



**Chancellor's Impact Report
2025-26**

Transformative

2025-26 IMPACT



Over \$300 Million

Annual Economic Impact

Over 4,500

Local Jobs Supported

98% of Graduates

Live and work in Louisiana

With funding from the state and our valued donors to the BRCC Foundation, we completed

\$50 Million in Capital Projects

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“A BRCC education prepares students for high-demand, high-wage careers that reshape their futures and strengthen both our local and state economies.”

Willie E. Smith, Sr., Ed.D.
Chancellor of BRCC



Letter from the Chancellor

Dear Colleagues, Partners and Friends,

At Baton Rouge Community College, we transform lives.

Whether our students earn an associate degree, a technical diploma or a certificate -- and whether they plan to continue their education at a four-year institution or immediately join the workforce -- we equip them with the knowledge and skills that open doors to opportunity. A BRCC education prepares students for high-demand, high-wage careers that reshape their futures and strengthen both our local and state economies.

This work matters deeply, and you played an essential role in it. Your support in countless ways has fueled our progress and contributed to the successes we achieved over the past year.

2025-26 was one of the most transformative years in BRCC's history. In this Impact Report, I'm excited to share highlights from the past year as well as the opportunities that lie before us in the future. In 2025-26, we set a new record for fall enrollment, completed \$50 million in capital projects, cut the ribbon on a new state-of-the-art building and broke ground on another, supported more than 4,500 jobs in our area and brought an annual economic impact of more than \$300 million to the Capital Region of Louisiana.

These accomplishments are a testament to the hard work, innovation and commitment of our students, faculty, staff, and also of our partners, friends and supporters. Thank you for joining us on this path to transformation -- not just for our students, but for all of Baton Rouge and Louisiana.

Warm regards,



Willie E. Smith, Sr., Ed.D.

Chancellor

Chancellor's Cabinet

Sarah Barlow, Ph.D.

Provost/Vice Chancellor for Workforce and Student Development

Corlin LeBlanc, CPA

Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration

Pilar Blanco-Eble, Ed.D.

*Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement/
Executive Director, BRCC Foundation*

Renita Ward Williams, J.D.

Vice Chancellor for Institutional Affairs and Strategic Planning

Transforming Enrollment & Graduation

Breaking Records

A total of 2,722 first-year students enrolled at Baton Rouge Community College for the Fall 2025 semester, establishing a new record. The previous record for first-year students was 2,501 set in the Fall 2024 semester. For the past several years, BRCC has continued to set enrollment records, bucking the national trend in higher education of declining enrollment across all types of colleges and universities.

Back-to-Back Largest Graduating Classes of Registered Nurses in History

In May and December of 2025, BRCC celebrated its back-to-back largest graduating classes of Registered Nurses in history with another large class finishing in May 2026! At the same time, scores of other allied health professionals also completed their programs. Graduates of BRCC's Division of Nursing & Allied Health are "pinned" at a special ceremony upon completing their programs, marking a special occasion attended by family and friends. The ever-increasing size of the pinning and graduation ceremonies underscores not only the success of our students, but also the growing pipeline of healthcare professionals that BRCC provides the state.

May 2026 Commencement

BRCC's 30th Commencement Ceremony celebrated more than 4,000 graduates and completers across all programs from the Summer 2025, Fall 2025 and Spring 2026 semesters. This includes a record number of students from the Division of Technical Education and the most dual-enrollment students in a single graduating class from any higher education institution in Louisiana history.



18,390 Students Served Annually

with Steady Enrollment
Increases in the Past 4 Years

"This record-breaking class is a testament to all the ways we've advanced BRCC over the past several years. We continue to offer new and varied programs that provide better futures for our students, and we have become a powerful driver -- for our students' careers, for our local economy, and for the workforce in our region. We are transforming lives and the Capital Region."

Willie E. Smith, Sr., Ed.D.
Chancellor of BRCC





Transforming Healthcare

Grand Opening of Nursing & Allied Health Building

In August 2025, we celebrated the grand opening of our new \$35 million nursing and allied health facility with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on the Mid-City Campus.

The Baton Rouge Community College | Our Lady of the Lake Health Nursing & Allied Health Building brings together under one roof all the programs in BRCC's Division of Nursing & Allied Health. This includes the nursing, practical nursing, sonography, surgical technology, phlebotomy, and medical assistant programs.

Funded in part by a \$12 million donation from FMOL Health | Our Lady of the Lake, the new building has the capacity to serve 1,500 students, and allows BRCC to add several new programs to the Division of Nursing & Allied Health, including physical therapy, occupational therapy, respiratory care, and athletic training.

Chancellor Smith and E.J. Kuiper, President and CEO of FMOL Health, cut the ribbon on the new building in August 2025. Designed by Chasm Architecture and Mackey Mitchell, with Ratcliff Construction Company as general contractor, the building is the first new classroom building on BRCC's Mid City Campus since 2009.



State-of-the-art facility with
the capacity to serve

1,500 Students

93,000

Square Feet

4 New Programs

to the Division of Nursing
& Allied Health



The new building features state-of-the-art classrooms and labs, simulated hospital and surgical rooms, a home-health-care training space sponsored by St. James Place Independent Senior Living Community, and high-fidelity mannequins that simulate actual patients.



“BRCC is one of the fastest-growing community colleges in the nation, and our healthcare programs are among our largest and most in-demand. To meet the needs of our students and regional employers, we needed a new, modern facility. We are extremely grateful to Our Lady of the Lake Health, local and state government, and all our donors for turning this dream into a reality.”

Willie E. Smith, Sr., Ed.D.
Chancellor of BRCC



BRCC and Lowe's officials ceremonially broke ground for the new construction lab on the Mid City Campus.



The Capital City Construction Lab is currently being built on the Mid City Campus, next to the Cypress Building.



Transforming Construction Management

Breaking Ground on BRCC's Capital City Construction Lab

In October 2025, we officially broke ground on the new Capital City Construction Lab on the Mid City Campus, and in August 2026, classes will begin being held in the new facility. The Construction Lab will serve as a hands-on, open-air student learning environment designed to replicate real-world construction conditions.

BRCC and the Baton Rouge Community College Foundation received an \$850,000 Gable Grant from the Lowe's Foundation to fund construction of the lab and establish a brand-new Plumbing Program at BRCC that will utilize the new facility. Along with plumbing, the lab will provide BRCC students with practical skills in carpentry, electrical, HVAC, and construction management.

The BRCC Construction Management degree program is the only two-year degree program accredited by the American Council for Construction Education (ACCE) in Louisiana and one of only 15 ACCE-accredited two-year programs in the nation. The Lab ensures BRCC's commitment to the Lowe's Foundation national goal of preparing 50,000 students for skilled trades careers by 2028.

An artist's rendering of the Capital City Construction Lab shows what part of the interior will look like when completed.



New Plumbing Program

In Fall 2025, BRCC announced the start of the Plumbing Apprenticeship Program in partnership with the Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors Association of Louisiana. The BRCC Plumbing Apprenticeship Program is the first of its kind in the Capital Region, highlighting BRCC's commitment to providing excellent value to our students, business and industry partners and the community. The first cohort of students began the plumbing program in January 2026 and will use the resources provided by the new Capital City Construction Lab to gain hands-on training in a real-world setting.

Transforming Our Community

A Force for Good

The name of our college includes the word “Community” and we take that seriously. We have partnered with area businesses and industry to offer hands-on, real-world learning to our students, as well as to provide them with a pipeline for jobs upon graduation. We also search for ways to bring value to our community so we can be a force for good in the Baton Rouge Capital Region.

Supporting Survivors

In Fall 2025, BRCC teamed up with The Governor’s Office of Women’s Policy, the IRIS Domestic Violence Center and the Louisiana Community and Technical College System to launch the **Safe Wheels Alliance**. The alliance uses students and instructors from BRCC’s Automotive Technology Center to repair and maintain the vehicles of survivors of domestic

violence. The program provides reliable transportation to survivors, while giving BRCC automotive students hands-on training that enhances their career preparation.

Bringing Inspiration

In 2025, BRCC has partnered with the new **Baton Rouge Inspiration Center** to provide academic and workforce training to the local community. By offering classes at the center at 5511 Winbourne Ave. in Baton Rouge, BRCC is meeting students where they are. These classes provide additional academic pathways for students to earn an associate degree or a technical certification that will lead to a high-wage, high-demand career.

Mentoring Youth

In conjunction with Louisiana Senator Regina Barrow, the Baton Rouge Area Chamber, the East Baton Rouge Parish School System and Big Buddy, BRCC is a cornerstone of the **Mayor’s Youth Workforce Experience**. The program is a summer initiative designed to provide over 400 high school students in East Baton Rouge Parish with paid work opportunities, hands-on career training, and graduation-ready credentials. BRCC provides the students with internships and the opportunity to earn industry-based certifications to enhance their resumes and career prospects.



BRCC and its local partners announced the creation of the Safe Wheels Alliance in Fall 2025 at a press conference at BRCC’s Automotive Technology Center.



BRCC and the Baton Rouge Inspiration Center announced its partnership in January 2026 to offer various workforce training programs to students, right in their own neighborhood.

Creating Jobs

Training North Baton Rouge

In 2025 and 2026, BRCC and ExxonMobil have continued their partnership in the **North Baton Rouge Industrial Training Initiative**, graduating more than 90 students in 2025 who completed training in the electrical, millwright, pipefitting, instrumentation and welding disciplines. And for the first time in June of 2025, the program graduated Process Technology Support Technicians, who are certified to work at refineries and chemical plants.

The NBRITI program provides tuition-free training for North Baton Rouge residents to help them obtain careers in high-demand skilled crafts. The training is designed to recruit, train, develop and sustain a pipeline for North Baton Rouge residents to have successful careers with local employers.

Graduates received a certificate of completion from BRCC and a national certification from their respective disciplines, such as the National Center for Construction Education and Research certification, and certifications from the American Welding Society.

The training is based at BRCC's Acadian and Central Campuses and the program assists students with securing a job in the industry.

Offering HOPE

In summer 2025, BRCC and the Way to Work program, powered by **HOPE Ministries**, partnered to offer classes, workshops and educational pathways to Baton Rouge residents to help them achieve meaningful employment and financial independence. BRCC provides the courses and trainings to residents who use the resources of HOPE Ministries, located at 4643 Winbourne Avenue in Baton Rouge.

Growing Healthcare

BRCC and **Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System | Our Lady of the Lake** are working together to improve healthcare in Louisiana. FMOLHS | OLOL is the driving force behind BRCC's new Nursing & Allied Health building, many of BRCC's healthcare programs and initiatives, and the support of BRCC Athletics. The partnership helps address the critical nursing and healthcare worker shortages in Louisiana and beyond.



Along with support from ExxonMobil, more than 40 other local companies and organizations partnered with BRCC to offer support and jobs to graduates of the NBRITI program.



Students from Glen Oaks High School in Baton Rouge attended a dual enrollment event at BRCC in 2025.

Transforming K-12 Education

Preparing the Next Generation

The Early College Academy is a team effort between BRCC and the East Baton Rouge Parish School System to offer high school students dual enrollment at BRCC. Students can take college classes while still in high school so they can accelerate their education and become career-ready faster.

Pathways to Bright Futures Initiative

In May 2025, 18 students from Glen Oaks Magnet High School in Baton Rouge graduated not only with their high school diplomas, but also with associate degrees from BRCC. The students were part of a pilot program called Pathways to Bright Futures that enabled them to enroll in both high school and college courses beginning in 9th grade. Along with their high school diplomas, the students also received an Associate of Arts Louisiana Transfer Degree in Humanities from BRCC. In addition to the Glen Oaks students, the GEO Prep Academy in Baton Rouge also had 13 students who graduated from BRCC while graduating high school.



BRCC's Dual Enrollment has

**Grown 506%
Since 2020**

BRCC continues to lead the region in partnering with K-12 schools to offer students meaningful access to college courses and programs of their choice. More than 2,200 dual enrollment students were enrolled at BRCC in Fall 2025, a figure that represented approximately 20 percent of the total Fall enrollment.

May 2026 Dual Enrollment Record

**200+ Graduates
State Record**

In May 2026, more than 200 dual enrollment students earned associate degrees from BRCC -- the most in a single graduating class from any higher ed institution in Louisiana history.

TRIO Programs

The TRIO Programs at BRCC are federally funded programs dedicated to helping first-generation, low-income students succeed in their academic pursuits. TRIO programs address class, social, and cultural barriers to education, as well as financial barriers. The programs aim to increase college enrollment, persistence, and completion rates among disadvantaged students.

TRIO includes the Upward Bound Program, which provides pre-college academic assistance to low-income, potential first-generation college students in the high school core curriculum areas of math, English, science and foreign language. The program also addresses other college preparatory needs including financial aid assistance, academic/career counseling, and GEE/ACT testing assistance. The Educational Opportunity Center assists first-generation college and low-income individuals 19 years of age or older, or those younger than 19 who are enrolled in an Adult Education Center, living within an 11-parish area in furthering their education beyond high school and the high school equivalency test (HISSET). The program provides various forms of aid in the areas of academic assistance, career exploration, enrollment advising, and financial aid counseling.



In 2025, Dr. Darica N. Simon-Baptiste, Director of TRIO Programs at BRCC, received the SWASAP Legacy Leader Award, recognizing her exemplary service, leadership and commitment to educational equity.



In May 2026, more than 200 dual-enrollment high school students -- a state record -- graduated with their high school diplomas while also receiving associate degrees from BRCC. Dual enrollment continues to propel high school students in the Capital Region into college and careers more quickly, saving them time and money.

Transforming Research

Dr. Mary Miller, BRCC researcher and faculty member, engages her students in field research and presenting their findings at international conferences -- rare experiences for students at community colleges nationwide.

Louisiana Sponge Hunters: From the Bayou to Portugal

When thinking of Louisiana waterways, most people think of alligators or crawfish. But Baton Rouge Community College is a national leader in the study of an animal that plays a critical role in shaping our ecosystem – the freshwater sponge.

From presenting research in Portugal and giving a TEDx Talk last fall, to multi-state expeditions to collect and study sponges, BRCC researcher and faculty member Dr. Mary Miller and her team of student researchers spent 2025 putting BRCC on the national and international stage.

Miller is one of only a few sponge taxonomists in the U.S., and BRCC is one of the only community colleges in the nation taking part in this type of research. It's also rare for community colleges to offer research opportunities to undergraduate students, but Miller currently has a team of 14 students working with her. They call themselves The Sponge Hunters.

"We are the leading community college in this field," Miller said. "It is very rare to go to a conference and see another community college presenting or even attending. When our students get to showcase their research at national and international conferences like the one in Portugal, it gives them a chance to see how their research can really impact the world."

Louisiana's swamps, rivers and streams are home to an abundance of freshwater sponges that may hold the secrets to our waterways. Miller and her students are trying to uncover those secrets. For instance, in some locations, freshwater sponges are abundant, and in other places, nonexistent. Their presence or absence may tell us a lot about a certain body of water.

Miller developed The Louisiana Freshwater Sponge Project to map all of the waterways in the state that contain freshwater sponges. This means that she and her students put on knee boots and wade through all kinds of water bodies to hunt sponges. The Sponge Hunters collect sponge samples, along with water and sediment samples.

Sponges can be an indicator of clean water and a healthy ecosystem, but Miller has found that there are fewer sponges today in Louisiana waters than there were 50 years ago.

Things like pollution or heavy metals in water may be factors, and Miller and her students are trying to learn all they can about what the presence or decreased presence of sponges signifies.

Through recent partnerships with other colleges, universities and research organizations around the country, Miller is broadening the scope of the project beyond Louisiana to extend the breadth of research offered to students at BRCC. To date, Miller has garnered about \$2 million in grants to support her research – also something that is rare at community colleges.

Since Miller began the project 7 years ago, she has had a total of 61 student researchers who have worked with her. Many have gone on to get degrees in related fields to continue ecological and environmental work.

"Research impacts student success in a way that is unmatched by any other experience. It can be life changing, and that is exactly why I wanted to bring student research to BRCC," she said.



Dr. Mary Miller was invited to give a TEDx Talk in Fall of 2025 to speak about her freshwater sponge research and her BRCC student researchers.



Transforming Our Faculty

Educators who Excel

Inspiring our students is what our faculty members do best. They are leaders in their fields, earning honors and awards that bring new perspectives to their teaching and added experience to their students.

Four BRCC Faculty Awarded Prestigious Fellowship to Advance Humanities Education

In 2025, four BRCC faculty members from the Division of Liberal Arts were awarded a two-year fellowship with the Great Questions Foundation, which is supported by the Mellon Foundation. The fellowship aims to promote core-text reading and discussion-based learning at community colleges nationwide.

The four faculty members who received a fellowship from the Great Questions Foundation are Samantha Chaisson, Natasha Whitton, Bea Gyimah and Darren Jones; listed from left to right.



Arts Fest 2026

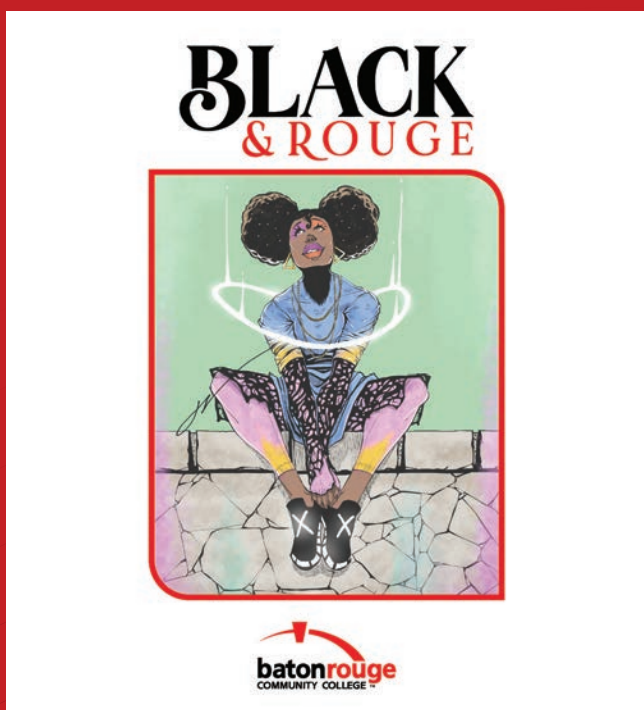
Faculty members Carrie Causey and Clarence Nero organized Arts Fest XIV, held March 30 – April 2, 2026 on the Mid City Campus. The theme of Arts Fest 2026 was “Art for the Soul” and included four days of free artist talks, film screenings, poetry readings, and music and dance performances. The event was sponsored by CareSouth Medical & Dental, In Loving Arms Pediatric Day Health Center, The Great Questions Foundation and the Student Government Association. Willie Burton, two-time Academy Award winner for sound on films such as *The Green Mile* and *Oppenheimer*, was a keynote speaker at the festival.

BRCC Faculty Filmmaker and Alumnus Receives Alex Trebek Fellowship

BRCC faculty member and alumnus Shea Stephens was selected in 2025 to receive the Alex Trebek Legacy Fellowship by the Television Academy Foundation in Hollywood. Stephens, who teaches film at BRCC, is also an accomplished filmmaker, with work primarily focusing on Black Southern life. His films have been shown at major festivals, including the Atlanta Black Film Festival, the Pan African Film Festival, and the International Gullah Film Festival, among others.



Chancellor Smith, far left, and Provost Barlow, far right, recognized faculty members Gail Suberbielle, Shea Stephens, Gery Frie, Mary Miller, and Keith Potter at a 2025 awards ceremony.



BRCC released its Spring 2026 issue of *Black & Rouge Journal*, a collection of poetry by students, employees and the Baton Rouge community, in conjunction with Arts Fest XIV. The faculty-led journal, founded in 2008, takes its name from the colors of BRCC.



Faculty member Eric Baskin with Chancellor Smith.



The new plumbing program at BRCC began in 2026. Starting salaries for plumbers in the Baton Rouge area average more than \$20/hour, providing students with another option for a stable, long-term career.

Transforming Our Programs

Building Successful Careers

Audio Recording Program

In Fall 2025, after a six-year hiatus, BRCC began registering students for audio recording and engineering courses as part of the music studio production career and technical certificate program. All audio recording and engineering courses are held in BRCC's in-house audio recording studio located on the Mid City Campus. This immersive environment ensures students learn on professional-grade equipment in a real-world setting.

Technical Education

In 2025, BRCC Workforce Development received the Award of Excellence in the Post-Secondary Technical Education category at the 17th Greater Baton Rouge Industry Alliance (GBRIA) Craft Workforce Development Awards ceremony. This marks the fifth time that BRCC has received this prestigious award. May 2026 saw the largest-ever graduating class from the Division of Technical Education at BRCC. The division offers dozens of technical education programs that make students job ready in high-wage, high-demand fields.



100+ Programs

Top High-Wage, High-Demand Programs:

Process Technology

Construction Management

Registered Nurse

Manufacturing

Transportation & Logistics

IT/Computer Science

Workforce Entrepreneurship & Technology Certificate

BRCC is launching an eight-week, no-cost training opportunity to build or scale a real business using AI tools. Students will gain hands-on entrepreneurship and workforce skills and will launch a functional business system – not just ideas! The program begins in June 2026 and will also provide Industry-Based Certifications in Customer Service and Sales, Excel Basics and Google AI Essentials.



Chancellor Willie E. Smith, Sr. and Loyola University Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs Thomas A. Chambers ceremonially signed a Memorandum of Understanding to create a program for BRCC students to gain acceptance to Loyola Online's Bachelor of Applied Science program through Loyola's City College.

Transforming Lives

BRCC and Loyola University Sign Unique 2+2 Transfer Program

BRCC and Loyola University New Orleans held a signing ceremony in November 2025 to announce a new, one-of-a-kind, 2+2 transfer program between the two institutions.

The transfer program recognizes and transfers all 60 credits of a BRCC Associate of Arts degree, Associate of Science degree, or Associate of Applied Science degree to Loyola's City College.

This is a one-of-a-kind transfer program at BRCC because it's the first time BRCC students with an Associate of Applied Science degree have a clear transfer route with that degree.

BRCC graduates who make this transfer can enter Loyola's Bachelor of Applied Science program with junior-level standing. This transfer program provides a direct pathway for BRCC graduates to obtain a more affordable and flexible bachelor's degree online from Loyola University New Orleans.

Baton Rouge Community College is committed to providing affordable, high-quality education and workforce training that leads students to successful careers. For students who are pursuing associate degrees and plan to continue their education at a four-year college or university, transfer programs are another way we can assist our students by creating set pathways that are simple to follow.



Located in the Bienvenue Student Center, The Closet is a service that provides BRCC students with business attire so they can attend job interviews and begin their careers with confidence.



In Spring 2026, BRCC cut the ribbon on its new Safe Space area in the Bienvenue Student Center. Left to right: Dianna Gilbert Depron, Director of Enrollment Management; Miracle Davis, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Development; Sarah Barlow, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Workforce & Student Development; Renita Ward Williams, Vice Chancellor for Institutional Affairs and Strategic Planning; Alisha Diggs, Mental Health Counselor.



At BRCC, we want our students to be focused on school, not hunger. The Store inside the Bienvenue Student Center offers healthy food options for students who are facing food insecurity.

Transforming Student Services

Helping Where It Counts

BRCC is dedicated to the safety, well-being and success of our students. From free counseling services to assistance with food insecurity, we offer students a plethora of resources to help them achieve their goals in the classroom and in their lives.

Safe Space for Students

In Spring 2026, BRCC cut the ribbon and officially opened The Safe Space in the newly renovated Counseling and Accessibility Center located in the Bienvenue Student Center on the Mid City Campus.

The Safe Space includes:

- Licensed Counselors and Counseling Interns
- Private spaces for individual and group counseling
- A relaxation pod for stress relief
- A meditation room for mindfulness and reflection
- Space for workshops, seminars, and group sessions

The Safe Space is open to all BRCC students, faculty and staff and is intended to serve as a stigma-free area for support, wellness and connection.

The Store

Food insecurity is a major issue for college students across the nation and in Baton Rouge. Partnerships with the USDA, Healthy Blue, and the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank help BRCC to address this need for students, so no BRCC student

ever goes hungry. The Store continues to be a successful resource for our students, year after year.

The Closet

Now in its second year, The Closet is designed to provide students with business and business-casual clothing at no cost, to ensure that every student has the opportunity to dress confidently and appropriately as they embark upon job interviews and step into the workforce.

Mental Health Awareness & Assistance

The “Trauma 2 Resiliency” Mental Health Conference in November 2025 brought together BRCC and local high school students to hear from more than 10 speakers on a variety of mental health topics. Speakers addressed topics such as mental health, stress, anxiety, depression, social media influence, trauma & math, violence, and bullying. Students were also invited to enter an essay contest in which they wrote about personal traumas and their own resiliency. Judges selected the top three essays and winners were awarded BRCC scholarships.



Transforming Philanthropy

BRCC Foundation

When you invest in the BRCC Foundation, you invest in the students who will build, heal, and power Baton Rouge for the next generation.

\$2.2M Endowment | \$10.1M Total Assets

Where Access Becomes Opportunity

At the BRCC Foundation, philanthropy removes barriers and opens doors. Through the generosity of our donors and partners, BRCC expands access to education, strengthens workforce training, and creates pathways for students. Each investment helps prepare the nurses, skilled trades professionals, technicians, and leaders our region needs while creating life-changing opportunities for the students who call BRCC home.

The Chancellor's Circle

BRCC officially launched its inaugural Chancellor's Circle Leadership Giving Society in May 2025. The Chancellor's Circle is BRCC's leadership giving society, recognizing distinguished individuals and organizations whose philanthropic partnership advances our mission and strategic priorities. Through leadership investments aligned with the Chancellor's vision, members provide flexible, immediate use support that strengthens student success, fuels innovation, and expands opportunity, helping prepare future leaders and a skilled workforce for Baton Rouge and our region.

In May 2026, the BRCC Foundation Board of Directors and Chancellor's Circle members gathered to support BRCC and celebrate the First Fifty Founding Chancellor's Circle Members. Left to right: Robert Schneckenburger, BRCC Foundation Board Member and event co-host; Ralph Bender, BRCC Foundation Board Member and event co-host; Willie E. Smith, Sr., BRCC Chancellor; Richard Nelson, President of Louisiana Community and Technical Colleges; Edie Bender, Chancellor's Circle Member and event co-host; and Pilar Blanco-Eble, Vice Chancellor for Advancement and Executive Director of the BRCC Foundation.

\$53,966

in scholarships supported 56 students

\$95,573

in endowed awards kept students on track to completion

\$67,650

invested in faculty professorships, elevating the quality of every classroom

220 donors

44 Chancellor's Circle members
20 new board members
since 2023

The BRCC Foundation exists to empower student success through philanthropic support and community partnerships that expand access, support retention, strengthen academic and workforce programs, and prepare Baton Rouge Community College as the preferred provider of talent for a global marketplace.

Board of Directors for the BRCC Foundation

Chas Roemer, Chair	Norisha Kirts Glover	Kristi Wagley Richard
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Willie E. Smith, Sr., Chancellor	Adrian Owen Jones, CFRE	Jerell Thomas
Pilar Blanco-Eble, Executive Director	Eric Lane	Alesia Wilkins-Braxton, J.D.
Darius Bonton	Meg Mahoney	Renita Williams Thomas
Marvin Borgmeyer	Sandy Michelet	LaDonna Williams
David Fleshman	Erin Pou	Brian LaFleur, Emeritus

The Chancellor’s Circle

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Hancock Whitney
Ochsner Health
Chas Roemer
Forte and Tablada, Inc.
Willie E. Smith, Sr., Ed.D.
LaDonna and Troy Williams
Woman’s Hospital

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Pam and Rob Fairly
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Michelle and David Hardy
Adrian Owen Jones, CFRE
Heather Kleinpeter
Lisa and Eric Lane

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Meg Mahoney
Jake Manship
Richard Manship
Melara Enterprises
Sandy and Craig Michelet
NRK Construction
Cheryl and Tom Olinde
Cherine Patin
Kristi Wagley Richard
Mila Sexton, CFRE
Andrew Shenkan
SSA Consultants
Kabrina Smith
Renita and Oliver Thomas
Beverly Brooks Thompson, Ph.D., CFRE

ASSOCIATE MEMBER

Tina Williams



Left to right: Megan Roberts, Executive Director, Thomason Foundation; Pilar Blanco-Eble, Ed.D., Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement & Executive Director, BRCC Foundation; Jeannette Guillory Thomason, donor and head of the Thomason Foundation; Willie E. Smith, Sr., Ed.D., BRCC Chancellor; Sarah Barlow, BRCC Provost and Vice Chancellor for Workforce and Student Development.

Transforming Opportunities

Expanding Louisiana's Healthcare Workforce

Louisiana needs more nurses, and BRCC is helping to meet that need. Thanks to a \$350,000 Collective Impact Grant from the Louisiana Blue Foundation, BRCC is expanding its Nursing & Allied Health programs so more students can enroll, more faculty can be added, and more trained healthcare professionals can enter the workforce sooner.

This investment is helping address one of our state's most urgent workforce challenges while creating pathways for students and strengthening the quality of healthcare for families and communities across Louisiana.

Opening Doors to Careers in Construction and Healthcare

For many students, the cost of education stands between them and a career that could transform their future. A \$250,000 gift from the H. Allen and Jeannette Guillory Thomason Foundation is helping to remove that barrier.

This investment establishes endowed scholarships at BRCC for students pursuing careers in Construction and Nursing & Allied Health, two fields that are essential to Louisiana's workforce.

Through these scholarships, students who might not otherwise have the financial means to continue their education can gain the training needed for productive careers that also strengthen our communities.

Building Louisiana's Construction Workforce

For the past decade, the Louisiana State Licensing Board for Contractors and the Contractors' Educational Trust Fund



Officials from St. James Place joined Chancellor Smith and Provost Barlow in cutting the ribbon on the St. James Place Assisted Living Apartment. Gordon Buster, left, is chairperson of the St. James Place Resident Association, and Dick Wager, second from right, is President and CEO of St. James Place.

have invested in BRCC students. In 2025, the organizations contributed nearly \$185,000 to support BRCC's Construction Management program, marking the tenth consecutive year of support and reflecting the industry's confidence in BRCC as the premier training ground for Louisiana's construction workforce.

Preparing the Next Generation of Healthcare Professionals

Through a \$375,000 investment from St. James Place retirement community in Baton Rouge, BRCC is preparing students to meet the growing demand for healthcare professionals in Louisiana.

In May 2026, BRCC cut the ribbon on the new St. James Place Assisted Living Apartment in the Nursing & Allied Health Building. The apartment replicates a real assisted-living setting, allowing students to practice caring for patients in a

realistic environment. The St. James Place Scholars Nursing & Allied Health Workforce Scholarship Fund helps students access and complete their training.

Expanding Opportunity for Students with Intellectual Disabilities

Every student deserves the opportunity to learn, grow, and prepare for meaningful work. A \$1,039,000 grant from the United States Department of Education is helping BRCC expand that opportunity for students with intellectual disabilities.

The five-year investment will strengthen BRCC's BEARS Program to help students with cognitive disabilities prepare for continued education and training, and will create a new Program for Successful Employment Lab, giving students access to college experiences that build academic skills, career preparation, and greater independence.

Transforming Our College

Excellence All Around

From being voted “Best Community College in Baton Rouge” to achieving national accreditations and awards, BRCC shined in 2025-26.

Awards & Recognition

Voted Best Community College Two Years in a Row

BRCC was voted Best Community College in back-to-back years by the people of Baton Rouge in The Advocate’s 2025 and 2026 Best of Baton Rouge contests. In 2026, BRCC was also named Best Summer Camp in the same competition, acknowledging our variety of high-quality summer camps for students in grades 3-12. This recognition demonstrates our dedication to providing high-quality, accessible education to our community. The contest, held by the Capital City’s daily newspaper and sponsored by the East Baton Rouge Parish Library, celebrates Baton Rouge’s favorite institutions, businesses and individuals.

Automotive Training Program Earns National Accreditation

In 2025, BRCC’s Automotive Training program earned the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence national accreditation for Maintenance and Light Repair. The Automotive Training program underwent rigorous evaluation by the ASE Education Foundation to achieve this prestigious recognition, demonstrating that they had met nationally accepted standards of excellence.

Chancellor Smith Named Workforce Development Champion

In Fall 2025, Chancellor Willie E. Smith, Sr. was honored with the Workforce Development Champion Award by the Louisiana Chamber of Commerce Foundation. The award underscores the significance of BRCC’s workforce development efforts in the region and across the state.

Chancellor Smith Receives MLK Trailblazer Award

Chancellor Smith received the Martin Luther King, Jr. Trailblazer Award from United Excel Christian Faith Ministries in January 2026. Chancellor Smith was chosen for his continued commitment to the success of BRCC students and all people in the Baton Rouge community.

Chancellor Smith Featured in Baton Rouge Business Report’s Leadership Issue

Chancellor Smith was prominently featured in the Baton Rouge Business Report’s 2026 Capital Assets Roundtable issue. He was one of six top executives from the Capital Region who participated in the roundtable discussion on the future of Baton Rouge. Dr. Smith represented higher education and workforce training on the panel, emphasizing BRCC’s critical role in the region’s economy.

AACC Honors Chancellor Smith

Chancellor Smith has recently been selected by his peers nationwide to serve on the Board of Directors for the American Association of Community Colleges, and has now been appointed to the organization’s Executive Committee, where he will help lead national initiatives focused on workforce training and program initiatives. The appointment places Dr. Smith among a select group of community college leaders helping shape the future of workforce development, economic mobility, and postsecondary education policy in the U.S.



Chancellor Smith with his Workforce Development Champion Award.



In back-to-back wins, BRCC was named Best Community College in 2025 and 2026 in The Advocate's Best of Baton Rouge competition. Representatives from BRCC attended the awards event both years.



Chancellor Smith was one of several local business leaders featured in the January 2026 Baton Rouge Business Report's Capital Assets Roundtable issue.



National recording artist Cupid, front left, had attendees at Drip, Sip & Jam 2026 dancing to the Cupid Shuffle. The fundraising event first began in 2025 and has now become an annual tradition.

Transforming Winners

Champions, In Any Field

BRCC Athletics had a banner year in 2025. The program achieved a conference title repeat for men's basketball and a post-season appearance for softball.

BRCC Athletics, led by Athletic Director Brock Kantrow, offers men's and women's basketball, baseball and softball opportunities to BRCC student-athletes.

BRCC Men's Basketball Team Wins Back-to-Back LCCAC Championships

Under Head Coach Byron Starks, the BRCC men's basketball team captured the Louisiana Community Colleges Athletic Conference championship in 2025. The Bears clinched the LCCAC championship with an exciting win at home over Southern University-Shreveport, marking the second consecutive year they were crowned conference champions. Starks also received Coach of the Year for his outstanding season.

BRCC Lady Bears Softball Makes Playoffs

In 2025, the Lady Bears softball team made their first-ever playoff appearance in Oklahoma and were recognized

afterward by the Louisiana Legislature at the State Capitol. In summer 2025, BRCC welcomed Abby Bolton as head coach of the Lady Bears.

Drip, Sip, and Jam

For the first time in 2025, BRCC Athletics held a fundraiser to help support student-athletes. Drip, Sip & Jam brought together the local community to enjoy music, art, and food and drinks from local well-known restaurants and vendors. Attendees were able to paint shoes, T-shirts and accessories in their favorite colors and styles while participating in a silent auction and enjoying the food and music.

Making Athletes Job Ready

BRCC Athletics is creating a new initiative to help make student-athletes job ready by integrating industry-based certifications into their academic journey. This will enable them to have job opportunities beyond athletics when they graduate so they can be champions in any field.



The Bears men's basketball team won the Louisiana Community Colleges Athletic Conference championship in 2025. In 2026, 6 players were named to the All-Conference Team.



The Lady Bears basketball team landed 5 players on the 2026 All-Louisiana Community College Athletic Conference Team, including sophomore guard/forward Shellee LeBlanc, above. Other honorees were Jacey Coleman, Emani Young, Cambrieion Link and Trinity Thomas.



The Lady Bears Softball team made their first-ever postseason appearance in 2025.



Baton Rouge Community College

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mybrcc.edu

Transforming Louisiana

100+ Programs

Top High-Wage, High-Demand Programs:

Nursing • IT • Process Technology • Construction Management • Manufacturing

BRCC Locations in Baton Rouge: Mid City • Acadian • Central • Ardendale

BRCC Locations in Other Cities: Jackson • Port Allen • New Roads