

Southern State Community College Awards Scholarships, Opening Doors for Student Success

Over 100 students are one step closer to achieving their educational and career goals after Southern State Community College awards over \$225,000 in scholarships for the upcoming academic year. The funding, made possible through generous donors, community partnerships, and the Southern State Community College Foundation, will support students pursuing degrees, workforce certifications, and transfer opportunities.

College officials say the scholarships are more than financial assistance—they are investments in students' futures and the economic vitality of the community.

"This funding helps remove barriers that often stand between students and their dreams," said Dr. Nicole Roades, President of Southern State Community College. "When students don't have to worry as much about paying for tuition, books, or other educational expenses, they can focus on learning, graduating, and giving back to our community."

For many recipients, the scholarships represent a life-changing opportunity.

For Kallie Fraley, a first-generation college student, receiving a scholarship means continuing an education that once seemed financially out of reach. Working part-time while balancing classes and care-giving responsibilities at home, she said the award eases the financial burden and allows more time to focus on coursework.

"I've always wanted to earn my degree, but there were times I wasn't sure if I would be able to balance school while also working a part-time job," Fraley said. "This scholarship gives me the chance to stay in school and work toward a career where I can make a difference."

Another recipient, Caleb Garcia, returned to college to pursue certifications to advance his career. The scholarship helped cover the cost of tools, tuition, books, and gas commuting from Florence, KY to the Wilmington Laurel Oaks Career Campus for evening classes after his regular job during the day.

"Earning my master's degree while working full-time allowed me to transition from automotive manufacturing into my current role as an Avionics Engineer, but obtaining my FAA Airframe and Powerplant License is the next step toward advancing my career," Garcia said. "As the sole provider for my wife and toddler, I've been working three jobs to make this goal possible, and these

scholarships will ease the financial burden so I can focus on completing the program and building a stronger future for my family."

For Mandi Diehl, a single parent balancing family responsibilities and college studies, scholarship support has meant fewer financial sacrifices and greater confidence about completing a degree.

"This scholarship means so much more than financial support," Diehl said. "It gives me the opportunity to continue my education while building a better future for my family. I hope my boys see that no dream is too big and that with hard work and determination, anything is possible."

According to college officials, the scholarship program continues to expand each year thanks to the generosity of alumni, local businesses, civic organizations, and individual donors who believe in the power of education.

"This is about changing lives," said Amy Perkins-McClellan, Vice President of Enrollment and Workforce Innovation. "Every scholarship represents someone in our community choosing to invest in a student's potential. Those investments ripple outward—strengthening families, employers, and our region for years to come."

As students prepare for the new academic year, college leaders say the impact of these scholarships will be measured not only by the dollars awarded but by the graduates who go on to become nurses, teachers, skilled trades professionals, entrepreneurs, and community leaders.

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