

HISTORY OF LAKE-SUMTER STATE COLLEGE

Lake-Sumter State College has been known by several names over the years, but the College's commitment to offering a quality education to this community has not changed.

A Brief History

1961: Lake and Sumter County citizens rally to establish an institution of higher learning. The Florida Legislature authorized Lake-Sumter Junior College (LSJC) for white citizens and Johnson Junior College for black citizens.

1962: Lake-Sumter Junior College is officially founded, and students begin classes in modular buildings located on the Leesburg High School campus with Dr. Paul P. Williams as the College's first president. Johnson Junior College students begin classes at Carver Heights High School with Perman E. Williams as its first president.

1964: 39 students graduate at the first Commencement of LSJC.

May 1964: Groundbreaking for the 70-acre Leesburg campus, along Highway 441 near Silver Lake.

1965: The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prompted the Lake County School Board, then the College's governing body, to merge LSJC and Johnson Junior College. For the 1965-66 academic year, LSJC operated as a school with two locations: the Johnson Center at Carver Heights High School and the Silver Lake Center. Also, this year, LSJC was accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges Commission on College (SACSCOC) allowing credits earned at LSJC to transfer to other USDOE recognized institutions.

January 1965: The Library and three other buildings open their doors to LSJC students. 57 students graduate at the first, and only, Commencement of Johnson Junior College.

1966: The Johnson Center closes and the two schools are now fully united on the Silver Lake location.

1968: 103 students graduate as part of the first Commencement ceremony at the Silver Lake location.

1970: LSJC renamed to Lake-Sumter Community College (LSCC) in response to the Florida Legislature's creation of a Division of Community Colleges.

October 1976: The Fine Arts Center, featuring a 440-seat auditorium and fine arts studios, opens.

1980: The LSCC Foundation, Inc. is organized with Marie Bowden as its first chair. Bowden was a member of the advisory committee created to inform the creation of the College in the early 1960s. Also, Dr. Paul P. Williams announces his retirement from LSCC. Dr. Robert S. Palinchak is named as his successor.

1986: Dr. Carl C. Andersen is selected at the College's third president.

1988: LSCC and the Sumter County School Board agree to establish a joint-use facility in Sumterville that would provide adult education classes and college-level programs. This was the first step in a long series of

college, community, and individual efforts leading to the construction of the Sumter Center.

1990: The Florida Legislature appropriates funds for LSCC to purchase two additional parcels of land that increased the size of the Leesburg campus to 114 acres.

1993: Dr. Robert W. Westrick is selected as the College's fourth president.

1995: Florida Gov. Lawton Chiles helps dedicate LSCC's first regional facility. The Sumter Center first welcomed students in the summer of this year.

1999: The first 330 students begin classes in the Phase I Building (Building 1) at South Lake at the beginning of the Fall Semester. The building was officially dedicated in December. Also, this year, the groundbreaking for the Phase II building in South Lake was held.

January 2000: The 16,000 square foot Clark Maxwell, Jr., and Student Services Center at the Sumter Center opens.

September 2000: The refurbished Gymnasium on Leesburg Campus, including the addition of the Magnolia Room for banquets and meetings, is rededicated as the Everett A. Kelly Convocation Center, in honor of the supportive state legislator. Later that month, a ceremony is held to commemorate the newly enhanced Leesburg Campus Sports and Recreation Complex.

December 2001: The state-of-the-art Health Sciences Center in Leesburg is dedicated thanks to an anonymous \$3 million donation that was matched by state funds.

March 2002: The Phase II building, known as the Higher Education Facility (Building 2), at the South Lake campus is dedicated as a joint-use facility between LSCC and the University of Central Florida.

July 2002: Dr. Robert W. Westrick retires and Dr. Charles R. Mojock is selected as the College's fifth president.

2006: LSCC partners with the University of Central Florida for the DirectConnect to UCF program, increasing access to bachelor's degrees and providing guaranteed acceptance for students earning their AA degree.

July 2008: The Legends Way Softball Complex, a professional-quality venue for collegiate and community competitors, and regional and national tournaments, is dedicated in South Lake County. This complex is a partnership among LSCC, Lake County Government and South Lake Hospital.

September 2009: Cooper Memorial Library, a 50,000 square foot facility costing \$14.3 million, is formally dedicated on the South Lake campus. This facility was made possible through a unique collaboration among LSCC, Lake County Board of County Commissioners and the University of Central Florida with the support of the Friends of Cooper Memorial Library and the Cooper Memorial Library Association.

2010: LSCC receives reaccreditation from SACSCOC. The Nursing program also receives accreditation from the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission, showing the program's commitment to a high-quality education.

2011: The Aspen Institute names LSCC among the 120 best community colleges in the nation.

August 2011: The District Board of Trustees votes to enhance LSSC's academic programs with the addition of four-year bachelor and/or bachelor of applied science degrees.

2012: The College celebrates its 50th Anniversary with the slogan "Appreciating the Past, Anticipating the Future". The College is again recognized by the Aspen Institute as being one of the best community colleges in the nation.

September 2012: The District Board of Trustees earmarks funds to establish the Sumter Partnership for Workforce Innovation and Education. This partnership creates a plan to better serve the training needs of the citizens of Sumter County. Initial partners in the project include Sumter County Commission, Sumter County Schools, Sumter County Sheriff, Sumter County Fire Department, University of South Florida, Combat Veterans to Careers, and The Villages Charter School.

November 2012: The District Board of Trustees votes to rename the college to Lake-Sumter State College.

January 2013: 37 students enroll in the College's first four-year degree program, the Bachelor of Applied Science in Organizational Management.

2014: Lake-Sumter State College, South Lake Hospital, Lake County Public Schools, Montverde Academy, and the University of Central Florida partner to establish the Health Sciences Collegiate Academy, offering rigorous STEM and health sciences focused curriculum to South Lake students in grades 9 through 12.

2015: The College is again recognized by the Aspen Institute as being one of the Top 150 community colleges in the nation.

December 2015: Dr. Charles R. Mojock retires, and Dr. Stanley M. Sidor is selected as the College's sixth president. Also, a groundbreaking ceremony is held for the Science-Health Building on the South Lake campus.

January 2016: The Sumter Center celebrates its 20th year of operation serving the students of Sumter County.

May 2016: LSSC partners with Lake Technical College, who will offer a Practical Nursing (LPN) program in South Lake to enhance the student pathway to gaining training and certifications necessary for employment. The partnership expands to Sumter by November.

2017: The College again receives recognition by the Aspen Institute as being one of the Top 150 community colleges in the nation.

June 2017: LSSC Foundation begins offering the J.P. Donnelly Transition Scholarship to students who transition from Lake Technical College to LSSC for degree programs.

July 2017: The State Board of Education approves the College's request for a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree.

August 2017: The Science-Health Building, a 51,000 square foot facility is formally dedicated on the South Lake campus. The first class of students in the Health Sciences Collegiate Academy begin taking classes full-time on the South Lake Campus.

February 2018: The Health Sciences Collegiate Academy (HSCA) adds a 2-year accelerated program. For the first time in HSCA, students from all Lake County high schools are eligible to participate.

May 2018: The College hosts its first Commencement ceremony in South Lake at the Clermont Performing Arts Center.

August 2018: The first students enroll in the Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree.

October 2018: The College holds its inaugural Lakehawk Service Day. All employees and some students donated over 1,000 hours of community service to 18 projects across Lake and Sumter Counties.

November 2018: The first athletics team in College history advances to an NJCAA national tournament. The Women's Volleyball team competes in the NJCAA Division II National Championship and finishes as one of the top 10 teams in the country.

April 2019: The College brought the Lakehawk to life by introducing its first mascot, Swoop the Lakehawk, at celebrations on all three campuses.

January 2019: The District Board of Trustees approves the addition of men's and women's cross country teams to Athletics. The new teams will train on the South Lake Campus on courses shared with the National Training Center.

May 2019: The District Board of Trustees approves the addition of a beach volleyball team to Athletics. The new team will play home matches at the Hickory Point Beach Volleyball Complex in Tavares.

May 2019: The first class of Health Sciences Collegiate Academy students graduate from LSSC with their associate degree while also earning their high school diploma the same month.

July 2019: CareerSource Central Florida opens their new Leesburg area office in Building M on the College's Leesburg Campus. This new office strengthens the existing workforce partnership between LSSC & CareerSource Central Florida.

August 2019: The first students enroll in the College's new Honors Program. The Honors Program offers an integrated course curriculum taught in cohorts and requires students to complete a capstone research project.

October 2019: The College renames the Science-Health Building on the South Lake campus to the Science-Health Partnership Building in recognition of the continued and expansive partnership with Orlando Health South Lake Hospital for health sciences education.

2020: The College transitioned to fully online coursework and services in March due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. Employees worked from home for several months before beginning a transition back to campus. Online courses remained the preferred delivery method throughout the year.

2020: As students and their families are economically impacted by the global pandemic, LSSC and the LSSC Foundation provided over \$2,500,000 in scholarships, technology, food distributions, and direct financial support to students. Throughout the year, LSSC volunteers provided thousands of local families with over 193,500 pounds of food over three food distribution events in Leesburg and Clermont. Loaner laptops and mobile hotspots were provided to students who did not have adequate technology to complete coursework remotely; this program later transitioned to a laptop grant program that gave students a laptop of their own. With financial support from federal relief funds, LSSC provided over \$1.5 million in direct financial assistance to students to use where it was needed most.

January 2020: The District Board of Trustees approves a new policy making all LSSC campuses tobacco and smoke free.

May 2020: Commencement Ceremonies were canceled for the first time in history due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. Students who would have graduated at this ceremony were offered the opportunity to participate in December 2020.

2021: The College continues offering primarily online course options as a result of the ongoing pandemic. As vaccines were just becoming available, the College partnered with the Florida Department of Health to offer community COVID-19 vaccinations on all three campuses for different time periods. Once vaccine eligibility included individuals aged 18+, the College provided vaccination events on campus for students.

May 2021: The College opens a non-credit Commercial Drivers License training program on the Sumter Center and enrolls its first students. This program fills a training need in the area and was partially funded by a Rapid Credentialing Grant awarded by the State of Florida.

2022: For the first time, the LSSC Foundation, Inc. awards over \$1,000,000 in student scholarships in one calendar year.

January 2022: Dr. Stan Sidor announces his retirement and Dr. Heather Bigard is chosen as interim president.

August 2022: The College opens its first Dedicated Education Unit (DEU) for Nursing in partnership with AdventHealth Waterman, including an instructional space dedicated for Allied Health programs located on the AdventHealth Waterman campus in Tavares.

July 2022: Dr. Heather Bigard is selected as the College's seventh president and becomes the first female to hold the role.

November 2022: The District Board of Trustees approves an eight-acre land donation from the City of Eustis to establish a new training site for Commercial Driver (CDL) and Lineworker training programs.

August 2023: The College opens a new campus location, its first since 1999, in the Cagan Crossings Town Center in the Four Corners expanding into a growing and underserved community in Lake County.

2023: The College opens additional Nursing DEUs at Orlando Health South Lake Hospital and UF Health Leesburg Hospital.

2023: The Florida Legislature awards \$17,500,000 for the construction of a new Workforce Development Center on the Leesburg Campus.

2023: The College again receives recognition by the Aspen Institute as being one of the Top 150 community colleges in the nation.

Fall 2023: The HSCA program expands to offer a full-time cohort based on the Leesburg Campus.

Fall 2023: The District Board of Trustees approves track and golf as new athletics programs. Track will begin in Spring 2024 and golf in Fall 2024.

January 2024: The State Board of Education approves the College's request for a Bachelor's of Elementary Education degree with the program beginning in Fall 2024.

Spring 2024: The College's degree-seeking student enrollment crosses 5,000 for the first time in a spring semester.

Spring 2024: Jaabir Taylor (Track) and Megan Wright (Softball) were named NJCAA Athletes of the Week, the first time a student-athlete from LSSC has received this recognition.

May 2024: The College awards an honorary degree in leadership to Senator Dennis Baxley in recognition of his exemplary service to the citizens of Florida.

August 2024: The District Board of Trustees selects Dr. Laura Byrd as interim president.

Fall 2024: The College's degree-seeking student enrollment sets a new record when it crosses 6,100 students for the first time.

Fall 2024: The Lakehawks Track & Field team adds a half-marathon team to its roster.

2024: This year marks the largest graduating class of students in the College's history, over 1,100 students throughout the year.

Spring 2025: The first cohort of students in the College's AS Respiratory Care program begin classes on the South Lake Campus.

May 2025: Amy Bak (Softball) was selected as a recipient of the 2025 NJCAA Rawlings Gold Glove Awards, presented by the National Fastpitch Coaches Association becoming the first student in school history to earn this recognition.

June 2025: The State Board of Education approves the College's request for a Bachelor's of Exceptional Student Education degree with the program beginning in Fall 2026.

August 2025: Academic year enrollment crosses 10,000 students for the first time with the College serving 10,092 students in the 2024 - 2025 academic year across credit, non-credit, and early college programs.

August 2025: Representative John Temple is selected as the College's eighth president, starting in September 2025.

January 2026: Spring 2026 enrollment increases to over 7,300 students marking the first spring semester in College history with a larger student enrollment than the fall semester.