



The Community Standard

NEWS FROM THE ALABAMA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

Accessible higher education: Why we're holding the line on tuition

A message from Chancellor Byrne

Affordable and accessible higher education has always been an issue for many Alabamians, but never more so than now.

For that reason, I have determined that the Alabama Community College System will not raise tuition and fees at state community and technical colleges for 2009-2010 – the fifth year in a row we have held our costs level – even in the face of severe budget cuts. We have also committed more resources than ever to need-based scholarships.

Why? Because the thing that makes our institutions essential to the future of our state is that we are the most accessible, affordable means of higher education for the vast majority of Alabamians.

We are the great equalizer for many students – young and adult – whose financial or personal circumstances preclude the option of going away to a university.

State community or technical college tuition is half that of a public four-year institution, and far less than attending a private college.

Since our colleges are located throughout the state, most of our students are able to hold down jobs, live at home and commute, saving even more money.

With our open enrollment, adult education services, and a wide array of academic, career-technical and workforce training programs, we are the linchpin that holds together the future of tens of thousands of Alabamians.

That's an important part of what sets us apart from ivy-draped universities: We're proud of that roll-up-your-sleeves-and-get-it-done role, and we're very good at it.

The quality of our freshman and sophomore academic courses and our technical instruction is topnotch. We stress quality in everything we do.

Students completing their studies at a community college are just as likely to succeed at a four-year institution as the students who started there, maybe even more so. That's why the leading colleges and universities in Alabama actively recruit our students into their upper-level courses, because we contribute to their success rate.

For our technical and health-care students, a short-term certification or a two-year degree often is all that is needed to make them highly sought by employers, even in this challenging economy. And we provide this training at a fraction of the cost of a for-profit career college.

In these challenging times, I am encouraging everyone to take another look at their local community and technical colleges, where it is our tradition and our mission to provide an open door to higher education for all.