



(Re)Engage Alabama

Inaugural Convening of Alabama 4-Year Institutions: August 3, 2022

Purpose

Education and training is key to supporting individuals and families and creating a stronger economy. Recognizing this, Alabama has set a [statewide goal](#) of adding 500,000 credentialed Alabamians to the potential workforce. In order to reach this goal, and to provide opportunities for every Alabamian to earn the skills and knowledge to succeed, Alabama is committed to supporting adult learners, recognizing that adults experience unique challenges when pursuing their academic and workforce training goals.

To advance the state's commitment to supporting adult learners, the Alabama Commission on Higher Education ([ACHE](#)), [Alabama Possible](#), and the [Governor's Office of Education and Workforce Transformation](#) (GOEWT) are launching (Re)Engage Alabama, an adult attainment-focused Continuous Improvement Meeting Series, that will align and connect multiple ongoing adult-focused initiatives under a set of common enrollment, completion, and labor force participation goals. These ongoing initiatives include but are not limited to the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) Degrees When Due project, the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) Prior Learning Assessment initiative, and a project with Complete College America (CCA) aimed at supporting adult learners of color in attaining credentials of value at Historically Black Community Colleges and Predominantly Black Community Colleges in Alabama.

The goals of the inaugural convening of of Alabama 4-Year Institutions on August 3rd are to:

- **Connect** multiple ongoing adult-focused initiatives under a common set of goals
- **Build a coalition** of engaged institutions of higher education (IHEs) focused on improving adult enrollment and degree completion
- **Strengthen** awareness and partnership across multiple adult-focused initiatives
- **Share** promising practices and common challenges
- Begin to **collaboratively create** a continuous improvement process

Background

ACHE, Alabama Possible, and GOEWT participated in the national Partnerships for Achieving Student Success (PASS) Cohort from January - May 2022. The PASS Cohort was a collaboration of state systems of higher education – from Alabama, Rhode Island, and Michigan – focused on improving outcomes for adult learners. The cohort was led by [Third Sector](#), a nonprofit advisory organization, with support from [Education Strategy Group](#), and [ECMC Foundation](#). The state focused specifically on adults pursuing four-year degrees at public universities, recognizing that two thirds of the jobs that will be added to Alabama's labor market over the next decade will require bachelor's degrees and that while Alabama has many adult-focused education and workforce initiatives underway, there are few specifically targeted at adults pursuing four-year degrees. Through the PASS Cohort, the state conducted data discovery, root cause analysis, an asset and gap analysis, and other activities to gain a deeper understanding of adult learners.

During PASS, ACHE, Alabama Possible, and GOEWT learned that between 2017 - 2021, there were 97,368 adults¹ ages 25 - 54 enrolled in public 4-year institutions (IHEs) in Alabama, making up 14.4% of total undergraduate enrollment. 57.5% of those adults identified as White, 27.5% as African American or Black, and 9.3% as

¹ Statewide student database name



non-Black people of color. Based on the historical data, enrollment and completion rates vary across 4-year IHEs. This variation led ACHE, Alabama Possible, and GOEWT to **focus on developing a stronger understanding of how differences across IHEs might impact enrollment and completion outcomes, and how all IHEs can be supported to enroll and serve more adult students, including returning adults with some college, no degree.** More data, disaggregated by institution, will be shared on August 3rd.

What is “(Re)Engage Alabama?”

(Re)Engage Alabama is **an adult attainment-focused continuous improvement (CI) initiative that enables regular, ongoing data sharing and creates communication channels** for sharing best practices for enrolling and supporting adult students to completion across 4-year public IHEs. CI is both a mindset and a process that involves using data and stakeholder engagement to uncover insights, design solutions, and take actions to improve outcomes on an ongoing basis. Alabama’s CI process will enable IHEs and other stakeholders to:

- Better understand and discuss data on enrollment and completion outcomes for adult students across IHEs, as well as how these outcomes connect with labor force participation outcomes;
- Identify and scale specific solutions that IHEs have in place that support adult enrollment and attainment and have been shown to positively impact outcomes; and
- Connect, align, and augment existing and ongoing state- and IHE-level efforts to support adults.

CI processes typically have four steps (depicted on the right): collecting data, analyzing data, discussing results, and improving outcomes. In order to determine what data will be collected and analyzed, and how that data will be discussed and used to brainstorm solutions that improve outcomes, ACHE, Alabama Possible, and GOEWT invite all 4-year institutions to participate in (Re)Engage Alabama. These ongoing meetings will engage IHEs and other partners currently focused on adult reengagement and attainment, and will serve as spaces to collaboratively design the CI process while implementing the third and fourth steps (i.e. discuss results, improve outcomes).



As an incentive, ACHE has secured a small initial pool of funding (\$60K) to support IHE participation in meetings and their implementation of resulting actions, which might include:

- **New or deeper relationships with local community-based organizations**, including Alabama Possible, that can provide targeted reengagement, recruitment, application and financial aid support, and/or wraparounds for adult students;
- **Institutional adoption and systemization of Prior Learning Assessments and/or pre-emptive degree audits** for adults with significant credit but no degree to provide more realistic time-to-graduation expectations;
- **System-wide adoption and standardization of outcome metrics** between institutions, providers, workforce and other partners, etc. to better measure impact;
- **Regular, ongoing analysis and monitoring of enrollment, persistence, and graduation outcomes** for adult students;
- **Improved communication and coordination** - including regular, ongoing sharing of best practices - across institutions and service providers; and
- **Implementation of data-driven interventions** based on what is moving the needle on outcomes.