

NEWSLETTER

May 2026

Volume 12 Number 1

2025 SACAD ANNUAL LUNCHEON IN NASHVILLE A HUGE SUCCESS

The SACAD annual membership luncheon held on Sunday, December 7, 2025 in Nashville, Tennessee was well attended by 115 SACAD members and associates. The session was entitled: "From Hype to Hire: How Mississippi is Building a Smart AI Workforce."



Dr. Kollin Napier

Dr. Kollin Napier presented how artificial intelligence (AI) rapidly transforms the workforce and community colleges and universities must move from adaptation to leadership. The session highlighted how Mississippi took a statewide approach through the Mississippi Artificial Intelligence Network (MAIN), the nation's first statewide AI initiative.

Dr. Napier holds a Ph.D. in Computer Science from Mississippi State University, where his research focused on artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and software engineering. He has contributed to peer-reviewed journals and conferences and holds a master's and bachelor's degree from MSU, along with an Associate of Applied Science in Information Systems Technology from Jones College.

Before assuming his current role as Director of the Mississippi Artificial Intelligence Network (MAIN) at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, Dr. Napier worked as a software applications developer and later as a software architect for the MSU Extension Service. With a unique blend of academic expertise and industry experience, he is a driving force behind advancing computer science education, applied research, and workforce innovation in Mississippi. Through MAIN, Dr. Napier is shaping a technology-driven future empowering communities across the state and fostering a national dialogue on the transformative potential of AI.

The SACAD Board will be planning the 2026 Annual Membership Luncheon which will be held on December 6, 2026 in Houston, Texas. The SACAD Annual Membership Luncheon is held each year in conjunction with the SACSCOC Annual Meeting. The theme for this year's SACSCOC conference is "Exploring New Frontiers in Accreditation."

The cost for the annual SACAD member luncheon is \$50 and can be paid for by check or credit card through PayPal on the sacad.org website. Detailed information about the 2026 luncheon will be communicated in late summer. Please mark your calendars for the 2026 SACAD Annual Membership Luncheon in Houston, Texas!

SACAD EXECUTIVE SECRETARY-TREASURER RETIRES

SACAD would like to congratulate Dr. George D. Edwards on his retirement after twenty years of service. We thank you for your contributions and wish you well in your retirement.



Dr. George D. Edwards

CURRENT MEMBERS RENEW MEMBERSHIP TODAY

The SACAD Board invites current members to renew their 2026-2027 membership with SACAD. Institutional dues are \$150.00. Dues notices will be mailed to the presidents/CEOs of all potential membership colleges by May 30, 2026. Dues may be paid by check or credit card.

Please contact Raegina D. Scott, SACAD Executive Secretary-Treasurer at sacadsecretary.treasurer@gmail.com or by phone (270) 213-0164. Also, please see the website at sacad.org for more information.

SACAD BOARD AND OFFICERS SELECTED FOR 2026

PRESIDENT: Dr. J. David Campbell
Northeast Alabama Community College, AL

VICE PRESIDENT: Dr. Brent Gregory
East Central Community College, MS

PAST PRESIDENT: Dr. Cindy Kelley
Madisonville Community College, KY

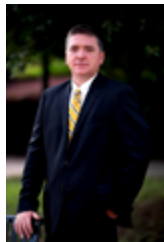
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY/TREASURER:
Raegina D. Scott (Nonboard member)



*Dr. J. David
Campbell*



*Dr. Cindy
Kelley*



*Dr. Brent
Gregory*



*Ms. Raegina
D. Scott*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Class of 2026

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

Class of 2027

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

Class of 2028

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



*Ms. DeAnnia
Clements*



*Dr. Patricia A.
Lee*



*Dr. Vincent
Solis*



*Dr. Dean
Sprinkle*



*Dr. Michael
Torrence*



*Dr. Mike
Rodgers*

ALABAMA

U.S. Navy Invests \$30 Million to ACCS

The Alabama Community College System (ACCS) announced a \$30 million investment funded by the U.S. Navy to modernize and expand maritime workforce training at four Alabama community colleges. The announcement came during a Monday morning press conference at the National Maritime Museum of the Gulf in Mobile, AL.

The funding will enable the colleges to expand their submarine manufacturing and shipbuilding training programs and assist the Navy, in building one Columbia-class and two Virginia-class submarines each year. Achieving this production target requires a dramatic expansion of America's maritime industrial workforce, and Alabama's community colleges are now positioned to play a central role in delivering that talent pipeline.

"This investment reflects our strength as THE workforce training provider for Alabama, and the confidence our federal partners place in our ability to deliver results," said Jimmy Baker, ACCS Chancellor. "We are expanding opportunity for Alabamians in every region while directly strengthening our contributions to the Maritime Industrial Base Program and our nation's security."

The U.S. Navy has projected a need for 250,000 skilled workers nationwide in maritime manufacturing over the next decade. With ongoing investments in Austal USA, Alabama Shipyard, and the new Mobile Naval Shipyard, more than 3,000 additional jobs are expected to be created in Alabama. Along the Alabama Gulf Coast alone, between 4,000 and 5,000 new maritime workers will be needed over the next five years.

"The Navy cannot grow the maritime industrial base alone. It takes regional partners like the Alabama Community College System building real training capacity in the communities where our workers live," said Matt Sermon, Direct Reporting Program Manager for the Maritime Industrial Base (MIB) Program. "This is what workforce development looks like when it's done right, putting people on a path to careers that matter to our national security."

"Alabama is rapidly advancing as a leader in diversified, high-tech manufacturing, serving as the U.S. base for global aerospace and maritime industries and powering major automotive and next-generation pharmaceutical production," said Governor Kay Ivey. "The United States Navy's investment of \$30 million in the Alabama Community College System marks another milestone as our state expands cutting edge training in submarine and shipbuilding manufacturing. This is exciting news for Alabama workers as they build successful careers while also contributing to America's defense."

Acclaimed Authors Headline NACC's 2026 Arts and Humanities Speakers' Forum

Northeast Alabama Community College (NACC) held its annual Arts and Humanities Speakers Forum on March 19, 2026, with writers Ron Rash, Wiley Cash, and Saul Lelchuk. The focus of this year's forum was "Fiction on the Edge: Crime, Culture, and the Human Heart." After a presentation by each author, Don Noble, recipient of the 2017 Governor's Arts Award and professor at the University of Alabama from 1969 to 2001, moderated a conversation with the three authors. As a professor of English at UA, Dr. Noble was known for his engaging teaching style, which was evident in his ability to foster a thoughtful discussion with Rash, Cash, and Lelchuk.

NACC President Dr. David Campbell began Forum in 1993. Since that first year, the Forum has hosted such writers as Tom Franklin, Silas House, Michael Knight, George Singleton, Mark Powell, Janisse Ray, Mary Hood, Dori Sanders, Thomas Cook, Pam Duncan, Sena Jeter Naslund, Robert McCammon, and Taylor Brown.

"Our Humanities Writer's Forum is one of the best events for writers in the South," stated Dr. Campbell. "To be able to hear these writers and our students learn from them is a tremendous opportunity regardless of their career direction. I can't say enough about Mrs. Joan Reeves in leading and organizing this Forum. She personally knows just about every major writer in the South and brings them to our campus."

Over 250 were in attendance for the morning session, and 75 were in attendance for the afternoon Master Classes. In addition to the NACC student body, faculty, and staff, there were faculty and students from Calhoun Community College. The authors were especially impressed by the projects students prepared to demonstrate their understanding of the novels.

Ron Rash spoke highly of his experience at the event, saying, "What a wonderful experience to be with such great teachers, administrators, and students. I have read at many schools, but I've never been at an event I've enjoyed more."

Cash shared his appreciation, saying, "I had such a wonderful and renewing couple of days with the students and faculty at NACC. The audience was kind and curious, and the hosts were accommodating and so pleasurable to get to know."

Lelchuk added, "Participating in the NACC Arts & Humanities Speakers Forum was a wonderful literary experience that I will not soon forget. As I conversed with fellow authors, readers, NACC faculty, and students, I was repeatedly impressed by the widespread passion for humanities and literature that I encountered. I hope to return next year as a guest!"



Joan Reeves, Chair of the English and Fine Arts Division, noted, “This event has always been such an important one for our students, faculty, staff, and community. Dr. Campbell showed great vision when he created this forum in 1993, and the generous support of the college has been instrumental in allowing us to bring three of the nation’s best writers to northeast Alabama. The college’s commitment to literary engagement and intellectual enrichment ensures that our students and community can learn from and be inspired by some of the most influential voices in contemporary literature.”

FLORIDA

The Aspen Institute Names Tallahassee State College as a Semifinalist

Aspen Institute has named Tallahassee State College (TSC) one of 25 semifinalists for the 2027 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, the nation’s premier recognition of community colleges that deliver strong student outcomes. The prize is awarded biennially and includes \$1 million in funding.



“To be named one of 25 semifinalists out of almost 1,000 colleges nationwide for the Aspen Prize is an honor that speaks to the impact of our work and the momentum we are building at Tallahassee State College,” said Dr. Jim Murdaugh, president of TSC. “We are proud to create clear pathways for our students, whether to a career or a bachelor’s degree, and this recognition reinforces our commitment to expanding opportunity and delivering results that change lives.”

Selected from nearly 1,000 colleges nationwide, the 25 semifinalists represent institutions demonstrating strong and improving results in student learning, completion, transfer to bachelor’s programs, and workforce success. Aspen defines student success as students earning meaningful credentials that lead to good jobs or successful transfer and degree attainment.

“We start every cycle of the Aspen Prize with a simple question: Which community colleges are best at ensuring students graduate with credentials that improve their lives?” said Josh Wyner, executive director of the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program. “We congratulate this year’s semifinalists for delivering strong outcomes and continuously improving student success.”

The Aspen Prize has recognized a diverse range of colleges from large, multi-campus institutions to small rural colleges, highlighting those that align programs with workforce needs and create clear pathways to bachelor’s degrees.

UCF first in Florida to shift from regional accreditation amid Commission for Public Higher Education Push

University of Central Florida President Alexander Cartwright announced Dec. 2 that UCF became the first Florida university to receive accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission, one of the nation’s largest institutional accreditors.

“UCF’s transition to HLC reflects our bold ambitions for the future and our responsibility to deliver exceptional value for Florida,” Cartwright said in a statement. “HLC is an accreditation partner that matches our scale, our innovation, and our commitment to strong stewardship of public resources.”

This milestone comes after Gov. Ron DeSantis announced this summer that the State University System of Florida and five other state systems would be launching a first-of-its-kind accreditation system — the Commission for Public Higher Education.

The 1965 Higher Education Act requires accreditors to evaluate educational institutions based on broadly defined categories.

Due to a recent state statute, Florida universities are required to switch accreditors every five years. UCF’s next accreditation date falls within the next full cycle in 2032, according to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.

GEORGIA

TCSG Receives National Grant to Simplify College Admissions for Adult Learners

Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) has been selected as one of 10 recipients of a national grant from Lumina Foundation’s Great Admissions Redesign initiative, which is investing more than \$3.5 million to simplify the college admissions process and expand student access across the country.

Through this grant, TCSG will pilot an AI-driven credit for prior learning platform at three colleges. The platform encourages students to upload their work history, earned credentials, military transcripts, and more, allowing adult learners to earn college credit for existing skills, knowledge, and competencies. The effort is designed to make it easier for students to navigate the path to college by creating a more seamless, student-centered experience.

“Our primary focus is unlocking non-credit to credit pathways for learners across the state,” said Matt Dollar, TCSG’s deputy commissioner of economic development. “It will be exciting to see how students who begin their college

education in workforce-focused non-credit programs at TCSG are able to apply their past experiences toward a streamlined path to a degree.”

Lumina’s Great Admissions Redesign initiative supports states, systems, and institutions in integrating admissions, financial aid, advising, and enrollment systems. The goal is to remove unnecessary barriers and help more students successfully enroll in and complete college.

“Across the country, we’re seeing real momentum to rethink how students access college,” said Melanie Heath, Lumina strategy director. “This cohort reflects a clear shift from fragmented fixes to coordinated, student-centered systems.”

The initiative is part of a broader national effort to increase post-high school attainment and advance Lumina’s Goal 2040, which aims for 75 percent of working-age adults to hold a credential of value.

While Georgia’s high school and GED students currently benefit from the Georgia MATCH direct admissions initiative, working-age adults have been excluded from a centralized enrollment strategy. By recognizing the prior experience of this important demographic, the grant project aims to contribute to a robust and highly skilled workforce.

Wiregrass Tech Earns Cognia Accreditation

Wiregrass Georgia Technical College is proud to announce that the college’s academy has been approved to award high school diplomas through its Cognia-



accredited Career Plus High School Diploma program. This approval follows a rigorous review by Cognia, a nonprofit organization that provides quality assurance for schools, school districts, and education service providers.

Cognia recognizes schools across the globe that meet rigorous standards focused on productive learning environments, equitable resource allocation, and effective leadership. To earn Cognia accreditation, a school must submit to internal and external review. Earning accreditation from the Cognia Global Accreditation Commission means that the school meets Cognia Performance Standards and maintains a commitment to continuous improvement. Schools in good standing can maintain their accreditation for a six-year term.

This milestone aligns with the Technical College System of Georgia’s (TCSG) Completion to Career initiative, which reimagines high school credentialing by offering adult learners an alternative to the traditional GED. The Career Plus program empowers Georgia residents aged 18 and older to earn an accredited high school diploma on their own timeline while gaining valuable career training in high-demand fields.

“Accreditation as conferred by the Cognia Global Accreditation Commission provides Wiregrass Tech’s a nationally recognized mark of quality for our school,” shared Wiregrass President DeAnnia Clements “It demonstrates to our community our commitment to excellence, our willingness to enact meaningful change based on evaluation and feedback, and our desire to be the best we can be on behalf of the students we serve.”

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Dr. Mark A. Elgart, president and CEO of Cognia, stated, “Cognia Accreditation is a rigorous process that focuses the entire school and its community on the primary goal of ensuring all students can flourish in engaging and equitable learning environments. We commend Wiregrass Tech for meeting high standards and making progress on key indicators that impact student learning.”

Read more from Georgia:

[*Southeastern Technical College President Larry Calhoun Announces Retirement*](#)

KENTUCKY

Eight KCTCS colleges named to Aspen 200

The Aspen Institute named eight Kentucky community colleges within the Kentucky Community and Technical College System to its prestigious top 200 list, making them eligible to compete for the \$1 million Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence in 2027.

The award is the nation’s premier recognition of high achievement and performance for two-year colleges. The top 200 list is developed based on student outcomes data, including retention, completion, transfer and bachelor’s attainment rates.



“There are more than 1,100 community colleges in the U.S., many of which perform at extremely high levels. We are delighted to celebrate this incredible marker of excellence that speaks to what we already know — KCTCS colleges are operating at and above the national standard,” said KCTCS President Ryan Quarles.

KCTCS colleges named to the top 200 list include Bluegrass Community and Technical College, Elizabethtown Community and Technical College, Hazard Community and Technical College, Madisonville Community College, Maysville Community and Technical College, Owensboro Community and Technical College, Somerset Community College and West Kentucky Community and Technical College.

The \$1 million Aspen Prize — awarded every two years — recognizes community colleges that achieve high and improving levels of student success in areas including teaching and learning; certificate and degree completion; transfer and bachelor’s attainment; workforce success; and college and program access. Aspen Prize winners and finalists are selected through three rounds of intensive data analysis and qualitative research by independent experts and selection committees. Effective practices and models of excellence uncovered during the prize process are shared with the field through open-access assessment tools and publications, conference presentations and professional development programs, including Aspen presidential fellowships and Aspen’s state and system partnerships. The Aspen Prize is supported by Ascendium and the Joyce Foundation.

Bluegrass Community and Technical College Awarded \$1.14 Million Federal Grant

Bluegrass Community and Technical College (BCTC) has been awarded \$1.14 million through the U.S. Department of Education’s Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), as part of a nationwide \$169 million investment announced this week to strengthen innovation and workforce alignment in higher education.

The grant is part of a new round of FIPSE awards aligned with program priorities established by the U.S. Department of Education in November, including initiatives that expand high-quality, short-term credential programs, enhance teaching and learning through emerging technologies, and build institutional capacity to meet workforce needs. Eighteen of the selected recipients are community colleges or two-year systems, underscoring the critical role these institutions play in workforce development.

Through this award, the college will partner with local healthcare providers, local emergency services, and the Kentucky workforce agency to launch and expand

credential pathways in emergency medical services (EMT), commercial driver’s licenses (CDL), and allied health fields. The initiative is designed to serve at least 150 students annually by its fourth year, directly addressing regional workforce shortages in high-demand sectors.”

The funding will support the development of accelerated, industry-aligned credential programs, expanded partnerships with employers and public agencies, and enhanced student support to ensure access, completion, and job placement.

The FIPSE award further advances BCTC’s mission to provide accessible, high-quality education that connects learning to meaningful careers and supports Kentucky’s long-term workforce and economic development goals.

West Kentucky Community and Technical College Named a Semifinalist for \$1 Million Aspen Prize

The Aspen Institute has named West Kentucky Community and Technical College (WKCTC) as one of 25 semifinalists for the 2027 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence. Aspen is widely recognized as the nation’s signature honor for community colleges. Rooted in deep research and backed by \$1 million in award funds, the Aspen Prize recognizes institutions that are delivering exceptional outcomes for students in college and beyond.

“Being named a semifinalist for the Aspen Prize is both an honor and a reflection of the work happening every day at WKCTC,” said Dr. Anton Reece, President of WKCTC. “Our mission is centered on student success, from the classroom to meaningful careers, and this recognition affirms that our students are not only completing their programs but leaving prepared to thrive in the workforce and in continued education.”

The 25 semifinalists, representing colleges from 20 states, were selected from nearly 1,000 institutions nationwide based on strong and improving outcomes in student learning, credential completion, transfer and bachelor’s attainment, and workforce success.

“At WKCTC, we are intentional about creating clear pathways for students, whether that leads to a career, a transfer opportunity, or both,” said Dr. Kate Senn. “This recognition highlights the impact of our faculty, staff, and partners who are committed to ensuring every student has access to opportunity and the support needed to succeed.”

In the coming months, the field will be narrowed to 10 finalists, announced in June 2026. Those institutions will undergo in-depth site visits in the fall, with the Aspen Prize winner announced in April 2027.

WKCTC has been recognized multiple times by the



Aspen Institute, reinforcing its role as a national leader in community college excellence and workforce development. This latest recognition continues that legacy, highlighting the college's impact on students, the regional economy, and the future workforce.

Read more from Kentucky:

[Bluegrass Community and Technical College Appoints Dr. Laura Hunt as Provost and Chief Academic Officer](#)

LOUISIANA

Louisiana Revenue Secretary Richard Nelson Named Community College System President

A member of Gov. Jeff Landry's cabinet has been chosen to lead the state's community and technical college system despite his lack of experience in higher education.



Richard Nelson

The Louisiana Community and Technical College System Board of Supervisors voted Wednesday to name state Revenue Secretary Richard Nelson as its next system president. Nelson will replace current President Monty Sullivan, who is retiring after serving in the position since 2014. Nelson took office on Jan. 1.

The board hired Nelson without conducting a search. It is standard practice for boards to convene search committees and undergo a months-long search process for college and university leaders.

Nelson, a Republican, has no prior work experience in higher education. Before Landry selected him to serve as secretary of the Louisiana Department of Revenue when he took office in 2024, Nelson ran against Landry for governor in 2023 and was previously a one-term member of the Louisiana House of Representatives.

"I'll tell you with humility, I have a lot to learn about the nuts and bolts of this," Nelson said in remarks to the board after his hiring. "I really think that the mission of this system is one of the most honorable in the state, and I think one of the most impactful that we can have on the future of the state."

Delgado Community College Builds Workforce Solutions for Louisiana's Future

As demand grows for skilled employees across multiple industries, Delgado Community College plays a central role in preparing current and future members of the workforce.

"Delgado has been meeting workforce development needs for over a century, due in part to our strategic business and industry partnerships statewide," said Chancellor Larissa Littleton Steib. "Delgado continues to see increased demand for skilled workers in the healthcare, automotive, maritime and industrial sectors."

One recent project is Delgado's leadership role in the GNO Infrastructure Partnership, in collaboration with GNO Inc. and partner institutions within the Louisiana Community and Technical College System. Delgado is implementing a \$6.05 million Strengthening Community Colleges Training Grant to expand training capacity for high-demand careers.

In addition, Delgado is developing Louisiana's first Electric Vehicle Technology program and enhancing course offerings in diesel technology, commercial vehicle and heavy equipment operator and motor vehicle technology.

"With \$850,000 in community investment funds secured by Congressman Troy Carter, we are in the planning phase for the Automotive Center for Excellence – the first facility of its kind in Louisiana focused on preparing students to work with electric vehicles," Chancellor Littleton Steib said. "We are also constructing a new Culinary Arts and Workforce Building to support hands-on, career-focused education. Additionally, with support from state legislators, Delgado is planning a \$3 million Maritime Aquatics Facility that will expand survival and safety training at our Maritime and Industrial Training Center."

These programs will add to Delgado's portfolio of programs that meet workforce needs. The Delgado Charity School of Nursing is the largest producer of nurses in Louisiana. The School of Allied Health is the largest producer of allied health professionals in Louisiana. Meanwhile, partnerships with Apple and Veolia give Delgado students access to education rooted in technology and the environment.

"Delgado has an impressive economic impact of \$588 million, and our graduates support more than 10,000 local jobs – a key indicator of how we are uniquely positioned to address current and future workforce needs," Chancellor Littleton Steib said.

Read more from Louisiana: [Enrollment at Nunez Community College Continues Historic Growth](#)

MISSISSIPPI

ICC President Dr. Jay Allen Named Finalist for National CEO of the Year Award

Itawamba Community College President Dr. Jay Allen has been named a finalist for the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) CEO of the Year Award, a national honor recognizing



Dr. Jay Allen

exceptional leadership among community college presidents across the United States.

The AACC CEO of the Year Award honors leaders whose work has made a significant and lasting impact on their institutions, students and the communities they serve. Dr. Allen will be formally recognized as a finalist during the AACC annual convention, the nation's premier convening of community college leaders, to be held in April in Seattle, Washington.

Since assuming the presidency at ICC, Dr. Allen has emphasized student success, workforce alignment and community engagement while maintaining a strong focus on institutional culture and excellence. Under his leadership, the college has continued to strengthen academic programs, expand workforce and industry partnerships and enhance the overall student experience across all ICC locations.

The American Association of Community Colleges is the primary national advocacy organization for the nation's community colleges, representing nearly 1,100 two-year institutions that collectively serve more than 10 million students annually. AACC provides leadership development, policy advocacy and professional resources while highlighting best practices and innovation across the community college sector.

Dr. Allen's selection as a finalist places Itawamba Community College on the national stage and underscores the college's ongoing role as a leader in community-focused education and workforce development.

East Central Community College 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.

"We are extremely proud of the dedication shown by our enrollment management team and the entire ECCC community in fostering an environment that attracts and retains students," said ECCC President Dr. Brent Gregory. "Our growth reflects the quality education and exciting campus life that we offer, and it demonstrates our commitment to providing students with the best value in higher education."

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.

"We are excited about the direction we are headed in and remain committed to offering an unparalleled educational experience," added Gregory. "Our goal is to continue to serve as the premier community college in our region, attracting students from across our five-county district and beyond."

Dr. Mary S. Graham appointed to Phi Theta Kappa International Board of Directors



Dr. Mary S. Graham

Mary S. Graham, president of Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, has been appointed to the International Board of Directors for Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society (PTK).

A nationally respected leader in community college education, Graham brings extensive executive experience and a strong record of advancing student success to PTK's governing board. Her appointment reflects both her long-standing service to the Society and the confidence placed in her leadership at the national level.

For the past six years, Graham has served on Phi Theta Kappa's Presidential Advisory Board as Mississippi's representative, providing operational insight and guidance to support community college students statewide. As a member of the Board of Directors, her role will expand to include strategic governance responsibilities, helping guide the Society's long-term vision, policy alignment, financial stewardship, and organizational sustainability at the national and international levels.

As president of MGCCC, Graham has led initiatives that strengthen workforce alignment, expand academic excellence, and create clear pathways to completion, transfer, and employment. Her leadership reinforces the essential connection between community colleges, regional economic growth, and expanded opportunity. Nationally, she has served on the Board of Directors for the American Association of Community Colleges and previously chaired the AACC Board, contributing to sector-wide initiatives focused on institutional effectiveness, advocacy, workforce development, and student success.

Graham is also a recipient of PTK's Shirley B. Gordon Award of Distinction, the Society's highest honor for community college presidents. Nominated by students, the award recognizes presidents who demonstrate extraordinary and sustained commitment to student success and academic excellence.

Phi Theta Kappa's Board of Directors includes presidents, students, alumni, advisors, and regional coordinators who collectively guide the organization's mission and future.

Graham's appointment further elevates MGCCC's national leadership presence and underscores the college's commitment to excellence in student achievement and opportunity.

Read more from Mississippi:

[**ECCC Names Dr. Aimee Brown Director of Career & Technical Education**](#)

NORTH CAROLINA

NC Community Colleges at Forefront of New \$9.25 Million Siemens Foundation Careers Electric™ Initiative

The North Carolina Community College System is taking a leading role in the launch of Careers Electric™, a groundbreaking national initiative by the Siemens Foundation to expand access to high-quality electrical training and create direct pathways into well-paying, in-demand careers.

Supported by a \$9.25 million investment, the program positions North Carolina's community colleges as the primary engine for training students for essential roles in the energy and infrastructure sectors over the next decade.

"North Carolina is creating thousands of high-quality jobs that do not require a four-year degree," said Dr. Jeffrey Cox, President of the North Carolina Community College System. "Our community colleges are proud to partner with employers and initiatives like Careers Electric™ to prepare students for these opportunities and to ensure our state has the skilled workforce needed to support continued economic growth."

A cornerstone of this statewide effort is the leadership of Wake Tech, which played a pivotal role in developing the partnership with the Siemens Foundation. In addition to the system-wide initiative, Wake Tech is slated to receive a separate grant to spearhead the implementation and development of the national training model. As a key partner, Wake Tech's extensive scope of work will serve as the primary blueprint for replication across the country, ensuring North Carolina remains the national leader in electrical workforce innovation.

"I have long believed the shortage of skilled electricians is one of the most critical workforce gaps facing both our state and our nation, and it will only grow as electrification expands across the economy," said Dr. Scott Ralls, President of Wake Tech. "Thanks to the generosity of the Siemens Foundation and the initiative of North Carolina's community colleges and schools, we are working to close that gap. Wake Tech is honored to help lead the way."

The initiative addresses a widening national skills gap and growing worker shortages in the skilled trades by validating a training model in North Carolina before

scaling it across the country. By focusing on high-impact electrical careers, the program aims to provide workers with financial security and a strong foothold in the middle class.

Campbell Joins Louisburg College as 29th College President

Louisburg College is excited to announce Richard Campbell as the 29th President of the College!

The Board of Trustees's approval comes after a rigorous process of interviews and meetings for Campbell, including talks with the Board, the Committee, Louisburg College faculty and staff, and a panel of current students.

Hailing from North Carolina, Campbell is a lifelong member of the United Methodist Church who has deep ties to faith-based higher education in the state. He is the son of an NC Hall of Fame Broadcaster and the great-great-grandson of James Archibald Campbell, founder of now Campbell University.



Richard Campbell

For the past decade, Campbell has served as a senior communications and marketing executive at NC State University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and Auburn University. He's led integrated strategies that increased student enrollment, strengthened alumni engagement, and enhanced philanthropic support.

"I am deeply humbled to be named the 29th President of Louisburg College," Campbell says. "This institution holds a remarkable legacy of transforming lives through education grounded in faith, community, and opportunity. I am eager to join the Louisburg family and to work alongside out faculty, staff, students, alumni, and trustees to chart a bold and sustainable course forward."

Campbell's appointment comes as Dr. Gary Brown, Louisburg College's 28th President, prepares for retirement. Dr. Brown has served the College since 2018.

"Dr. Gary Brown has provided steady leadership since 2018, strengthening the College's foundation and academic programs," says Tad DeBerry, Chair of the Board of Trustees. "We are grateful for his service and thoughtful transition. With Richard [Campbell]'s leadership, we are confident Louisburg will build on this momentum."

Read more from North Carolina:

[**NC Career Coach Program Celebrates 10 Years. More Than 200,000 Students Served**](#)

SOUTH CAROLINA

New Leadership Reflects Strength of SC Technical College System Talent Pipeline

The SC Technical College System is entering a new chapter of leadership, with three new college presidents bringing deep experience, fresh perspectives, and a shared commitment to student success and workforce impact. All three leaders were developed within the System, reinforcing its strength in cultivating and advancing talent and its ability to grow presidents from within.

At Denmark Technical College, Dr. Eric Brown now serves as president and CEO, bringing more than two decades of higher education leadership experience within the System. His background in student affairs, enrollment management, and strategic planning reflects a career focused on improving outcomes and expanding opportunity. His leadership comes at a pivotal time for the state's only historically Black technical college.

At Central Carolina Technical College, Dr. Jennifer Wilbanks steps into the presidency following a distinguished career in academics and workforce development. With more than 22 years in higher education, including executive leadership at Horry-Georgetown Technical College, she has a proven track record of strengthening academic programs, building partnerships, and improving student outcomes. A South Carolina native, she brings both experience and a deep understanding of the communities CCTC serves.

Most recently, Dr. Laurie Boeding has been announced as the next president of Technical College of the Lowcountry. A longtime leader at Trident Technical College, she brings more than 20 years of experience spanning faculty and executive roles, with a focus on aligning education with workforce needs, using data to drive student success, and leading academic innovation.

Together, these appointments represent more than leadership transitions. They demonstrate the SC Technical College System's ability to develop, retain, and elevate talent, creating a strong pipeline of experienced, mission-driven leaders. It's a model that strengthens continuity, accelerates impact, and keeps the System closely aligned with the needs of South Carolina's students, communities, and economy.

South Carolina Advances a Systemwide Approach to Student Success

The SC Technical College System is taking a bold, unified approach to student success, embedding it as a core part of how its 16 colleges operate every day. Rather than launching a standalone initiative,

the System has developed a Student Success Framework that aligns culture, decision-making, and on-the-ground practices across all institutions.

This work gained momentum during the System's Student Success Symposium this fall, where college leaders came together to define a shared, actionable vision for student success. The result is a consistent, systemwide approach focused on ensuring every student is supported, connected, and equipped to achieve their academic, personal, and career goals.

By prioritizing alignment and scaling proven practices across colleges, South Carolina is demonstrating how a statewide system can move beyond fragmented efforts to deliver measurable impact. The framework reinforces a clear commitment: student success is not a program. It is the standard for how the System serves students, communities, and the state's workforce.

TENNESSEE

Chancellor Recommends Candidates for Presidents of Cleveland State Community College and TCAT Oneida/Huntsville

After deliberative search processes at both institutions, Tennessee Board of Regents Chancellor Flora W. Tydings is recommending the appointments of Dr. John M. Davis as the next president of Cleveland State Community College and Timothy Smith as the next president of Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) Oneida/Huntsville.



Dr. John M. Davis

Davis has been vice president of administrative services at Germanna Community College in Virginia since 2017 and an administrator there since 2008. He holds a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Educational Policy, Planning, and Leadership from the College of



Timothy Smith

William and Mary, a Master of Science in Higher Education and a Bachelor of Science in Criminology, both from Florida State University, and an Associate of Arts from Gulf Coast Community College.

Smith is currently TCAT Oneida/Huntsville's vice president and has served in the TBR system since 2007. He earned Master of Science and Bachelor of Science degrees in Elementary Education, both at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

The chancellor's nominees were among finalists selected by search advisory committees at each college, which spent months reviewing and interviewing candidates. Finalists for TCAT Oneida/Huntsville were announced April 3, and finalists for Cleveland State were announced April 8. The finalists participated in campus visits and public interviews, with opportunities for public and campus community feedback. The chancellor selected the two candidates for her recommendation to the board after carefully reviewing the feedback and more interviews with the finalists.

Both search committees were composed of board members and representatives of the colleges' faculty, staff, students, and civic leaders from their communities.

Tydings thanked members of the search committees for their service. She also thanked Cleveland State's interim president, Dr. Ray Brooks, a retired president of community and technical colleges in Georgia and South Carolina, who is serving his second tenure as interim president at Cleveland.

At TCAT Oneida/Huntsville, President Dwight Murphy is retiring this summer after more than 20 years as the college's chief executive officer.

Tennessee Board of Regents Awarded National Grant to Simplify College Admissions and Expand Student Access

The Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) has been selected as one of 10 recipients of a national grant from Lumina Foundation's Great Admissions Redesign initiative, which is investing more than \$3.5 million to simplify the college admissions process and expand student access across the country.

Through this grant, TBR will streamline the enrollment process for dual enrollment at its community and technical colleges and improve the student experience once there – including clear, proactive interventions focused on advising, communication “nudges,” and career-aligned pathways so students and families know exactly what to do next and feel confident taking the next step. The effort is designed to make it easier for students to navigate the path to college by creating a more seamless, student-centered experience.

“We're honored to be selected by Lumina as a recipient of this grant, which will help us advance the important work already underway to simplify the college enrollment process and to help students succeed through to graduation,” said Troy Grant, TBR vice chancellor for strategic enrollment management.

“For example, we are streamlining dual enrollment for high school students who want to earn college credit and enroll in higher education. This will allow students who have already demonstrated college readiness through dual enrollment to seamlessly enroll at their local community college or TCAT (Tennessee Colleges of

Applied Technology) after high school graduation,” Grant said.

Lumina's Great Admissions Redesign initiative supports states, systems, and institutions in integrating admissions, financial aid, advising, and enrollment systems. The goal is to remove unnecessary barriers and help more students successfully enroll in and complete college.

“Across the country, we're seeing real momentum to rethink how students access college,” said Melanie Heath, Lumina strategy director. “This cohort reflects a clear shift from fragmented fixes to coordinated, student-centered systems.”

The initiative is part of a broader national effort to increase post-high school attainment and advance Lumina's Goal 2040, which aims for 75 percent of working-age adults to hold a credential of value.

“As Tennessee's open-access college system, student success and workforce development is our mission,” TBR Chancellor Flora W. Tydings said. “The work supported by the grant is part of our broader systemwide efforts to simplify access and better support students from application through enrollment.”

Chancellor's Fellowship Class of 2026-27 Announced

The College System of Tennessee today announced the 12 members of the Chancellor's Fellowship Class of 2026-27, representing faculty and staff from community and technical colleges across the state.

The Chancellor's Fellowship is a nine-month program designed to cultivate leadership talent across the college system. The program launched in 2025 with its inaugural class, which concluded its work in March. Members of the second class are from eight community colleges and four Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCATs), in campus positions spanning academics, student services, and administrative services.

Members of the Chancellor's Fellowship Class of 2026-27 are:

- Dr. Ryan Badeau – Columbia State Community College
- Shasta Carroll – TCAT Hohenwald
- Kim Christmon – Volunteer State Community College
- Jessica Green – TCAT Chattanooga
- Kandra Hire – TCAT Hartsville
- Dr. Angela Hughes – Pellissippi State Community College
- Chris Lykins – Chattanooga State Community College
- Dr. Levi Mayer – TCAT Dickson
- Julie Mula – Jackson State Community College
- Alma Rutledge – Southwest Tennessee Community College
- Dr. Willie Thomas – Cleveland State Community College
- Dr. Nathan Weber – Northeast State Community College

The class launches in June with an orientation session aligned with the quarterly meeting of the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR), the system's governing board. The class then will conduct monthly sessions through the next academic year.

"We're delighted to announce and congratulate the members of this second Chancellor's Fellowship class. Leadership development is one of our major responsibilities to ensure the success of our students in the years ahead, and I'm confident that members of this class will advance the high standards established by the inaugural group," said TBR Chancellor Flora W. Tydings.

TEXAS

Interim President of Lamar State College Port Arthur

Dr. John C. Hayek has served as Interim President of Lamar State College Port Arthur since January 2026, providing leadership and continuity during a period of institutional transition. In this role, he is focused on supporting students, faculty, and staff; strengthening workforce and community partnerships across Southeast Texas; and engaging campus and external stakeholders to inform the college's next chapter.



Dr. John C. Hayek

Dr. Hayek also serves as Vice Chancellor for Academic and Health Affairs and Chief Academic Officer for the Texas State University System (TSUS), where he provides academic leadership across four universities and three state colleges, advancing excellence in teaching, research, and service. In this systemwide role, he oversees academic planning and program review, data analytics and accountability, online learning, research, and strategic partnerships.

With more than 30 years of experience at the university, system, and state levels, Dr. Hayek has led major initiatives in academic and health affairs, student engagement, finance, policy development, strategic planning, and industry partnerships. Dr. Hayek serves as the Chair of the National Advisory Board for the National Survey of Student Engagement and is a member of the Texas Local Board of the American Lung Association.

Before joining TSUS in 2015, he served as Associate Vice Chancellor and Chief of Staff for Academic Affairs at the University of Texas System, directing projects in academic planning, policy, student success, and

data analytics. From 2005 to 2012, he was Senior Vice President for Budget, Policy, and Planning at the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, where he oversaw statewide funding and educational attainment initiatives designed to strengthen workforce quality and support economic development.

Earlier in his career, Dr. Hayek served as Senior Associate Director and Assistant Research Scientist at Indiana University's Center for Postsecondary Research, where he helped launch the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), now widely regarded as the national benchmark for promoting effective educational practices and institutional quality.

Before entering higher education, he held positions with IBM and the Northern Trust Company and worked with public-private economic development organizations that hosted major events, including the Super Bowl and an Olympic soccer competition in South Florida.

A social scientist by training, Dr. Hayek earned his Ph.D. in Higher Education from Indiana University Bloomington, a master's degree in Sports Administration from St. Thomas University in Miami, and a bachelor's degree in Economics from the University of Chicago, where he lettered in varsity baseball and football and was a member of the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity.

Dr. Hayek and his wife, Laura, reside in Southeast Texas, with Rain, their Standard Poodle, and are the proud parents of four adult children who live and work in Central Texas.

VIRGINIA

Dr. Tashika Griffith Selected as President at Germanna Community College

Dr. Tashika Griffith was selected as the seventh permanent president of Germanna Community College (GCC). Her service as GCC president began on January 1, 2026.

Dr. Griffith succeeds Dr. Janet Gullickson who served as Germanna president for eight years until her retirement.



Dr. Tashika Griffith

Dr. David Dore, Virginia Community College Chancellor, noted "I'm excited to welcome Dr. Griffith to lead Germanna Community College, and I know that she will provide the kind of dynamic leadership that will continue to make Germanna a cultural center and economic driver in its region."

Dr. Griffith's selection followed a months-long search that attracted exceptional candidates.

Prior to accepting the presidency at Germanna Dr. Griffith served as Provost and Chief Campus Officer, Clearwater Campus at St. Petersburg State College, St. Petersburg, Florida.

She has been affiliated with St. Petersburg College since 2016 and also served as Interim Dean of the College of Education, Assistant Provost and Provost of the college's Downtown and Midtown Centers. Dr. Griffith previously served as Associate Dean of Students at University of Tennessee in Knoxville, Assistant Dean of Students at the University of Miami, FL, Director of the office of Multicultural Affairs at University of Scranton, PA, and in the Career and Multicultural Center at Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA. In addition to 16 years in adjunct teaching positions at a number of colleges and universities, Dr. Griffith also taught public high school and served in the university police department at Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL. She has also served as an adjunct faculty member for the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Education's Department of Educational Leadership.

Dr. Griffith earned a Professional Certificate at Harvard University, a B.A. at Florida Atlantic University, a Master's degree at Virginia Tech, and her Ed.D. at Northeastern University, Boston, MA.

Raegina D. Scott, Executive Secretary-Treasurer

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