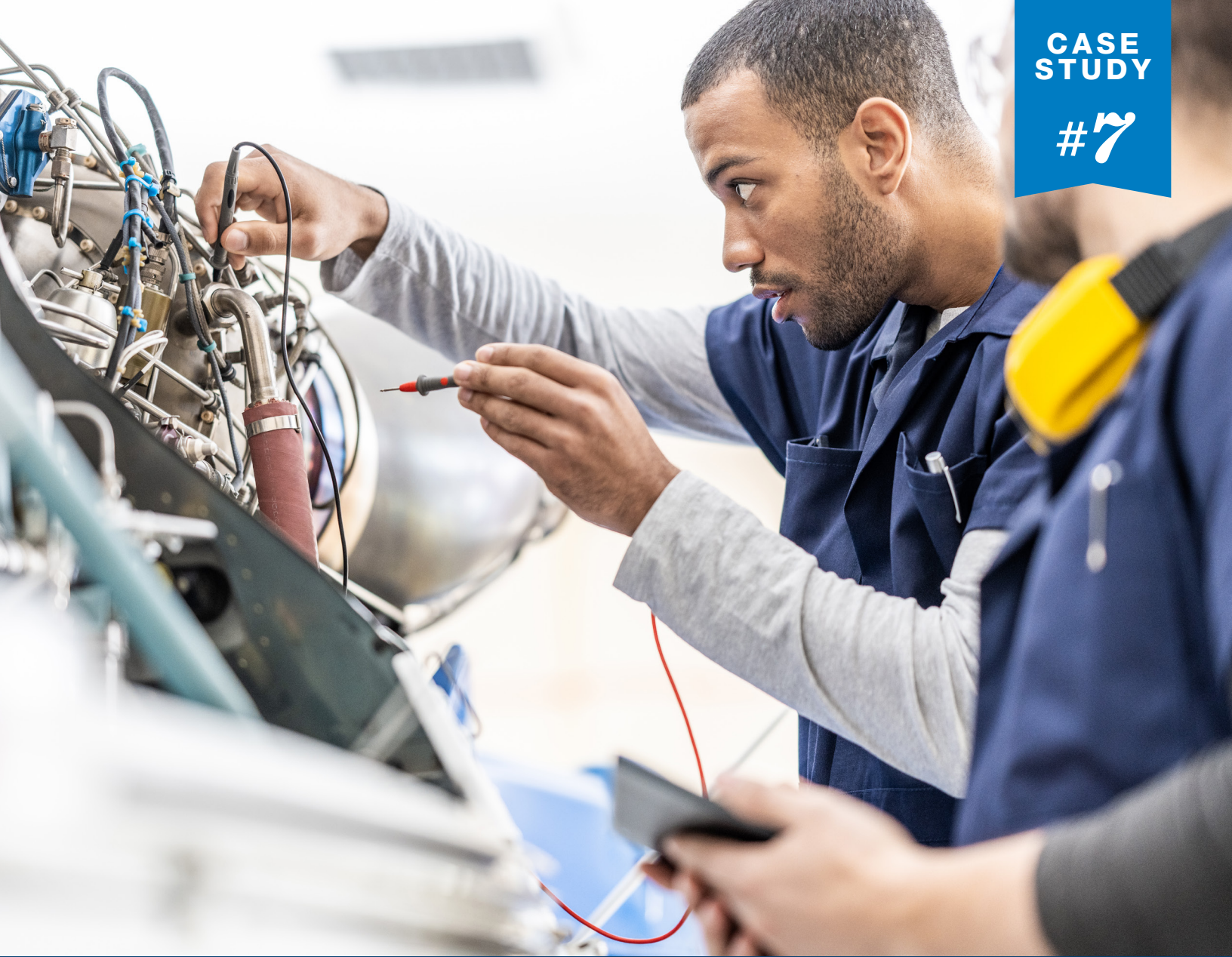


CASE
STUDY

#7



Empowering Futures

Workforce Development and Employer Engagement at Historically Black and Predominantly Black Community Colleges in Alabama

Dr. Kathy H. Thompson
Issifu Appiah, Contributor

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 **CIPE**
Center for Innovation
in Postsecondary Education

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The Center for Innovation in Postsecondary Education (CIPE), University of South Alabama

CIPE serves community colleges, universities, postsecondary partners, employers, and community partners to improve graduation rates and workforce outcomes for first-generation, under-represented, and under-resourced students. CIPE unifies the work of its partner communities to provide maximum benefit for participating institutions and the students they serve. CIPE assists higher education institutions in becoming more student-centered and equity-focused. CIPE catalyzes change among postsecondary institutions in digital teaching and learning, student advising, developmental education, student pathways, and capacity building, among other topics. Focusing on these objectives improves student outcomes and eliminates disparities, particularly among Black, Latino/a/x, and Indigenous students and students from low-income backgrounds.

Since 2015, Dr. Thompson and her team have honed their skill in creating partner communities, building consensus to articulate a shared learning agenda, and skillfully building relationships with site-facing supports and support providers. CIPE's purposeful and uniquely accomplished team is staffed by experts with the skill, knowledge, and ability to perform precisely at both the macro and micro levels. They develop unique operational service delivery frameworks for guidance, planning, strategy, and resources for partners to deploy in change management. CIPE's service deliverable supports constructs of holistic student success initiatives to serve students effectively and efficiently. The team's technical assistance enables partner institutions to build capacity by better understanding the practice of data utilization for decision-making and deploying efficiency in all-encompassing student success support.

Dr. Kathy Thompson is the Founding Director of the Center for Innovative in Postsecondary Education. She has over 30 years of experience in postsecondary administration, teaching, and workforce and economic development. Dr. Thompson currently serves as the Technical Assistance provider for the Lumina Foundation, Black Adult Learners Initiatives cohort of five HBCUs in North Carolina. Prior, Dr. Thompson served six years as the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Intermediary for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Frontier Set. She is motivated to eliminate equity disparities in education, particularly for Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students and students from low-income backgrounds.

Dr. Lisa Dunning, Kaizen Education Group, has a deep-rooted passion for higher education. She served three years as a consultant on the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Intermediary Team for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Frontier Set. Dr. Dunning currently lends her expertise through technical assistance and strategic guidance to the Lumina Foundation's Adult Learner Initiative and Educause's CourseGateway Digital Learning Strategy. A significant chapter of her career includes her leadership role as the Associate Vice President for Student Success at a distinguished HBCU. Dr. Dunning's visionary thinking was instrumental in developing and implementing a newly designed academic advising framework, the cornerstone of student support systems.

Carlisha Hartzog is the Storytelling Team Project Manager, overseeing the project's design, management schedule, and outreach. She is the president and managing member of Hartzog Consulting, a full-service project and event management firm that integrates logistics management and communications support to support some of the world's most respected foundations, Fortune 500 corporations, and multinational enterprises. Her experience supporting higher education organizations includes engagement with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Association of Public & Land-Grant Universities (APLU), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) nationally, and public and private colleges and universities. She has more than ten years of experience managing initiatives that embrace diverse populations to create equitable access to resources and opportunities.

Candace Spencer is a communication specialist with more than a decade of experience in higher education marketing and strategy development. Throughout her career, she has

provided valuable support to numerous postsecondary institutions spanning 21 states. She offers in-depth strategy analysis, creates impactful digital and print communication materials, crafts compelling written content, delivers training sessions that are both informative and engaging, guides brand evolution, and provides recommendations to help clients stay ahead of the competition.

Lisa Becker is a technical writer/editor with 28 years of experience contributing to projects and workgroups, including as Contributing Writer and Managing Editor of the Storytelling Team. She served as the communications arm of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's HBCU Intermediary Team from 2018 to 2022. She is currently contracted with the NASA Shared Services Center to work with NASA senior executives in drafting career history/achievement papers and Presidential Rank Nominations for executive career advancement and recognition.

Issifu Appiah is a student in the Master of Public Administration program at the University of South Alabama. Issifu earned a Bachelor's in Education from the University of Cape Coast, Ghana, West Africa. Issifu is a Graduate Assistant at the Center for Innovation in Postsecondary Education (CIPE). Issifu has a passion for learning, participating in community service, and having a positive impact.

In collaboration with the ECMC Foundation, the Center for Innovation in Postsecondary Education (CIPE) and **Alabama Possible** are delighted to share the first of a series of case studies. The focus is on the eight Historically Black Community Colleges (HBCC) and Predominantly Black Community Colleges (PBCC) in Alabama, collectively known as the "Great Eight." The eight HBCCs/PBCCs are Bishop State, Chattahoochee Valley, Gadsden State, George C Wallace, H. Councill Trenholm, J F Drake, Lawson State, and Shelton State. Over the next three years, Alabama Possible will consult with the CIPE Team to create case studies highlighting the successful initiatives of various institutions in promoting student success. These studies will cover a range of topics, including Academic Advising and Workforce Development, as well as the academic experience, campus climate, leadership and culture, data utilization, and technology. The CIPE Team's Storytellers conclude the project by developing a Storytelling Playbook that outlines these institutions' unique student success practices.

Introduction

In the dynamic landscape of education, community colleges serve as vital hubs for workforce development, offering pathways to prosperity for individuals and communities alike. Within the state of Alabama, Historically Black Community Colleges (HBCCs) and Predominantly Black Community Colleges (PBCCs) serve as pillars of opportunity, playing a pivotal role in shaping the workforce of tomorrow and fostering economic empowerment within underserved populations, a role that is integral and valued in our society.

As we navigate the evolving demands of the labor market, the synergy between community colleges, industry stakeholders, and local employers becomes increasingly paramount. This synergy forms the foundation for robust workforce development initiatives that not only equip students with the skills and knowledge needed for career success but also specifically address the needs and priorities of regional industries, ensuring their relevance and effectiveness in shaping the workforce of tomorrow.

This article delves into the transformative power of workforce development and employer engagement at HBCCs and PBCCs across Alabama. Through innovative programs, strategic partnerships, and community-centered approaches, these institutions bridge the gap between education and employment and drive economic mobility and social equity within historically marginalized communities. It's the collective effort of these partnerships that inspire hope for a brighter future.

Join us as we delve into the initiatives, partnerships, and success stories that exemplify the transformative power of workforce development and employer engagement at Alabama's HBCUs and PBCCs. These stories of triumph and transformation inspire hope for a brighter future and highlight the tangible impact of initiatives in creating meaningful change.



Through innovative programs, strategic partnerships, and community-centered approaches, these institutions bridge the gap between education and employment and drive economic mobility and social equity within historically marginalized communities.

Case Study Purpose

This case study highlights the innovative strategies employed by Alabama's HBCCs and PBCCs in workforce development, emphasizing their effectiveness in bridging the gap between unskilled workers and the demands of employers for a skilled workforce.

By examining the successes of these eight institutions, the study illustrates how these colleges collaborate seamlessly to meet the needs of students and regional employers. The study also highlights the critical support provided by the Alabama Community College System (ACCS), the Alabama Department of Labor, and the Alabama Department of Commerce, which collectively contribute to the success of students and employers.

To provide context for the workforce development activities at these HBCCs and PBCCs, an overview of Alabama's statewide labor force participation, employment, and unemployment rates is presented to offer insight into how these colleges strategically attract students and support employers.



Key Terms - US Bureau of Labor Statistics

The Current Population Survey (CPS) is the primary source of labor force statistics for the United States (US). Jointly administered by the US Census Bureau and the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, it is a monthly survey of US households that provides data on the labor force, employment, unemployment, and other population characteristics.

The Labor Market Participation Rate (LFPR) is the percentage of the population working or actively looking for work.

Employed is classified by the CPS if the person meets any of the following criteria:

- Worked at least 1 hour as a paid employee
- Worked at least 1 hour in their own business, profession, trade, or farm
- Were temporarily absent from their job, business, or farm, whether or not they were paid for the time off
- Provided unpaid labor for at least 15 hours in a family-owned business or farm.

The Employment-Population Ratio is the percentage of the population currently working.

The CPS classifies the Unemployed as people who meet all of the following criteria:

- Not employed during the CPS survey reference week
- Were available for work during the survey reference week, except for temporary illness
- Made at least one specific, active effort to find employment during the 4 weeks ending with the survey reference week or were temporarily laid off and expecting to be recalled to their job.

The Unemployment Rate represents the number of unemployed people as a percentage of the labor force.

Case Study Method

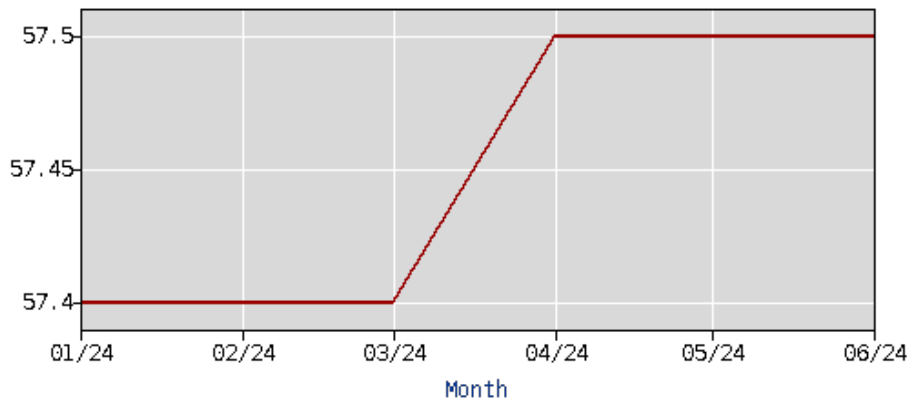
The research was designed to be inclusive, with workforce development strategies that included semi-structured interviews, analysis of college and system websites, and supplemental research. Interviews were conducted with workforce development leaders at each participating college, including administrators overseeing institutional research. Thoughtful Interview questions were crafted to explore the institution's workforce priorities, strategies, and perceptions of challenges and opportunities for success.

Alabama Statewide Labor Market Data (January 2024 to June 2024)

The statewide unemployment rate in Alabama was 2.9 percent in June 2024, significantly lower than the national average of 4.5 percent.¹ While this data indicates a strong job market in Alabama, it presents both opportunities and challenges for the state's eight HBCCs and PBCCs as they work to align their workforce development efforts with the needs of a dynamic labor market. Below are four graphs that illustrate the employment activity during this period between January 2024 and June 2024.

The labor market data provides insight into the behaviors of potential workers and the availability of jobs in Alabama.

Labor force participation rate



Labor market participation data indicates that before March 2024, fewer people were employed. However, in April 2024, there was a significant increase in individuals returning to work or entering the workforce, followed by a steady trend through June 2024.

Explanation of Labor Market Participation and HBCCs/PBCCs

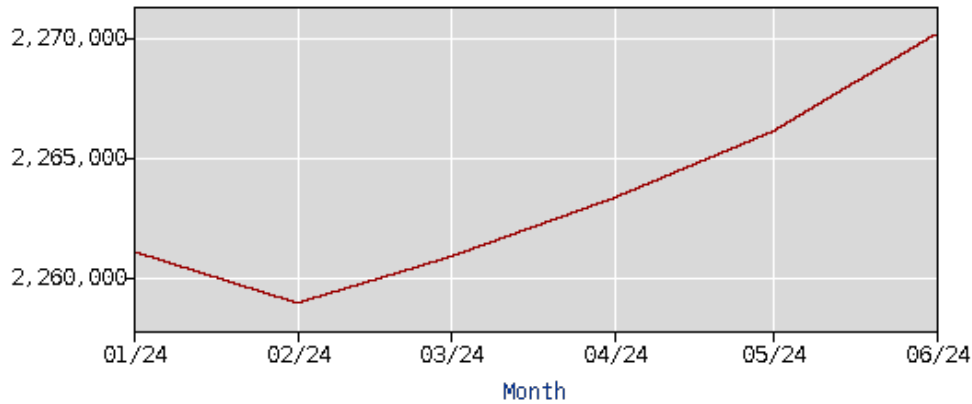
Alabama's labor market participation rates show fluctuations over time. Fluctuating labor market participation refers to changes in the proportion of individuals who are either employed or actively seeking work relative to the working-age population. For HBCCs and PBCCs in Alabama, these fluctuations carry significant implications. Low unemployment rates, such as Alabama's 2.9% in early 2024, signal a tight labor market with abundant jobs but highlight the workforce shortages that may hinder employers from meeting operational needs. Variability in participation highlights the importance of these institutions in preparing a flexible and skilled workforce through programs providing short-term certifications, credentials, and degrees aligned with industry demands. Further, HBCCs and PBCCs are central to supporting underrepresented communities facing systemic barriers, such as childcare or transportation challenges, that hinder consistent workforce engagement. By offering accessible education and wraparound services, they help bridge these gaps and enhance economic mobility.

Moreover, the dynamic nature of labor participation presents an opportunity for HBCCs and PBCCs to deepen partnerships with employers, ensuring their programs address real-time workforce needs through apprenticeships, internships, and other work-based learning models. This responsiveness positions these institutions as critical drivers of regional economic resilience, maintaining a steady pipeline of skilled workers to support community well-being and economic growth. However, these fluctuations also pose challenges requiring HBCCs and PBCCs to frequently reassess and adapt their curricula, which can strain resources. Additionally, fluctuating participation may complicate

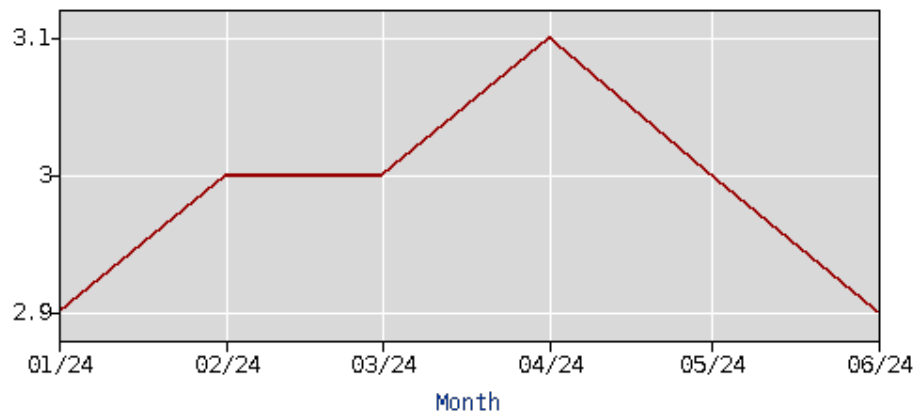
efforts to attract and retain students, necessitating proactive outreach and support. Despite these challenges, HBCCs and PBCCs are uniquely equipped to navigate the dynamic labor market, fostering opportunities for their students and contributing to the state's economic stability.

Between January and February 2024, workforce participation declined. Then, from March through June 2024, it increased dramatically. The January and February 2024 numbers can be attributed to seasonal shifts in employment.

employment



unemployment rate



Alabama Statewide Unemployment Rates (Seasonally Adjusted): January to June 2024

YEAR	JAN	FEB	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE
2024	2.9	3.0	3.0	3.1	3.0	2.9

The State of Alabama sustained a relatively low unemployment rate of 2.9 percent throughout early 2024, with minor fluctuations between February and May, and returned to 2.9 percent in June. This figure remains notably below the national average of 4.0 percent for the same period. However, labor market participation in Alabama showed variability during 2024, presenting potential challenges for employers in navigating workforce availability and meeting hiring needs.

What does the low unemployment rate in Alabama mean for HBCCs/PBCCs?

Alabama's low unemployment rate presents both opportunities and challenges for HBCCs and PBCCs. The implications for these institutions include the following:

Opportunities:

1 Increased Demand for Skill Development:

Even with low unemployment, there is often a demand for workers with specific skills. HBCCs and PBCCs can capitalize on this by offering targeted training and certification programs that align with the needs of local industries. This can lead to increased enrollment in workforce development programs.



2 Employer Partnerships:

Low unemployment may prompt employers to invest more in workforce development to fill skill gaps. HBCCs and PBCCs can establish or strengthen partnerships with local employers to create tailored programs that meet these companies' specific needs, leading to direct employment opportunities for students.

3 Career Advancement for Working Adults:

HBCCs and PBCCs can offer continuing education and professional development programs for employed individuals seeking to advance their careers. These institutions can provide flexible learning options that accommodate the schedules of working adults.

Challenges:

1 Competition with Workforce:

With a low unemployment rate, potential students might opt to enter the workforce directly rather than pursue further education. HBCCs and PBCCs should emphasize the long-term advantages of higher education, highlighting how it contributes to greater job stability and increased earning potential.



2 Retention and Enrollment:

Maintaining or increasing enrollment may prove challenging if prospective students are drawn to the immediate availability of job opportunities. HBCCs and PBCCs may need to implement targeted strategies to attract and retain students, including offering scholarships, flexible scheduling, and online learning options.

Strategic Considerations:

Focus on High-Growth Industries: HBCCs and PBCCs should prioritize identifying and aligning their programs with Alabama's growth industries, such as healthcare, technology, and manufacturing, ensuring their programs align with these sectors' needs.

Flexible Learning Options: Offering part-time, evening, and online courses can attract working adults seeking to upskill or reskill without leaving their jobs.

Scholarships: Offer full-tuition scholarships to encourage students to pursue credentials or certificates that advance skills and support career advancement.

By capitalizing on these opportunities and addressing the challenges, Alabama's HBCCs and PBCCs can play a crucial role in maintaining the state's low unemployment rate while supporting the economic mobility of their students.

Workforce Development Scholarships to Attract Students to the HBCCs and PBCCs

The Alabama Community College System (ACCS) offers potential students two opportunities to earn a credential or certificate without paying tuition, fees, and expenses.

1. The ACCS Innovation Center—Skills for Success² offers rapid and free training courses designed to align with Alabama's most in-demand business and industry career fields. Training courses include:

- Architecture and Construction Courses - Electrical Helper and Land Survey Helper
- Information Technology Courses - Fiber Optic Tech Installer

The Student Form to access free training is [ACCS Innovation Center Student Survey](#)

2. The Short-term Credential Scholarship Program Grant (ACCS)³ is a scholarship the twenty-five Alabama Community College System colleges offer. It reimburses Alabama residents up to \$4,500 for expenses associated with enrolling in and completing a short-term credential for credit and non-credit programs.

- The Student Application for Scholarship: [Short-Term Credential Scholarship Form](#)
- The After Program Completion Reimbursement Claim Form: [Completion Reimbursement Claim Form](#)

The Paths for Success Foundation, Montgomery, AL,⁴ is a second resource for students to earn credentials and certifications with a scholarship. The Foundation is a non-profit organization designed to assist Alabama citizens in obtaining skills, credentials, and certifications that lead to gainful employment. The Foundation provides opportunities by eliminating barriers that impact an individual's ability to participate. To learn more about the Paths for Success Foundation, visit <https://www.pathsforsuccess.com/>

HBCCs/PBCCs Workforce Development Profiles



Bishop State Community College

Bishop State Community College (BSCC), located in Mobile, AL, is a public historically black community college (HBCC) that serves the communities of Mobile and Washington counties in Alabama and offers a broad range of educational opportunities. With over 50 associate degree and certificate programs, the college has a longstanding commitment to preparing the inner-city populations of Mobile and Prichard for careers across various industries.

The South West Alabama Works region in southwest Alabama encompasses Mobile, Baldwin, Escambia, Washington, and Clarke counties. BSCC's presence includes seven on-site campuses and five off-site locations in high schools throughout Mobile and Washington Counties. This strategic positioning allows the college to effectively address the region's workforce development needs, characterized by a diverse economic landscape that includes aviation, shipbuilding, healthcare, and manufacturing. BSCC is essential for empowering the local workforce and fostering career development in these critical industries.



Economic Impact and Regional Integration

BSCC significantly impacts its community, generating \$190.4 million in economic activity during the 2020–2021 fiscal year. This contribution supports nearly 3,000 jobs, underscoring how well the college's initiatives align with the needs of the local labor market. A prime example is BSCC's partnership with Airbus, which bolsters Mobile's crucial aviation industry. Through the Flight Path 9 Program, which engages dual enrollment high school students, BSCC supplies approximately 90% of Airbus's workforce for aviation production. This collaboration is vital, as the aviation sector employs a substantial portion of Mobile's workforce and drives local economic growth.



Key Training Programs and Sector Alignment

BSCC's educational offerings align with the region's key industries, particularly shipbuilding and aviation. For instance, the college's partnership with Austal in the shipbuilding sector led to the creation of a three-week entry-level welding program designed to meet Austal's need for 3,400 skilled workers. Program completers are guaranteed job interviews, directly strengthening the manufacturing industry within the Southwest Alabama Workforce Development Council (SAWDC ALABAMAWORKS) region, where 10.7% of the local labor force is employed in this sector.



Akareem Spears, Bishop State

Additionally, BSCC's relationships with industry leaders, such as Alabama Power, further strengthen its HVAC, Line Worker training, and Advanced Manufacturing programs. These programs are critical to the region's thriving construction and manufacturing sectors. The college's commitment to preparing students for high-demand careers is exemplified by the Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education (FAME) program, which integrates work-based learning with traditional classroom instruction to equip students with the skills needed for success in the local workforce.



Challenges and Strategic Adaptions

For many students, childcare, and transportation remain significant barriers to accessing education. Recognizing these challenges, BSCC is actively working to create more inclusive programs that consider these factors. The institution strongly emphasizes reaching non-traditional students, including women in non-traditional roles, formerly incarcerated individuals, and immigrants. This approach is essential to meeting the diverse workforce demands of the region.



Future Directions and Emerging Opportunities

Semiconductor technology has been recognized as a critical area for future labor demands. The college's participation in initiatives like the Chips for America program and its potential expansion into civil engineering programs focused on construction science and architecture reflects a strategic, forward-thinking approach to regional workforce development.

In response to the unique economic demands of the SAWDC ALABAMAWORKS region, BSCC plans to leverage the South Alabama Logistics Park to enhance its logistics and supply chain management curriculum. This program will equip students with essential skills in supply chain management, procurement, and truck driving, aligning with the region's growing logistics needs.

Conclusion

Bishop State Community College adeptly integrates its educational offerings with the local business environment as a key player in the SAWDC ALABAMAWORKS region. The college fosters workforce development and supports regional economic growth by aligning its programs with the demands of major industries—such as manufacturing, shipbuilding, and aviation—and addressing the local workforce's challenges. With its strategic focus on emerging fields and ability to adapt to evolving workforce demands, BSCC is well-positioned to continue preparing the next generation of workers for high-demand, high-wage careers in the South West Alabama Works region.



Chattahoochee Valley Community College

Chattahoochee Valley Community College (CVCC), is a public, predominantly black community college (PBCC) located in Phenix City, Alabama, plays a vital role in workforce development across East Alabama and the Columbus, Georgia metropolitan area. CVCC serves the residents of Russell County and parts of Bullock, Lee, Macon, and Barbour Counties. The college offers programs specifically designed to address the demands of the workforce in the area, demonstrating its strong integration with the local economy. CVCC shares its campus with Troy University's Phenix City Campus and has developed modern facilities, including the Instructional & Performing Arts Center (IPAC). The college actively raises funds to support student scholarships through the Chattahoochee Valley Community College Foundation, reinforcing its commitment to educational accessibility and workforce readiness.



Economic Impact and Regional Integration

The demands of the local labor market, notably in the fields of applied technology and healthcare, are closely matched by the workforce development programs at CVCC. As of June 2024, the region's unemployment rate was 3.3%, with over 12,000 active job listings. The path of this program, among others, is significantly influenced by the major industries in the region, particularly in the fields of **applied technology and health sciences**, including **Piedmont Columbus Regional, Auburn University, and East Alabama Medical Center**. CVCC is pivotal in addressing the region's healthcare workforce needs, particularly in response to the growing demand in the health sciences and applied technology sectors. For instance, the **Medication Aide Program**, which gained prominence during the COVID-19 pandemic, directly responds to the region's critical shortage of healthcare professionals. By providing upskilling for Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) to handle medication administration under the supervision of registered nurses, CVCC contributes to local workers' skill sets and guarantees that healthcare facilities can continue running smoothly despite workforce shortages.

By developing proactive relationships with critical local businesses like **AlaTrade, West Rock, and Atchley Steel, CVCC assists in filling** important job openings with graduates with the skills necessary to satisfy these companies' particular requirements. These partnerships guarantee a consistent supply of competent labor for the area by supporting local economic growth.



Key Training Programs and Sector Alignment

The college offers a robust selection of health sciences and applied technology programs that cater to the region's labor market needs.

Health Sciences-Based Programs:

Medication Aide Program: This program became well-known during the epidemic. In order to distribute prescriptions in nursing homes under the direction of RNs or LPNs, it relies on upskilling certified nursing assistants. In East Alabama, where **13.5% of the labor market** is employed in health care and social assistance, this program is vital in supporting the regional demand for skilled health workers. Employers such as **East Alabama Medical Center** and **Piedmont Medical** are key stakeholders benefiting from these upskilling initiatives, directly addressing the needs of over 300 **openings for Registered Nurses** annually with a median wage of **\$60,670**.



<https://www.cv.edu/training-programs/workforce-development/>

Applied Technology Programs:

Core Programs (Welding, Industrial Maintenance, Advanced Manufacturing, HVAC):

The strong emphasis on applied technology aligns well with the region's manufacturing sector, representing **13.3% of the local industry**. Employers like **AlaTrade** and **Atchley Steel** are integral to the region, providing employment and apprenticeships that ensure students gain practical experience before graduation. The growth of programs such as **Electrical Technician** further expands opportunities for students in a region where **industrial machinery mechanics** are in demand, with **255 openings** at a median wage of **\$49,891**.

These programs are created with the region's employers to ensure the curriculum is current and aligned with industry demands. This ensures that graduates are equipped for the workforce upon graduation.



Challenges and Strategic Adaptations

The region's high rate of poverty has a major impact on the financial circumstances of the student population, posing substantial obstacles. Many students depend on Pell grants and VA benefits to fund their education; nevertheless, those unqualified for Pell confront significant financial barriers.

The college has implemented several strategies to address these challenges:

- **Grant Programs:** The development of grants and scholarships, such as the **ACCS short-term credential grant and foundation scholarships**, aim to reduce the financial burden on students.
- **Stackable Credentials:** Offering short-term credentials allows students to gradually earn their qualifications, making it more manageable to pay for their education over time.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Raising student awareness of available financial aid options is essential to ensure they can access the necessary resources. CVCC's partnership with a local marketing company for fall program promotions, including **TV and OTT marketing**, is a strategic approach in a region with a diverse population and many online job ads (**13,498 active ads** in March 2024). This targeted marketing ensures that CVCC's programs reach a broad audience, including those in underserved communities.



Future Directions and Workforce Development Potential

Through expanding its applied technology offerings and strengthening partnerships with regional industry, CVCC is positioning itself to fulfill the future workforce demands of the region. One such example is the addition of the **Electrical Technician Program**, which reflects the rising demand for skilled trades in the area.

The continuous collaborations with local businesses will keep curriculum development moving forward and guarantee that students graduate with the competencies required in a changing labor market. The college's dedication to upholding high standards in workforce education is demonstrated by its emphasis on **professional development** for faculty members and its **Manufacturing Skills Standards Council (MSSC)** training programs.

The institution maintains strong ties to local businesses through advisory boards, ensuring its programs remain aligned with industry demands and prepare students for manufacturing, healthcare, and advanced technology careers.

Conclusion

CVCC's workforce development programs are essential to the stability of the region's labor market and the growth of the local economy. The college plays a critical role in providing students with the skills necessary to thrive in high-demand industries by matching training programs with the needs of local companies, offering financial support to students, and consistently responding to industry developments. CVCC's workforce development initiatives will be crucial in creating a competent and adaptable labor force that can embrace the possibilities and challenges of the future as the region grows.



Drake State Community and Technical College

J.F. Drake State Community and Technical College (Drake State) is a public historically black community (HBCC) and technical college in Huntsville, North Alabama. Drake State offers various associate degrees, certificates, and non-credit courses. The college offers academic credit for relevant life experience and provides adult education, GED classes, associate's degrees, and certificate programs. Drake State fosters a strong sense of community through a workforce development strategy tailored to its region's needs. The community's input and the local workforce's needs inform the college's program and training design. This close relationship shapes the college's workforce training programs and community engagement strategies.

In 2021, Drake State was named one of six universities and colleges—and the only historically black community college—to receive the NASA Inclusion Across the Nation of Communities of Learners of Underrepresented Discoverers in Engineering and Science Award. The college was awarded approximately \$1.2 million to expand its Frontiers Research Program for STEM workforce development and provide free STEM activities to middle and high school students in the area in collaboration with NASA's Minority University Research and Education Project.



Economic Impact and Regional Integration

Drake State is located in North Alabama, with a low unemployment rate of 2.5% as of June 2024. The college's graduates have contributed \$37.1 million to the regional economy, and for every dollar invested in the college, taxpayers gain \$2.30 in added tax revenue and public sector savings.

There is a high demand for skilled workers in the region, with over 25,000 active online job postings as of June 2024. These factors highlight the significance of Drake State's initiatives in workforce development to meet the region's employment needs. The college supports the area's primary industries, including **Manufacturing (20.0%), Healthcare and Social Assistance (12.7%), Retail Trade (12.2%), and Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (11.0%)**. Its training programs align closely with these sectors, especially in healthcare, manufacturing, and technology.

The college's collaborations with significant local companies, such as **Huntsville Utilities, NASA, Boeing, Huntsville Hospital**, and other healthcare providers, directly benefit the local economy. By offering **custom training programs**, Drake State helps address skills shortages and promotes the development of these crucial industries. The college's 'community skill-up' approach, adopted by the region to prioritize skill development, is especially relevant given the growing demand for skilled workers across a wide range of industries. This effort not only meets the needs of local industries but also empowers individuals by improving their job opportunities and career prospects, aligning with wider state efforts to prepare **500,000** workers by **2025**.



Drake State President Dr. Pat Sims on LinkedIn



Key Training Programs and Sector Alignment

Drake State strongly emphasizes the role of community input in influencing the development of its workforce training programs. These programs are designed to align with sought-after skills, well-paying job prospects, and the specific needs of local businesses and industries:

- CDL Class B, Excavator Heavy Equipment Operations, OSHA 10, and CPR training for Huntsville Utilities
- Machine Tool Technology for NASA
- Cybersecurity, Data Analytics, Welding, System Engineering Technology, and Drone Training through the 2U/edX agreement and Jobs for Future (JFF)
- Medical Assisting Technology, Medication Aide Certification, and Certified Nursing Assistant, addressing the needs of the healthcare sector
- Computer Systems Analysis through the partnership with Leidos (a global leader in information technology, engineering, and science).

These programs target the region's top employment sectors and align with some of the fastest-growing professions in Alabama, i.e., Medical & Health Services Managers. Furthermore, the college's collaboration with Amazon via the Career Choice Program enables employees to pursue education in various fields, including nursing and cosmetology, showcasing the college's dedication to delivering adaptable, student-focused learning opportunities.



Challenges and Strategic Adaptations

Drake State is challenged by the swiftly changing demands of local industries. The college responds to these demands by:

- Constantly updating its programs based on community feedback and industry requirements
- Developing new training programs to fill identified gaps in local workforce training offerings

Drake College collaborates closely with industry partners to keep its training programs relevant and aligned with evolving workforce demands. At the same time, the college faces the challenge of attracting potential students in a highly competitive educational landscape. To address this, Drake State has developed unique engagement strategies aimed at standing out and driving enrollment:

- Empowering staff to act as the college's ambassadors in everyday situations.
- Leveraging word-of-mouth and success stories in promotional efforts.
- Deeply integrating faculty and staff into the local community to understand and address workforce needs.



Future Directions and Workforce Potentials

Looking ahead, Drake State is well-positioned to continue meeting the evolving employment needs of its local area. The college's adaptable strategy and close ties with the community form a firm basis for future expansion. Potential areas for growth include:

1. Increasing the number of programs in high-demand sectors, such as **healthcare and technology**, in response to the region's high volume of job opportunities from healthcare providers and industries.
2. Strengthening partnerships with other prominent employers in the area, such as **Blue Origin**, **Boeing**, and **Leidos**.
3. Improving professional, scientific, and technical services programs to cater to the increasing demand in the STEM and technology industry.

Conclusion

Drake State Community and Technical College plays a pivotal role in North Alabama's workforce development and economic stability. Through its strong alignment with local industries, community engagement, and focus on skill development, the college addresses both regional employment needs and the personal growth of its students. By maintaining strategic partnerships with key employers and adapting its programs to meet evolving workforce demands, Drake State remains an essential institution for preparing the next generation of skilled professionals. As the college looks to the future, its ongoing efforts to expand training in high-demand sectors, strengthen employer collaborations, and address emerging skills gaps will ensure its continued impact on the region's economic vitality and workforce readiness.



Gadsden State Community College

In Northeast Alabama, Gadsden State Community College (GSCC) is a public, historically black community college (HBCC) that plays a vital role in the region's workforce development. Established in 1925, GSCC has a longstanding tradition of providing vocational and technical training to Calhoun, Etowah, Cherokee, Cleburne, and St. Clair counties. The college's focus on precision machining, advanced manufacturing, and industrial automation is particularly crucial to the economic growth of Calhoun County, especially along the I-20 corridor.

GSCC offers specialized programs across its campuses, including career technical training at the East Broad and Ayers Campuses and health science programs at the Cherokee Center, Wallace Drive, and Valley Street Campuses, ensuring its educational offerings align closely with the region's labor market needs. The college's commitment to workforce readiness is further demonstrated by its comprehensive range of associate degrees, certificates, and non-credit courses designed to meet current and future industry demands. Through these efforts, GSCC continues to be a key driver of economic development and a vital resource for the local workforce.



Economic Impact and Regional Integration

Rooted in vocational training since 1925, Gadsden State Community College (GSCC) was established by unifying four historic institutions across five campuses in Etowah and Calhoun counties. This strategic presence enables GSCC to meet the region's workforce needs by providing training for high-demand industries such as manufacturing, healthcare, and transportation. However, with the regional decline in traditional manufacturing, GSCC's role in retraining and upskilling workers has become essential for maintaining economic stability. The institution's partnerships with key employers, including Honda Manufacturing and the Anniston Army Depot, highlight its commitment to regional integration by aligning workforce programs with the evolving demands of the local labor market, ensuring a steady pipeline of skilled workers.



Gadsden State Programs of Study



Key Training Programs and Sector Alignment

GSCC delivers a diverse portfolio of workforce development programs designed to meet the specific needs of regional industries and key employer partners. Notable programs include the Consortium of Machining Education Training (COMET) and the Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education (FAME), both of which equip students with the specialized skills required in advanced manufacturing and other high-demand sectors.

- **FAME** focuses on industrial automation, preparing students for careers in advanced manufacturing—a sector experiencing growth in Calhoun County.
- **COMET** specializes in precision machining. It offers students hands-on experience combined with classroom instruction, making them job-ready upon graduation.

GSCC's East Broad Campus offers comprehensive professional technical training, and the Valley Street Campus offers specialty programs, such as non-credit health sciences, HVAC, and refrigeration. Maintaining a long tradition in technical education, the Ayers Campus in Anniston offers welding technology, HVAC, Mechatronics, Electrical, Mechanical Design, and diesel technology programs.

Frequent meetings with industry partners ensure training equipment and curricula remain up-to-date, demonstrating the alignment of these programs with industry needs. To support non-traditional students, the college offers short-term non-credit programs, such as the Carpentry Helper, explicitly designed to satisfy demand in the area.



Challenges and Strategic Adaptations

Despite the strength of its programs, GSCC faces challenges, including the decline of traditional manufacturing in Gadsden, Alabama and the need to change to meet the changing requirements of the local labor market. Maintaining program viability as specified by the Alabama Commission of Higher Education presents another difficulty. For programs to remain in operation, they must show that they produce, on average, eight graduates yearly over five years. This rule presents difficulties, especially in sectors where industry demand is subject to swings.

In response, the institution has strategically increased its range of programs, especially in non-credit and short-term training courses that serve non-traditional students and developing sectors. One notable instance of this adaptation is the **Carpentry Helper program**, which targets non-traditional students and fills skill gaps in the construction industry, which, while not the largest, is still essential to the regional economy.

Another strategy adopted by the college is the incorporation of **work-based learning initiatives**, which fuse classroom education with real-world experience. In so doing, GSCC guarantees students are provided with practical skills that augment their employability and academic preparation.



Future Directions and Workforce Development Potentials

Looking ahead, Gadsden State is well-positioned to continue its role as a key driver of workforce development in Alabama. Future directions for the institution include expanding its partnerships with key industry sectors such as advanced manufacturing, healthcare, and transportation. The institution's focus on developing short-term, non-credit programs that cater to non-traditional students is expected to grow, particularly in sectors like construction and industrial automation, which are in high demand.

The introduction of the **Carpentry Helper program**, which was designed and piloted at Gadsden, is a prime example of the institution's commitment to expanding short-term, non-credit training options that cater to non-traditional students. This program, which blends industry expertise with practical training, is expected to grow in popularity as it provides valuable skills in a sector critical to the local economy.

GSCC's commitment to aligning its curriculum with industry standards, particularly in fields requiring licensure, such as nursing, will continue to ensure that its graduates are well-prepared to meet the job

market demands. Additionally, the institution's role in providing **adult education services and GED programs** will be critical in helping more individuals transition into post- secondary education and gain the skills necessary for career advancement.

Conclusion

Gadsden State Community College stands out for its historical significance, strategic campus distribution, and diverse program offerings closely aligned with regional workforce needs. The institution is committed to aligning its programs with industry standards and has significant industry partnerships, which help prepare students for career opportunities in high-demand industries. GSCC's emphasis on innovation and strategic alliances will guarantee that it maintains its position as a pillar of workforce development in Northeastern Alabama as it adjusts to the demands of a shifting labor market.



Lawson State Community College

Lawson State Community College (LSCC), is a public, historically black community college (HBCC) with campuses in Birmingham and Bessemer, Central Alabama, is a cornerstone of the state's workforce development. Recognized as a "Champion of Change" by the White House in 2011, LSCC has led significant initiatives, including a \$10 million, 4-year federally-funded transportation industry training program across four states. The college's extensive workforce development strategy focuses on key areas, i.e., manufacturing, healthcare, automotive technology, and culinary arts.

LSCC's strong partnerships with neighboring institutions, leading industries, and local companies guarantee that its courses correspond with the changing demands of Alabama's economy. Notably, LSCC's nursing program has repeatedly ranked No. 1 in the state, reflecting the college's commitment to excellence in technical and vocational education. LSCC also assists first-generation and educationally disadvantaged college students in reaching their professional objectives through its Student Support Services TRIO program.



Lawson State Career Technical Education Programs



Economic Impact and Regional Integration

LSCC plays a significant role in Central Alabama's economy. With a low unemployment rate of 2.8% and strong labor demand evidenced by 24,393 active online job postings in June 2024, the college's efforts in workforce development are vital.

With a massive \$284 million boost to the local economy, LSCC has significantly contributed to the Lawson State Service Area. This contribution has maintained 3,920 jobs, highlighting the college's critical role in the expansion and stability of the local economy.

The following breakdown illustrates the various ways the college contributes to the regional economy:

- **Operations Spending:** During FY 2020-21, the college's operational activities generated \$39.5 million in regional economic income, underscoring its daily functions' significant role in sustaining local businesses and services.
- **Student Spending:** Relocated and retained students at LSSC contributed \$6.7 million in income to the local economy during FY 2020-21. This spending is vital in supporting local retail, housing, and service industries.

- **Alum Impact:** One of the most notable impacts is the \$237.8 million in additional revenue from LSCC alums employed in the local workforce during FY 2020–21. This figure highlights the long-term benefits of the college’s programs in enhancing graduates’ earning potential and contributing to the region’s overall economic growth.

LSSC’s partnership with major employers plays a crucial role in this region. To address the energy industry’s needs, **Alabama Power**, for instance, works with Lawson State to provide specialized training called the Spire program. **Birmingham Water Works** and the college collaborate to offer soft skills training, which is crucial for improving employability across various industries. The healthcare industry, which accounts for 15.6% of jobs in the area, is further strengthened by the ties between Lawson State and the **University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB)**, a top employer in the area, regarding clinical training and employing graduates from health programs. NHS Management in the region operates a robust medication aide program in partnership with Lawson State, helping to support nursing homes by maintaining a steady pipeline of qualified personnel.

LSSC’s integration into the regional economy is further exemplified by its leadership in the workforce component of the **Re-Compete Grant** with the City of Birmingham. This initiative aims to revitalize employment in underemployed areas by establishing a workforce training center and integrating essential services, such as public transportation and childcare. If successful, this **\$10 million** grant from the US Department of Labor could significantly enhance the college’s capacity to support local residents in the Birmingham area.



Key Training Programs and Sector Alignment

To ensure students have the necessary skills to succeed in the labor market, LSCC has carefully designed its training programs to correspond not only with the major industries

propelling economic growth in Central Alabama but in other states as well. LSCC’s method of workforce development is characterized by flexibility and responsiveness to the needs of both major and minor employers. Through a combination of non-credit and credit-based programs, the college can customize its training to meet the demands of both large-scale manufacturers and smaller businesses.

One of Lawson State’s most notable initiatives, the **Multi-Craft Training Program** combines industrial maintenance, mechanicals, robotics, and electrical training into a thorough curriculum. Employers such as U.S. Steel, Heidelberg Materials, Millennium, and Magna Kamtek, which require personnel with diverse skills in these fields, provided valuable input when the program was created in direct response to industry needs. The **TECH program by Mercedes-Benz** is another notable training program where students can intern at MBUSI as an apprentice while earning an **Automotive Service Excellence (ASE)** and **Associate in Applied Science Degree**.

LSSC has one of Alabama’s best programs in the healthcare sector, ensuring graduates are well-prepared to enter the workforce. LSCC also performs exceptionally well in the utilities industry. The college, in collaboration with **AlabamaWorks**, offers a specialized **Line Worker Training Program** that equips students for opportunities in the energy business through its cooperation with Alabama Power. A **plumbing and gas line training program** is also a part of the partnership with **Spire Alabama**.

Along with degrees tailored to particular industries, LSSC emphasizes the importance of helping students develop soft skills essential for success in any career. Partnerships with Birmingham Water Works and other employers provide training focused on professional communication, job preparedness, and resume building. These programs ensure that graduates possess both the technical know-how and soft skills necessary to succeed in workplace environments that demand strong interpersonal skills.



Challenges and Strategic Adaptations

LSSC faces the challenge of recruiting qualified instructors for its non-credit workforce programs, a difficulty heightened by the broader labor shortages in the post-COVID workforce. To address the instructor shortage, the college builds connections with working professionals in the field who may decide to retire and look for part-time teaching opportunities.

To address the lack of workers and low labor force participation, LSSC develops training programs and offers wraparound services in partnership with companies, business leaders, and community organizations. These efforts are critical in an area where 46.2% of jobs demand a high school diploma or some college degree.



Future Directions and Workforce Development Potentials

Looking ahead, Lawson State aspires to increase the scope of its workforce development programs while focusing on essential skills and employability. The college's participation in the Re- Compete Grant application indicates its dedication to increasing workforce engagement and offering all-inclusive support services, such as childcare and transportation.

Conclusion

Using its tailored curriculum and strategic partnerships, Lawson State Community College serves as a cornerstone for workforce development in Central Alabama, meeting local companies' short- and long-term demands. Due to its comprehensive approach, which offers both credit and non-credit programs, the institution is positioned to play a significant role in expanding the local economy. LSSC has the ideal environment to prepare its students for successful jobs while promoting the broader economic growth of the region by continuing to adapt to challenges and seizing chances for expansion.



Shelton State Community College

Shelton State Community College (SSCC) is a public, historically black community college (HBCC) located in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. More than 4,500 students are enrolled in various coursework, with approximately 3,000 attending full-time. SSCC has two campuses: the Martin Campus and the C.A. Fredd Campus; its Martin campus is home to the Alabama Fire College and Personnel Standards Commission. Statewide, the Fire College provides paid and volunteer firefighter and emergency medical technician training.

SSCC's employer-driven approach to workforce development distinguishes it within Alabama. While the academic programs primarily focus on meeting student needs, the college's workforce development initiatives are designed to address the demands of regional businesses and industries. The college's goal is to upskill these companies' current workforce to discourage employee attrition after acquiring new skills, thus helping to stabilize, expand, and sustain these businesses. This strategy, often implemented through training programs supported by federal or state funding, plays a crucial role in meeting the specific needs of employers.



Economic Impact and Regional Integration

With an additional \$248.1 million in revenue to the SSCC Service Area (Tuscaloosa County and Bibb County) in the 2020–21 fiscal year, Shelton State Community College substantially contributes to the local economy. This amount equals 2.2% of the entire region's gross regional product (GRP). Concerning employment, SSCC's operations backed 3,952 jobs; that is, one in every 33 jobs in the SSCC Service Area had some connection to the college and its students.



Shelton State Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Technology

The college paid out \$25.4 million in salary to 410 academic and staff members who worked both full- and part-time. The long-term impact of SSCC's former students working in the area workforce went beyond the immediate effects of its activities, contributing an additional \$204.1 million in additional income in FY 2020–21. The present enrollment of students has boosted the Service Area economy by \$7.2 million in revenue.

Shelton State Community College's role in the economic landscape of Northeast Alabama is vital. The region's unemployment rate as of June 2024 was 3.1%, reflecting a robust job market. The top employment sectors in Northeast Alabama include:

- **Manufacturing** (19.9% of total jobs)
- **Health Care and Social Assistance** (14.0% of total jobs)
- **Educational Services** (12.0% of total jobs)
- **Retail Trade** (10.6% of total jobs)

SSCC contributes to this stability by collaborating closely with key regional employers, including Mercedes-Benz, BF Goodrich, Nucor, and Druid City Hospital, to provide targeted workforce training. These partnerships align with the region's top employment sectors, ensuring that the training provided by the college directly supports the region's economic needs.

Moreover, SSCC's involvement with emerging companies like Martinrea, Motherson, and Westervelt further strengthens the integration between the college and the local economy. These collaborations not only enhance the workforce's skill levels but also attract new businesses to the region, thereby boosting economic growth.



Key Training Programs and Sector Alignment

SSCC offers a range of training programs closely aligned with the needs of the region's top industries. The college's automotive training programs, specialized training in technical and manufacturing fields, and healthcare training are particularly noteworthy. Below are the key programs:

- **Mercedes-Benz (MBUSI) Partnership:** Focused on automotive training and IT pathway development to upskill workers to meet the advanced technical requirements of the automotive industry.
- **BF Goodrich Partnership:** Specialized training in technical and manufacturing fields to align with industry standards and requirements.
- **Nucor Partnership:** Workforce development initiatives in the manufacturing sector aim to enhance workers' technical skills.
- **Druid City Hospital (DCH) Partnership:** Healthcare workforce training is designed to equip healthcare workers with the necessary skills to meet the demands of the healthcare sector.

Emerging partnerships include companies like **Martinrea**, **Motherson**, **Westervelt**, **ARD Tuscaloosa One Place**, and **Honda**, all contributing to workforce development in various sectors, highlighting the college's adaptability and strong industry connections.



Challenges and Strategic Adaptations

Shelton State Community College has made commendable progress in workforce development, offering various programs tailored to meet industry demands. These include the Skills for Success courses, which provide rapid, no-cost training in ambulance operation, community health work, and customer service. Despite these achievements, the college acknowledges the need for ongoing efforts to strengthen its workforce development initiatives. According to its strategic plan, SSCC is committed to expanding relationships within its service area by offering diverse, relevant, non-credit training and education opportunities. This commitment underscores the College's dedication to continuous improvement in meeting the community's and local industries' evolving needs.

Finding and keeping qualified instructors for specialized technical courses is a significant problem. Due to the industry's great demand for qualified workers, there is frequent competition for talent, with the private sector paying more than the college can afford. This problem is especially noticeable in developing fields where qualified teachers are essential, such as KUKA robotic training. Another significant challenge is **student enrollment and interest**. Attracting and retaining students in programs designed for high-demand industries can be difficult. This is especially true in fields where employers have a poor reputation, making enrolling enough students to meet the demand for skilled workers difficult.

The different educational backgrounds of the people enrolled in SSCC's workforce training and upskilling programs have also required attention. Many workers possess strong practical abilities but may lack the literacy or technical knowledge required for advanced training. To address this, the college utilizes visual aids, videos, and hands-on learning methods to make training accessible and engaging. This approach ensures that learning gaps are discreetly bridged, preserving the dignity and confidence of the workers throughout the process.

Strategic adaptations to these challenges include partnerships with **local organizations** such as **Veterans Affairs (VA)**, the **Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS)**, and the **Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind**. These collaborations help **SSCC** reach a broader demographic of potential students who might not see themselves as "college students". Still, they can benefit from the training and career pathways offered by the college. These partnerships also provide avenues to recruit and train instructors by tapping into local expertise and resources.



Future Directions and Workforce Development Potentials

Shelton State Community College is well-positioned to grow its workforce development role in the future by forming strategic alliances and offering innovative training programs. The institution is actively working to establish new partnerships with emerging companies in the area, like Motherson and Martinrea, to develop apprenticeship programs that will satisfy the demands of the automotive sector in the future.

Through programs like the **Worlds of Work (WOW)**, which exposes ninth graders to various professional possibilities early on, SSCC is also concentrating on improving student engagement. The college intends to uphold its reputation as an innovator in Alabama workforce development by staying current with industry trends and continuously adapting its curricula to meet the evolving needs of the local economy.

Conclusion

The workforce development initiatives of Shelton State Community College are essential to the region's economic growth. The institution has effectively matched the demands of local companies with its training programs thanks to its employer-driven strategy, which has helped to stabilize and expand the local economy. SSCC's innovative strategies and forward-thinking initiatives position it well for continuing success in workforce development, ensuring that both businesses and workers in the region thrive despite obstacles.



Trenholm State
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Trenholm State Community College

Trenholm State Community College (TSCC) is a public, historically black community college (HBCC) located in Montgomery, Alabama, the state's capital. TSCC offers associate degrees, certificates, and non-credit courses through more than 35 programs. The college also grants academic credits for life experiences. Additionally, it provides free dual enrollment courses for high school students, enabling them to earn both college and high school credits simultaneously. Through its Workforce Development and Continuing Education divisions, TSCC provides professional development, personal enrichment, workforce education, adult education, certificate programs, and associate's and certificate programs.

Uniquely positioned as the only community college in Montgomery, TSCC faces significant competition from four-year universities within the same region. Despite this, the college has established a robust reputation for offering both for-credit and non-credit courses that align with high-wage and high-demand job markets.



Economic Impact and Regional Integration

Trenholm State Community College plays a crucial role in the economic development of Montgomery and the whole of the River Region. As of June 2024, the leading job sectors in the region are manufacturing, healthcare, and educational services, with a comparatively low 3.1% unemployment rate. The college contributes to the area's economic growth by ensuring its graduates are well-prepared to enter the workforce and matching their program offerings with the demands of the local labor market.

TSCC's close collaboration with key employers underscores its importance in providing a trained workforce that supports these critical industries. For instance:

- **Hyundai Motor Manufacturing**, the largest employer in the region, partners with TSCC through the River Region Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education (FAME) Technician Program. This program offers students on-the-job training while earning an associate degree. This partnership ensures a steady pipeline of skilled technicians to support Hyundai's operations.
- **Baptist Health** collaborates with TSCC through the LPN Immediate Impact Program. This initiative equips nursing students with both didactic instruction and clinical education, directly addressing the growing demand for healthcare professionals in the region.



<https://www.trenholmstate.edu/future-students/fame/>



Key Training Programs and Sector Alignment

TSCC offers a variety of programs that are directly aligned with the region's high-demand sectors:

- **Welding Program:** TSCC's welding program is one of its most prominent programs. It is highly regarded for its comprehensive curriculum that prepares students for careers in the manufacturing and construction industries. The program is known for its strong ties with local employers who value the skills and expertise of TSCC's welding graduates.

- **Line Worker Training:** In partnership with Alabama Power and Alabama Rural Electric Association, TSCC offers a ten-week fast-paced course for students to learn the fundamentals of electricity and the skills needed for job opportunities in line work.
- **Electrician Helper Program:** This non-credit certificate program designed to teach students the basics of electrical work is particularly popular among students, often resulting in waitlists. Many participants in this program later pursue an associate's degree in the field.
- **CDL/Truck Driving Programs:** TSCC provides truck driving training programs that cater to various needs, including Class A CDL, Class B CDL, and specialized Truck Driving/CDL training. These programs cover essential skills such as basic and advanced truck driving, among others. The popularity of these programs reflects the high demand for skilled drivers in the region's transportation and logistics sectors.



Challenges and Strategic Adaptations

With the increase in enrollment at TSCC since the COVID-19 pandemic, **capacity management has emerged as a significant challenge**. Some programs are highly popular, leading to over-enrollment, while others struggle to attract sufficient interest. Consequently, students have had to be turned away from programs such as the Electrician Helper Class and the Line Worker Program, because of space constraints. The truck driving program continues to operate with a waiting list. To address this, TSCC has proactively redirected students to other for-credit options while exploring ways to expand program capacity.

The **benefits cliff presents another challenge**, as individuals often hesitate to pursue higher-paying careers or training opportunities due to the risk of losing essential government benefits. This issue is particularly prevalent among housing authority residents, who might be reluctant to enroll in programs that could lead to a living wage if it means forfeiting critical support. In response, the college proactively supporting students facing the benefits cliff by providing assistance with basic needs to help them navigate this transition.



Future Directions and Workforce Development Potentials

TSCC is undertaking major improvements, including major campus renovations and the installation of **new HVAC systems**, under the direction of a new president. In order to address the changing demands of the job market, the college is also creating new, highly paid, highly sought-after programs. With its strong industry ties and **expansion of program offerings**, TSCC is poised to further contribute to workforce development in the River Region. Given the region's comparatively youthful and educated labor force, industries like healthcare, manufacturing, and transportation have room to grow.

Conclusion

Trenholm State Community College plays a significant role in workforce development in Montgomery, Alabama and the surrounding region. The college has shown flexibility in the face of difficulties with enrollment, competition, and the benefits cliff. TSCC's innovative leadership, robust industry ties, and alignment with the demands of the local labor market establish it as an essential institution for the benefit of students and the local economy. Undoubtedly, the college's ongoing evolution and expansion will enhance the region's economic growth and workforce development prospects.



Wallace Community College Selma

Wallace Community College Selma (WCCS), located in Selma, Alabama, is a public, predominantly black community college (PBCC) that holds a distinctive position in the state's workforce development landscape. Unlike other institutions, WCCS serves two separate regions—Northwest Alabama and East Alabama—encompassing eight counties within the Black Belt region. The Black Belt is traditionally known for its predominantly Black population, its legacy in cotton production, and its significant role in the civil rights movement in the South. The college seeks to expand access to vital training opportunities in underprivileged areas by prioritizing industry-recognized credentials and short-term certifications tailored for non-traditional students. This outreach is vital for promoting inclusivity and equity in education and workforce development, particularly in communities where traditional degree programs may be less accessible.



Economic Impact and Regional Integration

The presence of WCCS significantly strengthens the financial health of the communities it serves. The college contributed a little over \$47.5 million (or 0.8% of the gross regional product (GRP) for the WCCS Service Area) to the local economy in FY 2020–21. An estimated 845 jobs were supported by this economic contribution, indicating that one in every 88 jobs in the region was related to WCCS or its students' activities. The college's operations, which include a payroll of \$12.3 million, further enhance the local economy as faculty and staff spend within the community.

Furthermore, \$490,500 in revenue was generated for the regional economy through the of both relocating and local students. During the same fiscal year, the cumulative impact of WCCS graduates in the workforce contributed \$34.2 million to the regional economy. This underscores the college's crucial role, not only in education but also in driving regional economic growth and supporting employment sustainability.



Key Training Programs and Sector Alignment

The college has taken a leadership role in developing training programs in emerging fields such as **aviation** by offering specialized courses in **drone technology**, **avionics**, **A&P technicians**, and **air traffic control** designed to meet evolving workforce needs. Although these initiatives are new to the area, they are crucial to promoting the expansion of this industry. The college continues to offer traditional technical programs, such as welding, as a mainstay, serving students who want to further their studies or seek immediate work.

The college's workforce development efforts also encompass partnerships with local employers, including **Vaughan Regional Medical Center**, **Whitfield**, **Bush Hog**, and other key sectors, as well as initiatives in critical areas such as **CDL training**. These partnerships ensure training programs are directly connected to job opportunities, providing students with the skills to succeed in their chosen fields. Scholarships and funding mechanisms, such as the **Short-Term Credential Program Grant** and the **Pathways to Success Foundation**, support students in obtaining these credentials, thereby enhancing their employability.



Facebook Post

In addition to technical skills, WCCS emphasizes professional development through the **Alabama Career Essentials (ACE)** program, which helps students build essential soft skills, including resume writing and interview preparation. This holistic approach to training ensures students are job-ready and equipped to excel in their chosen careers.



Challenges and Strategic Adaptations

Delivering workforce development programs presents some obstacles for the college, chief among them the removal of barriers related to childcare and transportation that impede student participation. Transportation is still a significant barrier in rural areas, especially for people who don't live close to training facilities. In response, WCCS deployed a **mobile lab** with 15 stations and Wi-Fi in these towns to provide instruction. Childcare is another important concern, especially for women who work. To decrease this obstacle, the college has included childcare provisions in grant-funded initiatives such as the **Women in Trucking** initiative, supported by the **Women's Foundation of Alabama**.

Despite these efforts, concerns regarding the upfront costs associated with some programs, such as those requiring completion reimbursement, can be a hurdle for students from lower-income areas. The college continues to explore solutions to make these programs more accessible to all students.



Future Directions and Workforce Potentials

Looking ahead, WCCS plans to further strengthen the connection between its training programs and employment opportunities. One area of focus is encouraging more employers to utilize **apprenticeship programs**, which would **enhance training** outcomes and ensure students are job-ready upon completion. The college is also looking to expand its partnerships with local industries, particularly in emerging sectors like **Aviation, Air Traffic Control, Drone Technology,** and **Healthcare**, to sustain and grow its impact on the regional economy.

The long-term goal is to ensure that WCCS's training meets the region's current needs and anticipates future demands, positioning the college as a key driver of workforce development in Alabama.

Conclusion

With its strategic presence spanning several regions, WCCS is well-positioned to deliver essential training and education that supports workforce development throughout Alabama's Black Belt region. The institution substantially contributes to regional economic growth through strong collaborations with local employers, creative ways to overcome obstacles, and an emphasis on matching training needs with industry demands. As it continues to adapt and expand its programs, Wallace Community College remains a critical force in driving the region's workforce development and economic prosperity.

In conclusion, Alabama's consistently low unemployment rate and labor market participation present both challenges and opportunities for Historically Black and Predominantly Black Community Colleges (HBCCs and PBCCs). This case study highlights these institutions' innovative workforce development strategies, demonstrating their success in bridging the gap between unskilled workers and the state's growing need for a skilled labor force. By developing a comprehensive workforce profile for each HBCC and PBCC, we emphasize their economic impact, key training programs, industry partnerships, and emerging opportunities.

Alabama's eight HBCCs and PBCCs are uniquely positioned to address the skills gap by collaborating with employers to meet the evolving demands of the labor market. For more information on Alabama's workforce profile, refer to **Appendix A**. To view the HBCCs/PBCCs' summary of employer collaborations and training programs, see **Appendix B**.

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Appendix – A: State of Alabama Workforce Profile

Labor Market Data

- Unemployment Rate in 2022 – 3.1%
- Unemployment Rate in 2023 – 1.9%
- Unemployment Rate in June 2024 – 2.9%

The *counties* with the *lowest unemployment rates* are Shelby and Morgan Counties at 2.3%, Marshall and Cullman Counties at 2.4%, and Madison, Limestone, and Elmore Counties at 2.5%. The counties with the highest unemployment rates are Wilcox County at 8.5%, Perry County at 6.8%, and Dallas County at 6.0%.

The *major cities* with the *lowest unemployment rates* are Trussville and Vestavia Hills, at 2.0%; Alabaster, Hoover, Homewood, and Madison, at 2.2%; and Athens and Decatur, at 2.4%. The major cities with the highest unemployment rates are Selma, at 7.1%; Prichard, at 5.4%; and Bessemer, at 4.0%.

In-Demand Occupations (2023 – 2024)

- Nurse Practitioners
- Medical & Health Services Managers
- Restaurant Cooks
- Physical Therapist Assistants
- Occupational Therapy Assistants
- Information Security Analysts
- Web Developers
- Logisticians
- Industrial Machinery Mechanics
- Speech-Language Pathologists

SOURCES:

Alabama Department of Labor, *Labor Market Information*. Retrieved from <https://www2.labor.alabama.gov/> on 2024 August 15,

US Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Economy at a Glance* ([BLS.gov](https://www.bls.gov/)), retrieved on 2024 August 15.

Fastest Growing In-Demand Occupations (2023-2024)

- **Health Sector:** Nurse Practitioners, Medical & Health Services Managers, Physical Therapist Assistants, Occupational Therapy Assistants, Speech-Language Pathologists.
- **IT Sector:** Information Security Analysts, Web Developers, Software Developers, Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers.
- **Manufacturing:** Industrial Machinery Mechanics, Industrial Engineers.
- **Transportation and Logistics:** Logisticians, Aircraft Mechanics, and Service Technicians.

Workforce Challenges

- Worker shortfalls are projected to reach **231,600** by **2045**, requiring strategies to increase labor force participation.
- Improving **education attainment and funding** is vital to develop a skilled workforce for high-demand jobs.
- **Basic skills** training needs to be scaled up, while **technical skills** training needs to be accelerated.
- Economic and workforce development must be aligned to build a robust and diversified economy.

Appendix – B: Snapshot of HBCC/PBCC Workforce Strategies

Bishop State Community College, Mobile, AL

Labor Market Data in Mobile, AL

- Unemployment Rate in June 2024 - 3.5%

Key Training Programs

Airbus Partnership: BSCC and Airbus joined forces to attract new students through the *Flight Path 9 Program*, a dual enrollment initiative for high school students. This program prepares young talent for aerospace careers and supports early-career and mid-career employees seeking to advance their careers. As a result, BSCC now supplies 90% of the workforce for Airbus manufacturing, underscoring the success and impact of this strategic partnership.

Employer Collaborations

- **Airbus US Manufacturing Facility, Early Career Flight Path9 Program**– 10-week fast-paced program offered through BSCC. Airbus pays the tuition and costs for 18 college credits and multiple industry-recognized certifications. Upon completion, Early Career program participants become full-time apprentices at Airbus. Airbus apprentices continue their education with 12 weeks of training and then are placed with a mentor for 48 weeks of on-the-job training for the A220 or A320 program. Applications at [BSCC Airbus Training](#)
- **Alabama Power Lineman Program** – Nine-week fast-paced program offered through BSCC, including scholarships for tuition, books, and fees. To apply, [Bishop State Lineman Program](#)
- **Austal USA SET SAIL Program** – A three-week fast-paced program offered through Bishop State. The pre-employment program is free to the participants, and Austal USA interviews the completers at the end of the course. Applications at [Bishop State Austal SET SAIL Training](#)
- **Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education (FAME Program)**
This is a work-based learning model in which students split their time between college and work while earning an associate's degree. Applications at [Fame on the Coast Bishop State](#)

Bishop State Community College Future Directions

BSCC recognizes the critical need to attract a larger percentage of potential workers to meet the demands of the region's growing industries. To achieve this, the college is committed to offering workforce programs that align with key sectors, including:

- **Semiconductor CHIPS Manufacturing:** Bishop State aims to actively engage with the Manufacturing USA institute, launched by the US Department of Commerce, to support and expand semiconductor manufacturing training in the region.
- **Cybersecurity:** Acknowledging the high demand for cybersecurity professionals, BSCC plans to develop and offer a dedicated program of study in this critical field.
- **Civil Engineering:** Recognizing the significant demand for civil engineers, BSCC is exploring the development of programs in construction science and architecture, with a focus on civil engineering as a key area of study.

Chattahoochee Valley Community College, Phenix City, AL

Labor Market Data in Phenix City, AL

- Unemployment Rate in June 2024 - 3.3%

Key Training Programs

Chattahoochee Valley Community College collaborates with three leading regional employers to offer apprenticeships and employment opportunities for its students:

- **Atchley Steel Company** offers apprenticeships in steel fabrication through Chattahoochee Valley.
- **East Alabama Health** offers apprenticeships and employment for health sciences students through Chattahoochee Valley.
- **AlaTrade** offers apprenticeships in food processing and industrial maintenance.

Employer Collaborations

Chattahoochee Valley collaborates with local and regional employers by 1) engaging employers such as Atchley Steel in the technology programs advisory board and 2) working closely with employers to ensure the credentials, certificates, and degree programs are aligned with the workforce needs of business and industries in the region.

Workforce Development Professional Development

- Chattahoochee Valley ensures faculty and staff stay up-to-date on industry trends and workforce development best practices through regular professional development opportunities.

Chattahoochee Valley Measures of Success

- Chattahoochee Valley measures the success of the workforce development programs using the metrics of retention, pass rate, credentialing exam pass rate, student feedback, and employer feedback.

The Manufacturing Skills Standards Council (MSSC)

- Chattahoochee Valley uses MSSC training to assist students in earning stackable credentials because of its comprehensive approach to ensuring each student's success.

Chattahoochee Valley State Future Directions

The Electrical Technician Program at Chattahoochee Valley is in the early stages of expanding its workforce development offerings by introducing an Applied Technology program. This program will feature a short certificate for basic entry-level qualifications, a long certificate for comprehensive training, and an associate degree that integrates both certificates to complete the stackable credential pathway.

Drake State Community and Technical College, Huntsville, AL

Labor Market Data in Huntsville, AL

- Unemployment Rate in June 2024 - 2.5%

Key Training Programs

Drake State's workforce development strategy, "Community Skill Up," is deeply rooted in its strong connections with the local community and employers. This approach ensures that their training programs align closely with the region's needs. By actively incorporating community feedback, Drake State tailors its workforce programs to prioritize in-demand skills, high-wage opportunities, and gaps

identified by regional employers and key sectors. This collaborative, feedback-driven strategy positions Drake State as a pivotal player in meeting the workforce demands of its community.

- **2U/edX and Jobs for Future (JFF)** launched a new Access Partnership at Drake State. The partnership provides adult learners with free, fully online boot camp programs in cybersecurity and data analytics funded by the Truist Foundation.
- **Leidos**, a global information technology, engineering, and science leader, has partnered with Drake State to launch the Advanced Enterprise Global IT Solutions (AEGIS) initiative. Drake State will train students to become Computer Systems Analysts through this collaboration, specifically for the Enterprise Network Operating Center (ENOC) at Marshall Space Flight Center (MSFC). This partnership will equip students with the advanced skills and knowledge needed to excel in high-demand IT roles within a cutting-edge space exploration environment.

Employer Collaborations

Huntsville Utilities Gas and Water partners with Drake State to offer the Gas and Water Operation Certification Scholarship Program. This comprehensive four-week program is designed to equip students with the essential pre-employment skills needed for careers in the gas and water operations sectors. The scholarship covers all tuition costs, materials, supplies, fees, and student meals, ensuring participants have the support they need to complete the program and transition into the workforce. To learn more, [Drake State Workforce Development](#)

NASA and Drake State continue to thrive and expand in training NASA employees in Machine Tool Technology. This collaboration reinforces Drake State's reputation as a premier institution for technical education and ensures that NASA's workforce remains at the forefront of precision engineering and advanced manufacturing.

Drake State Future Directions

Drake State is committed to expanding the "Community Skill Up" initiative, continually enhancing its support for regional industry sectors by equipping new and existing workers with the skills they need to thrive. The college's approach to workforce development is comprehensive and multi-tiered, offering entry-level training for new workers, upskilling programs for current employees, and advanced training opportunities for those seeking career advancement. By addressing the workforce's diverse needs, Drake State aims to strengthen regional industries and empower individuals to achieve their professional goals.

Gadsden State Community College, Gadsden, AL

Labor Market Data in Gadsden, AL

- Unemployment Rate in June 2024 - 3.5%

Key Training Programs

Gadsden State Community College stands out for its unique structure, with three workforce development campuses strategically located throughout the community. This multi-campus approach enhances accessibility and convenience for students, offering diverse training programs tailored to meet the region's needs. Each campus specializes in distinct fields, providing students with classroom instruction and hands-on experience.

- **Ayers Campus (Anniston, AL):** This campus is home to the Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education (FAME) program, which is focused on Industrial Automation, and the Consortium of Machining Education Training (COMET) program, which specializes in Precision Machining. Both programs combine classroom learning with practical experience, ensuring students gain the skills required by industry.

- **East Broad Campus (Gadsden, AL):** This campus is dedicated to career technical training and offers programs in Automotive, Electrical and Electronic Engineering Technology, Welding, and Cosmetology.
- **Valley Street Campus (Gadsden, AL):** This campus specializes in health science programs such as Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) and Digital Medical Sonography. It also offers career technical programs in HVAC, Refrigeration, and Construction Technology and non-credit courses like CNA training, medication aid certification, and phlebotomy. The Valley Street Campus also partners with Job Corps, further expanding student opportunities.

Employer Collaborations

Gadsden State Community College maintains robust partnerships with industry leaders to ensure its training programs align with current industry demands and standards. These collaborations help shape industry-driven curricula, ensuring graduates are well-prepared to meet workforce needs. Key industry partners include Honda Manufacturing, the Anniston Army Depot, transportation, and the poultry sectors.

Gadsden State Future Directions

Gadsden State Community College is pioneering the Carpentry Helper program, a forward-thinking initiative designed to cater to non-traditional students. This program offers short-term, flexible training options delivered asynchronously, including hands-on lab sessions, to accommodate students with limited time and varying availability. By addressing the unique needs of this student population, Gadsden State is expanding access to quality education and skills training, empowering more individuals to advance their careers in a way that fits their schedules.

Lawson State Community College, Birmingham, AL

Labor Market Data in Birmingham, AL

- Unemployment Rate in June 2024 – 2.7%

Key Training Programs

LSCC's central location in Alabama makes it a vital partner to several of the region's largest employers, including The University of Alabama at Birmingham, Mercedes-Benz US International, US Steel, Spire Gas, and Alabama Power. LSCC has developed a workforce development strategy closely aligned with local industry demands through these collaborations. This strategy emphasizes job-ready training and offers non-credit and credit programs, ensuring a comprehensive approach that meets the workforce needs of both large and small businesses.

- **Alabama Power Lineman Program:** 12-week fast-paced full-time program offered through LSCC. For the latest information, [Lawson State Workforce Development Newsletter June 2024](#).
- **Mercedes-Benz US International (MBUSI), The TECH by Mercedes-Benz program:** LSCC offers a five-semester program for students to earn the Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) certifications and an Associate in Applied Science degree. This program rotates students between on-campus instruction and paid on-the-job work at the MBUSI assembly plant in Vance, AL. For more information, [Lawson State Mercedes TECH Program](#)
- **University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB):** Lawson State's longstanding partnership with UAB provides students in health-related programs with valuable clinical experiences and employment opportunities.

Employer Collaborations

- **US Steel Corporation, Heidelberg Materials North America, Millennium Inc., and Magna International—Kamtek** has partnered with Lawson State to launch a new **Multi-Craft Training**

Program. This program focuses on industrial maintenance, mechanics, robotics, and electrical technology and is specifically designed to prepare students for employment with these leading companies. To support this initiative, Lawson State has secured a \$250,000 grant to fund the program and acquire new equipment.

- **Natural Gas Utility—Spire Alabama:** Spire has partnered with LSSC to launch the *new Get into Energy Program*, a training initiative designed to equip students with the skills necessary for entry-level positions at Spire and within the broader natural gas industry.

Lawson State Future Directions

A top priority for LSSC is institutionalizing cross-functional resource sharing to maximize the college's internal network, thereby enhancing program offerings across all departments. Additionally, Lawson State is deeply committed to ensuring that every student acquires the employability skills necessary to be work-ready through non-credit and credit programs.

Trenholm State Community College, Montgomery, AL

Labor Market Data in Montgomery, AL

- Unemployment Rate in June 2024 - 3.4%

Key Training Programs

Trenholm State Community College, situated in Montgomery, the capital of Alabama, faces competition from several nearby four-year universities within its student catchment area. Despite this competitive landscape, according to the Alabama Community College System reporting, Trenholm State offers the most comprehensive credit and non-credit credentials and certifications tailored to meet the high-wage, high-demand career opportunities driven by regional employers.

Trenholm State has risen to meet the demand of employers by offering three programs that consistently have a waitlist of students:

- **Alabama Power, Alabama Rural Electric Association Line Worker Training:** Ten-week fast-paced course for students to learn the fundamentals of electricity, including math and science, to perform the job and hands-on practice in an outdoor learning laboratory to prepare students for employment upon graduation. Applications at [Trenholm College Line Worker Training](#)
- **Electrician Helper Program:** This non-credit program certificate is popular among students, resulting in waitlists and students seeking the credit program for an associate's degree.
- **CDL/Truck Driving Certified:** TSCC offers popular truck driving training programs in Class A CDL, Class B CDL Straight Truck, and Truck Driving/CDL Classes in basic truck driving, advanced truck driving, vehicle maintenance, and safe operating practices. Program brochure at [Trenholm CDL/Truck Driving Programs](#)

Employer Collaborations

- **Baptist Health: The LPN Immediate Impact Program** is a collaborative initiative between Trenholm State and Baptist Health designed to equip nursing students with both didactic instruction and clinical education. The ultimate goal is for these students to secure employment with Baptist Health upon completion. To learn more about this program, visit [Trenholm Baptist Health LPN Immediate Impact Program](#)
- **Hyundai Motor Manufacturing** is the largest employer in the region. TSCC collaborates with Hyundai with the River Region Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education (FAME)

Technician Program (AMT) to offer students the work-based learning model in which students split their time between college and work while earning an associate's degree. For information on FAME at TSSC, [FAME River Region Trenholm State](#)

Trenholm State Community College Future Directions

Semiconductor manufacturing represents the future of TSSC, which is currently expanding its courses in semiconductor training to meet the growing workforce demands in the region. To learn more, visit [Semiconductor Training at Trenholm State](#).

Shelton State Community College, Tuscaloosa, AL

Labor Market Data in Birmingham, AL

- Unemployment Rate in June 2024 – 3.1%

Key Training Programs

SSCC has earned a strong reputation in the region as a critical workforce partner, helping local businesses stabilize, grow, and upskill their existing workforce. Shelton State Community College has developed strong collaborations with employers to provide in-demand training in the region:

- **BF Goodrich Tuscaloosa Manufacturing**, in collaboration with SSCC, offers the **BFGoodrich Technical Scholars Program**, which provides students with a work-based learning experience. At the same time, they pursue a degree in Industrial Electronics Technology or Electrical Technology at Shelton State. For more information on the program, [Shelton State BFGoodrich Technical Scholars Program](#)
- **Druid City Hospital (DCH)** and SSCC's longstanding partnership for students enrolled in the Health Services Programs and post-graduation employment opportunities.
- **Mercedes-Benz US International, Inc. (MBUSI)** collaborates with Shelton State to offer students two training programs: 1) the **Mechatronics Program** and 2) the **Mercedes Tech Program**. To learn more about each program: Mechanics and Electronics, [Shelton State Mechatronics Program](#), and Mercedes Tech Program, [Shelton State Mercedes Tech Program](#).
- **NUCOR**, in collaboration with SSCC, offers the **NUCOR Technical Academy**, which provides students with a work-based learning experience, and students pursue a degree in Applied Science (AAS) in Electrical Technology Defined Training (ELT/IDT). For more information on the Academy, [Shelton State NUCOR Technical Academy](#).

Employer Collaborations

Shelton State Community College is expanding its regional partnerships by establishing new apprenticeships with automotive suppliers Martinrea International Tuscaloosa and Samvardhana Motherson Peguform (SMP) Automotive Tuscaloosa. Additionally, the college is creating specialized training pathways in collaboration with Westervelt Lumber and local Honda dealerships to develop skilled technicians, further enhancing workforce readiness in the community.

Shelton State Future Directions

SSCC is committed to enhancing student engagement and raising awareness of career pathways as part of its strategic future directions. The college aims to expose potential students to career opportunities earlier in their academic journey and empower current students to take an active role in their career development, thereby challenging and reshaping perceptions of what college can offer. Key strategies include engaging ninth graders through the World of Work (WOW), a regional initiative

in collaboration with businesses and industries; integrating career services into the broader student experience on campus; intentionally partnering with the local career center led by the Alabama Department of Labor; and collaborating with the Alabama Department of Rehabilitative Services and the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind to engage and support potential students with diverse needs.

Wallace Community College Selma, Selma, AL

Labor Market Data in Selma, AL

- Unemployment Rate in June 2024 – 7.10%

Key Training Programs

Wallace Community College Selma is strategically situated in a region that spans two key workforce areas—Central and West Alabama Works—and eight counties within the historic Black Belt region. To effectively serve this region’s diverse and expansive communities, Wallace Selma’s workforce development delivers training programs directly to these areas using a Mobile Lab, ensuring accessibility and support across the college’s service area.

Wallace Selma’s Mobile Lab travels the region, providing students access to short-term and industry-recognized certifications. Available credentials include:

- **Short-term credential courses** are carpentry helper, electrical helper, school bus endorsement, land survey helper, and hazmat endorsement.
- **Short-Term Nursing Certifications** offered by Wallace Selma, including Patient Care Technician, Clinical Medical Assistant, and Community Health Worker. Students earning a short-term credential are eligible for the *Short-Term Credential Program* grant, which provides up to \$4,500 to cover tuition, books, and fees.
- **Eight week trainings** offered by Wallace Selma are Aircraft maintenance, Avionics Technician, Fiber Optics, Heavy Equipment, and Sheet Metal. Students enrolled in these programs can apply for completion reimbursement upon completing their training.

Additional funding opportunities are available through the Pathways to Success Foundation and Skills for Success (WIOA) funding, further supporting students in obtaining the credentials and certifications they need to succeed. To learn more about the credentials and certificates, [Wallace Selma Workforce Development](#)

Employer Collaborations

Wallace Selma maintains robust partnerships with industry leaders to ensure its training programs align with current industry demands and standards. These collaborations help shape industry-driven curricula, ensuring graduates are well-prepared to meet workforce needs. Key industry partners include International Paper, West Fraser Timber, Bush hog, and the Vaughan Regional Medical Center.

Wallace Community College Selma Future Directions

WCCS is introducing a new aviation sector that includes Avionics, Air Traffic Control, and Drone Technology, broadening the college’s commitment to cutting-edge industry education. Additionally, the college is committed to expanding its established technical credentials and associate degree programs in fields such as Commercial Truck Driving (CDL), Electrical Technology, Drafting and Design Technology, Industrial Maintenance Technology, and Welding, ensuring that students are equipped with the skills necessary for success in these high-demand industries.

Bishop State Community College

Chattahoochee Valley Community College

J.F. Drake State Community & Technical College

Gadsden State Community College

Lawson State Community College

Shelton State Community College

H. Councill Trenholm State Community College

Wallace Community College Selma

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