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STUDY  
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# *Pathways to Prosperity:* *Adult Education+Degree=Career*

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 **CIPE**  
Center for Innovation  
in Postsecondary Education

**ECMC**  
Foundation

the  
**GREAT  
EIGHT**

## ***The Center for Innovation in Postsecondary Education (CIPE), University of South Alabama***

CIPE serves community colleges, universities, postsecondary partners, employers, and community partners to improve graduation rates and workforce outcomes for first-generation, under-represented, and under-resourced students. CIPE unifies the work of its partner communities to provide maximum benefit for participating institutions and the students they serve. CIPE assists higher education institutions in becoming more student-centered and equity-focused. CIPE catalyzes change among postsecondary institutions in digital teaching and learning, student advising, developmental education, student pathways, and capacity building, among other topics. Focusing on these objectives improves student outcomes and eliminates disparities, particularly among Black, Latino/a/x, and Indigenous students and students from low-income backgrounds.

Since 2015, Dr. Thompson and her team have honed their skill in creating partner communities, building consensus to articulate a shared learning agenda, and skillfully building relationships with site-facing supports and support providers. CIPE's purposeful and uniquely accomplished team is staffed by experts with the skill, knowledge, and ability to perform precisely at both the macro and micro levels. They develop unique operational service delivery frameworks for guidance, planning, strategy, and resources for partners to deploy in change management. CIPE's service deliverable supports constructs of holistic student success initiatives to serve students effectively and efficiently. The team's technical assistance enables partner institutions to build capacity by better understanding the practice of data utilization for decision-making and deploying efficiency in all-encompassing student success support.

**Dr. Kathy Thompson** is the Founding Director of the Center for Innovative in Postsecondary Education. She has over 30 years of experience in postsecondary administration, teaching, and workforce and economic development. Dr. Thompson currently serves as the Technical Assistance provider for the Lumina Foundation, Black Adult Learners Initiatives cohort of five HBCUs in North Carolina. Prior, Dr. Thompson served six years as the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Intermediary for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Frontier Set. She is motivated to eliminate equity disparities in education, particularly for Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students and students from low-income backgrounds.

**Dr. Lisa Dunning**, Kaizen Education Group, has a deep-rooted passion for higher education. She served three years as a consultant on the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Intermediary Team for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Frontier Set. Dr. Dunning currently lends her expertise through technical assistance and strategic guidance to the Lumina Foundation's Adult Learner Initiative and Educause's CourseGateway Digital Learning Strategy. A significant chapter of her career includes her leadership role as the Associate Vice President for Student Success at a distinguished HBCU. Dr. Dunning's visionary thinking was instrumental in developing and implementing a newly designed academic advising framework, the cornerstone of student support systems.

**Carlisha Hartzog** is the Storytelling Team Project Manager, overseeing the project's design, management schedule, and outreach. She is the president and managing member of Hartzog Consulting, a full-service project and event management firm that integrates logistics management and communications support to support some of the world's most respected foundations, Fortune 500 corporations, and multinational enterprises. Her experience supporting higher education organizations includes engagement with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Association of Public & Land-Grant Universities (APLU), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) nationally, and public and private colleges and universities. She has more than ten years of experience managing initiatives that embrace diverse populations to create equitable access to resources and opportunities.

**Candace Spencer** is a communication specialist with more than a decade of experience in higher education marketing and strategy development. Throughout her career, she has

provided valuable support to numerous postsecondary institutions spanning 21 states. She offers in-depth strategy analysis, creates impactful digital and print communication materials, crafts compelling written content, delivers training sessions that are both informative and engaging, guides brand evolution, and provides recommendations to help clients stay ahead of the competition.

**Lisa Becker** is a technical writer/editor with 28 years of experience contributing to projects and workgroups, including as Contributing Writer and Managing Editor of the Storytelling Team. She served as the communications arm of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's HBCU Intermediary Team from 2018 to 2022. She is currently contracted with the NASA Shared Services Center to work with NASA senior executive service in drafting career history/achievement papers and Presidential Rank Nominations for executive career advancement and recognition.

**Issifu Appiah** is a student in the Master of Public Administration program at the University of South Alabama. Issifu earned a Bachelor's in Education from the University of Cape Coast, Ghana, West Africa. Issifu is a Graduate Assistant at the Center for Innovation in Postsecondary Education (CIPE). Issifu has a passion for learning, participating in community service, and having a positive impact.

In collaboration with the ECMC Foundation, the Center for Innovation in Postsecondary Education (CIPE) and Alabama Possible are delighted to share the first of a series of case studies. The focus is on the eight Historically Black Community Colleges (HBCC) and Predominantly Black Community Colleges (PBCC) in Alabama, collectively known as the "Great Eight." The eight HBCCs/PBCCs are Bishop State, Chattahoochee Valley, Gadsden State, George C Wallace, H. Councill Trenholm, J F Drake, Lawson State, and Shelton State. Over the next three years, Alabama Possible will consult with the CIPE Team to create case studies highlighting the successful initiatives of various institutions in promoting student success. These studies will cover a range of topics, including Academic Advising and Workforce Development, as well as the academic experience, campus climate, leadership and culture, data utilization, and technology. The CIPE Team's Storytellers conclude the project by developing a Storytelling Playbook that outlines these institutions' unique student success practices.

**The mission of community colleges** varies throughout the country. By nature of their existence, they are known for offering certificates, associate degrees, and bachelor's degrees. Community colleges have diverse student bodies, and a range of practice solutions - are indispensable to meeting national goals for educational attainment and developing a productive workforce.<sup>1</sup> The *Great Eight* is part of the Alabama Community College System (ACCS), celebrating 60 years as a System. The four mission-driven areas of the ACCS are 1) Transfer to a four-year university, 2) Job Training and Certifications, 3) Adult Education/GED, and Veteran's Services.<sup>2</sup>

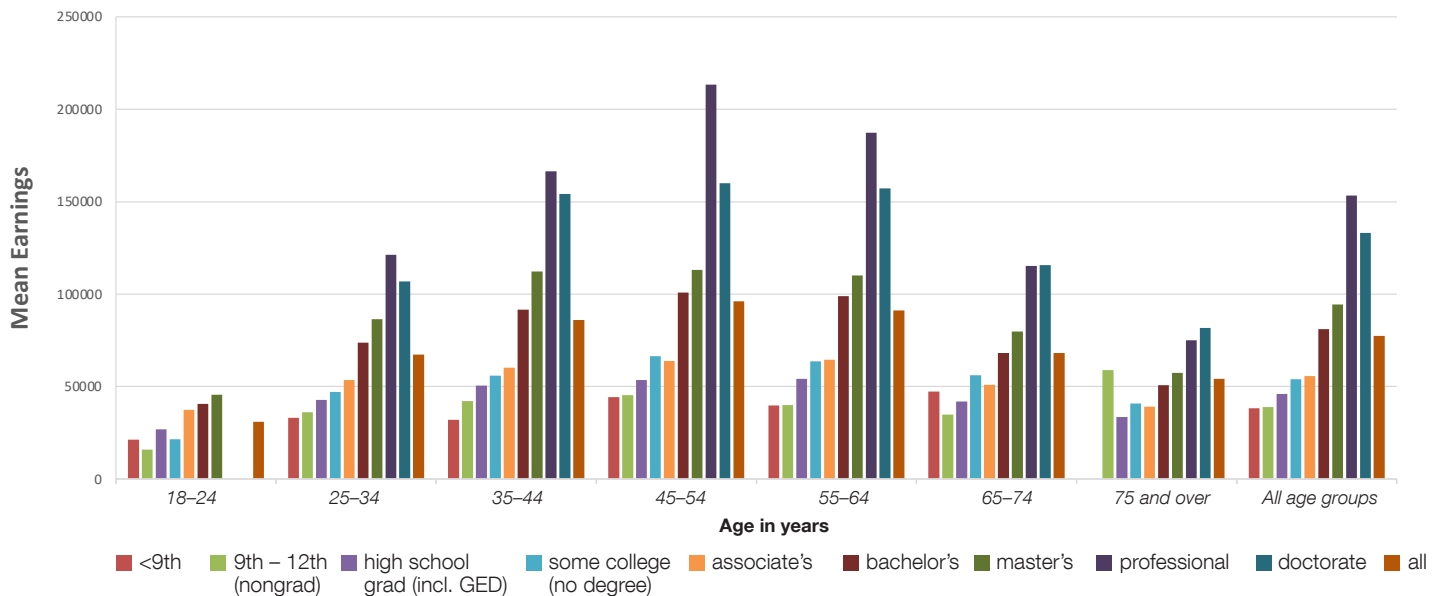
This case study will highlight the *Great Eight*: Bishop State, Chattahoochee Valley, Gadsden State, Wallace, Trenholm, Drake, Lawson State, and Shelton State through their collaboration with the Alabama Community College System mission to serve adults seeking to earn a GED in the Adult Education programs. Pursuing Adult Education/GED is a pathway to educational attainment and increased earnings over one's career lifetime. To understand the long-term value of education in the United States, the US Census, Current Population Survey (CPS), 2022 provides data to explain the relationship between age, education, and poverty levels. The three charts illustrate the impact of not having a high school diploma and completing a degree on one's earnings over a lifetime and how factors such as field of study, skills, and job demand can significantly affect earning potential. The charts also demonstrate the long-term monetary value of earning a GED, Certificates, and Degrees. Essentially, the more education attained, the greater the opportunity to increase one's income throughout a career.

Pathways to prosperity begin with earning a high school diploma or GED to create a path to attain postsecondary certificates and degrees for in-demand careers that will create opportunity to earn more income.

The **Mean Earnings by Age Group and Educational Attainment**, 2022 graph illustrates the relationship between income, age, and education levels. By specific age groups, the earnings are:

- Ages of 25 to 34 earn an average of \$73,700 with a bachelor's degree and \$121,400 with a professional degree.
- Ages of 45 to 54 earn an average of \$100,900 with a bachelor's degree and \$213,400 with a professional degree.
- These earnings represent a 37% increase for those with a bachelor's degree and 76% increase with a professional degree between age groups.

**Mean Earnings by Age Group and Educational Attainment, 2022**



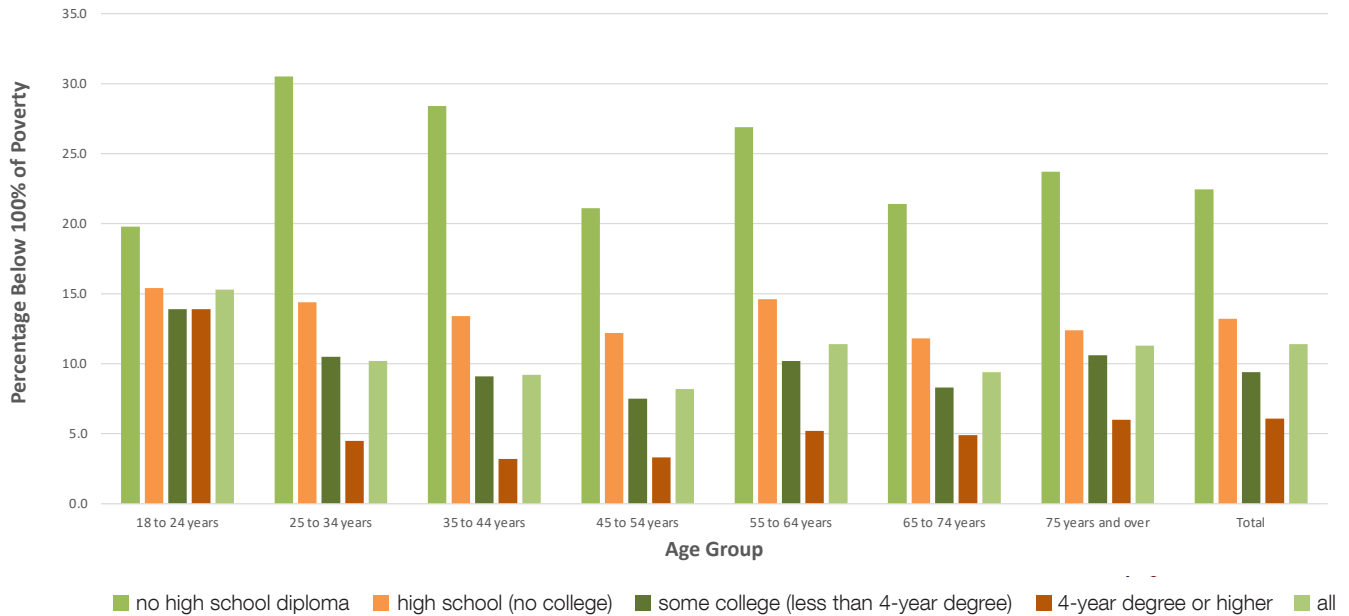
Source: Current Population Survey (CPS) Annual Social Economic (ASEC) Supplement (PINC-04) Data for those aged 75 or over with <9th grade education, and those aged 18-24 with professional or doctorate degrees are unavailable due to the small size

1 Baine, David, and Sandy Baum (2016). *Community Colleges: Multiple Missions, Diverse Student Bodies, and A Range of Policy Solutions*. The Urban Institute, Washington, DC.

2 Alabama Community College System, accessed on August 24, 2023 at <https://www.accs.edu/>.

The **Percentage Below 100% of Poverty by Age Group and Educational Attainment, 2022**, indicates that the poverty level is lower with higher levels of education across all age groups except for 18-24-year-olds, where the rate is the same at 14 percent for those with some college (no degree) and those with a 4-year degree or higher.

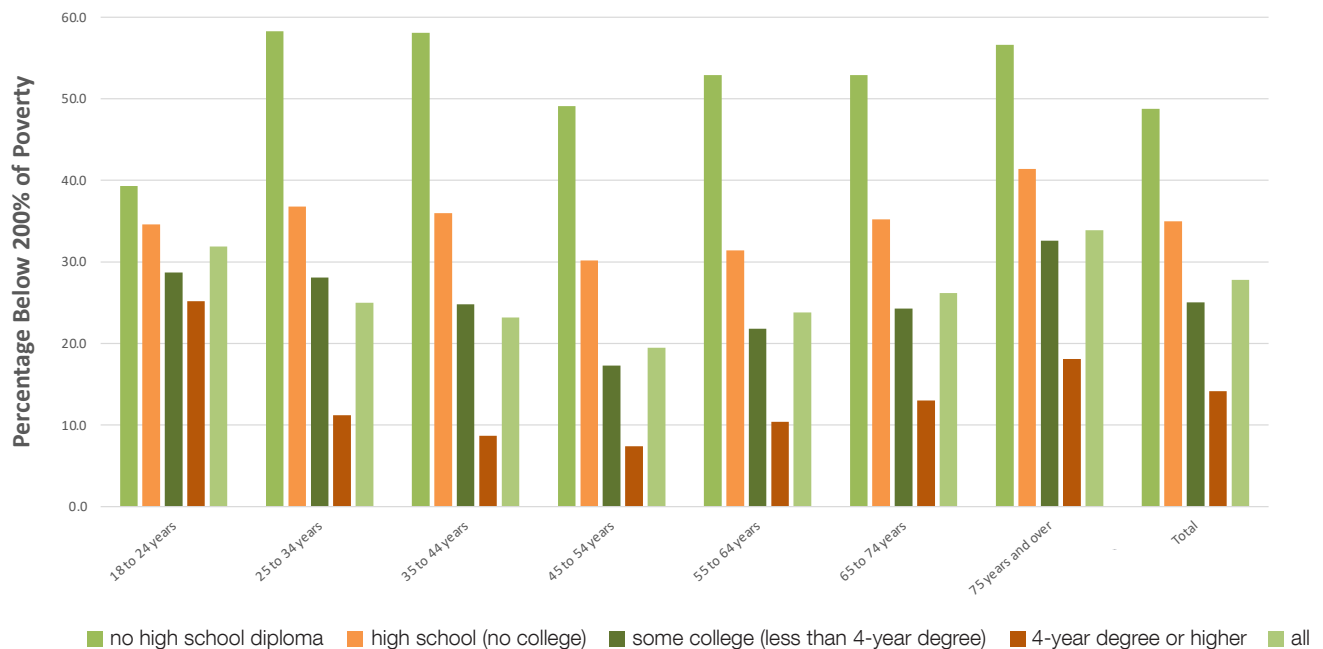
**Percentage Below 100% of Poverty by Age Group and Educational Attainment, 2022**



Source: Current Population Survey (CPS) Annual Social Economic (ASEC) Supplement (PINC-09)

The **Percentage Below 200% of Poverty by Age Group and Educational Attainment, 2022**, shows the trend is similar. Those with no high school diploma experience the highest rates of poverty, which decreases as educational attainment increases.

**Percentage Below 200% of Poverty by Age Group and Educational Attainment, 2022**



Source: Current Population Survey (CPS) Annual Social Economic (ASEC) Supplement (PINC-09)

For adults who seek and earn a GED, we know that it opens the doors up for opportunities to further education and job training, which can lead to better jobs and higher wages. Most importantly, earning a GED will improve a person's quality of life.

The *Mean Earnings by Age Group and Education Attainment, 2022* graphs provide data for the Great Eight to share with students the value of earning a GED and continuing their educational path to improve their income potential. The most compelling information from the data states that the poverty rate is highest among those without a GED at 21 percent and lowest for those with a 4-year or higher degree at 15 percent. The overall rate of poverty below 100 percent among all age groups and education levels is 11 percent. Lastly, it is important to note that high-income, high-growth jobs depend on employers and employment sectors in a region.

The *Great Eight* institutions are fulfilling the ACCS mission-driven goals by offering creative and innovative opportunities for adult education students to thrive and complete a GED with wrap-around services, skills training to prepare for high-demand jobs, and a pathway to earn a degree. Some examples are:

<b>School</b>	<b>Adult Education/GED Programs</b>
<b>Bishop State Community College (BSCC)</b>	<b>The High School Diploma Option (HSDO) Program</b> is designed for adult education student completers who dropped out of traditional high school or who completed the required credits for graduation but were unsuccessful in achieving one or more sections of the Alabama High School Graduation Examination can receive a High School Diploma.  <a href="https://www.bishop.edu/programs/adult-education">https://www.bishop.edu/programs/adult-education</a>
<b>Chattahoochee Valley (CVCC)</b>	<b>Career Pathways Track Program:</b> The CVCC's Pathways TRACK Program (Technical Readiness+Academic = Career Knowledge) is designed for adult education students to gain employability skills and credentials for employment with local and regional industries and sectors while completing the GED.  <a href="https://www.cv.edu/training-programs/adult-education/">https://www.cv.edu/training-programs/adult-education/</a>
<b>J. F. Drake State (DSCTC)</b>	<b>The GOAL (Greater Opportunities through Adult Learning)</b> program is designed to provide free adult basic education, adult secondary education through the high school diploma option (HSDO), workforce preparation, general education development (GED) classes, and support for English-As-A-Second Language (ESL) learners to help students gain self-sufficiency and employment.  <a href="https://drakestate.edu/career-pathways-programs/adult-education/">https://drakestate.edu/career-pathways-programs/adult-education/</a>
<b>Gadsden State (GSCC)</b>	<b>The Adult Education Trio Program</b> is a unique opportunity for adult education students to navigate from GED to college enrollment.  <a href="https://www.gadsdenstate.edu/programs-of-study/adult-ed-services.cms">https://www.gadsdenstate.edu/programs-of-study/adult-ed-services.cms</a>
<b>H. Councill Trenholm (TSCC)</b>	<b>Mobilizing Alabama Pathways (MAPS)</b> is designed to offer free short-term, virtual training programs for high-demand jobs in Alabama. The MAPs credential demonstrates skill mastery and is ready for employment or additional education.  <a href="https://www.trenholmstate.edu/programs/adult-education-program/">https://www.trenholmstate.edu/programs/adult-education-program/</a>

<b>School</b>	<b>Adult Education/GED Programs</b>
<b>Lawson State (LSCC)</b>	<p><b>INFUSION Program</b> is designed to work one-on-one with a librarian to improve digital literacy skills and reading comprehension.</p> <p><a href="https://www.library.lawsonstate.edu/adulteducationprogram">https://www.library.lawsonstate.edu/adulteducationprogram</a></p>
<b>Shelton State (SSCC)</b>	<p><b>Adult Education Co-Enrolled Program</b> is designed for adult education students to begin their college careers before completing the GED. Students attend college courses concurrently while earning a GED or non-traditional diploma.</p> <p><a href="https://www.sheltonstate.edu/instruction-workforce-development/adult-education/">https://www.sheltonstate.edu/instruction-workforce-development/adult-education/</a></p>
<b>Wallace Community College Selma (WCCS)</b>	<p><b>Ability to Benefit Program</b> is designed for dual enrollment in adult education and credential-earning programs such as office administration, computer science, brick masonry, and welding.</p> <p><a href="https://www.wccs.edu/programs/adult-education">https://www.wccs.edu/programs/adult-education</a></p>



### **Adult Education/GED Resources for Students and Colleges**

**Alabama Community College System:** For students seeking adult education programs at one of the 24 community colleges in Alabama, a list of resources can be found at the website, <https://www.accs.edu/adulteducation/>

#### **The Great Eight Facts:**

- 1** The *Great Eight* offers free Adult Education/GED one-stop services ranging from the GED or high school equivalency, family literacy, ESL, and job training to career pathways to earn an undergraduate degree.
- 2** The *Great Eight* offers one-on-one tutoring and assistance with basic computer skills.
- 3** The *Great Eight* offers a range of job training programs for skilled and high-demand jobs in their service region.

## ***HBCC/PBCC Resources***

This case study resource focuses on the Great Eight and the evidence-based framework created by the Council for Adult Experiential Learning (CAEL) to assist postsecondary institutions in developing successful adult learners' programmatic strategies by integrating data analytics planning, capacity-building policy practices and identifying student experiences to improve program offerings. The CAEL framework three-prong approach can be adapted to any adult learner program.

**The Council for Adult Experiential Learning (CAEL):** In 2022, CAEL released findings and a framework, New Learners Framework for Creating Adult Learner Leaders for Institutional Effectiveness (ALLIES), which offers insights into understanding adult learners' requisites to succeed in their postsecondary pursuits. This resource provides the colleges with evidence-based practices to consider as they continue to enhance their adult education offerings.

The CAEL Framework provides best practices institutions can employ to assist adult learners in learning more effectively and transitioning successfully to the workforce. To stay abreast of the changing student dynamics and shifts by colleges to meet the needs of students, CAEL recommends three integration strategies: **Level 1 Data-Driven Planning**, **Level 2 Organizational Capacity and Policy**, and **Level 3 Student Experience**. The chart illustrates the tools within each integration to implement:



For more information on CAEL's ALLIES Framework webinar, go to <https://www.cael.org/webinars/allies-framework-webinar>.

### ***For more information about the Great Eight and their work with adult learners,***

Contact Information for Dr. Kathy H. Thompson at [kathythompson@southalabama.edu](mailto:kathythompson@southalabama.edu) and <http://southalabama.edu/cipe>

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Bishop State Community College

Chattahoochee Valley Community College

J.F. Drake State Community & Technical College

Gadsden State Community College

H. Councill Trenholm State Community College

Lawson State Community College

Shelton State Community College

Wallace Community College Selma

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