



**ALABAMA
DEPARTMENT OF
POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION**

Representing Alabama's Public Two-Year College System

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, May 21, 2008

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Chancellor: 2-year colleges will hold the line on tuition

Montgomery – Alabama Community College System Chancellor Bradley Byrne announced Wednesday that state community and technical colleges will not increase tuition in the next fiscal year.

“This is the fourth straight year that our community and technical colleges have kept tuition level,” Byrne said. Tuition and required fees for ACCS freshmen and sophomores average \$90 per credit hour and have not increased since fall of 2004. *(Please see attached chart for breakout of tuition and fees at each college.)*

“The decision was made earlier this month following a meeting of college presidents during which the great majority of presidents favored keeping tuition at its present level,” Byrne said.

Even with four years of no tuition increases, Alabama’s average annual tuition of about \$2,700 is higher than the national community college average of \$2,400.

One reason for higher tuition in Alabama’s two-year college system is lack of local revenue. Elsewhere in the nation, local funding accounts for 19 percent of the typical community college’s revenue, according to the American Association of Community Colleges. Less than one-tenth of 1 percent of ACCS revenue comes from local sources such as race tracks or sales taxes. *(Please see attached chart for revenue comparisons.)*

In a measure aimed at reducing costs for ACCS students and faculty, Byrne rescinded a 2005 order requiring that classes be scheduled for Monday through Friday. “I, too, am concerned about the strain the rising cost of gas has put on our students and faculty,” Byrne said in a Wednesday memo to presidents, asking that they “use their good judgment and creativity” in scheduling classes beginning in the fall. Although many classes may be conducted over fewer days of the week, colleges will continue to be open Monday through Friday.

Byrne said that this year, more than ever, not increasing tuition calls for system-wide belt-tightening.

“Based on the budget introduced in the legislature during the regular session, the Alabama Community College System anticipates a 8 percent cut overall in FY2009,” Byrne said. “We are holding the line

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despite a huge hit in our adult education budget and significant cuts to all of our colleges. We are doing this because we are committed to our role as the most accessible form of higher education available to most Alabamians.”

Accessibility is a key component of the system’s three core missions: Academics, adult education and workforce development.

Academics

“Students attending a community college their freshman and sophomore years spend about half as much on tuition and fees as they would at state four-year institutions,” Byrne said. More than half the state’s college freshmen and sophomores are enrolled in ACCS institutions. National studies show that lower-income students and minorities are increasingly looking to community colleges. “We offer the only front door to higher education for many students,” Byrne said.

Adult education

Despite the severe cuts to adult education funding, the ACCS continues to assist adults without a high school diploma earn a GED, a function that the two-year college system took over from K-12 schools about 6 years ago by legislative act.

This function is critical to Alabama’s future, since one out of four Alabamians over age 25 does not have either a diploma or GED. That’s about a half-million working-age citizens who must earn a GED so they can qualify for job certification programs or college courses.

Because community colleges have “open door” enrollment policies, they offer a critical stepping stone to higher education, as students who earn a GED may start their college education in the two-year institutions and transfer to upper-level universities.

Workforce development

The Alabama Community College System provides the lion’s share of workforce development services in the state, through career and technical education, job certifications, dual enrollment programs with high schools, and on-site training programs for employers, to name a few.

The Southern Regional Education Board projects that by 2014 the fastest growing, highest-paying jobs in America will require education beyond high school. Jobs requiring an associate’s degree are expected to increase by 25 percent, compared to 20 percent growth in jobs requiring a bachelor’s degree. Jobs requiring a postsecondary vocational certificate are expected to grow by 18 percent.

In Alabama, those percentages are likely to be even higher. With exponential job growth expected in the state over the next few years, the ACCS is steering the training and education programs for the great majority of new high-wage, high-demand jobs.

“Unquestionably, Alabama’s community and technical colleges play a unique role in bringing higher education to all of our citizens,” Byrne said. “Keeping costs as low as possible is critically important to accomplishing our missions and remaining accessible to the greatest number of Alabama citizens.”

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