



ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Changing lives for good, *forever.*





A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Welcome to Gadsden State's 2024 Annual Report. This year has been one of growth, achievement, and innovation, all driven by our commitment to student success and community impact. We've expanded our campus with a new career technical facility and broken ground on a \$10 million sports complex, ensuring students have the resources they need to thrive.

Our students continue to excel, from earning top state scholarships to being recognized nationally. Their success reflects the incredible dedication of our faculty, whose international certifications and innovative teaching methods are helping shape the future of education at Gadsden State.

The partnerships we've built this year have made a significant impact on both our students and the wider community. The \$50,000 donation from Alabama Power supported the creation of a new campus trail, enhancing student life and wellness. The BOGO scholarship program with the Chamber of Commerce has provided more affordable education options for local businesses and their employees, while AMED's ambulance donation strengthened our health sciences training. These collaborations benefit workforce development and economic growth in the entire region.

As we reflect on the progress we've made, we look forward with purpose. The work we are doing together is not just shaping careers—it's making life better for countless Alabamians. Let's continue to create opportunities, transform futures, and leave a lasting impact on the communities we serve.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kathy Murphy
President, Gadsden State Community College



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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.

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*.

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.

INCLUSION as we value and respect 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

Gadsden State Community College is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to award associate degrees. 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, GA 30033-4097, by calling 404-679-4500, or by using information available on SACSCOC's website (www.sacscoc.org). In addition, each of the following GSCC instructional programs has received individual professional accreditation, approval or certification:

- Air Conditioning and Refrigeration
- Auto Collision Repair
- Automotive Service Technology
- Child Development
- Civil Engineering Technology
- Construction Technology
- Court Reporting
- Cybersecurity
- Diagnostic Medical Sonography
- Diesel Technology
- Electrical Technology
- Electronics Engineering Technology
- Emergency Medical Services
- Engineering Design Technology
- Industrial Automation Technology
- Mechanical Design Technology
- Medical Laboratory Technology
- Nursing Education
- Paralegal
- Precision Machining
- Radiography
- Salon and Spa Management
- Welding Technology



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catalogue of **Degrees
and Certificates**

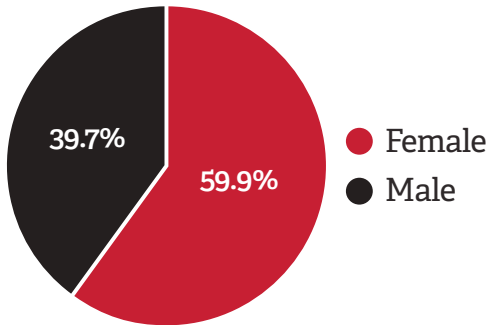


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to download our
**2024-27 Strategic
Plan**

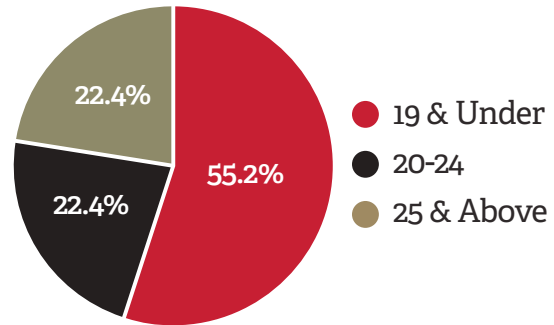
BY THE NUMBERS

Numbers are from Fall 2024 unless noted.

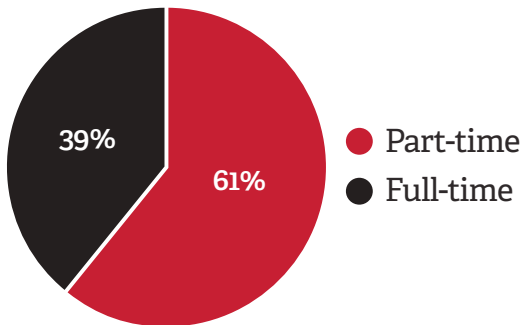
Enrollment by Gender



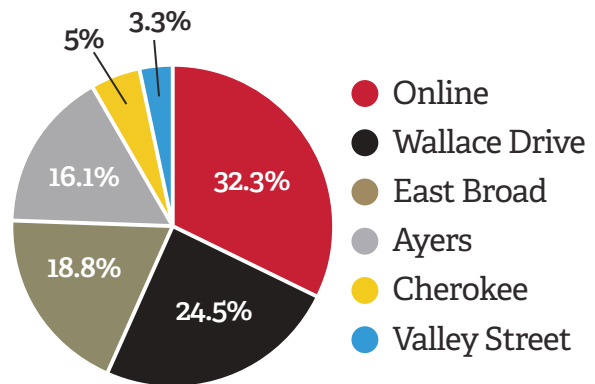
Enrollment by Age



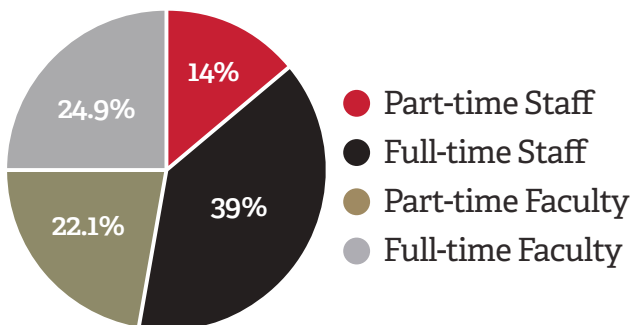
Enrollment by Status



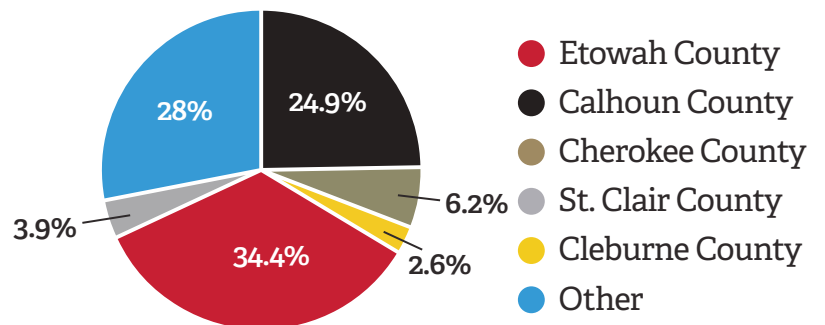
Enrollment by Campus



Faculty & Staff



Enrollment by Service Area



Enrollment by Ethnicity

White	3,424 (68%)
Black American	848 (17%)
Hispanic / Latino	266 (5%)
Multi-racial	266 (5%)
Nonresident Immigrant	39 (1%)
Race & Ethnicity Unknown	4 (less than 1%)
Asian	49 (1%)
American Indian	15 (less than 1%)
Pacific Islander	4 (less than 1%)

Scholarships 2023-2024

Institutional Scholarships	\$1,471,676
Tuition Waivers	\$87,224
Athletic Scholarships	\$434,960
Other	\$181,846

Top 10 Enrollment by Program

General Studies	2,393
Industrial Automation/Electrical Technology	267
Registered Nursing	265
Welding Technology	234
Computer and Information Science	149
Salon and Spa Management	135
Emergency Medical Services	133
Civil Engineering Technology	123
Child Development	112
Office Administration	107

Top 5 Feeder Schools

1. Gadsden City High School
2. Oxford High School
3. Southside High School
4. Etowah High School
5. Hokes Bluff High School

Credentials

Associate in Applied Science	478
Associate in Art / Associate in Science	238
Short-term Certificate	518
Certificate	348

Gadsden State Core Competencies

Academic Programs:

www.GadsdenState.edu/Academics

Technical Programs:

www.GadsdenState.edu/Technical

Health Science Programs:

www.GadsdenState.edu/HealthSciences

Skills Training:

www.GadsdenState.edu/Skills-Training

Adult Education Services:

www.GadsdenState.edu/AdultEd

Revenues and Expenditures

2023-2024 Revenues

State Appropriations	\$27,380,565
Tuition and Fees	\$20,203,018
Federal Funds	\$20,395,155
State Grants and Contracts	\$7,144,021
Auxiliary	\$1,071,092
Sales and Service	\$83,245
Other	\$ 3,004,782
Total Revenues	\$79,281,878

2023-2024 Expenditures

Instruction	\$25,240,100
Public Service	\$135,426
Academic Support	\$2,489,841
Student Services	\$6,424,989
Institutional Support	\$9,258,713
Operation and Maintenance	\$5,542,231
Scholarships and Fellowships	\$19,103,566
Auxiliary	\$1,061,330
Depreciation	\$5,037,210
Total Expenditures	\$74,293,406

Gadsden State Students Earn the Most AAMA Scholarships in the State

Gadsden State Community College had 30 students in 2024 who received the Alabama Automotive Manufacturers Association Scholarship. The College had more AAMA scholarship recipients than any other community college in the state.

“Our students have set the bar,” said Alan Smith, dean of Workforce Development. “For three years in a row, Gadsden State has had the most students receive this scholarship. This scholarship is a great path to limitless

opportunities for our students.”

The AAMA partners with the Alabama Community College System to provide scholarships and mentors to students pursuing an associate degree or a technical education certificate in the automotive industry. Students in automotive technology-related programs were considered for the scholarship.

“The AAMA deserves our appreciation for what it is doing to foster the growth and education of our students,” Smith said. “The

association has been instrumental in driving economic development in our state. It has played an important role in making Alabama a hub for automotive excellence. The AAMA is doing its part to ensure that the auto manufacturers in our state have the employees they need.”

Since the Mercedes Plant opened 26 years ago in Vance, four other automotive manufacturing plants have been built in the state. According to the Alabama Department of Commerce, automotive manufacturing plants in the state produce 1.3 million cars each year, which is the third highest total in the nation. Alabama also has 150 Tier 1 suppliers who send finished parts directly to automotive manufacturers.

The Alabama Department of Commerce also reports that the state added more than 6,000 jobs in 2023, many of them in the automotive sector.

“We have auto manufacturers who are having to use recruiters to find out-of-state employees to meet their needs,” Smith said. “We have an obligation to do what we can to train and educate top-notch technicians that can fill the many vacant jobs available. The AAMA Scholarships are instrumental in getting more skilled laborers. It’s easier to recruit students when you can offer scholarships that will cover the cost of tuition and fees.”

The scholarships are \$4,000 each and can be used for tuition, fees and books.

For more information about Gadsden State’s Career Technical Programs, visit www.gadsdenstate.edu/technical.

Students who earned an AAMA scholarship by major:

FAME/Industrial Automation Technology

Anthony Burns, Kanyon Cox, Kayden Cox, Judge Daugherty, Westin Day, Joshua Kanaday and Mason Lockridge, all of Gadsden;

Brennen Butler of Eastaboga; Nathan Carr, Gavin Moore and Gerardo Rios-Reyes, all of Oxford; Ashton Elder, Trent Hopkins, Mason Jairrels and Taleasha Smoot, all of Anniston; Dalton Elliott of Southside; Lucas Harcow, Kaleb Harmon and Jackson Roberts, all of Heflin; Tanner Holderfield of Rainbow City; Briteon Husk of Munford; Bailey Mitchell of Ohatchee; Caden Mitchell of Ranburne and Joshua Whitehead of Lincoln

Precision Machining Technology

Tyler Cate of Gadsden

Automotive Manufacturing Technology

Curtis Collins of Pell City

Industrial Automation

John Crane of Leesburg and Chandler McGinnis of Ashville

Electrical Technology

Ethan Fair of Weaver

Civil Engineering Technology

Caleb Fleming of Gadsden



Scan the code for more information on **Gadsden State's Career Technical Programs**

Nursing Program Achieves 100 Percent Pass Rate

Graduates from Gadsden State Community College's Registered Nursing and Practical Nursing Programs received good news regarding the National Council Licensure Examination. Those who took the test in 2023 passed on their first attempt and earned the program a 100 percent pass rate for both credentials.

"We are so proud of our nursing graduates who took and passed the NCLEX in 2023," said Dr. Cynthia Mullinax, director of the nursing program. "Passing the NCLEX is a huge milestone that unlocks the gateway to their professional dreams. It proves that they are committed to being excellent nurses who will ensure the safety and well-being of those entrusted to their care."

According to the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, the pass percentage nationally for RNs with associate degrees is 87.75 percent while the LPN pass rate is 86.67 percent. In Alabama, 87.5 percent of first-time test-takers pass. Gadsden State handily beat those rates at 100 percent.

"Surpassing the state and national percentages requires more than just knowledge," Mullinax said. "It shows our students' dedication to continuous learning and unwavering determination."

The pass rate for RNs earning a credential at Gadsden State has improved by 28 percent since 2020 and by 15 percent since 2021. Mullinax gave credit for the perfect

pass rate to the 16 nursing faculty and staff members.

"They really put a lot of time and hard work into educating and supporting our nursing students," she said. "We wouldn't be where we are without the nursing expertise provided to students. Every success is celebrated as a testament to our collective commitment to excellence in nursing education."

"The students and faculty achieved the ultimate goal of perfect pass rates, and we hope to keep this trend going."

For more information on Gadsden State's Nursing Program, visit www.gadsdenstate.edu/nursing.



Scan the code for more information on **Gadsden State's Nursing Program**



100%
NCLEX PASS RATE

Black History Month Celebration

Gadsden State Community College hosted several events during the month of February in recognition of Black History Month, including a program featuring Miss Alabama 2023 Brianna Burrell. Special events were held to bring the communities to Gadsden State campuses to recognize the achievements of Black Americans.

The main event for Black History Month was a program on Feb. 26 at the Wallace Hall Fine Arts Center. The event began at 10 a.m. with a Meet-and-Greet with Burrell. At 10:30 a.m., the Gadsden State Show Band and the A Cappella Choir performed. Burrell, a vocalist, also performed and spoke on her platform, SAVE-A-STEM.

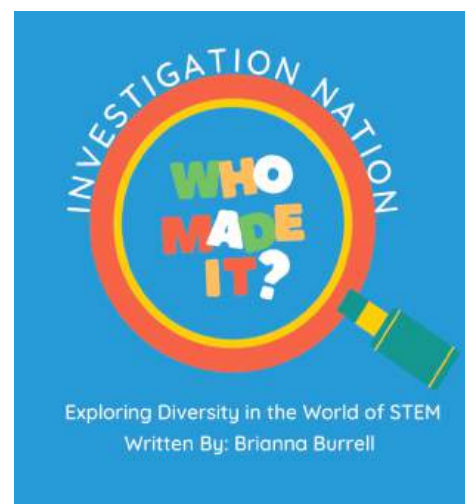
“Brianna’s community initiative encourages students of color and underfunded schools to engage in

programs focused on STEM,” said Pam Clough, Gadsden State’s ADA coordinator.

Burrell, a graduate of University of South Alabama with degrees in political science and philosophy, served as the STEM Sports USA Influencer of the Month and the Boys

“Brianna’s community initiative encourages students of color and underfunded schools to engage in programs focused on STEM.”

and Girls Club of Alabama Mentor of the Year for her work in STEM fields. She has written a children’s book titled “Investigation Nation: Who Made It? Exploring Diversity in the World of



STEM.”

Following the performances, Burrell was available for photographs. The event was free and open to the public. Area schools were encouraged to attend.

Gadsden State’s Ayers Campus hosted a month-long showing of movies, television shows and documentaries mixed with history, culture and entertainment. These showings were held in the Learning Resource Center.

Gadsden State’s Valley Street Campus, the area’s only HBCU, hosted Financial Literacy Lunch and Learn events for Dental Assisting and Construction Technology students, Certified Nursing Assistant students, Licensed Practical Nursing students and students in the Diagnostic Medical Sonography Program.

On Feb. 28, the Valley Street Campus partnered with Gadsden Job Corps for its second annual Black History Month Celebration. The keynote speaker was Dr. Charlie Parker, principal of Litchfield Middle School. The Gadsden State Show Band and Litchfield Middle School Choir performed. The event was open to the public and took place in the Job Corps Gymnasium located on the Valley Street Campus.



Scan the code to view the **photo album from Miss Alabama’s visit**



Scan the code to view the **livestream of the Valley Street Celebration**

Ground Broken for \$10 Million Sports Complex

Gadsden State Community College broke ground for a new baseball/softball complex in the Gadsden Sports Park on April 2, 2024. The \$10 million facility will be funded with a bond approved in November 2023 by the Alabama Community College System Board of Trustees.

"We believe this complex is a tremendous recruitment tool for us," said Dr. Kathy Murphy, president of Gadsden State. "We recruit the athletes, who, in turn, encourage friends and family to attend Gadsden State. Expanding sports is beneficial for the College as it promotes school spirit and unity."

The City of Gadsden has committed to picking up a portion of the tab for new parking lots and a pedestrian bridge that spans 135 feet over the existing culvert to connect a remote parking lot.

"I love the cooperation we are seeing between the City of Gadsden and Gadsden State," said Tim McCartney, a Gadsden native and member of the ACCS Board of Trustees. "I am proud that I voted in favor of the bond issue. We want to do everything we can to make sure this community and this College continue to grow and prosper."

Craig Ford, mayor of Gadsden, said he values the relationship with

Gadsden State and the commitment to athletics and academic excellence. "This facility is about the community," he said. "This is not just about Gadsden. This is about all five counties that Gadsden State serves. This is phenomenal for all of us."

The baseball and softball teams at Gadsden State disbanded in 2011 and 2016, respectively. An announcement was made on April 18, 2022, that Gadsden State will field the teams again. Blake Lewis was hired as the athletic director and head baseball coach on June 1, 2022, and Ryan Clark was named the head softball coach on Aug. 1, 2023.

Lewis said he was profoundly thankful to those who are making the dream of having a state-of-the-art complex a reality. "Beyond the athletic arena, this complex will also serve as a gathering place for our community – a place where families can come together to cheer on their loved ones, where friendships are forged and where memories are made," he said. "It will be a beacon of pride for Gadsden State and a testament to our dedication to fostering a vibrant and inclusive campus culture."

Clark agreed that athletics is a valuable aspect of the collegiate experience. "The complex will give our athletes and our students the

best experience possible, and we will forever be grateful," he said. "Seeing this come to fruition proves that we are all working together in the same direction. I'm so proud to be the softball coach at Gadsden State."

Aidan Bee, a pitcher on the Gadsden State baseball team, spoke on behalf of his team. "I want to thank everyone who has played a role in bringing this complex to Gadsden State," he said. "It represents a significant investment in our program and in our future. It shows your commitment to excellence and your belief that athletics is a vital part of the college experience."

Chloe Gattis represented the softball team, on which she plays catcher. "I'm beyond excited about our new baseball-softball complex," she said. "It's not just about the nice, new, state-of-the-art facilities. It's about what it means for our entire student body. This complex isn't just a place to play. It's a hub for student life."

Lathan Architects is the architect company for the project. Kyser Construction is the contractor. The project is expected to be completed in early-2025.

For more information about Gadsden State athletics, visit GoCardinals.GadsdenState.edu.



Scan the code to view the **album of photos, videos, and complex renderings**



Fine Arts Center to Undergo \$7.9 Million Renovation

Gadsden State Community College President Kathy Murphy publicly announced the large-scale renovation of the Wallace Hall Fine Arts Center and academic wing on April 29, 2024. “We are excited about this occasion,” she said “We are making history today. We are making sure that our employees, our students and our community have the facility they deserve.”

The project will cost almost \$7.9 million. The academic wing will undergo complete renovation of classrooms and studio space that will be used for courses in photography, pottery, visual arts, choral and band. Renovations will also be made to the computer lab and restrooms as well as new interior sheet rock walls, doors, flooring and paint throughout the building. Completely new electrical, plumbing and mechanical systems will also be included.

Exterior renovations will include an updated brick and precast façade; new concrete paved courtyard with lighting; a new front entry to both the Fine Arts Center and academic wing; and all new windows.

Mario Gallardo, Division Chair



of Fine Arts at Gadsden State, said Wallace Hall is more than just a building. “It is the epicenter for creativity and celebration of the arts at Gadsden State and for the community of northeast Alabama,” he said. “It’s a place where students can dream, build, play and imagine a beautiful future.”

It is also a place that connects the community with Gadsden State according to Gallardo. “Wallace Hall serves as a space to bring the community together like nothing else can. The arts cross all boundaries that

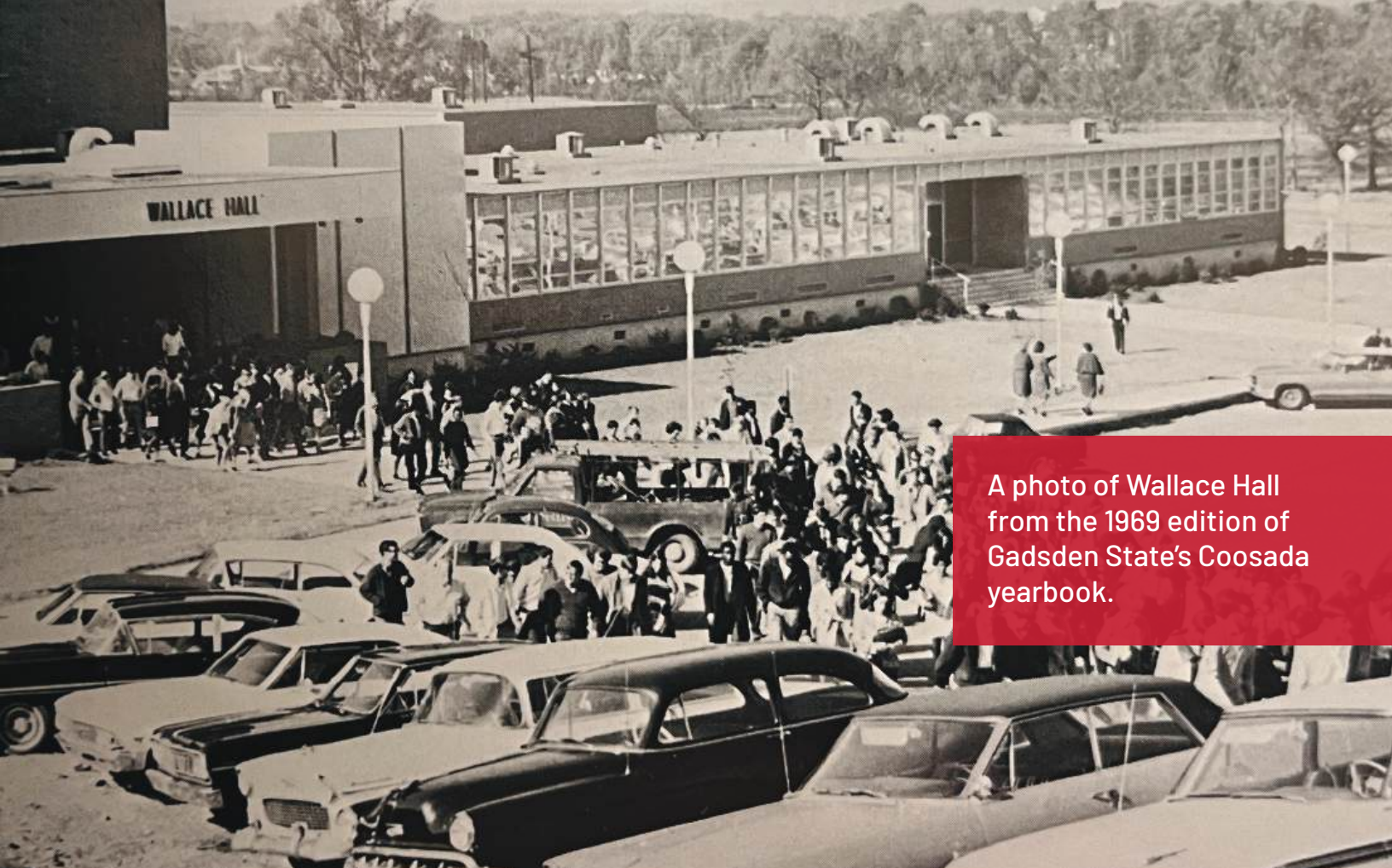
“It is the epicenter for creativity and celebration of the arts at Gadsden State and for the community of northeast Alabama.”

might keep us apart and reveal our humanity and help us to empathize with our neighbors. I’ve said many times that what we do here doesn’t stay here. It ripples out into the community,” Gallardo said.

The project is being funded by a bond that was approved in November by the Alabama Community College System Board of Trustees. The bond is also funding the construction of the new baseball/softball complex (see page 11).

The architectural firm for the Wallace Hall renovations is Lathan Associates of Hoover while the contractor is Hudak Construction Co. of Gadsden. Demolition is currently underway with the renovation projected to be completed next summer.





A photo of Wallace Hall from the 1969 edition of Gadsden State's Coosada yearbook.

The History of Wallace Hall

The Wallace Hall Fine Arts Center was constructed in 1967 for \$1.5 million. It was designed by Architects Hofferbert and Eliss and was built with excellent acoustics and modern stage equipment.

In 1997, the near constant use of Wallace Hall had taken its toll. Without major renovations, the Fine Arts Center would face closure. In 1998, Gadsden State and the City of Gadsden raised over \$450,000 to complete the needed repairs, which included the installation of 1,200 new theatre seats. The restrooms were gutted and replaced, and new dressing space was added.

In 2011, Wallace Hall received a \$150,000 landmark grant from the U.S. Department of Energy to transform the theatrical lighting systems into a more energy-efficient system. A new LED lighting system was also added, saving an estimated \$35,000 in energy costs annually.

In 2016, additional upgrades were made. The ceilings were repaired, and the entire space was

painted. New sound absorbing materials were added to the walls, and brand-new flooring was installed. The audio system was also updated.

In 2023, Gadsden State replaced the HVAC system at a cost of over \$500,000.

Through the years, Wallace Hall has hosted a broad range of community events, like plays, concerts, dance recitals and graduation ceremonies for local high schools.

It is home to Gadsden State's own in-house events, such as Convocation, the Jazz Festival, Evening of Fine Arts, plays produced by the Theatre Department, professional development events and, occasionally, commencement exercises.

The academic wing of Wallace Hall includes classrooms, labs and studio space for the fine arts programs, music programs, the popular A Cappella choir, the famous Gadsden State Show Band & Singers, and the theatre program, which returned to the stage in 2021 after being shuttered for over a decade.

When operating at full capacity, Wallace Hall Fine Arts Center has attracted approximately 40,000 visitors per year.

Ribbon Cut on New CAREER TECHNICAL FACILITY

Gadsden State Community College hosted a ribbon cutting June 12, 2024 for the new Advanced Manufacturing and Workforce Skills Training Center on the East Broad Campus. The event attracted approximately 200 people from Etowah and neighboring counties.

“Seeing all of your faces makes me realize the great support we receive from the communities we serve,” said Dr. Kathy Murphy, president of Gadsden State. “This center is one that you support and because of your support, lives are going to change for good, forever.”

The center provides a high-tech, hands-on learning environment for students seeking careers in high demand, high-wage industries. It houses Mechatronics, Industrial Automation, Precision Machining, Mechanical Design Technology, Additive Manufacturing and Electronics Engineering. It is also the home to a second cohort of FAME students, which is an apprenticeship style program for Industrial Automation majors.

Alabama Community College System Chancellor Jimmy Baker recognized Murphy and Alan Smith, dean of Workforce Development, for their commitment to making the center a reality. “They made the right decisions and worked really hard to make all of this happen,” he said.

“They worked with their local officials, with industry, with municipalities to make sure this center was built at Gadsden State. They are committed to this College.”

The Advanced Manufacturing and Workforce Skills Training Center was identified as a needed project through the ACCS ASPIRE 2030 initiative. ASPIRE stands for “Achieving Systemwide Potential through Increased Resources and Engagement” and is a result of a statewide bond issue passed by the Alabama Legislature in 2020 to provide funding for facility upgrades and new construction for all levels of education in Alabama. The decision to focus on the center was determined by committees comprised of Gadsden State employees as well as partners in K-12, government, business and industry, nonprofits and economic development organizations.

“When we were considering ASPIRE projects, we were told to ‘dream big,’” Smith said. “I want to say that we listened.”



The ribbon cutting for the **Advanced Manufacturing and Workforce Skills Training Center** on the East Broad Campus held June 12, 2024.



Gadsden State broke ground for the facility on Feb. 21, 2023. The construction of the center cost approximately \$24 million with funding coming from a statewide bond issue passed by the Alabama Legislature in 2020 to provide funding for facility upgrades and new construction for all levels of education.

The AMC features 10 laboratories, seven classrooms, 11 offices, a multipurpose room, 10 tool and storage rooms, a storm shelter, a testing suite, a kitchen and serving area, a break room and six restroom areas. It also features glass viewing areas

that allow prospective students and industry partners to have laboratory visibility during tours; a safe entrance for students loading and unloading from cars or buses; and digital displays with

“The center provides a high-tech, hands-on learning environment for students seeking careers in high demand, high-wage industries.”

information for students.

In June of 2023, Gadsden State was granted an additional \$12 million in the Education Supplemental Appropriation Bill approved by Alabama legislators and signed into law by Gov. Kay Ivey. The money was used for construction costs and equipment for the center.

Other entities also made financial commitments, including the Etowah County Commission, City of Attalla, City of Glencoe, City of Southside, City of Ridgeville, Rainbow City, Etowah County Schools, Sardis City, the Etowah Chamber of Commerce, Etowah County Sales Tax and the City of Gadsden. The AMC was designed by Goodwyn Mills Cawood and built by M.J. Harris Construction of Birmingham.

“Everybody bought into the idea of having this building at Gadsden State,” Smith said. “Everyone was on board and supported the vision that helps us change lives for good, forever. That’s what we do at Gadsden State.”

For more information, visit www.GadsdenState.edu/AMC.



Scan the code for more information on **Gadsden State's Career Technical Facility**



First CoMeT Cohort Signed

Gadsden State Community College hosted a signing event in July for the first cohort of students to be in the Consortium of Machining Education Training. Known as CoMeT, it is a hybrid work-based apprenticeship program that allows students to “earn while they learn.”

Alan Smith, dean of Workforce Development, said the program was developed in 2023 by Gadsden State employees to address the needs of the machining industry. “Gadsden State is teaming up with companies that need us to provide training to students who will go into their workforce,” he said. “We are providing a pipeline of skilled, highly trained precision machinists who are sure to be excellent employees.”

Seven industry partners signed 13 students and one alternate to be a part of the first cohort during a signing event at the Beck Conference Center on the Wallace Drive Campus. Through the CoMeT program, students take classes at Gadsden State two days a week and work for an industry partner three days a week.

“It’s not easy going to school and working at the same time,” Smith said. “This program allows students to do both while having a healthy work-life balance.”

The students are paid at least \$15 per hour by their employer during five semesters of training.

“This will be the least amount of money you will ever make for the rest of your life,” Andy Robertson, Workforce Development coordinator, said during the signing event. “You will make more and more money as you progress through your training and your career. Your salary will increase as you gain experience.”

Students who complete the program will graduate with an Associate in Applied Science in Precision Machining. “Upon graduation, the students have the potential to make at



least \$50,000 a year right away,” Smith said. “Because they’ll have a valuable credential and two years of industry-verified experience, our graduates will be head-and-shoulders above everyone else.”

CoMeT is offered in the Precision Machining Building on the Ayers Campus and in the new Advanced Manufacturing Center on the East Broad Campus. The program is led by instructors Daniel Anderson and Peyton Amberson. They oversee the students as they complete 1,776 hours in work-based learning as well as five projects.

“The instructors are here to make sure that our students become successful employees,” Robertson said. “They are instrumental in the growth of our students and the growth of our program.”

Smith said he expects all of the students to complete the program and graduate from Gadsden State. “If you study and work hard, you will make it through CoMeT with flying colors,” he said. “Find whatever it takes to finish this program and go onto a successful career.”

For more information, visit www.GadsdenState.edu/CoMeT.



Scan the code for more information on **Gadsden State's CoMeT Program**

Students and industry partners participating in CoMeT include:

Gadsden Tool Inc.

Jonathan Laughlin of
Wilsonville and Tyree Street
of Anniston

General Dynamics

Champton Goss of Centre,
Dalton Johnson of Pisgah,
and Jakarian Jackson
of Anniston

GH Metal Solutions

Kendra Perego of Valley Head

Lee Brass

Derrick Montgomery
and Jacauri Whitfield,
both of Anniston

Prince Metal Stamping

Eric Danini of Attalla and Tytan
Rich of Rainbow City

Stamped Products

Dillon Owens of Boaz and Lucas
Renfrow of Attalla

XYZ Controls

Matthew Williams of Glencoe

Alternate

Daronte Collins of Anniston

Medical Assistant Program Launched and a New Director Hired

Gadsden State Community College launched a new Medical Assistant Program that offers students a gateway to a rapidly growing healthcare field. The program opened Aug. 19 at the start of the 2024-25 academic year.

Dr. Susan Thrasher was hired as the director of the Medical Assistant Program. “We are providing hands-on training, modern facilities and comprehensive coursework to equip students with the skills necessary for a successful career in medical assistance,” she said. “It’s going to be incredible for the students who earn a degree at Gadsden State. The degree will empower them. It will empower the community. Knowledge empowers people.”

Thrasher’s 42-year career started well before she put on her scrubs and started her training. As a child, she had some health issues that required doctors’ visits and hospital stays, so she was exposed to many healthcare workers. “I was especially drawn to the medical assistants because they were so wonderful to me,” she said. “I knew that’s what I wanted to do.”

After she graduated from Hokes Bluff High School, Thrasher attended Gadsden State and then Birmingham’s Regional Technical Institute, where she earned an Associate of Applied Science in Medical Assisting in 1982.

She then went to work as a certified medical assistant for a physician in Birmingham for over six years. She landed a job as the assistant director of the University of Alabama at Birmingham Heart Station for the next three years.

In 1992, Thrasher started commuting to Chattanooga four days a week to work as a medical assistant at the office of Dr. Mark Heinsohn. It was there that she was encouraged to become a registered nurse. “He needed a nurse, and he said that he wanted that nurse to be me,” Thrasher said.

In April 1997, while taking nursing courses at UAB, she landed a job closer to her Hokes Bluff home as a nurse and lead patient coordinator for the Surgical Unit at Gadsden Regional Medical Center. Four months later, she earned a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from UAB.

After more than 13 years at Gadsden Regional, Thrasher went to Hokes Bluff Middle School as the on-site nurse. During this time, she earned a Master of Science in Nursing from the University of Alabama. “I wanted to be an educator, so nursing education was the next logical step,” she said.

“I wanted to be an educator, so nursing education was the next logical step.”

In 2019, she was named the health sciences instructor at the Etowah County Career Technical Center. The following year, she earned a Doctor of Education from UA as a nurse educator.

“My position at the Career Tech Center was a Godsend,” she said. “It was an opportunity for me to grow and get a foundation for being a full-time educator. It’s very different from being a nurse.”

On July 8, she started her job as the director of the Medical Assistant Program at Gadsden State. “Now, I’m living the true dream teaching at the college level,” she said. “Medical assistants are the heart, soul and compassion of the community through providing service to patients, physicians and colleagues. We will use positive reinforcement in the classroom and labs to ensure that Gadsden State students define professionalism through acquaintance.”



Dr. Susan Thrasher, Director Medical Assistant Technology

The program takes five semesters to graduate. Once the curriculum and training are complete, students can sit for a test to be certified by the National Board for Medical Assisting of the American Association of Medical Assistants. This certification leads students to employment opportunities in physicians’ offices, outpatient clinics, laboratories, ambulatory institutions, hospitals, nursing homes, minute clinics and urgent care facilities.

Medical assistants are responsible for administrative, clinical, specialized and general duties. Some responsibilities include lab procedures, collecting patient history, conducting physical exams, performing EKGs, taking vital signs, giving injections, making referrals and setting up surgeries.

“Medical assistants really are the front line of a medical facility – the physician’s right-hand person,” Thrasher said. “Medical assistants have a complete background to adequately support the physician.”

The online application and more information about the program can be found at www.GadsdenState.edu/Medical.



Scan the code for the online application and more information on **Gadsden State's Medical Assistant Program**

Samford and Gadsden State Partner for Student Success

Gadsden State Community College and Samford University have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that will create seamless transfer pathways for Gadsden State graduates into select Samford programs. With students such as Riley Hull already benefiting from student success partnerships formed between Samford and Gadsden State, the signing of this agreement formalizes their partnership.

Under the MOU, students completing designated courses at Gadsden State can easily transfer into Samford's Organizational Leadership, Liberal Studies, Human Development and Family Science, and Public Health programs. Samford has committed to providing transfer pathways, including Completer and Full Degree options, along with pre-transfer advising and scholarships to support the students' transition.

Samford will offer a \$2,000 transfer scholarship to Gadsden State graduates taking 24 credits over three semesters, with an additional

\$2,500 for Phi Theta Kappa members. Students pursuing STEM degrees can apply for the STEM Scholar's Award, averaging \$10,000 annually for eligible Pell Grant recipients. "Supporting students through the transfer process is a priority," said

"Higher education is all about serving the students today who will lead the achievements of tomorrow..."

Dr. Kathy L. Murphy, President of Gadsden State. "Our academic advisors and faculty can help students navigate applications and ensure their credits transfer smoothly. We are grateful to Samford University for its commitment to our students."

The agreement is especially beneficial for students such as Hull,



Riley Hull is the first Gadsden State student to benefit from the Memorandum of Understanding with Samford University.

who completed a traditionally nontransferable technical degree program in paralegal studies at Gadsden State and transfer the credits to Samford. "My goal is to be a lawyer one day and so it means so much to have two schools invested in my success for the future," said Hull. "We didn't know how it would work out, so to see this agreement come in place for students for years to come really represents how education should work for all."

In addition to the traditional bachelor's degree path, the partnership encourages reverse transfer agreements, ensuring that Gadsden State is notified of students' academic progression so that students who transfer prior to graduating from Gadsden State can still earn their associate degree after completing a number of credit hours at Samford.

"Higher education is all about serving the students today who will lead the achievements of tomorrow, and this agreement reflects our commitment to educational excellence for students who begin their journey at Gadsden State and continue through Samford," said Dr. Beck A. Taylor, President of Samford University.



COLLEGE HIGHLIGHTS

The Samford MOU is one of several Gadsden State has in place with four-year universities. These agreements extend services provided to students who transfer beyond the state's legislation. They require that all core credit classes successfully completed at Alabama's two-year colleges transfer to the state's public four-year colleges and universities.

"Gadsden State is committed to developing every avenue with our four-year partners that ensures and enhances our students' experiences for success, and this MOU is a significant step in expanding those opportunities," Murphy said. "We are proud our students will have the support and resources both at the two-year level and the four-year level to achieve their educational and

career goals."

For more information, visit www.GadsdenState.edu/Transfer.



Scan the code for more information about **Transferring**

'Merry Wives of Windsor' Performed at New Black Box Theatre

The Gadsden State Community College Theatre Program presented "The Merry Wives of Windsor" at 7 p.m. Nov. 21-23 in the brand-new black box theatre.

"The black box is a flexible theatre with the ability to adapt to the needs of the production," said Joe Fuselli, director of the theatre program. "The feel is much more intimate. Actors are much closer to the audience providing a more immersive experience."

The new black box theatre is located in the Meadows Library on the Wallace Drive Campus. Fuselli said in addition to the intimacy of the space, it also allows students

to experiment with new styles and approaches to storytelling. "The new theatre is a testament to Gadsden State's commitment to enhancing the performing arts for our community and to providing students with hands-on experience in a professional setting," he said.

"The Merry Wives of Windsor" is a comedic tale by William Shakespeare that explores love, mischief and mistaken identity. It follows Sir John Falstaff, a boastful and scheming knight. "Falstaff attempts to woo two wealthy married women, Mistress Ford and Mistress Page," Fuselli said. "He hopes to gain access to



their husbands' money; however, the women, aware of his intentions, decide to teach him a lesson by hatching a series of hilarious tricks to humiliate Falstaff. In the end, he is thoroughly embarrassed. The play concludes with reconciliation and merriment, highlighting themes of wit, deception and social class."

Under Fuselli's direction, the cast and crew brought Shakespeare's humor and charm to life in the performance space. "We were excited to perform 'The Merry Wives of Windsor' as our inaugural production in the new black box theatre," he said. "This space gives us so much creative freedom, and the cast was excited to share this classic comedy with the community in such a unique environment. The black box provides a special way to highlight a play like this one, and it also provides incredible opportunities for our students."



Second Annual Cardinal Gala a Success

The Cardinal Gala, hosted by the Gadsden State Community College Cardinal Foundation, was held on Thursday, October 10th at the Venue at Coosa Landing.

The Venue, decorated throughout with Gadsden State's signature colors of red, black, and silver, was the perfect location to showcase the talent of Worth the Wait, the talented mother daughter trio hailing from Etowah County. The trio now calls Cherokee County home when not traveling to Nashville for performances and recording.

With an emotional performance of many classics over a dinner served by Nette's Kitchen of Piedmont, the crowd was pleased with the harmonies and stories of their time in Gadsden. Mom, Tara, is also a Gadsden State

alum. She attended GSCC prior to transferring to complete her degree.

After dinner, Swoop the Band got the crowd up and dancing to their array of hits from the '80s and '90s. All former Gadsden State Community College students, the band members enjoyed their time together in the show band so much they formed their own band.

While some danced and visited during the Gala, other attendees watched the silent auction table with an eagle's eye. With so many great options, including Alabama and Auburn adorned custom fire pits, courtesy of the Ayers Campus, the bidding was intense.

"We measure success in many ways," said Hillary Folsom, director of advancement and alumni relations. "I believe the fellowship, goodwill, and community involvement created by this event is immeasurable. From Mayor Craig Ford and the City of Gadsden to each one of our business, industry, and individual sponsors, we created an event worthy of repeating."

As the night ended, lucky bidders

claimed their prizes while others lingered on the dance floor for one more spin. Student volunteers completed their tasks of clearing the tables and decorations.

According to Cardinal Foundation president Tommie Goggans, "There really is no adequate way to express our thanks to everyone involved. We are blessed with an outstanding team of talented individuals and generous members of our Cardinal Foundation Board of Directors. It is our joy to have the opportunity to be a part of the work done by Gadsden State Community College to change the lives of people in this region."

For more information on the Cardinal Foundation, visit www.GadsdenState.edu/CardinalFoundation.



Scan the code for more information on the **Cardinal Foundation**



One Stop at Ayers

Gadsden State Community College's Ayers Campus has completed a renovation to the Cheaha Center, which originally housed the Alabama Department of Labor's Anniston Career Center. The renovated facility now includes the new Gadsden State One Stop Center in addition to the Anniston Career Center.

"The renovation brings significant upgrades to the center's functionality and aesthetic, benefiting both students and community members who rely on the services offered at the facility," said Pam Johnson, Gadsden State's dean of Institutional Effectiveness and acting director of the Ayers Campus.

The One Stop Center, a key student services hub, and the Anniston Career Center, which provides a wide range of employment-related resources, have undergone cosmetic upgrades to enhance the experience for students, clients and visitors. The renovations include new luxury vinyl flooring, updated paint and the addition of modern furniture and a new computer corral in the One Stop Center. In addition, walls were added to separate the two centers, allowing for better organization and more efficient use of space.



Tiffany Young, Gadsden State employee in the Financial Aid Office, assists a student at the One Stop Center on the Ayers campus.

"The renovations to the Cheaha Center are a true asset for our students and community members," Johnson said. "When you walk in the door, all services are within view of the student. It's a bonus that it's in an instructional building that's so accessible to so many students. This project helps us better serve our community while fostering a welcoming and efficient environment for those who rely on student services."

The One Stop Center now includes a new storage area and designated spaces for several important services that have moved from the original Ayers Campus Administration Building. Relocated services include:

- **Advising and Retention Center**
- **Dual Enrollment**
- **Admissions and Records**
- **Financial Aid**
- **Enrollment Services**
- **Technical Advisement**
- **Educational Opportunity Center**
- **The Business Office**

Additionally, office space has been included for the Gadsden State Police and Public Safety Department as well as for college leaders visiting the Ayers Campus. "These changes make the One Stop Center a centralized location where students can easily access multiple services in one location, streamlining the process for students as they pursue their education," said Andy Green, dean of Student Services.

The Anniston Career Center, which provides services from a variety of state departments, such as the Alabama Department of Labor, Department of Commerce, Department of Rehabilitation Services, and the Alabama Community College System, also benefits from the renovations. The center offers enhanced services, including job placement assistance, job fairs, career evaluations and access to work-based learning, internships, apprenticeships and youth programs. The Anniston Career Center serves Calhoun and Cleburne counties and has been a vital community resource on the Ayers Campus for 22 years.

"We are excited about the new

space and new opportunities for collaboration between the One Stop Center and the Anniston Career Center," said Shari Vickers, the regional manager for the DOL's Area 2. "We have six specialists who assist job seekers with registration, job searches, career evaluations, resume building, interview skills, soft skills workshops, adult education and GED prep referrals and veteran services. Our job is to support the local workforce and help people improve their skills and employment prospects."

Employers also benefit from the updated space as they continue to be able to list job orders, host online job fairs, conduct interviews and recruitment activities and receive valuable information about federal bonding, labor market statistics, and tax credits.

"The renovation will also help ensure the Career Center is better able to assist individuals transitioning into the workforce, whether through job training, skills development or career services," said Katrina Herring, manager of the Anniston Career Center.

Vickers said the co-location with the One Stop Center is a game changer. "By being located so close to student services, we can maintain closer contact with students as they prepare to enter the workforce with new or updated skills," she said. "The Career Center continues to support individuals in their journey from education to employment, and these upgrades will help us do that even more effectively."

The Cheaha Center also includes an annex that was built in 2020. It houses instruction space for nursing and academic courses, serving a large number of students each year. "The renovation to the original space creates a more unified and accessible environment, strengthening the overall functionality of the Cheaha Center," Green said.

Remaining in the original administration building are offices for Institutional Effectiveness, Upward Bound, Educational Talent Search, Testing, and IT departments.



Clarissa Williams of Henagar has been selected to be a part of the American Society of the Radiologic Technologists Student to Leadership Development Program.

Local Student Selected for Leadership Development Program

Clarissa Williams of Henagar has been selected to be a part of the American Society of the Radiologic Technologists Student to Leadership Development Program. The three-year program offers students a chance to attend educational sessions and to network with medical imaging and radiation therapy professionals.

Williams is a second-year radiography student at Gadsden State Community College. She was selected for ASRT SLDP after a nationwide application process. She was one of two students selected from Alabama. She received airfare, housing and a stipend for meals and other expenses for a trip to Orlando in June to attend the ASRT House of Delegates meeting.

The mission of ASRT is to advance and elevate the medical imaging and radiation therapy profession and to enhance the quality and safety of patient care. In addition, the ASRT strives to maintain high standards of education and to further the welfare and socioeconomics of radiologic technologists. The Alabama Society of Radiologic Technologists is an affiliate of ASRT.

Nursing Student Selected for White House HBCU Initiative in Philadelphia

Chantara Williams, a Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) student at Gadsden State Community College's Valley Street campus, was selected to represent the college at the White House Initiative on Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Development through Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

The initiative recognizes students throughout the country for their academic achievements, leadership and civic engagement with the goal of preparing the scholars as the next generation of leaders to champion equality, excellence and economic development in their communities. Selected scholars serve as ambassadors for their institutions and participate in various events, including the National Annual HBCU Week Conference which took place in Philadelphia Sept. 15-19, 2024.

Williams' participation highlights Gadsden State's commitment to fostering excellence and leadership among its students. Her achievements at Gadsden State, coupled with her passion for nursing and community service, exemplify the qualities that the HBCU Scholar Recognition Program seeks to promote.

"We are incredibly proud of Chantara Williams for this outstanding achievement," said Dr. Kathy Murphy, President of Gadsden State Community College. "Her selection as an HBCU Scholar is a testament to her hard work and dedication, and we look forward to seeing her represent our college and community on this national stage."

As part of the program, Williams engaged in professional development workshops, networked with industry leaders, and collaborated with other scholars to further their academic and career goals. The Initiative covered all expenses related to her participation in the conference, including lodging, airfare, and ground transportation.



Chantara Williams and Ricky Tillis at the Annual National HBCU Week Conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Student Proves Resilient During Cancer Battle

Jhaylan Redwine embodies resilience and determination while charging a path to a future dedicated to healing and service. Not only is she a Gadsden State Community College nursing student but she is also an active-duty member of the Army National Guard and a cancer survivor.

At 25 years old, Redwine is considered a non-traditional student, which is described as one who returns to college after taking a break from their educational journey. She graduated from Model High School in Rome, Ga., in 2017 and attended classes sporadically at Georgia Highlands College for a few years. “I had to work three jobs to support myself while attending college,” she said. “I decided to look into military service to earn a GI Bill so I could stick to school without working 80 hours a week to support myself and pay tuition.”

In September 2021, Redwine went to basic training in Fort Sill, Okla., and to Missouri where she received job training as a LHS and M915 tactical truck operator.

Now, she is a member of the 1160th Transportation Company in Rome, and she also is in her sixth year of working at Advent Health Redmond, where she has worked in the dietary department and as a phlebotomist and nurse technician to get on-the-job experience. She is also in her final semester of Gadsden State’s Nursing Program.

“I always knew I wanted to do something in the medical field, but I wasn’t confident that I could do it,” she said. “I felt like I was a mediocre person with mediocre grades. The medical field was much bigger than me.”

It was during her grandmother’s battle with Parkinson’s Disease that solidified her desire to go into nursing. “I appreciated the care she received,” she said. “I felt I could help her like her nurses were, but I didn’t know how. I

didn’t know her disease. I decided to learn to help my grandma.”

She enrolled at Gadsden State but soon found herself being the patient. In May 2023, she knew her health was declining. At first, she thought it was because of her busy schedule of juggling Gadsden State, the National Guard and work.

“I just kept pushing through,” she said. “There were other people with bigger problems. I knew I could push through some fatigue.”

In July, she felt odd due to low hemoglobin levels. A transfusion was required, which caused some issues, and she was admitted into the hospital. A computed tomography scan showed a mass in the colon. A colonoscopy confirmed she had stage 3 signet ring cell carcinoma. According to the National Institutes of Health, the median survival time for stage 3 patients is 15.4 months.

“It is one of the worst cancers you can get in your colon,” Redwine said. “Typically, it’s diagnosed too late in younger women because there are few or no warning signs – no visible rectal bleeding, no family history. For some women, it advances to stomach cancer by the time it is diagnosed. I was lucky my cancer was caught early.”

After she was diagnosed, Redwine was still committed to her educational responsibilities. She showed up for a test at Gadsden State Cherokee just one week later. “I was on a walker, but I was there,” she said. “It was important that I stuck to my studies.”

During her cancer battle, Redwine had a partial colectomy and underwent chemotherapy every two weeks for seven months. Because the chemotherapy required 46 hours to administer, Redwine could be seen in classes and in clinicals with a backpack that provided the medication to her.

She said her battle with cancer was challenging but possible thanks to the support of her instructors, fellow students, her grandfather Ronnell Redwine, and her aunt Robbie Redwine. “My Pawpaw and aunt were at every treatment,” she said. “They made sure I had everything that I needed so I could focus on my health and my education.”

Classmate Hannah Womack took



Jhaylan Redwine Gadsden State Community College nursing student

Redwine to her clinical assignments at Gadsden Regional Medical Center, Riverview Regional Medical Center and Advent Health Redmond. “I could not be where I am today without Hannah,” she said. “She helped me study. She helped with transportation. She encouraged me and was an important reason for me to succeed through the semester.”

In July, Redwine was notified that her scans are clear of cancer. Because she has a genotype that has a high probability of returning the cancer in three to five years, she has to undergo regular scans and colonoscopies to confirm that she is still in remission.

“Being in remission feels like I accomplished something I couldn’t control,” she said. “I’m still a little scared but I’m able to do what I want to do because I’m healthier and I’m stronger. I’m no longer ‘foggy.’ My weight is coming back. It feels good.”

Redwine joined members of her cohort on Dec. 12 for the traditional nursing pinning followed by graduation on Dec. 19 at Gadsden State Cherokee.

For more information about the Nursing Program and other programs at Gadsden State Cherokee in Centre, visit www.GadsdenState.edu/Cherokee.



Scan the code for more information on **Gadsden State Cherokee in Centre**

Students Named to All-Alabama Academic Team

Two members of Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society at Gadsden State Community College earned accolades for outstanding academic achievement as well as college and community service. Sebella Henry and Harry Glenn were selected for the Phi Theta Kappa All-Alabama Academic Team. In addition, Henry has been named a Bronze Scholar on the Coca-Cola Academic Team.

All-Alabama Academic Team members are nominated by faculty and reviewed by a selection committee. To be eligible, students must have a 3.25 minimum GPA, complete at least 12 hours at the nominating college and be involved in campus activities. Each community college in Alabama nominates two students for the team. Henry and Glenn each received \$1,000.

Students are nominated by college administrators for the Coca-Cola Academic Team. They must be members of PTK and are selected based on academic achievement, leadership and engagement in college and community service. As a Bronze Scholar, Henry was awarded \$1,000 to use for educational expenses. She is one of only 50 Bronze Scholars nationwide and was chosen from more than 2,400 applicants. "I'm so honored to be recognized," Henry said. "My time at Gadsden State has truly been a positive experience."

Henry was homeschooled before she came to Gadsden State in Fall 2022. She scored an honors scholarship at the College. "I only applied to Gadsden State," she said. "I wasn't ready to leave home. I had a lot of social anxiety. Being a student at Gadsden State brought me out of my shell. I will never be able to adequately thank everyone at Gadsden State for the difference they made in my life."

On May 9, Henry graduated with an associate degree in general studies. She is transferring to the University of Alabama at Birmingham to work towards bachelor's and master's degrees in math education.

"I enjoyed math when I was in high school, but when I got to Gadsden State, my love for it grew," she said. "I was able to learn from some wonderful teachers. They have really inspired me to become a teacher myself"

Henry has been recognized multiple times for her academic success as well as her commitment to student life at Gadsden State. At the recent Honors Day, she was presented the coveted Allen-Ray Award, the highest honor

bestowed on a Gadsden State student. It is named for the late Sen. James B. Allen and the late Jack Ray, the former CEO of Exchange Bank of Alabama.

The 20-year-old also was named a Student of Distinction and was awarded the Presidential Scholarship to UAB, the Transfer Excellence Scholarship to the University of Alabama, the Opportunity Transfer Scholarship to Jacksonville State University and the Institutional



Gadsden State President **Dr. Kathy Murphy** with **Harry Glenn** and **Sebella Henry**



From left to right: Dean of Health Sciences **Dr. Joey Battles**, Advising and Retention Center Director **Dr. Dana Davis**, ORI 101 Instructor and PTK Advisor **Melissa Davis**, All-Academic Team Members **Sebella Henry** and **Harry Glenn**, Dean of Institutional Effectiveness **Pam Johnson**, Dean of Academics **Dr. Farrah Hayes**, and Director of the Teaching and Director of Distance Education, Faculty Development, and Learning Resources **Dr. Derrick Griffey**.

Scholarship to Athens State University.

Henry is the president of PTK and served as a Gadsden State representative at the recent PTK international convention, where the local chapter was recognized as a Five-Star Chapter and won the Distinguished College Project Award for the work done at an Etowah Chamber event for local teachers, counselors and administrators.

In addition to her commitment to PTK, Henry served as a volunteer tutor in math and computer literacy for Gadsden State's Adult Education Services. She was on the 2024 Gadsden State Homecoming Court and volunteered at the Cardinal Gala, Candy with the Cardinals, G-Day and Get on Board Day.

"I have really loved being a Gadsden State student," she said. "I could not recommend Gadsden State more to other students. The faculty is absolutely wonderful. They advocate for their students. They want to see us succeed. Students can be assured that the teachers at Gadsden State have their best interest at heart."

Glenn chose Gadsden State because it's close to his Rainbow City home, and the College provides multiple ways for students to get involved. "There's always something to do at Gadsden State," he said. "There are many opportunities to be involved in campus life. It's what you make of it."

It was his involvement and academics that landed him on the All-Alabama Academic Team. "It's such an honor," he said. "I was excited to be selected. For others to select me is a high honor. It was appreciated but definitely unexpected."

Glenn came to Gadsden State after graduating from Southside High School in 2022. He was chosen as a Gadsden State Ambassador and led over 50 tours for prospective students. He was on the President's List for his 4.0 GPA and was elected to the 2024 Gadsden State Homecoming Court. He also volunteered at many college events, like graduation, Cardinal Commit and Candy with the Cardinals.

At Honors Day, the 20-year-old was awarded the President's Cup, a

designated award for students who demonstrate exceptional success in all phases of college life. It was presented by Dr. Kathy Murphy, Gadsden State president. He was also named a Student of Distinction and was awarded the Opportunity Transfer Scholarship to JSU as well as the Roll Tide Transfer Scholarship and the Leadership and Achievement Scholarship to UA.

He recently received an associate degree in general studies. He will enroll at UA this fall to pursue a bachelor's degree in business administration and a master's degree in healthcare management. He hopes to one day be the CEO of a hospital.

"I am always recommending Gadsden State to people," he said. "You can't beat the per-credit tuition. It was much more affordable. It also helped me to be in classes with fewer people. It is easier for me to learn with less distractions. I'm really happy that I made the decision to start at Gadsden State. It has prepared me to continue my education at Alabama."

English Instructors Featured in Poetry Anthology

Tabitha Bozeman and Rachel Houghton, both English instructors at Gadsden State Community College, have been selected to feature their poetic works in *The Southern Poetry Anthology, Volume X: Alabama*.

"I have been writing for as long as I can remember," said Bozeman. "I fell in love with it during graduate school because I realized I could share stories and put work out there that also had a sense of privacy about it."

Houghton was a first-generation student at the University of Alabama at Birmingham working on a bachelor's degree when she started writing on a regular basis. "I went back to school and thought that if I'm going to work hard to get a degree, I'm going to do something I love," said Houghton.

The *Southern Poetry Anthology, Volume X: Alabama*, a Texas Review Press publication, showcases literary talents across the southern region and has chosen poems that highlight the deep and diverse literary contributions of the writers' observational experiences in Alabama.

One of Houghton's published works is "Wading in the Little Cahaba River," which she was inspired to write after attending a workshop at the Cahaba

River. "I literally stood in the water with fellow writers," said Houghton. "It was really a cool experience. For Houghton, having the poem in the anthology is special because some of the other published poets were also at the river that day. "It reminds me of how we are all connected to each other and the world around us," she said.

Houghton's second piece, "Burn," was the first poem she wrote when she realized she could mix fiction with poetry. "I am more comfortable in the fiction realm of writing," she said. "Some of the emotions I tried to access with this poem are grief, determination and hope."

Bozeman's poems are titled "Meth Adaptation" and "Sanatoria." Both examine the aspects of the darker side of living in Southern Appalachia. "These poems examine the impact substance abuse and mental health challenges can have on those we love," she said. "They balance between the ordinary challenges of our lives and how they can be tied to impactful and formative experiences."

Bozeman has made it a goal to capture emotions or a moment and dig into it. "When there's a hard situation or a beautiful moment, I really try to capture that in a piece of



The poetic works of **Tabitha Bozeman**, left, and **Rachel Houghton**, both English instructors at Gadsden State Community College, have been published in *The Southern Poetry Anthology, Volume X: Alabama*.

poetry and turn it into a story," she said.

The instructors regularly submit their literary works and encourage their students to do so as well. "I like to practice what I preach," Bozeman said.

Released on Feb. 29, *The Southern Poetry Anthology, Volume X: Alabama* serves as a platform for literary exploration and cultural dialogue. "Our themes are each unique in their own ways based on both of our observations and experiences in the south," said Bozeman. "We hope people enjoy reading our stories and poems."

Excellence in Education Awards

The Chamber of Gadsden & Etowah hosted its seventh annual Excellence in Education and Teachers of the Year Luncheon on May 9 at the Venue at Coosa Landing. Gadsden State Community College was the

presenting sponsor of the event.

"We continue to appreciate the partnership we have with Gadsden State," said Christi Robinson, president and CEO of The Chamber. "We appreciate Gadsden State's willingness to always support this wonderful event."

The luncheon began with the presentation of colors by the Etowah High School Junior ROTC and the singing of the National Anthem by Sydney Day, a member of Gadsden

State's A Cappella Choir. Caity Daniel, Gadsden State's SGA president, gave the invocation.

Awards were then presented to the Teachers of the Year. Winners received a hardback journal from Gadsden State as well as an award featuring original art by K-12 students. Courtney Brothers, Gadsden State's volleyball coach, was recognized as the Teacher of the Year for Southside Elementary School, where she teaches physical education.

Awards then were presented in various categories for the Excellence in Education Awards. Winners were nominated by community members. Then, the nominees submitted an application that was reviewed by the Excellence in Education Committee. Four Gadsden State representatives received Excellence in Education Awards.

Tabitha Bozeman, an instructor in the Language and Humanities Division, accepted the Excellence in Community Outreach Award on behalf of the Cardinal Arts Journal. The award is sponsored by the Etowah County Commission. The CAJ started as a project in Bozeman's creative writing classes but now includes poetry, fiction, nonfiction, art and photography submissions from students, employees, alumni and community members. The CAJ hosts contests as well as creative workshops in art, poetry, crocheting,

"We appreciate Gadsden State's willingness to always support this wonderful event."

bookmaking, nature journaling and more.

Excellence in Student Development went to Catherine Bailey, an English and Paralegal Studies instructor. The award is sponsored by Blueprint University. During her award announcement, it was said that her commitment to her students goes beyond the classroom. She invites judges, paralegals and attorneys to give her students deeper insight into what they are learning and how it can be applied in the real world. Bailey also created a professionalism workshop for her paralegal students.

The coveted Heart of an Educator

Award, sponsored by Gadsden State, was presented to Valerie Roberts, an Office Administration instructor. She is described as having a servant's heart because she volunteers at every opportunity on campus and in the community. She has a true passion for her students and makes genuine connections to help them reach their full potential.

The Excellence in Postsecondary Administration Award was presented to Alan Smith, dean of Workforce Development. Over \$36 million has been invested in career technical education under his leadership, and enrollment continues to increase. He fosters relationships with students and employees on workforce opportunities. He was also instrumental in securing funding for the new Advanced Manufacturing and Workplace Skills Training Center.

Simulation Coordinator Earns International Credential

The simulation coordinator at Gadsden State Community College has earned the international Certified Healthcare Simulation Educator credential from the Society for Simulation in Healthcare.

Dr. Evelyn Lightsey, who has worked in Gadsden State's Nursing Department for 16 years, passed an exam that assesses the knowledge and understanding of the principles, processes and fundamentals for developing and delivering high-quality healthcare simulation activities. The comprehensive CHSE credential covers educational design and healthcare simulation principles and the application of those principles to meet the needs of healthcare learners at all levels. Lightsey joins the ranks of more than 2,500 individuals from 37 countries who have achieved this distinction.

The Alabama Board of Nursing has made it mandatory that simulation

coordinators at higher-learning institutions must be deemed "highly qualified" by earning certification by August. "Dr. Lightsey has worked hard to make advances in our simulation program," said Dr. Cynthia Mullinax, director of Nursing at Gadsden State. "We are able to utilize high-fidelity simulation as well as standardized patient simulation in our nursing courses at Gadsden State. These real-life situations are excellent teaching tools that prepare students to be practicing licensed nurses."

The Simulation Center at Gadsden State utilizes sophisticated technology to provide students a safe, realistic environment to develop their clinical skills. The center also includes an electronic health record system like the ones found in today's healthcare settings. "Simulation experiences assist in increased knowledge of patient care, disease processes, interpersonal interactions, self-confidence and



Dr. Evelyn Lightsey, DNP, RN, CNE, CHSE,
Simulation Coordinator

professionalism," Mullinax said. "It truly enables a more competent practitioner to enter the nursing workforce."

For more information about the Simulation Center, visit www.gadsdenstate.edu/programs-of-study/simulation.cms



Scan the code for more information on the **Gadsden State Simulation Center**

Sgt. Bankson Joins Mobile Crisis Team

The Gadsden State Community College Police Department is taking proactive steps to address mental health issues in Etowah County. Sgt. David Bankson, who oversees the Ayers and Cherokee campuses for the Gadsden State Police/Public Safety Department, was recently sworn in by Probate Judge Scott Hassell to join the Mobile Crisis Assistance Team (MCAT).

This specialized task force will help ensure that those in need receive timely evaluations and access to mental health services. This commitment not only enhances safety on campus but also extends vital resources to the broader community. “Mental health is one of the most urgent issues we face today,” said Gadsden State Police Chief Jay Freeman. “For law enforcement, recognizing mental health crises is not just important; it’s a vital part of our duty. It empowers us to respond with compassion and understanding.”

Gadsden State President Dr. Kathy Murphy emphasized the college’s commitment to community well-being. “GSCC is excited to come

alongside our community in support of the Mobile Crisis Assistance Team,” said Dr. Murphy. “None of us lives in silos and all of us need support and help from time to time. Sgt. Bankson serving on MCAT allows us to better serve students facing mental health challenges and also allows

Sgt. Bankson to support the broader community.”

As Sgt. Bankson carries out this important work, the Gadsden State Police Department continues to strengthen partnerships with local agencies, reinforcing its dedication to public safety and community care.



Sgt. David Bankson, Gadsden State President **Dr. Kathy Murphy**, Probate Judge **Scott Hassell** and GSCC Chief of Police **Jay Freeman** with the Etowah County Commission after Bankson’s swearing-in.

Chancellor’s Award Winners

Winners of the 2024 Chancellor’s Awards from Gadsden State Community College were recognized during the Alabama Community College Association Conference Nov. 24 in Montgomery.

“These individuals exemplify the very best of what it means to go above and beyond in service for our students and to each other,” said Dr. Tera Simmons, executive vice president of Gadsden State. “Their dedication, selflessness and unwavering

commitment to excellence enrich our college community and inspire us all to do our best. We are truly fortunate to have such outstanding individuals among us.”

Winners were recognized locally in September at the Spring Convocation held at Gadsden State Cherokee. Two members of the faculty were selected for the award – Patricia Wilborn and Hollie Bonds. The support staff award went to Wes Wood, and the administrator award winner was Andy Robertson.

Patricia Wilborn

Wilborn is the 2024 Chancellor’s Award winner for academic faculty.

She is currently the division chair for Languages and Humanities and serves as the director of the Alabama Language Institute, the oldest English language institution in the southeast. She began her career at Gadsden State in 1999 as an ALI instructor and went on to teach courses in English Composition, developmental reading and writing, humanities and German.

Wilborn earned a Bachelor of Arts in German in 1994 from the University of South Alabama. Two years later, she completed a Master of Arts in German at the University of South Carolina. In 1998, Wilborn maintained a 4.0 GPA in her pursuit of a Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages from

FACULTY & STAFF

the University of Alabama.

Wilborn presented at the 2024 National Organization of Student Success Conference in Las Vegas and has served as a member of the national search committee for the Fulbright Fellowship Program. She was awarded the 2015 Adjunct Faculty Member of the Year of the Alabama Association for Developmental Education.

Hollie Bonds

Bonds is Gadsden State's Chancellor's Award winner in the technical faculty division. She is the Mechanical Design Technology instructor on the Ayers Campus.

At Gadsden State, she has been instrumental in doubling the number of students in her program. Currently, the Mechanical Design Technology Program has the highest enrollment among technical programs. An advocate for females enrolling in STEM programs, Bonds has seen female enrollment increase in her program by 30 percent. In addition, the number of Machine Design dual enrollment students increased by 833 percent from the spring semester 2022 to the fall semester 2023.

A Magna Cum Laude graduate of Gadsden State, Bonds spent a decade working in industry as a CAD designer, machine shop supervisor, manufacturing engineer and advanced PC&L analyst before becoming a college instructor in 2022. Bonds was honored in 2023 by the Gadsden State Alumni Association as the Outstanding Technical Faculty Member of the Year.

Wes Wood

The 2024 Chancellor's Award winner among staff members is Wes Wood, Supervisor of Facility Maintenance. Wes previously served as the building maintenance supervisor at the Ayers campus since 2021. Prior to working at Gadsden State, Wes worked as an electrician for St. Vincent's Health System and three other electric companies.

At Gadsden State, he is responsible for overseeing a team of maintenance

and custodial technicians, managing repair schedules and implementing preventive maintenance programs.

Wood earned an Associate of Science in Industrial Automation Technology from Gadsden State in 2013.

Andy Robertson

The 2024 Chancellor's Award for Administration winner is Andy Robertson. He started his Gadsden State career in 2015 as an instructor of Electronic Engineering Technology at the Ayers Campus. In 2020, he was named workforce development coordinator for the College and also serves as the division chair of Applied and Engineering Technologies on the Ayers Campus.

At Gadsden State, Robertson has been instrumental in the development and success of two apprenticeship-style programs – the Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education

and the Consortium of Machining Education Training. Through FAME and CoMeT, students receive valuable hands-on experience with world-class industry partners while receiving education and training at the College. He also added several short-term certificates to Gadsden State's available credentials, including Additive Manufacturing and Mechatronics Advanced Automation.

Robertson earned an Associate in Applied Science in Electronic Engineering Technology from Gadsden State in 2003 before transferring to Jacksonville State University, where he received two Bachelors of Science – one in secondary education and another in math. He is a graduate of the Faculty Development Institute, the Gadsden State Leadership Academy and Leadership Calhoun County. He also won the Eugene Prater Exceptional Achievement in Teaching Award in 2019.



Gadsden State Chancellor's Award recipients from L to R: **Andy Robertson, Patricia Wilborn, Hollie Bonds, and Wes Wood.**

Gadsden State Wins Statewide Award for Clean-up Project

Gadsden State Community College was recognized by Coca-Cola UNITED during the annual Alabama PALS Governor's Awards Ceremony. The College was recognized on Nov. 12 at the Renaissance Hotel in Montgomery for its Don't Drop It on Alabama project. This is the second year in a row that Gadsden State was recognized with this statewide award.

"We are incredibly honored to receive this award," said Lynn Patterson, director of Student Activities at Gadsden State. "The amount of litter our students and employees removed during this project is a true testament to their dedication and commitment to preserving our community's natural beauty."

During the Don't Drop It on Alabama event, student groups competed in cleaning up streets and public common areas in Gadsden, Anniston and Centre. As a result, they collected 7,950 pounds of litter, the highest amount among the Alabama Community College System. Participating campuses included the Ayers, Wallace Drive, Valley Street and Cherokee campuses. The litter collection earned Gadsden State a



Gadsden State Employees attend the PALS Governor's Awards Ceremony. From L to R: **Dr. Kathy Murphy**, president of Gadsden State, **Lynn Patterson**, **Stacie Tucker**, **Theresa Miller**, **Randi Wright**, **Pam Johnson**.

\$1,000 prize. Joining Patterson for the presentation by Gov. Kay Ivey were Dr. Kathy Murphy, president of Gadsden State; Pam Johnson, dean of Institutional Effectiveness; Clerk, Stacie Tucker; Randi Wright, director of Gadsden State Cherokee; and Theresa Miller, of the Valley Street Campus. "This award is not just a recognition of our efforts but a reminder of what we can accomplish together when we work toward a cleaner, healthier environment for all," she said.

Patterson made the clean-up project a competition to see which student organization could collect the most garbage. The Student Government Association prevailed in the competition. Second place went to the Lady Cardinals

Volleyball Team with third place going to the Men's Tennis Team. The winners received prize packets of Gadsden State swag.

Coca-Cola UNITED is a longtime partner of Alabama PALS, a statewide organization dedicated to making the state more beautiful by sponsoring programs focused on cleaning up litter in Alabama's streets, streams, campuses and coastlines. Through education and annual anti-littering campaigns, Alabama PALS has partnered with Alabama counties, cities, communities, schools and other organizations to enhance the Alabama environment by preventing littering and picking up litter.

Gadsden State Athletics Earns ACCC Sportsmanship Award

Gadsden State Athletics was awarded the 2024 Sportsmanship Award by the Alabama Community College Conference (ACCC). The purpose of this award is to promote good sportsmanship among student athletes, coaches, and spectators and to encourage respect for all game officials.

"Receiving this award was truly an honor," said Athletic Director Blake Lewis, "because it was awarded to Gadsden State Athletics as a whole. It includes our men's sports – baseball, basketball, cross country and tennis, and our women's sports – basketball, cross country, softball, and volleyball. All of these athletes and coaches deserve recognition for the part they played in earning this prestigious award."



From Left to Right: **Coach Deddrick Tarver**, **Ashley Kitchens**, **Coach Buster Stewart**, **Coach Blake Lewis**, **Coach Ryan Clark**, **Coach Courtney Brothers**, **Coach Jackson Millander**, **Coach Marty Dixon**.

Employee Credentials

Faculty, staff and employees are dedicated to being the best they can be in order to best serve Gadsden State students. Degrees, certificates, and achievements in professional growth and development earned by these committed lifelong learners in 2024 include the following:

Degrees

- **Brentin Tucker**, Accountant – Bachelors of Science in Business, Faulkner University
- **April Givens**, Nursing Instructor – Doctorate in Nursing Practice, DNP, Chamberlain University
- **Britany Gargone**, Accountant – Master of Business Administration, Faulkner University
- **Jennifer Williams**, Grants Budget Manager – Master of Science in Management, Faulkner University
- **Andy Robertson**, Coordinator of Workforce Development – Masters degree in Career Technical Education, Athens State University
- **Blake Lewis**, Athletic Director/Head Baseball Coach – Doctorate in Educational Leadership, Tennessee State University
- **Paula Battaglia**, Nursing Instructor – Doctor of Nursing Practice, Chamberlain University
- **Julian Thornton**, Instructor – Ph.D., Grand Canyon University

Certifications

- **Elyssa Willett**, Human Resources Coordinator – Project Management Graduate Certificate, University of Arkansas
- **Kristy Cooper**, Admissions and Records Specialist – Short-Term Certificate – Word Processing Specialist, Gadsden State Community College
- **Evelyn Lightsey**, Simulation Coordinator – Certified Healthcare Simulation Educator, The Society for Simulation in Healthcare
- **Laura Catoe**, ADA Coordinator – Certificate in Instructional Design, Athens State University
- **Becky Baker**, Assistant Accountant II – AAS Accounting Technology, Gadsden State Community College
- **Valerie Leonard**, DNP, APRN, FNP-C, BC-ADM, CNE – Nursing Instructor – CNE (Certified Nurse Educator), The National League for Nursing
- **Rachel Houghton**, English Instructor – Master Teacher Certification, Alabama Master Teacher Experience
- **William Kyle Roberts**, Maintenance – AAS Industrial Automation Tech, AAS Electrical Technology, STC Electrical Technology, Certificate Electrical-Industrial Control, STC Electrical-Industrial Tech, STC Electrical-Residential Apprentice, STC Industrial Automation Tech, Gadsden State Community College
- **Susan Di Biase**, Instructor of Music Theory and Aural Skills – Level Seven Teacher Training for Cello, Suzuki Association of the Americas

Professional Development

- **Dr. Cheryl L. Sington**, Leadership Etowah

Instructional Leadership Academy

- **Michelle Roberts**



City of Hokes Bluff Donates Police Vehicle

The City of Hokes Bluff donated a fully-equipped 2015 Ford Explorer to the Gadsden State Community College Police and Public Safety Department. The cost? One dollar.

"We want Gadsden State to be as safe as our community," said Hokes Bluff Mayor Scott Reeves. "Hokes Bluff is among the safest cities in the state. We want to do our part to ensure that Gadsden State remains safe as well. We have children from Hokes Bluff who continue their education at Gadsden State. Their safety and security are a priority for us."

The Hokes Bluff City Council voted to surplus the vehicle to Gadsden State for one dollar. Reeves presented the keys to Dr. Kathy Murphy, president of Gadsden State, and Jay Freeman, chief of the Gadsden State Police and Public Safety Department on March 21. They were joined by Tyler Roe, chief of the Hokes Bluff Police Department; Sgt. Colton Harden, a member of the Gadsden State Police; and Sgt. David Bankson, also of the Gadsden State Police and a member of the Hokes Bluff City Council.

"We love the relationship we are building with Hokes Bluff," Murphy said. "The safety and security of our students is important to us, which is why we are building a strong police department. Anyone who comes alongside us in partnership is very

much appreciated."

The Ford Explorer is already outfitted with a cage, radar, lights, sirens and other police equipment.

"We are immensely grateful to the City of Hokes Bluff for this generous gift," Freeman said. "We thank Mayor Reeves, the City Council and Chief Roe for their extraordinary generosity and support. The Ford Explorer will play a vital role in serving all five of our campuses and supporting various Gadsden State events. We look

forward to making lasting impacts that benefit our College and our community."

The Ford Explorer is the College's third patrol vehicle. They also have four public safety vehicles. The Police and Public Safety Department was created in June with the hiring of Freeman. He currently oversees 12 full-time and seven part-time employees. The department consists of security personnel in addition to certified law enforcement officers.



Dr. Kathy Murphy, president of Gadsden State, presents a dollar to Hokes Bluff Chief of Police **Tyler Roe** in exchange for a fully-equipped Ford Explorer. Joining them are, from left, Sgt. **Colton Harden**, Sgt. **David Bankson** and Chief **Jay Freeman**, all of the Gadsden State Police and Public Safety Department, and Hokes Bluff Mayor **Scott Reeves**.

BOGO Scholarship Program for Local Chamber Members

Gadsden State Community College and partnering Chambers of Commerce entered a partnership that includes the College providing educational opportunities for qualified employees of each chamber as well as their membership. The BOGO Scholarship provides tuition for a free course for each paid course at Gadsden State during the Spring 2025 semester.

Eligibility Requirements:

- Must be a full- or part-time employee of The Chamber of Gadsden and Etowah County, the Cherokee County Chamber of Commerce or the Calhoun County Chamber of Commerce or an employee of a chamber member
- Covers Spring 2025 semester
- Can be used for programs resulting in a certificate or an associate degree

- Must be in good academic standing with any previously-attended college
- Must maintain at least a 2.5 GPA to remain eligible for scholarship



Cardinals “Adopt” Child Battling Brain Tumor

Gadsden State Community College’s student-athletes are forging a bond with a child fighting a battle far greater than any game. Levi Worthington is an 8-year-old boy who has been diagnosed with ependymoma, a tumor that affects the brain and spinal cord.

He is the third child to join the Gadsden State Cardinals through a partnership with Friends of Jaclyn Foundation, a non-profit organization that connects children battling brain tumors with college and high school sports teams. A special signing event to signal Levi’s “adoption” as a Cardinal was held April 29 at the Beck Conference Center.

“It’s a tremendous day for us and for the Worthington family,” said Athletic Director Blake Lewis. “Gadsden State is honored to contribute to the mission of the Friends of Jaclyn Foundation and to the lives of these young people.”

Amanda Worthington, Levi’s mother, said it was 18 months ago when her child started getting sick, was becoming increasingly confused about simple things and lost 20 pounds in three weeks. “It got to the point that we could hardly get him to wake up,” she said.

Just a few days before his seventh birthday, a CT scan revealed a large mass on his brain. He was rushed to Children’s of Alabama and admitted to pediatric intensive care in preparation for brain surgery. “He was lethargic and had a heart rate of only 23 beats per minute,” she said. “We just prayed that God would have His hand in it.”

Levi underwent a four-hour surgery that showed the tumor was crushing his brainstem and wrapped around his spinal cord. Two weeks after the surgery and a shunt insertion, he took his first round of chemotherapy.

“It’s an awful, nasty poison but you pray that it works; that it shrinks

the tumor,” Worthington said of chemotherapy. “Unfortunately, it fed his cancer, and the tumor grew three times bigger. It was a devastating blow.”

Over the past year, Levi has undergone several rounds of chemotherapy and radiation. He also takes medication. “He has taken everything like a champ,” she said. “He never complains. He takes things better than most adults. He really is one of the bravest souls I know.”

Worthington said Levi is one of six children. All of his siblings provide daily support and encouragement. “They have been there for him every step of the way,” she said. “This process has been a nightmare, and we are only surviving because we are a close-knit family. Levi is a lucky little boy with siblings he can rely on. This is their day, too. I want to thank them for always being so supportive.”

Denis Murphy, founder of the Friends of Jaclyn Foundation, attended the signing event and shared how the foundation programs are making a difference in the lives of over 1,000 children nationwide. “Gadsden State is the only college in the country that has an entire athletic department committed to these children,” he said. “Typically, it’s only one or two teams at a college. At Gadsden State, all of the teams are committed to these

kids.”

The Foundation was founded after his daughter, Jaclyn, was diagnosed with a malignant brain tumor in 2004 when she was only 9 years old. While in the hospital, a lacrosse team poster inspired her father to encourage Jaclyn that she would one day be like the players on the poster – happy and excited by a victory. Later, she was adopted by a collegiate lacrosse team as an honorary member. “The team was inspired by Jaclyn, and Jaclyn was encouraged by the team,” Murphy said. “They made her feel like she’s part of a team. I knew I had to help kids like Jaclyn. They all need to have a team like Jaclyn did.”

Jaclyn celebrated 20 years of being disease-free on March 26, and the family continues the mission of uplifting children living with pediatric brain tumors. “Our mission is to improve the quality of life for these kids,” he said. “We want them to enjoy themselves and forget sometimes that they’re sick.”

Lewis said that Levi will be a part of the Cardinal family for life. “We aim to provide support and a sense of belonging to Levi and his entire family,” he said. “We believe in the power of sports. We certainly welcome them to the Cardinal family.”



Alabama Power Company Donates \$50,000 for New Trail

The Alabama Power Co. granted \$50,000 to Gadsden State Community College to construct a new walking and running trail along the perimeter of the Wallace Drive Campus that borders the Coosa River.

Known as the Coosa River Trail at Gadsden State, the multi-purpose venue will be open to College employees and students as well as members of the community for walking, running and enjoying nature. Future plans include an outdoor classroom for Gadsden State and public school students to study plants, trees, wildlife, fish and birds indigenous to the area. Identifiers will be on trees, bushes and wildflowers along with information about the Coosa River.

“Alabama Power is excited to support this venture with Gadsden State,” said Spencer Williams, community relations manager in Gadsden. “We make it our mission to enhance the quality of life and economic potential in the region. The latest investment with one of our key strategic partners, speaks to both of those objectives.”

The Coosa River Trail at Gadsden State will be up to 10K in length for cross country racing. The trail will be the home base for the Gadsden State Cross Country Team. Administrators hope that it will attract cross country meets to Gadsden. “Two cross country meets in Huntsville provided a combined economic impact of \$1.4 million last year,” said Gadsden State Athletic Director Blake Lewis. “That was in just one weekend. Hosting meets at the Coosa River Trail has big potential to bring visitors who will spend money on lodging, food and

entertainment in Etowah County.”

Future trail plans also include fiber optic cables for real-time video and scoring for the races. This capability will also help to monitor the course for security purposes. “The Coosa River Trail will be a natural recruitment tool for Gadsden State,” said Dr. Kathy Murphy, president. “It will bring more people to campus and will serve as a reminder that Gadsden State is an affordable option for students wanting a good education close to home.”

Elizabeth Wheatley wrote the grant that secured the \$50,000 donation. She said she anticipates some people

becoming reacquainted with Gadsden State after not being on campus for a while. “This project will increase activity on campus and create a buzz that something amazing is going on at Gadsden State,” she said. “Ultimately, it will create a ‘wow’ factor when walkers, runners and lovers of nature get a glimpse of the Coosa River from a vantage point that they may have never seen.”

Construction of the Coosa River Trail at Gadsden State is expected to begin in 2025. It will be constructed in phases as funding is available.

“This project will increase activity on campus and create a buzz that something amazing is going on at Gadsden State”



A check for \$50,000 was presented to **Dr. Kathy Murphy**, middle, president of Gadsden State, and to **Blake Lewis**, far right, athletic director. Pictured are, from left, **Spencer Williams**, community relations manager in Etowah County; **Dana McFarland**, community relations manager in Calhoun County; and **Terry Smiley**, vice president of Alabama Power's Eastern Division.

MOU Signed with City of Gadsden Police Department



Left to right: Gadsden State police chief **Jay Freeman**, Gadsden State president **Dr. Kathy Murphy**, City of Gadsden mayor **Craig Ford** and Gadsden Police Department chief **Lamar Jaggears** after the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the police departments.

The police departments for Gadsden State Community College and the City of Gadsden signed a Memorandum of Understanding to enhance community safety and cooperation. The agreement aims to promote mutual assistance and collaborative efforts to ensure the well-being of residents and students in Gadsden. “This is a significant step towards building a safer and more secure community,” said Jay Freeman, chief of the Gadsden State Police and Public Safety Department.

Through the MOU, both departments pledge to share resources, expertise and

information to enhance public safety and emergency response capabilities. Freeman said the partnership is a testament to the power of community collaboration in creating a safer environment for citizens and students. “This MOU marks a significant milestone in our joint commitment to safeguarding our community,” he said. “By working together, we are not just pooling resources. We are building a stronger, more resilient Gadsden. Together, we stand stronger to maintain peace and security and to respond more effectively to any challenges that may arise.”

Gadsden State created the new police department in 2023 to serve all five of its campuses and Freeman was named chief in May.

“By working together, we are not just pooling resources. We are building a stronger, more resilient Gadsden.”

Haas Foundation Awards \$1 Million Grant

Gadsden State Community College has received a \$1 million grant from the Gene Haas Foundation to support its Precision Machining Program located in the new Advanced Manufacturing and Workforce Skills Training Center on the East Broad Campus. In recognition of the contribution, Gadsden State is naming the precision machining lab in the center the Gene Haas Center for Advanced Machining and Engineering Technology.

“Precision Machining is considered a high-demand, high-wage occupation,” said Alan Smith, dean of Workforce Development. “Our Precision Machining Program prepares students for rewarding careers as CNC machinists or programmers, automotive machinists, tool and die makers, mold makers and in tool and machinery sales. We are thankful for the generous contribution the Haas Foundation is making to our students at Gadsden State.”

Gene Haas, founder of Haas Automation Inc., a leading machine tool manufacturer, founded the Haas Foundation in 1999 to support manufacturing education. The organization previously gifted funds to Gadsden State to support scholarships for students pursuing careers in manufacturing. “We are incredibly grateful to the Haas Foundation for their extraordinary support,” said Elizabeth Wheatley, who wrote the grant for the college. “Their investment in our Precision Machining Program will have a lasting impact on our students and the local manufacturing industry. This grant ensures that our students will have access to excellent equipment and



Precision Machining Instructor **Daniel Anderson**, far left, demonstrates on machining equipment in the Gene Haas Center for Advanced Machining and Engineering Technology. Students are, from left, **Thomas Yohe**, **Harrison Goforth** and **Justin Bashe**.

training that will give them the skills they need to thrive in high-demand careers.”

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, there are approximately 357,000 machining jobs in the country with a median annual income of over \$53,000. Gadsden State offers an associate in applied science degree as well as certificates in Basic Machine Tool, Basic CNC and Additive Manufacturing. Gadsden State also provides dual enrollment opportunities in machining for high school students who want to get a jumpstart on training.

Students may also be interested in applying to the innovative Consortium of Machining Education Training, known as CoMeT. Students in the CoMeT program can earn an associate degree in Precision Machining Technology and gain the skills necessary to design and manufacture precision parts. Through hands-on experience with Gadsden State’s industry partners, students are prepared for a career that requires advanced manufacturing craftsmanship.

Smith said potential students are encouraged to explore all career technical opportunities at Gadsden State. He said career technical education is important for the region’s economic growth. “Career technical education, like our Precision Machining Program, is vital to providing students with skills and training that employers are seeking in today’s workforce,” he said. “With demand for skilled machinists growing, this program helps bridge the gap between education and industry. We are preparing students for high-paying, secure careers.”

For more information about Gadsden State’s Workforce Development programs, visit www.GadsdenState.edu/Technical. Information about CoMeT can be found at www.GadsdenState.edu/CoMeT.



Scan the code for more information about the **Workforce Development Programs**



Scan the code for more information on **Gadsden State's CoMeT Program**

Ambulance Received as a Gift from AMED

American Medical Emergency Dispatch, a local ambulance service, donated a 2015 Chevy Type I Ambulance to Gadsden State Community College's Emergency Medical Services Program. The donation will enhance emergency vehicle driver training and will support EMS students to train in real-world environments.

"We can now simulate all aspects of patient care in EMS," said John Hollingsworth, director of Gadsden State's EMS Program. "We start in the classroom learning the information and move to the lab to practice and simulate skills. Then, we send our students out into the field to complete real patient care during the clinical phase. The new ambulance allows us to train in motion and train with the actual equipment used in the field. We are so grateful to AMED for this generous donation."

Dr. Joey Battles, dean of Health Sciences at Gadsden State, said the donation from AMED is a significant stride in enhancing the EMS Program.



Precision Machining Instructor **Daniel Anderson**, far left, demonstrates on machining equipment in the Gene Haas Center for Advanced Machining and Engineering Technology. Students are, from left, **Thomas Yohe**, **Harrison Goforth** and **Justin Bashe**.

"We are focused on providing excellent healthcare training," he said. "This donation contributes to the training of students to ensure they excel in this vital field."

Gadsden State's EMS Program trains three levels of pre-hospital providers to stabilize and transport patients in need of care at area hospitals: emergency medical technicians, advanced EMTs and paramedics. Training can be completed in as little as one semester, and Gadsden State has 100 percent job placement for its students.

"If you want a job in EMS, you can have one easily after just one semester

in our program to become an EMT," Hollingsworth said. "If students wish to advance their training, the Advanced EMT and Paramedic programs offer a larger scope of practice and higher salaries."

Battles said Gadsden State has one of the strongest EMS programs in the state, largely due to the faculty and staff. "Their dedication to excellence, coupled with their expertise and commitment to student success sets our program apart," he said. "They are outstanding educators and mentors who are shaping the future leaders of EMS."



In September, the ambulance got the cardinal treatment.



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