

# NEWSLETTER

Fall 2024

Volume 10, Number 2

## SACAD Announces Annual Luncheon



Tyson Elbert

The SACAD board of directors is pleased to announce information regarding its annual membership luncheon. The event will be held on Sunday, December 8, 2024 from 11:30 am to 1:00 pm at the Hilton Austin Hotel in Salon DE in Austin, Texas.

The session is entitled: **“Empowering Community Colleges Through Grassroots Advocacy.”** The presentation is described as follows: In today's dynamic

policy environment, higher education institutions face growing challenges in advocating for the needs of their students, faculty, and communities. This presentation will explore the critical role grassroots advocacy can play in shaping policy decisions, strengthening relationships with elected officials, and building sustained support for higher education.

The session will focus on state-based initiatives designed to train institutional advocates through professional development and targeted advocacy programs. Attendees will gain insight into best practices for advocacy training, equipping higher education professionals with the skills needed to lead efforts that influence policy decisions and foster lasting change. Key topics will include the fundamentals of grassroots advocacy, with practical strategies to mobilize campus communities, engage diverse stakeholders, and amplify the voices of institutions.

The speaker for the luncheon is Tyson Elbert, the founder and Executive Director of AdvocacyBuild, LLC. Established in 2017 and based in Washington, DC, AdvocacyBuild works with education, philanthropic, nonprofit, and business communities to develop professional development experiences focusing on leadership, policy, networking, and advocacy. Through this work, Mr. Elbert directs state-based Policy Fellows Programs with education partners in Indiana, Kansas, Mississippi, and Missouri.

Prior to founding AdvocacyBuild, Mr. Elbert spent nearly two decades working in higher education, including the John C. Stennis Institute of Government and Com-

munity Development at Mississippi State University, the Education Policy Center at The University of Alabama, and the Rural Policy Research Institute at The University of Missouri.

Mr. Elbert received his undergraduate degree from the University of Missouri, a Master of Public Affairs from the Harry S Truman School of Public Affairs at the University of Missouri, and a Master of Arts in Political Science from Mississippi State University.

Mr. Elbert has additional certificates from American University's Public Affairs and Advocacy Institute and European Public Affairs and Advocacy Institute programs, as well as the International Comparative Rural Policy Studies program, hosted by a consortium of thirteen international universities. Mr. Elbert also served as a Senior Policy Fellow in the Global Education Policy Fellowship Program hosted by the Institute for Educational Leadership, in partnership with Columbia University's Teachers College and Michigan State University.

The session is designed for presidents, vice presidents, deans, department heads, and directors in two-year degree granting institutions.

The SACAD luncheon cost is \$40 and interested parties may register and pay by check or by credit card through PayPal on the [sacad.org](http://sacad.org) website. Please make checks payable to SACAD for \$40 and send to:

SACAD  
P. O. Box 942  
Verona, VA 24482

Contact Dr. George D. Edwards, SACAD Executive Secretary-Treasurer at [gdedwards930@gmail.com](mailto:gdedwards930@gmail.com) or by phone (606) 424-8867 for more information.

## Become a Member of SACAD

The SACAD Board invites current members to renew their 2024-2025 membership with SACAD. Dues notice letters were sent via U.S. Mail in May, 2024. Please renew your membership in SACAD. Institutional dues continue to be only \$150.00 per year and are payable by check or credit card through PayPal on the [sacad.org](http://sacad.org) website. If you need a copy of the dues invoice or if you need additional information, please contact the SACAD Executive Secretary-Treasurer at 606 424-8867 or via email at [gdedwards930@gmail.com](mailto:gdedwards930@gmail.com).

## SACAD ANNOUNCES SPONSORS AT 2024 LUNCHEON

The SACAD Board is pleased to announce that EdAmerica and Concourse Syllabus will once again return as the sponsors for the Annual SACAD Luncheon to be held at the Hilton Austin Hotel, room Salon DE, Austin, Texas on December 8, 2024 from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

### EDAMERICA LEAD SPONSOR

Edamerica focuses on advancing student success by providing services that make a difference. With their help 40,000 stop-out students have returned to college and over 1 million students got the answers they needed to register for class, apply for financial aid, or just find the cafeteria. They deliver innovative, high-touch, NIST-compliant solutions that span the student life cycle. Check out their case studies at [www.edamerica.net](http://www.edamerica.net).



### CONCOURSE SYLLABUS BRONZE SPONSOR

Concourse Syllabus is a template-based syllabus management solution. Our cloud hosted, fully accessible system allows you to create, edit, update, and access your syllabi from anywhere and on any device. Integration with your SIS and LMS lets you pull information straight from the source and provides faculty and students easy access to their syllabi. Archiving and auditing functions simplify your processes and save time and eliminates frustration for faculty, staff, and administrators. Concourse takes a complex problem and provides an easy, all-in-one solution for schools of every size and type.



## SACAD NEWS

### SACAD LUNCHEON AGENDA

Hilton Austin Hotel  
Salon DE  
Austin, Texas

December 8, 2024 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

#### PRESIDING

**Dr. Cynthia S. Kelley**

President, Madisonville Community College, KY

#### WELCOME

**Dr. Cynthia S. Kelley**

#### INVOCATION

**Dr. Michael Torrence**

President, Motlow State Community College TN

#### BUSINESS SESSION

*Financial Report*

**Dr. George D. Edwards**

SACAD Executive Secretary-Treasurer

*Recognition of Sponsors*

**Dr. George D. Edwards**

*Recognition of Board Members and Officers*

**Dr. Cynthia S. Kelley**

#### INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKER

**Dr. Brent Gregory**

President, East Central Community College MS

#### KEYNOTE ADDRESS

**Mr. Tyson Elbert**

Founder and Executive Director of AdvocacyBuild, LLC

*"Empowering Community Colleges  
Through Grassroots Advocacy"*

#### DOOR PRIZES

**Dr. James David Campbell**

President, Northeast Alabama Community College, AL

## ALABAMA

### The Dual Advantage: Fast Track to Career After Auburn

The transition after high school graduation is a pivotal moment for any student.

Some are jumping directly into the workforce, while others are gearing up to further their education at universities this fall. Dual enrollment graduates are often able to transition with a distinct advantage over their classmates.

Before even receiving his high school diploma in 2023, Braxton Clines had already crossed the stage at Northeast Alabama Community College (NACC).

By securing a head start, he not only saved time and money but also swiftly earned his white coat at Auburn University's Harrison College of Pharmacy. It typically takes up to seven years of schooling, but he found a way to reduce it by three years when starting at an Alabama community college.

### Alabama's Community Colleges Report Highest Enrollment in Decade

The number of residents pursuing academic credit and workforce credentials through Alabama's community and technical colleges is the highest it has been since 2013.

The Alabama Community College System (ACCS) reported more than 170,000 residents enrolled in academic courses or registered for adult education and workforce training opportunities between August 2023 and July 2024, marking the first time since 2013 in which enrollment had reached those numbers.

Of the 170,000, 122,867 represent the academic headcount in credit-based programs. The remaining number represents those who are pursuing industry-recognized, job-ready workforce credentials that prepare residents for in-demand jobs throughout Alabama.

The commitment of Alabama's community and technical colleges to align programs with the needs of local and regional employers ensures graduates are job-ready and equipped with the skills required to thrive in today's competitive job market.

The recent enrollment surge is particularly significant in light of ongoing efforts to increase Alabama's college-going rates and labor force participation. ACCS's initiatives, including scholarships, flexible learning options, and support services, have played a crucial role in making college more accessible to underserved communities.

## FLORIDA

### Dr. Cristie Kedroski Named Interim President of Northwest Florida State College



*Dr. Cristie Kedroski*

Northwest Florida State College (NWFSC) is pleased to announce the selection of Dr. Cristie Kedroski as Interim President. She began her role as Interim President July 6, 2024.

Dr. Kedroski completed her undergraduate degree at the University of Florida, where she majored in marketing and minored in communications. She received her MBA from the University of West Florida, and later returned to the University of Florida to earn her doctorate in higher education leadership. The Board of Trustees extended its heartfelt gratitude to retiring Dr. Devin Stephenson and looks forward to selecting a permanent president to continue the remarkable growth and achievements he has laid the groundwork for throughout his years of service to the College.

### Mel Ponder Named President of Northwest Florida State College



*Mr. Mel Ponder*

The Northwest Florida State College board of trustees has announced that Okaloosa County Commissioner Mel Ponder has been selected as the school's next president.

Outside of county duties, Ponder serves as an executive for the Emerald Coast Association of Realtors and is the founder and president of Business Empowered.

He is a small business owner, Mayor of Destin from 2014 to 2016, and a member of the Florida House of Representatives from 2016 to 2020. Commissioner Ponder graduated from Florida State University with a bachelor's Degree in Finance.

### Miami Dade College and Florida State University Announce New Articulation Agreement

In a continued effort to expand career pathways for students, Miami Dade College (MDC) has established a new transfer articulation agreement with Florida State University (FSU).

The MDC2FSU agreement formalizes a seamless academic transition for MDC students earning an Associate in Arts enabling them to transfer to FSU as juniors and

pursue a bachelor's degree in accordance with the terms of the partnership. The agreement was signed by MDC President Madeline Pumariega and FSU President Richard McCullough.

The first eight MDC2FSU programs selected are: social work, cyber criminology (both criminology and computer science), and entrepreneurship (commercial, retail and STEM). Programs such as psychology and criminology/criminal justice, which traditionally see the most MDC transfer students, are also included.

Upon transferring, students will be supported through FSU's Transfer Student Services and other resources, including enrolling in the IDS 3003 Transfer Connections and Success course during their first semester.

### GEORGIA

#### Heather Pence Named Interim CTC President



*Ms. Heather Pence*

Ms. Heather Pence, of Pickens County, Florida, is serving as the Interim President of Chattahoochee Technical College (CTC) following the recent retirement of Dr. Ron Newcomb.

Ms. Pence served previously as the Executive Vice President for Operations at Chattahoochee Tech, where she was instrumental in advancing the college across financial, technology, and administrative divisions. Fresh out of college with a bachelor's degree in accounting, she began her career in state

government at the Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts. It was while auditing multiple technical colleges for this state agency that Ms. Pence said she began to realize the value added to Georgians through technical education. She then accepted a position with Appalachian Technical College, which is now part of Chattahoochee Tech, and continued to serve within the TCSG system for two decades. She was selected in 2023, for the first cohort of 25 participants from across the state in the TCSG Senior Leadership Academy, a year-long professional development program.

Ms. Pence earned a bachelor's degree from North Georgia College and State University. She then earned an MBA at Reinhardt University.

#### Technical College System of Georgia Achieves Highest Enrollment Since 2013

The Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) announced a 9.3% increase in enrollment for the Academic Year 2024 (AY24), bringing total enrollment to 148,746 students across the system. This is the highest number of students enrolled at TCSG since 2013, a testament to the grow-

ing demand for skilled workers in Georgia and the increasing attractiveness of TCSG's career-focused college programs.

The rise in enrollment from AY23's 136,114 students reflect the statewide focus by TCSG's 22 colleges on workforce development and the critical role that technical education plays in supporting Georgia's growing economy. Additionally, total credit hours saw a significant 10.6% increase, highlighting students' commitment to advancing their skills through higher education.

#### Key Highlights from AY24:

- **Total Enrollment:** 148,746 students, a 9.3% increase from 136,114 students in AY23 and the highest enrollment since 2013.
- **Credit Hours:** A 10.6% increase in total credit hours taken by students.
- **High-Demand Programs:** Enrollment in high-demand programs surged by 11.6%, reflecting growing interest in industries vital to Georgia's economy, such as healthcare, manufacturing, information technology, and aviation.
- **College Growth:** 21 out of TCSG's 22 colleges reported enrollment growth during AY24, demonstrating a system-wide commitment to providing relevant, affordable education across the state.

This enrollment surge reflects TCSG's ongoing mission to ensure that Georgia's residents have access to career-focused college education that prepares them for the state's expanding job market. TCSG continues to play a pivotal role in maintaining Georgia's standing as the number one state in the nation to do business by producing a highly skilled workforce.

### KENTUCKY

#### Dr. Brooke L. Justice Named Interim President of SKYCTC



*Dr. Brooke L. Justice*

The Kentucky Community and Technical College System recently named Dr. Brooke L. Justice as interim president of Southcentral Kentucky Community and Technical College. Dr. Justice, who currently serves as vice president of student services at SKYCTC, began her new role August 16, 2024.

Dr. Justice has served in various roles throughout her nearly 20-year career in higher education. Her passion for the community college began at Bowling Green Technical College, which later grew into SKYCTC. She has extensive experience in higher education including the areas of strategic enrollment management, academic success and stu-



dent pathways.

Dr. Justice earned her bachelor's and master's degrees from Western Kentucky University and her doctorate in educational leadership from the University of Kentucky.

Dr. Justice replaces Dr. Phil Neal who was appointed recently as acting executive vice president and provost for KCTCS.

### **KCTCS Offers GED Opportunities to Inmates**

There were 4,460 incarcerated individuals who earned a GED through the Kentucky Community and Technical College System from 2020-2024. During the same period, enrollments in the GED prep classes, taught by the colleges' adult education instructors, grew to 14,441.

"When we say KCTCS is education for all, that's exactly what we mean. Supporting those who lack a high school diploma is a key priority for our state and workforce," said KCTCS President Ryan Quarles.

"Everyone benefits if these individuals reenter our communities and the workforce with a credential that will help them build better lives for themselves and their families," added Dr. Quarles, who was recently appointed to the Governor's Council of Second Chance Employers.

According to published studies, education not only benefits inmates, but it also produces societal benefits, such as lowering rates of recidivism when they are released," said Maggie Price, director of student success at Maysville Community and Technical College.

Fourteen KCTCS colleges are service providers for Kentucky Adult Education, the state agency that administers the GED program. Classes are held at county jails and prisons.

### **KCTCS/SKYCTC Reports Record Year in Workforce Training**

Southcentral Kentucky Community and Technical College (SKYCTC) as well as the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) set new workforce training records in fiscal year 2024, according to a new report released by KCTCS' Workforce Solutions program. The report provides system-level data on the impact of Workforce Solutions and numerous statewide programs and provides a breakout of impact by each of the system's colleges.

KCTCS invested an increase of \$2 million in the TRAINS program to meet employer demand. The system's total annual investment in the program was \$7.4 million. Utilizing funding from the Kentucky General Assembly for the TRAINS program, Workforce Solutions trains businesses' new hires with the aim of accelerating full productivity levels while helping retain incumbent workers through upskilling opportunities. TRAINS has been shown to offset the

cost of training for businesses by up to 75%.

In fiscal year 2024, KCTCS partnered with Kentucky companies on 339 TRAINS projects, up from 248 last year, a 37% increase. This resulted in \$10.87 million in gross revenue generated for the colleges, compared to \$8.6 million last year. New clients increased 15% and repeat clients grew 51%.

KCTCS continues to be the number one provider of workforce training in Kentucky. One out of every 49 Kentucky jobs is supported by the activities of KCTCS colleges and students.

## **LOUISIANA**

### **Nunez Chancellor Invited to the White House for Aerospace Workforce Roundtable**



*Dr. Tina Tinney*

The Aerospace Manufacturing Technology program at Nunez Community College was represented recently at a Space Workforce Roundtable at the White House in Washington D.C. by Nunez Chancellor Tina Tinney, Ed. D. and facilitated by the Office of the Vice President, the National Space Council, the Department of Labor and the Department of Education.

Nunez's Aerospace program, represented by Dr. Tinney, was part of a roundtable discussion comprised of approximately 30 federal authorities, education leaders and industry representatives. The focus of the discussion was strengthening, diversifying and growing the aerospace workforce. Educational pathways and industry-based credentials that train future technicians in core competencies were shared.

Nunez Community College will participate in the Space4All campaign launched by the U.S. Department of Education. The STEM awareness campaign was recently launched to expose individuals to opportunities aligned with the aerospace industry, the economic impact of the industry, and to spark students' interest in STEM careers and space exploration.

Additionally, Nunez Community College will serve as a subject matter expert in vetting a nationwide aerospace competency model being developed by the U.S. Department of Labor to establish critical curriculum for aerospace pathways.

### **BPCC Expands Health Care Programs**

Bossier Parish Community College (BPCC) has expanded its Nursing and Allied Health program offerings at the

Natchitoches and Sabine Valley (Many) campuses. These new additions provide students in rural areas with greater access to high-demand careers in healthcare and administrative fields.

The BPCC Natchitoches campus has launched several new healthcare-related programs, including EKG/Telemetry, Emergency Medical Technician, Phlebotomy, and Medical Records and Billing Assistant. In addition, the campus will soon offer a Respiratory Therapy program, giving students even more pathways to pursue careers in the healthcare industry.

At BPCC's Sabine Valley campus in Many, new programs include Medical Records and Billing Assistant, Emergency Medical Technician, and Medical Assistant. EMS students at the Natchitoches campus are able to work on their skills in a full-size ambulance simulator. These programs are designed to meet the growing demand for healthcare professionals in the region, offering students practical skills and certification opportunities close to home.

The BPCC Natchitoches Campus offers a wide range of educational opportunities, including career and technical education programs, general education courses, high school dual enrollment, WorkReady U (adult basic education), and workforce development training.

### MISSISSIPPI

#### **Co-Lin's Paramedic Training Program Earns National Accreditation**

Copiah-Lincoln Community College's (Co-Lin) Paramedic Training Program has earned national accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP). This prestigious recognition highlights the program's commitment to excellence in paramedic education, ensuring that students receive the highest quality training available.

The program provides an essential step for current EMTs seeking to advance their careers in emergency medical services. Students in the program complete over 1,300 clock hours of intense classroom instruction, hands-on training, and clinical rotations, equipping them with the knowledge and skills needed to perform at the highest levels in the field.

Graduates of the program are well-prepared to pursue licensure and employment in emergency medical services, contributing to the health and safety of communities throughout the region.

#### **ECCC Leads State in Enrollment Growth**

East Central Community College (ECCC) in Decatur continues to set the pace for student enrollment growth among

Mississippi's 15 community colleges, boasting a 24% increase in headcount since the fall of 2021, the highest in the state. Over the past year alone, enrollment grew by 6.8%, further solidifying ECCC's position as a top choice for students seeking a comprehensive, affordable educational experience.

ECCC's enrollment surge is largely attributed to its focus on student success and retention initiatives. The college continues to build a reputation for offering exceptional education, a full collegiate experience, and strong support services—all while maintaining affordability.

### NORTH CAROLINA

#### **Community Colleges Play Vital Role in Disaster Response After Hurricane Helene**

In the aftermath of Hurricane Helene's devastation across Western North Carolina, community colleges stepped up as crucial emergency response hubs, supporting relief efforts by federal, state, and nonprofit organizations. With 14 colleges affected by the storm, these community colleges quickly transformed into staging grounds and operational bases for disaster teams, emergency responders, power companies, and displaced residents.

A statewide Helene Relief Fund was created by the North Carolina Community College System and colleges raced to find generators and emergency internet in the days after Helene. The System Office worked with agency partners to drive and helicopter Starlink systems and generators to western colleges.

- **Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College (A-B Tech)** became a regional emergency hub, sheltering 179 displaced individuals and providing medical assistance to an additional 60 people. The college also staged 300 ambulances to assist with potential evacuations and housed shelter workers across multiple campuses
- **Blue Ridge Community College** in Hendersonville has been transformed into a multi-functional recovery base, supporting local emergency services, and search and rescue teams. The Health Sciences Campus was designated for triage services to assist the nearby hospital, while other parts of the college served as shelters and staging areas for relief workers. Despite the campus itself facing significant damage, including power, water, and cell service outages, the college quickly adapted
- **Caldwell Community College & Technical Institute**, which is home to hard-hit Boone and Watauga County, opened its doors to Samaritan's Purse and Duke Energy, providing a critical space for coordinating recovery logistics and staging response opera-

tions. The campus became a base for rapid mobilization, ensuring that resources reached impacted areas quickly and efficiently.

- **Western Piedmont Community College** in Morganton became a key player in the region's recovery efforts, staging 450 trucks and 750 personnel from Duke Energy to support extensive power restoration across the area.
- **Wilkes Community College** experienced significant damage and was closed for 12 days before opening as a resource center on October 7. Their Ashe Campus provided access to power and internet connectivity for students, employees, and the local community.
- Spruce Pines, home to **Mayland Community College**, was one of the most devastated areas in Western North Carolina. While they have opened their doors to faculty and staff, there is no timetable yet to resume instruction.
- **Haywood Community College** provided access to showers and laundry for employees and students, while also housing 40 to 50 displaced individuals each day. The college's facilities are being used by the local Chamber of Commerce and an engineering firm to continue operations amid the disruption. Emergency responders are expected to establish a base on campus shortly, further bolstering recovery efforts. Additionally, the campus serves as a landing zone for search and rescue helicopters, facilitating rapid deployment in critical situations.
- **Isothermal Community College** became a crucial staging ground for more than 600 Duke Energy trucks and up to 1,500 personnel, as well as National Guard equipment. In response to the significant communication challenges caused by the loss of cell towers, the college opened its doors to employees and their families, offering essential services such as power, water, WiFi, and meals.
- **Cleveland Community College** not only provided space for community dinners but also accommodated the local Health Department to deliver essential services to residents.
- **McDowell Technical Community College** provided space as an Emergency Operations Center and helped facilitate a warehouse for donations of basic needs. Their Universal Building supported the shipping and receiving of donations. The campus also housed the Greenville Swift Water Rescue Team and campsite evacuees.
- **Southwestern Community College's** Jackson Campus served as a staging area for tanker trucks to refuel first responders and stands ready to serve as an overflow shelter when needed.

Many other counties saw significant damage to roads and trees, but impacts to campus operations varied. Cleveland Community College, Catawba Valley Community College, Tri-County Community College and Gaston Col-

lege were able to resume operations in the days after Helene, but their campuses worked to support line workers, donations, and other community supports for hurricane victims.

### SOUTH CAROLINA

#### SCC Assists With Hurricane Relief

Spartanburg Community College (SCC) employees, alongside President Dr. Michael Mikota, gathered donations from students, staff, and community members to support those affected by Hurricane Helene in Western North Carolina. The team of volunteers consisting of SCC employees, as well as Dr. Mikota and his family, delivered two trailers filled with essential supplies—ranging from water, coats, and generators to canned goods and baby essentials and more—directly to Blue Ridge Community College.

While the two teams were working together to unload donations, you could see tears of joy and gratitude from both sides. After delivery to Blue Ridge Community College, the employees and volunteers at Blue Ridge would work on distributing donations to families and areas in need.

"What an incredible gift. We are forever grateful, and we are now Chasers!" exclaimed Dr. Laura Leatherwood, President of Blue Ridge Community College.

#### SCTCS Launches AI for the Trained Eye

South Carolina's technical colleges are committed to staying at the forefront of emerging technologies. This summer, the South Carolina Technical College System's (SCTCS) Division of Academics, Student Affairs, and Research, in partnership with Central Carolina Technical College, launched a professional development series, *AI for the Trained Eye*, designed for faculty and staff across all disciplines. This cross-disciplinary program offered participants the chance to delve into AI's transformative role in teaching, learning, and work practices. Through hands-on activities, collaborative projects, and thoughtful discussions on ethical considerations, educators and professionals gained insights into how AI can be integrated effectively and responsibly across diverse educational settings in the state.

Recently, the System hosted a one-day AI conference, *A New Era: AI in Higher Education and the Workforce*, which worked to underscore further the importance of AI in education, particularly in enhancing the student experience. Attended by nearly 200 faculty, staff, and administrators from the System's 16 colleges, the conference brought together leaders from community colleges, state agencies, and industry to explore AI's impact on student engagement, personalized learning paths, and workplace skills development. Highlights included a presentation by Dr. Greg DeSantis from Jobs for the Future (JFF), which showcased AI's potential to streamline student services and foster inclusive



learning environments. Dr. Wes Fondren from Coastal Carolina University delivered an engaging keynote on how AI can serve as a practical tool for students, faculty, and administrators, offering tangible examples of how to use AI productively and responsibly. The conference reinforced the SC Technical College System's dedication to innovation, preparing students and educators alike for a future shaped by AI technologies.

### TENNESSEE

#### **Dr. Tracy D. Hall Selected for Aspen President Fellowship**



*Dr. Tracy D. Hall*

Dr. Tracy D. Hall, president of Southwest Tennessee Community College in Memphis, is one of 25 innovative leaders selected from across the country to participate in the second cohort of the Aspen Presidents Fellowship, sponsored by JPMorgan Chase. The Fellowship is a unique yearlong professional development experience that helps community college presidents refine and reform their agenda to drive transformative change.

The Aspen Institute's Presidents Fellowship represents a powerful opportunity to reshape community college leadership and strengthen educational equity and excellence across the nation. Fellows will work with highly accomplished community college presidents, Aspen leaders, and each other to analyze their college's outcomes and develop concrete plans inspired by field-leading practices.

Dr. Hall has served as the president of Southwest Tennessee Community College since 2015. Under her leadership, the College joined Achieving the Dream, prioritizing equity and student success through a redesign of its student-centered processes. This commitment led to the College being recognized as a Leader College of Distinction. In 2021, these efforts were honored with the prestigious and highly competitive Bellwether Award in the Planning, Governance and Finance category for transforming the student experience from recruitment to graduation. In 2023, Dr. Hall launched the Southwest Workforce Solutions Center, a revolutionary change for the College that integrated its workforce programs with associate degree programs featuring embedded certificates, significantly enhancing students' career pathways.

#### **TBR and Google Announce New Partnership**

The Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) and Google announced a new partnership Tuesday that will help thousands of Tennessee community and technical college students earn Google Career Certificates in high-growth fields. TBR will also offer students the company's new Google AI Essentials course, designed and taught by AI experts at Google to teach foundational skills in artificial intelligence technology.

Nearly two-thirds of all new jobs created since 2010 require either high- or medium-level digital skills, but one in three American workers have very limited or no digital skills. Google Career Certificates help by preparing learners for the in-demand fields of Cybersecurity, Data Analytics, Digital Marketing & E-commerce, IT Support, Project Management, and User Experience (UX) Design. Google's partnership with TBR to offer the certificates will help students gain job-ready skills and an industry-recognized certificate.

### TEXAS

#### **Dr. Kimberly Lowry Named Vice President of TACC and Executive Director of The Texas Success Center**

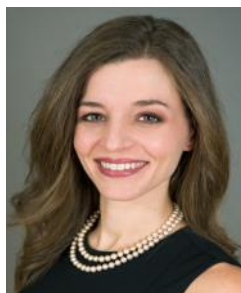


*Dr. Kimberly Lowry*

The Texas Association of Community Colleges (TACC) is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Kimberly Lowry as the new Vice President of TACC and Executive Director for the Texas Success Center (TSC) effective June 17, 2024. Dr. Lowry brings a wealth of experience and a proven track record of leadership in higher education, with a focus on community college excellence and student success.

Dr. Lowry holds a Ph.D. in Higher Education from the University of North Texas, an M.S. in Counseling, and a B.A. in Psychology from California State University, Long Beach. She is also a Certified Executive Coach (ACC) and Professional Certified Coach (PCC), with extensive experience in leadership development and organizational effectiveness.

#### **Dr. Jessica Pace Named President of Panola College**



*Dr. Jessica Pace*

The Panola College Board of Trustees has named Dr. Jessica Pace as the 11th President and first female to lead Panola College, effective April 29, 2024.

Dr. Pace is a Carthage native who attended Panola College after graduating from Carthage High School. She holds a Doctorate in Learning and Organizational Change from Baylor University, a Master of Business Administration in Strategic



Management from the University of North Texas, and a Bachelor of Science in Merchandising, also from the University of North Texas. Additionally, she is a Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE).

As Vice President of Institutional Advancement at Panola College since 2014, Dr. Pace spearheaded initiatives that significantly impacted the College's growth and success. Under her leadership, the College's endowment total surged from \$3.6 million to an impressive \$12 million, a testament to her strategic fundraising skills and stewardship.

### VIRGINIA

#### Virginia Community College System (VCCS) Strategic Plan

Under the guidance of Virginia's Chancellor David Dore, the VCCS has announced its new Strategic Plan, *Accelerate Opportunity*. This plan will focus on five key objectives that will also guide the Systems Legislative priorities for the upcoming Legislative session:

- **#1 Developing Virginia's Talent:** aligning VCCS programs with the needs of Virginia's industries, ensuring our students are well-prepared for the jobs of today and tomorrow.
- **#2 Reaching More Virginians:** expanding system outreach efforts, making sure every Virginian knows about and can access the opportunities available through our community colleges.
- **#3 Delivering Education to Today's Learners:** adapting our teaching methods and delivery systems to meet the diverse needs of modern students through high-impact institutional practices.
- **#4 Supporting Today's Learners:** recognizing that our students often face challenges outside the classroom. This objective emphasizes comprehensive support services to help students overcome barriers to success.
- **#5 Investing in Virginia's Workforce:** to ensure that our programs support students' needs for financial flexibility while supporting the vitality and sustainability of our colleges.

#### Dr. Pat Huber Announces Retirement



Dr. Pat Huber

New River Community College (NRCC) president Dr. Pat Huber will retire effective the end of December 2024.

Dr. Huber's career at NRCC spanned more than 35 years. She assumed the role of NRCC president in July 2017. She first joined the college faculty in July 1988 as a part-time English instructor, teaching night classes and subsequently

held roles including as a division dean and academic vice president.

Under her administration, the college enjoys strong partnerships throughout the New River Valley and beyond.

#### Dr. Robert Brandon Named President of NRCC



Dr. Robert Brandon

Dr. Robert Brandon was recently appointed as the seventh president of New River Community College (NRCC). His service as president at New River will begin January 1, 2025.

Dr. Brandon currently serves as vice president of Academic and Student Services at Southwest Virginia Community College (SWCC) in Richlands, Virginia, a position he has held since 2018.

Dr. Brandon earned a bachelor's degree in English at Virginia Intermont College in Bristol, Virginia, a master's degree in English at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, Tennessee, and a doctorate in English at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro in Greensboro, North Carolina.

#### Dr. Jim Shaeffer Announces Retirement



Dr. Jim Shaeffer

Eastern Shore Community College (ESCC) president Dr. Jim Shaeffer will retire effective June 30, 2025. Dr. Shaeffer, whose tenure oversaw a college "reboot," became President of ESCC on July 1<sup>st</sup> of 2019. A significant part of the reboot was establishing a new culture of YES! (Your Eastern Shore), that embodied a culture of hospitality, transparency, accountability, and inclusion.

#### Dr Tommy Wright Named VCCS Senior Vice Chancellor



Dr. Tommy Wright

The Virginia Community College System (VCCS) announced the appointment of Dr. Tommy Wright as the new Senior Vice Chancellor for Finance and Operations.

Dr. Wright is currently President for Southwest Virginia Community College (Southwest), one of the 23 colleges in the Virginia Community College System. Appointed in 2018, he is the third president of South-

west since its founding in 1967.

Prior to serving as President of Southwest, Dr. Wright served as the Vice President of Finance and Advancement at Cleveland State Community College in Cleveland, Tennessee, a position he held from 2010 until his presidency at Southwest.

Dr. Wright received a Bachelor of Science in Mass Communications and a Master of Education and Education Specialist in Administration and Supervision from Middle Tennessee State University. He received a Doctorate of Education in Administration and Supervision at Tennessee State University.

### **VWCC President Dr. Robert Sandel Announces Retirement**



*Dr. Robert H. Sandel*

Robert H. Sandel, president of Virginia Western Community College (VWCC), has announced his plans to retire at the end of the 2024-25 academic year, effective June 30, 2025.

As its fourth president, Sandel has led the college since 2001.

Dr. Sandel also strengthened the college's fundraising. When he arrived at Virginia Western, its Educational Foundation operated with no grants and only about \$1 million in assets under management, according to the college. Today, the foundation has \$34 million in assets under management.

Among his accolades, Dr. Sandel was named to the Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council Hall of Fame, and he was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Roanoke College. In Fall 2024, he will be honored by Junior Achievement of Southwest Virginia as the 2024 Laureate in the Southwest Virginia Business Hall of Fame. Prior to Virginia Western, Sandel was president of Virginia's Mountain Empire Community College for more than nine years. Before that, he served more than 20 years in the South Carolina technical college system.

### **Dr. Cornelius Johnson Named Interim President of DCC**



*Dr. Cornelius Johnson*

Dr. Cornelius Johnson, Ed.D., will serve as the Interim President of Danville Community College (DCC), effective December 1, 2024.

Dr. Johnson will serve in the role vacated by Dr. Jerry Wallace, who has accepted the position of president of West Virginia University Potomac State College effective

December 1, 2024.

Dr. Johnson is currently serving as the Vice President of Academic Affairs & Student Services at DCC. He brings over 26 years of experience in higher education to the job. His leadership experience is complemented by roles such as Dean of Student Services and faculty member at respected universities including Indiana State University and the University of Houston-Downtown.

His experience as a Program Manager at NASA's Johnson Space Center included recruiting and mentoring exceptional scholars across the nation in STEM fields. Dr. Johnson continues this critical work today in his capacity on the American Association of Community Colleges Commission on Structured Pathways.

Dr. Johnson holds a Doctorate in Educational Leadership Administration from the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, a Master's in Higher Education from Indiana State University, a bachelor's in Communications from the University of Washington, and an Associate of Arts from Seattle Central Community College. Dr. Johnson is an alumnus of the American Association of Community Colleges Future President's Institute.

### **Dr. Victoria Ratliff Named Interim President of SVCC**



*Dr. Victoria Ratliff*

Dr. Victoria Sue Ratliff, Ed.D., as the Interim President of Southwest Virginia Community College. Dr. Ratliff brings over thirty years of experience in higher education and economic development initiatives in southwest Virginia.

A proud first-generation college student, Dr. Ratliff began her journey at Mountain Empire Community College (MECC), where she witnessed firsthand the transformative power of education. Dr. Ratliff holds an Associate Degree from MECC, a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration from Tusculum College, an MBA from Morehead State University, and a Doctorate of Education with a Higher Education Concentration from Liberty University.

Dr. Ratliff will begin her role as Interim President on January 1, 2025. She will serve in the interim role pending a national search for a permanent president. During that time the local board, faculty, staff, and students will have an opportunity to help identify and prioritize the qualities of their next president.

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