

## **A Brief History of Historically Black Community Colleges in Alabama**

(references are the institution's website)

### **Preface**

According to the website for the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities, (<http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/list/whhbcu/edlite-index.html>), *The Higher Education Act of 1965*, as amended, defines a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) as: "...any historically black college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the education of black Americans." According to a Statement Adopted by the President's Board of Advisors on Historically Black Colleges and Universities released in December 2004, "HBCUs make a strong and unique contribution to the United States by providing an education to many socioeconomically disadvantaged young people among the nation's African American and other minority populations. The nation's HBCUs provide a supportive environment in which qualities of leadership, strong values, and character are developed, along with a strong sense of identity and self-actualization. The participation of the graduates of HBCUs in the nation's business, social and political systems, and in the military services adds great economic and social value to our nation. Their involvement in the social and political discourse of the United States strengthens our democracy and its stability."

### **Alabama**

The Alabama Community College System (ACCS) has 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. Information from the ACCS website (<http://www.accs.cc/ACCSHistory.aspx>) states a brief history of public community colleges starting in 1947 when after World War II, "President Harry S. Truman created a commission on higher education that identified a 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."

In 1963, the Alabama Legislature formed the college system and the Department of Postsecondary Education by linking the public two-year colleges into "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."

According to the White House Initiative On Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) (<http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/list/whhbcu/edlite-list.html>), Alabama has the most two year public HBCUs in the nation. These six institutions include Lawson State Community

College, Bishop State Community College, Gadsden State Community College Valley Street, J. F. Drake State Technical College, Shelton State Community College C.A. Fredd Campus and Trenholm State Technical College.

### **Lawson State Community College**

Lawson State Community College (<http://www.lawsonstate.edu>) traces its origin to October 9, 1947, when the Wallace-Patterson Trade School Act authorized the creation of a trade school in Jefferson County. Wenonah State Technical Institute was organized in 1949 and opened in 1950 with 11 instructors and 75 students in 10 courses and one related subject. The first president was Dr. Theodore A. Lawson. The initial funding received by the technical division was \$75,000. Wenonah State Junior College was authorized under Act No. 93 of the 1963 Alabama State Legislature, and officially opened in 1965. Dr. Lawson served as president of the College and the Technical Institute. In 1967, Wenonah State Junior College held its first commencement exercise with 33 graduates. In 1968, the College reached another milestone when it received accreditation by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. In 1969, the State Legislature approved naming the junior college in honor of Dr. Lawson, at which time there were 300 students enrolled. On October 1, 1973, Wenonah State Technical Institute merged with Lawson State Junior College to become a comprehensive community college. Lawson State Community College has only had four presidents: Dr. Theodore A. Lawson, 1949 – 1971; Dr. Leon Kennedy, 1971-1978; Dr. Jesse J. Lewis, 1978-1987; and Dr. Perry W. Ward since 1987. On January 27, 2005, the Alabama State Board of Education adopted the *Statement of Intent to Merge T. A. Lawson State Community College and Bessemer State Technical College*, to form one institution, T.A. Lawson State Community College, in accordance with its policy 102.7 *Consolidation or Merger of Postsecondary Institutions*. Lawson State Community College is located at 3060 Wilson Road, Birmingham, Alabama. The Bessemer Campus is located at 1100 Ninth Avenue, Southwest, Bessemer, Alabama. Final approval for the merger was given by the Alabama State Board of Education on June 23, 2005. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools granted approval of the merger on June 23, 2005.

The college's enrollment for fall 2010 is over 4,700.

### **Bishop State Community College**

Bishop State Community College (<http://www.bishop.edu/history.html>) was founded in the summer of 1927. It was originally the Mobile Branch of Alabama State College (University) in Montgomery, Alabama. It was established as an in-service arm of Alabama State College that offered extension courses to African-American elementary and secondary teachers in Mobile. In 1936, O. H. Johnson was appointed dean. The first full-time faculty was seven individuals including Mobile pioneers in education Dr. Benjamin F. Baker, Mary Wilbur Weeks Burroughs and C.F. Powell. Dr. Sanford. D. Bishop, Sr. joined the teaching staff of "The Branch" in 1938 as an instructor of English and music. In 1941, he was named dean. In 1942, property was acquired on Broad Street where the present Main Campus is located. The campus consisted of a

two-story framed building, which prior to the purchase of the property, was used by the Voluntary Fire Fighters Society #11. It was purchased with a loan that was later repaid by students through fund-raising. In 1963, the name "Mobile Branch of Alabama State College" was changed to Alabama State College – Mobile Center. In 1965, the Alabama State Legislature ratified the Alabama State Board of Education's action establishing the Alabama State College – Mobile Center as Mobile State Junior College and severed its relationship with Alabama State College in Montgomery. Dr. Bishop was appointed president of the new independent junior college. In 1971, the Alabama State Legislature renamed the college to S. D. Bishop State Junior College. Upon the death of Dr. Bishop on June 21, 1981, Dr. Joseph Christopher Mitchell was selected to serve as interim president. In September 1981, Dr. Yvonne Kennedy was appointed as the second president. On February 23, 1989, the Alabama State Board of Education re-named the college to Bishop State Community College to reflect its growth in vocational/career offerings, transfer offerings and community service activities. On August 22, 1991, the Alabama State Board of Education consolidated two technical colleges in Mobile – Southwest State Technical College and Carver State Technical College – with Bishop State Community College. Southwest State Technical College, now the Southwest Campus of Bishop State Community College, was established to provide postsecondary vocational training in the Mobile area under the 1947 Regional Trade School Act. The city of Mobile provided the 26 acres of land for the campus. The first graduates, in 1954, were 15 members of a practical nurse program who had begun classes in January 1953. The College officially opened in May 1954 with an enrollment of 100 students in eight programs. Carver State Technical College, now the Carver Campus of Bishop State Community College, was authorized on January 1, 1962, by the Alabama State Legislature. It was constructed in 1962 in the Toulminville area of Mobile. On November 19, 1976, the Alabama State Board of Education approved changing the name of Carver State Technical Trade School to Carver State Technical Institute and later to Carver State Technical College. In 1995, the college added a fourth campus with the opening of its Baker-Gaines Central Campus. This site was formerly the historic Central High School. The facility houses the Division of Health Related Professions. In addition, it includes a museum, child care center, 1,200-seat auditorium, multimedia center, cafeteria facilities and a bookstore. Dr. Kennedy was president for 26 years, retiring on July 30, 2007. Dr. James Lowe, Jr., became the interim president on August 1, 2007, and on May 22, 2008, the Alabama State Board of Education appointed him president.

In fall 2009-2010, Bishop State Community College enrolled 3,600 students.

### **J. F. Drake State Technical College**

J. F. Drake State Technical College, (<http://www.dstc.cc.al.us/facts.pdf>) located in Huntsville, Alabama was established in 1961 and opened its doors on September 4, 1962 as Huntsville State Vocational Technical School with S. C. O'Neal as its first director/president. Mr. O'Neal served in this capacity until 1983 when Dr. Johnny L. Harris was appointed its second president. On October 26, 2000, Dr. Helen McAlpine was appointed the third president, and its first female president. Drake State was constructed on thirty acres of land deeded by Alabama A & M University to the Alabama Board of Education. In 1966, the name was changed to J. F. Drake State Technical Trade School in honor of the late Dr. Joseph Fanning Drake, a

former president of Alabama A & M University for more than thirty-five years. On August 22, 1973, the school was given technical college status by the Alabama Board of Education, and assumed its present name of J. F. Drake State Technical College and was authorized by the Board to offer the Associate in Applied Technology (AAT) degree. In the fall 1998, J. F. Drake State Technical College converted from quarter to semester system. The State Board of Education authorized the addition of the Associate in Occupational Technology Degree (AOT).

The college currently enrolls approximately 1300 students.

### **Gadsden State Community College Valley Campus**

The Comprehensive Development Plan for Gadsden State Community College states that the college's Valley Street Campus, has a heritage that extends back to the 1950s when Black veterans of Etowah County expressed discontent in not being able to attend the white trade school located in Gadsden. Mr. Eugene N. Prater director of the Veterans General Continuation Program for Negroes, solicited support from local, state, and federal officials for the establishment of a trade school for Negroes. In July 1960, the Gadsden Vocational Trade School was founded as a private vocational training school for Black Americans. In 1961, the trade school became part of the State of Alabama's network of vocational/technical schools and operated as a Negro trade school under the supervision of the Alabama State Board of Education. In January 1962, ownership was assumed by the State of Alabama with the school's name being changed to Gadsden State Technical Trade School. In 1977 the trade school became known as Gadsden State Technical Institute, a name which it kept until its merger in 1985 with the Alabama Technical College and with Gadsden State Community College.

### **Shelton State Community College C.A. Fredd Campus**

In 1994, **Shelton State Community College** located in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. (<http://www.sheltonstate.edu/content.aspx?PageID=110>) consolidated with C. A. Fredd State Technical College, another public two year college located in Tuscaloosa. The new institution created by the consolidation retained the name of Shelton State Community College, and the president of Shelton State was named president of the consolidated institution. The institution, now called Shelton State Community College, C. A. Fredd Campus, was created by the state legislature in 1963 as Tuscaloosa State Trade School. In 1974, the institution became Tuscaloosa State Technical College and was authorized by the Alabama State Board of Education to grant the associate degree. In 1976, the college name was changed to C. A. Fredd State Technical College to honor the first president of the institution. C. A. Fredd State Technical College was recognized as one of the nation's Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Shelton State Community College maintains that identity and continues the specific HBCU mission of promoting educational access and opportunity for all students in a culturally diverse community.

Fall 2010 enrollment at Shelton State Community College is more than 6,000 students.

## **H. Councill Trenholm State Technical College**

H. Councill Trenholm State Technical College is located in Montgomery, Alabama (<http://www.trenholmtech.cc.al.us/index.php?id=about-trenholm-state#c472>). The college was created through the consolidation of John M. Patterson State Technical College with H. Councill Trenholm State Technical College. On April 27, 2000, the Alabama State Board of Education approved the intent to merge. Since both colleges were technical colleges, the merger did not alter that status or result in any change in the role of the new entity. The Chancellor of Postsecondary Education appointed Dr. Alma Freeman as Interim President of the newly created technical college on April 20, 2001. Dr. Larry McCoy, Interim Provost, was also appointed by the Chancellor to oversee the consolidation process. On April 26, 2001 the Alabama State Board of Education voted to name the newly created entity H. Councill Trenholm State Technical College. The College maintains two campuses: the Patterson Campus and the Trenholm Campus. The two campuses are only 8.9 miles apart. The College is approved for the training of veterans, and the programs are approved for federal financial aid. Effective November 19, 2001, Dr. Anthony L. Molina was appointed President of H. Councill Trenholm State Technical College and served from 2001-2007. The President administers the two major campuses and several instructional sites, 34 instructional programs and about 200 employees. Mr. Samuel Munnerlyn was appointed interim President in April 2007 and appointed President in December 2007. Both institutions were accredited by the Council on Occupational Education. On March 12, 2002, the Council on Occupational Education granted initial approval for the merger. The two Colleges have a shared history in providing services for the same geographical area. In compliance with a U.S. Federal Court Order, courses were realigned in 1970 to eliminate program duplication between Patterson State Technical School and Trenholm State Technical School. Because of the court order, program offerings and personnel were shifted between the schools. In the fall of 1989, the institutions initiated a collegiate schedule for all programs and courses. Each curriculum is composed of a series of discrete courses. Students register for and study specific courses each term. In the fall of 1998, the colleges changed from a quarter system to a semester system.

### **TRENHOLM CAMPUS**

H. Councill Trenholm State Technical College was one of several public postsecondary occupational education institutions authorized by the Alabama State Legislature on May 3, 1963. Construction on the 35-acre site located at 1225 Air Base Boulevard began August 19, 1965, and was completed August 8, 1966, at a cost of approximately 1.25 million dollars. The physical plant was initially comprised of an administration building and four shop buildings. The City of Montgomery and the Montgomery County Board of Revenue made financial contributions towards the construction of the cafeteria. The College was named for the late Dr. Harper Councill Trenholm, a past president of the neighboring Alabama State University. In 1966, Mr. Lucious W. Smiley was appointed president of the school and served until 1970. The instructional staff assumed duties July 1, 1966. Classes began August 15, 1966, with an initial enrollment of 275 students. Mr. M. D. Smiley served as president from 1970 until 1981, followed by Dr. Thad McClammy from 1981 through 1995. Interim presidents appointed by the Chancellor served from 1995 until 2001. The College continued to grow; during the 1971-72 school year the physical plant was expanded to include the new warehouse facility and the Related Subjects Building. The Allied Health Occupations Building was completed on April 17,

1979. The Joseph Dickerson Culinary Arts and Conference Centre was officially dedicated on August 25, 1991. The new Library and Tower of Learning Building was completed and opened in 1996. In the school year 1998-99, the College had 1,295 students enrolled in 13 different programs.

Enrollment for fall 2009 was 1,733.