues to provide high-quality education and training to students in the region.”

Dr. Frank-Alston has been a part of Augusta Technical College for nearly 20 years, holding several key leadership roles, including Provost and SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison, Executive Vice President for Academic

Affairs and Institutional Effectiveness & Research, Senior Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness & Research, Vice President for Academic & Student Affairs, and Vice President for Student Affairs.

She holds a Ph.D. in Workforce Education & Development with an emphasis in Training/Human Resources from Pennsylvania State University, an M.S. in College Student Personnel from Western Illinois University, and a B.A. in Anthropology from Northwestern State University of Louisiana. Dr. Frank-Alston is also a 2007 graduate of Leadership Augusta, a 2014 graduate of the Technical College System of Georgia Executive Leadership Academy, and a 2018 graduate of the Aspen Presidential Fellowship for Community College Excellence.

"I am honored to serve as Interim President of Augusta Technical College and continue our mission of providing high-quality education and workforce training," said Dr. Frank-Alston. "I look forward to working alongside our dedicated faculty, staff, and community partners to support student achievement and economic growth in the region."

Dr. Frank-Alston officially assumed her role as Interim President on April 1, 2025.

### **Unified High Demand Career List Announced**

Governor Brian P. Kemp recently announced the State Workforce Development Board has officially approved Georgia's High Demand Career List, a tool designed to align education, training, and workforce development efforts with the needs of employers across the state. The High Demand Career List is a component of the Governor's Top State for Talent initiative, which will parallel Georgia's development as the top state in which to do business. Ensuring workforce development resources throughout the state are aligned to grow talent pipelines will further strengthen Georgia's position as the best place for opportunity.

"As the number one state to do business for over a decade, maintaining our competitive edge remains a top goal for my administration and our partners in the legislature," said Governor Brian Kemp. "Georgia's High Demand Career List is our newest tool in that mission, promoting the alignment of education and training programs to the needs of job creators so we can bring even more opportunities to every part of the state for hardworking Georgians."

The High Demand Career List identifies careers that are high-demand, high-wage, and high-skill to inform educational pathways for economic success and sustainable growth. It is a resource for all stakeholders, including students and parents, to provide meaningful insights into critical career choices. It will guide improvements in education and job training programs, increase support for training opportunities, and highlight essential careers

across Georgia. Created using various data sources, metrics, and Labor Market Information, the list represents job trends and economic needs both statewide and regionally.

"The approval of the High Demand Career List marks a significant step in addressing Georgia's workforce needs," said Stuart Countess, CEO of Kia Georgia, and Chair of the State Workforce Development Board. "By identifying careers that are critical to our economy, we can ensure that education and training programs are aligned with employer demands, helping to close skill gaps and provide Georgians with pathways to rewarding, high-paying careers."

The High Demand Career List focuses on jobs that play a large role in Georgia's economy and are expected to grow, with plenty of opportunities available. These careers often require specialized training, like college credentials, apprenticeships, or certifications, to make sure workers have the skills they need. By using this list, Georgia aims to connect education and job training programs with the needs of employers, grow the number of skilled workers, ensure training programs meet industry standards, and increase awareness of career opportunities across the state.

## **KENTUCKY**

### **KCTCS Giving Day a Huge Success**

More than 1,100 donors in 28 states and 91 Kentucky counties rallied together to help ease financial barriers for Kentucky Community and Technical College System students by contributing more than \$350,000 in the second annual, 24-hour KCTCS Giving Day.

Funds will be used for need-based scholarships, food pantries, emergency aid, enrichment programs and other initiatives identified by the state's 16 community colleges, all aimed at helping students thrive in college so they can stay and complete their programs.

"I'm deeply grateful for the financial support from all of our communities — alumni, partners, employees and businesses," said KCTCS President Ryan Quarles. "Your contributions are more than just gifts; they are lifelines and launchpads for students striving toward brighter futures."

In a 2023 survey of KCTCS students, 58% of students worry about having enough money to pay for college, while 48% reported experiencing food and housing insecurity. Donors had the option to give locally to their college or to the system, and to contribute to specific causes.

This year's focus was on increasing the number of total gifts, which increased by 28% over last year's Giving Day. Current faculty and staff and retirees led the donor base at 64%. Alumni of one of the 16 KCTCS colleges made up 22% of the donors. People identifying as friends of KCTCS



and its colleges contributed 17% of the total. Board members contributed 7%, with students giving 5% of the day's total.

The KCTCS Foundation also outlined several challenges to help college organizers reach their goals. West Kentucky Community and Technical College raised the highest total as well as the highest number of gifts allocated to student emergency funds. Elizabethtown Community and Technical College received the highest number of total gifts, while Hazard Community and Technical College had the most combined gifts from Alumni and Students.

"Thanks to your generosity, we came together to support our students in the ways they need it most. Whether it's food, housing or other essentials, your gifts will help more students accomplish their educational goals," said Megan Stith, executive director of the KCTCS Foundation.

### New Fire Commission Executive Director Selected



*Bruce Roberts*

The Kentucky Fire Commission Board has selected Bruce Roberts, a retired firefighter and longtime advocate for fire safety training, as the new executive director of the Kentucky Fire Commission. The commission, attached to the Kentucky Community and Technical College System, provides essential training and certifications for both paid and volunteer firefighters across the state.

Roberts was appointed executive director earlier this month. He brings decades of experience in fire safety and training to the role. A retired firefighter for the City of Louisville, Roberts was first appointed to the fire commission board in 1994, serving until 2008 when he joined the commission full-time. Since then, he has served in a variety of leadership positions, including division director, deputy director and most recently, interim director since last May.

"Bruce is going to be a great fit — we couldn't ask for a better person," said Ricky King, chair of the fire commission board. "His knowledge, experience and deep understanding of the fire commission are exactly what we need."

The Kentucky Fire Commission plays a vital role in enhancing fire safety and education across the commonwealth. As an agency attached to KCTCS for administrative purposes, its mission is to strengthen, upgrade and improve fire rescue services for individuals, communities and industries throughout the state.

KCTCS President Ryan Quarles said, "Bruce Roberts brings a lifetime of dedication to public service and fire safety, and we are confident in his ability to lead with both vision and purpose. Under his leadership, the Kentucky Fire Commission will continue delivering efficient and effective training and support services for the brave men and women across the commonwealth."

Roberts is looking forward to his continued service with the commission.

"I am excited to lead the fire commission over the next two years, continuing to provide the firefighters throughout the commonwealth with the most up-to-date training," he said. "I am also committed to supporting fire departments through legislation to help with the purchasing of protective gear, equipment and grants, ensuring our firefighters can perform their jobs safely while serving the citizens of the commonwealth."

### LOUISIANA

#### Enrollment Increases in LCTCS

Enrollment across the Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS) has rebounded strongly from the nationwide decline in 2020, with its 12 colleges serving over 150,000 students this academic year.

LCTCS plays a critical role in Louisiana's education and workforce ecosystem, providing academic pathways, workforce training, and adult basic education services to meet the changing needs of students and employers.

Every day, thousands of students of all ages attend classes to earn degrees, credentials, and certifications that prepare them for high-demand careers, driving economic growth and strengthening communities across the state. While many two-year institutions nationwide have faced enrollment declines since the COVID-19 pandemic, LCTCS has bucked that trend by expanding access and opportunity. Tim Hardy, chair of the LCTCS Board of Supervisors, attributes this success to the system's ability to meet students where they are — whether they're new high school graduates, career changers, or working adults looking to advance their skills.

"Community and technical colleges have gained a new level of respect across our state and country," Hardy said. "We are providing direct pathways from unemployment to meaningful careers. By offering flexible programs— from two-year degrees to short-term certifications—we are removing barriers and empowering more students than ever before. We're able to serve those students by being very nimble in how we provide education, whether it's a two-year degree program, technical diploma, short-term certification program, high school equivalency, or something in between. They can take classes in the evening or through



remote learning. We feel an obligation to remove barriers and make it as comfortable as possible for people to gain that upward mobility.”

LCTCS recently celebrated its largest graduating class, with 35,000 individuals earning degrees and credentials in 2024. This included over 20,000 degrees, diplomas, and certificates along with over 13,000 short-term workforce training credentials and industry-based certifications, demonstrating the system’s commitment to equipping students for high-demand careers.

Our reason for this success is LCTCS’s ability to rapidly adapt to industry needs. In recent years, the system has expanded programs and launched new programs in broadband, construction, healthcare, and manufacturing sectors that are expanding across Louisiana.

“When a business is considering relocating or expanding in Louisiana, one of their very first questions is always about whether a state has the workforce it will need,” Hardy said. “They’re not going to come if they can’t find employees. The leaders in our state recognize this and see the role that LCTCS plays in that workforce pipeline. I don’t think I’ve ever seen this level of excitement about what our institutions can provide.”

Nunez Community College (Nunez) is a prime example of LCTCS’s growth and responsiveness to industry demands. Serving over 4,000 students per semester, the St. Bernard Parish-based college attracts learners from a seven-parish region around New Orleans.

Dr. Tina Tinney, chancellor of Nunez Community College, highlighted the institution’s expansion of its allied health and process technology (PTEC) programs. With a recent \$1 million grant, Nunez is enhancing PTEC to meet the growing need for skilled workers in the energy sector.

“We are very industrial in this region, and our programs reflect that,” Tinney said. “We’re expanding training in renewable energy and liquefied natural gas while continuing to support aerospace manufacturing—where we are the only college in Louisiana with a dedicated program. This isn’t just about today’s jobs; it’s about preparing for the future.”

Meanwhile, Baton Rouge Community College (BRCC) is seeing record numbers of graduates. The college now averages 4,200 completers annually, thanks in part to increased student support services.

Chancellor Dr. Willie Smith credits the college’s student navigator program, which helps guide individuals from enrollment through completion. Additionally, short-term credential programs, many of which can be completed in just weeks, are making education more accessible to working adults.

“Most of our students are parents with families who need

to enter the workforce quickly,” Smith said. “We’re giving them high-value, high-wage credentials that lead to immediate employment. The impact on our communities is incredible.”

LCTCS continues to expand its reach and impact, ensuring that every student—regardless of background—has access to high-quality, career-focused education. With enrollment at record highs and new programs continually being introduced, the system remains a cornerstone of workforce development in Louisiana.

### **New Chancellor Selected for Louisiana Delta Community College**

The Louisiana Community and Technical College System announced a new chancellor of Louisiana Delta Community College on Wednesday, April 9.



*Dr. Justin Hoggard*

Dr. Justin Hoggard will serve as the school’s next chancellor starting on July 1, 2025.

Hoggard was selected after a five-month nationwide search that started in November of 2024.

With a doctorate in educational leadership and degrees in education and history, LCTCS leaders said they believe Hoggard is a great fit for the job.

“He [Hoggard] brings a thoughtful, student-focused approach to leadership, and we are confident that under his guidance, LDCC will continue to grow and serve the region with excellence,” said LCTCS Board Chair Tim Hardy. “He is well-positioned to lead the college into the future, and we’re excited to see all that he will accomplish.”

Hoggard has nearly 20 years of higher education leadership experience, most recently working as president of Coastal Bend College in Texas for six years.

He has also worked as a chief academic officer and dean of instruction at universities in Missouri.

“Dr. Hoggard is a respected leader with a deep understanding of how community and technical colleges drive opportunity and growth,” said LCTCS President Dr. Monty Sullivan. “His passion for serving students and commitment to innovation will be key to building on Delta’s momentum.”

Outside of the classroom, Hoggard has served on numerous local and regional boards supporting education and workforce development.

“I am deeply honored and humbled to be selected as the next chancellor of Louisiana Delta Community College,”

Hoggard said. "I am truly excited to be part of this wonderful institution that has such a vital role in the educational landscape and economic vitality of Northeast Louisiana."

### MISSISSIPPI

#### **Northwest next ACUE class finishes teaching excellence program**

Northwest Mississippi Community College had another faculty cohort complete the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) certification. The group was honored March 19 in the Haraway Center.

"We are incredibly proud of our faculty members who have earned this prestigious ACUE micro-credential," said Associate Vice President of Academic Instruction Kristin Davis. "This achievement will undoubtedly have a positive impact on our students' learning experience."

This program focuses on research-backed framework that equips educators with learning environments. Those who go through the program are dedicated to advancing and delivering quality instruction.

Instructors being honored were part of the Spring 2025 and Fall 2024 cohorts. The fall cohort included Career-Technical instructor Lori Lawson of Lafayette County, health science instructors Austin Mabry and Monica Williams, both of Tate County, and business Instructor Rebekah Yeaton of Tate County.

Included in the Spring 2025 cohort were business instructor Amy Stewart of DeSoto County, humanities instructor Renee O'Neill of Lafayette County, social sciences instructor Regan Sellers of Tate County, Davis of DeSoto County, Career-Technical instructor Shelli Benton of Tate County, and humanities instructor Carroll Huebner of Lafayette County.

#### **First AI Lab Established**

Mississippi Delta Community College (MDCC), in partnership with the Mississippi Artificial Intelligence Network (MAIN) and Apple, is proud to announce the opening of the first artificial intelligence (AI) lab in higher education in the state. The Apple AI Lab offers students and faculty cutting-edge access to artificial intelligence tools and resources, positioning MDCC at the forefront of innovation in education and workforce development.

This initiative is a joint effort between MDCC's Workforce and Instructional Technology departments and is part of a larger mission to expand access to AI learning and training opportunities. Alongside the new lab space, MDCC offers multiple, self-paced, free AI courses to introduce learners to AI fundamentals and real-world appli-

cations.

"AI has appeared and grown quickly in the last year," said Jason Zuehlke, Director of Instructional Technology and coordinator of the Tech Zone at MDCC. "It has been great to partner with MAIN and Apple to be able to provide the resources we have. Like any tool, AI can be a great asset if used correctly. The Tech Zone is proud to host the Apple AI Lab made possible by the MAIN Grant and guide training in ethical and effective uses of AI."

The Mississippi Artificial Intelligence Network (MAIN), established in 2023, is the nation's first and only statewide AI initiative. MAIN provides leadership in artificial intelligence across the state through a combination of awareness, education, training, and innovation. More about MAIN and its initiatives can be found at <https://mainms.org>.

The AI Lab is housed within MDCC's Tech Zone, a dynamic and collaborative technology space launched in Fall 2022 under the Office of Instructional Technology. Designed to support both students and faculty, the Tech Zone includes collaborative work areas equipped with whiteboards, projectors and a Newline Interactive Display—offering features like whiteboarding, internet access and screen mirroring. The space also boasts an entire green screen wall for customized video projects, as well as tools such as iPads and Swivls for recording and presentation.

### NORTH CAROLINA

#### **Community College Day in North Carolina**

Halifax Mall buzzed with energy recently as legislators, students, and community members gathered for Community College Day, a showcase of North Carolina's community colleges and their pivotal role in workforce development and economic growth.

Hosted by the North Carolina Community College System, the event featured more than 20 colleges from the mountains to the coast, highlighting cutting-edge programs in advanced manufacturing, cybersecurity, aerospace training, healthcare, and other high-demand fields. By demonstrating how these programs align with North Carolina's growing industries, the event strengthened partnerships with legislators and stakeholders to ensure continued investment in student success and the state's economic future.

"Community College Day is a powerful reminder of the vital role our 58 community colleges play in shaping North Carolina's workforce and economy," said Alex Fagg, Vice President of Government and External Relations at the System. "Today, we showcased cutting-edge programs that are preparing students for in-demand careers and strengthening industries across the state. By connecting with elected officials, business leaders, and students, we reinforced the message that investing in community colleges is investing



in North Carolina's future. Our colleges are driving innovation, workforce solutions, and economic growth—and today's event highlighted just how critical that mission is.”

### **NC Community Colleges Foundation Recognizes Impact of Hurricane Relief Fund**

Five months after Hurricane Helene devastated western North Carolina, the NC Community Colleges Foundation reflects on the progress made through its Hurricane Helene Community College Response and Recovery Fund. With the unwavering support of individual and corporate donors, the Foundation has distributed \$560,000 across four rounds of funding to affected community colleges, helping them rebuild and provide critical resources to students and staff.

The generosity of 256 donors played a pivotal role in supporting student well-being, operational needs, lost wage assistance, campus repairs, and small business stabilization.

“The outpouring of support from our donors has been nothing short of remarkable. Their generosity has allowed our colleges to provide critical aid to students, faculty, and staff who are still recovering from the devastation of Hurricane Helene,” said Dr. Jeff Cox, President of NC Community College System. “This fund has been a true lifeline, ensuring that our colleges can continue serving their communities during this difficult time.”

The NC Community Colleges Foundation continues to raise funds to support long-term recovery efforts, ensuring that students and campuses have the resources they need to move forward.

## **SOUTH CAROLINA**

South Carolina's technical colleges are turning heads this year—with standout nursing licensure pass rates, a growing spotlight on student success programs like Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG-SC), and strong legislative engagement.

In 2024, South Carolina ranked 6th in the nation for registered nursing (RN) NCLEX pass rates and 7th for practical nursing (PN)—significantly outperforming national averages. RN candidates achieved a 94.7% first-time pass rate (vs. 91.2% nationally), and PN candidates hit 97.1%, nearly nine points above the national average.

Several colleges earned 100% pass rates, including Williamsburg, Midlands, Northeastern, Trident, Piedmont, Technical College of the Lowcountry, and Denmark Technical College. Others scored 90% or higher, such as Spartanburg, York, Orangeburg-Calhoun, Horry-Georgetown, and Central Carolina, underscoring the

consistent excellence of nursing education across the SC Technical College System.

The System also recently hosted its annual JAG-SC Career Development Conference, bringing together nearly 600 Jobs for America's Graduates students from across the state. These high schoolers participated in competitive events, leadership development, and networking sessions designed to prepare them for life after graduation. It was a powerful showcase of the next generation's talent and the state's investment in student success from classroom to career.

To complement this success, the SC Technical College System recently hosted a Legislative Luncheon at the State House, gathering lawmakers, college presidents, and students to showcase the System's pivotal role in workforce readiness. With industry-aligned training in healthcare, manufacturing, and IT, as well as programs like retrain SC and Apprenticeship Carolina, the message is clear: South Carolina's technical colleges are essential to the state's economic strategy.

These milestones reflect South Carolina's proactive approach to workforce development—rooted in results, fueled by partnerships, and driven by a commitment to, real-world impact.

## **TENNESSEE**

### **Board of Regents Gets Reports on Innovative Partnerships**

During its quarterly meeting, the Tennessee Board of Regents heard an informational report on TCAT Murfreesboro's innovative partnership with Nissan in an Industrial Electrical Maintenance and Mechatronics training program in which students can earn diplomas and industry-ready certificates.

The partnership is in its second trimester with about 100 students currently enrolled. Graduates may work at any industry in need of their new skills.

Through the partnership, five highly qualified employees of Nissan's Smyrna Assembly Plant work as TCAT Murfreesboro adjunct instructors teaching the college's accredited Industrial Electrical Maintenance (IEM) & Mechatronics course. The program offers day and evening class options at the TCAT Murfreesboro Smyrna Campus/Nissan Training Center.

Nissan senior workforce development executives Dan Caldwell and Jason Stanley and TCAT Murfreesboro President Patrick Wade presented details of the program. Rodney Douglas, a 35-year Nissan employee, and IEM student Carlos Castillo spoke about their experiences.



### **Pellissippi State Community College Recognized as One of Nation's Best**

Pellissippi State Community College has been designated a Leader College by the national nonprofit Achieving the Dream – an organization dedicated to advancing community colleges throughout the country.

The organization recognizes colleges that have pursued and met challenging student success goals. Pellissippi State's success in students' increased course pass rate overall and in English composition in particular were key in bringing this distinction to the college.

"This honor speaks to the role our faculty and staff are playing in our students' achievements," said Pellissippi State President L. Anthony Wise, Jr. "Increasing student success in our highest enrollment courses was a major goal of our 2020-2025 strategic plan, and this award recognizes a truly collective, whole-College achievement."

Achieving the Dream's 15 Leader Colleges are those that excel in adopting effective practices across higher education. They are among the best at developing innovative ways to work with other colleges to share knowledge and facilitate an exchange of ideas about evidence-based reform strategies.

Pellissippi State is one of more than 300 colleges in the Achieving the Dream Network and has been a member since 2018.

"We are proud to recognize our 2025 Leader Colleges and Leader Colleges of Distinction for their extraordinary commitment to student success," said Achieving the Dream President and CEO Karen A. Stout.

By earning this recognition, Pellissippi State exemplifies excellence within the Achieving the Dream Network through measurable gains in student outcomes and impactful change within the college, Stout said.

Pellissippi State's "dedication to using data-informed approaches to create meaningful opportunities for students and their communities serves as a powerful example for all institutions of higher education and especially for those in the ATD Network," she said.

In addition to Pellissippi State's Leader College designation, Chattanooga State Community College is one of five colleges nationwide to earn ATD's recertification of their status as Leader Colleges of Distinction, announced during ATD's 2025 DREAM Conference.

## **TEXAS**

### **New Amarillo College President Selected**



*Dr. Jamelle J. Conner*

The Board of Regents recently selected Dr. Jamelle J. Conner as the first female president of Amarillo College.

Conner, the vice president of student affairs at St. Petersburg College in Florida, was one of two finalists for the AC presidency. Her selection as the 15th president of AC marks the culmination of a 17-month national search to replace Russell Lowery-Hart, who resigned from AC in September of 2023 to become chancellor at Austin Community College.

"I am so deeply honored to be selected as the next president of Amarillo College. The passion and dedication of the faculty and staff, coupled with the warmth of the Amarillo community, have given me a true heart for this College and the community," Conner said. "I am excited to work alongside the Board of Regents, faculty, staff, students, and the entire community to build on our strengths, create our shared vision, and transform the lives of those we serve."

"She expressed to us her plans to be part of the future and what we're doing here at AC, and that's exciting," said Jay Barrett, chairman of the AC Board of Regents. "I can hardly wait to see her in place and see her expand the College's reach throughout our community."

Conner began her work at St. Petersburg College, which serves 40,000 students, in 2008 as associate vice president of strategic execution and administrative systems support. Prior to her higher education experience, Conner worked as a director of financial planning and analysis, responsible for a \$200 million annual budget.

### **Dr. Cesar Maldonado appointed Interim President of Coastal Bend College**



*Dr. Cesar Maldonado*

Coastal Bend College is proud to announce the appointment of Dr. Cesar Maldonado as Interim President, effective April 7, 2025 through August 31, 2025. With over four decades of leadership experience spanning the private sector, higher education, and STEM innovation, Dr. Maldonado brings a wealth of strategic vision and operational expertise to the role.

A seasoned executive, Maldonado has led transformative initiatives in both corporate and aca-

demographic environments, including notable advancements in workforce education, technology integration, and student success. Dr. Maldonado was a founding member of the Texas Emerging Technology Fund and chaired the Border Governors Conference on Science and Technology, promoting cross-border research and technological collaboration. His contributions have been honored by numerous organizations, including his induction into the Texas Tech University Industrial Engineering Academy, and recognition by students with the Pi Theta Kappa Distinguished Administrator Award for outstanding support of student achievement and leadership. The Texas House and Senate have also recognized his educational leadership and impact on student success.

"I'm honored to serve Coastal Bend College during this pivotal time," said Maldonado. "Together with the board, faculty, staff, and community, I look forward to strengthening our commitment to student achievement, community engagement, and academic excellence."

As Interim President, Dr. Maldonado will lead efforts to develop an updated strategic plan, align institutional goals with emerging community needs, and build a strong, sustainable budget that continues to support student success and long-term growth.

Dr. Maldonado previously served as Chancellor of the Houston Community College System, the third largest community college in the State of Texas, from May 2014 until the term of his contract ended on August 31, 2023.

He holds Bachelor and Master of Science degrees in Chemical Engineering from Texas A&M University, a Doctorate in Systems and Engineering Management from Texas Tech University, and is an alumnus of the UC Berkeley Haas School of Business Executive Program.

The Coastal Bend College Board of Trustees has launched a national search for a permanent president.

### VIRGINIA

#### **Germanna Community College's President Announces Retirement**



*Dr. Janet Gullickson*

Dr. Janet Gullickson, the first woman president of Germanna Community College, has announced that she will retire this summer after eight years as the college's chief executive.

Under her leadership, Gullickson has guided Germanna through a period of remarkable enrollment growth. Additionally, the college

has received multiple national recognitions, including twice being named among the top 150 colleges nationally by the Aspen Institute. The college's recent selection as the first institution nationwide to receive Amazon Web Services' mobile classroom exemplifies her success in fostering industry partnerships that benefit students and communities. More recently, Gullickson has been involved in developing work-based learning programs for students to gain hands-on experience through paid internships.

Dr. David Doré, chancellor for the Virginia Community College System, credits Gullickson with significantly transforming Germanna Community College. "Dr. Gullickson has positioned Germanna for continued success. Her successor will inherit an institution known for innovation, fiscal strength, and deep community partnerships," he said.

Gullickson earned a Doctor of Leadership and Policy in Higher Education degree from the University of Minnesota, and Master of Science degree in Rural Sociology and Planning from South Dakota State University.

#### **VCCS Presidential Searches Progress**

The State Board for Community Colleges in Virginia has certified presidential candidate finalists for both Eastern Shore Community College and Virginia Western Community College. The finalists, in alphabetical order, are Dr. Rushton Johnson, Jr. of Knoxville, Tennessee; Dr. Daryl Minus of South Hill, Virginia, and Dr. Ashli Hamilton Wilkins of Enterprise, Alabama. The finalists, in alphabetical order, are Dr. Daryl Minus of South Hill, Virginia, Dr. Jamonica Rolle of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and Dr. Laura Treanor of Vincennes, Indiana.

Additional presidential searches are underway at Danville Community College and Southwest Virginia Community College.

#### **Interim President Announced for Germanna Community College**



*Dr. Van Wilson, Ed.D.*

Dr. Van Wilson, Ed.D., has been appointed by Virginia Community College System Chancellor David Dore, as the Interim President of Germanna Community College (GCC) effective July 1, 2025.

"Dr. Wilson's proven leadership abilities and his unwavering commitment to student success make him uniquely qualified for this important role," said Doré. "I have complete confidence that under his direction,

Germanna Community College and its community of stakeholders will continue to thrive."

Wilson has 40 years of experience in higher education, including nine years with the VCCS, most recently as Interim President of Brightpoint Community College. He previously served as associate vice chancellor for Student Experience and Strategic Initiatives. Prior to joining Virginia's Community Colleges in 2013, Wilson served as associate vice president of Student Learning and Success for the North Carolina Community College System, a position he held for five years.

Dr. Wilson holds a doctorate in educational leadership from Appalachian State University, a master's in public affairs from Western Carolina University, and a bachelor's in chemistry from Western Carolina University.

Wilson, who retired from the VCCS in 2023, will take the reins of leadership from Dr. Janet Gullickson, the current president of Germanna, who announced last year that she would be retiring in July after eight years as the college's chief executive.

The search for a permanent president of Germanna Community College will begin soon. It is a lengthy process and will be conducted similar to previous presidential searches at other colleges within the system. This national search will involve input from the local college board, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders, which will help to identify and prioritize the qualifications needed for the next president.





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