



Photo Caption: Pictured above are Southern State's 2024-25 SOCHE excellence award recipients. From left to right: Robin Tholen, Nicole Sheppard, and Jessica Steadman.

Southern State Community College honors three employees who will receive SOCHE Excellence Awards

The Strategic Ohio Council for Higher Education (SOCHE) has recognized three Southern State Community College individuals who have demonstrated excellence in service, teaching, and leadership. Those honored with the 2024-25 SOCHE Excellence Awards include Robin Tholen, Nicole Sheppard, and Jessica Steadman.

Robin Tholen, Executive Assistant to the President, Board of Trustees, and the Foundation of Southern State, is receiving the Staff Excellence Award. Robin's servant-leadership heart is infectious and reaches every corner of the institution. In addition to her core responsibilities as Executive Assistant, Robin helps the institution fulfill its core values, particularly related to "personal connection" and "community engagement." Robin's passion for uplifting others is visible in every aspect of her work, and her presence makes Southern State a great place to learn, grow, and succeed.

Assistant Professor of Education and Division Coordinator for Art, Humanities, and Education, Nicole Sheppard, is Southern State's Faculty Excellence Award winner. Nicole exemplifies excellence through her dynamic leadership in Early Childhood Education. As Program Director, she has streamlined multiple teacher education pathways for students and established 3+1

partnerships, enhancing transfer opportunities and affordability. As a Division Coordinator and Steering Committee member for strategic enrollment planning, she impacts institutional growth. A participant in the Ohio Leadership Academy, regional “Grow Your Own” educator initiatives, and a current Ed.D. candidate, she demonstrates a profound commitment to higher education.

Southern State Data Coordinator Jessica Steadman has been selected to receive this year’s Campus Impact Award. Jessica’s quiet dedication and hard work behind the scenes are crucial to the College’s success. She has greatly improved operational efficiency and enhanced data transparency, which supports informed decision-making. Her high personal standards, along with a methodical and logical approach, set a high benchmark for anyone fortunate enough to work with her. Jessica has a deep understanding of complex federal reporting requirements and consistently works to ensure that the College’s data is accurate and representative. Her presence and personality bring a valuable dynamic to the technology team, elevating everyone’s performance.

“Southern State is fortunate to have many wonderful faculty and staff,” says Southern State’s Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs, Dr. Erika Goodwin. “The three award winners this year exemplify Southern State’s core values and have made a significant impact on our students and their colleagues. We are honored to recognize three truly outstanding members of our team,” Goodwin adds.

SOCHE is the regional leader for higher education collaboration, engaging with colleges, universities, and industry to transform the economy through the education and employment of nearly 200,000 students in southwest Ohio. See more at <http://www.soche.org>.

For more information about Southern State Community College, its faculty, and educational offerings, visit <http://www.sccc.edu>.

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