

# History

Since opening its doors in 1966, Wallace State has served hundreds of thousands of students, and more than 25,000 have been awarded degrees or diplomas. From fewer than 30 students in Wallace State's very first graduating class in 1967 to the most recent graduating class of more than 1,800, Wallace State has improved the quality of lives of hundreds of thousands of students.

Wallace State Community College, originally named George C. Wallace State Trade School of Cullman County, was approved by the State Legislature on May 3, 1963. The Alabama Community College System Board of Trustees appointed Dr. Ben Johnson as director in 1965. Classes began on August 1, 1966 with 10 instructors, 11 programs, and 59 students.

Dr. James C. Bailey became the institution's second president on February 16, 1971. Wallace State obtained accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges in December of that same year. SACSCOC accreditation soon separated Wallace State from the other State trade schools in Alabama. Through its new community college status, Wallace State was able to offer an increasing variety of academic and health programs and today is recognized among the top producers in the nation of health care graduates, offering more two-year health programs than any other college in the state.

Wallace State Community College is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to award associate degrees. Contact the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097 or call 404-679-4500 for questions about the accreditation of Wallace State Community College.

Many instructional programs have additional accreditation from organizations appropriate to their particular disciplines.

Dr. Vicki P. Karolewics was appointed Wallace State's third president on August 28, 2003. An era of transformation, innovation and expansion, and a focus on excellence have been the hallmarks of her leadership. Wallace State received the best SACSCOC reaffirmation of accreditation review in the College's history. Wallace State's ambitious multi-million dollar Technology Plan received a rare commendation from SACSCOC. President Karolewics' student success agenda – Start Early, Start Right, Finish, and Succeed – has made Wallace State among the nation's top colleges for student outcomes. Students obtain unprecedented levels of success, whether transferring, taking licensure exams or finding employment. Their satisfaction has been reflected in the College's retention rate, which exceeds state and national averages.

The College's physical campus and online presence have continued to grow with demand. The College expanded its commitment to the community with the 2010 opening of a center for fine and performing arts named for generous benefactors Ottis and Evelyn Burrow. This facility, which features The Evelyn Burrow Museum, a museum of fine and decorative arts, is the locus for cultural arts events of all kinds, bringing talented authors, artists, filmmakers and musicians to campus and giving students and community members the opportunity to celebrate many facets of arts and culture and to present and enjoy creative works.

The addition of a school of Nursing and Center for Science in 2014, a space designed for cross-disciplinary learning, includes a national model hospital simulation center. This facility also includes a large conference center. Extensive renovations have ensured technical programs meet or exceed industry standards. New fully online associate in arts and associate in science degrees have been added to an increasing array of online offerings. A new Wallace State location in Oneonta, and a new instructional site in Winston County allow the College to offer higher education to previously underserved populations. The Fast Track Academy, Fast Track for Industry, the Fine and Performing Arts Academy have enhanced offerings to high school students on campus, while the dual enrollment student population continues to multiply.

During Dr. Karolewics' tenure, Wallace State has been recognized for its innovations in teaching and learning on the state and national levels. Dr. Karolewics has built partnerships with business and industry, educational institutions, and community leaders, while expanding the College's ability to develop its resources through the attainment of competitive grants. In recent years, the College has been rated the first choice among community colleges by high school seniors taking the ACT, ranked among the Top Three in the South for Workforce Development, repeatedly designated by the Aspen Institute as one of the top 150 community colleges in America according to student outcomes, and selected for a number of prestigious initiatives, including the American Association of Community College's Pathways Project and the American Association of Colleges and Universities Roadmap Project. In 2016, Wallace State was named a Center of Excellence in Nursing Education by the National League of Nursing, one of only two colleges and universities in Alabama to earn that distinction. Wallace State has also been nationally ranked among the "Top 100 Community Colleges," among the "Top 50 Associate Degrees: Health Professions and Related Clinical Sciences" by Community College Week, and among the "Fastest Growing Community Colleges" in the U.S. Wallace State was designated an Achieving the Dream Leader College in 2017, for its intense efforts to continually improve student success. It is one of just 180 All-Steinway Schools in the world.

Wallace State's athletic success has extended to 18 ACCC All-Sports Trophies, national championships in cheerleading and softball, numerous conference titles, scores of academic All-Americans and All-Americans by sport, and professional athletes in baseball and golf.

Today, Wallace State is among the largest colleges in the Alabama Community College System and a virtual powerhouse in educational programming, with a wide variety of majors leading to degree, certificate, and transfer opportunities, and a credit and non-credit semester enrollment of approximately 6,500 students. The College is part of a system that serves the education and workforce training needs of 300,000 people and has been conservatively estimated to produce a \$3 billion annual economic impact on this state and in our communities.

The real impact, however, is in improving the lives of students through education. Two-year college graduates today earn 24 percent more in the workplace than their workplace counterparts with less education. Eighty percent of the new jobs available in the next decade will require a minimum of two years of postsecondary education, making Alabama's two-year colleges and Wallace State more important than ever.