



A Message from Executive Director Dr. Jim Purcell

Welcome to the first issue of the ACHE Impact Newsletter! This publication marks an exciting step forward in our mission to keep stakeholders, partners, and the public informed about the vital work being done across Alabama's higher education landscape.

At the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, we are dedicated to fostering a collaborative and innovative environment where students can thrive, institutions can grow, and our state can prosper. ACHE Impact will serve as a platform to highlight initiatives, share success stories, and provide updates on policy and progress that impact the future of education and workforce development in Alabama.

Thank you for your continued support as we work together to strengthen postsecondary education and build a brighter future for all Alabamians.

Campus Snapshots

Celebrating Accomplishments Across Alabama's Postsecondary Institutions

Each quarterly newsletter will spotlight several of our state's outstanding 4-year and 2-year institutions on a rotational schedule.



Alabama State University

Nations Oldest HBCU Celebrates 158 Years

Alabama State University celebrated its 158th birthday alongside the 41st anniversary of WVAS FM 90.7, its NPR-affiliated radio station, during two private events on July 15–16.

Campus Snapshots

Continued

Alabama State University Continued: The festivities included an ice cream social with T-shirt giveaways and a lively birthday carnival featuring music by Yung Vokalz. Attendance was limited to members of the Hornet Nation Family and news media. While the events were free, guests were encouraged to donate nonperishable food items, school supplies, or monetary gifts in honor of ASU—one of the nation’s oldest state-sponsored HBCUs.



Athens State University Launches Program to Fit Community College Graduate, Adult Learner Needs

Athens State University has launched a new Bachelor of Science in Applied Management (APM) program to meet an educational and workforce development need by bridging the gap between technical expertise and advanced managerial skills. The program serves as a seamless pathway for community college graduates earning an Associate of Applied Science degree, as well as returning adult learners who have practical, applied experience in a chosen field.

The program provides students with a comprehensive business education to prepare them to enter managerial employment, advance within the management field, or assist in the development of individuals who hold those positions. Program concentrations include Leadership, Manufacturing, or Small Business Management. Students may also opt for a Tailored Business Concentration.

The APM program provides a seamless pathway for those coming from technologies-based programs in community colleges such as Air Conditioning & Refrigeration, Aerospace/Aviation Technology, Automotive Technology, Design Drafting Technology, Electrical Technology, Industrial Maintenance, Machine Tool Technology, Process Technology, Robotics, and Welding.



Bevill State Community College

Bevill State Community College is proud to partner with Jasper City and Walker County Schools to expand dual enrollment opportunities through the new Heman Drummond Center for Innovation (HDCI), a project driven by the leadership and support of the Walker Area Community Foundation. Currently under construction, this facility will provide local high school students access to hands-on career and technical education, enabling them to earn workforce credentials in high-demand fields such as Welding and Machine Tool Technology while still in high school. (Continued pg. 3)

Campus Snapshots

Continued

Bevill State Community College Continued: By equipping students with in-demand skills and creating a steady pipeline of job-ready talent, the HDCI will be a powerful asset in attracting new industry and driving economic opportunity for our area.

“This partnership reflects Bevill State’s commitment to serving our communities and working alongside our local schools to strengthen workforce development,” said Dr. Joel Hagood, President of Bevill State. “The HDCI will play an important role in preparing students for rewarding careers and supporting economic progress in our region.”



Bishop State Community College

The Wildcat Roadtrip: Breaking Barriers to College Access

At Bishop State, we believe access should never be a barrier to higher education. That’s why we launched the Wildcat Roadtrip. It is a bold initiative that brings the full college enrollment experience directly to local high schools.

First piloted in 2023 at five schools, the program helped 60 seniors enroll in college without ever having to leave their campuses. The success was immediate and inspiring. By spring 2024, the Wildcat Roadtrip expanded to 10 high schools, enrolling and retaining more than 300 first-time freshmen for the fall semester. Now in its third year, the 2025 roadtrip is our largest yet, reaching 12 schools, registering 331 students, plus 24 student applications for our FAME on the Coast program.

By meeting students where they are, we are breaking down barriers, building trust, and demonstrating that opportunity isn’t something students can only search for; it’s something we deliver!



Calhoun Community College

Calhoun Launches Innovative Facility Merging Arts and Technology Training

Calhoun Community College has officially opened its STEAM Imagination Center, an innovative instructional site located in downtown Decatur as part of the Alabama Center for the Arts. The new facility brings together science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics to support Calhoun’s mission of advancing workforce innovation. Representing a five-million-dollar investment, the center marks a bold step forward in education and training for North Alabama. (Continued on pg. 4)

Campus Snapshots

Continued

Calhoun Community College Continued: Training at the center will prepare students for roles such as additive manufacturing technician, architectural drafter, product designer, UX and web designer, animator, and multimedia specialist. New programs are in development to expand career opportunities even further and will initially serve around 75 students per year beginning this fall. As additional degree and certificate programs are created, enrollment is expected to grow, with a video game development track already in progress.

The STEAM Imagination Center will support students from Calhoun's Fine Arts, Computer Information Systems, and Design Drafting programs. "We are marrying arts and technology," said Calhoun President Dr. Jimmy Hodges. "This center represents opportunity, creativity, and innovation." According to a recent Lightcast labor market report, demand for these skills is expected to grow by more than 16 percent over the next decade, making the center a timely addition to Calhoun's academic and workforce training efforts.



Central Alabama Community College

CACC Student Experiment Selected for Spaceflight

Radishes are heading to space, and CACC students made it happen.

A student-led experiment on how radish roots and shoots grow in microgravity was selected for flight to the International Space Station through the Student Spaceflight Experiments Program (SSEP). The team—Allie Scott, Benton Stegall, Noah White, Adlyne Benton, and Gracie Deason—submitted the winning idea after a college-wide competition that featured 15 proposals from 52 students.

Their project was chosen for its scientific value and relevance to future space farming. It's set to launch in April 2026 as part of SSEP Mission 20. Two additional CACC teams earned honorable mentions for research on cancer cell growth and amino acid crystallization in space. This experience gave students the chance to take their classroom learning further and explore how their ideas could contribute to real-world science.



Chattahoochee Valley Community College

CVCC's EMT Program Continues to Excel with High Board Exam Pass Rates

Chattahoochee Valley Community College's Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) program continues to produce well-trained, highly competent emergency responders. The program emphasizes the development of knowledge, hands-on skills, and professional behavior through classroom instruction, clinical training, and real-world experience. (Continued on pg. 5)

Campus Snapshots

Continued

Chattahoochee Valley Community College Continued: In both Fall 2024 and Spring 2025, EMT students achieved a 100% first-time pass rate on their board exams—an impressive reflection of the program’s quality and consistency.

The EMS program at CVCC was revitalized in 2007 under the Workforce Development umbrella and subsequently incorporated into the Public Safety program. In 2011, Advanced EMT was introduced, followed by the hiring of the first full-time EMS instructor in 2012.

Today, CVCC’s AEMT program continues to grow, preparing students to respond confidently and professionally in emergency medical settings across the region.



Coastal Alabama Community College

Coastal Alabama Community College emphasizes emergency response training

Safety is a priority at Coastal Alabama Community College, and to emphasize this initiative, faculty and staff from across the College’s six-county footprint participated in an emergency crisis training covering everything from CPR to Stop the Bleed critical care.

“These are educators, not first responders, but they love people and they love their communities, and this provides a sense of security to our employees and our students that we’re going to try our best to keep them safe and do all that we can,” said Dr. Aaron Milner, President of Coastal Alabama.

Each campus was also provided with resources to address a variety of emergencies. The supplies compliment the practical knowledge of what to do in a crisis, which each attendee learned during the training.

“When they lay their heads on their pillows at night, they will know they have done their best to be prepared for whatever may come,” Milner said.

Submit Your Story

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Scholarships and Student Financial Assistance

The Alabama Commission on Higher Education is committed to expanding access to postsecondary opportunities through targeted scholarship programs that support student success and strengthen the state's workforce.

ACHE administers several key scholarship and grant programs designed to assist students with financial need, encourage academic excellence, and promote enrollment in high-demand fields. These include:



- ***Alabama Student Assistance Program (ASAP)*** - A need-based grant providing critical support for students attending eligible public and private institutions.
- ***Alabama Math and Science Teacher Education Program (AMSTEP)*** - This program provides loan repayment incentives to Alabama certified teachers of mathematics or science who agree to teach in public schools in the state. It helps address critical teacher shortages in these high-demand subject areas.
- ***Alabama National Guard Educational Assistance Program (ANGEAP)*** - This program provides tuition assistance to active members of the Alabama National Guard who are enrolled in an accredited postsecondary institution within the state. It recognizes the dedication of our service members and helps them pursue higher education while serving.
- ***Alabama Athletic Trainer Loan Assistance Program (ATLAP)*** - This program assists licensed athletic trainers in repaying their federal student loans while serving in public K–12 schools and supports the state's efforts to recruit and retain these professionals, ensuring safer and healthier sports environments for Alabama's students.
- ***Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivors Educational Assistance Program (POFSEAP)*** - This program offers tuition, fees, and instructional costs for the dependents and eligible spouses of Alabama law enforcement officers and firefighters who have been killed in the line of duty. It serves as a small measure of support and gratitude for families who have made the ultimate sacrifice.
- ***(Re)Engage Alabama Grant*** - This initiative provides scholarships and targeted support to help adult learners return to college and complete their degrees. Many Alabamians have some college credit but no degree. (Re)Engage Alabama connects these students with resources, flexible pathways, and financial assistance to help them cross the finish line and enter the workforce better prepared.

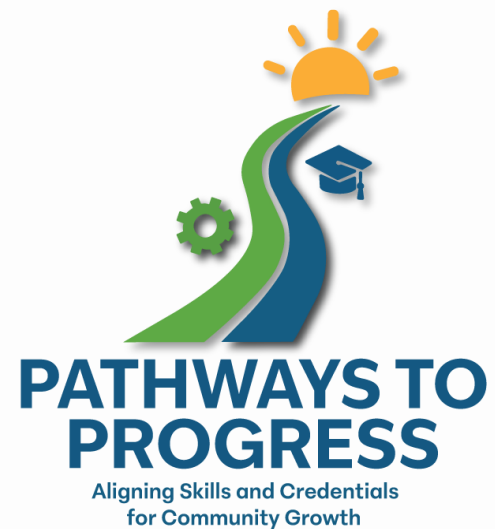
To learn more about these scholarships and how to apply, visit www.ache.edu and click on the "State Student Financial Assistance" tab.

Pathways to Progress: Advancing Economic Growth and Social Stability

The Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) is proud to introduce the Pathways to Progress Initiative that is a strategic effort designed to foster economic growth and promote social stability in communities that possess the foundational elements of a thriving economy but lack critical alignment between educational credentials and workforce skills.

This initiative is rooted in data-driven analysis, utilizing statistical methodologies to identify community-specific barriers and opportunities. By tailoring education and workforce solutions to the unique needs of each region, the initiative ensures that interventions are both relevant and impactful.

The Pathways to Progress Initiative recognizes that strong regional economies will depend on an educated, skilled workforce. By addressing gaps in education, aligning training with local industry needs, and providing scholarships and strategic advising, the initiative will help individuals overcome barriers to postsecondary success. Ultimately, Pathways to Progress aims to build resilient communities that can adapt and thrive, creating lasting economic prosperity across Alabama.



Upcoming ACHE Events & Presentations

SACCR 2025 September 8-10, 2025

Dr. Jessie Lynn Nichols will present on “Rooted In Data: An Introspective Look Through a 40 - Year Lens at Agriculture Student Success”

OER Workshops September 11 & 12

Thursday September 11

University of South Alabama
Marx Library Auditorium
8 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Friday September 12

Auburn University at Montgomery (AUM)
Taylor Center – Room 230
8 a.m. – 3 p.m.

SAIR 2025 September 27-30, 2025

Dr. Patrick Kelly and Dr. Jessie Lynn Nichols will present on: “The life Cycle of an Economy and the Role of Colleges and Universities in Optimizing Regional Prosperity”

Dr. Jessie Lynn Nichols will present on: “Rooted In Data: An Introspective Look Through a 40 - Year Lens at Agriculture Student Success”

AWS-MLU Voices of the Valley AI Convening October 1, 2025

ACHE is proud to partner with Amazon Web Services, HBCU Consortium, and Alabama A&M University to present *Empowering the Future: Building Institutional Capacity Through HBCU and HBCC Collaboration*.

Upcoming ACHE Events & Presentations

Alabama AI Higher Education Exchange October 22, 2025

ACHE is proud to sponsor another statewide AI and higher education convening, hosted at The University of Alabama's Bryant Conference Center in Tuscaloosa. Join us for a full day of AI training, insights, and perspectives from content experts and industry leaders.

December 12, 2025

Commission Meeting @ 10:00 am - 12:00 pm RSA Union Building 100 North Union Street, 7th floor, Room 779 Montgomery, Alabama 36104

ACHE In Action

April 2025

Athens State University Presidential Inauguration for Dr. Catherine Wehlburg



Dr. Purcell delivers inspiring opening remarks during the presidential inauguration ceremony at Athens State University.



Dr. Jim Purcell (left), Dr. Catherine Wehlburg (center), and Dr. Robin McGill (right)

May 2025



Members of ACHE attended and presented at the COTL 2025 Annual Conference

May 2025



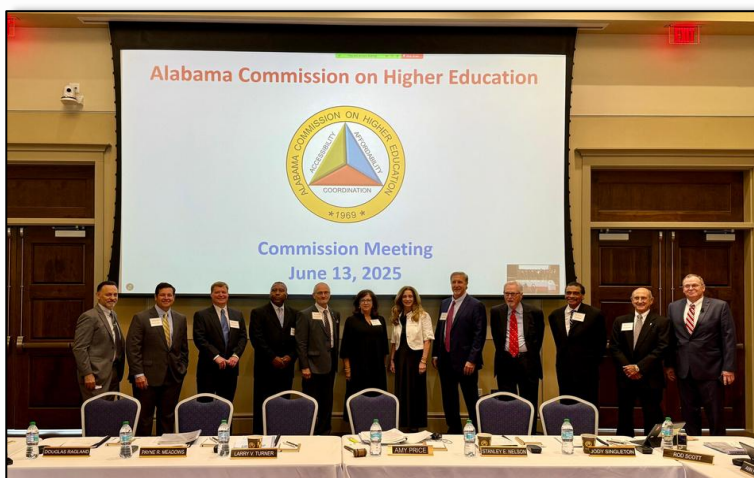
ACHE In Action

Congratulations to ACHE Research Fellows **Dr. Jessie Lynn Nichols** and **Dr. Deana Goodwine** on earning their doctorate degrees from Auburn University.

Dr. Nichols explored **Career Pathways of Agriculture Students: An Introspective Look Through a 40-Year Lens**, offering a longitudinal perspective on agricultural education and career readiness.

Dr. Goodwine examined, **Factors Affecting Completion of Employer-Driven Competency-Based Education and Skills-Based Learning Programs**, providing insights into student success and program effectiveness in today's workforce landscape.

June 2025



Commission members gathered for our June meeting at the University of South Alabama. Working together to advance education and opportunity across our state.



During the June 2025 Commission Meeting, Commissioner Price was recognized for her nine years of dedicated service and 1-year leadership as Chair.

July 2025



On July 15, 2025, Dr. Jim Purcell, Executive Director of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, was honored with the 2025 SHEEO Exceptional Leader Award. Presented at SHEEO's annual conference, the award recognizes visionary leadership and enduring impact in higher education policy and practice. Dr. Purcell shared remarks during the event, reflecting on this tremendous accomplishment and reaffirming Alabama's commitment to student success, equity, and innovation across the higher education landscape.

ACHE In Action

July 2025

On July 18, 2025, board members, faculty, and staff of Kingdom College gathered to celebrate recent legislative support alongside state and higher education leaders. The event included Rep. Rick Rehm, Kingdom College President Dr. Virginia Mayer, ACHE's Dr. Stephanie Dolan, Sen. William M. Beasley, and ACHE Commissioner and Mayor of Headland, Jody M. Singleton. The gathering highlighted ongoing collaboration to strengthen access and opportunity through Alabama's growing independent college sector.



On July 22, 2025, representatives from the Alabama Commission on Higher Education joined Selma University leadership and community stakeholders to commemorate supplemental funding received this year from the Alabama Legislature. The event highlighted the importance of public investment in institutional revitalization and student success.

On August 5, 2025, ACHE staff visited The University of West Alabama for engaging discussions centered on data integrity, higher education policy, and collaborative strategies to strengthen student and institutional outcomes. The visit reflected UWA's ongoing commitment to academic excellence, innovation, and student success. ACHE extends its gratitude to UWA for their warm hospitality and continued partnership in advancing Alabama's higher education landscape.



August 2025



On August 8–10, 2025, Dr. Jessie Lynn Nichols, ACHE's Communications and Governmental Relations Coordinator, and Teresa Smiley, HBCU Executive Director, attended the 40th Annual Business Council of Alabama (BCA) Conference in Point Clear, AL. The conference brought together business, education, and policy leaders from across the state to explore strategies for strengthening Alabama's economic vitality and workforce readiness.

ACHE In Action

August 2025

August 11-14, 2025, Dr. Purcell and Dr. McGill presented at the 2025 Annual SHEEO Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Dr. Robin McGill presented on "Building Rural Higher Education Research with State Agencies, joining leaders from AL, TN, MT & OR" whereas Dr. Purcell joined an esteemed panel, "State Investments in Higher Education: Insights from SREB's College Affordability Profiles," alongside Jeff Cox, MJ Kim, and Dr. Stephen Pruitt.

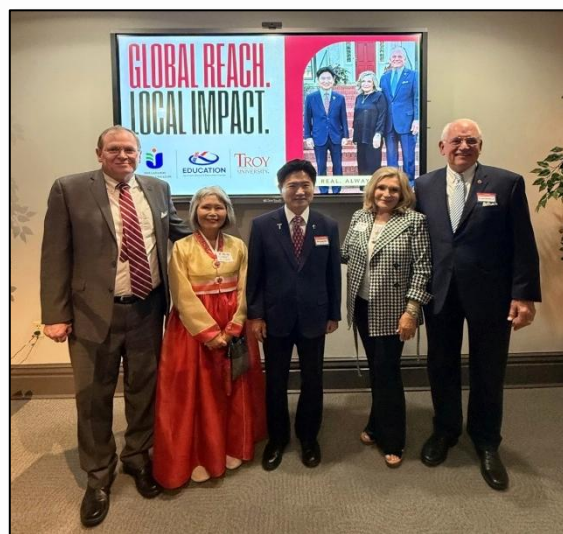


On August 27, 2025, ACHE Executive Director Dr. Jim Purcell and staff welcomed the newly crowned National Little Britches Rodeo Association (NLBRA) Jr. Princess, Maddie Gregory, to the Commission's offices. Maddie is an inspiring young leader, proudly representing Alabama and the rodeo community with style, grace, and big dreams.

Founded in 1952, the NLBRA is one of the nation's oldest and largest youth rodeo organizations, giving youth ages 5-18 the chance to compete in a safe, structured, family-oriented environment.

Through its Royalty program, the NLBRA develops role models who embody sportsmanship, leadership, and the western way of life, all while providing valuable scholarship opportunities to its titleholders.

On August 28, ACHE Executive Director Dr. Jim Purcell, ALIEEP Executive Director Meesoon Han, Jeonnam Superintendent Kim Dae Jung, and Troy University leaders Janice Hawkins and Dr. Jack Hawkins, Jr., President, attended the reception celebrating the Korean Education Center (K-Edu Center) at Troy University. This event highlighted the commitment to expanding global education opportunities and strengthening international collaboration,.



ACHE IMPACT

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