

# “WCCS: Building Bridges to the Future”

George Corley Wallace State Community College (Wallace Community College Selma) had its origin on May 3, 1963, as William Rufus King State Vocational Technical School in honor of a famous Alabamian that served 29 years as a United States Senator and Vice President of the United States in 1852 under President Franklin Pierce. He was also responsible for giving Selma its name. Located on twenty acres inside the city limits of Selma, the home of historic events from the Civil War to Civil Rights, the College has also become a landmark in Selma's history.

On October 1, 1973, the Alabama Board of Trustees authorized the second change of the institution's name to George Corley Wallace State Community College. Mr. Charles L. Byrd, who had been the Director of the Technical Institute, was appointed President. In 1990, under the administration of the first African American President Dr. Julius Brown, the marketing name of the College became Wallace Community College Selma (WCCS). Mr. Effell Williams, Sr. served as the Interim President from May 2000 until July 31, 2000. On August 1, 2000, Dr. James M. Mitchell became the third and most visionary president who led the College to its present role as a powerful influence on the upward mobility of citizens in Selma and surrounding areas. Responsive to the needs of the service area, Wallace Community College Selma expanded its educational thrust in the following areas: transfer programs, student services, community involvement, workforce development, and technology. Quality instruction, strong student support services, and access to opportunity became the clarion call of the Institution.

Because of its sound fiscal management, the College continued its pace forward by improving the infrastructure and expanding the facilities to create a learning environment to prepare for the demands of the 21st century; thus, transforming the College into a progressive and innovative institution of higher learning.

WCCS has enhanced the aesthetic value of each building by elevating with copper roof designs. All existing structures have been renovated and several new state-of-the-art buildings opened, including the Hank Sanders Technology Center, the Health Sciences Building and a One Stop Student Center which houses the division of Student Services (Offices of Financial Aid, Admission and Records, Student Support Services, Talent Search and Student Organizations). The building also includes a Barnes and Nobles Bookstore, a game room and TV room for entertainment, and quiet areas designed for study and relaxation. Plans are being developed for a new technical center which would provide training for all technical programs under one roof. The college has been able to accomplish these goals with no long-term indebtedness.

The College serves a seven-county region representing the western part of the state; it encompasses many of the most economically challenged counties in Alabama known as the “Black Belt Area”. Through various partnerships and externally funded grants, the College is impacting west Alabama through workforce development, community service, and educational opportunities. In order to meet the demands of the College's service areas, the College sought to establish new initiatives that would increase the number of high school graduates, increase post-secondary success among students from underserved backgrounds and prepare students for the demands of the workforce.

- In 2007, the College partnered with SECME, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Selma City School System to house the first and only Early College Program in the State of Alabama. Over the past seven years, the Early College program has produced impressive results. Many of the graduates have received full scholarships to four-year universities and colleges. Today, the College continues to house the Early College Program in partnership with Dallas County School System.
- In 2005, the college partnered with the Alabama State Department of Education to improve math and science knowledge and skills necessary for success in postsecondary studies and in the workforce. WCCS became the only community college to be named as an AMSTI site. WCCS, in conjunction with ASU, and JSU, received the honor of piloting a new AMSTI Lead Teacher program in schools hoping to

become AMSTI schools during the summer of 2007, and conducting a Grades K-12 Leadership Academy for Math, Science, and Technology (LAMST) during the summer of 2006. Since that time, WCCS has provided professional development and training to thousands of teachers statewide.

- The implementation of the Advanced Visualization Center continues to have a tremendous impact on the organizational structure of the College because of its far-reaching effects on the instructional programs of the College as well as local public school systems and business and industry within the serviced area of the Institution. The Center is instrumental in developing and implementing innovative, engaging curricula for education and workforce development. The technologically-advanced center provides teaching and training opportunities and allows for educators and entrepreneurs to virtually transform the learning experience. The Center provides the following laboratories: Immersive floating model, Development, Broadcast and Studio, Telepresence, Visual Learning, Rapid Prototype, Experience and Discovery, and Interactive Use of Force.

Through the Advanced Visualization Center, the College is also able to develop critical thinking skills in its students; create a learning institute, bridge the gap between education and the workforce, project-based learning/collaborative, develop learning communities, improve quality workforce development and develop interactive learning experiences that are beneficial to students, the community and future growth.

In collaboration with community organizations, the college has hosted national and international speakers such as Senator Barak Obama, Eric Holder, Secretary of Education, Vice-President Joseph Biden, Winnie Mandela, South African activists/politician, and many others.

Wallace Community College Selma continues to expand its mission and goals to focus on meeting the needs of its students and the community. While celebrating its rich history, the College is constantly making strides toward excellence and building bridges to the future.