2019 ACCESS Award winners announced

The 2019 winners of the Alabama Connecting Classrooms, Educators, and Students Statewide Virtual Learning Program annual ACCESS Awards have been named. They are:

- Administrator of the Year: Dr. Jennifer Cardwell, curriculum and instruction secondary specialist, Trussville City Schools.
- Teacher of the Year: Linda Shields, English teacher, University of Alabama Support Center.
- Counselor of the Year: Casey Watters, Geneva County Middle/High School.
- Facilitator of the Year: Nancy Lamberth, Sylacauga High School.
- Student of the Year: Traci Johnson, Envision Virtual Academy, Mobile.

The winners were presented their awards during the opening session of the 2019 Alabama Educational Technology Conference in Mobile on June 12.

Winners were selected by a panel from nominations sent in by the three ACCESS Support Centers at the University of Alabama, Troy University, and the Madison City Board of Education.

ACHE discusses affordability, state’s economic well-being

Making the cost of higher education more affordable is an important part of efforts to keep Alabama’s economy strong, according to Jim Purcell, executive director of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education.

“Student success is crucial in continuing Alabama’s economic momentum,” Purcell told ACHE board members at the commission’s June 7 meeting.

According to the consumer credit reporting firm Experian, student debt figures from the first quarter of 2019 show that the average Alabama student owed $35,674 in student loans. That is an increase of nearly 31 percent in the past five years, putting Alabama in the top 10 states for increased debt. At 36 percent, Mississippi had the largest five-year increase.

The cost of education past high school certainly factors in a person’s decision on whether to pursue additional education, according to a press release from ACHE.

The state has helped address that issue by increased funding for the Alabama Student Assistance Program, a need-based program, said ACHE Chairman Ed Sanders. The legislature increased program funding by 30 percent for next year.

“The additional money for ASAP will help many more students be able to afford college,” Sanders said.
Follow these tips to find more funds for higher education

Students thinking about college or technical school may these tips help them get more money to pay for their education:

- If they haven’t already filed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), submit it now.
- Visit www.alstudentaid.com and click on Students and Parents.
- Look for local scholarships provided by community organizations and businesses.
- Talk with a financial aid officer at the school they plan to attend to learn about any aid the school has available.
- Take out student loans only after they have received all the free aid — grants, scholarships and work-study — for which they qualify. If they need loans, only borrow as much as they really need.
- Apply, apply, apply. The more financial aid for which they apply, the better their chances of getting enough aid to pay for college. Make sure they meet all deadlines.

ACHE approves new programs

The Alabama Commission on Higher Education has approved six new programs for the state’s public universities and colleges. They are:

- Auburn University, a master’s degree in teaching English for specific purposes.
- Enterprise State Community College, an associate’s degree in machine tool technology.
- Jacksonville State University, a master’s degree in athletic training.
- Troy University, a doctoral degree in global leadership.
- The University of Alabama, a master’s degree in hospitality management.
- The University of West Alabama, a bachelor’s degree in nursing.

Two Alabama schools receive community service awards

Students from two Alabama schools have been awarded the 2018–19 National Community Service Award from the United Nations Association–USA and InnerView Technologies.

The award focuses on student service and community outreach. The Alabama recipients were:

- Jacksonville High School, UN Global Goal 3, good health and well-being.
- The Donoho School, UN Global Goal 16, peace, justice and strong institutions.

The program honors 3 levels of achievement: Merit for 20 hours, Honor for 40 hours, and Ambassador for 100 hours of community service during a school year.

To learn more about the awards, call Sarah Hopkins at (202) 496-6384 or visit www.UNAUSA.org.
Scholarship spotlight
Dixie Youth Baseball Scholarship

Eligibility: Must be a high school senior and have been registered on a Dixie Youth Baseball team participating in a franchised Dixie Youth Baseball Inc. league before reaching age 13.

Award: $2,000
Number: 100 in Alabama and 10 other states
Deadline: Application available October 1; deadline to submit application, February 1
Contact: Johnny Berthelot, Chairman, Scholarship Committee, Dixie Youth Baseball Inc., 110 South Bolivar Street, Suite 207, Marshall, TX 75670; dyb@dixie.org; http://youth.dixie.org/

Private loans bridge gap between college costs, other financial aid

Most college-bound students qualify for financial aid to help pay for their education, such as federal and state grants, scholarships and federal loans. In addition, local scholarships are often available. Parents can also borrow federal loans to help pay students’ college costs.

Some students may find that these programs don’t cover all the costs of college. Others may not qualify for state and federal aid because they’re going to school less than half time. When that happens, private student loans, such as Advantage Education Loan, may be an option.

Because interest rates on private loans depend on the borrower’s credit rating, students may have to pay higher rates than they would on federal student loans. In addition, many lenders require students to have a cosigner, and most require the college to certify that the student needs the loan.

Students and parents are should compare the private loans offered by various lenders to find the best possible deal.
Students can enter audio-essay contest

Students enrolled in a public, private, parochial or home schools in grades 9–12 can enter the Veterans of Foreign Wars Voice of Democracy audio-essay contest.

The contest gives high school students an opportunity to express themselves in a patriotic-themed recorded essay.

The national first-place winner receives a $30,000 scholarship paid directly to the recipient’s U.S. university, college or vocational/technical school. In addition, the first-place winner from each state will receive a scholarship worth at least $1,000 and an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C.


Students can read the rules and eligibility requirements and download the entry form and brochure before they submit their entry at their local VFW Post.

Work-study helps students pay for higher education

One way students can help pay the cost of education after high school is through a work-study program. Plus, work-study can provide valuable experience that looks good on a résumé.

Federal Work-Study lets students earn money to help pay the costs of post-high school education. Rules may vary some by school, but a student must generally:

- Be enrolled in an eligible program.
- Be working toward a certificate or degree.
- Have financial need.
- Be a U.S. citizen or eligible noncitizen.

Students must be paid at least the federal minimum wage. Jobs may be on or off campus. Students who submit the FAFSA will be considered for Federal Work-Study unless they asked not to be.

Many colleges have their own work-study programs. Students interested in a school’s program should check with the college’s financial aid office.

No newsletter for July

As in past years, we won’t publish the Alabama Counselor Connection in July. We’ll be back with our first issue for the 2019–2020 school year in August.