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SOUTHERN STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESS RELEASE



Southern State Celebrates Back-to-School Season and New Opportunities for Ohio Students and Workers

For many Ohioans, “back to school” no longer means a traditional college experience. As students head to campus and classrooms this fall, Southern State is highlighting the innovative ways that community colleges are helping learners of all ages gain new skills, earn valuable credentials, and prepare for in-demand careers in Ohio’s rapidly evolving economy.

“More than ever, community colleges are built for today’s students and today’s economy,” said Southern State President Dr. Nicole Roades.

“Whether someone is just beginning college, returning to school to advance their career, or learning new skills for an entirely different field, we provide affordable, flexible, and workforce-focused pathways that help students move forward quickly,” Roades said.

Each year, Ohio’s 22 community colleges serve approximately 250,000 students, including high school students earning college credit through Ohio’s College Credit Plus program, recent high school graduates, working adults, veterans, career changers, and adults seeking short-term training to quickly gain new skills or advance in their careers.

Students are learning online, on campus, and even at work through flexible programs designed to fit busy lives and changing career goals. Students may be earning a short-term

certificate, an associate degree, or even a bachelor's degree in an applied field while balancing jobs and family responsibilities.

For many students, "back to school" begins while they are still in high school. Through Ohio's College Credit Plus program, students can earn college credits tuition-free and, in some cases, even complete an associate degree before graduating from high school. More than 60,000 Ohio students participate in College Credit Plus annually through Ohio's community colleges.

For traditional college students, community colleges also provide affordable pathways to bachelor's degrees through "2+2" and "3+1" transfer agreements with four-year institutions, allowing students to complete a significant portion of their education at lower cost before transferring to a university.

At the same time, Ohio's community colleges are seeing strong demand from working adults and career changers looking to "upskill" or pivot into new industries. Programs in healthcare, advanced manufacturing, information technology, logistics, engineering technologies, and the skilled trades are increasingly aligned with Ohio's growing 21st-century economy and workforce needs.

"Ohio's community colleges are more important than ever as the transformation of the state's economy continues," said Avi Zaffini, President and CEO of the Ohio Association of Community Colleges.

"As Ohio's economy evolves and new technology-driven industries continue to grow, community colleges are helping students and employers adapt together," Zaffini said. "Our colleges are Ohio's top workforce partner and the best value in higher education because they offer connected, flexible, and affordable education aligned directly with employer needs."

"More than 1,000 employer partnerships across Ohio help guide program development and create opportunities for internships, apprenticeships, and work-based learning experiences that connect students directly to jobs" added Zaffini.

For many students, "back to school" does not mean stepping away from work. Through work-based learning and earn-and-learn partnerships, students can gain classroom instruction while also earning income and building real-world experience with employers in their chosen fields.

Before the fall term begins, Southern State will hold a Resource Expo on Saturday, August 22 from 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. to help students prepare for classes, connect with campus resources, and start the semester with confidence.

Throughout the fall semester, Southern State will also host career exploration opportunities and workforce-focused activities designed to support student success and connect learners with new opportunities.

To learn more about programs at Southern State, visit www.sccc.edu.

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