

Comprehensive Study of Two-Year Colleges in Bienville, Claiborne, and Union Parishes

Response to HR313 of the 2024
Regular Session

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Introduction

House Resolution 313 of the 2024 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature urges and requests the Board of Regents to conduct a comprehensive study of two-year colleges in Union, Claiborne, and Bienville parishes and to submit a written report to the House Committee on Education not later than January 31, 2025.

The resolution expresses the critical role that educational attainment plays in the economic future of the region, and outlines the crucial role that two-year colleges play in the education-career pipeline that fuels that economic engine.

This report examines the educational landscape, workforce demands, and employer needs in Union, Claiborne, and Bienville Parishes. The report provides information about the current educational offerings together with a full program inventory broken down by campus and delivery methodology, as well as about current two-year student enrollment and completion. By contrasting current educational attainment levels with the qualifications demanded by employers, the report identifies key gaps that currently exist and recommends strategies for two-year colleges to better align their offerings with community and workforce needs in the future.

The information in this report has been compiled from data provided by the Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS), Board of Regents student information system, Louisiana Workforce Commission, and American Community Survey.

Overview of the educational and economic landscape in Bienville Parish

Bienville Parish has a population of 12,253 (2024). That population has declined by 7% since 2018 and is forecast to decrease by a further 4.8% by the end of the decade. Of the overall population, 9,468 residents are 16 or older, non-military and non-institutionalized. The labor force consists of 5,149 with an unemployment rate of 5%.

The current educational attainment level distribution in Bienville Parish is displayed in Table 1 below.

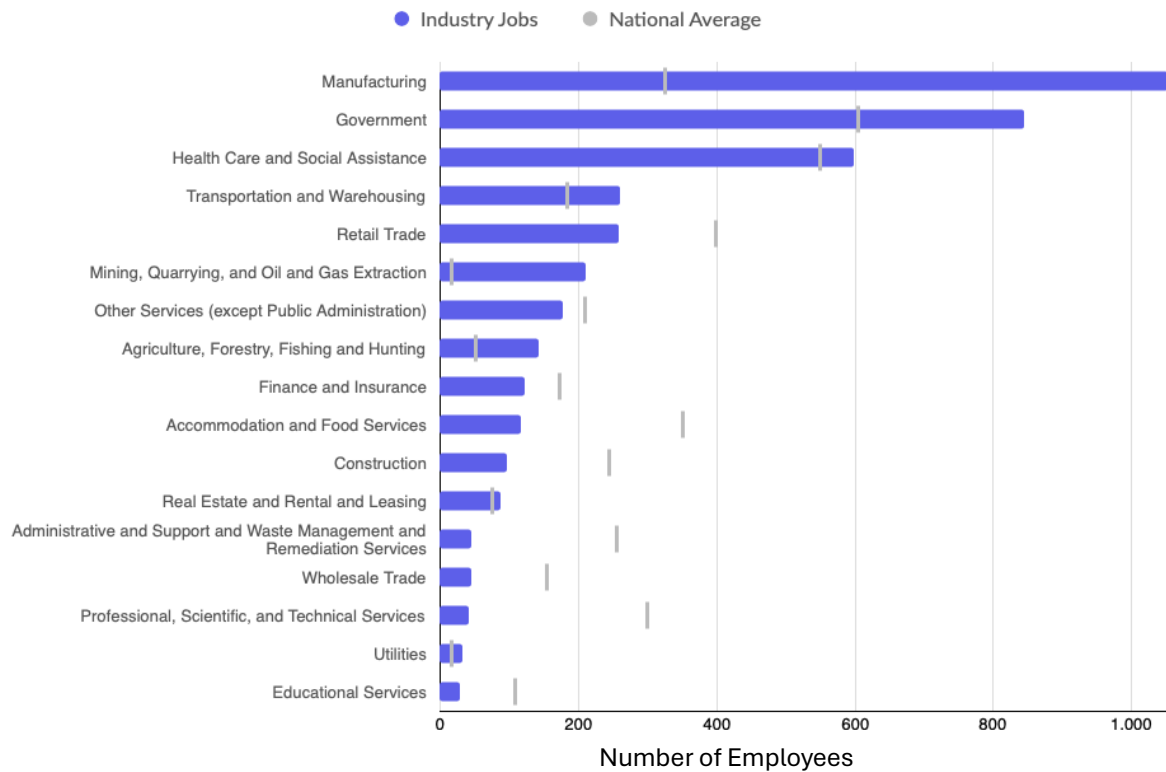
Table 1: Educational Attainment Level Distribution in Bienville Parish

Educational Level	Percentage
Less than 9 th grade	3.2%
9 th Grade to 12 th Grade	10.8%
High School Diploma	49.2%
Some College	17.2%
Associate’s Degree	7.0%
Bachelor’s Degree	9.3%
Graduate Degree or Higher	3.2%

Among employers, Manufacturing, Government, and Healthcare are the three largest occupational areas, with Chart 2 below showing a more detailed distribution.

Chart 2: Distribution of Occupational Areas

Largest Industries



Of these occupations Healthcare and the Wholesale Trade are identified as the two top growing industry sectors. This is borne out in the top posted occupations positions last year (shown in Table 3 below), and by the in-demand skills list, which is dominated by Nursing, Home Health Care, Rehabilitation and Merchandising.

Table 3: Top Posted Occupations Nov. 2023-Nov. 2024

Occupation	Total/Unique Postings
Registered Nurses	129 / 63
Physical Therapists	53 / 43
Speech-Language Pathologists	39 / 29
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	52 / 24
First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	44 / 22
Industrial Production Managers	40 / 19
Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	19 / 13
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	23 / 12
Physical Therapist Assistants	14 / 11
Fast Food and Counter Workers	23 / 11

The aim of this report is to examine how well the education-career pipeline is preparing local residents for the job openings locally. Table 4 below shows the educational breakdown of the job postings provided by employers across this same time horizon.

Table 4: Education Requirements for Job Postings Nov. 2023-Nov. 2024

Education Level	% of Total
No Education Listed	46%
High School or GED	28%
Associate's Degree	17%
Bachelor's Degree	17%
Graduate Degree or Higher	7%

Comparing Table 1 with Table 4 highlights the educational needs in this region. While 41% of the positions posted by employers last year required a credential above a high school diploma, only 19.5% of population of the population of Bienville Parish hold educational credentials at that level.

Overview of the educational and economic landscape in Claiborne Parish

Claiborne Parish has a population of 13,399 (2024). That population has declined by 14.1% since 2018 and is forecast to decrease by a further 9.4% by the end of the decade. Of the overall population, 9,254 residents are 16 or older, non-military and non-institutionalized. The labor force consists of 5,291, with an unemployment rate of 5%.

The current educational attainment level distribution in Claiborne Parish is displayed in Table 5 below

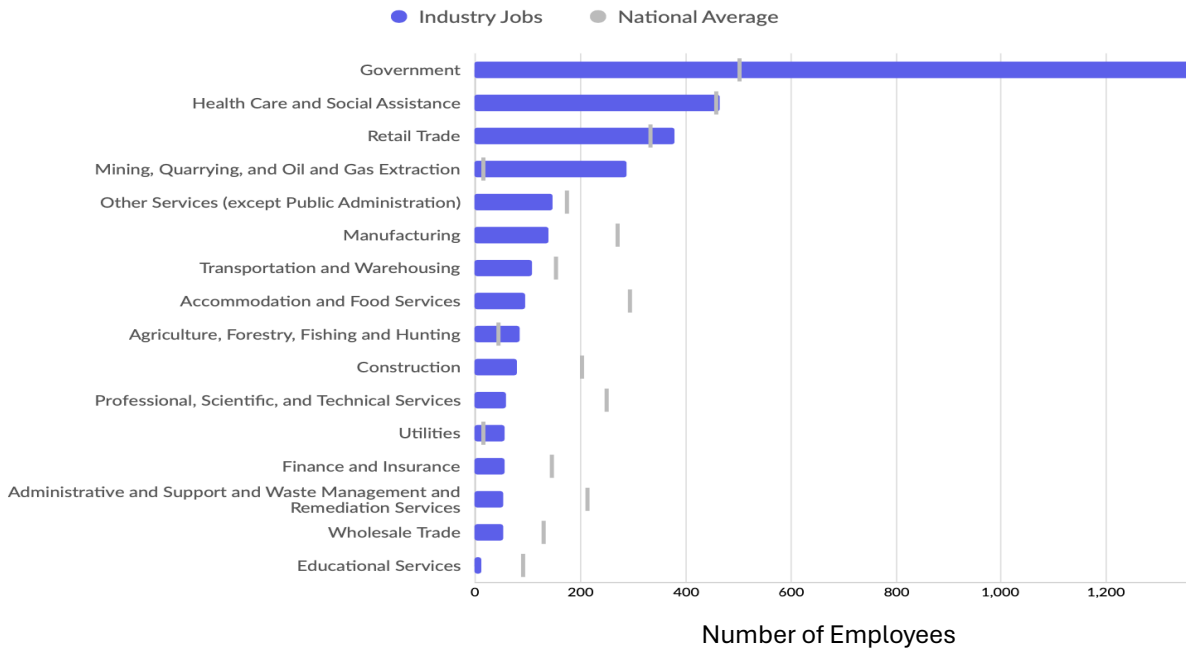
Table 5: Educational Attainment Level Distribution in Claiborne Parish

Educational Level	Percentage
Less than 9 th Grade	4.4%
9 th Grade to 12 th Grade	17.9%
High School Diploma	46.8%
Some College	15.5%
Associate’s Degree	3.6%
Bachelor’s Degree	7.7%
Graduate Degree or Higher	4.1%

Among employers, Government, Healthcare, and Retail Trade are the three largest occupational areas, with Chart 6 below showing a more detailed distribution.

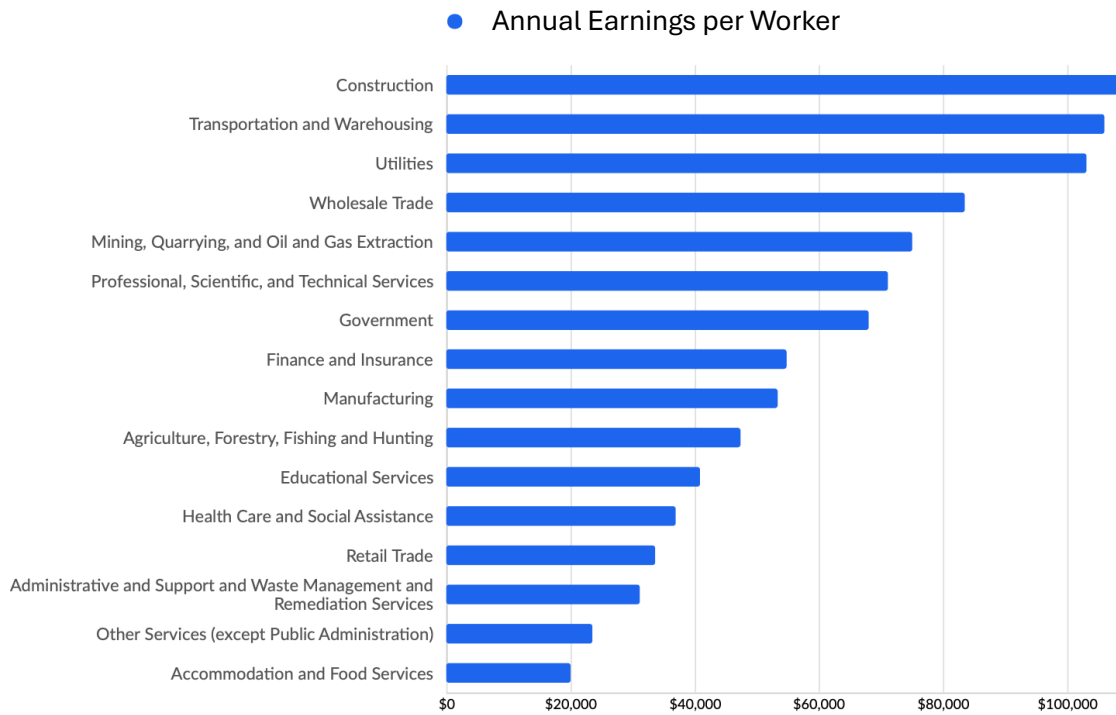
Chart 6: Occupational Areas by Employment

Largest Industries



While not the largest employing sectors, the most lucrative industries from a salary perspective are Construction, Transportation, and Utilities, as shown in Chart 7 below.

Chart 7: Industries by Salary Top Industry Earnings



The top posted occupations last year (shown in Table 8 below) are dominated by Healthcare and Retail-oriented occupations, with those same fields leading the in-demand skills list.

Table 8: Top Posted Occupations Nov. 2023-Nov. 2024

Occupation	Total / Unique Postings
Registered Nurses	138 / 70
First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	84 / 37
Retail Salespersons	108 / 35
Fast Food and Counter Workers	47 / 22
General and Operations Managers	18 / 11
Merchandise Displayers and Window Trimmers	21 / 11
Magnetic Resonance Imaging Technologists	17 / 11
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	36 / 11
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	20 / 10
Industrial Production Managers	16 / 9

The aim of this report is to examine how well the education-career pipeline is preparing local residents for the job openings locally. Table 9 below shows the educational breakdown of the job postings provided by employers across this same time horizon.

Table 9: Education Requirements for Job Postings Nov. 2023-Nov. 2024

Education Level	% of Total
No Education Listed	60%
High School or GED	21%
Associate's Degree	9%
Bachelor's Degree	13%
Graduate Degree or Higher	11%

Comparing Table 5 with Table 9 highlights the educational needs of this region. While 33% of the positions posted by employers last year required a credential above a high school diploma, only 15.4% of population of the population of Claiborne parish hold educational credentials at that level.

Overview of the educational and economic landscape in Union Parish

Union Parish has a population of 20,461 (2024). The population has declined by 7% since 2018 and is forecast to decrease by a further 5.1% by the end of the decade. Of the overall population, 16,217 residents are 16 or older, non-military and non-institutionalized. The labor force consists of 8,966, with an unemployment rate of 5.3%.

The current educational attainment level distribution in Union Parish is displayed in Table 10 below

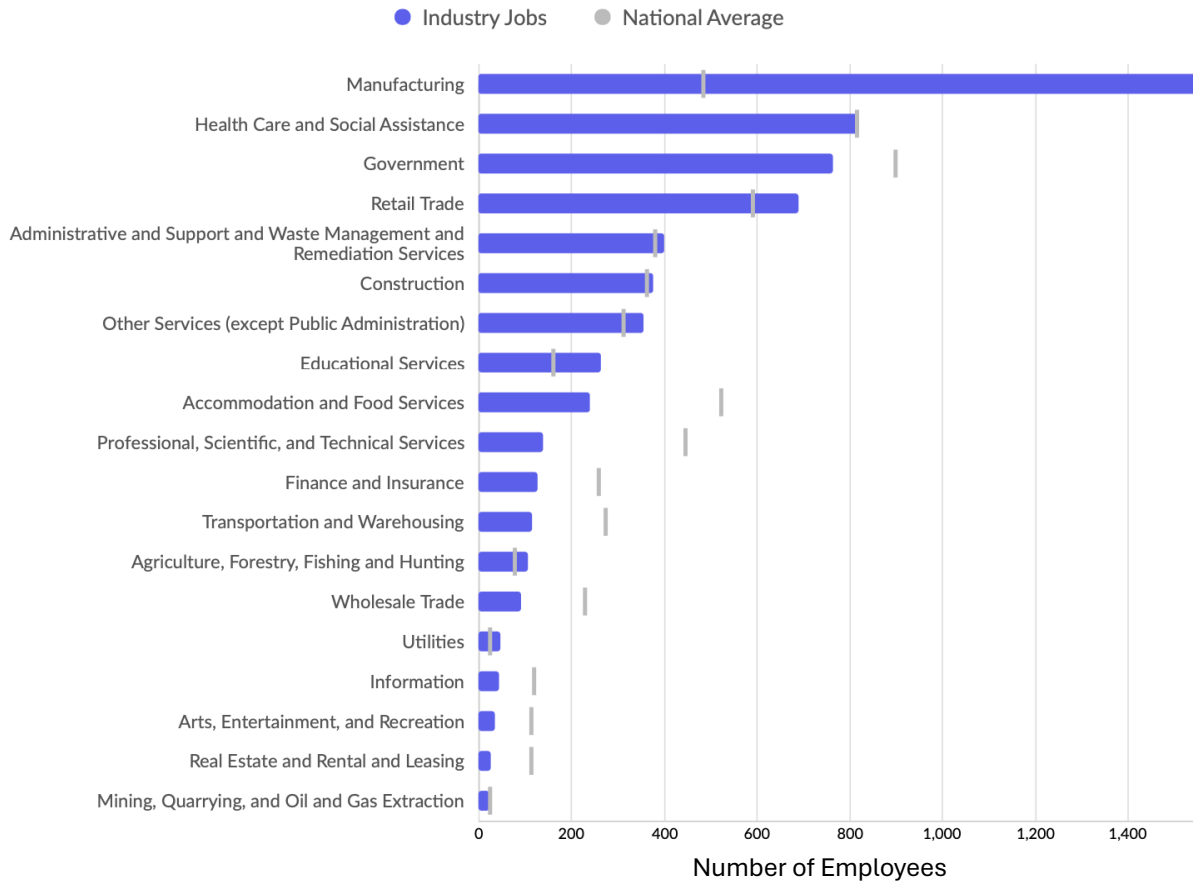
Table 10: Educational Attainment Level Distribution in Union Parish

Educational Level	Percentage
Less than 9 th Grade	3.1%
9 th Grade to 12 th Grade	10.6%
High School Diploma	42.7%
Some College	21.0%
Associate’s Degree	4.9%
Bachelor’s Degree	14.1%
Graduate Degree or Higher	3.7%

Among employers, Manufacturing, Healthcare, and Government are the three largest occupational areas, with Chart 11 below showing a more detailed distribution.

Chart 11: Occupational Areas by Employment

Largest Industries



The top posted occupations last year (shown in Table 12 below) were Cooks, General and Operations Managers, and First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers, with those same areas leading the in-demand skills list.

Table 12: Top Posted Occupations Nov. 2023-Nov. 2024

Occupation	Total/Unique Postings
Cooks, Restaurant	103 / 48
General and Operations Managers	53 / 38
First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	70 / 38
Production Workers, All Other	50 / 35
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	25 / 21
First-Line Supervisors of Entertainment Workers	31 / 20
Forest and Conservation Workers	35 / 17
First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	37 / 17
Food Service Managers	34 / 15
Retail Salespersons	16 / 15
Maintenance and Repair Workers	21 / 14

The aim of this report is to examine how well the education-career pipeline is preparing local residents for job openings locally. Table 13 below shows the educational breakdown of the job postings provided by employers across this same time horizon.

Table 13: Table 9: Education Requirements for Job Postings Nov. 2023-Nov. 2024

Education Level	% of Total
No Education Listed	64%
High School or GED	14%
Associate's Degree	7%
Bachelor's Degree	21%
Graduate Degree or Higher	3%

Comparing Table 10 with Table 13 highlights the educational needs in this region. While 64% of all jobs list no educational requirement, 31% of the positions posted by employers last year required a credential above a high school diploma. However, only 22.7% of the population of Union Parish hold educational credentials at that level.

Current Educational Program Offerings

At present the only physical location of a two- or four-year institution in Bienville, Claiborne, and Union Parishes is the Louisiana Delta Community College Workforce Training Site in Farmerville. This site primarily offers adult education.

To access full face-to-face certificate, degree, diploma, and workforce programs, potential students must go out of these parishes. The nearest available campuses are the Minden campus of Northwest Louisiana Technical Community College, and the Bastrop, Ruston, and Monroe campuses of Louisiana Delta Community College. Reaching these locations may require up to an hour's drive. The face-to-face programs provided at those campuses are listed below, together with the credential levels available.

The acronyms listed below stand for

- AGS – Associate of General Studies
- AALT or ASLT – Louisiana Transfer Associate
- AAS – Associate of Applied Science
- AS – Associate of Science
- ASN – Associate of Science in Nursing
- ASN – Associate of Science in Teaching
- CTC – Career and Technical Certificate
- CTS – Certificate of Technical Studies
- TD – Technical Diploma

Programs at the Bastrop Campus (LDCC) include:

- [General Studies – Liberal Arts](#) (AGS)
- [General Studies – Natural Sciences & Math](#) (AGS)
- [Nurse Assistant](#) (CTC)
- [Patient Care Technician](#) (CTS)
- [Practical Nursing](#) (TD)
- [Structural Welding](#) (TD)
- [Structural and Pipe Welding](#) (TD)

Programs at the Monroe Campus (LDCC) include:

- [Business and Technology](#) (AAS)
- [Care and Development of Young Children](#) (AAS)
- [CNC \(Computerized Numerical Controlled\) Manufacturing](#) (CTS)
- [Computer Science](#) (AS)

- [Criminal Justice \(AAS\)](#)
- [General Studies – Liberal Arts \(AGS\)](#)
- [General Studies – Natural Sciences & Math \(AGS\)](#)
- [Industrial Instrumentation Technology \(AAS\)](#)
- [Industrial Maintenance Technology \(AAS\)](#)
- [Computer and Information Technology \(AAS\)](#)
- [Louisiana Transfer Degrees \(Liberal Arts\) \(AALT\)](#)
- [Louisiana Transfer Degrees \(Science and Math\) \(ASLT\)](#)
- [Medical Coding Specialist \(CTS\)](#)
- [Medical Lab Technician \(AAS\)](#)
- [Process Technology \(AAS\)](#)
- [Registered Nursing \(ASN\)](#)

Programs at the Ruston Campus (LDCC) include:

- [Business Office Administration \(AAS\)](#)
- [General Studies – Liberal Arts \(AGS\)](#)
- [General Studies – Natural Sciences & Math \(AGS\)](#)
- [Industrial Instrumentation Technology \(AAS\)](#)
- [Louisiana Transfer Degrees \(Liberal Arts\) \(AALT\)](#)
- [Nurse Assistant \(CTC\)](#)
- [Patient Care Technician \(CTS\)](#)
- [Practical Nursing \(TD\)](#)
- [Structural Welding \(TD\)](#)
- [Structural and Pipe Welding \(TD\)](#)

Programs at Minden Campus (NLTCC) include:

- [Advanced Manufacturing Technology](#)
- [Associate of Applied Science in Business Office Administration](#)
- [Business Office Technology](#)
- [Industrial Instrumentation & Electrical Technician](#)
- [Associate of Applied Science in Industrial Instrumentation and Electrical Technology](#)
- [Industrial Maintenance Technology](#)
- [Patient Care Technician](#)
- [Associate of Applied Science in Practical Nursing](#)
- [Practical Nursing](#)
- [Welding](#)
- Heavy Equipment Vehicle Operator (CTS) (Camp Minden)

As well as its face-to-face programs, Louisiana Delta offers several programs fully online.

Programs at the Knights Online Campus (LDCC) include:

- Business and Technology (AAS)
- Business Office Administration (AAS)
- Criminal Justice (AAS)
- Full Stack Cloud Developer (AAS)
- Computer and Information Technology (AAS)
- Technical Studies (AAS)
- Criminal Justice (AALT)
- General Business (AALT)
- Humanities (AALT)
- Social Science (AALT)
- Business (AGS)
- Natural Sciences (AGS)
- Applied Sciences (AGS)
- Computer Science (AS)
- Teaching, Grades 1-5 (AST)
- Biological Sciences (AS)
- Physical Sciences (AS)
- Human Resource Specialist (CST)
- Medical Coding Specialist (CTS)
- Mortgage Documents Specialist (CTS)

Both Louisiana Delta and NLTC also offer an array of workforce training programs on a regular schedule. As for all face-to-face instruction, currently residents of Bienville, Claiborne and Union Parishes need to travel out of their home parish to participate in one of these training courses.

Workforce Programs at LDCC include:

- Heavy Equipment Operator
- CDL Training Course
- CNC Machining
- Certified Nursing Assistant
- Patient Care Technician
- Phlebotomy

Workforce Programs at NLTCC include:

- Allied Health
 - Certified Medical Assistant
 - Certified Nursing Assistant
 - Phlebotomy
- Transportation and Logistics
 - CDL Training Course
- Industrial
 - Power Line Worker

Current Educational Program Enrollments

At present the only physical location of a two- or four-year institution in Bienville, Claiborne, or Union Parishes is the Louisiana Delta Community College Workforce Training Site in Farmerville. This site primarily offers adult and community educational programs. Table 14 provides a summary of enrollment in the programs offered in Academic Year 2023-24.

Table 14: Enrollments at Louisiana Delta Community College Workforce Training Site in Farmerville

Program	Enrollment
Adult Basic Education	77
Adult Secondary Education	47
Community Education	125
EL Program (ESL)	35
Total	284

To access full face-to-face certificate, degree, diploma, and workforce programs, potential students must go out of parish. Enrollments in credit and workforce programs at the two serving institutions in Academic Year 2023-24 are shown in Table 15.

Table 15: Enrollment in Credit and Workforce Programs

Parish	Bienville	Claiborne	Union	
Institution	NLTCC	NLTCC	NLTCC	LDCC
Total Enrollment	146	84	9	134

Dual Enrollment

Bienville Parish Schools began providing a bus service to the Minden campus of Northwest Louisiana Technical Community College from Ringold High School in 2016. The School System has worked hard to overcome the implementation obstacles to develop new and different schedules for each student so they can complete the necessary high school courses and the dual-enrolled classes. The new schedules were created to accommodate the transportation schedules of the buses and provide enough time for the students to earn a credential at NLTCC. As the partners have become more familiar with overcoming these challenges, this program has gradually grown. While some students do attend dual enrollment courses at the high school, the existence of the bus program has been instrumental in enabling dual enrollment in Bienville Parish to almost double over the last two years (Table 16). Its enduring success is shown in the proportion of the high school students who have early college or an industry-based certification upon graduation (Table 17) and the parish-wide college-going rate, which almost matches the state average (Table 18).

Table 16: Headcount Enrollment in Dual Enrollment Courses

Parish	AY 2021-22	AY 2022-23	AY 2023-24
Bienville Parish	44	63	83
Claiborne Parish	16	16	32
Union Parish			14

Table 17: Proportion of the graduating class with early college credit or an IBC

Parish	% on-time graduating class of 2023	% of on-time graduates with early college credit or IBC
Bienville Parish	89%	60%
Claiborne Parish	96%	39%
Union Parish	86%	45%
Louisiana	83%	74%

Table 18: College-going rates for high school graduates in each parish and statewide

Parish	AY 2021-22	AY 2022-23
Bienville Parish	50.6%	56.2%
Claiborne Parish	33.7%	58%
Union Parish	38.8%	37.1%
Louisiana	52.8%	56.5%

In fall 2021 Claiborne Parish Schools also began providing a bus service to the Minden Campus. The lessons learned have allowed this program to also grow quickly since its inception (Table 16). While this success has not yet impacted the proportion of high school graduates with early college or an IBC, the most recent college-going rate of 58% (Table 18) certainly suggests the impact of these efforts.

Without a similar transportation service, access to dual enrollment opportunities for students in Union Parish remains extremely modest.

Conclusion and Recommendations

There is a clear need across all three of the parishes studied for increased educational offerings. Currently the only physical location available for in-person postsecondary education is at the Louisiana Delta Community College Workforce Training Site in Farmerville, which offers only adult education. To access full face-to-face postsecondary certificate, degree, diploma, and workforce programs, potential students must go out of their home parish. Doing so requires the

potential student to have access to some form of transportation and, even if that were available, the ability to commit to significant travel time.

The economies of all three parishes would clearly benefit from a more educated local workforce. While a considerable proportion of advertised positions continue to not specify a minimum required education level, a large number of job openings do. In fact, in each parish the proportion of jobs that require a qualification above a high school diploma exceeds the proportion of the population that hold that credential level by a significant amount, ranging from 10% to 20%.

There are considerable opportunities to make an impact in these locations, and two-year colleges can fill the gap in access with technical and healthcare training programs.

Based on the data in this report and conversations with the regional economic development office servicing these parishes, we recommend several concrete next steps. Longer term, there is a significant opportunity to engage the large proportion of residents in each parish with some college but no credential, but we first suggest a more immediate strategy to start toward this goal.

1. Expand on-site educational offerings in each parish

We recommend expanding to offer technical and healthcare-related short-term certification programs that lead to immediate workforce entry at physical locations in each parish. To accomplish this, we recommend that LCTCS utilize existing educational properties such as local high schools, or appropriate industry-based locations. We also recommend that LCTCS utilize their mobile lab resources to take technical resources and equipment to these new locations. All three parishes highlight shortages in healthcare fields. Union Parish's industrial base (e.g., poultry processing and logistics) requires targeted workforce training. Bienville Parish shows growing demand in utilities and home healthcare. By partnering with local employers, institutions have an opportunity to provide entry-level training in qualifications such as Certified Nursing Assistant and Patient Care Technician, Heavy Equipment Operator, Powerline Worker, and Electrical, which would lead program graduates to high-demand and well-paying jobs in each parish. Qualifying students would be able to utilize M.J. Foster Promise Scholarship funds to assist in covering the cost of the programs.

2. Create employer-educator partnerships to expand opportunity

The FAME Advanced Manufacturing Technician (AMT) program is a two-year, five-semester program that combines classroom and lab training with on-the-job work experience. Each student in the program is matched with a sponsor company for the duration of their training. A successful implementation of the FAME approach has been launched in Northwest Louisiana

with Bossier Parish Community College as the educational provider, and North Louisiana Economic Partnership as the organizing force behind the federation of advanced manufacturing companies. While there is not the same need for advanced manufacturing in these three parishes, the FAME approach of partnering with local employers in a structured program that combines classroom learning with on-the-job experience may be a fruitful way to increase the supply of educated workers in high-demand areas while also increasing parish educational attainment.

3. Expand Dual Enrollment opportunities

We also recommend exploring ways to increase the availability of dual enrollment in all three parishes. The effects of the substantial work underway in Bienville Parish are evident in the recent growth of dual enrollment and college-going rates, but there is further work to do to increase the proportion of high school graduates with early college or industry credentials. The initial impact of the bus program from Claiborne Parish also shows promising early results. Again, we recommend finding ways to further enhance and expand that program, as well as provide dual enrollment experiences on the ground in these parishes.

Lastly, based on the success of the bus program in both Bienville and Claiborne, we recommend replicating the bus approach for high schools in Union Parish. The barriers that must be overcome for a Union Parish high school student to participate in on-site community college dual course currently pose severe challenges. That high bar is reflected in the very modest enrollment numbers and the low current parish college-going rate.