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A.A. TO B.A. PATHWAY OFFERS NORTHWEST-SHOALS GRADS 100% TRANSFER OF CREDITS INTO A PAID, ON-THE-JOB BACHELOR'S DEGREE & CAREER

Reach University & Northwest-Shoals Community College remove barriers for A.A. holders to complete a zero-debt B.A. and pursue a career in teaching, while transforming the workplace into a learning place.

(MUSCLE SHOALS, Alabama) – May 2, 2023 – Reach University and Northwest-Shoals Community College (NW-SCC) today announced a partnership to provide every NW-SCC graduate a transparent and paid pathway to a bachelor's degree and professional career through a program to overcome historic transfer, completion, and workforce alignment challenges.

In a first of its kind articulation agreement between an Alabama two-year college and Reach University, 100% of credits from nearly all available NW-SCC majors will transfer into Reach's Liberal Studies Bachelor of Arts (B.A.). Rather than a traditional college campus, Reach will utilize local K-12 employers as the university learning place through its accredited apprenticeship degree program. All degree seekers will work as an employee in a northwest Alabama school while completing their job-embedded B.A., offering exposure into the field of teaching and the chance to pursue a teacher credential following degree completion.

This announcement comes as the Alabama Community College System (ACCS) is “bucking the trend” of community college challenges across the country. As many two-year institutions witnessed pandemic-related enrollment declines, ACCS has experienced an [“increase in enrollment by at least 5% each year since 2020.”](#) This program aims to leverage strong enrollment growth to incentivize degree completion and ease transfer into an affordable, on-the-job bachelor's degree for a broad swath of majors.

“As Alabama's first public junior college, Northwest-Shoals takes great pride in being an institution that bridges effective academic and technical career training with the needs of our local employers,” stated NW-SCC President, Dr. Jeff Goodwin. “Our partnership with Reach University will assist with degree completion, while aligning our graduates' transfer opportunities with the labor needs of one of our largest regional employers. We expect this program to create a consistent pipeline of talent for our local schools.”

The A.A. to B.A. Transfer Pathway is offered to all associate's of arts and sciences graduates, as well as select applied science and occupational technology degree holders. The grad will fill

a critical job (e.g., as a classroom aide or other classified employee) while pursuing a debt-free Liberal Studies degree. Half of the learning towards the B.A. comes from on-the-job work, while the other half comes from rigorous and synchronous online Oxford-style seminars held after work hours, led by Reach's nationally-recognized teacher practitioner faculty. In serving historically underrepresented populations, the program also offers extensive advising and support services throughout the degree experience.

"When the Russellville City School District needed bilingual talent to support the changing demographics of our community, we utilized Reach's apprenticeship degree to successfully recruit and train local educators - and the impact of this benefit was seen almost immediately. I am thrilled to welcome a broad swath of A.A. holders into our district to fill a critical role while they pursue their B.A., and potentially spark a love of teaching in a new generation of talent who call this region home. I encourage every district to embrace this new take on education as a benefit to meet short and long-term talent needs," said Dr. Heath Grimes, Superintendent, Russellville City Schools.

In transitioning the workplace into the university learning place, the program provides the learner first-hand exposure into the field of teaching, while closely aligning the training with a district's workforce needs.

"This partnership leverages the individual strengths of a regional community college, an employer-centered university, and leading local employers to create unparalleled postsecondary and professional opportunities in a rural community," said Joe E. Ross, President, Reach University. "The data is clear; an overwhelming majority of community college students want to complete a bachelor's degree, are hungry for hands-on exposure into new fields of work, and are ready to enter the professional workforce. This partnership removes the hurdles that have historically held this talent pool back in filling our nation's ~10MM open roles. And we all win for it."

To be eligible for the program, A.A. holders must be employed at an approved K-12 school, and have access to an instructional work setting for approximately 15 hours a week. Degree seekers will be paid throughout the duration of their degree program, taking on zero student loan debt. After B.A. completion, the learner may matriculate into an alternative teacher certification program, but there is no obligation to do so.

"This A.A. to B.A. Transfer Pathway supports all of Haleyville in thinking outside the box to recruit, train, and place effective, qualified educators in classrooms across our community. We invite every eligible NW-SCC graduate to join us in a variety of roles as they work towards a paid, job-embedded Liberal Studies degree that can be applied to teaching or to any industry throughout the learner's life-long career. This program is a win-win for everyone," shared Dr. Holly Sutherland, Superintendent, Haleyville City Schools.

This program is open to all regional K-12 districts in northwest Alabama. To learn more, please visit www.reach.edu.

ABOUT REACH UNIVERSITY

[Reach University](http://www.reach.edu) is a regionally accredited, non-profit university that pioneers job-embedded degrees and credentials. Reach is actively solving America's teacher shortage by creating fully-embedded pathways for high-potential individuals to earn degrees, credentials and jobs as teachers within their own communities. By focusing on low-income, urban and rural regions, offering online tutorials and classes, and rendering academic credit for on-the-job experience, Reach University is eliminating barriers to entry in high-need professions, and building grow-your-own pipelines of locally representative talent.

ABOUT NORTHWEST-SHOALS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Northwest-Shoals Community College (NW-SCC) is part of the Alabama Community College System and home to over 4,000 students. NW-SCC offers over 100 certificate and degree programs and is committed to providing career technical, academic, and lifelong educational opportunities that promote economic growth and enrich the quality of life for the people it serves. For more information about the NW-SCC, visit <https://nwsc.edu>.

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