

History of the College

Northwest Shoals Community College is a comprehensive two-year public institution of higher learning providing vocational, technical, academic and lifelong educational opportunities for the northwest Alabama Region. The College is part of the Alabama College System, a statewide system of postsecondary colleges, governed by the Alabama Board of Education. Northwest Shoals derives its original charter from the Alabama legislature through the Alabama Trade School and Junior College Authority Act of 1963.

The Northwest Shoals service area is comprised of the counties of Colbert, Franklin, Lauderdale, Lawrence and the western portion of Winston. The College operates two campuses – the Shoals Campus in Muscle Shoals and the Phil Campbell Campus in Phil Campbell.

The Phil Campbell Campus was founded in 1963 as Northwest Alabama State Junior College to provide access to postsecondary education for citizens of the rural counties of northwest Alabama. It was the first public junior college in what was to become the Alabama College System and was accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in 1967. The Shoals Campus, founded in 1966 as Joe Wheeler State Trade School, provided occupational and technical training.

Both institutions recognized that the narrowness of their focus did not meet their constituents' educational needs. In 1973 Muscle Shoals State Technical Institute enhanced its curriculum and obtained accreditation from the Commission on Occupational Education Institutions. In 1977, with the approval of the Alabama State Board of Education, Northwest Alabama State Junior College established a branch campus in Tuscumbia primarily to offer first and second-year college courses.

In 1989 the Alabama State Board of Education created Northwest Alabama Community College through the consolidation of Northwest Alabama State Junior College in Phil Campbell and Northwest Alabama State Technical College in Hamilton. Shoals Community College was created through consolidating Muscle Shoals State Technical College and the Tuscumbia Campus of Northwest Alabama State Junior College. The Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools granted accreditation to Northwest Alabama Community College in 1990. Shoals Community College received its accreditation in 1991.

Northwest Shoals Community College was formed in 1993 by the Alabama State Board of Education through the merger of Northwest Alabama Community College's Phil Campbell Campus and Shoals Community College. The merger was enacted in order to provide more effective and efficient educational services to residents of rural northwest Alabama and the Shoals area.

Additionally, the merger provided business and industry with a single focal point for addressing educational and training needs and provided a single workforce development center to assist communities with economic development activities. The merger was reviewed and approved by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Reaffirmation of accreditation was granted by SACSCOC in December, 2009. Northwest Shoals Community College, composed of two campuses, has adequate physical facilities to support an environment in which academic, social, physical, and emotional development may be fostered. The two campuses are located in Muscle Shoals and Phil Campbell. The campus in Muscle Shoals is designated as the Shoals Campus.