



Elevating Aspirations:

Transfer Pathways from HBCCs and PBCCs to Four-Year Colleges

Dr. Kathy H. Thompson

Trinity Walker and Eva Burch, Contributors

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the
**GREAT
EIGHT**

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.

Trinity Walker is a student in the Master of English program, concentrating in Creative Writing, at the University of South Alabama. She earned her Bachelor of Science, also from the University of South Alabama. Trinity assisted Dr. Kathy Thompson in the Center for Innovation in Postsecondary Education (CIPE) during the summer of 2025. She is passionate about literature, traveling, and promoting lifelong learning.

Eva Burch is pursuing a Master of Science in Psychology, specializing in Behavioral and Brain Sciences, at the University of South Alabama. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology at the University of South Alabama as well. During the summer of 2025, Eva assisted Dr. Kathy Thompson at the Center for Innovation in Postsecondary Education (CIPE). Eva has a passion for education and serving the community to leave a positive impact on others. After graduating, she hopes to obtain her Ph.D. in school psychology.

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.

Transitions in education are not merely points of passage—they are fundamental to the student journey. For students at Historically Black Community Colleges (HBCC) and Predominantly Black Community Colleges (PBCC) in Alabama, the associate degree is not the end of the road, but a powerful springboard to the promise of a four-year college education.

HBCCs and PBCCs serve as critical engines of access and equity. These institutions cultivate talent, foster academic excellence, and prepare students for continued success. Through strategic partnerships and innovative transfer pathways, they are dismantling longstanding barriers and creating seamless, supported transitions to four-year colleges and universities.

This case study examines the transformative impact of transfer pathways from HBCCs and PBCCs to four-year institutions in Alabama. It highlights the practices and strategies that foster student achievement and educational mobility, focusing on four key areas:

1

Student Support Services: Institutions provide holistic support—from dedicated transfer advising and orientation programs to tutoring, mentoring, and wraparound services—that address both academic and non-academic needs.

2

Student Outcomes: The case study presents data on transfer rates, credit accumulation, and bachelor's (associate's) degree completion, illustrating how these community colleges are advancing student success at scale.

3

Transfer and Institutional Partnerships: Strong articulation agreements, dual admissions programs, and co-designed transfer maps ensure credit alignment and reduce barriers to achieving a four-year degree. Strategic partnerships with regional and state institutions serve as models of effective collaboration.

4

Student Success Stories: Throughout the case study, the voices and journeys of students who have successfully navigated the transfer process are woven in. Their stories of ambition, resilience, and achievement bring to life the real impact of these institutional efforts.

In addition to showcasing the accomplishments of eight Alabama community colleges, this case study draws on evidence-based practices from the field to offer actionable insights. Together, these stories and strategies illuminate how coordinated, student-centered approaches can expand opportunity and empower learners to reach their full potential.

Case Study Method

This research employed an inclusive, multi-method approach to examine effective transfer strategies at participating institutions. The methodology included:

- **Semi-structured interviews** with key transfer leaders at each community college to gain insights into institutional strategies, challenges, and opportunities related to transfer student success.
- **Document and website analysis** of each college and the statewide system to contextualize transfer policies, articulation agreements, advising models, and available support services.
- **Supplemental research** to integrate broader insights and align institutional practices with national trends and evidence-based strategies.

The interview protocol was carefully designed to explore institutional perspectives on improving transfer rates and increasing the completion of bachelor's degrees. Questions focused on student support structures, inter-institutional partnerships, advising practices, and efforts to promote success in transfer outcomes.

This approach ensured a comprehensive understanding of the transfer landscape and captured both the systemic and lived experiences of transfer student success across Alabama's HBCCs and PBCCs.

Context and Significance

Successful community college transfer students typically share key traits: strong academic performance, proactive engagement in the transfer process, and a clear understanding of their educational and career goals.¹ Conversely, **students who face challenges with transfer** often encounter systemic barriers, including the absence of clearly defined pathways to a bachelor's degree, non-transferable credits, misaligned curricula between two- and four-year institutions, and a transfer process that is often confusing and difficult to navigate.²

To address these long-standing issues, the Aspen Institute and the Community College Research Center (CCRC) published *The Transfer Playbook: Essential Practices for Two- and Four-Year Colleges* in 2016. This guide outlines evidence-based strategies to improve transfer student outcomes and foster stronger institutional collaboration.³ Key practices include:

- Using **data to drive improvement**: Leaders at both two- and four-year colleges use transfer outcome data to build urgency, monitor progress, and identify areas for reform.
- Creating **clear program maps**: Institutions collaborate to develop and regularly update major-specific program maps that clarify university requirements for students, advisors, and faculty.
- Early **decision-making support**: Faculty and advisors help students identify a major and target transfer institutions early in their academic journey.
- Curriculum **alignment and instructional quality**: Faculty from both sectors collaborate to ensure that lower-division courses at community colleges are rigorous and aligned with the expectations of four-year institutions.
- Strategic **investments in student supports**: Institutional leaders invest in programs and services designed to improve transfer student success and increase returns for students and taxpayers alike.

In 2024, the CCRC, the Aspen Institute, and the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center released two landmark [Tracking Transfer reports](#). These reports offered the first comprehensive, state-by-state analysis of transfer outcomes disaggregated by race/ethnicity, neighborhood income, and age. An accompanying interactive dashboard presents the findings to support policymakers, institutions, and practitioners in understanding and improving transfer pathways.

The Alabama-specific data underscore significant trends in postsecondary outcomes, particularly for low-income students. Findings reveal that 28% of low-income students in Alabama successfully transferred to a four-year institution, compared to 30% of all students, highlighting similar levels of aspiration. Additionally, 31% of low-income students transferred with a credential (certificate or associate degree), slightly surpassing the 28% rate for all students.

However, disparities emerge in the completion of bachelor's degrees. While 44% of all transfer students earned a four-year degree, only 38% of low-income students achieved the same outcome. Similarly, in the cohort-based bachelor's degree completion metric, 11% of low-income students earned a degree, compared to 13% of all students.

These findings reflect both the potential and persistent inequities in transfer success for low-income students in Alabama. While initial momentum is evident—especially in credential attainment—the gap in bachelor's degree completion underscores the need for enhanced support systems, targeted interventions, and sustained institutional collaboration. These data provide a strong foundation for continuous improvement in policy and practice to ensure that all students, regardless of background, have a clear and efficient path to a four-year degree.

Examine Your State's Community College Transfer Outcomes

Tracking Transfer: Community College and Four-Year Institutional Effectiveness in Broadening Bachelor's Degree Attainment

CCRC COMMUNITY COLLEGE
RESEARCH CENTER
Teachers College, Columbia University

Select State
Alabama

National Comparison
All

Subgroup Selection
Multiple values

Filter by Gender
All genders

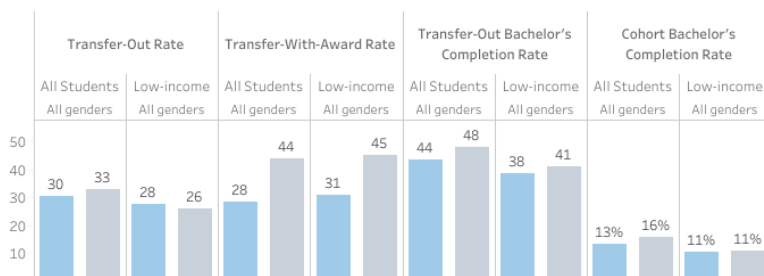
Focus Four-Year Results by Sector
Public Four-Years

**COLLEGE
EXCELLENCE
PROGRAM**
aspen institute

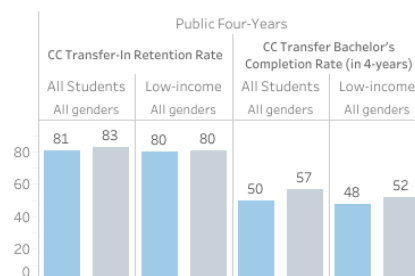
National Student Clearinghouse
Research Center

Alabama
U.S. Average

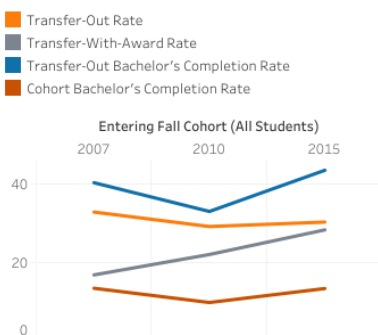
Community College Transfer Outcomes ①



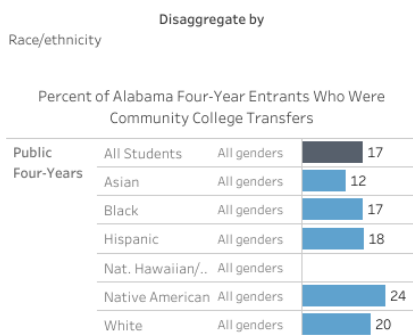
Four-Year Institutional Effectiveness ①



How Have Our State's Community College Transfer Outcomes Changed Over Time?



What Percent of Four-Year Students Enter Via the Community College Transfer Pathway?



Explore More Dashboards

How does our state compare to other states?

[Compare States](#)

How do community college transfers fare post-transfer compared to other students at four-year institutions?

[Post-Transfer Outcomes](#)

How do transfer outcomes compare for students who begin their journey through high school dual enrollment?

[Prior Dual Enrollment](#)

What bachelor's degree majors are transfers completing, and is it representative compared to non-transfers?

[Bachelor's Degree Fields](#)

Objectives of the Case Study



Document Effective Transfer Practices at the Great 8 HBCCs/PBCCs in Alabama

To identify and describe institutional strategies, partnerships, and policies that have effectively supported community college students in transferring to and succeeding at four-year institutions.



Assess Institutional Alignment and Collaboration

To evaluate the extent and quality of collaboration between two-year and four-year institutions in areas such as curricular alignment, advising, data sharing, and co-design of transfer pathways.

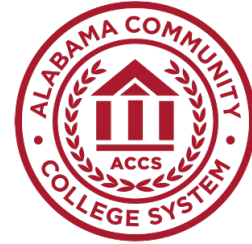


Highlight Promising Innovations

To showcase innovative practices (e.g., guided pathways, articulation agreements, dual enrollment-to-transfer models) that have improved transfer access, efficiency, and completion rates.

Alabama Community College System Transfer Articulation Policies and Practices

The Alabama Community College System (ACCS) offers flexible, affordable, and accessible education tailored to meet the diverse needs of students throughout the state. With 24 colleges and more than 130 locations, ACCS serves a wide range of learners—from high school students to working adults—offering 288 academic and technical programs, including university transfer pathways and workforce training.



To support seamless transfer opportunities, ACCS partners with [Alabama Transfer](#), a statewide initiative that identifies courses aligned with specific career pathways and ensures transferability across institutions. Through a statewide articulation agreement, ACCS offers a 2- to 4-year transfer system, allowing students to complete academic coursework at any of the 24 community colleges with the assurance that those credits will transfer to participating public universities in Alabama.⁴

Alabama Transfer: Formerly known as STARS (Statewide Transfer and Articulation Reporting System), ensures that the credits earned at a community college transfer seamlessly to a four-year university. An official Transfer Agreement outlines which courses align with the intended major or career path. For students transferring to a private or independent college in Alabama, the Alabama Community College System (ACCS) maintains an articulation agreement with the Alabama Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (AAICU), facilitating the transfer of credits to participating private institutions.⁵

Reverse Transfer: Alabama supports a [reverse transfer](#) option that allows students who transferred from a community college to a four-year institution before completing an associate degree to transfer university-earned credits back to the community college, enabling them to earn their associate degree retroactively.⁶

Mapping the Transfer Process from a 2-Year College to a 4-Year University

For many students, the transition from a community college to a four-year university can be a daunting and complex process. In Alabama, resources such as the Alabama Transfer System and the Alabama Community College System's (ACCS) 2-to-4-Year Transfer Framework are designed to help students navigate the credit transfer process. However, despite these tools, many students still face confusion and barriers along the way.

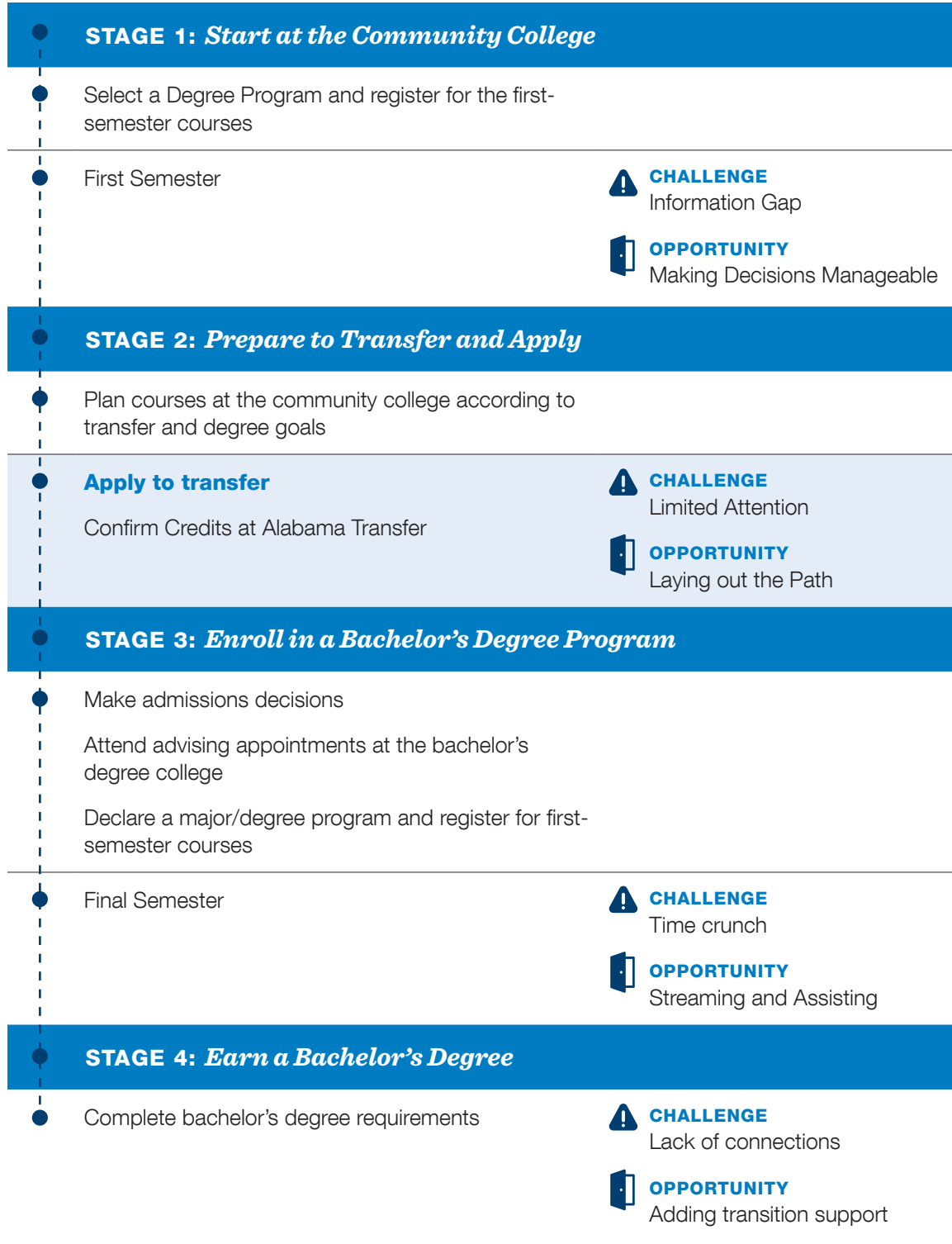
To address this challenge and make the transfer process more transparent and student-friendly, the MDRC's Center for Applied Behavioral Science (CABS), in partnership with the Transfer Opportunity Project led by the City University of New York (CUNY), developed *Mapping the College Transfer Process*—a visual tool designed to demystify the steps and decisions involved in transferring from a two-year to a four-year institution.⁷

As part of this effort, MDRC and CUNY researchers conducted nearly 50 interviews and focus groups with approximately 200 staff members and students across six CUNY community and bachelor's degree-granting colleges. Participants shared their experiences with the transfer process, including the emotions, thoughts, and questions they had at each stage. They also offered recommendations for improving the system based on their lived experiences.

Drawing on these reflections, along with insights from behavioral science and existing research on transfer in higher education, including contributions from two advisors to the Transfer Opportunity Project, the CABS team identified key barriers to successful student transfer and proposed targeted recommendations for improvement.

To help institutions and systems better support transfer students, the project outlines four key stages of the transfer journey. These stages capture the pivotal moments and decision points students encounter as they navigate from a two-year college to a four-year university.

[Mapping the College Transfer Process](#) (Click to Learn More about the Stages)



Student Support Services

Bishop State Community College exemplifies a holistic approach to student success by offering comprehensive support services that meet both academic and non-academic needs—an essential strategy for improving transfer, persistence, and completion rates. Central to its efforts is a **Transfer Advising, Mentoring, and Coaching Model**, which ensures students receive individualized guidance as they explore transfer pathways, navigate academic choices, and make informed career decisions. Paired with **dedicated transfer and career counseling**, students are supported not only in their educational planning but also in their overall well-being, with timely interventions available for mental health concerns and personal crises.

Transfer & Career Counseling aims to empower students to make informed decisions about their academic and career paths while ensuring their overall well-being. This includes guiding major choices, transfer opportunities, as well as career exploration and development. Recognizing that academic and career success is deeply interconnected with personal well-being, these services also include identifying and addressing any challenges that may impact a student's ability to succeed, including mental health concerns.

In cases where students face personal crises or mental health emergencies, Transfer & Career Counseling services are committed to connecting them promptly with appropriate emergency resources and support systems. This holistic approach ensures that students are not only prepared for academic and career transitions but are also supported in maintaining their mental and emotional health, which is essential for their overall success.

The Transfer & Career Counseling Center hosts a variety of student-centered events throughout the academic year to support a smooth and informed transfer process. These events include:

- **Let's Talk! Transfer & Scholarships 101** – This session covers key topics, including the transfer process, selecting the right university, partner institutions, application deadlines and requirements, scholarship opportunities, and tips for a successful transition. It also includes a Q&A with transfer counselors.
- **Let's Talk! Transfer 101: The Next Steps After Graduation** – This session is designed to guide students through the transition to a four-year institution after graduation.
- **Transfer Days** – Held throughout the semester, these events bring representatives from four-year universities to campus, providing students the opportunity to engage directly with admissions staff, ask questions, and gather information.
- **ALACRAO⁸ Transfer College Day** – Bishop State hosts this annual event each spring. In Spring 2025, the event attracted 160 student participants.

Bishop State's Academic Advising Center, in collaboration with the Transfer & Career Counseling Center, actively utilizes **Alabama Transfers** to support students seeking to continue their education at four-year institutions. Alabama Transfers is a vital resource for students across the state, providing a comprehensive guide to transfer pathways, including course equivalencies and institutional requirements between Alabama's two-year colleges and public universities. By helping students seamlessly transfer earned credits and avoid course duplication, the program promotes informed decision-making and ensures academic progress. This statewide initiative strengthens collaboration between community colleges and universities, enhancing access, affordability, and the overall student experience.

Building upon this commitment to student success and smooth transitions, Bishop State's **Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)** centers on implementing **Guided Pathways** by 2030. Guided Pathways offers a structured academic framework that supports student achievement through clearly defined degree plans. These plans are designed to promote timely program completion and effective preparation for transfer to

four-year colleges and universities. By aligning degree plans with advanced degree prerequisites, Guided Pathways reinforces the goals of Alabama Transfers, ensuring that students have a coherent and efficient route toward achieving both their educational and career aspirations.

Recognizing that financial barriers are a critical factor affecting student success, Bishop State provides **robust financial aid advising**. Students have access to a variety of funding sources, including federal and state grants, institutional scholarships, VA benefits, and WIOA funding. The college's commitment to affordability is further demonstrated through low-cost academic and technical programs, federal work-study opportunities, and responsible guidance regarding private loans.

Student Outcomes

Bishop State Community College continues to make measurable progress in advancing student success through well-defined transfer pathways, increased credential attainment, and strategic investments in academic infrastructure. These efforts are reflected in recent institutional data:⁹

College Profile of Enrollment and Award Summary

Bishop State experienced an 18.1% increase in enrollment in Academic Year (AY) 2023–2024, rising from 4,222 students in AY 2022–2023 to 4,895 students. This follows an earlier 8.8% increase from AY 2021–2022, **marking two consecutive years of strong enrollment growth**. Enrollment across General Education, Technical Education, and Dual Enrollment programs has remained relatively balanced, with all areas showing consistent upward trends.

While the total number of awards granted in AY 2023–2024 decreased slightly to 700, compared to 827 awards in AY 2022–2023, it still represents an improvement over the previous two academic years, indicating sustained momentum in credential completion despite year-to-year fluctuations.

Summary Profile of Enrollment and Awards Granted	ACADEMIC YEAR			
	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
College Head Count (HC) Unduplicated	3562	3880	4222	4895
General Education HC	1348	1391	1426	1558
Technical Education HC	1191	1320	1480	1494
Dual Enrollment HC	1023	1169	1316	1843
Awards – Associates (AA, AS, AAS, AOT)	316	353	305	307
Short Certificates (STC)	158	134	428	296
Certificates (CER)	106	131	94	97
AWARD SUMMARY (All levels)	580	618	827	700

Fall-to-Fall retention rates for First-time, Full-time students decreased by six percentage points for the FA2023 Cohort compared to the FA2022 Cohort, from 61% to 55%. This decrease followed a slight increase of three percentage points during the previous periods (FA2020 Cohort to FA2022 Cohort). First-time and part-time student Fall-to-Fall retention rates for the FA2023 Cohort also decreased, but by a lesser rate of four percentage points from the FA2022 Cohort rate of 34% to 30%.

Fall-to-Fall Retention Rates	FA2020 COHORT	FA2021 COHORT	FA2022 COHORT	FA2023 COHORT
Retention Rate – First-time, full-time	58%	61%	61%	55%
Retention Rate – First-time, part-time	48%	33%	34%	30%

The Transfer-out rate within 150% of normal time to program completion, which dipped in Cohort 2019, has increased for the last two years, rising to 30% for the Cohort year 2021. The 4-year average Student Right-to-Know Transfer-out Rate is 25%.

Transfer Out Rate	AY21-22 - COHORT YEAR 2018	AY22-23 - COHORT YEAR 2019	AY23-24 - COHORT YEAR 2020	AY24-25 - COHORT YEAR 2021
Transfer-out Rate within 150% of normal time to program completion	27%	19%	27%	30%

Cohort of full-time, first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students

Institutional investments also signal a commitment to long-term student achievement. The opening of the [Center for Nursing and Health Science](#) and the [Gene Haas Center for Advanced Manufacturing Technology](#) marks a strategic expansion in high-demand career pathways. Plans to build [new student housing](#) directly across from campus, and membership in the [Thurgood Marshall College Fund](#).

Through these efforts, Bishop State is strengthening the alignment between academic offerings, workforce needs, and student aspirations, ensuring that learners not only transfer and graduate but also thrive in their next steps academically and professionally.

Transfer and Institutional Partnerships

Bishop State Community College has cultivated a network of intentional transfer-focused programs and institutional partnerships that facilitate seamless pathways from two-year to four-year degrees. These efforts exemplify scalable models of collaboration that reduce credit loss, streamline transitions, and promote student success.

The college's top transfer institutions include the University of South Alabama, the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Alabama State University, and the University of West Alabama. Through [Associate in Arts \(AA\)](#) and [Associate in Science \(AS\)](#) degree pathways, which offer concentrations in high-demand fields such as business, psychology, biology, health, and STEM, students can fulfill general education requirements and build a strong academic foundation aligned with their intended bachelor's programs.

Notably, Bishop State has launched a **STEM Pathways Program**, supporting a cohort of students pursuing pre-engineering, pre-medicine, and pre-pharmacy studies. Students in this program benefit from guided academic planning, personalized degree plans, access to scholarships such as the *Pathway USA* Scholarship, and dedicated transfer advising. The program is designed to expand access for both traditional and nontraditional students, including those from dual enrollment and technical education programs.

Recent **partnership agreements and MOUs** demonstrate Bishop State's commitment to reducing barriers to transfer:

- Through a partnership with **Tuskegee University**, **Bishop State students** can transfer up to 64 credits and access **mentorship, scholarships, and academic support**.
- An **articulation agreement with the University of Mobile** facilitates a smooth pathway for students pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Child and Social Development.
- A **culinary arts-to-hospitality management agreement with the University of South Alabama** supports students seeking to advance in a growing service sector.
- The college has also expanded articulation pathways with **Miles College** and **Columbia Southern University**, including tuition discounts and bachelor's degree opportunities in fields such as occupational safety, EMS administration, and criminal justice.



Source: Bishop State Community College

Bishop State Community College's Culinary Arts program established with the University of South Alabama's Hospitality and Tourism Management (HTM) program, an articulation agreement. This partnership creates a seamless **transfer pathway**, allowing graduates of Bishop State's Culinary Arts program to pursue a Bachelor's degree in Hospitality and Tourism Management at the University of South Alabama.¹⁰

Additional partnerships with **Xavier University of Louisiana (College of Pharmacy)**, the **University of South Alabama's Colleges of Medicine and Engineering**, and others in development expand opportunities for students pursuing competitive and high-demand fields.

Through intentional program design, shared academic pathways, and strategic collaboration with regional and state institutions, Bishop State Community College is effectively removing barriers and broadening access to four-year degrees. These transfer and institutional partnerships stand as a model for scalable, student-centered collaboration in higher education.

Student Support Services

At Chattahoochee Valley Community College (CVCC), student success is grounded in a culture of care, connection, and comprehensive support. CVCC offers a robust range of student services designed to equip learners with the academic, personal, and career resources they need to succeed and reach their goals.

The **CVCC Dual Enrollment Program** offers high school students early access to college-level coursework, introducing them to the college environment. **For students aspiring to pursue a bachelor's degree, this program serves as a critical first step in understanding the college experience and navigating CVCC's transfer pathways.** By participating in dual enrollment, students begin to build college credits, develop academic confidence, and gain insight into the options and support available through CVCC's university transfer programs.

A cornerstone of CVCC's student support efforts is the **SENSE Program** (Strategies to Enhance New Student Engagement), a Title III Strengthening Institutions initiative designed to build meaningful connections between students and the CVCC community. The SENSE Program is scheduled to conclude in September 2025.

In the spring of 2025, the Center to Improve Rural Student Success (CIRSS) succeeded the SENSE Program. CIRSS is a four-year, grant-funded initiative supported by the U.S. Department of Education through the **Rural Postsecondary and Economic Development (RPEDS)** program. The RPEDS program is focused on increasing postsecondary enrollment, persistence, and completion among rural students by developing high-quality career pathways aligned with high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand regional industries.

Through CIRSS, CVCC implemented targeted support services that address the specific barriers rural students face, such as limited access to educational resources, career guidance, and technology. The grant will support the development and expansion of initiatives that foster student success, including personalized academic advising, career coaching, and the integration of advanced learning tools.¹¹ CVCC is located in a rural region of Alabama, serving a student population primarily from Lee, Russell, Macon, and Barbour Counties, as well as the nearby metropolitan area of Columbus, Georgia.

Complementing this effort, the **Career Services Center** provides personalized guidance for students navigating their career pathways, offering support with job exploration, resume development, and preparation for life after graduation. This resource is accessible to both current students and alumni, reflecting the institution's long-term investment in learners' professional success.

CVCC also supports students' academic achievement through its **Tutoring Center**, which delivers assistance across most disciplines and accommodates all learning modalities—traditional, hybrid, and online. The **Learning Resource Center (LRC)** further enhances academic engagement by offering access to more than 46,000 print volumes, 20,000+ e-books, digital databases, and customized research support.

To support student wellness, CVCC offers **personal and academic advisement**, including disability services, and connects students with resources to help them overcome mental health or personal challenges that may impact their academic progress.

The **CVCC Testing Center** plays a pivotal role in both academic placement and credentialing. As a certified member of the National College Testing Association (NCTA), the center provides a secure, student-centered environment for assessments, including course placement, online testing, and

industry certifications. These services not only uphold professional standards but also reinforce CVCC's broader mission of supporting academic achievement and workforce readiness.

Together, these wraparound services reflect CVCC's commitment to providing holistic, equity-minded support systems that foster academic momentum, transfer readiness, and lifelong success. By engaging, encouraging, and empowering its students—known proudly as Pirates—CVCC demonstrates how a comprehensive support infrastructure can serve as a foundation for transformative student outcomes.

Student Outcomes

Chattahoochee Valley Community College (CVCC) is advancing student success through strategic efforts that improve retention, promote degree completion, and facilitate successful transfer to four-year institutions. The college's commitment to student achievement is reflected in its demographic reach and key performance indicators.

CVCC serves a diverse student population that includes traditional-age learners, adult students, and individuals from underserved communities. This diversity underscores the college's role in providing equitable access to postsecondary education and in preparing students for academic and workforce advancement.

Retention rates at CVCC indicate progress in engaging students through the first year, one of the most critical benchmarks for long-term success. Through initiatives such as proactive success coaching, academic support services, and mentoring, the college continues to enhance its ability to retain students and guide them toward credential attainment.

Transfer rates highlight CVCC's growing success in preparing students to continue their education beyond the associate degree. Through transfer-focused academic programs and strong institutional partnerships, students are increasingly earning the credits and credentials necessary to enroll and thrive at four-year institutions.

While detailed data on **credit accumulation** and **bachelor's or associate degree completion rates** may vary by cohort, CVCC's investments in student-centered support systems and guided academic pathways are enabling more students to meet key milestones, reduce time to completion, and take the next step in their educational journeys.

Together, these outcomes demonstrate how CVCC is not only expanding access but also scaling student success with a focus on persistence, transfer readiness, and equitable achievement.

Chattahoochee Valley Top Six Universities for Transfer	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
AU	32	23	24	27	26
AUM	9	9	9	11	4
JSU	1	2	9	7	9
TROY	21	28	29	24	17
UA	4	7	8	9	24
UAB	7	4	8	9	12

Source: ACHE at <https://data.ache.edu/Rpt.Transfer>

Transfer and Institutional Partnerships

Chattahoochee Valley Community College (CVCC) is advancing student mobility and educational equity through a robust set of articulation agreements, workforce-aligned programs, and community-based initiatives. These partnerships are designed to reduce barriers to transfer and expand access to four-year degrees, particularly for students in rural and underserved communities.

CVCC maintains **formal articulation agreements** with a range of regional and national institutions, including **Alabama State University, Auburn University at Montgomery, Miles College, Troy University – Phenix City Campus, the United States Sports Academy, and Mississippi State University (MSU)**. These agreements ensure that students can transfer credits with confidence and clarity, thereby streamlining the path to completing a bachelor's degree.

A notable partnership with **Mississippi State University**, established in August 2023, provides special benefits for CVCC graduates and staff. This agreement specifically supports students with associate degrees in applied technology who wish to pursue further education while balancing work and family responsibilities. It reflects a shared commitment between CVCC and MSU to create flexible, adult-friendly pathways to degree attainment.

In addition to these university partnerships, CVCC is expanding access to education through the **Center to Improve Rural Student Success (CIRSS)** initiative, which targets rural students. CIRSS addresses longstanding geographic and socioeconomic barriers by delivering **mobile/hybrid instruction, remote testing, and community-based recruitment**. Career and college exploration events, along with hands-on experiences in **STEM, healthcare, and technical trades**, help students envision and plan their educational futures.

CVCC also connects rural learners to **high-demand workforce pathways**, including programs in **automotive manufacturing, industrial maintenance, pharmacy technician training, emergency medical services, and nursing**. These short-term certification programs not only provide immediate entry points into high-wage careers but also serve as stepping stones to advanced degrees through CVCC's transfer partnerships.

Collaborative efforts with local K–12 systems, such as the partnership with **Russell County High School**, further illustrate CVCC's commitment to aligning **career and technical education (CTE)** with industry-recognized credentials and long-term employment outcomes. These programs ensure students graduate workforce-ready while maintaining the option to pursue further education.

By integrating **academic transfer pathways** with **workforce development** and **community-based outreach**, CVCC is removing structural barriers and creating a more inclusive and responsive higher education ecosystem. Its strategic partnerships with four-year institutions and rural-serving initiatives serve as a replicable model for how community colleges can lead equitable educational and economic transformation.

Academic Progress – Student Transferring to a University	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Alabama A&M	0	0	0	0	0
Alabama State University	0	0	0	0	0
Athens State University	0	0	1	0	0
Auburn University	32	23	24	27	26
Auburn University at Montgomery	9	9	9	11	4
Jacksonville State University	1	2	9	7	9
Troy University	21	28	29	24	17
The University of Alabama	4	7	8	9	24
University of Alabama at Birmingham	7	4	8	9	12
University of Alabama at Huntsville	1	1	0	2	2
University of Montevallo	0	0	0	1	0
University of North Alabama	1	0	0	0	0
University of South Alabama	1	2	1	1	4
University of West Alabama	0	3	2	0	2
Total	77	79	91	91	100

Source: ACHE at <https://data.ache.edu/Rpt.Transfer>

Student Support Services

Drake State Community and Technical College is advancing a comprehensive student success model that integrates academic advising, career coaching, mental health services, and innovative support programs. These holistic services reflect the institution's commitment to removing barriers and creating an inclusive environment that empowers all students to thrive academically and personally.

At the core of Drake State's approach is the **Student Success Coach** program, which aims to increase postsecondary enrollment and completion, particularly among underserved populations. Through this model, students receive proactive guidance on career and educational planning, with a strong focus on Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathways. By informing students and families about career opportunities, academic requirements, and financial aid resources, the program helps students make informed decisions that align with their long-term goals.

Career preparation is further supported through the **Office of Career Services**, which provides one-on-one assistance with career exploration, resume development, interview preparation, and connections to apprenticeships, internships, and job placement opportunities. **Career readiness workshops and networking events** reinforce the institution's role as a bridge between education and workforce success.

Drake State also fosters a strong sense of community through its participation in the **Caring Campus Initiative**. This national evidence-based effort promotes meaningful connections between faculty, staff, and students. The initiative strengthens the campus culture by addressing non-academic barriers and ensuring that all students feel seen, supported, and valued.

Mental health and wellness services are readily available through the college's **Counseling Services**, which offer support for crisis intervention, personal adjustment, anxiety, stress, and academic or vocational decisions. Confidential services and referrals to external providers ensure students receive the care they need, when they need it. While faculty serve as primary academic advisors, the counselor provides supplemental academic guidance as requested.

To support equitable access, Drake State offers a wide array of **financial aid resources**, including federal and state grants, work-study programs, veteran benefits, and institutional scholarships. Specialized programs such as WIOA, Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Senior Adult Scholarship ensure that financial constraints do not limit students' ability to pursue a college education.

Additionally, the college addresses transportation challenges through its **Lyft Ride Smart partnership**, providing students with reliable access to classes, jobs, and community resources. This innovative service enhances retention and ensures students can consistently engage in their academic journey.

Drake State also supports early college awareness through its **Summer Bridge Program**, which is designed for high school students in grades 10–12. The program introduces participants to college-level coursework in mathematics, biology, and computer information systems, while engaging them with STEM industry partners and campus leaders. This early exposure encourages college readiness and builds confidence among future students.

Although the college does not currently offer on-campus housing, its targeted investments in coaching, career development, counseling, and community mobility represent a robust and evolving model of student-centered support.

Through these wraparound services, Drake State is delivering on its mission to uplift every student by meeting both their academic and non-academic needs, helping them succeed in college, career, and life.

Transfer and Institutional Partnerships

Drake State has established a robust network of articulation agreements with regional and state institutions to support seamless transfer and degree completion for its students. These strategic partnerships ensure credit alignment through clearly defined transfer maps, dual admissions opportunities, and co-designed academic pathways. By minimizing credit loss and reducing transfer-related barriers, Drake State empowers students to pursue and attain four-year degrees with greater efficiency and confidence.

The college maintains articulation agreements with the following institutions:

- Alabama A&M University
- Athens State University
- Auburn University
- Jacksonville State University
- Oakwood University
- The University of Alabama at Birmingham
- The University of Alabama in Huntsville (Electrical Engineering)
- University of Montevallo
- University of North Alabama
- University of West Alabama
- Western Governors University

These partnerships exemplify effective collaboration and serve as a model for aligning the goals of two-year and four-year institutions in support of student success.

Student Support Services

At Gadsden State Community College (GSCC), a comprehensive network of student support services is intentionally designed to meet the academic and non-academic needs of a diverse student population, especially first-generation, low-income, and rural learners. These services provide a strong foundation for student persistence, success, and transfer readiness by offering holistic, wraparound support.

To ensure a robust curricular match with transfer institutions, GSCC engages in joint faculty convenings to review course syllabi, learning outcomes, and sequencing. Guided Pathway maps and DegreeWorks software help students understand which courses apply directly to their intended bachelor's degrees.

Transfer planning begins early, often during the student's first semester. Advisors help students select a program of study aligned with their intended transfer institution and career goals. Pathways are co-developed with partner institutions to prevent excess credit accumulation and to promote on-time degree completion.

Gadsden State Community College offers a comprehensive ecosystem of academic and non-academic supports aimed at promoting student success from entry to transfer:

Transfer Advising, Mentoring, and Coaching

Gadsden State's [Advising and Retention Center](#) offers targeted academic counseling, particularly for students enrolled in developmental education. Students receive one-on-one support in selecting majors, mastering study and time management skills, and preparing for transfer through access to admissions guidance, scholarship resources, and university connections. Advisors also help students navigate personal challenges, such as mental health concerns, by connecting them to community resources and offering group workshops on social awareness topics.

Student Support Services (SSS) Program

Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, the TRIO Student Support Services program at Gadsden State serves over 600 eligible students—first-generation, low-income, or students with disabilities at no cost to them. The program offers:

- Free tutoring in core subjects
- Personalized academic advising
- Financial literacy and college-readiness workshops
- Technology access, including printing and computer labs
- Cultural and university campus visits
- Scholarship opportunities

SSS fosters a supportive and inclusive environment that promotes equitable success for all participants.

Cheaha Educational Opportunity Center (EOC)

As one of only two community colleges in Alabama to host a TRIO EOC, Gadsden State supports up to 850 adult learners annually across four counties. The center offers individualized assistance with college admissions, financial aid, high school equivalency, and career planning, removing barriers to entry for adult learners.

Mental Health and Wellness

Recognizing the impact of mental wellness on academic success, Gadsden State provides **free teletherapy** through Uwill, giving students immediate access to crisis care, scheduled therapy sessions, and self-directed wellness resources, including yoga, mindfulness, and meditation.

Technology, Learning Support, and Orientation

Students have access to a range of academic support services through:

- The Cardinal Tutoring Center (free, walk-in tutoring for all)
- The Teaching and Learning Center (TLC) for online learning support and faculty development
- Library services include interlibrary loans, e-resources, and extended checkouts
- **ORI 101 Orientation Course**, a required hybrid class designed to equip first-time students with the tools to succeed academically and navigate college life

Upward Bound and Bridge Programs

Since 1973, Upward Bound has offered high-impact support to low-income, first-generation high school students. Its multi-phase approach includes academic year tutoring, summer bridge programs, and college visits, preparing students for a successful college transition through scholarships, career exploration, and life skills development. Graduating seniors receive summer scholarships to begin college coursework at Gadsden State.

Additional Supports

- **Financial Aid:** Comprehensive advising on scholarships, grants, and federal assistance, including guidance for transfer scholarships at key Alabama universities.
- **On-Campus Housing:** Fowler Residence Hall provides affordable, secure housing for a diverse community of students, including international learners and athletes.

Gadsden State Community College exemplifies a student-centered approach to postsecondary success by addressing students' academic, social, financial, and emotional needs. Through layered support programs such as TRIO SSS, EOC, and Upward Bound, as well as innovative advising models, the institution builds a seamless pipeline from entry to graduation or transfer, empowering students to thrive both in college and beyond.

Student Outcomes

Transfer student outcomes are tracked through collaborative data-sharing with partner institutions, the Alabama State Longitudinal Data System, and alumni surveys. These efforts enable the college to monitor persistence, degree completion, and career outcomes post-transfer.

Transfer and Institutional Partnerships

Gadsden State Community College has established strong institutional partnerships and transfer pathways that ensure academic continuity and reduce barriers to attaining a four-year degree. Through a combination of articulation agreements, dual admission opportunities, and clearly mapped transfer pathways, GSCC supports a seamless transition for students pursuing a bachelor's degree.

Strategic Articulation Agreements

Gadsden State Community College maintains articulation agreements with a broad network of public and private four-year institutions, including:

- Athens State University
- Auburn University
- Jackson State University (Mississippi)
- Jacksonville State University
- Miles College
- Samford University
- Troy University
- University of Alabama
- University of Alabama at Birmingham
- University of Alabama in Huntsville

These partnerships provide students with a wide range of academic options, ensuring that coursework aligns with the degree requirements of transfer institutions.

Model Partnership with Samford University

A standout example of effective collaboration is GSCC's agreement with [Samford University](#), designed to simplify the transfer process and expand access to scholarship opportunities. Under the MOU:

- Students who complete designated coursework at GSCC are guaranteed seamless admission into select Samford programs (Organizational Leadership, Liberal Studies, Human Development and Family Science, and Public Health).
- Gadsden State Community College graduates with an associate degree satisfy Samford's general education requirements.
- Transfer scholarships include \$2,000 for completing 24 credits over three semesters, with an additional \$2,500 for Phi Theta Kappa members. Eligible STEM students may receive the [STEM Scholar's Award](#), averaging \$10,000 annually.

This agreement highlights GSCC's commitment to reducing transfer friction and supporting students beyond the associate degree.

Transfer Tools and Advising Support

Gadsden State utilizes the [Alabama Transfer](#) to ensure that core curriculum credits are accepted by all public institutions in Alabama. Students benefit from early and ongoing academic advising, transfer fairs, and strategic planning resources. Advisors encourage students to begin exploring transfer options during their first semester and provide tailored guidance through each phase of the process, from selecting majors to applying for financial aid.

Transfer success is further enhanced by workshops, campus visits, and articulation guides that align student coursework with specific university majors, ensuring a seamless transition. Gadsden State also provides comprehensive checklists and resources to help students navigate the application process, meet deadlines, and maximize scholarship opportunities.

Gadsden State Community College exemplifies a transfer-centered institution through intentional partnerships, aligned curricula, and proactive advising. Its collaborative agreements—especially the innovative partnership with Samford University—serve as a model for advancing equity, reducing credit loss, and supporting the timely completion of bachelor's degrees for community college students across Alabama and beyond.

Lawson State Community College Transfer Program



Student Support Services

Lawson State Community College (LSCC) delivers a comprehensive and equity-driven model of student support services that addresses the academic, personal, and career needs of students, particularly those seeking to transfer to four-year institutions. Through intentional advising structures, wraparound services, and targeted student development initiatives, LSCC ensures that its learners, many of whom are first-generation college students, have the tools and support necessary to succeed and complete their educational journey.

Advising and Coaching Models

Central to LSCC's advising redesign is the **R.A.C.E. to the Finish!** —Retention, Advising, Completion, and Engagement Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). A cross-functional effort between Student Services and Instructional Services, the center is staffed with faculty, counselors, and advising staff, offering robust in-person and virtual advising support. Faculty members are required to provide at least one hour of advising per week, resulting in over 100 hours of service across campuses. This investment has strengthened one-on-one connections and helped students stay on track to graduate.

The strategic approach of the QEP involves four targeted initiatives that serve to promote and support campus-wide student success. The overarching plan includes: 1) changing the College's decentralized advising model to a **shared-split advising model**; 2) creating and operating of a **centralized Advising Center**; 3) **identifying faculty and staff to serve as Master Advisors**; and 4) **integrating of professional advising staff and personnel** to maintain and oversee the overarching initiatives, procedures and activities identified as supporting completion, retention and student engagement.

Career and Transfer Services

Lawson State Community College offers career and transfer guidance through resume workshops, interview preparation, career fairs, and on-campus recruiting. The institution's **Career and Transfer Services** office also provides personalized advising and career planning across both campuses. Importantly, LSCC integrates **transfer readiness** education into its first-year orientation classes, where students are introduced to **Alabama Transfers** agreements and the broader concept of guided college transfer.

Academic and Wraparound Supports

The **SPACE Center** (Student Persistence through Assistance and Collaborative Efforts) offers tutoring, seminars, and academic advising. Wraparound services are integral to LSCC's student support philosophy and include a food pantry, transportation assistance, a laptop loaner program, and a clothing closet—all designed to remove non-academic barriers to student success and completion. As noted by Dr. Sherry Davis, these services are critical to supporting student retention, particularly among transfer students.

TRIO and Student Support Services (SSS)

Lawson State Community College hosts federally funded **TRIO programs**, including **Student Support Services**, which provide targeted academic and personal support for first-generation, low-income, and disabled students. These programs aim to improve graduation and retention rates by fostering a supportive environment and skill-building opportunities across both campuses.

Financial Aid and Recognition

Financial support is a key element of the college's wraparound model. In 2024–2025, LSCC awarded **over \$552,000 in academic transfer scholarships** in partnership with nine four-year institutions. Events like **Honors and Awards Day** publicly celebrate these achievements, reinforcing a culture of excellence and recognition for transfer-bound students.

Bridge and Pipeline Programs

Through programs like **SOAR** (Summer Opportunity for Academic Readiness), LSCC prepares high school seniors—particularly those interested in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU)—for the college transition by introducing them to academic pathways, financial aid, and scholarship resources. Lawson State STEM! engages students (from middle school through college) year-round and helps them secure transfer scholarships and research opportunities nationwide.

Lawson State STEM!

The STEM Program at Lawson State Community College provides a variety of opportunities designed to enhance students' awareness of STEM fields and foster their persistence in STEM education and careers. Lawson State hosts a range of on-campus STEM activities for middle school, high school, and college students, including:¹²

- STEM Scholars Program (*for college students*)
- STEM Enrichment Institute (*middle/high school*)
- STEM Internship Program (*for college STEM majors*)
- STEAM Academy (*middle/high school*)

A signature event, the **Lawson State STEM White Coat Ceremony**, honors STEM Scholars who have engaged in rigorous scientific research during the academic year and participated in **Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REUs)** during the summer.

Lawson State also partners with **Samford University** to support student transfer and advancement in the STEM fields. Through this partnership, more than 10 academically gifted LSCC students have transferred to Samford's STEM Scholars Program with support from **NSF S-STEM scholarships**.



Source: <https://www.lawsonstate.edu/>



To view the Lawson State STEM!, click here, [The STEMposium Magazine 2025 Edition](#)

Culture of Transfer and Community Engagement

Lawson State Community College actively engages in early outreach and pipeline development by involving multiple departments—not just Admissions—in high school visits and recruitment efforts. The college also educates families about support services and the transfer process, helping parents of first-generation students better understand pathways to a four-year degree. This approach ensures that students are prepared, connected, and supported throughout their enrollment and transfer process.

With a transfer readiness exceeding 69%, LSCC is a model of how community colleges can create a supportive, structured, and culturally responsive ecosystem that advances student success, especially for historically marginalized populations.

Transfer “Ready” Rate

The transfer-ready rate is determined by using two criteria: 1) the percentage of transferable Associate Degrees (A.A. and A.S.) compared to the percentage of total degrees awarded in a given year; and 2) the actual number of Lawson State students who transferred to a four-year college.

The percentage of transferable associate degrees is calculated by meeting the college threshold of 25% associate degrees awarded to students attending Lawson State in an academic year.

YEAR	# OF GRADUATES	# OF A.A. & A.S. DEGREES	% OF A.A. & A.S. DEGREES
2024	574	199	3467.00%
2023	611	207	3366.00%
2022	609	190	3244.00%

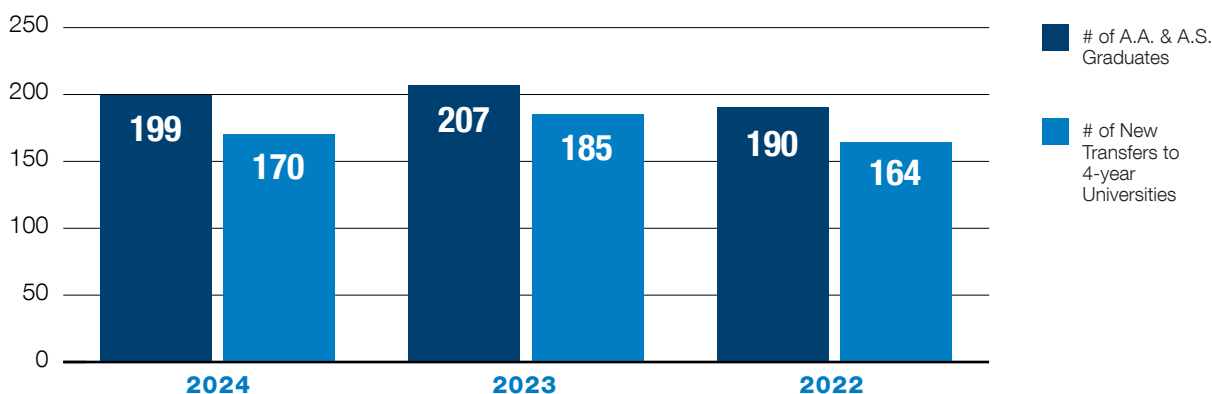
To evaluate the actual transfer rate, Lawson State uses the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) Annual Transfer Reports, which provide detailed data on the number of Lawson State students who transferred and to which institutions, by academic year.

Student Outcomes

According to the Alabama Commission of Higher Education data:

- In 2024, 199 Lawson State students earned A.A./A.S. degrees, and 170 new Lawson State students transferred to a four-year college (during that same year). This represents 85% alignment.
- In 2023, 207 Lawson State students earned A.A./A.S. degrees, and 185 new Lawson State students transferred to a four-year college (during that same year). This represents an 89% alignment.
- In 2022, 190 Lawson State students earned A.A./A.S. degrees, and 164 new Lawson State students transferred to a four-year college (during that same year). This represents an 86.3% alignment.

ALABAMA COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION
NEW Undergraduate Transfer Report Results for Lawson State (2022-2024)



Note: ACHE reports do not include out-of-state transfers.

Transfer and Institutional Partnerships

Lawson State Community College (LSCC) has built a strong infrastructure of transfer and institutional partnerships that facilitate seamless transitions for students pursuing four-year degrees. These partnerships are grounded in robust articulation agreements, dual admission models, and co-designed transfer maps that ensure credit alignment and reduce common barriers in the transfer process. Through these strategic collaborations, LSCC serves as a statewide exemplar for advancing equitable transfer outcomes and expanding educational opportunity.

Comprehensive Articulation Agreements and Transfer Pathways

LSCC's **College Transfer Division** is the institution's largest and most popular program, allowing students to complete up to **64 transferable credits** toward an associate degree before matriculating to a four-year university. Students pursuing an Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree follow clearly defined academic pathways that align with the curriculum requirements of partner universities, ensuring they remain on track toward earning a bachelor's degree.

LSCC maintains active partnerships with a broad network of public and private institutions, including:

- Alabama A&M University
- Auburn University
- Jacksonville State University
- Miles College
- Samford University
- Tennessee State University
- Tuskegee University
- University of Alabama

These agreements allow for flexible and innovative transfer options, including **dual-degree and graduate pathway models** that extend beyond the associate level.

Innovative and Place-Based Transfer Opportunities

Notably, LSCC's articulation agreement with **Alabama A&M University** enables students to earn their **Bachelor of Social Work (BSW)** degree on-site at Lawson State through a combination of synchronous and asynchronous instruction. Students can even continue to pursue a **Master of Social Work (MSW)** through the same model without relocating, thereby greatly increasing access for students with geographic or financial constraints.

Similarly, the partnership with **Tennessee State University** offers asynchronous PhD coursework, which several Lawson faculty and staff are utilizing to further their education. These models of vertical transfer—from associate to bachelor's and even to doctoral study—illustrate LSCC's commitment to lifelong learning and institutional collaboration.

Conclusion

Lawson State Community College's network of articulation agreements and co-located degree programs exemplifies how community colleges can design transfer ecosystems that are student-centered, equity-driven, and regionally responsive. By aligning academic programs with partner institutions and offering flexible, stackable credentials, LSCC not only simplifies the transfer process but also expands access to graduate-level opportunities. These partnerships serve as a model for other community colleges seeking to scale transfer success and deepen educational attainment in their regions.

Shelton State Community College (SSCC) Transfer Program



Student Support Services

Shelton State Community College provides a comprehensive and student-centered approach to support services that foster academic success, personal growth, and a seamless transition to four-year institutions. Through a combination of structured advising, academic enrichment, mentoring, and wraparound services, SSCC holistically addresses the needs of its diverse student population.

Advising and Mentorship:

Shelton State Community College assigns advisors based on students' last names, offering continuity in support. Students schedule meetings via an online platform, fostering accountability and proactive engagement. The college also supports transfer advising through one-on-one coaching and structured guidance to align academic planning with four-year transfer goals.

Tutoring and Academic Resources:

The SOAR Institute provides free tutoring, internet access, computers, and software for all enrolled students. It also offers help sessions focused on placement assessments and basic technology skills. These services ensure students are academically prepared and equipped to succeed.

Peer and Community Mentorship:

The Collegiate 100, an initiative affiliated with the 100 Black Men of Tuscaloosa, fosters peer mentorship by pairing college students with high school students preparing for college. This program supports leadership development and community engagement while facilitating a smooth transition for incoming students.

Financial Aid and Accessibility:

With more than half of its students receiving financial aid, SSCC supports affordability through grants, scholarships, and federal work-study programs, although it does not participate in loan programs. This debt-averse approach underscores the college's commitment to access and financial wellness.

Mental Health and Basic Needs Support:

The C.A.R.E. (Communicate, Assess, Refer, Educate) Team is a cornerstone of non-academic support. It provides individualized assistance for students in crisis or facing challenges related to health, housing, food insecurity, or legal matters. This proactive resource ensures life circumstances do not derail students.

Technology Access:

In addition to academic support, the SOAR Institute ensures equitable access to technology, providing essential digital tools and training to support coursework and skill development.

Associate Degree Concentrations for Transfer Students

The Associate in Arts (AA) in General Studies and the Associate in Science (AS) in General Studies are degrees designed for students who plan to transfer to a college or university to complete a baccalaureate degree. Shelton State Community College recognizes concentrations of courses within the plans of study for its degree programs. A concentration within an AA or AS degree

represents a coherent and significant cohort of courses (at least 18 semester credit hours) that corresponds to an established transfer pathway to a baccalaureate degree in a specific major. Concentrations are recognized on diplomas, but do not constitute separate degrees. As discussed above, the degree awarded is either an AA in General Studies or an AS in General Studies.

Below is a listing of the approved concentrations currently offered at Shelton State.

ASSOCIATE DEGREE CONCENTRATIONS

Associates in Arts	Associate in Science
• Art • Business • Criminal Justice • Dance • English • History • Music • Physical Education • Psychology (Clinical) • Religious Studies • Sports Management • Theater	• Chemistry • Exercise Science • General Science • Mathematics • Psychology (Experimental)

Shelton State Transfer Bridge and Scholarship Programs

Bridge Program Partnership with the University of Alabama Shelton State and the University of Alabama (UA) have established the [Shelton State Bridge Program](#) to support students transitioning from SSCC to UA. Through this program, UA will admit up to 150 SSCC students who meet the following criteria: a minimum of 24 completed college credit hours, a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher, and good academic standing.

Participants in the Bridge Program will gain early access to a range of UA student services designed to promote campus engagement and facilitate a seamless transfer process. These services include admission to Crimson Tide athletic events, use of the UA Student Recreation Center, campus parking privileges, access to the UA Career Center, and issuance of a UA ACT Card.¹³

The [SOAR HBCU Scholarship Program](#), supported by the Thurgood Marshall College Fund, offers a one-week summer residential experience for rising high school seniors. Hosted at The University of Alabama, this program educates participants about HBCUs, HBCCs, financial aid, and college admissions, supporting a successful transition to postsecondary education.

Through its integrated and inclusive approach to student support, Shelton State Community College exemplifies best practices in meeting both the academic and non-academic needs of its students. Its commitment to advising, mentoring, and resource coordination strengthens student success and sets the foundation for equitable transfer outcomes.

Student Outcomes

Shelton State Community College (SSCC) demonstrates a strategic commitment to advancing student success through regular monitoring of transfer and graduation rates, clear institutional goals, and innovative partnerships that expand academic and workforce opportunities. By aligning student outcome metrics with its mission of academic excellence and workforce preparation, SSCC has established a culture of continuous improvement and accountability.

Shelton State Transfers Student Academic Performance:

SSCC transfer data for students attending the University of Alabama, the University of Alabama at Birmingham, and the University of Alabama at Huntsville demonstrates that Shelton State students are performing well at the four-year institutions:

University of Alabama – Shelton State Transfer Academic Performance – 2024 -2025

Student Category	Number of Students	Average Semester Hours Attempted	Average Semester Hours Earned	Average GPA
1 Transfers from Shelton State CC	428	29.78	27.01	3.24
2 Transfers from other Alabama Two-Year Colleges	945	27.16	24.32	3.14
3 Other Transfers	1,802	25.59	22.85	3.08
4 First-Time Undergraduates	21,830	27.53	25.29	3.32
5 All Transfers and First-Time Undergraduates	25,005	27.41	25.11	3.30

SSCC transfers (n = 428) outperformed their peers from other Alabama two-year colleges and the general transfer population, earning an average of **27.01 semester hours** with a **3.24 GPA**—higher than other transfer groups and closely aligned with first-time UA undergraduates (GPA 3.32).

University of Alabama at Birmingham – Shelton State Transfer Academic Performance – 2023-2024

POST-TRANSFER HOURS AND GPA

Transfer Hours Accepted	#Students	Average GPA
15-23.00 semester hours	24	3.33
24-59.99 semester hours	65	2.92
60 or more semester hours	33	2.90
Total	122	3.02

SSCC transfers (n = 122) achieved notable GPA increases post-transfer, with an overall post-transfer **GPA of 3.02**, up from a pre-transfer GPA of **2.86**, indicating their capacity to succeed in more rigorous academic environments.

University of Alabama at Huntsville-Shelton State Transfer Academic Performance – 2023-2024

Student Category	Number of Students	Average Semester Hours Attempted	Average Semester Hours Earned	Average GPA
1 Transfers from Shelton State CC	17	34.64	30.82	3.25
2 Transfers from other Alabama Two-Year Colleges	2010	35.42	31.00	3.19
3 Other Transfers	1623	33.72	29.90	3.22
4 All Transfers and First-Time Undergraduates	2789	32.31	28.69	3.26

SSCC transfers (n = 17) averaged **34.64 semester hours attempted** and **30.82 earned**, with an **average GPA of 3.25**, outperforming both the other two-year college transfers and general transfer cohorts.

These metrics validate SSCC's efforts to prepare students not only to transfer but also to thrive at four-year institutions. The academic performance of SSCC transfer students underscores the strength of the college's academic programs, advising services, and intentional transfer partnerships. More broadly, these outcomes reinforce SSCC's mission to expand access to high-quality education, promote credential attainment, and create equitable pathways to bachelor's degrees and economic mobility.

Transfer and Institutional Partnerships

Shelton State Community College exemplifies a student-centered approach to transfer through its expanding portfolio of articulation agreements, dual admissions programs, and co-designed transfer pathways. These initiatives are strategically designed to ensure credit alignment, minimize transfer barriers, and promote educational mobility for students pursuing a four-year degree.

Shelton State Community College maintains formal transfer agreements with a diverse set of four-year institutions, including The University of Alabama, Stillman College, Samford University, and the University of West Alabama. Each partnership reflects Shelton's commitment to academic continuity and regional collaboration. For example, Shelton is enhancing its agreement with Stillman College to include shared degree programs. The College is also finalizing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Mississippi State University to establish a pathway from an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree to a Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) degree.

One of the most notable developments is the Shelton State Bridge Program in collaboration with The University of Alabama (UA), which offers eligible SSCC students early access to UA resources while they are still enrolled at Shelton. This dual enrollment initiative helps students build familiarity with UA's campus, services, and academic culture, ensuring a seamless transfer experience.

Beyond these marquee partnerships, SSCC has established articulation agreements with a wide array of institutions, including Miles College, the University of North Alabama, and Jacksonville State University. These relationships serve as models of effective collaboration, reinforcing SSCC's mission to expand access, increase credential attainment, and support long-term student success across Alabama and the region.



Trenholm State Community College Transfer Program

Student Support Services

Trenholm State Community College (TSCC) provides a student-centered framework of academic advising, mental health counseling, tutoring, and enrichment services designed to support every aspect of student success. Serving a diverse and predominantly under-resourced student population, TSCC's student support infrastructure reflects its commitment to equity, access, and student persistence in college.

Transfer Advising, Mentoring, and Coaching Models

Trenholm State Community College supports [transfer-readiness](#) through individualized advising and outreach, delivered by student services staff and faculty in the General Education and Professional Transfer divisions. While the college lacks a formal, large-scale transfer center, its advising services are designed to support academic planning for degree completion and university transfer.

Tutoring and Academic Support

The [Tutoring Center](#) at Trenholm offers English and writing support through a small team of tutors, and the college has partnered with [PearDeck Learning](#) to expand online tutoring access. Though limited in subject areas and staffing, these services provide targeted academic reinforcement. The college also operates a [Student Success Center](#), which offers enrichment activities and academic coaching to help students navigate course challenges and develop effective study skills.

Mental Health and Wellness Support

Trenholm State Community College's [Academic Counseling and Enrichment Services](#) address a broad spectrum of emotional and psychological needs, including crisis intervention, test anxiety, social stress, dating violence, and substance abuse. These services are coordinated through the Student Success Center and aim to cultivate emotional resilience and academic confidence. TSCC has partnered with UWILL, a mental health platform that enables students/staff to connect with a licensed professional counselor to address their mental health needs. This commitment to holistic wellness is particularly impactful for first-generation students adjusting to the demands of college life.

Financial Aid and Equity-Driven Access

TSCC is a non-loan institution, meaning it does not participate in federal student loan programs. Instead, it prioritizes grants and scholarships to reduce debt burdens. Students are supported through a range of federal and state programs, including:

- [Pell Grant](#)
- [Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant \(FSEOG\)](#)
- [Federal Work-Study \(FWS\)](#)
- [Alabama Student Assistance Grant \(ASAP\)](#) – a need-based award providing up to \$5,000 annually for Pell-eligible students with an Expected Family Contribution (EFC) of zero.

These funding sources reflect Trenholm's equity-focused mission, ensuring that underprivileged students have access to higher education without incurring long-term financial barriers.

Technology and Resource Accessibility

To bridge the digital divide, TSCC offers [laptop rentals](#) through its campus library. This service is essential for students who may lack personal access to technology, supporting their ability to engage in online coursework, research, and virtual advising services.

Bridge and Transition Programs

TSCC participates in the [SOAR HBCU Scholarship Program](#), a summer bridge initiative in partnership with Alabama State University and the Thurgood Marshall College Fund. Open to rising high school seniors, this program introduces participants to the college experience, including admissions, financial aid, career exploration, and academic majors. Offered at no cost, SOAR enhances early college exposure and supports the transition from high school to postsecondary education, especially for students considering HBCUs and HBCCs.

Student Outcomes

Trenholm State Community College is committed to improving postsecondary outcomes for its diverse and predominantly under-resourced student population. Using disaggregated performance data, TSCC tracks student transfer rates, credit accumulation, and degree completion to inform strategic interventions and strengthen its academic and support structures.

Transfer Outcomes

TSCC tracks the transfer rates of first-time, full-time, credential-seeking students within [150% of the standard program time \(three years\)](#). Recent data reflect a downward trend over three academic years, with a notable decline during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic:

Transfer Outcomes	2021–2022 (COHORT YEAR 2018)	2022–2023 (COHORT YEAR 2019)	2023–2024 (COHORT YEAR 2020)	2024–2025 (COHORT YEAR 2021)
Transfer Rate	11% <i>(below institutional threshold of >18%)</i>	11%	11%	18%

While TSCC exceeded its benchmark in earlier years, the drop in the most recent cohort underscores the impact of external factors, including the pandemic, on student mobility. The data also suggest a potential inverse relationship between transfer-out rates and graduation rates, warranting a deeper analysis of how students navigate their completion and transfer options.

Graduation Outcomes

Graduation rates at 150% of program time show a more stable pattern with incremental progress toward the college's benchmark of exceeding 20%:

Graduation Outcomes	2019–2020 (2017 COHORT)	2020–2021 (2018 COHORT)	2021–2022 (2019 COHORT)
Graduation Rate	18% <i>(below threshold)</i>	23%	20%

The rise from 18% to 23% between 2019 and 2021 suggests that student success strategies and support services—such as advising, financial aid access, and counseling—have contributed to improved completion outcomes. However, the slight dip to 20% in the most recent year signals ongoing challenges, particularly for students balancing academic and non-academic responsibilities.

Interpreting the Trends

Taken together, the data reveal two important insights:

- 1 Transfer and completion are not always mutually reinforcing.** Some students may choose to transfer before completing an associate degree, while others prioritize degree attainment at TSCC before considering further education.
- 2 External factors, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, significantly influenced student trajectories.** These include disruptions in academic continuity, economic instability, and shifts in educational priorities, particularly among low-income and first-generation learners.

TSCC's continued use of longitudinal data systems to monitor student progress allows for responsive program design and targeted support interventions. Efforts to realign transfer advising, strengthen institutional partnerships, and support retention through holistic services are critical next steps in boosting long-term student success metrics.

Transfer and Institutional Partnerships

TSCC demonstrates its commitment to expanding student access to bachelor's degrees through innovative and equity-centered transfer partnerships. These collaborations are designed to reduce barriers, align academic programs, and create seamless pathways for students—particularly those from historically underserved backgrounds—to continue their educational journeys.

- Alabama State University
- American Public University System
- Auburn University at Montgomery
- Jacksonville State University
- Miles College
- Tuskegee University

Tuskegee University: A Model Partnership

TSCC's articulation agreement with **Tuskegee University**, one of the nation's most prestigious HBCUs, stands out as a model of strategic alignment and student-centered design. The agreement goes beyond basic credit transfer to offer a comprehensive, relationship-driven transfer experience.

Key elements of the partnership include:

Transfer Scholarships

Tuskegee commits to awarding **three scholarships each fall** to eligible TSCC transfer students:

- Tuskegee Merit Scholarship
- Tuskegee Transfer Grant
- Alabama Transfer Grant

These financial supports reduce cost barriers and incentivize completion of a bachelor's degree.

Reverse Transfer Credit Opportunity

TSCC students can transfer to Tuskegee before completing their associate's degree. Through reverse transfer, students can apply Tuskegee coursework toward their Trenholm associate credential, ensuring no loss of progress and supporting dual credentialing.

Pre-Transfer Campus Integration

To ease the transition process, TSCC students preparing to transfer are invited to participate in Tuskegee campus life during the semester prior to transfer. They gain early access to:

- Athletic events
- The Learning Resource Center
- Career Services

This early engagement fosters a sense of belonging and prepares students for a smooth academic and social transition.

Transfer Maps and Institutional Alignment

Though TSCC does not currently offer a formal dual admissions program, the depth of the Tuskegee partnership achieves similar outcomes. The institutions work collaboratively to align program requirements, ensuring that students follow a clearly mapped path that minimizes credit loss and maximizes transfer efficiency.

The partnership also reflects a shared commitment to student success and regional workforce development. By linking two institutions that serve overlapping communities—one at the two-year level and one at the four-year level—this collaboration strengthens educational continuity and supports upward mobility for Alabama’s students.

Trenholm State Community College’s partnership with Tuskegee University exemplifies how intentional transfer agreements can transform student pathways. By combining credit articulation, financial support, and early integration into campus life, the partnership removes traditional barriers to transfer and builds a supportive bridge to bachelor’s degree attainment. TSCC’s model demonstrates the effectiveness of strategic collaboration in promoting equity and advancing student success across institutional boundaries.



Wallace Community College Selma (WCCS) Transfer Program

Student Support Services

Wallace Community College Selma provides a comprehensive range of student support services tailored to meet the academic and non-academic needs of its diverse student body, particularly those from historically underserved backgrounds. Through dedicated advising, coaching, and federally funded programs, WCCS creates a nurturing environment that fosters persistence, academic achievement, and transfer readiness.

Transfer Advising, Mentoring, and Coaching Models

Wallace Community College Selma integrates academic advising and student success coaching into its student development framework to ensure personalized and proactive support. The **Academic Advising** program plays a dual role, guiding students through appropriate course selection and resolving school-related challenges that may hinder their academic progress. Faculty advisors play a central role in this process, cultivating strong advisory relationships that support student retention and degree completion.

Complementing academic advising is the **Student Success Coaching** program, which takes a holistic approach to student development. Success coaches collaborate with students to address academic, social, personal, and career-related concerns. This model of wraparound support helps students manage the broader challenges of college life and remain focused on their educational goals.

Student Support Services (TRIO SSS)

Wallace Community College Selma participates in the federally funded **TRIO Student Support Services (SSS)** program, targeting first-generation, low-income students and students with disabilities who have demonstrated academic need. Eligible students gain access to:

- Personalized academic advising
- Tutoring and study support
- Assistance with navigating financial aid and transfer opportunities

The SSS program reinforces equity and inclusion by creating pathways for students who may face structural barriers to college success.

Financial Aid Services

The college is a participating institution for major federal aid programs, including the **Federal Pell Grant**, the **Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG)**, the **Federal Work-Study (FWS) program**, and the **ASAP grant**. While WCCS does not participate in student loan programs, its financial aid office provides robust support to help students access available resources and minimize financial barriers to degree attainment.

Technology Access and Learning Resources

Wallace Community College Selma provides access to computer labs across campus to support students who have limited access to technology at home. These labs offer the tools necessary for coursework, research, and online learning. Although there is no formal teaching and learning center, access to technology plays a key role in bridging the digital divide for students.

Student Outcomes

Wallace Community College Selma demonstrates its commitment to student success through ongoing assessment of transfer and graduation outcomes. Using a 150% time-to-completion metric to reflect the realities of its student population—many of whom are part-time, first-generation, or balancing work and family responsibilities—WCCS is actively monitoring its progress toward improving both associate degree completion and transfer rates.

Transfer-Out Rates

Wallace Community College Selma uses IPEDs Grad report to collect and review transfer data. The college established an institutional benchmark of achieving a **minimum 15% transfer-out rate** within the 150% completion timeframe. While the institution met or exceeded this threshold in earlier years, recent trends reflect a decline:

	2021 (2018 COHORT)	2022 (2019 COHORT)	2023 (2020 COHORT)	2024 (2021 COHORT)
Transfer-Out Rate	14.7%	12.9%	8.4%	14.0%

These declining transfer rates underscore the need for ongoing investment in transfer advising, university partnerships, and support structures to reaccelerate upward transfer pathways, particularly for students from underserved backgrounds.

Graduation Rates

In contrast to the transfer trend, WCCS has made steady improvements in **graduation rates**, consistently approaching or exceeding its goal of **a 37% completion rate at 150% time**:

	2021 (2018 COHORT)	2022 (2019 COHORT)	2023 (2020 COHORT)	2024 (2021 COHORT)
Graduation Rate	35.3%	36.5%	39.1%	41.0%

This upward trajectory reflects the effectiveness of campus-wide student success strategies, including academic advising, coaching, and TRIO Student Support Services. These efforts have helped students persist and complete associate degrees, even in the face of economic and logistical challenges.

Transfer and Institutional Partnerships

Wallace Community College Selma is strengthening its role as a transfer-focused institution by establishing robust, student-centered partnerships with a range of four-year colleges and universities. These relationships are grounded in articulation agreements, clearly mapped transfer pathways, and a shared commitment to equity in higher education. By aligning curricula and reducing credit loss, WCCS ensures that students—many of whom are first-generation and from underserved communities—can transition smoothly into bachelor’s degree programs.

Creative and Strategic Transfer Agreements

Wallace Community College Selma has developed articulation agreements with both public and private institutions, offering students a wide spectrum of transfer opportunities that reflect the diversity of student goals and fields of study:

- **Miles College**

As a private, HBCU affiliated with the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, Miles College shares WCCS's mission of empowering underserved student populations. The transfer agreement between the two institutions opens pathways for WCCS graduates to complete their bachelor's degrees in an environment that fosters cultural and academic continuity.

- **South University**

WCCS's partnership with South University offers access to a broad range of professional programs, including nursing, public health, business, and theology. The agreement supports career-oriented students by ensuring credit alignment across health and technical programs, many of which are in high demand in Alabama's workforce.

- **University of West Alabama (UWA)**

A flagship articulation agreement between WCCS and UWA creates a direct and efficient pathway for WCCS students to complete their four-year degrees. Former WCCS President James Mitchell (referencing remarks from President Tucker in 2019) emphasized that the collaboration is not only academic but also deeply rooted in regional service. The partnership reflects a mutual investment in student achievement and community development across Alabama's Black Belt region.

Pathway Design and Impact

Each articulation agreement is developed with a focus on **credit alignment, program compatibility, and student affordability**. These co-designed pathways reduce the duplication of coursework and minimize time to degree completion. Although WCCS does not currently offer dual admission programs, the articulation agreements function similarly by providing structured, pre-approved pathways into bachelor's degree programs.

These institutional partnerships also create a **transfer-friendly culture** at WCCS. Faculty and administrators at both institutions collaborate to ensure curriculum alignment, and students are encouraged to begin planning for transfer early in their academic journey. The partnerships are regularly evaluated to ensure they remain relevant to the needs of students and the demands of the workforce.

Wallace Community College Selma is advancing student success through carefully cultivated partnerships that open doors to four-year degree completion. With transfer agreements that span public and private institutions—including HBCUs and professional colleges—WCCS exemplifies how community colleges can serve as equitable launchpads for bachelor's degree attainment. These collaborations not only benefit students but also contribute to broader regional goals of educational access and economic mobility.

Student Success Stories

This case study highlights the transformative power of transfer-focused institutional efforts by showcasing the real-life journeys of students whose academic and personal resilience have been enhanced through support systems at HBCCs. At **Bishop State Community College**, student success is not just measured in metrics but brought to life through stories of determination, aspiration, and achievement.

A compelling example is the success of Kayla Andrews and Trenice Paige, who were honored with the prestigious Cal & Annette Johnson HBCC Scholarship during the inaugural Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCf) Workforce Development Summit held in Birmingham, Alabama. Each student received a \$15,000 scholarship—the highest amount awarded—to support their educational pursuits in the 2024–2025 academic year.¹⁴

For Trenice Paige, a full-time student and single mother of five, the scholarship represents more than financial aid; it is a validation of her persistence and purpose. She shared, “It helps lighten the financial burden of pursuing my education while balancing my responsibilities as a single mom of five and a full-time student. My journey hasn’t always been easy, but I am determined to succeed and show my children that resilience and hard work pay off.”

The journeys of Kayla and Trenice underscore how Bishop State not only supports academic achievement but also nurtures the resilience and ambition of its students. Their stories exemplify the profound and lasting impact HBCCs can have on individual lives and community transformation.



Source: <https://www.bishop.edu/news/bishop-state-attends-tmcf-workforce-development-summit-wins-scholarships>

At **Chattahoochee Valley Community College**, student success is more than academic achievement—it’s a journey marked by leadership, service, and the pursuit of lifelong goals. The institution’s commitment to nurturing well-rounded, transfer-ready students is exemplified in the stories of DeAndre Arnold and David Renteria, who were honored at the 2025 All-Alabama Academic Team Recognition Program for their outstanding accomplishments.¹⁵

Hosted by the Alabama Community College System (ACCS) and held in Birmingham, this annual event recognizes the top scholars from Alabama’s 24 community and technical colleges. DeAndre and David were among those selected for their academic excellence, leadership, and impact on campus and in their communities.

DeAndre Arnold, a General Studies major with a 3.89 GPA, has made his mark both academically and as a campus leader. Serving as a student ambassador and work-study student in the Marketing Department, DeAndre captures the vibrancy of student life through



Source: <https://www.cv.edu/two-cvcc-students-honored-at-all-alabama-academic-team-recognition-program/>

his photography and presence at events. His commitment and talents have earned him the Troy University Transfer Presidential Scholarship, and he plans to pursue a degree in business with dreams of becoming an entrepreneur.

David Renteria, with a 3.68 GPA, also exemplifies dedication and service. Balancing academics with his role as a work-study student in the IT Department, David has been awarded the University of Alabama's Community College Presidential Scholarship and the Leadership Scholarship. He intends to major in Kinesiology at the University of Alabama and become a physical therapist, reflecting both his academic focus and passion for helping others.

Their recognition as members of the All-Alabama Academic Team, a distinction supported by Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society and the American Association of Community Colleges, speaks to CVCC's ability to prepare students for success beyond the classroom.

DeAndre and David's journeys reflect the broader mission of CVCC: to empower students with the academic foundation, leadership experiences, and transfer pathways necessary to achieve their goals. Their stories bring to life the real impact of institutional support and affirm the critical role community colleges play in expanding opportunity and fostering excellence.

At **Drake State Community and Technical College**, student success is not defined solely by degrees earned, but by lives transformed. This case study highlights the remarkable stories of Dr. Sanitha Douglas and Debbie Holt, whose perseverance, courage, and pursuit of education demonstrate the transformative power of community college pathways, especially for adult learners navigating complex life circumstances.

Dr. Sanitha Douglas began her educational journey at Drake State, where a nurturing environment and committed faculty reignited her desire to learn. Facing the challenges of returning to school as a nontraditional student, Dr. Douglas found not just an academic home but a launching pad for her future. Her time at Drake State laid the foundation for a journey that would take her through nursing school and ultimately to the successful completion of a Doctorate of Nursing Practice (DNP). Now serving as an adjunct instructor, Dr. Douglas has come full circle—mentoring the next generation while serving as a living testament to the possibilities that emerge when students are met with both high expectations and compassionate support.

Equally inspiring is the story of Debbie Holt, whose path to an associate degree in Engineering Graphics began after decades marked by hardship. After dropping out of high school and facing the challenges of addiction and single parenthood, Holt began rebuilding her life at age 42. Motivated by her desire to find purpose and inspired to model resilience for her daughters, Holt enrolled full-time at Drake State. It was there that she encountered Engineering Graphics Department Chair Bob Grissim, whose mentorship and belief in her potential helped her stay grounded and committed to both sobriety and academic success.



Source: <https://drakestate.edu/>



Source: <https://drakestate.edu/>

"I cannot begin to tell you how that man changed my life," Holt recalled. "He was more than a teacher that day. He listened, he understood, he sympathized, and he has been one of the best cheerleaders for me since day one."

Holt went on to graduate with an associate degree, enter the geospatial industry, and secure employment with GIS Surveyors, Inc., which supported her remote work while she continued her studies. She was later awarded the Community College Presidential Scholarship—a full-ride opportunity to the University of Alabama, where she completed her bachelor's degree in Geography with a minor in GIS.

Now thriving professionally and personally, Holt shares a message rooted in her lived experience: "Don't give up. Know that you are worth it."

These student stories exemplify Drake State's deep commitment to second-chance learners, career transformation, and lifelong educational access. Through personalized instruction, compassionate mentoring, and strong academic pathways, the college ensures that every student—regardless of their starting point—has the opportunity to rewrite their future.

Student voices are at the heart of **Gadsden State Community College's** mission to support academic success and seamless transfer opportunities. This case study highlights how institutional efforts—such as strategic university partnerships and proactive transfer pathways—translate into real impact for students like Riley Hull, whose educational journey exemplifies ambition, resilience, and upward mobility.

In August 2024, Riley became the first Gadsden State student to benefit from a newly established Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Gadsden State Community College and Samford University. The partnership guarantees admission for Gadsden State students who meet Samford's requirements and offers both Completer and Full Degree transfer pathways, along with pre-transfer advising and scholarship opportunities.

What makes Riley's success story especially compelling is that she came from a traditionally non-transferable technical degree program in paralegal studies. Under this agreement, Riley was able to transfer her technical credits to Samford and continue pursuing her dream of becoming a lawyer. She reflects on the experience:

"My goal is to be a lawyer one day, and so it means so much to have two schools invested in my success for the future. We didn't know how it would work out, so to see this agreement come in place for students for years to come really represents how education should work for all."

This forward-thinking partnership also includes a reverse transfer provision, allowing students who leave Gadsden State before completing an associate degree to be still awarded the degree once they earn sufficient credits at Samford. This dual-level support ensures students maintain academic momentum while maximizing credential attainment.

Riley Hull's story brings to life the outcomes of Gadsden State's broader commitment to student-centered transfer strategies. Through formal partnerships, personalized advising, and inclusive transfer policies, the college demonstrates how intentional collaboration with four-year institutions opens doors for students, especially those on nontraditional academic paths.



Source: <https://www.gadsdenstate.edu/about-us/latest-news.cms/2024/639/samford-university-and-gadsden-state-form-seamless-transfer--reverse-transfer-partnership-for-students-pursuing-four-year-degrees>

Her success is not only a personal milestone but also a model of what is possible when higher education institutions design systems that put student needs at the center.

Lawson State: Throughout this case study, the voices and journeys of students who have successfully navigated the transfer process are highlighted, bringing to life the real impact of Lawson State's institutional efforts. Their stories of ambition, resilience, and achievement are further illustrated through photos from Lawson State's April 2025 Honors and Awards Day, one of the college's signature events that recognize outstanding student performance and potential. Among those celebrated were students who accepted transfer scholarships to Miles College, the University of Alabama, Jacksonville State University, and the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). The photo set also features Dr. Cynthia T. Anthony, president of Lawson State, congratulating a student on receiving a transfer award. These personal achievements underscore the college's commitment to supporting student success and educational advancement.



Source: <https://www.lawsonstate.edu/news/2025/honors-awards-day-2025.aspx>

At [Wallace Community College Selma](#), student success is rooted in personalized support, flexible pathways, and a commitment to helping learners realize their full potential, no matter where they begin. The [journey of Christina](#), a WCCS alumna, exemplifies how the college's intentional efforts create life-changing opportunities through academic preparation, holistic support, and seamless transfer pathways.

Christina's educational path began in WCCS's [Adult Education Program](#), where she earned her [GED](#)—a milestone that reignited her academic ambitions. From there, she enrolled in the [Associate of Science in Computer Information Systems](#) program, where both academic rigor and deep faculty engagement defined her learning experience.

"Not only was I able to earn my GED through their adult education program, but I was able to obtain my Associate of Science in Computer Information Systems," Christina shared. "My time at Wallace was filled with outstanding learning experiences. I was also covered in the most outstanding support system from the instructors."

Through hard work and the encouragement of her mentors, Christina was [accepted into the College of Engineering at Auburn University](#), a transition she once thought impossible.

"I was able to go on and be accepted into Auburn University for the College of Engineering... I never thought I would see myself here."

Her story is a testament to the effectiveness of WCCS's [student-centered advising, academic preparation, and transfer support services](#), which together provide a strong foundation for students navigating both personal challenges and institutional systems. Christina's success is not just her own—it reflects the outcomes of a deeply intentional community college ecosystem designed to transform lives.

By elevating student voices like Christina's, this case study highlights the significant role that community colleges such as WCCS play in expanding access, fostering resilience, and providing clear pathways to four-year institutions and beyond.

Conclusion

Alabama's HBCCs and PBCCs are reimagining the student transfer experience through bold partnerships, data-informed strategies, and a deep commitment to student success. As these institutions continue to elevate aspirations, their stories provide a blueprint for scaling equitable transfer practices nationwide.

Key Insights

- 1 Student Support Services:** HBCCs and PBCCs offer holistic support models that include academic advising, tutoring, career coaching, mental health services, and financial aid navigation. Institutions like Bishop State and Chattahoochee Valley employ high-touch approaches such as mentoring and wellness interventions to ensure that students' academic and non-academic needs are met throughout their journey.
- 2 Student Outcomes:** Colleges are making measurable gains in transfer, graduation, and credential attainment. For instance, Shelton State reports consistent increases in its 150% graduation and transfer rates, while Wallace Selma demonstrates strong alignment between degree attainment and transfer outcomes. Disaggregated data underscore both progress and remaining equity gaps, particularly in bachelor's degree completion for low-income and underrepresented students.
- 3 Transfer and Institutional Partnerships:** Institutions have formed robust articulation agreements, dual admissions programs, and co-designed academic maps with regional and state universities. Gadsden State's MOU with Samford University is a notable example, offering guaranteed admission and reverse transfer opportunities. Similarly, Chattahoochee Valley and Drake State have launched STEM and applied technology transfer pathways in partnership with institutions like Mississippi State and Alabama A&M University.
- 4 Student Success Stories:** These stories bring the data to life. From Christina at Wallace Selma—who transitioned from GED to Auburn's College of Engineering—to Debbie Holt at Drake State—who overcame addiction and earned a full scholarship to the University of Alabama—the human impact of strong transfer pathways is clear. Other standouts include Kayla Andrews and Trenice Paige at Bishop State and Riley Hull at Gadsden State, whose unique journeys demonstrate how institutional investments can change lives.

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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

the **GREAT EIGHT**

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