



ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

2025



- TOP TEN ACCOMPLISHMENTS
- CELEBRATE GADSDEN STATE
- 2025 CHANCELLOR AWARDS

Enjoy the journey through the top accomplishments of the 2025 academic year and the institutional centennial "Celebrate Gadsden State" campaign.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Students, Faculty, Staff, Alumni, and Community Partners,

As we reflect on 2025, we do so with immense pride, gratitude, and renewed purpose. This year marked a historic milestone for Gadsden State as we celebrated our 100th anniversary – a century of expanding access, transforming lives, and strengthening the communities we serve.

Our centennial celebration, *Celebrate Gadsden State*, was more than a look back at our rich history; it was a bold affirmation of our future. For 100 years, Gadsden State has been a gateway to opportunity across Etowah and surrounding counties. From our earliest beginnings to our present-day campuses,

generations of students have trusted this institution to help them build meaningful careers and better lives. In 2025, we honored that legacy while positioning ourselves for the next century of service and innovation.



ALAN SMITH

President

Enrollment Growth and Expanding Access

This year, we experienced encouraging growth in overall enrollment, reflecting renewed confidence in the value of community college education. More students are choosing Gadsden State for its affordability, flexibility, and workforce-aligned programs. Our recruitment and retention efforts, paired with expanded student support services, have strengthened pathways for traditional students, adult learners, and working professionals. One of the most exciting areas of growth has been dual enrollment. Partnerships with area high schools across our service region have expanded significantly, allowing more students to earn college credit while still in high school. Dual enrollment not only accelerates academic progress but also reduces the financial burden on families and increases the likelihood of degree completion. In 2025, we saw record participation, reinforcing our commitment to meeting students where they are and creating seamless transitions from high school to college and career.

Academic Excellence and Transfer Success

Academic excellence remains at the heart of our mission. Our university transfer programs continue to provide strong foundations for students pursuing bachelor's and advanced degrees. Faculty innovation, enhanced advising models, and expanded academic support services have improved student success outcomes and strengthened transfer pathways to four-year institutions across Alabama and beyond.

At the same time, we remain focused on evolving curricula to reflect emerging industries, technological advancements, and the needs of employers in our region. Our goal is simple but powerful: ensure that every credential earned at Gadsden State leads to meaningful opportunity.

Health Sciences: Meeting Critical Workforce Needs

In 2025, our Health Sciences Division experienced significant momentum. Demand for nurses, allied health professionals, and emergency responders continues to grow statewide, and Gadsden State remains a leading provider of highly skilled graduates in these fields. Through expanded clinical partnerships, updated lab technologies, and a continued emphasis on hands-on training, our health sciences programs are preparing students to meet the complex challenges of modern healthcare. The dedication of our faculty and clinical partners ensures that our graduates enter the workforce with competence, confidence, and compassion.

Career Technical Education: Driving Regional Prosperity

Career Technical Education (CTE) has been another area of notable advancement. From advanced manufacturing and welding to industrial systems, CDL, and skilled trades, our programs are aligned with regional workforce demands. Investments in equipment, facilities, and industry collaboration have strengthened our ability to deliver real-world, job-ready training.

As Alabama continues to prioritize the development of a highly skilled workforce, Gadsden State plays a vital role in preparing talent for high-demand careers. Our graduates are not only employable – they are essential to the economic vitality of our communities.

A Centennial Year of Gratitude

Celebrating 100 years reminded us that institutions endure because of people. I am deeply grateful to our faculty and staff for their unwavering dedication, to our students for their perseverance and ambition, and to our alumni and community partners for their steadfast support. The centennial was not merely a celebration of longevity – it was a celebration of impact. Every degree awarded, every certification earned, and every life changed represents the true legacy of Gadsden State.

As we look ahead, we carry forward the same mission that has guided us for a century: to provide accessible, high-quality education that transforms lives and strengthens communities. The momentum of 2025 positions us confidently for the next 100 years of excellence. Thank you for being part of this extraordinary journey.

With gratitude and optimism,



Alan Smith
Gadsden State President



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GADSDEN STATE
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

ABOUT US — Strategic Plan 2024 - 2027

VISION STATEMENT

Gadsden State Community College will be the preferred choice for exceptional education and innovative workforce development which changes lives of our students, their families, and our world for good, forever.

MISSION STATEMENT

Gadsden State Community College empowers and prepares students from all backgrounds for success through exceptional education and innovative workforce development with a focus on community and global engagement resulting in a positive economic impact for all stakeholders.



CORE BELIEFS

We Believe In:

EXCELLENCE with a commitment to a culture that empowers all to achieve high standards.

ACCOUNTABILITY with a focus on continuous improvement through the use of data-informed decisions.

RESPECT as we value the uniqueness of each other.

SERVICE as we keep the needs of others at the heart of our work.

INTEGRITY and the adherence to moral and ethical principles.

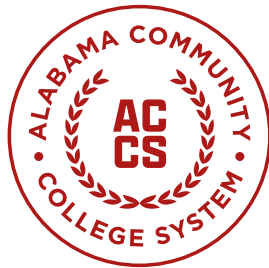
ACCREDITATIONS — SACSCOC & ACCS

ACCREDITATION:

Gadsden State Community College is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to award the Associate degree.

Gadsden State may also offer credentials such as certificates and diplomas at approved degree levels. Questions about the accreditation of Gadsden State Community College may be directed in writing to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097, by calling (404) 679-4500, or by using information available on SACSCOC's website (www.sacscoc.org).

NOTICE: *Academic courses taken at Ayers State Technical College prior to 1997 must be retaken due to a lack of accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.*



In addition, each of the following GSCC instructional programs has received individual professional accreditation, approval, or certification from the appropriate professional or academic organization:

- AIR CONDITIONING & REFRIGERATION PROGRAM
- AUTO COLLISION REPAIR TECHNOLOGY
- AUTOMOTIVE SERVICE TECHNOLOGY
- CIVIL ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY
- CONSTRUCTION TECHNOLOGY
- COURT REPORTING
- DIESEL TECHNOLOGY
- DIAGNOSTIC MEDICAL SONOGRAPHY
- ELECTRICAL TECHNOLOGY
- ELECTRONICS ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY
- EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES
- INDUSTRIAL AUTOMATION TECHNOLOGY
- MECHANICAL DESIGN TECHNOLOGY
- MEDICAL LABORATORY TECHNICIAN
- NURSING EDUCATION
- PARALEGAL
- PRECISION MACHINING
- RADIOGRAPHY
- SALON AND SPA MANAGEMENT
- WELDING TECHNOLOGY



CORE COMPETENCIES

Academic Programs:
GadsdenState.edu/Academics

Technical Programs:
GadsdenState.edu/Technical

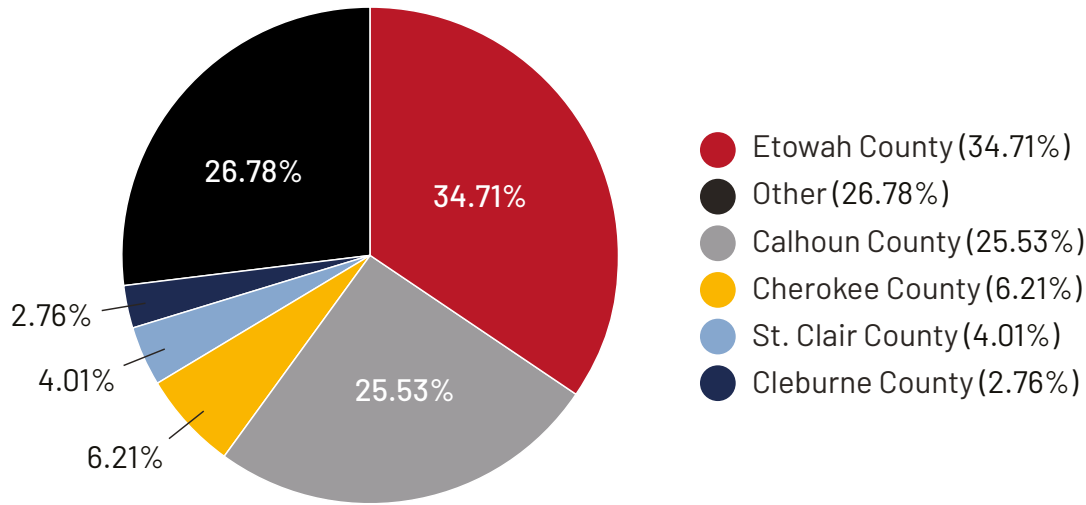
Health Science Programs:
GadsdenState.edu/HealthSciences

Skills Training:
GadsdenState.edu/Skills-Training

Adult Education Services:
GadsdenState.edu/AdultEd

BY THE NUMBERS

— At a Glance Fall 2025



**CALHOUN
CHEROKEE
CLEBURNE
ETOWAH
ST. CLAIR**

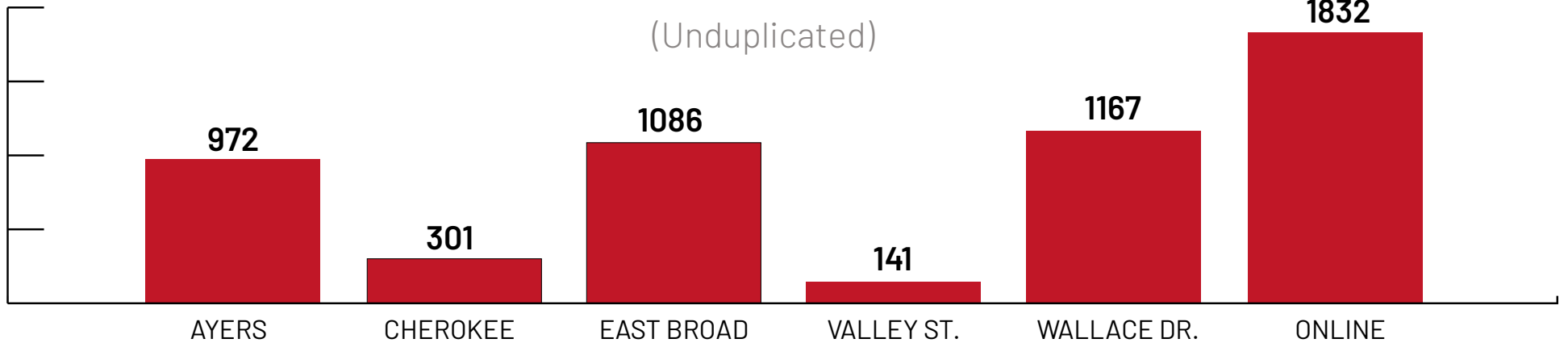
COUNTIES IN GSCC SERVICE AREA

TOP FIVE FEEDER SCHOOLS

**GADSDEN CITY HIGH
OXFORD HIGH
SOUTHSIDE HIGH
ETOWAH HIGH
PIEDMONT HIGH**

CAMPUS ENROLLMENT

(Unduplicated)



FALL 2025 SUMMARY

46,190

CREDIT HOUR PRODUCTION

5,568

TOTAL ENROLLMENT HEADCOUNT

363

GRADUATES

DIVISION OF FINE ARTS

45 SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

22 STUDENTS
Gadsden State Show Band

21 STUDENTS
A Cappella Choir & Gadsden State Singers

29 STUDENTS
Gadsden State Theatre

TRANSFER OPPORTUNITIES

23 ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS & MEMORANDUMS OF UNDERSTANDING

17:1

STUDENT TO TEACHER RATIO

FINANCIAL AID

\$8.3 M

55% MORE AFFORDABLE

According to ACHE, Gadsden State is 55% more affordable than the state's public universities. The cost of in-state tuition and fees is only \$182 per credit hour.

ADULT EDUCATION SERVICES
(Non-credit)

1,149 ENROLLMENT HEADCOUNT

31 GED COMPLETERS 1,598 CERTIFICATES AWARDED

CONTINUING EDUCATION & CORPORATE TRAINING

298 CERTIFICATES OF COMPLETION

2 EMPLOYERS 22 PARTICIPANTS

SKILLS TRAINING DIVISION
(Non-credit)

85% COMPLETED TRAINING

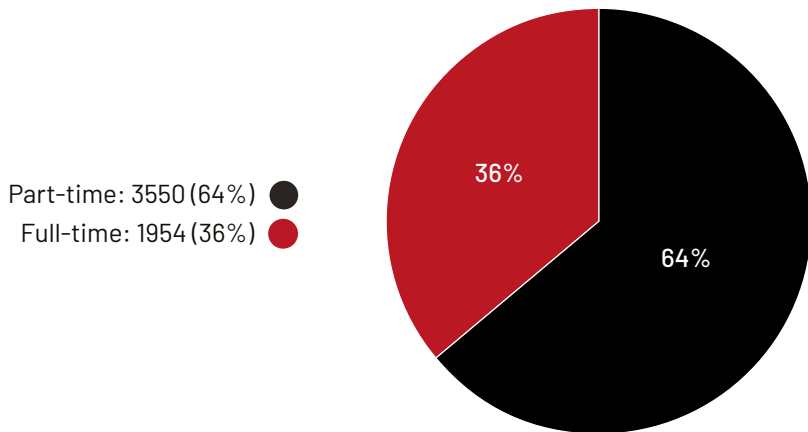
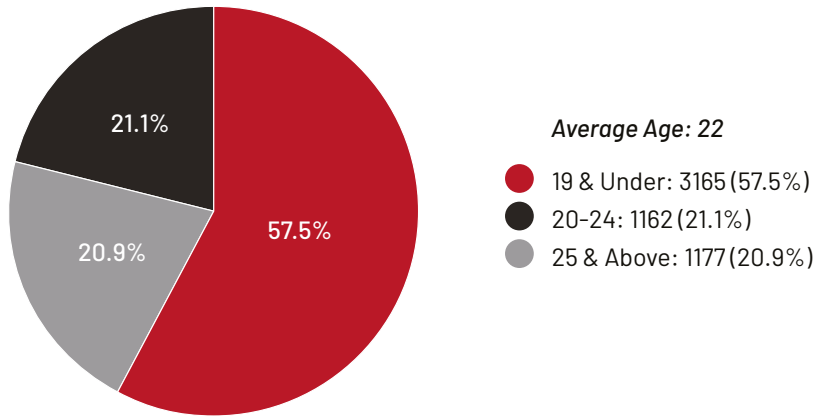
172 ENROLLMENT HEADCOUNT

TOP 10 PROGRAMS

- General Studies
- Industrial Maintenance Technology
- Registered Nursing
- Welding
- Salon & Spa Management
- Computer Information Sciences
- Civil Engineering Technology
- Emergency Medical Technology
- Office Administration
- HVACR

ENROLLMENT BY ETHNICITY

African-American:	948 (17%)
American Indian or Alaska Native:	42 (<1%)
Hispanic:	500 (9%)
Multi-Racial:	321 (6%)
Nonresident Alien:	321 (6%)
Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian:	3 (<1%)
White:	3642 (66%)
Unknown:	3 (<1%)

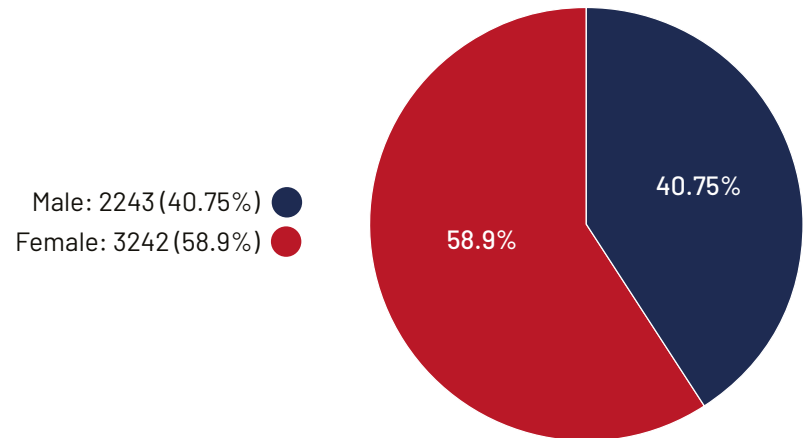


REVENUES

State Appropriations:	\$27,613,605.00
Tuition and Fees:	\$21,733,340.00
Federal Funds:	\$19,845,346.00
State Grants and Contracts:	\$6,085,905.00
Auxiliary:	\$918,387.00
Sales and Service:	\$93,356.00
Other:	\$93,356.00
Total Revenues:	\$76,383,295.00

EXPENDITURES

Instruction:	\$25,578,944.00
Public Service:	\$112,813.00
Academic Support:	\$2,323,156.00
Student Services:	\$6,951,677.00
Institutional Support:	\$9,876,721.00
Operation and Maintenance:	\$5,487,252.00
Scholarships and Fellowships:	\$20,299,972.00
Auxiliary:	\$765,477.00
Depreciation:	\$5,247,705.00
Total Expenditures:	\$76,643,717.00



Gadsden State Community College Generates \$270.5 Million Dollars in Economic Impact

Gadsden State Community College (GSCC) continues to play a pivotal role in driving economic growth and community development across Alabama. According to the latest Economic Impact Study for Fiscal Year 2023-2024 by Lightcast, a global leader in labor market analytics, GSCC generated an impressive \$270.5 million in total added income for the regional economy, equal to approximately 2.3% of the total gross regional product of the GSCC Service Area, comprised of five campuses or educational centers in Calhoun, Cherokee, and Etowah counties, solidifying its status as a cornerstone of regional prosperity.

Key Areas of Impact:

- Operations spending impact (\$42.5 million) – Payroll and benefits to support day-to-day operations.
- Construction spending impact (\$7.9 million) – GSCC invests in capital projects, facility maintenance, and growth to meet educational needs.
- Student spending impact (\$2.5 million) – Expenditures of relocated and retained students in the region.
- Alumni impact (\$217.6 million) – Thousands of former students are employed in the GSCC service area.

The total impact of \$270.5 million is equivalent to supporting 4,415 jobs. For perspective, this means that one out of every 36 jobs in the GSCC Service Area is supported by the activities of GSCC and its students.

Gadsden State Community College remains committed to its vision of providing accessible, high-quality education that drives economic and social advancement throughout Alabama.



Students attend Workforce Development Summit, earn scholarships

Two Gadsden State students from the Valley Street Campus attended the inaugural *Thurgood Marshall College Fund Workforce Development Summit* held Jan. 30–Feb. 1, 2025 in Birmingham. The students are Giaus Spurgeon and Dyamond McCadney.

The Summit, which serves as a forum for *Historically Black Community Colleges* to connect with workforce talent and industry partners, provided an invaluable three-day experience for the students to learn the skills required to thrive, grow, and lead in their chosen fields. In addition to the Summit experience, both students received the *Cal and Annette Johnson Scholarship* worth \$15,000 each. The scholarships are a part of the Summit's commitment to supporting the education and professional development of students from HBCCs.

"We are very proud of Giaus and Dyamond," said Ricky Tillis, director of the Valley Street Campus. **"A scholarship worth \$15,000 is substantial and will significantly ease their financial burdens. It allows them to continue their studies with full focus."**

McCadney, a 27-year-old native of Union City, Tenn., is pursuing a degree in Diagnostic Medical Sonography at the Valley Street Campus. McCadney, who is in her second year at Gadsden State, chose the community college for its proximity to her home and its status as an HBCC.

"Gadsden State has been a perfect match for me," she said. **"The program also has an amazing success rate for sonographers."**

After graduation, McCadney plans to apply for Gadsden



State's Echocardiography Certificate Program and is considering continuing her education at the *University of Alabama at Birmingham*.

Reflecting on her experience at the Summit, McCadney said it was phenomenal.

"I learned so many skills, such as taking control of my credit and negotiating my salary," she said. **"The job fair was an incredible opportunity, and we were able to meet with a number of companies."**

McCadney expressed her gratitude upon receiving the \$15,000 scholarship.

"I have been working the entire time I've been in college," she said. **"It's unbelievable to think that not only is my tui-**

Recipients of the Cal & Annette Johnson Scholarship, Dyamond McCadney (L) and Giaus Spurgeon (R), pictured with Ricky Tillis, director of the Gadsden State Valley Street Campus.

tion paid now, but I can also fully focus on my studies. I am so grateful for the Summit and the scholarship fund for giving me this amazing opportunity.”

Spurgeon, an 18-year-old from Albertville, is working toward a short-term certificate in Construction Technology at the Valley Street Campus. He chose the program because of his hands-on learning style and his passion for carpentry.

“I’ve really enjoyed helping others with the work the program does for *Habitat for Humanity*,” he said. “It has been awesome to help build houses.”

Spurgeon plans to pursue an associate degree in general studies at Gadsden State and hopes to become an entrepreneur in the construction field.

“I’m still trying to figure out my life’s path, but I know I want to help people by building homes that low-income people can afford,” he said.

Spurgeon said he was shocked and thrilled to learn he had received the \$15,000 scholarship.

“I never considered that I would be a scholarship recipient,” he said. “I didn’t even realize they called my name. I just sat there shocked for a minute.”

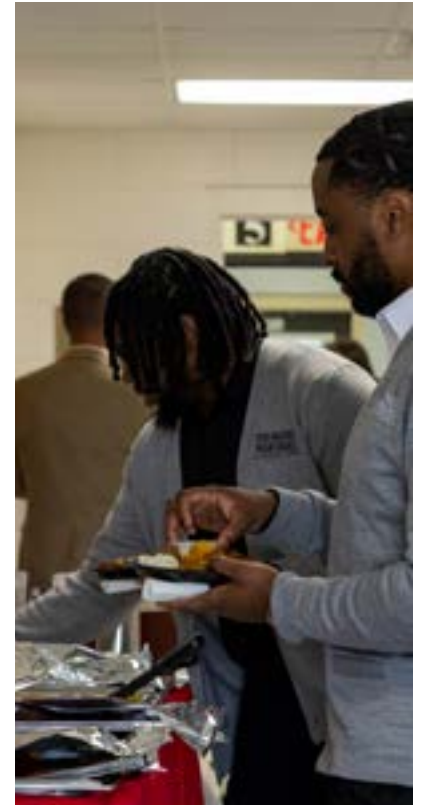
The Valley Street Campus, which was once the only vocational training school for Black Americans, earned its HBCU designation in 1997 and continues to serve as a beacon of educational excellence for underserved communities. The campus was one of six community colleges in Alabama selected to join the Thurgood Marshall College Fund in 2023, providing students with additional access to scholarships and professional development opportunities.

The *Workforce Development Summit* is a part of the college fund and aims to deepen partnerships between HBCCs and employers seeking work-ready talent. Spurgeon said he is grateful for the opportunity to learn from others at the Summit.

“I learned so much at the Summit, including the importance of being my authentic self,” he said. “Always be yourself and take time for yourself. Also, take advantage of networking. Don’t be afraid to communicate with others. That next handshake could be a job opportunity.”



Representatives from the Thurgood Marshall Fund attended a lunch and discussion with members of the cabinet.





Gadsden State announces revamped program, new director

— Surgical Technology on the Ayers Campus

Gadsden State ushered in a new chapter for its Surgical Technology Program with the appointment of Dr. Stephanie Austin as the new program director. Under her leadership, the program was set for a major “restart,” promising to strengthen the skills of future surgical technologists and meet the growing demands of the healthcare industry.

“The Surgical Technology Program is designed to prepare entry-level surgical technologists who are competent in the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective learning domains to enter the profession,” she said. “I’m honored to be a part of bringing this valuable career field to the communities in our region.”

Austin, a native of Crossville, Tenn., has worked in surgical technology for over

two decades. She decided to become a surgical technologist after undergoing surgery herself.

“When I went into the operating room, I saw a high school classmate of mine who was a surgical tech,” she said. “At first, I was very scared and upset. I had never had surgery before. He really calmed me down. He held my hand and reassured me that they would take great care of me. He comforted me when I needed comforting the most. I woke up from surgery and immediately said, ‘I know what I want to do now.’”

Austin enrolled in the Surgical Technology Program at the Tennessee Technology Center and earned a diploma in 2004. Five years later, she continued her education at Roane State Community College in Harriman, Tenn., earning an Associate in Applied Sciences.

In 2016, Austin earned a bachelor’s degree in Surgical Technology and a Master of Arts in Leadership in Higher Education from Siena Heights University in Michigan. She most recently earned a Doctorate of Education in August from the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences. While furthering her education, she continued to grow in her profession. For 11 years, she worked as a certified surgical technologist for four Tennessee medical facilities. In 2015, she became an educator and worked as the program director of Surgical Technology at Keiser University in Clearwater, FL, and Virginia College in Knoxville. Her most recent position was the director of the Surgical Technology Program and director of Central Processing at Walters State Community College in Morristown, Tenn.

“I’m proud to have been a part of the initial accreditation at two of the institutions I previously worked,” she said. “It’s certainly a challenge to work towards an accreditation from a national organization, but it’s such a joy when accreditation is awarded and you know

your students are going to get the best possible education and training.”

Austin has been an on-site evaluator since 2019 for the Accreditation Review Council in Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting. She is also the vice president of the Tennessee Association of Surgical Technologists and a member of the AST National Board of Directors.

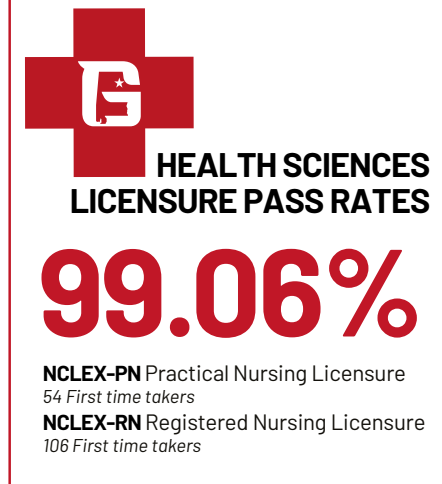
Austin was named the Fellow of the Association of Surgical Technologists in 2021. The FAST award is given to those who have upheld the highest professional, ethical, and moral standards and traditions of the surgical technology profession, and whose professional activity has been devoted to the advancement of the profession towards improving the quality of surgical patient care.

“I’m grateful that I chose this career field,” she said. “It has been incredibly rewarding. The work we do directly impacts patient outcomes, which makes our field not only essential but deeply rewarding.”

Austin is already hard at work rebuilding the program for Gadsden State. Previously, the College’s Surgical Operating Room Technician Program awarded certificates to students entering the field. It has transitioned to a degree-granting program, launched in January 2026.

“The program is going to provide quality surgical technologists to medical facilities in our area,” Austin said. “In this day and age, having certified surgical techs is important. An accredited program that leads to certification provides standards that are needed for our students.”

Austin, who started her new job Feb. 3, 2025, said she is currently in the process of getting the program accredited by a national accrediting organization.



DR. STEPHANIE AUSTIN

*Surgical Technology
Program Director*

“Our program will take five semesters to complete following a semester of general academic courses,” she said. “Following completion of the program, graduates can take a national certification examination to obtain the surgical technology credential. A surgical technologist can earn positions in a hospital operating room, inpatient and outpatient surgery centers, labor and delivery units, physicians’ offices, veterinary offices, and central sterile supply departments, to name a few employment opportunities.”

She said surgical technologists are an integral part of the team of medical practitioners providing surgical care.

“Surgical technologists have a number of responsibilities,” Austin said. “We prepare operating rooms, pass instruments, and assist surgeons in any way needed to ensure safe and efficient surgical procedures. We are also patient advocates. We speak for the patient when they can’t speak for themselves. We protect them from any hazards or dangers while they are in their most vulnerable state.”

While the career can be stressful, Austin said it can be fun.

“Surgical technologists enjoy the work we do,” she said. “We enjoy taking care of patients. We enjoy the camaraderie on the surgical team. We work as a unit; a well-oiled machine. It’s an exciting career. Yes, it can be a little stressful but it’s fun to work in a team atmosphere.”

In addition to transitioning to a degree program, the lab located on the Ayers Campus in Anniston was redeveloped with new equipment and supplies.

“The lab is realistic to what an operating room actually looks like,” Austin said. “Students will have a great experience in the lab on campus before they even go to clinical sites. Students are going to receive the highest quality education at Gadsden State.”

The minimum admissions requirement for the Surgical Technology Program include:

- Unconditional admission to Gadsden State.
- Submit online program application.
- Submit supporting documents to the Admissions Office:
 - All official high school and college transcripts or official GED scores
 - Official ACT scores
- Must be at least 18 years old.
- A minimum 2.5 overall GPA at Gadsden State for all college courses taken. If no courses have been completed at Gadsden State, the GPA from high school or from another college institution may be used.
- Minimum of 2.5 GPA for required Surgical Technology general education courses.
- Must be eligible for placement into English 101 and Math 100.
- Must be in good standing with the College.
- Must meet the Essential Functions required for Surgical Technology students.
- Pass a criminal background check and drug test upon admission to the program. Students are also subject to random and “for-cause” drug testing during the length of the program.
- Submit a completed health questionnaire and immunization records upon request by the program.
- Demonstrate proof of insurance. Students who do not show proof of insurance will not be allowed to attend clinicals.

A variety of clinical affiliates* are used within the surrounding eight (8) counties. The program makes every effort to avoid excessive driving distances but cannot guarantee a specific clinical assignment. Program faculty will assign clinical rotations based on availability.

CLINICAL SITES CITY, COUNTY

Gadsden Regional Medical Center
Gadsden, Etowah County

Riverview Regional Medical Center
Gadsden, Etowah County

Children’s Hospital
Birmingham, Jefferson County

Grandview Medical Center
Birmingham, Jefferson County

RMC Stringfellow
Anniston, Calhoun County

Northeast Alabama Regional Medical Center
Anniston, Calhoun County

DeKalb Regional Medical Center
Fort Payne, DeKalb County

Marshall Medical Center South
Boaz, Marshall County

Brookwood Citizens Baptist Medical Center
Talladega, Talladega County

**Additional clinical sites may be added to enhance students’ learning.*



Gadsden State Cuts Ribbon for the Gene Haas Center, Advancing Workforce Training in Precision Manufacturing

Gadsden State celebrated a major step forward in workforce development on March 19, 2025, with the official ribbon cutting of the new *Gene Haas Center for Advanced Machining and Engineering Technology*—a cutting-edge facility designed to train students in advanced manufacturing and precision machining.

The Haas Lab is equipped with state-of-the-art CNC machines and tooling systems that mirror the technology used in today's industrial settings. The center will support students enrolled in Gadsden State's manufacturing and automation programs,



GENE HAAS CENTER
ADVANCED MACHINING AND ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY

providing them with essential hands-on experience and industry-aligned skills.

“The Gene Haas Lab represents a significant investment in both student success and regional workforce development,” said Andy Robertson, dean of Workforce Development. “By providing hands-on training utilizing these state-of-the-art CNC machines and industry-standard tooling systems, we are equipping our students with the critical skills needed to thrive in today’s advanced manufacturing sector. This facility not only enhances learning opportunities but also strengthens our ability to meet the growing demands of local and regional industries.”

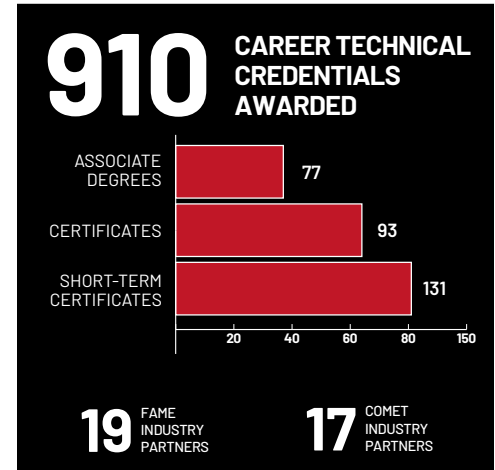
The ribbon cutting ceremony brought together Gadsden State leadership, faculty, students, local officials, and industry partners. Attendees toured the new facility and observed demonstrations of the CNC machines in action.

“The ribbon-cutting ceremony highlighted the strong collaboration between Gadsden State, industry partners, and the community,” Robertson said. “Bringing

together leaders, faculty, students, and local officials underscores the shared commitment to workforce development. Seeing the CNC machines and knowing the training provided to our students on these machines demonstrates the real-world training opportunities, ensuring our students are well-prepared for successful careers in advanced manufacturing.”

The opening of the Haas Lab underscores Gadsden State’s continued commitment to preparing students for high-demand careers and strengthening the region’s workforce pipeline through innovation and applied learning.

Dignitaries, faculty, and students gather for the ribbon cutting of the new Manufacturing Lab, celebrating a major step forward in workforce training and hands-on education.





Cardinals Soar on the Field: Excellence & Recognition

— ACCC 2025 Recognitions

The 2025 athletic season marked a defining chapter in the history of Gadsden State—one shaped by vision, discipline, and a renewed culture of excellence under Athletic Director & Head Baseball Coach Blake Lewis.

The 2025 season was one of transformation, accomplishment, and renewed pride for Cardinal athletics at Gadsden State. This year's narrative centers on remarkable leadership, unprecedented growth, and hard-earned success in one of Alabama's most competitive collegiate athletic conferences—the Alabama Community College Conference (ACCC).

LEADERSHIP THAT REVITALIZED A PROGRAM

Since taking the helm, Coach Lewis has brought renewed energy and structure to the athletic department. His emphasis on accountability, academic achievement, and character development has reshaped expectations for what it means to be a Cardinal athlete.

Under his guidance, recruiting efforts expanded, training standards intensified, and a winning mindset became embedded in the program's identity. Facility enhancements, increased community engagement, and strengthened alumni connections further elevated the profile of Gadsden State athletics throughout the region.

Gadsden State's Baseball and Softball fields in the final stages of development.

More importantly, Coach Lewis has cultivated a culture where student-athletes are developed as leaders—preparing them not only for competition, but for life beyond the game.

His leadership philosophy goes far beyond wins and losses—emphasizing academic achievement, personal growth, and competitive excellence in equal measure.

In 2025:

- Student-athlete success off the field soared with nearly 100 Cardinals earning ACCC Commissioner’s Honor Roll recognition for academic achievement across fall and spring semesters.
- Conference competition improved dramatically as Gadsden State captured a No. 2 seed in the ACCC Regional Baseball Tournament—a dramatic turnaround from the previous season and a milestone in the program’s rebuilding journey.

Coach Lewis’ emphasis on building strong character and academic excellence alongside athletic performance has helped redefine what it means to be a Cardinals athlete. The ACCC Championship is more than a trophy—it represents a turning point. Under Coach Blake Lewis’ leadership, Gadsden State athletics has experienced a renewed sense of pride, purpose, and performance.

The 2025 season demonstrated what is possible when vision aligns with commitment. As the Cardinals look toward the future, the foundation laid this year ensures that success will not be a singular achievement, but a sustained standard.

With championship momentum, recognized talent, and transformational leadership, Gadsden State’s athletic program stands stronger than ever—ready to build on a remarkable year and continue raising the bar for excellence.

ACCC RECOGNITIONS

ACCC COAH OF THE YEAR: **Dr. Blake Lewis**

In 2025, Athletic Director & Head Coach Dr. Blake Lewis led the Cardinals to an *Alabama Community College Conference (ACCC) Championship*, a milestone achievement that reflects not only competitive success but a complete revitalization of the athletic program. The ACCC title, **Coach of the Year**, stands as a testament to the relentless work ethic of the student-athletes and the leadership philosophy that Coach Lewis has instilled across the department.

From preseason conditioning to postseason play, the Cardinals demonstrated grit, focus, and unity. The championship run was defined by strategic preparation, player development, and a culture that demanded excellence both on and off the field. Coach Lewis’ steady leadership helped transform potential into performance, positioning Gadsden State as a powerhouse within the conference.



Gadsden State’s Athletic Director & Head Baseball Coach

Gadsden State’s coaches and Athletics administration are fully committed to supporting the education mission of the College. As such, the vision of the Athletic Department is to promote and provide the greatest opportunity for student-athletes to grow to become better students, better athletes, and better people... EVERYDAY CHAMPIONS!

MISSION STATEMENT:

To develop and empower student-athletes to live a life of purpose by optimizing achievement in academics, competition, and life. We embrace diversity and seek excellence while highlighting the implications of ethics, character, and integrity. As a member of **Gadsden State Athletics**, we strive to have every one of our student-athletes understand that organizational teamwork, community involvement, and hard work lead to perseverance and success throughout life.

CORE VALUES:

CHARACTER We speak honestly, act ethically, persevere through challenges, honor our commitments, and take ownership of our actions and decisions.

TEAMWORK We come together with open communication, mutual respect, and a shared vision to serve all members of our community.

EXCELLENCE We are relentless in pursuing greatness through passion, hard work, intelligence, and discipline.

ACCC PLAYER OF THE YEAR: Aaron Wallace

Sophomore infielder **Aaron Wallace** stood out as one of the most impactful players in the entire conference, earning the prestigious **ACCC Player of the Year** award. Wallace consistently delivered clutch performances, leading the Cardinals with an outstanding batting average, electrifying offensive production, and unshakeable leadership on and off the field.

His presence in the lineup often shifted game momentum in the Cardinals' favor, and his performance became a cornerstone of the team's identity.



#38: 2024 - 25 / INF

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND ALL-AROUND SUCCESS

While athletic accomplishments drew headlines, Cardinal student-athletes also excelled academically. Nearly every sport and team at Gadsden State had representation on the *ACCC Commissioner's Academic Honor Roll*, demonstrating that success in the classroom goes hand-in-hand with performance on the field.

This balance of academic and athletic excellence is a hallmark of the program Coach Lewis has built—one where student-athletes graduate prepared for life beyond sports.

ACCC RECOGNITION: Jayden Roberts

Another testament to Cardinal talent was the recognition earned by **Jayden Roberts**, whose powerful presence in the lineup and dynamic play earned league-wide accolades.

Roberts' contributions—especially in big games—helped solidify Gadsden State's competitive standing in the conference and highlighted the depth of talent on this roster.



#36: 2024 - 25 / UT



ATHLETICS

155

ATHLETES

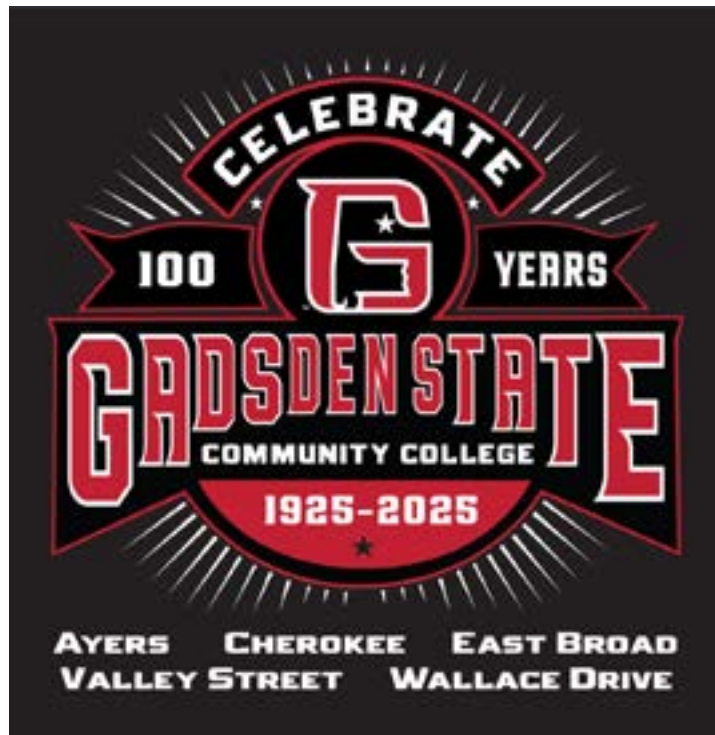
SPORTS OFFERED:

Baseball | Men & Women's Basketball
Men & Women's Cross Country | Softball
Men's Tennis | Women's Volleyball

3.27
ATHLETES' AVG. GPA



Gadsden State provides full-time students opportunities to compete in intercollegiate athletics and is a member of the Alabama Community College Conference (ACCC) and National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA).



Gadsden State Celebrates 100 Years of Excellence & Impact

— Celebrate Gadsden State

Gadsden State commemorated its 100th anniversary with the “Celebrate Gadsden State” campaign, highlighting a century of academic excellence and community service. Founded in 1925 as the Alabama School of Trades—the South’s first state-operated trade school—Gadsden State has evolved through the consolidation of several institutions into a comprehensive community college.

HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS:

- **Alabama School of Trades (1925):** Established as the first state-operated trade school in the South, it laid the foundation for technical education in the region.
- **Gadsden Vocational Trade School (1960):** Founded by Eugene N. Prater to provide vocational training for African Americans. It was later renamed Gadsden State Technical Institute and designated as a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) in 1997.



Alan Smith, Gadsden State President; Carl Byars, former VS Campus Director; Pastor Steve Hoyt (Keynote Speaker); Ricky Tillis, HBCU Valley Street Campus Director



- **Gadsden State Junior College (1965):**
Established by the Alabama State Legislature to offer professional and technical programs, further expanding educational opportunities in the area.
- **Harry M. Ayers State Technical College (1963):**
Founded to provide technical education and later merged with Gadsden State in 2003.

Celebrate Gadsden State: 60 Years at Ayers Campus Marks Major Milestone in College’s Centennial Year

— Celebrate Gadsden State

These institutions merged over the years to form the present-day Gadsden State Community College, which now operates multiple campuses, including the East Broad, Valley Street, Wallace Drive, Ayers, and Cherokee campuses.

Gadsden State started its 100-year centennial celebration with a special event recognizing 60 years of education and service at the *Ayers Campus* on June 17, 2025. The event brought together students, alumni, retirees, community members, and local leaders to celebrate Ayers’ legacy and its pivotal role in Gadsden State’s century-long impact across East Alabama.

The yearlong celebration highlighted the impact Gadsden State has made in the lives of students and the community.

This year, Gadsden State honored its founding in 1925 through a series of events under the “*Celebrate Gadsden State*” campaign. The **Ayers Campus** celebration was a key part of this effort, commemorating both local and institutional milestones.

CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION EVENTS:

June 17, 2025:
Ayers Campus Celebration

July 7, 2025:
Valley Street Campus Celebration

August 27, 2025:
Cherokee Campus Celebration

September 16, 2025:
East Broad & Wallace Drive Celebration

October 9, 2025:
Annual Cardinal Gala at The Venue

Established in 1965 as Harry M. Ayers State Trade School, the institution became Harry M. Ayers State Technical College in 1973 and later received accreditation with the Commission on Colleges at the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in 1997. Following its merger with Gadsden State in 2003, the Ayers Campus has evolved into a vital part of Gadsden State, serving generations of students and supporting the regional workforce through innovative programs in career technical education, health sciences, and academics.

Dean Andy Green welcomed attendees and introduced the college’s leadership. Following introductions, **President Alan Smith** delivered remarks highlighting recent progress and future plans for the Ayers Campus.



“We’re excited about celebrating 60 years of education on our campus here,” said Smith. “From Ayers Trade School in 1965 to the Ayers Campus of Gadsden State today, we’ve been doing some great things—and we’re looking forward to a very bright future.”

Smith also emphasized the success of the newly renovated One Stop Center, which centralizes student services and enrollment support.

“There’s been a very positive reaction from our students and people coming in to enroll or connect with Alabama Career Center services. It’s been a good partnership, a good collaboration, and a very positive experience so far,” he said.

Dean Andy Robertson recognized local dignitaries in attendance, including Senator Keith Kelley and State Representative Mark Gidley, before introducing Dean Jessica Slaten, who honored retirees and alumni of the Ayers Campus. Slaten also introduced a *lineup of distinguished alumni speakers*:

- Pam Murray Noah, a 1984 Ayers State graduate and retiree with 35 years of service
- Steve Junior, a 2014 graduate of the Electrical Technology program
- Ben Gissendaner, a 2018 graduate of the Auto Collision Repair program
- Luke Devin, a 2023 graduate of the FAME program

Attendees heard heartfelt stories and reflections from college leadership, employees, and community stakeholders—highlighting how Gadsden State continues to shape lives and careers in Calhoun County and beyond.

Looking ahead, Gadsden State is pursuing long-term capital improvements for the Ayers Campus.

“We’re looking at repaving and restructuring spaces



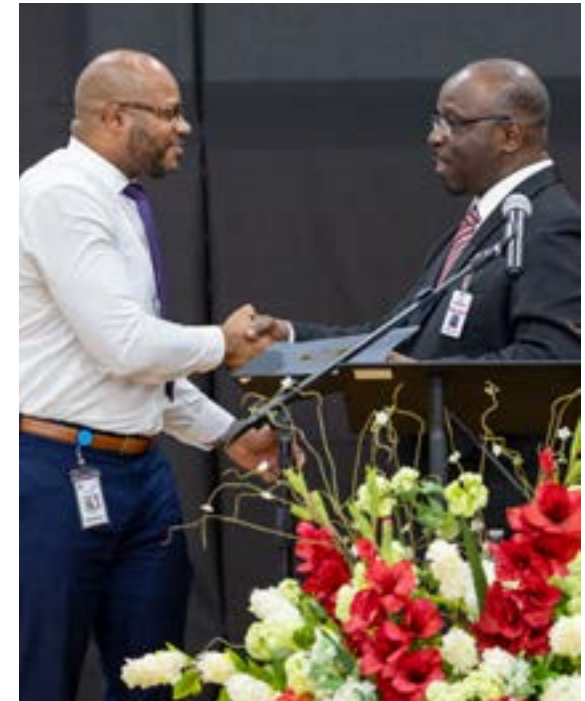
to support new programs. We have great things in store for those just starting their educational journey or returning to earn a certification or change careers,” said Smith.

Guests enjoyed music, food, historical displays, and a walk down memory lane with photos and memorabilia. Commemorative items such as coins, mugs, and t-shirts were also available to mark the occasion.

Celebrate Gadsden State: 65 Years at the Valley Street Campus Honors a Historic Legacy of Service and Community

— Celebrate Gadsden State

Gadsden State continued its centennial celebration with a commemorative event marking 65 years of impact at the **Valley Street Campus** on July 7. Students, alumni, retirees, community leaders, and local officials gathered to celebrate the campus’ deep roots in Gadsden and its enduring commitment to education, equity, and opportunity.



Corey Davis, Job Corps Center Director; Ricky Tillis, HBCU Valley Street Campus Director

As part of Gadsden State’s 100-year “Celebrate Gadsden State” campaign, the **Valley Street Campus** celebration paid tribute to one of the institution’s most historic sites—originally founded on July 6, 1960, as the Gadsden Vocational Trade School. The school was established to provide African American veterans and students access to vocational training, laying a strong foundation for the future of workforce education in Alabama.

“The Valley Street Campus is a testament to resilience, vision, and progress,” said Interim President Alan Smith. **“It continues to shape lives across our region. As part of Gadsden State’s mission to provide accessible, high-quality education that meets the needs of a diverse student population, Valley Street is a shining example of what it means to uplift communities. For 65 years, Valley Street has opened doors and changed lives—and today, its legacy continues to evolve with purpose and pride.”**

Originally led by founder and director Eugene N. Prater, the school became a state institute in 1962, and was renamed Gadsden State Technical Institute in 1972. In 1985, the school merged with Gadsden State Community College, becoming the Valley Street Campus of Gadsden State.

In 1997, the Valley Street Campus received the unique Historically Black Colleges and Universities designation from the U.S. Department of Education. As a result of the designation, the Valley Street Campus became a Title III grant recipient the following year. The Title III grant funding assists in establishing and strengthening the Valley Street Campus with physical resources, academic programs, and institutional management.

The Valley Street celebration featured a program that

highlighted the campus’s legacy, current impact, and bright future. Guests were welcomed by **Mrs. Karen Robinson, Program Director and Instructor of the Dental Science Program**, followed by opening remarks from Interim President Alan Smith. A moment of reflection was led by Pastor Joseph S. Rowser of Pine Grove Baptist Church in Lincoln, AL, who delivered the scripture and invocation.

The celebration included musical selections from **Mrs. Epiphany Cherry**, and a tribute titled “The History of the Coffee Shop” as told by founder Mr. Eugene N. Prater, **performed by current students representing Valley Street’s technical programs:**

- Lela Rogers (Dental Assisting)
- Amari Headen (Diagnostic Medical Sonography)
- Monique Curry (Licensed Practical Nursing)
- Sawyer Mabry (Construction Technology)
- Victor Ramirez (Air Conditioning and Refrigeration)

Mrs. Joy McCamey, former Title III Director, recognized former campus directors and special guests in attendance, reflecting on the way they have helped shape Valley Street over the decades. **Mrs. Elizabeth Wheatley, Gadsden State Grant Writer, presented recognition awards to campus leadership or family representatives including:**

- Mr. Eugene N. Prater, Founder/Director, Gadsden Vocational Trade School (1960-1978)
- Mr. Edward D. Bonner, First President, Gadsden State Technical Institute (1978-1982)
- Mr. Roger Watts, Provost, Gadsden State Technical Institute (1982-1996)
- Mr. Willie Duncan, Director, Valley Street Campus (1996-2007)
- Mr. Carl Byers, Director, Valley Street Campus/Instructor (2008-2018)
- Mr. Ricky L. Tillis, Director, Valley Street Campus/Instructor (2022-Present)

Valley Street Campus Director Ricky Tillis reflected on being a student focused institution before introducing the keynote speaker. Tillis said, **“Our**

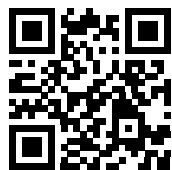


partnerships, our programs, and—most importantly—our people continue to strengthen the Valley Street legacy. This campus has always represented hope, access, and opportunity. From its beginnings as a trade school, to its current designation as an HBCU site, Valley Street has been a cornerstone of progress in this community. It's a place where lives are changed, and futures are built."

The keynote address was delivered by **Mr. Steven Hoyt of Birmingham, AL**, whose powerful message centered around the theme *"Remembering Our Legacy while Equipping Today's Students with Excellence and Opportunity."* In his speech, Hoyt reflected on the enduring mission of the Valley Street Campus to serve the community and lead with progress through education and technical training. Hoyt reminded attendees, **"No matter where you come from, you can rise above and achieve greatness."**

Alumni were honored by **Mrs. Shirley Hall**, Class of 1972, representing the campus's historical journey from Gadsden Vocational Trade School (1960–1972), to Gadsden State Technical Institute (1972–1985), and now the Valley Street Campus (1985–present). The program concluded with closing remarks from **Ricky Tillis**, Director of the Valley Street Campus, who also introduced **Dr. Derrick Griffey**, **Gadsden State Director of Distance Education, Faculty Development, & Learning Resource**. Dr. Griffey curated the historical campus displays—a visual journey through the decades that celebrates the people, programs, and progress that define the Valley Street legacy.

Discover Programs
of Study offered at the
Valley Steet Campus



Celebrate Gadsden State: 23 Years at the Cherokee Campus celebrated as part of College's centennial year

— Celebrate Gadsden State

Gadsden State marked its 100th year with a special celebration on Aug. 27, 2025, at the Cherokee Campus, highlighting the College's legacy of service in East Alabama and its ongoing commitment to student success and regional workforce development.

The celebration was well attended by students, employees, alumni, and community members, reflecting the strong support for the **Cherokee Campus** and its role in the region. **Andy Green, Dean of Student Services**, opened the program with a welcome and remarks recognizing the Cherokee Campus's role in expanding access to higher education for students across Cherokee County and surrounding communities.

President Alan Smith followed with remarks that highlighted Gadsden State's momentum in academics, health sciences and workforce training, as well as the importance of community.

"I have a heart and passion for helping our students in our service area, because somebody helped me many years ago," Smith said. **"We're moving forward to help people, we're putting students first, and we're helping our community partners."**

President Smith recognized dignitaries and elected officials in attendance before introducing Boone

Kinard, former executive director of external affairs for the Alabama Community College System. Kinard shared the mission of the ACCS and recognized the importance of Gadsden State’s presence in the region.

“That’s why the campus here in Cherokee County is so important, because it gives an opportunity for students to stay at home and be able to further their education,” said Kinard. “If Gadsden State was not here, there may not be another opportunity for students in this area.”

Following Kinard’s message, nursing student, Olivia Monterrojas, shared her story about how Gadsden State has been an incredible part of her life.

“From my first day at Gadsden State, it has supported my personal goals and helped me be the person that I always wanted to be,” said Monterrojas.

Monterrojas emphasized that her experiences at Gadsden State have prepared her for success in both her studies and her future career in nursing.



The program also featured Mr. Richard Lindsey, who served as the representative for Alabama House District 39 for 35 years and was instrumental in securing the construction of the Gadsden State Cherokee Campus.

Lindsey reflected on the campus’s impact and the doors it opens for learners at every stage.

“Gadsden State Cherokee is here for many reasons, but mainly because of the hard work and contributions of many forward-thinking leaders in Cherokee County. We began meeting and discussing the need for this facility, bringing people together to support it, then involving the Gadsden State team, and finally going to Montgomery to speak with Governor Riley and the chancellor’s office to make this happen. You don’t make anything happen without cooperation and people coming together, and that’s what it took to get this done,” Lindsey said.

Green also recognized past and current campus directors for their *leadership and dedication*, including:

- Diann Cruickshank
- Dr. Martha Lavender
- Luanne Hayes
- Randi Wright

Dr. Derrick Griffey, Director of distance education, faculty development and learning resources, highlighted the College’s archives and historical journals, offering a glimpse into the people, programs, and milestones that shaped Gadsden State over the past century through historical displays.

The program concluded with closing remarks from Dean Green and a call to continue supporting students through strong community engagement and investment in modern facilities and programs.

Current Cherokee Campus Director Randi Wright



reflected on the milestone, saying the Cherokee Campus has been a tremendous success story for Gadsden State, providing local students with access to quality education close to home.

“As we celebrate this milestone, we’re excited about the future growth and opportunities this campus will continue to bring to Cherokee County and beyond,” she said.

Gadsden State celebrated 100 years with Centennial Celebration at Wallace Drive Campus

— Celebrate Gadsden State

Gadsden State marked its centennial on Tuesday, Sept. 16, 2025, with a historic 100-year celebration at Beck



Gymnasium on the **Wallace Drive Campus**. Students, alumni, employees, retirees, and community members gathered to honor a century of education, innovation, and service.

The event began with opening remarks from **Dean Andy Green**, who welcomed guests and recognized Gadsden State leadership, before introducing **Gadsden State President Alan Smith**.

In his remarks, President Smith reflected on the College’s century-long impact and reaffirmed its mission for the future.

“For 100 years, Gadsden State has opened doors and created opportunities that transform lives,” Smith said. “We honor those who came before us by preparing the next generation to succeed. Our commitment is to continue opening doors of opportunity and ensuring Gadsden State remains a place where futures are built.”

Smith also recognized dignitaries in attendance, including past presidents, division chairs, directors, retirees, and alumni of the *Alabama School of Trades*, *Alabama Technical College*, and *Gadsden State Junior College*.

Special presentations followed, including a *City of Gadsden* proclamation by Council President **Kent Back** and a Congressional Record presented by **Shea Snide Miller**, representing Congressman **Mike Rogers’** office.

The program continued with video segments highlighting milestones in *Gadsden State’s history and remarks from speakers representing the College’s past, present, and future*:

- **Boone Kinard**, former Executive Director of External Affairs for the Alabama Community College System
- **Tim McCartney**, Alabama Community College System Board of Trustees
- Alumni, **Lindsey Cline** and **Destiny Hall**
- Retiree, **Pam Clough**
- Former president, **Dr. Martha Lavender**
- Former president, **Dr. Renee Culverhouse**
- Director of Advancement and Alumni Relations, **Hillary Folsom**
- Gadsden State President **Alan Smith**

Following the event, guests viewed archival displays and enjoy refreshments while reconnecting with fellow Cardinals. Commemorative items, including centennial T-shirts and coins, were also available. Guests were then invited to tour the College’s newly opened Sports Complex.

The 100-year celebration was one of several milestone events that took place during Gadsden State’s centennial year, “Celebrate Gadsden State” campaign highlighting the College’s legacy across all five campuses: East Broad, Wallace Drive, Valley Street, Ayers and Cherokee.

Gadsden State’s Cardinal Gala Celebrates a Century with Roaring ‘20s Flair

— Celebrate Gadsden State

Gadsden State and the Cardinal Foundation hosted the annual **Cardinal Gala** on Thursday, Oct. 9, 2025, at *The Venue at Coosa Landing*, where guests celebrated a century of service, education, and community in true Roaring ‘20s style.



CARDINAL FOUNDATION

\$1.84 M

- \$76,000** Cardinal Gala special project funds
- \$1,665,846** Total endowments & proceeds from investments
- \$88,000** Scholarships by endowment and other donations from supporters
- \$13,386** Funding administered on behalf of college initiatives

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

1,084

MEMBERS

63

STUDENT CHAPTER MEMBERS

Guests arrived in themed attire to a ballroom transformed with vintage décor and lively jazz-inspired ambiance. The event featured a silent auction with exclusive items and experiences donated by community partners, along with a gourmet dinner.

Entertainment throughout the evening included performances by Gadsden State fine arts students and the talented Gadsden State Show Band, whose upbeat setlist had guests on their feet. Numerous student volunteers also contributed to the event's success by assisting guests and helping coordinate activities behind the scenes.

"This event truly captures what makes Gadsden State special – a community coming together to support education, celebrate our students, and invest in the next 100 years," said Hillary Folsom, Director of Advancement and Alumni Relations.

The Cardinal Gala serves as one of Gadsden State's premier fundraising events during its Centennial Celebration, marking 100 years of transforming lives through education, opportunity, and community partnerships.



GADSDEN STATE
CARDINAL FOUNDATION



The Cardinal Foundation is an approved IRS 501(c)(3) support organization established to raise, manage, distribute and steward private resources to support the mission of Gadsden State. The Foundation is managed and controlled by a Board of Directors.

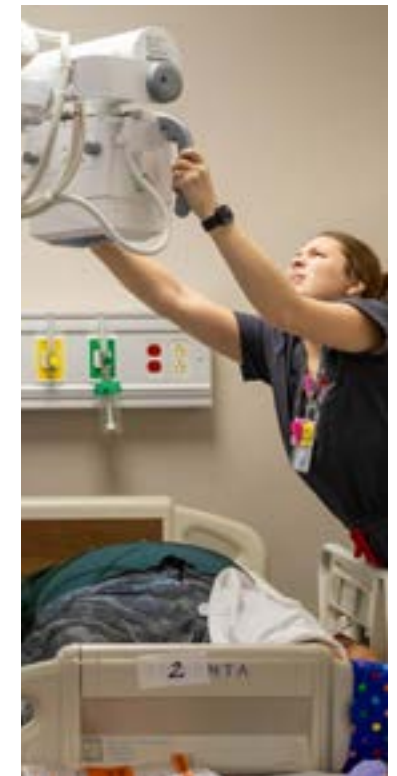
Health Sciences conducts Mass Casualty Simulation

— Event involved 200 volunteers

In May, Gadsden State hosted a large-scale, pre-planned mass casualty simulation to provide nursing and paramedic students with critical hands-on training. Conducted in partnership with the College's Police and Public Safety Department and more than a dozen local emergency agencies, the event involved over 200 volunteers to create a realistic emergency scenario. The simulation allowed students to practice responding to high-pressure situations, collaborate across disciplines, and use advanced equipment.

"We want to help students understand how to work collaboratively together," Dr. Joey Battles, dean of Health Sciences said. "We wanted to give them experience in real-life situations working together with the newest and best equipment available."

In addition to improving technical skills and communication, the simulation also allowed



students to make mistakes in a controlled environment and learn from them.

“Simulations like these are essential,” Battles said. “They give our students the opportunity to build confidence, strengthen their teamwork, and understand what it’s really like to respond when every second counts.”



Alan Smith named President of Gadsden State

— Succession from Vice President of Capital Projects, Community Relations and Workforce Development

In June, Gadsden State Community College named Alan Smith as interim president, and in July the ACCS Board of Trustees approved Chancellor Jimmy H. Baker’s recommendation to appoint him as the College’s permanent president. Smith, whose connection to Gadsden State began over 30 years

ago as a business student, has served in several leadership roles since joining the College in 2017.

He emphasized his commitment to strengthening Gadsden State’s role as a community-focused college that provides clear pathways to four-year degrees and high-demand careers.

A steadfast advocate for student success and regional growth, Alan Smith’s professional career includes experience in K-12 education, construction and manufacturing industries, and community college instruction and administration.

Prior to his appointment as president, Smith served as interim president; vice president of capital projects, community relations, and workforce development; dean of workforce development, and adjunct instructor.



2025 Alabama Community College System Chancellor's Awards

Gadsden State faculty and staff

Gadsden State is proud to recognize the 2025 recipients of the *Alabama Community College System Chancellor's Awards*. These annual awards recognize outstanding employees across the state for excellence in leadership, teaching, and service. This year's honorees from Gadsden State were recognized for their exceptional commitment to students, colleagues, and the college community.

"We are fortunate to have so many exceptional faculty and staff who generously share their time, talents, and dedication to enrich the lives of our students and enhance their educational experience." said Dr. Tera Simmons, executive vice president.

Award recipients were recognized during the *Alabama Community College Association Conference in Montgomery* on November 23, 2025.



CHANCELLOR'S AWARD FOR ADMINISTRATOR: **Ricky Tillis**, *Valley Street Campus Director*

The 2025 Chancellor's Award for Administrator was presented to Ricky Tillis, director of the *Valley Street Campus*. A former Valley Street student himself, Tillis leads with humility, integrity, and a strong commitment to serving students and colleagues. He is widely regarded as a natural problem solver who builds trust and consistently goes above expectations to support the campus community.

Tillis coordinates major outreach efforts and campus events, including the annual Tailgate Celebration and Black History Program. He is known for developing meaningful relationships with students and for creating experiences that foster engagement and belonging.

Reflecting on his work, Tillis shared: "Having a humble awareness that the position I currently hold is by God's grace. As a steward of this grace, I must maintain a culture of excellence, be mission-focused, and provide altruistic leadership with a community approach toward transformation."





CHANCELLOR'S AWARD FOR ACADEMIC FACULTY: **Beth McGlaughn**, *Paralegal Program Coordinator & Instructor*

The 2025 Chancellor's Award for Academic Faculty was awarded to **Beth McGlaughn**, coordinator and instructor of the Paralegal Program. McGlaughn holds a bachelor's degree in philosophy and religion from Birmingham-Southern College and a Juris Doctor from The University of Alabama School of Law. She brings years of litigation experience to the classroom, where she enriches instruction with real-world legal application.

McGlaughn is known for creating a dynamic learning environment centered on research, critical thinking, and professional preparation. She has expanded opportunities for her students by creating a professional clothing closet and establishing a transfer agreement with Samford University that provides a pathway to advanced legal studies and even law school.

"What I love most is working with the students," she said. "Each one brings unique experiences and goals, and it is a joy to help them pursue careers in the legal profession."



CHANCELLOR'S AWARD FOR TECHNICAL FACULTY: **Dr. Evelyn Lightsey**, *Nursing Division Simulation Coordinator*

The 2025 Chancellor's Award for Technical Faculty was presented to **Dr. Evelyn Lightsey**, Simulation Coordinator for Gadsden State's Nursing Division. Dr. Lightsey began her career at the College in 2007 and has since become a leader in simulation-based nursing education. She holds a BSN from Jacksonville State University, an MSN from UAB, and a Doctor of Nursing Practice from Samford University. She is also a certified nurse educator and certified health care simulation educator.

Colleagues describe her as both an exceptional instructor and an invaluable co-worker. One nominator stated, "She has touched the lives of countless students. She truly loves the profession of nursing and works tirelessly to train competent, compassionate nurses."

Her commitment extends beyond instruction. A former student shared that Dr. Lightsey tutored her in math outside of normal class time – support that helped the student succeed academically and ultimately begin her nursing career.

Lightsey says her favorite part of the job is "helping students put the pieces of the puzzle together through simulation-based learning experiences," and she values the close-knit, supportive GSCC work family.



CHANCELLOR'S AWARD FOR SUPPORT STAFF: **Efferson Ellis, Jr.**, *Gadsden State Security Officer*

The 2025 Chancellor's Award for Support Staff was awarded to **Efferson Ellis Jr.**, a dedicated security officer who has served Gadsden State for more than 16 years. Ellis is known for his professionalism, strong work ethic, and calming presence across campus.

Colleagues and students alike praise him for his reliability, sound judgment, and genuine warmth. One instructor said, "His presence brings a sense of security; we feel safe under his watch." A student described him as someone who "brings a sense of safety and calm wherever he is." His supervisor noted that Ellis "sets an outstanding example of serving with purpose and integrity."

Ellis said he enjoys meeting new students, ensuring their safety, and working in an environment where coworkers feel like family.



Gadsden State Enrollment Reached 5,568 Students – Highest in More Than a Decade

Gadsden State celebrated a major milestone this fall with total enrollment reaching 5,568 students – the College’s highest headcount since 2013. The achievement reflects the institution’s ongoing commitment to student success, innovative programs, and strategic recruitment and retention efforts.

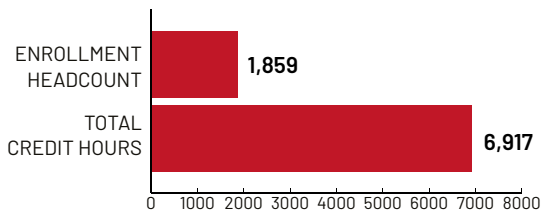
“This growth is a direct result of the collective effort of our faculty, staff, and leadership across all campuses,” said Alan Smith, president of Gadsden State. “It shows that when we work together to provide opportunity, support, and access, our communities respond. We’re proud to see more students choosing Gadsden State to begin or continue their educational journey. I believe this growth also reflects the fact that Gadsden State is affordable and provides relevant education and workforce training that prepare people to be successful and secure great-paying careers. I am extremely appreciative of the hard work and collective effort of our employees and our community partners who continue to believe in and support our mission.”

Over 2025, Gadsden State implemented several key initiatives that have strengthened enrollment, including expanded workforce training programs, increased outreach to high school

FALL 2025 SUMMARY

DUAL ENROLLMENT SUMMARY

(Unduplicated)



- General Studies
- Welding Technology
- Electrical Technology
- Human Services
- Mechanical Design Technology

students through dual enrollment, and enhanced support for adult learners. The College invested in marketing and communications strategies to reach new audiences and better share the opportunities available through its five campuses across East Alabama.

Andy Green, dean of Student Services, said the numbers are a reflection of both new and returning students who recognize the value of a Gadsden State education.

“Our enrollment team, advisors, and faculty members have worked tirelessly to make the process seamless – from application to orientation to classroom success,” Green said. “Every department has played a part in helping students see that Gadsden State is not only affordable and accessible, but also a pathway to great futures.”

The College’s record growth comes as Gadsden State continues its yearlong Centennial Celebration – *marking 100 years of transforming lives through education and service.*



Gadsden State Police and Public Safety Department Celebrates Two Years of Growth, Service, and Community Impact



July marked a significant milestone for Gadsden State and its surrounding communities as Chief Jay Freeman and the Gadsden State Police and Public Safety Department celebrated two years of service, progress, and purpose. Since its formation, the department has made remarkable strides across the college’s five campuses and the three counties it proudly serves.

Before Chief Freeman’s arrival, Gadsden State did not have any sworn law enforcement officers. Today, the department stands as a blended force of sworn police officers, public safety personnel, and non-sworn staff—all working in unity to protect, serve, and build lasting relationships. This transformation has been a success story rooted in leadership, training, and a deep commitment to customer service.

Under Chief Freeman’s leadership, the Gadsden State Police and Public Safety Department has not only established a foundation of safety and trust but has become a model of community-focused policing in higher education and beyond.

“No one campus is the same—just like the communities we serve,” said Chief Freeman. “Every area deserves tailored relationships, and that begins with listening first, being respectful, and offering excellent customer service. That’s how I was raised, and that’s how we operate every day.”

What began as a vision has quickly grown into a dynamic and dedicated law enforcement agency that prioritizes relationship-building, campus safety, and proactive service.

In just two years, the department has:

- Launched the first-ever **Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT)** at Gadsden State, providing early support for students in distress
- Established a dedicated **Chaplain Program**, offering spiritual and emotional care to both students and staff
- **Appointed a mental health officer**, now deputized through the probate office, to assist with crisis intervention and provide individuals with access to critical mental health resources

Expanded training and outreach initiatives, including the launch of:

- A free **Women's Self-Defense** program
- A **Basic Civilian Firearm Safety Course** focused on situational awareness and responsible gun ownership
- The **Golden Rule/Bully Prevention Program**, which is now being taught in schools across the region
- **Formed local, state, and federal apprenticeship partnerships**, providing students with hands-on experience and future career pathways in public safety and law enforcement
- Added several new **sworn law enforcement officers** to meet the growing needs of the college's events and daily operations across its three-county jurisdiction
- **Invested in essential equipment and resources** that empower officers to safely and effectively serve a diverse student population and community base

"Our team isn't just trained—they're committed," said Freeman. "Many of our public safety officers and personnel had existing relationships on these campuses when I arrived. We've built on that foundation to develop one of the most well-rounded, service-driven departments in the state."

At the heart of our department's success is our emphasis on customer service. We believe in treating everyone with dignity and respect, listening to

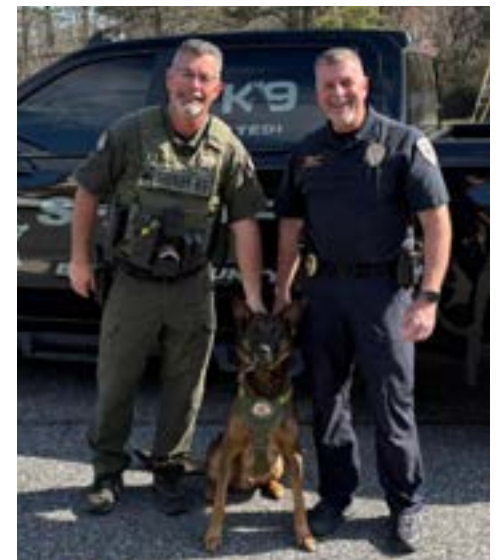
concerns before responding, and leading with clarity, compassion, and communication. Training is a constant priority—whether it's for our officers, our safety staff, or our broader community. By investing in leadership development and skill-building, we ensure that everyone on our team is equipped to serve at the highest level.

"We've got an amazing team at Gadsden State—truly some of the best people I've had the privilege to work with," added Freeman. "They come from all walks of life and bring diverse skill sets to the table. The most rewarding part of this journey has been building relationships with our students—getting to know them, earning their trust, and being a daily source of support and safety."

The department's focus remains clear: continuous improvement, expanding community partnerships, and providing exceptional safety and support to students, faculty, staff, and guests of Gadsden State. By expanding our skill sets and supporting one another, we strengthen our ability to keep our campuses and communities safe.

"We've been blessed to build this department from the ground up—something not many people get to do," said Freeman. "But this is just the beginning. When we lead with respect, focus on customer service, and treat people the way we'd want to be treated, we build something lasting. That's how we move forward—together. Safety will always be our number one priority and the driving force behind everything we do."

"In just two years, the Gadsden State Police and Public Safety Department has made a tremendous impact—not only on our campuses but throughout the surrounding community," said President Alan Smith. "Their presence has enhanced the sense of security, strengthened community trust, and built meaningful relationships with our students, faculty, and neighbors. Their success is a testament to the power of service, visibility, and leadership."



Gadsden State supported local Ag students with Poultry Science Pathway

— 26 high schools visited on the Poultry Science Partnership Tour



Administrators and students from Faith Christian School FFA receive a check from Gadsden State

Gadsden State partnered with local high schools to strengthen agricultural education and introduced students to careers in the poultry and agriculture industries.

As part of this effort, Gadsden State presented a \$500 check to each Future Farmers of America (FFA) Chapter to assist in funding student attendance at the *National FFA Convention* October 29 – November 1, 2025, in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Through a partnership with *Auburn University*, Gadsden State offers a poultry science program that provides scholarships and a seamless transfer pathway to a four-year degree. The program prepares students for success in one of Alabama’s most in-demand industries while helping meet workforce needs across the state.

“It is an honor for Gadsden State to invest in our local students and agricultural education,” said Randi Wright, campus director at Gadsden State Cherokee. “Through our support of their FFA Convention experience and the promotion of our poultry science program, we demonstrate our commitment to advancing both student success and the future of this essential industry.”



The following schools participated in the Poultry Science Partnership Tour:

- Alexandria High School
- Benjamin Russell High School
- Cedar Bluff High School
- Central of Clay County High School
- Cherokee County High School
- Crossville High School
- Faith Christian High School
- Fyffe High School
- Geraldine High School
- Ider High School
- Lincoln High School
- Ohatchee High School
- Piedmont High School
- Plainview High School
- Pleasant Valley High School
- Saks High School
- Sand Rock High School
- Southside High School
- Spring Garden High School
- Sylvania High School
- Valley Head High School
- Wadley High School
- Walter Wellborn High School
- Weaver High School
- White Plains High School
- Woodland High School



AUBURN
POULTRY SCIENCE

EXECUTIVE CABINET — Meet the 2026 members



DR. TERA SIMMONS

Executive Vice President



JESSICA SLATEN

Dean of Financial & Administrative Services



DR. JOEY BATTLES

Dean of Health Sciences



DR. DANA DAVIS

Dean of Institutional Effectiveness, Grants, & Special Projects



ANDY ROBERTSON

Dean of Workforce Development



ANDY GREEN

Dean of Student Services



DR. DERRICK GRIFFEY

Dean of Academic Programs & Services



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