



ACCS HISTORY

1925 – Alabama opens first public two-year college

The first public two-year college in Alabama, a state-operated trade school, opened in 1925. Several private two-year institutions trace their roots to the late 1800's. Both technical and academic institutions emerged as part of the college landscape.

1947 – Truman calls for creation of public “community” colleges

After World War II, thousands of veterans returned with GI Bill funds, but limited access to higher education. President Harry S. Truman created a commission on higher education that identified a huge gap between public high schools and the limited access of universities. That gap was making it impossible for veterans with families, working people, and the vast majority of America's rural populace to advance their education. Truman called for the creation of public “community” colleges—two-year institutions of higher education located in communities for general academic education as a doorway to universities and for technical training and degrees. The goal was to make higher education more accessible and to fuel America's booming economy that required ever-increasing workplace skills.

1963 - Alabama Legislature forms college system and Department of Postsecondary Education

In 1963, the Alabama Legislature linked the public two-year colleges in a single system governed by the State Board of Education. As in other states, the number of two-year colleges and the student population grew quickly. Over the years, a dual system of primarily African-American trade schools and primarily white junior and technical colleges were merged into a single system. In 1982, the Alabama Legislature created the Department of Postsecondary Education, separating it from the State Department of Education, and creating the position of Chancellor.

Today - The Alabama Community College System

Today, mergers have reduced the number of colleges to 26, with 22 comprehensive community colleges and 4 technical colleges. Athens State University, an upper-division university, serves junior and senior-level transfer students from the state's community colleges and other four-year universities. In 2006, Marion Military Institute (MMI) a private military two-year college, became a part of the Alabama Community College System. The 164-year-old Marion Military Institute is the oldest military junior college in the nation, producing more than 204 generals and admirals for the U.S. armed forces. The number of people served by all of the entities of our system, including

AIDT, ATN, workforce development, and adult education, is approximately 300,000 annually. Of that, approximately 125,000 are enrolled in credit courses.

Remembering the Goal

President Truman's goal was to "make higher education more accessible and to fuel America's booming economy that required ever-increasing workplace skills." The Alabama Community College System continues to evolve to meet the educational and economic needs. More advanced technology, guaranteed college-credit transfer, specialized workforce development training for new and expanding industry as well as for existing businesses, adult education, access to distance learning, and education for healthcare professionals now characterize Alabama's two-year colleges. That's quite a distance from the system's origins—but directly on target with the goal of more accessible higher education in the heart of communities.