



Skills for
Success



60,000+
ENROLLED

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FEBRUARY COURSE HIGHLIGHT

Wastewater Treatment Course

Industry Partners Help Shape New Wastewater Treatment Training for Alabama's Workforce

At the request of industry partners across Alabama, the ACCS Innovation Center is developing a new wastewater treatment Skills for Success course designed to support this growing field and prepare individuals for entry-level careers in both treatment facility operations and onsite wastewater systems. Students who complete the course will have the opportunity to participate in hands-on lab training and select the pathway that best aligns with their goals.

Developing this training course required strong collaboration from partners willing to open their facilities and share their expertise. Special thanks go to **Jeremy Creel** and the team at **Jefferson County's Cahaba River Water Reclamation Facility** for hosting filming and demonstrating key treatment processes within an operating facility. We also extend our sincere appreciation to **Marty Clarke**, owner of **Water Resource Management, LLC**, who dedicated a full day of operations and his entire crew to simulate a complete septic system installation from start to finish. Marty also secured a demonstration permit and invited **Ken Stephens** of the Alabama Department of Public Health to demonstrate the inspection process.

Reflecting on the effort, Clarke shared, "How can I complain about the workforce if I have done nothing to help it?"

We are also grateful to **Dr. Mark Barnett** of **Auburn University** for serving on the course Task Force and for guiding the development process, as well as to the many industry partners who have contributed their time and expertise. Together, these efforts ensure the training reflects real-world practices and helps strengthen Alabama's wastewater workforce for years to come.

The course is currently in development, and our design team is building the online, interactive portion of the training. Once development is complete, the course will move into a pilot phase before being launched statewide and made available to all 24 community colleges. Together, these efforts help ensure the training reflects real-world practices and supports the continued growth of Alabama's wastewater workforce.

Bringing Career Exploration on the Road

This month, the ACCS Innovation Center unveiled three new Haulmark mobile training trailers, each equipped with two new Tenstar simulators during a ribbon cutting ceremony at Columbiana Middle School.

These mobile career exploration trailers bring hands-on learning directly to students and communities across Alabama. Each simulator features more than 20 immersive training scenarios, allowing participants to explore career pathways in construction, transportation, agriculture, emergency services, and more. In a safe, controlled environment, learners can build essential employability skills while gaining early exposure to high-demand industries.

As part of our **Skills for Success** model, this initiative is designed to create stronger pathways from classroom learning to meaningful careers.

"This investment brings real career exploration directly to students and communities across Alabama. Through the ACCS Innovation Center and our community college partners, we are creating earlier awareness, stronger pathways, and more opportunities for Alabamians to connect training to meaningful careers," said Julie Frizzell, Chief of Operations for the ACCS Innovation Center.



Meeting Students Where They Are

The career exploration trailers are available for middle and high schools, community colleges, and state-sponsored events across Alabama. By aligning with **Skills for Success** programming, the simulators help develop decision-making, focus, and situational awareness. This ultimately bridges the gap between education and workforce needs.

As Chris Stricklin, President of Dunn University, shared during the ribbon cutting: *"Programs like this are helping Alabama maintain its national leadership in workforce innovation. Through hands-on experiences, our community colleges are inspiring youth and providing tangible opportunities to explore the careers they want to pursue."*

Expanding Opportunity Across Alabama

The ACCS Innovation Center has now developed more than 67 industry-partnered Skills for Success courses designed to prepare Alabamians for high-demand careers and stronger futures. The addition of the mobile career exploration trailers strengthens our ability to introduce those pathways earlier and more intentionally.

Interested in bringing a trailer to your school or community event?

Onsite visit requests may be [submitted online here](#).

For program questions, please contact:

Matt Heaton
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EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Dr. Sharon Alley

What is your role at the Innovation Center?

I serve as a Senior Project Coordinator for Course Development at the Innovation Center. In this role, I guide the courses from the initial concept through launch, ensuring they meet workforce needs across the state.

What project, program, or initiative are you most excited about this month?

I'm most excited about the second pilot of our Asphalt Lab Technician course. Watching students take what they learned in the online theory and apply it in the lab with expert instructors is always a highlight. The feedback we gather from students and instructors will help us make the course even better for future students.

How does your work help support students, colleges, or business and industry across the state?

Every course we develop starts with a real industry need. Working alongside industry experts, we design the online theory courses and hands-on labs that the Alabama community colleges then bring to life for their students. The result is rapid training that opens doors to employment for students and strengthens Alabama's workforce for the future.

What's your favorite place in Alabama to unwind?

The Tennessee River in North Alabama is absolutely beautiful. It is a great place to unwind and enjoy time with my family.

Behind the Scenes

The ACCS Innovation Center is proud to partner with **Seed Creative**, a Tuscaloosa-based, multiple Emmy Award-winning video production company that helped bring the **Skills for Success** program to life across Alabama by filming real Alabamians working in high-demand industries for use in our online training courses.

Their latest project—a 30-second Skills for Success commercial filmed at Hillcrest High School (Tuscaloosa) for the Alabama High School Athletics Association (AHSAA) Football Playoffs—captures the moment a quarterback looks across the field and sees more than teammates. He sees a future shaped by training, confidence, and purpose through Skills for Success and Alabama's community colleges. The creativity, planning, and production excellence behind this piece reflects the innovation and talent Seed Creative brings to every project.

We are especially grateful to **George Edmondson, Nick Golden**, and the entire Seed Creative team for being such an incredible partner in sharing Alabama's workforce opportunities. A behind-the-scenes feature showing how the commercial was created is [now available on YouTube](#), offering a closer look at the teamwork and expertise that made this vision possible.

And the momentum continues—coming soon is our Skills for Success basketball commercial, which will air during the AHSAA Basketball Final Four, March 2–7.

Together, we remain focused on helping every Alabamian find their play—and win where it matters most. Delivered by Alabama's community colleges, Skills for Success courses are helping individuals across our state train quickly and move confidently into the workforce.



**WE'RE PROUD TO WELCOME
MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGER**

Christie S. Aitken

TO THE ACCS INNOVATION CENTER TEAM

Christie S. Aitken serves as Marketing and Public Relations Manager for the ACCS Innovation Center. A Montgomery native, she leads marketing and public relations for the Center's rapid, no-cost training programs, partnering with workforce and curriculum teams, business leaders, and Alabama's community colleges to support in-demand career pathways for individuals and employers statewide.

Christie brings experience across statewide public sector systems, education, healthcare, and nonprofit organizations. She previously led statewide marketing and communications for Alabama State Parks, supporting the brand and 21 state parks. She also led systemwide digital marketing for the largest hospital system in Central Alabama during the COVID-19 response. Christie holds a Bachelor of Science in Marketing, Management, and Research and an Associate of Science in Business Administration from Troy University.

Recognized by the American Advertising Federation (AAF), the Public Relations Council of Alabama (PRCA), and the Southern Public Relations Federation (SPRF) for leadership and contributions to the marketing and public relations field, Christie is also named among Business Alabama's Top Women in Tech and holds Senior Practitioner status through SPRF. She is the founder and creator of the Redeeming Red World Dyslexia Day campaign, which lights landmarks in red each October 15 to celebrate great dyslexic minds, elevate their stories, and spread education and awareness.

A storyteller at heart, Christie finds joy in motherhood, mentoring, writing in quiet corners of local coffee shops, and travel that unfolds without a plan.

INNOVATION *Unplugged*



Episode 86

FROM HEADLINES TO HALLWAYS: HOW STORYTELLING SHAPES LEADERSHIP

Ebony Horton Bradley - Reid State Community College

Episode 87

TRAINING WITH PURPOSE: CITY OF FOLEY'S INVESTMENT IN CDL TALENT

City of Foley Street Development

Episode 88

WHY HUMAN SKILLS MATTER: THE PERFECT PAIRING OF SKILLS FOR SUCCESS AND FLAWLESS DELIVERY

Dr. Ryan-Cate Gibson and Thea Harvey-Barratt – Holistic Performance Group (HPG)

Episode 89

CRYSTAL CLEAR COMMAND: HOW CLARITY MEETS EXPECTATIONS

Dan Durbin – Durbin Leadership, LLC.