

LAWSON STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
ALABAMA

COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT

Innovation Technology Leadership Conference



JENNIFER AMERICA

2017 - 2018

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The Conference was held in the Dr. Perry W. Ward Advanced Technology Building



PURPOSE OF PROJECT

Statement of Project Goals

The Community Service Committee began the selection of a project with what we felt would extend leadership training beyond the classroom and into the workforce. This is why Lawson State Community College fully recognizes the following goals of Phi Beta Lambda (PBL) for our project:

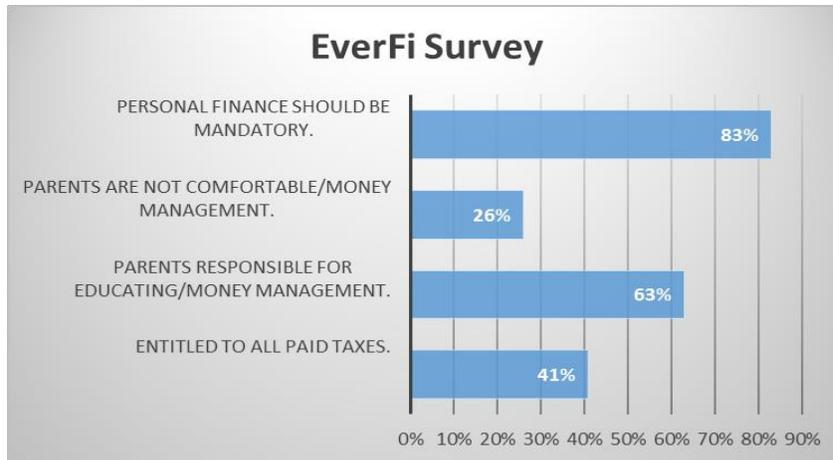
- Develop competent, aggressive business leadership;
- Strengthen the confidence of students in themselves and their work; and
- Encourage members in the development of individual projects which contribute to the improvement of home, business, and community.

The goals stated above help us to enforce the PBL Creed and strengthen our faith in the Creed's words. We believe that every person should actively work toward improving social, political, community, and family life. We believe that every person should take responsibility for carrying out assigned tasks in a manner that brings credit to self, associates, school, and community. What is most important, we believe that we have the responsibility to work efficiently and to think clearly. We are making this promise by improving our community and instilling in our future generation that everyone must contribute to the community and do their part.

Service to the Community and Its Citizens

A survey done by EverFi, Inc., revealed that the United States high school students lacked adequate financial knowledge. Nearly half of United States high school students say they do not know how to establish good credit, and more than a quarter of students believed they will be unprepared to manage their finances upon high school graduation because they do not understand basic financial facts and concepts. Other facts were:

- On an average, high schools students believed that a good credit score was about 500 and more than a third believed that a good credit score is 300 or less.
- 41% of the students surveyed think they are entitled to receive all paid taxes back upon filing a federal income tax return, or that they do not have to pay federal income taxes at all.
- 63% say their parents are responsible for educating them about money management; but, only 26 percent of parents feel prepared to educate their children.
- 83% of students believe that personal finance should be mandatory in schools. However, only four U.S. states require at least a semester-long course devoted to the topic, and less than half of states require personal finance education to be integrated into other subject matter.



The members of Phi Beta Lambda assisted the faculty and staff in the Business and Information Technologies Division at Lawson State Community College in organizing an Innovation Technology Leadership Conference (ITLC) as a service mainly to the high school students in the surrounding schools (Birmingham City, Schools, Midfield City Schools, Jefferson County Schools, local private schools, etc.). The Innovation Technology Conference was designed to help build tomorrow’s leaders by strengthening skills and opening minds as a step on the journey to career success!

It is known that work ethics should begin early. This is why we wanted our main target audience to be high school students – Lawson State’s Divisional students (Phi Beta Lambda and others) were in attendance as well. The conference focused on life skills, soft skills, personal financial matters, scholarships, technology, career options, etc. These areas were the main focus this year because we wanted to assist in producing the best and brightest for the workforce. Most employers know not to assume a wealth of professional experience at the entry-level; but, they do expect workers to have the soft skills necessary to be productive in a professional work environment.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OF PROJECT

We all (members) felt that the Innovation Technology Leadership Conference presenters should be the most creative prominent innovators in the South with a wealth of valuable information to absorb. We wanted every participant, from that day forward, to learn ways to transform their lives to be productive citizens. The workshops mirrored real-world challenges and facilitated critical thinking and communication among all workshop groups.

Further, we all wanted the workshops to be interesting to our population that day; therefore we did our research and came up with the following workshop titles and sought the best speakers in the state:

WORKSHOPS TOPICS

SO YOU ARE 18 AND OLDER NOW—A SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR YOUNG ADULTS – PRESENTER: Attorney Eric Guster, Guster Law Firm / CNN - After you walk off of the stage obtaining your high school diploma, the next day, you will be walking into the “Real World” with challenges. Master your challenges successfully as a young adult by making wise life-skills decisions. Get some essential information needed to cultivate life-long goals.

HOW TO CUT COSTS OBTAINING A COLLEGE DEGREE AND RESEARCH SCHOLARSHIPS – PRESENTER: Dr. Stephanie Henry, Business/Office Administration Instructor – Lawson State - The extra years a student spends in college means more money made in the workforce. Your earnings will increase with the level of education one has earned by obtaining certifications, certificates or degrees. Learn how you can finish college faster and start maximizing your earning potential as soon as possible. There are scholarships tailored to all academic interests, talents, geographic locations, religion, extracurricular activities, career goals, gender, etc. Learn how to jump start your search to make your college life more affordable.

ALL OF THE THINGS CREDITORS DO NOT WANT YOU TO KNOW PRESENTER: – Ms. Michelle Foy, Credit Consultant – Lawson State - Gaining and/or understanding how to establish and maintain good credit are essential to a more stress-free lifestyle of living. The topics include (1) Maintaining good credit; and (2) The pitfall and benefits to obtaining student loans, personal loans, and revolving credit. You will learn the information creditors do not want consumers to know.

SOFT SKILLS IN THE WORKFORCE—DON'T LIMIT YOUR CHANCES OF CAREER SUCCESS – PRESENTER: Dr. Kim LaFevor, Dean of College of Business and Professor of Business - You might have the best reputation for being the best that you do; but, it amounts to little if you don't work well with others. Some of the most important professional skills for workers and employers are soft skills. Soft skills are more crucial to your job search and overall career than you think. Learn what it takes to have the key to building relationships, gaining visibility, and creating more opportunities for advancement! Employers believe great soft skills are one of the most important elements that lead to success in business. Further, today's employers are looking more at communication, teamwork, etc., than simply just traditional academic results and outcomes. In this session, choosing your academic path and the importance of these soft skills that will likely set you apart from other candidates will be shared.

THE ABCs OF OBTAINING PELL GRANTS/OTHER FEDERAL RESOURCES FOR COLLEGE – PRESENTER: Ms. Cassandra Hollins, Director/Financial Aid–Lawson State Get the maximum funds you deserve while going to college. The topics to be discussed are: (1) What is College Financial Aid, (2) Sources of Financial Aid and (3) The Dreaded FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid).

WANT TO BE A SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEUR—GET THE FACTS PRESENTER: Mr. Thomas Walker, Owner of Goodyear Stores - Giving up the 9 to 5 job and becoming your own boss is no small feat. It takes intelligence, heart, intuitiveness, tenacity, foresight, and a

lot of courage. Most say that it was the best decision they ever made. Learn what it takes to be the boss!

BE FINANCIALLY SAVVY—LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL - PRESENTER: Taylor Agricola, CFP, Financial Advisor and Associate VP Raymond James and Associates - When you graduate from high school, you will be faced with a variety of options—college, work, or even the military. Some of you will still have parental assistance and some will not. Learn how to become financially savvy with your finances at an early age and build a financial legacy.

SOCIAL MEDIA IN YOUR LIFE AND CAREER—THE DO'S AND THE DON'TS – PRESENTER: Ms. Naquela Kirk, Media and Marketing Specialist - Lawson State
Social Media is a great responsibility on every individual—it could potentially ruin your education, negatively impact your career, or hurt others. Learn what to do, to avoid, and how Social Media can work for you!

HOW TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN AN ONLINE COURSE—HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE – PRESENTER: Mrs. Bethany Gwin, CIS Instructor – Lawson State
Do you want to complete your B.S. degree in less than 4 years? Some students across the United States have earned up to 45 hours of college credit while in high school—get started early!

DIGITAL RESUMES: TIPS ON HOW TO GET NOTICED – PRESENTER: Ms. LaTanya Millhouse, Senior Program Manager—The Alpha Omega Group
The new trend in the workforce seems to be digital resumes. Ultimately, you need one because companies are asking for them. Many businesses require potential employees to submit a resume via the company website or a third-party employment website. Moreover, posting your resume on your social network profiles can help employers find you. Learn how a digital resume can help you get noticed and land the perfect new job.

INTRODUCTION TO APP DEVELOPMENT—BECOME A SOFTWARE DEVELOPER – PRESENTER: Mr. Scott Kelley, CIS Instructor – Lawson State
Starting January 2018, Lawson State will be teaching app development for iOS Mobile phones, watches, etc. Learn how to code and design fully functional apps, gaining critical job skills in software development and information technology.

BANKING BASICS FOR STUDENTS – PRESENTER: Zach Eaves, Branch Manager, Regions Bank - Get the facts early about banking! You will learn: (1) The process of opening a checking and savings account; (2) Budgeting; (3) What is an overdrafts and overdraft protection; (4) The importance of having a personal banker; (5) Mobile pay and mobile banking; (6) The difference between a debit and credit card; etc.

Planning, Development, and Implementation



We instantly began soliciting assistance from the local businesses to offer scholarships to the college students. We received \$2,500 and will be giving 3, \$500 scholarships to students (at the Honors and Awards Program – April 2018) that will be returning in the fall (2018) and they will be able to use

the funds to offset tuition, books, fees, materials, etc. The following businesses made the scholarships possible:

Jennifer America with Dr. Kim LaFevor, Dean
College of Business—Athens State University, Alabama

- America’s First Credit Union
- EBSCO
- Buffalo Rock
- Vulcan Materials

IMPLEMENTATION OF PROJECT

The Innovation Technology Leadership Conference was held on Tuesday, November 14, 2017, on Lawson State Community College Birmingham Campus in the Ward Building. Prior to the students’ attendance at the conference, they were required to register through an online service called Eventbrite to choose which three workshops they would like to attend. There was a \$10 registration fee and it also paid for the students’ lunches (Chick-Fil-A). Mrs. Sherlita Denson, Mr. Norris Watkins (Birmingham Advisers), and Mr. Scott Kelley (Bessemer Campus) had all the students to meet in the lobby of the Ward Building. PBL members and the Lawson State Community College’s Ambassadors greeted the students and distributed the itinerary of the conference as well as biographies of the presenters. Once the students receive the pamphlets, they then proceeded into the auditorium. The attire for the conference was business casual.

We started promptly at 9:00 a.m., even thou all of the buses had not arrived—we had to stay on schedule. There were 192 students in attendance. Dr. Alice Tyler Milton, Associate Dean for the Business and Information Technologies Division, issued the welcome and vision for the leadership conference. During the 15 minutes allotted, the remaining buses were in.

The conference was composed of a series of workshops in which students had a choice to attend. The workshops consist of various categories which emphasize leadership, funding your education, money management, how to land your dream job through resume writing, etc. These workshops were located throughout the Ward Building in designated labs. Students dispersed with their schools to the various workshops they had chosen. Each workshop was limited to 45 minutes so students would stay intrigued and also allow the presenters enough time to teach thoroughly. There was a 15-minute break in between workshops to allow students to ask questions and/or get information from the presenters for future endeavors.

After the second workshop was completed, the students and presenters had lunch for an hour. Lunch for the presenters, advisers, and guests (One adviser traveled from Craven Community College, in North Carolina) was sponsored by Lawson State Phi Beta Lambda—Jim-‘N-Nicks was catered. During this time PBL members mingled with the students to receive feedback on how their overall experience was throughout the conference (the responses were

documented). PBL members also asked the students what their future plans were after graduation and at the same time, recruited future PBL members. During the luncheon, PBL members issued raffle tickets to all of the students to win a door prize. Students were also able to win door prizes after each workshop they attended.

We thanked all the students for attending the conference, and hoped that having this conference would be beneficial to them and help them along their journey in college or in the workforce. The students really were enthused to win the door prizes. The winning gift bags consist of snacks, school supplies, and Lawson State memorabilia. Once the raffle was over students then proceed to their final workshop.



Jennifer America With Thomas Walker, Entrepreneur
Owner of Three Goodyear Stores—Birmingham Area

The workforce of today and the future needs to be more educated than the workforces of previous generations. Educating a competitive workforce helps to stimulate both the local and state economies. It also helps individuals improve their lives and the lives of their family members. Employers are seeking specific higher-ordered skills and prefer graduates who have gone through systematic programs of study. Merely graduating from high school is no longer sufficient to guarantee a steady job and a middle-class income. As educational attainment of the population continues to increase, more and more people will receive education or training after leaving high school.

IMPACT AND BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

The members of PBL realize that giving back to the community is vital and giving freely of ourselves is priceless—it is a wonderful feeling. The smiles, laughter, and fellowship made us feel rich. The knowledge that we gain from the workshop was inspiring and motivational. It truly elevated our future. We believe our project gave us the courage to continue are journey to

success. Though it is difficult to summarize all the benefits we gained from leadership conference, here are some of the important benefits:

- Learning first hand/hands on experience;
- Learning how to use our strengths and abilities;
- Learning how to master soft skills for the workforce
- Learning how to survive in the “real world”;
- Learning how to “step out on nothing and get something;”
- Meeting new and interesting people;
- Learning from our mistakes and trying to avoid repeating those mistakes;
- Learning to have confidence and believe in ourselves and our abilities; and
- Learning to relate the goals of PBL to “real life” situations.

Workshop Comments: Surveys were sent via e-mail, within one week after the event, to determine its overall impact. Based on a post-event survey (Powered by Google Forms), that completed by the attendants of the Community Service Project, the participants felt that the event was successful regarding its purpose. They were asked 6 questions regarding the event. The survey sought the participating student’s opinions on the following:

1. How organized was the conference?
2. Was the conference beneficial to life skills?
3. Would you join or recommend someone to join Lawson State PBL?
4. What activities would you like Lawson State PBL to do for the upcoming semester?
5. Was the atmosphere in the classroom comfortable?
6. Do you feel your life skills have been enhanced by attending the conference?

In response, 100% of the participants stated that they gained something that can benefit them after graduation. Along with that 87.5% stated that they would join Lawson State PBL and 100% of the polled participants would recommend a student to join Lawson State PBL. All (100%) participants generally agreed that the atmosphere for this event was comfortable and the objectives that were established were met. None of them (0%) felt uncomfortable or lack meeting the objectives of the presented activities.

EVIDENCE OF PUBLICITY RECEIVED

Below is a snapshot of the “pdf” file program:

Welcome! The Technology Leadership Conference is designed to help build tomorrow’s leaders by strengthening skills and opening minds as a step on the journey to career success! It is known that work ethics should begin as early as high school. Therefore, both high school and college students are present. The conference will focus on life skills, soft skills, personal financial matters, scholarships, technology, career options, etc. These areas are our focus this year because we want to assist in producing the best and brightest for the workforce. Most employers know not to assume a wealth of professional experience at the entry-level; but, they

do expect workers to have the soft skills necessary to get along in a professional work environment.

The Innovation Technology Leadership Conference consists of the most creative prominent innovators in the South with a wealth of valuable information for you to absorb. We want every participant, from this day forward, to learn ways to transform yourself and your future business or careers by continuing to learn, network and have fun!

Tentative Schedule for November 14, 2017

8:15 a.m.	– 9:00 a.m.	Registration
9:00 a.m.	– 9:15 a.m.	Overview of Workshops
9:15 a.m.	– 9:30 a.m.	Break
9:30 a.m.	– 10:15 a.m.	Session I of Workshops
10:15 a.m.	– 10:30 a.m.	Break
10:30 a.m.	– 11:15 a.m.	Session II of Workshops
11:15 a.m.	– 11:30 p.m.	Break
11:30 a.m.	– 12:30 p.m.	Lunch
12:30 p.m.	– 12:45 p.m.	Break
12:45 p.m.	– 1:30 p.m.	Session III of Workshops

NOTE: During the breaks, students were also able to visit the vendors in the lobby area (Regions Bank, America’s First Credit Union, Rep from HR, etc.)

INNOVATION TECHNOLOGY LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE PRESENTERS



Eric L. Welch Guster—Attorney, Political Analyst, Investor—Eric L. Welch Guster grew up in Birmingham, Alabama, graduated from Baker Elementary, Bush Middle and Ensley High School. He received a B.S. in Accounting and Finance from Alabama State University and graduated from Birmingham School of Law.

He is the founder of Guster Law Firm, LLC, where members of the firm handle criminal and civil matters. He appears weekly as a legal & political analyst on national and international television shows and stations including CNN, HLN, MSNBC, The Today Show, Good Morning Britain and FOX News.

In addition to his law firm and television careers, Eric Guster is a real estate investor. He invests in residential and commercial real estate property in Alabama, Georgia, Florida and New York. During his years at Alabama State University, Guster pledged Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., and became a member of The Mighty Marching Hornets.

“Never quit,” is his motto. He used it when he started his own business in college, and he still refers to that motto in everything he does today. In his spare time, he travels, enjoys cross fit, volunteers with organizations benefiting youth, and mentors young attorneys.



Zach Eaves – Branch Manager, Regions Bank—Zach was born and raised in Athens, Georgia, where he attended the University of Georgia and spent more than 25 years of his life. He graduated from UGA with a BA in Religion in 2009. Following his passion

for youth ministry he was sent to Birmingham to be on staff with Young Life. He spent three years overseeing the middle and high school ministries in Vestavia Hills. Transitioning out of full-time ministry, he and his wife, Liza, decided to stay in the Birmingham area.

Zach began working for Regions in July of 2015 as a personal banker. Over two years and a few promotions Zach is now a Branch Manager of the Morgan Rd. Branch in Bessemer, Alabama. Zach has a passion for people and uses financial advice, guidance and education through Regions Bank to help them reach their financial goals. As a Branch Manager he not only focuses on the customers, but also on his fellow associates through coaching, mentoring and training. Zach lives in Hoover, Alabama, with his wife and daughter. He hopes to make life better for all that he comes in contact with!

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Thomas Edward Walker, Sr.—Visionary, Leader, God-Fearing, Catalyst, & Father—Thomas Walker is a testament to the American Dream—Born in 1960 in Birmingham, Alabama, during one of the most pivotal times of the United States history—the Civil Rights Movement, Mr. Walker overcame many odds to being one of the most influential entrepreneurs in the state of Alabama. Our country’s vast history speaks stories of men and women who defied the cultural normalcy from impoverishment to wealth, whether spiritual, material or educational.

The setting of his childhood was in a neighborhood called East Thomas, west of the Birmingham metro area. He grew up under his mother and father in a three-bedroom home that still stands today. He has four siblings – two brothers and two sisters. Though not the oldest, Mr. Walker had a knack for leadership around the home as he tended to yardwork and immediately got a job once he became of age. He attended the home of the historic Thundering Herd of A.H. Parker High School; a public school in Birmingham, Alabama, originally named Negro High School in the early 1900’s. He was an active athlete in high school, but had a huge appreciation for the sport of baseball.

Mr. Walker began his career in the automotive industry as a mechanic at a local Firestone Complete Auto Care facility after high school. When he graduated from A.H. Parker High School, he was admitted into Miles College, just a few miles from home in Fairfield. Mr. Walker knew at an early age that he possessed an inner will and strength that most freshmen in college do not even think about until years after college. This strength nourished his rise and will to do more for his family, personal life and community. In between classes, he hurried to work for a few hours and returned to his studies. The hunger for being able to implement his gifts of customer service, drive and focus into the real world, while also providing for his family, overcame the desire for the collegiate atmosphere and he removed himself from Miles College.

Mr. Walker did not stop as a mechanic at the local Firestone, but quickly moved up into the ranks of manager. Some within the company did not appreciate the drive of such a young person such as him and felt that it would be in best interest for the company to move in another direction – without him. Mr. Walker went to work with the Goodyear Tire & Rubber company for five years as a store manager. After much diligence, commitment and sacrifice, he eventually was able to purchase his own auto care facility. Ironically, he opened a franchise Goodyear Tire Center – a longtime Akron, OH based competitor of Firestone in Forestdale, just steps away from his childhood neighborhood. He was the first African-American franchise owner of a Fortune 500 automotive service center in Birmingham, Alabama. Today, twenty-seven years later, this portfolio of automotive service centers has grown to three in the surrounding Birmingham areas.

Mr. Walker’s life and stages of personal transmutation outlines the confirmation of finding one’s divine path through witness, love and personal metamorphosis. These strengths have been passed on through DNA to his three sons Thomas Jr., Michael and William. He and his wife of twenty-seven years, Nadis, live in the Hoover community where they continue to be beacons of joy and love in other’s lives.



Dr. Kim LaFavor—Dean for the College of Business at Athens State University

—Dr. Kim LaFavor presently serves as the Dean for the College of Business at Athens State University. Her employment with Athens State University began in 2005, where she has served as a Faculty Member and Department Chair for both Management and Human Resource Management until her selection as Dean in October 2013. She has taught collegiately for 25 years at both the undergraduate and graduate level, specializing in the areas of advanced human resource practices, labor relations and employment law. She professionally consults specifically in the areas of leadership development, recruitment and selection, performance management, compensation administration and labor relations. She has developed and modified HR programs and curriculum to be successfully awarded alignment with SHRM Curriculum Guidelines for HR

Undergraduate and Graduate Programs by National SHRM, including designing an Executive MBA Program with an HR Concentration that has become the largest in the State of Tennessee.

Currently, LaFavor serves on the Board of Directors for the Tennessee Employment Relations Research Association as Past President and with the Alabama Society of Human Resource Management as the State Director for College Relations. She is President-Elect for the Alabama Association for Higher Education in Business. Among her recognitions, she has been nationally recognized as an HR Fellow, Pearson “One” Professor, HRM Hall of Fame, and National Woman of Achievement. She has served as both a SHRM National Foundation Scholarship Judge and Pearson Scholarship Judge for multiple years for Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society. In addition, LaFavor has authored several HR publications to include peer reviewed journal articles, and practitioner based publications, including those published in the International Journal of Business Excellence, Strategic Management Quarterly, International Journal for Enterprise Information Systems, Technology Interface Journal, HR Professionals Magazine, and HR Alabama Magazine. She has also served as a reviewer for human resource, labor relations, and employment law textbook publishers and professional publications for over two decades. Prior to her current responsibilities LaFavor had a 21-year career with General Motors of which she spent the greatest portion of her tenure in progressively responsible HR/Labor Relations to include: Organizational Development Consultant, Training and Development Leader, Senior Leadership Development Advisor, Labor Relations Supervisor, and retired as Plant Personnel Director with Saturn Service Parts Operations.

A native of Detroit, Michigan, LaFavor has a Bachelor of Science Degree with dual majors in Psychology and Personnel Psychology from Athens State University, a Master’s of Science Degree in Human Resources Management from Troy State University, and a Doctorate of Business Administration with dual majors in Management and Education from the University of Sarasota. She holds HR certifications through the Human Resource Certification Institute (HRCI) as a Senior Professional in Human Resources and through the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) as a SHRM Senior Certified Professional.

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Dr. Stephanie Henry, Ph.D.—Business Education, Business Administration, Office Administration Instructor—Lawson State (KBD Adviser)

—Dr. Stephanie Henry currently holds a doctoral degree in Instructional Leadership with a concentration in Instructional Technology and has worked in the education and training industry for more than 10 years.

Her experience includes working within the public and private sectors. She has organized instruction and programs via face-to-face, hybrid, and web-based channels for both the K-12 audience, postsecondary, and business professionals.



Bethany Gwin—Computer Science Instructor—Lawson State (KBD Adviser): Bethany Gwin is a Computer Science instructor at Lawson State Community College. She graduated with a Management Information Systems degree from the University of Alabama in 1994. Upon graduation, she obtained a job as a computer programmer for SunGard Business Systems (now FIS). At SunGard her specialty was Defined Benefits and Defined Contributions.

After spending 15 years in the business world, she decided to bring her knowledge into the classroom. She graduated with a 4.0 from Jacksonville State University with a Master’s degree in Computer Science in 2013. Mrs. Gwin teaches a variety of introductory and advanced computer science courses at Lawson State including IC3 and MOS Certifications classes. Beginning in spring 2018, she will add to her list of classes Swift Programming—Developing Apps for the iOS system (iPhones, iPads, etc.) She lives in Vestavia Hills, Alabama. When not teaching, she enjoys spending time with her husband and 3 daughters.

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Scott Kelley—Computer Science Instructor—Lawson State (PBL Adviser): Scott Kelley currently has the following certified credentials: A+, Network+, Security+, CCNA, MCSE, IC3, MCDBA, etc. He graduated from Samford University with a bachelor’s degree in Computer Science and the University of Alabama at Birmingham with a master’s degree in Computer Science. His hobby includes repairing old video arcade games.



Michelle Foy—Administrative Assistant for the Business and Information Technologies Division – Lawson State; Licensed Insurance Agent, Tax Advisor, and Credit Analyst—Michelle Foy, a native of Cleveland, Ohio, that worked extensively in banking (Credit Analyst, Debt Collector, Bankruptcy, Litigation, Managing Repossessions, etc.) before coming to Lawson State Community College. She is a graduate of Lawson State and is currently pursuing a bachelor’s degree at Athens State University (Alabama) with an anticipated month of graduation, May 2018. After her bachelor’s degree, she plans to pursue a MBA.

In addition to Michelle’s knowledge in credit restoration, she is a licensed insurance agent, financial consultant, tax advisor, and litigation specialist. Michelle loves promoting financial literacy and helping others increase their credit worthiness amongst credit lenders and financial institutes.

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Cassandra Renee Hollins—Director of Student Financial Services—Lawson State: Cassandra Renee Hollins has worked in the Financial Aid profession for more than 30 years. She brings considerable regulatory and administrative experience to her role as the Director of Student Financial Services.

In addition to serving as a Director of Student Financial Services, early in Cassandra’s career, she consulted in the areas of enrollment management, FA ABC’s with the Rutledge/Southern College System and ITT, regulatory compliance and financial aid processes and procedures. She has more than 16 years of experience as the Director of Student Financial Services at a two-year Historically Black College, 9 years of experience as a Financial Aid Officer and JTPA Manager, and 7 years in the Private/Proprietary

Institutions. Cassandra has made a special effort to address issues of “First Generation Students—College Entry”, and believes in *President Obama’s Quote “Higher education can’t be a luxury, it’s an economic imperative that every family in America should be able to afford.”*

She is active in several professional organizations including the Southern Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (SASFAA), Alabama Association of Student Financial Aid Administrator, the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA), and the Mississippi Community College Starfish Program. Cassandra is the second eldest of six children, mother of three, and grandmother of four; received a Bachelor of Science in Finance from Alabama A&M University and a Master of Management from Faulkner University with further studies at the University of Alabama (Tuscaloosa). With a reputation for JUDICIOUSNESS, Cassandra believes and knows that with God, all things are possible and “to whom much is given, much is required! Her favorite quote is, “Each one, Reach One; Each one, Teach one!



Naquela Kirk, Marketing Specialist—Public Relations and Community Affairs—Lawson State: Naquela Kirk has is a Media and Marketing Specialist in the Office of Public Relations and Community Affairs at Lawson State Community College. She has five years of experience in the Birmingham television news industry working as an assignment editor at CBS 42. During her time in television news, Naquela was responsible for providing the newsroom with the latest, developing information on news events as they were happening.

She worked closely with news managers, producers and reporters to develop story ideas for television and digital news coverage. In her current position, one of her many tasks is to strategically produce social media posts to engage with followers across Lawson State Community College’s social media platforms. Naquela is a graduate of the University of Montevallo where she received her B.S. in Mass Communications.

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Taylor Agricola—CFP, Associate Vice President, Investments: Taylor has been with Raymond James, formerly Morgan Keegan, since 2006 and since then his goal is to get to know each client and their specific wants and needs, and work closely with them to devise a customized financial plan to help build and preserve their assets, and then on a daily basis exceed their expectations for competence, service, responsiveness, and attention to detail.

Taylor has earned the professional certification of CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ practitioner. By being certified by the CFP Board, he has taken the extra step to demonstrate his professionalism by voluntarily submitting to the rigorous CFP® certification process that includes highly demanding education, examination, experience and ethical requirements. Taylor was born and raised in Birmingham and currently lives there with his wife and two young children. He received his bachelor’s degree in Finance from Auburn University. In his free time he enjoys golf, cooking, college football, and spending time with his family.

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LaTanya Millhouse—Senior Program Manager, The Alpha Omega Group. LaTanya Millhouse has been working with the Alpha Omega Group since 2004. The Group fosters the needs of the community. Through the Alpha Omega Group, she has provided assistance to several local nonprofit organizations that includes assistance with the success of “Making Proud Choices”, a national campaign to prevent teen pregnancy. Additionally, the Alpha Omega Group works with the Jefferson County Commission in the areas of community development and public relations.

PHOTOS FROM THE CONFERENCE



**Students Taking
Pictures
After the
Conference**



**School Buses Arriving
For the Conference**

**Students
Migrating to
Different
Workshops**



**Gathering Before the
Workshops**

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