

CASE
STUDY

#8

Expanding Access, Strengthening Futures

Dual Enrollment at Historically Black and Predominantly Black Community Colleges

Dr. Kathy H. Thompson

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 **CIPE**
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The Center for Innovation in Postsecondary Education (CIPE), University of South Alabama

CIPE serves community colleges, universities, postsecondary partners, employers, and community partners to improve graduation rates and workforce outcomes for first-generation, under-represented, and under-resourced students. CIPE unifies the work of its partner communities to provide maximum benefit for participating institutions and the students they serve. CIPE assists higher education institutions in becoming more student-centered and equity-focused. CIPE catalyzes change among postsecondary institutions in digital teaching and learning, student advising, developmental education, student pathways, and capacity building, among other topics. Focusing on these objectives improves student outcomes and eliminates disparities, particularly among Black, Latino/a/x, and Indigenous students and students from low-income backgrounds.

Since 2015, Dr. Thompson and her team have honed their skill in creating partner communities, building consensus to articulate a shared learning agenda, and skillfully building relationships with site-facing supports and support providers. CIPE's purposeful and uniquely accomplished team is staffed by experts with the skill, knowledge, and ability to perform precisely at both the macro and micro levels. They develop unique operational service delivery frameworks for guidance, planning, strategy, and resources for partners to deploy in change management. CIPE's service deliverable supports constructs of holistic student success initiatives to serve students effectively and efficiently. The team's technical assistance enables partner institutions to build capacity by better understanding the practice of data utilization for decision-making and deploying efficiency in all-encompassing student success support.

Dr. Kathy Thompson is the Founding Director of the Center for Innovative in Postsecondary Education. She has over 30 years of experience in postsecondary administration, teaching, and workforce and economic development. Dr. Thompson currently serves as the Technical Assistance provider for the Lumina Foundation, Black Adult Learners Initiatives cohort of five HBCUs in North Carolina. Prior, Dr. Thompson served six years as the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Intermediary for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Frontier Set. She is motivated to eliminate equity disparities in education, particularly for Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students and students from low-income backgrounds.

Dr. Lisa Dunning, Kaizen Education Group, has a deep-rooted passion for higher education. She served three years as a consultant on the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Intermediary Team for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Frontier Set. Dr. Dunning currently lends her expertise through technical assistance and strategic guidance to the Lumina Foundation's Adult Learner Initiative and Educause's CourseGateway Digital Learning Strategy. A significant chapter of her career includes her leadership role as the Associate Vice President for Student Success at a distinguished HBCU. Dr. Dunning's visionary thinking was instrumental in developing and implementing a newly designed academic advising framework, the cornerstone of student support systems.

Carlisha Hartzog is the Storytelling Team Project Manager, overseeing the project's design, management schedule, and outreach. She is the president and managing member of Hartzog Consulting, a full-service project and event management firm that integrates logistics management and communications support to support some of the world's most respected foundations, Fortune 500 corporations, and multinational enterprises. Her experience supporting higher education organizations includes engagement with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Association of Public & Land-Grant Universities (APLU), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) nationally, and public and private colleges and universities. She has more than ten years of experience managing initiatives that embrace diverse populations to create equitable access to resources and opportunities.

Candace Spencer is a communication specialist with more than a decade of experience in higher education marketing and strategy development. Throughout her career, she has provided valuable support to numerous postsecondary institutions spanning 21 states. She offers in-depth strategy analysis, creates impactful digital and print communication materials, crafts compelling written content, delivers training sessions that are both informative and engaging, guides brand evolution, and provides recommendations to help clients stay ahead of the competition.

Lisa Becker is a technical writer/editor with 28 years of experience contributing to projects and workgroups, including as Contributing Writer and Managing Editor of the Storytelling Team. She served as the communications arm of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's HBCU Intermediary Team from 2018 to 2022. She is currently contracted with the NASA Shared Services Center to work with NASA senior executives in drafting career history/achievement papers and Presidential Rank Nominations for executive career advancement and recognition.

In collaboration with the ECMC Foundation, the Center for Innovation in Postsecondary Education (CIPE) and [Alabama Possible](#) are delighted to share the first of a series of case studies. The focus is on the eight Historically Black Community Colleges (HBCC) and Predominantly Black Community Colleges (PBCC) in Alabama, collectively known as the "Great Eight." The eight HBCCs/PBCCs are Bishop State, Chattahoochee Valley, Gadsden State, George C Wallace, H. Councill Trenholm, J F Drake, Lawson State, and Shelton State. Over the next three years, Alabama Possible will consult with the CIPE Team to create case studies highlighting the successful initiatives of various institutions in promoting student success. These studies will cover a range of topics, including Academic Advising and Workforce Development, as well as the academic experience, campus climate, leadership and culture, data utilization, and technology. The CIPE Team's Storytellers conclude the project by developing a Storytelling Playbook that outlines these institutions' unique student success practices.

Dual enrollment programs have become a powerful tool for increasing college access and success among high school students. By allowing students to take college-level courses while still in high school, these programs provide a **head start on higher education, reduce the time and cost needed to earn a degree, and improve overall college readiness**. For **Historically Black and Predominantly Black Community Colleges (HBCCs/PBCCs)**, dual enrollment is a critical pathway for supporting underrepresented students (including **first-generation, low-income, and minority students**) by fostering early exposure to college coursework in a supportive environment. This case study examines how **HBCCs/PBCCs are implementing and expanding dual enrollment programs**, focusing on the **challenges, successes, and effective strategies** that shape student outcomes. It explores how these institutions collaborate with local high schools, ensure academic rigor, and provide essential support services to help students transition smoothly into higher education. Additionally, the study highlights the role of **dual enrollment in workforce development**, particularly in preparing students for careers in **Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), healthcare, and technical fields**. Lastly, this case study analyzes the experiences of HBCCs/PBCCs in dual enrollment to provide actionable insights for educators, policymakers, and institutional leaders looking to **expand access, improve student outcomes, and strengthen pathways from high school to college and careers**.

Overview

Dual enrollment, also known as concurrent enrollment, can be part of Career Technical Education (CTE) pathways or academic transfer programs. According to recent Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data, nearly 2.5 million high school students participated in at least one dual enrollment course during the 2022–23 academic year. Community colleges played a significant role in this initiative, accounting for over 1.78 million enrollments—representing 21% of their total enrollment for that period.¹

The popularity of dual enrollment has grown steadily over time. Between **Fall 2015 and Fall 2021**, participation in dual enrollment increased by **46%**, followed by an additional **18% increase** from **2021 to 2023**. Today, dual enrollment is widely available, with approximately **82% of high schools nationwide** offering these courses. In 2022–2023, **25%** of high school students in Alabama were enrolled in dual enrollment.²

Case Study Method

This research was designed to be inclusive, incorporating **semi-structured interviews, an analysis of college and system websites, and supplemental research**. Interviews were conducted with key dual enrollment leaders at each participating college.

The interview questions were carefully developed to examine each institution's **dual enrollment priorities, strategies, and perspectives on challenges and opportunities for success**. This multi-faceted approach ensured a comprehensive understanding of how these colleges implement and sustain dual enrollment programs.

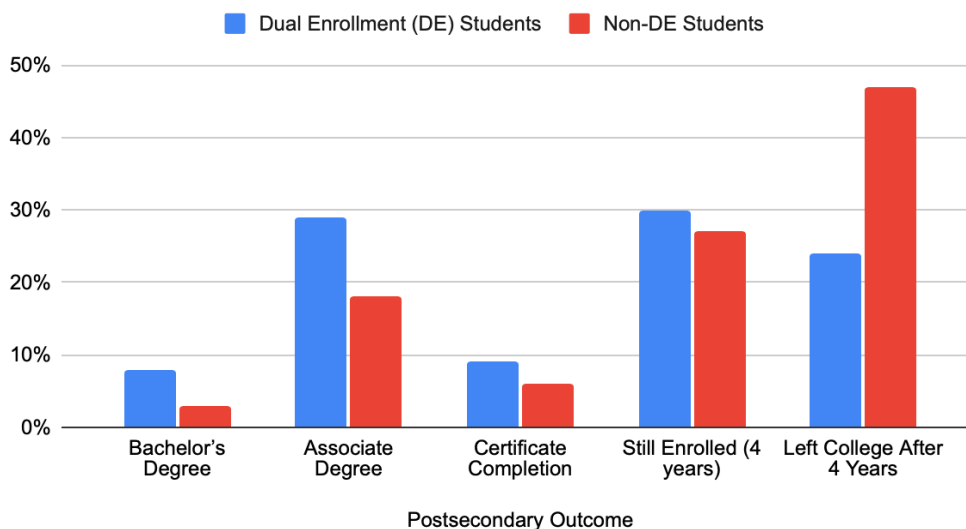
Context and Significance

In Alabama, students can start dual enrollment as early as the summer after their ninth-grade year, allowing them to earn college credits in over 450 career fields. The dual enrollment courses encompass academic transfer classes for those planning to attend a community college for two years before transferring to a four-year institution, STEM courses in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, and Career and Technical Education classes like welding, mechatronics, and healthcare.³

The **2024 Community College Research Center report** highlights the postsecondary outcomes of dual enrollment students in Alabama compared to those with no prior dual enrollment experience. The data shows that **8% of dual enrollment students earned a bachelor's degree**, compared to only **3%** of non-dual enrollment students. Similarly, **29%** of dual enrollment students attained an **associate degree**, while only **18%** of non-dual enrollment students did the same. **Certificate completion** was also slightly higher among dual enrollment students (**9%**) than **6%** of their non-dual enrollment peers. Regarding college persistence, **30%** of dual enrollment students were **still enrolled after four years**, whereas only **27%** of non-dual enrollment students remained in school. Additionally, only **24%** of dual enrollment students **left college after four years**, compared to a much higher **47%** of non-dual enrollment students who were no longer enrolled.

The figures below indicate that **dual enrollment improves degree attainment, enhances college retention, and reduces dropout rates**.⁴

Dual Enrollment (DE) Students and Non-DE Students



Objectives of the Case Study

1 Analyze the Implementation of Dual Enrollment Programs

- Examine how HBCCs/PBCCs structure and deliver dual enrollment courses.
- Identify key academic and administrative strategies that support student success.

2 Highlight Effective Strategies in Dual Enrollment at HBCCs/PBCCs

- Showcase successful models of partnership between colleges and high schools.
- Identify effective advising, mentoring, and support services that enhance student persistence.

3 Assess the Impact on College Access, Affordability, and Completion

- Evaluate how dual enrollment reduces college costs and accelerates degree attainment.
- Analyze student outcomes, including persistence, retention, and transfer rates.

4 Identify Barriers and Challenges

- Explore common obstacles students and institutions face, such as financial constraints, academic readiness, and credit transferability.
- Examine equity concerns and how HBCCs/PBCCs address disparities in access to dual enrollment opportunities.

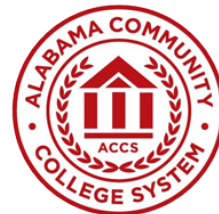
5 Provide Policy and Practice Recommendations

- Offer insights for institutional leaders and policymakers **on expanding, sustaining, and enhancing** dual enrollment programs.
- Recommend strategies to improve alignment between high school curricula, college expectations, and workforce needs.

This case study addresses these objectives to contribute to the broader conversation on how **HBCCs/PBCCs can leverage dual enrollment to create stronger, more accessible pathways into higher education and the workforce.**

Alabama Community College System Dual Enrollment Policies and Practices

The Alabama Community College System (ACCS), in collaboration with the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE), has established comprehensive policies and practices to guide dual enrollment programs, enabling eligible high school students to earn both high school and college credits simultaneously. These initiatives aim to enhance educational opportunities, promote college readiness, and facilitate a seamless transition to postsecondary education.⁵



Dual Enrollment Eligibility Criteria:

- **Grade Level:** Students must be in the 10th, 11th, or 12th grade. The Chancellor may grant exceptions for students identified as gifted and talented in accordance with Alabama Administrative Code §290-8-9.12.
- **Academic Standing:** A minimum cumulative, unweighted GPA of 2.5 on a 4.0 scale is required for general academic courses. Career and Technical Education courses may have different GPA requirements, as specified by individual institutions.
- **Institutional Approval:** Students must obtain written consent from their high school principal or an authorized school official indicating their academic readiness and social maturity for college-level coursework.

Dual Enrollment Course Offerings and Structure:

- **Course Level:** Dual enrollment courses are college-level and align with the institution's existing academic inventory. Developmental or remedial courses (those numbered below 100) are excluded from dual enrollment offerings.
- **Credit Allocation:** Typically, a three-semester credit hour college course equates to one high school Carnegie unit. The exact credit equivalency is determined through agreements between the college and the local education agency.⁶
- **Instructional Locations:** Courses may be conducted on college campuses, at high schools, or through online platforms, providing flexibility to meet diverse student needs.

Dual Enrollment Financial Considerations:

- **Tuition and Fees:** Students are generally responsible for tuition, fees, textbooks, and necessary materials. However, various funding sources, such as the Career and Technical Education Dual Enrollment (CTEDE) Scholarship, may cover these expenses for eligible CTE programs.⁷
- **Scholarship Opportunities:** The availability of scholarships varies by institution and program. Students are encouraged to consult with their high school counselors and college admissions offices to explore financial assistance options.

Dual Enrollment Maintaining Academic Eligibility:

- **Academic Performance:** To continue participating in dual enrollment, students must achieve a grade of 'C' or higher in all college courses. Failure to meet this standard or withdrawing from a course may result in a suspension from the program for at least one academic term, excluding summer sessions.

Dual Enrollment Institutional Responsibilities:

- **Faculty Credentials:** Instructors teaching dual enrollment courses must meet the credentialing requirements set by the ACCS and relevant accrediting bodies. High school teachers serving as adjunct faculty are included in this mandate.⁸
- **Policy Adherence:** Dual enrollment programs operate according to the college's academic calendar and policies, which may differ from those of the high school. Students must comply with all institutional regulations, including attendance, conduct, and course requirements.

HBCCs/PBCCs Dual Enrollment Programs

Alabama offers a traditional dual enrollment program that enables high school students to take college-level courses and simultaneously earn high school and college credits. However, each HBCC/PBCC in the state has better **expanded its dual enrollment** offerings to meet its communities' diverse and evolving needs. These programs now include opportunities for students in public schools, private schools, homeschool settings, and those identified as talented and gifted. The goal is not only to provide access to college credits but also to place every participating student on **a guided pathway toward earning a credential**—such as a short- or long-term certificate—and, ultimately, an associate degree.



Bishop State Community College



Unlocking Potential

The Role of Bishop State in Dual Enrollment

Bishop State has expanded its focus from traditional dual enrollment to a broader **Early College Programs** model. This rebranding reflects a shift toward offering **multiple options** for high school students to earn college credit—including dual enrollment for dual credit and **Accelerated High School**. Within these programs students can earn stackable workforce credentials as well as a general education short certificate or career and technical short certificates. These programs are designed to support diverse students, including those from Mobile County and Washington County schools, private schools, and homeschools.

The college's long-term vision is to encourage students to **graduate high school with an associate degree**. The **General Education Short Certificate**, now listed in the college's catalog, offers a structured pathway equivalent to the first year of college, providing cost-savings and a more direct route to entering the workforce or an advanced degree.



What Works

Promising Practices in Dual Enrollment

Bishop State's innovative efforts to **strengthen student connection and matriculation** include:

- 1 Bishop State's **Wildcat Roadtrip** is a proactive outreach initiative where key college departments visit partner high schools to meet directly with seniors planning to attend full-time. During these visits, the Office of Early College staff provide **individualized advising**, helping students review current course progress, understand degree requirements, and visualize how close they are to earning a certificate or associate degree. This **face-to-face engagement** makes the college experience more tangible and helps students see a clear pathway to college completion.
- 2 Bishop State invests in **events and recognition opportunities** that provide traditional college experiences for dual enrollment students. These include **basketball game nights**, **induction ceremonies** for the **Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) Honor Society**, and **National Technical Honor Society** memberships—all **primarily funded by ACCS Success Coach Grant money obtained by the Office of Early College Programs**. These efforts help students feel **connected and valued**, reducing feelings of uncertainty that dual enrollment students might face when taking college courses while still in high school. This sense of belonging is key to student motivation, persistence, and eventual matriculation into full-time college enrollment.
- 3 Bishop State hosts **Faculty Summer Institutes** to provide professional development, collaboration opportunities, and ongoing support for dual enrollment instructors. These sessions allow college and high school faculty to share effective strategies, align on course standards, and stay informed about changes in curriculum or instructional delivery. By investing in teacher training and engagement, the college ensures that **students receive high-quality, college-level instruction**, regardless of where the course is taught. This practice also supports **program consistency and academic rigor**, which is especially important as credentialed high school teachers deliver more dual enrollment classes at off-campus high school sites.



By the Numbers

Impact and Outcomes of Dual Enrollment

Around **1,600 students** are enrolled through Bishop State's dual enrollment programs—making up **roughly 40% of the college's total student population**. Program participation has grown significantly since 2022 due to increased awareness of the value and benefit of dual enrollment coupled with increased state legislative funding for dual enrollment participation. This increase also provided the **ability to fund more academic courses**, not just career-technical ones.

Students can earn up to **60 college credit hours**—the equivalent of an associate degree—by combining **state-funded, self-paid, and summer courses**. The addition of the **General Education Short Certificate** further increases the value of early college pathways, preparing students for degree completion and academic transfer.

Chattahoochee Valley Community College



Unlocking Potential

The Role of Chattahoochee Valley in Dual Enrollment Pathways

Chattahoochee Valley Community College (CVCC) has built a dual enrollment program that opens doors for students from varied backgrounds in Eastern Alabama. The college recognizes that not all students have the same needs. Some are focused on **general education courses** like Biology and English that can transfer to a four-year university. Others prefer **hands-on CTE programs** like welding, HVAC, or phlebotomy, which often require special equipment and must be taken on campus. Students can take classes **on the CVCC campus, at their high schools, or online**, depending on what works best for them.



What Works

Promising Practices in Dual Enrollment

- 1 One of the college's standout practices is sending advisors to local high schools **every week**. This consistent in-person support builds relationships between the college and high school communities, helping students and their families feel more comfortable asking for assistance.
- 2 CVCC also provides **flexible advising hours**, including evenings so that parents can be fully involved. CVCC has also made big improvements in how they **support students who aren't yet ready for college-level work**. For example, some students start with general education classes and later realize they do better in hands-on CTE courses. Advisors help them adjust their path and avoid discouragement.
- 3 Another strong practice is the use of **alternative credentials**. If a student cannot finish an associate degree, CVCC ensures they leave with a certificate that holds value in the workforce market.



By the Numbers

Impact and Outcomes of Dual Enrollment

CVCC serves students from **three public school systems, one private school, plus homeschooled students**. They begin **recruitment efforts as early as eighth grade**, ensuring students know about dual enrollment options before high school even begins. Regular events like **informational nights, parent meetings**, and **school visits** keep families engaged and informed.

CVCC's flexible structure and commitment to personalized support ensures that students don't just take classes—they **receive guidance that sets them up for long-term success**. As the college continues to grow its program, its focus remains on **seamless pathways from high school to college and career**, with better transitions from two-year to four-year institutions as a top goal for the future.

Drake State Community and Technical College



Unlocking Potential

The Role of Drake State in Dual Enrollment Pathways

Drake State Community College offers a **traditional dual enrollment program** that serves high school students across **three counties** in the North Alabama region. The dual enrollment and early college pathways at Drake are designed with **intentionality and alignment**, ensuring every course contributes meaningfully toward a **short certificate, certificate, or associate degree**.



What Works

Promising Practices in Dual Enrollment

- 1** Drake provides **personalized, consistent support** through its team-based approach. Success coaches, school counselors, and liaison staff meet with **students in grades 10–12** to guide them through application processes, college pathways, and financial aid. This team also helps students navigate challenges like **lack of college knowledge** or **overcoming personal barriers**, ensuring they know how and where to get assistance.
- 2 Course Alignment:** The college works closely with **high school counselors** to ensure students only take courses that align with **high school graduation and college degree requirements**. This eliminates wasted credits and keeps students on a **clear path to credential completion**.
- 3 Continuous Improvement and Professional Development:** Drake State builds its programming around **regular student, teacher, and counselor feedback**. It emphasizes professional development for staff, ensuring that they stay updated on **dual enrollment trends and workforce needs**.



By the Numbers

Impact and Outcomes of Dual Enrollment

Drake State has seen **consistent growth** in dual enrollment participation over the past four years:

- **2021–22:** 257 students
- **2022–23:** 337 students
- **2023–24:** 433 students
- **2024–25 (so far):** 459 students (expected to increase with summer enrollment)

This growth is largely attributed to **state workforce development grant funding**, which covers **tuition, books, and fees** for eligible students. The college is exploring **additional funding sources**, particularly for the upcoming early college model, with hopes of attracting **private foundations** by highlighting the program's **structured, student-centered design and proven effective strategies**.

Gadsden State Community College



Unlocking Potential

The Role of Gadsden State in Dual Enrollment Pathways

Gadsden State Community College's dual enrollment program operates across **five campuses and partners with 47 high schools** in Northeast Alabama. The program's scope supports students to take **two or more tuition-free courses per semester**, based on funding.



What Works

Promising Practices in Dual Enrollment

Gadsden State stands out for several **student-centered strategies** designed to improve access, support, and student success.

- 1 One of its most effective innovations and goal to implement is the **student ambassador program**, where current dual enrollment students serve as peer mentors and receive scholarship incentives. **This model helps boost outreach and encourages student engagement.** The Dual Enrollment Transition Day also supports seniors on scholarship applications, academic advising, and career exploration, assisting the college in **retaining students** beyond high school graduation.
- 2 To reduce barriers, many **dual enrollment courses are offered onsite at high schools**. The college also offers **laptop loans and access to campus computer labs**.



By the Numbers

Impact and Outcomes of Dual Enrollment

Gadsden State's dual enrollment program is steadily growing. The chart shows steady growth in dual enrollment from FA 2021 to FA 2024, with a sharp rise in both enrollment numbers and scholarships awarded. Academic credit hours and funding also increased significantly, especially between FA 2023 and FA 2024, indicating expanding program support and student participation.

Each semester, 12 to 15 students complete an associate degree or technical certificate while still in high school—**welding** being one of the most common fields. The college recently **requested \$2 million** in workforce funding and received **\$1.4 million**, demonstrating strong institutional and legislative support.

Dual Enrollment Trends (FA 2021 - FA 2024)

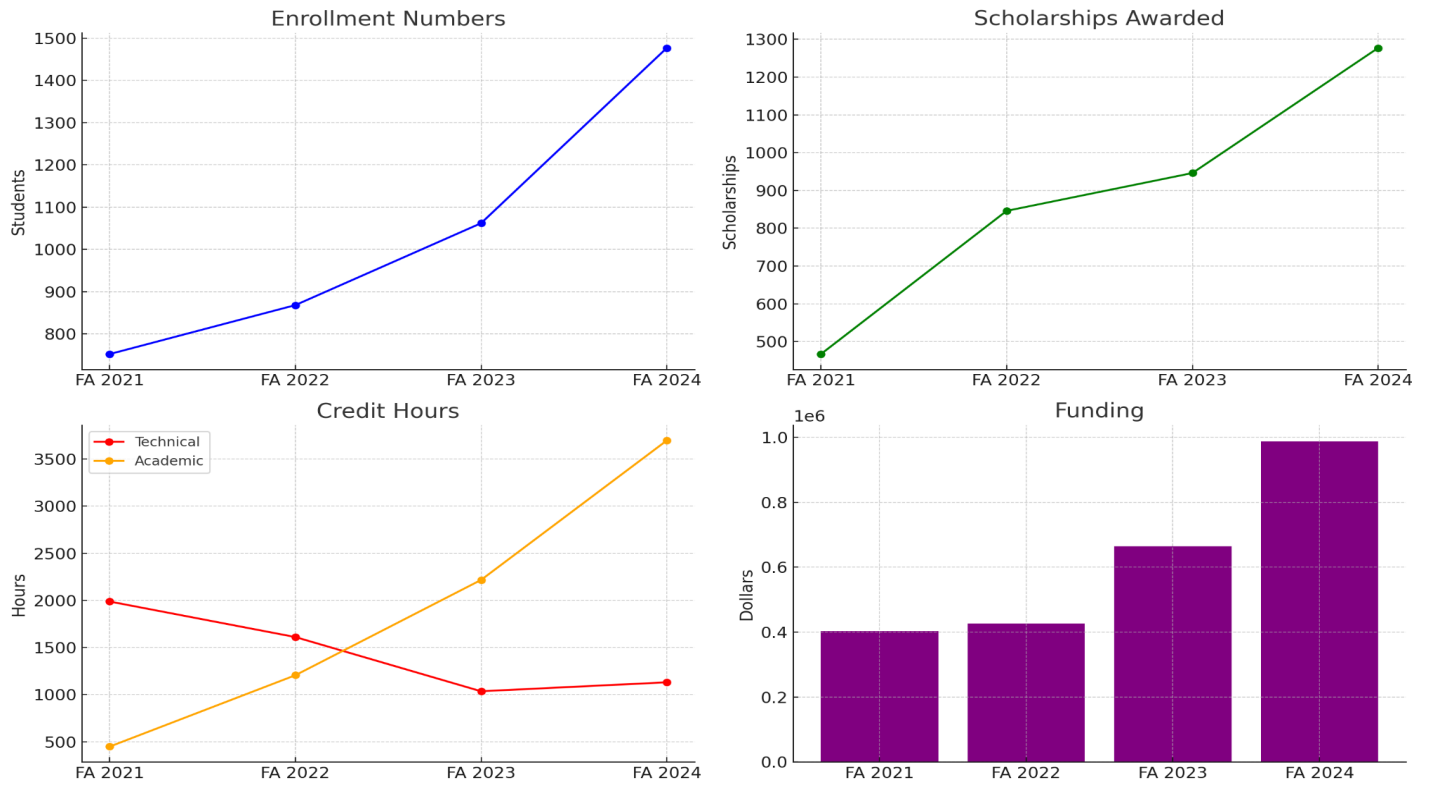


Chart Source: Gadsden State Community College

Lawson State Community College



Unlocking Potential

The Role of Lawson State in Dual Enrollment Pathways

Lawson State Community College's dual enrollment program is a **growing and well-organized initiative** housed within the college's **Instructional and Student Services division**. Centered initially on Career Technical Education (CTE), the program has broadened its scope to encompass general education courses in response to growing demand. Scholarships are available to dual-enrolled students to cover **tuition, books, and fees**.

The college is launching structured academic **pathways** for dual and early college students, replacing the old model of earning random credits. These pathways are developed with **Instructional Services** and clearly outline what students should take each term to complete a **credential (short certificate, long certificate, or associate degree)** alongside their high school diploma.



What Works

Promising Practices in Dual Enrollment

1 Lawson State's Commitment to High-Quality Program Management and Instruction.

Lawson State has firmly committed to strengthening its dual enrollment program by appointing a dedicated **Dual Enrollment Specialist** to oversee and expand the initiative. This role ensures greater access for high school students to college-level courses and helps streamline enrollment. Lawson State assigns **experienced faculty**—particularly those with strong success rates and backgrounds in teaching high school students—to lead dual enrollment courses to enhance instructional quality. **The college recognizes that dual enrollment students have unique needs and schedules compared to traditional college students and has effectively adjusted its approach to meet those differences.**

2 Students also have access to **24/7 online tutoring (Tutor.com)** and are encouraged to use all available resources through **consistent communication**.

3 **Dual Enrollment Bridge Scholarship** awards a **full-ride scholarship** to students who complete **12 college credit hours** with at least a **3.0 GPA**, encouraging them to **continue at Lawson State** after graduation. This pipeline strategy strengthens Lawson's commitment to student success **beyond high school**.



By the Numbers

Impact and Outcomes of Dual Enrollment

Lawson State's dual enrollment program now supports **over 500 students** and continues to expand responsibly. The graph shows a consistent rise in the number of students served from Fall 2021 to Fall 2024. Notably, student participation grew significantly each fall and spring term, increasing from 251 students in Fall 2021 to 511 in Fall 2024.

The college is steadily improving and **building sustainable systems** that center **student achievement, advising, and long-term impact**. Staff consistently emphasize the **importance of college performance**, especially how **grades impact future university GPAs and scholarships**. This clarity helps both students and families better understand their commitment.

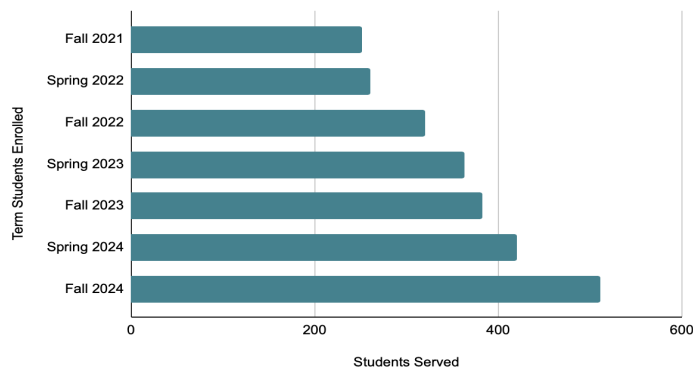


Chart Source, Lawson State Community College

Shelton State Community College



Unlocking Potential

The Role of Shelton State in Dual Enrollment Pathways

Shelton State Community College has dramatically transformed its dual enrollment program, growing from just over **200** students in 2020 to more than **1,300** students today. Despite having one of the smallest service areas among Alabama's 24 community colleges—serving only 12 to 15 high schools—Shelton State has built an impressively robust program.

The college offers dual enrollment completely free of charge, covering tuition, textbooks, and fees. The scholarship model allows new students to take one free class while returning students can take two free classes per semester.

A key transformation came in June 2020 when the Dual Enrollment Director revamped the program's enrollment process. Shelton State transitioned from a paper-based system to a fully digital approach with a user-friendly software where students can enroll in the program seamlessly, improving the enrollment experience.



What Works

Promising Practices in Dual Enrollment

- 1 A standout feature of Shelton State's support system is its **dual enrollment facilitator model**, which functions as a **specialist-driven retention system**. Students receive personalized guidance to select courses that align with both high school graduation requirements and future college aspirations.
- 2 Shelton State conducts live orientation sessions with students and parents rather than requiring an orientation course, creating a supportive environment that clarifies program expectations from the start.
- 3 To address technological barriers students face in rural areas, Shelton State works with local high schools to provide **computer lab access** for dual enrollment students. The college is also exploring partnerships to secure technology resources for students who lack personal laptops, tablets, or reliable internet access at their homes.



By the Numbers

Impact and Outcomes of Dual Enrollment

Shelton State has seen **consistent growth** in dual enrollment participation over the past five years:

- **Fall 2020** - 295
- **Fall 2021** - 443
- **Fall 2022** - 706
- **Fall 2023** - 1156
- **Fall 2024** - 1246

The college's dual enrollment program has had a tremendous academic impact on its students. One notable success story is a recent high school graduate who **completed 50 credit hours** through the program and was accepted into Auburn University's **Pharmacy School** at just **17 years old**.

Another remarkable example is a former dual enrollment student who began college courses in **ninth grade** after being identified as gifted. Through Shelton State's program, she earned an associate's degree by age 16, **completed her bachelor's degree** in just one year, and was accepted into medical school by 18. Shelton State Community College has emerged as a **leader in dual enrollment, with an** impressive 87% student success rate, **setting a benchmark** for other institutions in Alabama.

Trenholm State Community College



Unlocking Potential

The Role of Trenholm State in Dual Enrollment

Trenholm State Community College takes a **student-first approach** to dual enrollment by operating the program under the Office of Student Affairs rather than instruction. This intentional decision reflects the college's belief that dual enrollment should prioritize students' needs and access. Trenholm welcomes students from all settings across **six counties** in the East Alabama region and **fully funds tuition and books** for all dual enrollment students. Each student can take up to **nine credit hours per semester at no cost**. The college does not apply a one-size-fits-all model but instead adjusts its engagement to align with the specific needs of each high school within its service area.



What Works

Promising Practices in Dual Enrollment

- 1 Trenholm's recruitment and communication approach is **multi-channel and community-driven**. From placing **billboards** in key areas to working directly with **local superintendents and school boards**, the college ensures that families in all service areas are informed about dual enrollment options. Outreach efforts especially focus on **rural communities**, where access to college information can be limited. **Word-of-mouth referrals** play a significant role in rural areas, particularly highlighting how deeply rooted the program is in community engagement.
- 2 Dual enrollment participants have access to **tutoring, study skills and financial literacy workshops, a campus food pantry**, and **direct advising from faculty and program advisors**. These services are delivered through the **Student Success Center**, emphasizing the college's belief that dual enrollment students are full members of the campus community.

Internally, the college has worked to **bridge communication gaps** between the dual enrollment office, instructional division, and high school partners. This improved collaboration has helped ensure students receive a more seamless and supportive experience.



By the Numbers

Impact and Outcomes of Dual Enrollment

Looking ahead, Trenholm plans to **implement an Early College programming and potentially create dedicated space** for students in the program. With the college expanding its footprint in the River Region with an addition of a new campus site in **2027**, the college sees an opportunity to provide these students with more educational opportunities to earn credentials to enter the workforce or complete an associate degree in a transfer pathway.



Wallace Community College Selma



Unlocking Potential

The Role of Wallace Selma in Dual Enrollment Pathways

Wallace Community College Selma has played a **pioneering role** in dual enrollment across Alabama. In 2004, it became the **first college in the state to partner with a public school system—Selma City Schools—for dual enrollment**. This program started with support from the **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** and **Tuskegee University**. Their first class graduated in 2008, setting the stage for a strong legacy of college access and success.

Today, the program has grown to partner with **34 high schools** across about **nine counties**, covering much of Alabama's **Black Belt region**. It serves **public, private, and homeschooled students**. Wallace Selma has also kept its roots in mind. While the program has grown, it still reflects its original **early college values**, such as a strong **STEM focus**, **wraparound student support**, and a commitment to **college readiness**. Enrollment is approximately 1,200 students each semester.



What Works

Promising Practices in Dual Enrollment

- 1 A big part of Wallace Selma's success comes from its intentional support of students. Every dual enrollment student is assigned a Success coach who acts as a mentor, advocate, and academic guide. These coaches visit partner high schools twice monthly, meet with students in person, and even lead **orientation sessions** onsite. One program, **"Coaches Day Out,"** ensures coaches are regularly present and available at local schools.
- 2 One coach is **stationed full-time in rural areas** to ensure students in remote communities aren't left behind. With **FERPA waivers in place**, coaches can communicate directly with families to keep everyone on the same page. Academic advisors ensure students take the right mix of high school and college courses to stay on track for both diplomas. These efforts ensure that students don't fall behind and can reach graduation with **confidence and the proper credentials**.
- 3 Wallace Selma also makes a point to **build community and motivation** through activities like **Dual Enrollment Fun Day**, where students from different schools come to campus for a day of events. These celebrations are fun and serve as a **recruitment tool**, encouraging other students to join when they see the photos or hear about the experience.



By the Numbers

Impact and Outcomes of Dual Enrollment

Wallace Selma's program is not just big in reach—it's also **fully funded**, which makes it even more impactful. Dual enrollment students can take up to **12 credit hours per semester**, and **all costs—including books—are covered**. In 2024, the college secured an **additional \$200,000** to expand dual enrollment during the summer, especially for students close to finishing their associate degrees.

The results speak for themselves. Several students have fulfilled all requirements for an associate degree before earning their high school diploma. Notably, five 11th-grade students completed all college coursework before graduating high school. Most students who meet these requirements are classified as early high school graduates.

In May 2024 alone, 120 dual enrollment students graduated with associate degrees and/or short-term certificates, demonstrating the program's power to accelerate academic achievement and workforce readiness.

Common Themes & Cross-Institutional Practices

Across all eight institutions, the goal of dual enrollment is to help high school students get a head start on college, especially for first-generation and underrepresented students. There is a strong focus on **academic quality** — institutions make sure dual enrollment classes match the **standards of regular college courses**.

Partnerships with high schools are central to every program. Institutions work closely with school counselors to **align courses, manage enrollment, and support students**. Many use qualified high school teachers as adjunct faculty, but they require those teachers to go through training and regular support from college staff.

Support Systems for Dual Enrollment Students

All eight schools recognize that “dual enrollment” students need extra support to succeed. Common supports include:

- **Advising:** Most schools assign **success/career coaches** who help students choose courses aligned with high school graduation requirements and future college aspirations.
- **Flexible Tutoring:** Learning occurs at the respective high schools, online, or college campuses.
- **Orientation:** The institutions offer orientation sessions for dual enrollment students to explain expectations and resources.
- **Regular Check-ins:** The colleges stay in touch with students to track progress and quickly address issues by utilizing **Early Alert System/Dropout Detective**, software that flags students who may be struggling academically.
- **Pathways to College Enrollment:** These institutions use dual enrollment as a recruitment tool. They expose students to college expectations early, making the transition easier through various initiatives, including **Transition Day**, an event designed to guide students who wish to continue their education at the respective college.

Funding & Sustainability

All eight colleges receive funding from **Alabama state workforce development funds** to support dual enrollment each year. Some are in the process of exploring new funding sources to cover expansion, including private support.

Challenges and How They Are Addressing Them

Several shared challenges came up across the schools:

- 1 **Teacher Credentialing:** It's hard to find enough qualified teachers to teach college-level classes in high schools. Schools are addressing this by training more teachers, offering graduate courses, and creating long-term plans to build the pipeline.
- 2 **Maintaining Academic Quality:** Schools worry about keeping standards consistent across different sites and instructors. They are handling this with regular evaluations and mentoring systems.
- 3 **Student Readiness:** Some students struggle with college-level work. To help, the institutions consistently offer orientation, advice, and tutoring.

- 4 Technology Access:** Some students lack internet or devices, especially in rural areas. A few programs provide laptops or work with schools to improve access.
- 5 Growth Pressure:** As interest in dual enrollment grows, schools face staffing and resource challenges. Some need to hire more coordinators and build dedicated spaces/offices on campus to manage the demand.

Conclusion

Dual enrollment programs at HBCCs/PBCCs are proving to be transformative, particularly for first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented students. By building robust partnerships with local high schools, offering wraparound support services, and aligning coursework with academic and workforce pathways, these institutions create more equitable access to college and career opportunities. Despite challenges such as funding constraints, staffing demands, and disparities in academic readiness, HBCCs/PBCCs are responding with innovation, intentional design, and student-centered practices. As dual enrollment participation continues to rise, HBCCs/PBCCs are not only providing a head start on higher education but also helping students envision and actualize their futures. The success of these programs underscores the need for continued investment, policy alignment, and sustainable support to ensure all students—regardless of background—have the tools and opportunities to thrive.

Summary of Key Insights

- 1 Early Exposure Increases Success**
Dual enrollment boosts college readiness, degree attainment, and persistence—especially for underserved populations.
- 2 Partnerships Are Foundational**
Strong collaborations between colleges and high schools ensure alignment, seamless transitions, and shared responsibility for student success.
- 3 Support Services Make a Difference**
Academic advising, tutoring, career coaching, and regular check-ins are vital to helping dual enrollment students succeed in college-level coursework.
- 4 Flexibility and Access Are Key**
Institutions offer courses on-campus, at high schools, and online—while adapting advising hours and locations to fit student and family needs.
- 5 CTE and Workforce Pathways Are Central**
Programs increasingly emphasize CTE pathways aligned with local workforce needs in STEM, healthcare, and skilled trades.
- 6 Credentialing and Professional Development Matter**
Ensuring instructor quality and consistency across dual enrollment sites remains a priority, addressed through training and collaboration.
- 7 Sustainability Requires Creative Funding**
While state workforce funds are critical, institutions are exploring private and federal resources to support growth and equity-focused expansion.
- 8 Removing Barriers Is a Guiding Principle**
HBCCs/PBCCs remove barriers by reaching rural, low-income, and non-traditional students, and customizing services to meet diverse needs and reduce barriers.

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ENDNOTES

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Bishop State Community College

Chattahoochee Valley Community College

J.F. Drake State Community & Technical College

Gadsden State Community College

Lawson State Community College

Shelton State Community College

H. Councill Trenholm State Community College

Wallace Community College Selma

the **GREAT EIGHT**

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