

RISING UP: ACTIVE LEARNING

Active Learning with Lesson Study
UNCF Liberal Arts Innovation Center



Volume I: Getting to Know the Team

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YŌKOSO: WELCOME

To the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) and the Talladega College (TC)
Virtual Liberal Arts Innovation Center (LAIC) for Education

By: Dr. Rebecca McKay

In November of 2019, the Education Department was asked to support the written design for an innovation in education to be disseminated through the Talladega College Education Department and a long-admired organization of ours, the United Negro College Fund (UNCF). This innovation was slated to be disseminated by the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) and the Talladega College (TC) Virtual Liberal Arts Innovation Center (LAIC) for Education. My role in this endeavor is to guide and support the Talladega College Education Department as they enact the grant. As a professional learning specialist, I also serve in the role of advisor to our Talladega College Faculty who are interested in honing their active learning skills and studying instruction through the process of Lesson Study. I act as the Lesson Study informal guide for the Education Department as well as the on-site supporter.

To say that we as a small department were honored to receive this grant is an understatement, but truthfully, we were also overwhelmed. Reading the request for the grant proposal or the RFP was like coming home and we calmed down as we reviewed concepts of the smallest doable innovation

that creates the greatest change for improved teaching and learning in our department and the innovation is Japanese Lesson Study defined as “a teaching improvement and knowledge building process that has origins in Japanese elementary and secondary education. In Japanese lesson study, teachers work in small teams to plan, teach, observe, analyze, and refine individual class lessons, called research lessons.” This innovation has a long and productive history in our Talladega College Education Department and the lives of our very experienced faculty.

The Talladega College Education Department began to collaborate and to define and explain the smallest and simplest innovation that makes the most difference for our teacher candidates’ classroom and field experiences and at the same time has the most impact on the students in our partner schools. Again, we knew immediately that our choice was Japanese Lesson Study. Without hesitation we moved forward with the smallest and the simplest innovation that makes the most difference in teaching and learning. In the next section, please see our steps and find our recommended process to this simple common-sense approach to an innovation that changes teaching and learning. This innovation also builds capacity to sustain renewal and change in teaching and learning at the institution level. It is perhaps the simplest innovation that might make the greatest difference in Talladega College teacher candidate’s careers and in the teaching lives of their professors.



• Cerbin, W. & Kopp, B. (2006). Lesson Study as a model for building pedagogical knowledge and improving teaching. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, p. 260.

INTRODUCTION

The Plan for the Smallest Innovation

The Talladega College Education Department decided to divide and conquer. While I worked my way through the UNCF Liberal Arts Innovation Center (LAIC) for Education grant writing process, my colleagues and leaders in the Talladega College Education Department worked their way through the Alabama State Department of Education Continuous Improvement in Educator Preparation (CIEP) process for the review and the inclusion of new content standards into our programs. As we connected our classroom work, syllabi and field experiences to our state and national standards, again, we were confirmed in our choice of Japanese Lesson Study. As we reviewed our department data and the growth in our teacher candidates' professional dispositions and content knowledge, we realized the improvements in our teacher candidates were overwhelmingly impacted by the process of Japanese Lesson Study.

The following plan is the simplest process and plan from the Liberal Arts Innovation Center (LAIC) for Education. Our leadership teams recommend this process using multiple layers of influence for others who want to try the innovation of Japanese Lesson Study. For colleagues who want to utilize the tools and materials our United Negro College Fund (UNCF) and the Talladega College (TC) Virtual Liberal Arts Innovation Center (LAIC) for Education provide, there will be multiple ways to enter into your own process to try this innovation of Lesson Study. The following plan and timeline are a perfect match for the UNCF grant plan and the following description fits what we implement each semester. A nonnegotiable in the plan requires multiple layers of influence of leadership at the college level (Appendix A). The United Negro College Fund (UNCF) and the Talladega College (TC) Virtual Liberal Arts Innovation Center (LAIC) for Education leadership levels are shown in Appendix A. If you choose to try our innovation, we recommend these layers of leadership to ascertain a level of rigor.



Training and Development

Faculty and student interactions can develop into deep relationships between Historically Black College University (HBCU) professors and students. The relationships are palpable during Lesson Study. Relationships forged between faculty and students during active learning in the classrooms have repeatedly shown results in HBCU student achievement and persistence. The quality of teacher-student relationships during interactions between students are visible during the professors' use of active learning, which we have embraced and embedded in our teaching and learning since 2015, particularly the Alabama Reading Initiative Best Practices: Planning Strategic Lessons: A Step-by-Step Guide: <https://www.alsde.edu/sec/ari/Strategic%20Teaching/Purposeful%20Planning%20Guide.pdf>

• Flowers, A., Scott, J., Riley, J., & Palmer, R. (2015). *Beyond the Call of Duty: Building on Othermothering for Improving Outcomes at Historically Black Colleges and Universities*. *Journal of African American Males in Education*, Vol. 6 Issue, p. 59-73.

THE ROLE OF THE INNOVATION CORE TEAM

The design and development of Lesson Study as a long-term cycle of professional learning requires an Innovation Core Team to focus on the cycles of professional learning. The Innovation Core Team includes Rebecca McKay, Rebecca Robinson, Michelle Bridgewater, and Yulanda Clinton who focused on the following three topics and steps 1, 2, 3 as we asked ourselves the following questions. These same questions can guide anyone who wishes to try our innovation.



1. Identify a Goal for Professional Learning

- *What college core value is this professional learning tied to?*
- *How will our work in this area further our work towards the college core values?*

2. Articulate our Moral Purpose

- *Why is this area of work important?*
- *How will this support better student learning?*

3. Identify Success Indicators

- *What are our expectations for this cycle of professional learning?*
- *How will we know this professional learning has been effective?*





Our Process

We tackled the initial step 1) to answer the what and how that set the stage for our professional learning as the Innovation Core Team. We chose to continue a deep book study on the process of Lesson Study by using the only book on college classroom pedagogy related to college faculty Lesson Study, which is directly related to the UNCF and the Talladega College Virtual Liberal Arts Innovation Center (LAIC) for Education. Choosing a simple and familiar process like Lesson Study is critical for the Innovation Core Team since our to do lists grow longer and longer. This allows a faculty to relax and enjoy the process. Lesson Study is also an important model for teacher candidates and builds a community for change.

Defining and initiating Step 2) to deepen our pedagogy on active learning, which has shown a significant impact on underrepresented students in undergraduate science, technology, engineering, and math as well as other subjects. Immediately the Innovation Core Team enrolled in courses on active learning through the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) core teaching competencies as defined in ACUE's effective practice framework. We also wrote the active learning strategies in all of our course syllabi (Appendix B) to ensure student success through quality instruction, which is the Association of College and University Educators or ACUE's stated mission. Identifying success in Step 3) is the last indicator and is the one that is the most exciting to the Innovation Core Team.

We know this professional learning has been effective. How can we go public and send our research out into the world? We do what teachers have always done, we plan, research, teach, and plan again. We use simple and reliable research techniques that stand the test of time such as observations of teaching, careful notetaking, and the capture of the lessons via video and clear audio recordings. We also join with several other teams who will support our work through collecting data in our first public research lesson, which means that a school opens its research lessons and lesson studies to educators and guests beyond the school. Talladega College Education Department(TCED) utilizes the process as a component of a research-based program of professional learning for our faculty and our students.

The public research lesson means that a school opens its research lessons and lesson studies to educators and guests beyond the school. Since lesson study has characteristics of effective professional development (PD) the Talladega College Education Department(TCED) utilizes the process as a component of a research-based program of professional learning. Please enjoy meeting them and reading each of their stories of the role that they play in this significant innovation in the appendices section. The design and development of Lesson Study as a long-term cycle of professional learning requires an Innovation Team of professors to focus on a cycle of professional learning and lesson planning using our Talladega College Education Department

OUR PROCESS (CONTINUED)



Lesson Plan Template that is aligned with the Alabama Core Teaching Standards (ACTS) and the Alabama (CIEP) Continuous Improvement for Educator Preparation Programs. Our first Lesson Studies are scheduled for Saturday, February 20 and Sunday, February 21. In the coming month, we enter phase one component of the research element of our study, which is planning and delivering the public research lesson. Our team will provide video of the planning sessions and the Lesson Studies. We will also join with other colleagues who are featured in this electronic magazine and who play a significant role in our journey to improve instruction and active learning to form a community.



- Theobald, E.J., Freeman, S., et al. (incl. 32 co-authors). (2020). Active learning narrows achievement gaps for underrepresented science, technology, engineering, and math. *PNAS*, 117 (12).
- ACUE Effective Practice Framework (N.D.) Retrieved from https://acue.org/?acue_courses=acues-effective-practice-framework
- Lewis, C. (2006). Lesson study in North America: Progress and challenges. In M. Matoba, K. A. Crawford & M. R. Sarkar Arani (Eds.) *Lesson study: International Perspective on Policy and Practice*. Educational Science Publishing House, Beijing.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Wei, R. C., Andree, A., Richardson, N., & Orphanos, S. (2009). *Professional learning in the learning profession: A status report on teacher development in the United States and abroad*. Dallas, TX: National Staff Development Council.

CORE TEAM



DR. REBECCA
MCKAY

*Dean of Social Sciences and Education
LAIC Lead/Lesson Study Lead*

I am Rebecca McKay, Talladega College Dean of Social Sciences and Education, wife, mother, grandmother, and gardener. I have taught every age, including elderly adults, pre-school children, babies, and every age in between. I believe in hard work, joy, and a specific life plan for all of us as we go through our wonderful lives. In August of 1961, at twelve years of age, I took my first teaching job working on Saturdays with a neighbor child who needed to learn to play. I feel that my path in life has led me through a wonderful set of opportunities that prepared me to do my current job. In August of 2015, I sent my request to retire from the Alabama State Teacher Retirement System. After fifty-four years of teaching, I am still living my dream. Today, I am in my favorite role, that of "teacher of teachers." My role in the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) and the Talladega College (TC) Virtual Liberal Arts Innovation Center (LAIC) for Education is to work with and support colleagues who are featured in this electronic magazine. I will play a significant role in our journey to improve instruction and active learning and form a community of colleagues who want to improve their classroom instruction.

I always wanted to teach and feel it is my destiny. Being fortunate to have a family who supported my work was a gift. If I needed a teaching tool or device, everyone in my family, extended family, and my friends pitched in and created the tool that I needed. Early in my career, my husband and my Dad made sets of Montessori self-corrective teaching materials. We created sandpaper letters-upper and lower case-, building blocks, large and small sets, sand and water tables, button, lace, and shoe tying boards. So materials and techniques have always been a driving force in my schoolwork.

Over these 54 years, I became involved with numerous initiatives, programs, and organizations that changed my life and my teaching. I have always been drawn to others who have been labeled by society as the "underdog" or students who struggle socially, mentally, or physically. Soon, I realized that my path was being drawn toward struggling readers and writers. After years of classroom work, I moved into the role of literacy coach and enrolled in a Ph.D. program with an emphasis in literacy. I used my time to serve students labeled as struggling readers and writers. I also completed simple research studies to find out how to help. I truly love my work, no matter the age or circumstances of the student. At the high point of my career, I was asked to research, write, and work with the Alabama Reading Initiative. This was an intellectual growth period that was life changing as I won numerous teaching awards, wrote extensively, traveled through my state, across the country, and worked internationally to present and learn how to support schools and communities that were struggling and labeled as "failing."

In my doctoral program, I learned how to generate new knowledge and thinking related to supporting schools, communities, and families struggling with multiple hardships. I was most drawn to the teachers in these communities who were labeled as failures. For the rest of my life, I am committed to working with great love and respect with teachers and teacher candidates who deserve the best and most carefully designed materials and professional learning that can be offered.

CORE TEAM



DR. REBECCA
ROBINSON

*Chair of the Education Department
Lesson Study Chair*

I am Rebecca Robinson and I currently work as the Chair of the Department of Education at Talladega College. With this role, I serve as advisor to the education students, schedule classes, write curriculum and manage the day to day functions of the department. I also serve as the Coordinator of Field Experiences and Certification Officer for the Education Department. Most importantly, I teach future teachers.

I truly believe in education as evidenced by the time I have spent pursuing degrees. I have a Master's and AA (Sixth Year) degree in Elementary Education. After I decided that I wanted to become a principal, I returned to school to obtain administration certification at the master's and AA level. At age fifty-two, I decided to join some of my younger teacher friends to pursue a life-long dream of receiving a terminal degree. Graduating in 2009 with a doctoral degree in Education Leadership was one of my greatest accomplishments.

Prior to joining the faculty of Talladega College in 2014, I proudly served the boys and girls of Talladega County for thirty-eight years as a teacher and principal. I began and ended my time with Talladega county in my hometown of Munford where I taught fifth graders for nine years and returned nineteen years later to be the principal of Munford Elementary School. I was also privileged to work in the south end of Talladega county as an Assistant Principal and the Principal of B. B. Comer Memorial Elementary School.

Throughout my career, I have always strived to promote a strong instructional foundation for student learning and have conducted professional development sessions for educators at the national, state, and local level. I try to be an encourager for teachers and students to be successful and further their education. My greatest achievements occur when a teacher or student tells me that I have helped them further their education.

I am married to John R. Robinson and I have two adult children, Andy and Emily. The "lights of my life" are my twin grandsons, Colton and Clayton.

I presently serve on the Citizens Brookwood Talladega Advisory Board, Talladega County Education Foundation, and the Secretary of the Gamma Mu chapter of Delta Kappa Gamma Education Sorority. I have a strong faith and am a member of Munford Baptist Church.

CORE TEAM



DR. MICHELLE
BRIDGEWATER

*Professor of Education
Lesson Study SPED Specialist*

I am Dr. Michelle Williams Bridgewater, and I come to this project with 43 years in education. Since 2017, I have worked at Talladega College. I have been working in Higher Education since 2007. In addition to these educational experiences, my career began as a teacher of children with Learning Disabilities, teaching elementary students. During my second year with the school district, to be one of the inaugural teachers at its innovation school: The Educational Programs for the individual Child (EPIC). After working for eleven years, I interviewed and was selected to be a Program Specialist for The Early Childhood Special Education program. I developed the program from the ground up for the school district. I am proud to say that several of the initial procedures are still in operation today. My education began in Birmingham City Schools, and I received my undergraduate degree from The University of Alabama. I have also earned a certification in Educational Leadership, an Educational Specialist degree in Educational Leadership and, a Doctorate in Educational Leadership with a minor in Special Education Law. My Doctorate was a joint venture between The University of Alabama and the University of Alabama at Birmingham. My role with the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) and the Talladega College (TG) Virtual Liberal Arts Innovation Center (LAIC) for education will be to assist with training and instructing Teacher preparation candidates and other educators wishing to be a part of this program.

During my time with Birmingham City Schools, I was very active with programs serving young children including, Head Start and the National Association for Young Children (NAEYC) as a participant and a Board member. My first Higher education experience took place at the University of Alabama, teaching- fifth-year students obtaining their Collaborative Special Education degrees. During my time in Online Higher Education, I taught students pursuing their Doctorates in Educational Leadership. I was fortunate enough to work with two online Universities Argosy University and Keiser University. In addition to teaching, I chaired and co-chaired Dissertations. While at both Universities, I presented as a member of the faculty at their required Residencies. I enjoyed presenting at residencies because it was my only opportunity to meet my students face to face. It was also a unique experience because I worked with students from various cultures and nationalities worldwide. I was even privileged to teach some active-duty troops worldwide who chose to pursue their education with these universities.

Coming to Talladega has brought me full circle as I use my special education knowledge to develop new teachers for the field. I forgot to mention that while I was a Program Specialist, I was assigned to work with various agencies on behalf of our Birmingham City special education students. One such agency was the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind in Talladega. I know there is a need for qualified and compassionate teachers in the field. As part of my devotion to children and adults with disabilities, I have served on the Association for Retarded Citizens (ARC) Board of Directors of Jefferson County for five years. It was a highlight of my life. We worked together to provide new placements for clients who were once institutionalized. Having attended the University of Alabama, I had completed practicums at Bryce and Partlow, two Institutions located in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. The ARC also bought a new campus for our clients, which provided more adaptive educational opportunities. It was wonderful seeing some of the clients begin transitioning to employment as the ARC worked with community members to provide these opportunities.

I have been fortunate to work for the last forty-three years to serve my community through Church, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, The Links, Inc., and Jack and Jill of America, Inc. I have two sons who learned a great deal about service to others as they participated in church and Jack and Jill. As the great Shirley Chisholm stated, "Service is the rent we pay for the privilege of living on this earth."

CORE TEAM



DR. YULANDA
CLINTON

*Professor of Education
Lesson Study Content Specialist*

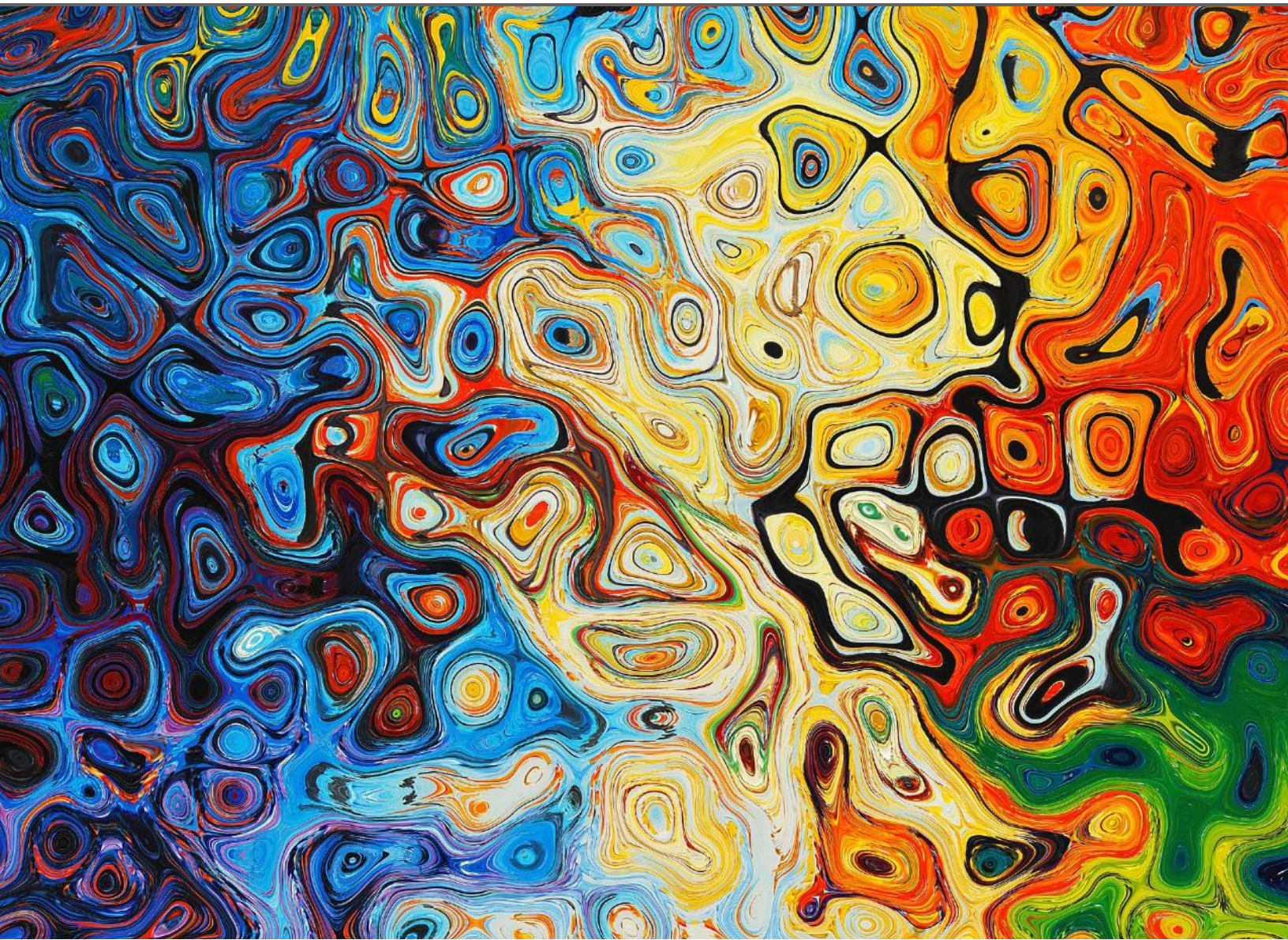
I am Dr. Yulanda W. Clinton, a native of Bayou La Batre, Alabama. I am brand new to the higher education arena. I bring 30 years of educational experience from the Mobile County Public School system where I gained useful experience as an elementary teacher, professional school counselor, and administrator. My contribution to the completed puzzle with the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) and the Talladega College (TC) Virtual Liberal Arts Innovation Center (LAIC) for Education is very simple. I will assist in training and instructing teacher candidates at Talladega College and provide Professional Development for faculty at Talladega College. After completing and receiving ACUE training, I am implementing active learning strategies in the courses that I teach in the present, and future.

During my tenure in Mobile County Public School System I was named SECME teacher of the year and I founded and organized several groups and clubs while serving in my varied capacities. I received a B.S. and master's degree in Elementary Education from the University of South Alabama and began my educational career as a first and second grade teacher at Castlen Elementary School. While teaching at Castlen, I coached Varsity girls' basketball and cheerleaders at the high school located near Castlen. As I coached, I found a new love and a desire to help students at the secondary level. I decided to further my education to assist those students and received my ED.S. degree in professional school counseling from the University of South Alabama. My counseling degree afforded me the opportunity to return to my alma mater, Alba High School, and work as the counselor, which merged and became Alma Bryant High School and then I became an assistant principal at Alma Bryant. My love for learning enticed me to pursue a Ph. D. in Administration and Leadership from the University of Southern Mississippi. After which I served as principal at Mobile County Training Middle school where the staff and I worked diligently to change the climate and culture. Finally, I retired and ended my educational career in the Mobile County Public System, as an assistant principal at Theodore High School.

I have a strong commitment and compassion for today's young people and I am excited to embark upon this new journey to educate, train and mold students to become the best teachers they can possibly be. I am ready to cultivate and motivate students to understand the role they will play as teachers upon graduating from the best teacher education program around.

I have three sons Lemuel, Jr., Landon, Justin and a beautiful 3-year-old granddaughter, Autumn Rose. My love for the Lord and my family is unchangeable. During my spare time, I enjoy, shopping, traveling, singing, reading, watching football and spending time with my family.

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*"Great leaders don't set out to be a leader...they
set out to make a difference. It's never about
the role-always about the goal*

ORGANIZATION TEAM



DR. BILLY C.
HAWKINS

President of Talladega College

A native of Kent, Ohio, Dr. Billy C. Hawkins, holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Teacher Education from Ferris State University; a Master of Arts degree in Education Administration from Central Michigan University; and a Doctor of Philosophy in Education Administration from Michigan State University. Dr. Hawkins has also completed Post-Doctoral studies at Harvard University.

Dr. Hawkins has been in education for 42 years. He began his successful career as a teacher in the Lansing Michigan Public Schools System. His passion for teaching led him to the field of higher education, where he has served as Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs / Professor at Mississippi Valley State University; Vice President for Academic Affairs/Professor at Saint Paul's College in Lawrenceville, Virginia; Acting Dean, Associate Dean, and Assistant Dean/Professor in the College of Education at Ferris State University; and Director of the Educational Opportunity Program the State University of New York at Morrisville College. Previously, he served as the 20th President of Texas College from 2000 to 2007.

Dr. Hawkins became the 20th President of Talladega College on January 1, 2008. He has transformed Talladega College, and he is moving the institution forward toward its return of preeminence. Since his arrival, student enrollment has increased more than 70%, multiple renovations have been applied to classrooms and buildings on campus— along with the construction of three, new campus buildings set to launch in 2019-2020. In addition, under Dr. Hawkins' leadership, finances have been restructured and stabilized and new academic programs have been added. Moreover, he successfully guided the institution through a new ten year-SACSCOC Accreditation, the College gained reinstatement to the NAIA National Athletic Association and won three national championships in men's and women's basketball.

Additionally, Dr. Hawkins has served in various capacities as a board member with UNCF Board of Directors as Vice-Chair of the Member Institutions; the first African-American Board Chair of the Alabama Independent Colleges and Universities; Title III Advisory Board; SACSCOC Executive Committee; Ritz Theatre Board of Directors; and past Executive Chair with the Council of Independent Colleges.

Dr. Hawkins has authored two books, *Educating All Students: A Pathway to Success* and *Reaching for the Stars*; he has also written articles and was featured on the ABC Evening News with the late Peter Jennings; in the U.S. News and World Report; and he is listed in *Who's Who Among Executives and Professionals* in 2005-2006.

Hawkins has received many prestigious awards and recognitions for his contributions to higher education. In 2017, he was awarded the Colonel Leo Thorsness Courage Award and the Ferris State University Alumni Association's Distinguished Award. He recently was asked to serve on Governor Kay Ivey's task force to address the opioid addiction of military veterans. Dr. Hawkins is a proud member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.

Dr. Hawkins is married to Mrs. Lucy Hawkins, First Lady of Talladega College; and they have two grandchildren.

ORGANIZATION TEAM



DR. LISA LONG

Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs

My name is Lisa Eyvette Long and I was born in Denver, Colorado. I attended schools in Marlin, Texas, and graduated from Marlin High School.

I am a graduate of Jacksonville State University in Jacksonville, Alabama and earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Social Work. At the University of Alabama, I enrolled and earned a Master of Science degree in Social Work. Upon graduation, I accepted employment with Children's Rehabilitation as a District Social Worker. Over a span of several years, I was employed as a Social Worker with Hospice of East Alabama and Viva Renal Dialysis Center. I later obtained employment as a Social Worker, for a period of five years, with Southern Behavioral Health in Anniston, Alabama, working with families and individuals suffering from mental illness. I completed a Juris Doctorate at Birmingham School of Law in 2000.

In August 2001, I accepted a position as a Field Coordinator for the Social Work Program at Talladega College. In 2004, I was named Department Chair of the Social Work Department at Talladega College. I have taught at the undergraduate level in social work. I have also facilitated Diversity Training for Honda Manufacturing of Alabama in Lincoln, Alabama, since 2008.

I was appointed Interim Dean of Social Sciences and Education at Talladega College in Talladega, Alabama in 2009 and I assumed my duties as Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs at Talladega College August 2013. As Provost, I led the revision of the general education program, implemented the first Master's Program in 150 years of existence of the institution, and served as Accreditation Liaison for a successful SACSCOC 10- year Reaffirmation. In December 2019, I was elected, by my peers, as a member of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees.

I am married to Shedric Long, Sr. Together we have raised their three adult children, Ashley, Shedric C., and Shedric, Jr.

ORGANIZATION TEAM



CAITLIN COX

UNCF LAIC Program Manager

My name is Caitlin Cox and I was born in Medford, Oregon, and grew up in Berea, Kentucky. I attended schools in Berea and Richmond, Kentucky, and graduated from Madison Southern High School.

I am a graduate of Jacksonville State University in Jacksonville, Alabama, and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in History. At the University of Alabama, I enrolled and earned a Master of Library Information Sciences. Before graduation, I partook in internships at Satilla Regional Library in Douglas, Georgia, W.S. Smith Library with South Georgia State College in Douglas, Georgia, and Heritage Werks, an archival firm, in Atlanta, Georgia. After graduation, I took time off due to a high-risk pregnancy.

In November 2015, four months after my daughter was born, I accepted a Circulation Desk position at Oxford Public Library. Within four months, I was the new Assistant Director of Oxford Public Library. Then, in October 2017 I accepted the position of Library Director for Savery Library at Talladega College.

Since working at Talladega College I have filled roles of Part-Time Online Faculty Manager, Part-Time EDU 100-College Orientation Professor, and am currently serving as the Interim Director of the Dr. William R. Harvey Museum of Art and the UNCF Liberal Arts Innovation Center Grant Program Manager.

I am excited to be partaking in the UNCF LAIC grant because I believe active learning is the only way students will be able to truly learn content and not only regurgitate but retain. I believe that Dr. McKay is a leader and beyond knowledgeable in the field and am blessed to get to work with her and her team.

I have been married to Justin Cox for ten years (May) and have one daughter, Emma, who will turn six in June. I attend Trinity Baptist Church in Oxford, Alabama, and am a diehard Alabama fan, ROLL TIDE!



"The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team."

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT TEAM



DR. RHONDA
SUTTON

Knowledgeable Other

I am Rhonda Sutton and I was born and raised in Harlem in New York City. Ever since I was a little girl I wanted to be a teacher. As a child I enjoyed learning, especially reading and writing. Every week my mom would take my siblings and I to the library so that we could borrow books. We also had tons of books at home. From a young age I understood that it was through words that I made sense of the world. Learning was important to me because I believed that my education was the one thing that could not be taken away from me.

I am an educator, consultant, and a certified professional coach. In these roles, I strive to awaken the freedom of education and life as an irresistible revolution. It is in this awakening that I am able to support others in their journey to who they are becoming. What keeps me grounded are my values of honesty, trust, respect, curiosity, and freedom.

My entire professional career has been in education. I taught elementary school in East Harlem, New York City and in Northeast Pennsylvania. I was an elementary school assistant principal and a principal. I was the K-12 supervisor of English Language Arts. I also was a professor and department chair of Reading Education and the director of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Writing Project at East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania. Currently, I am CEO and lead consultant/certified professional coach for Trust You Consulting. I am passionate about transformational change in the education system. With over 35 years in education, I understand the struggles of leading and teaching in a demanding system. I work with educators who are seeking personal transformation and/or organizational transformation to create systems and environments that center teacher well being in service of enhancing student academic success. I help educators step into their greatness and create environments where vision is clear, curiosity is awakened, and teachers are empowered to take action.

By nature, I am curious. I wonder about things I see, hear, and experience. I bring that curiosity to teaching and learning. For the past two decades, I have had the opportunity to explore my curiosities as I supported and facilitated teacher professional learning. Being curious has helped me to be open to new ways of thinking about teaching and learning. My curious nature has also propelled me to try on new ways of teaching and learning. I have adopted an openness and acceptance of uncertainty in my teaching, which allows me to step out of my comfort zone. These are the skills I bring to coaching, teaching, and facilitating others' learning.

My husband, David and I have three beautiful children, Adrienne, Courtney and Jonathan and three wonderfully adorable grandchildren Adria, Adrian, and Quincy.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT TEAM



DR. ALICIA CURRY

Participant Observer

I am Dr. Alicia Curry, and I currently serve as the Dean of the School of Education at Stillman College. I am a wife, a friend, a teacher, and I have a passion for working with the less fortunate students. I have been immersed in student education since my youth through my mom's career as a Special Education teacher, Elementary Education teacher, and a Principal. During my childhood years, I watched my mom diligently work to improve her teaching skills and that greatly influenced my decision to become an educator. To that end, I enjoy working with small children, but I specifically enjoy working with children with learning disabilities and children that live in poverty-stricken environments. I have focused my career goals on obtaining the necessary credentials and skill sets that would allow me to make a difference in students' lives. I received my B.S. (1999) and M.S. (2002) in Elementary Education from the University West Alabama. In addition, I completed my Ph.D. with a 4.0 GPA from Mississippi State University in Elementary Education in 2011.

My work history has led me to working in multiple diverse settings in which I have had the opportunity to utilize my skills to help students at all levels to achieve their educational goals. I have taught in both the elementary (2nd and 3rd grades) and higher education school systems (college), and I have served in many administrative roles. My teaching career started with my first job as a 2nd grade elementary teacher at Walker Elementary (Tuscaloosa County School System) in August, 1999. I served approximately six years in this position. During this time, I was fortunate to be part of a looping class in which I moved to the next grade (3rd grade) with my 2nd grade class at the end of the year. From an educational standpoint, this proved to be greatly beneficial since my looping class was one of the classes that received the highest test scores on the Alabama Standardized Test for the state of Alabama. During my time as an elementary school teacher, I was selected twice as Walker Elementary Teacher of the Year, and I was nominated for the Jacksonville Teacher Hall of Fame. I was also nominated for the Alabama Teacher of the Year Award in 2002.

My career did not end there, and I continued to gain experience as an educator. In 2005, I accepted an Assistant Professor position at the University of West Alabama. In this position, I worked very closely with various colleagues at all levels to train future elementary teachers. I continued my commitment by training elementary teachers at Tuskegee University in 2010. I served as an Associate Professor of Elementary Education and as the Field-Based Coordinator. Under this position, I was able to directly place teacher candidates in various Alabama school systems for hands-on classroom training.

During my tenure at Tuskegee University, I served on many National Science Foundation grant programs as an educational expert, researcher, and co-principal investigator to develop educational science modules. These modules are utilized in classrooms across the Alabama Black Belt region. In 2013, I received the Tuskegee faculty research award for my educational research and publications. Furthermore, I have published more than 15 educational modules that are currently being used in the school systems. In addition, I presented these educational modules at many local and national conferences. Throughout my career as an educator, my greatest joy has been to witness how the power of teacher education can change and shape the lives of students. Indeed, I learned from my mom at an early age that children will perform beyond belief when they feel they are loved. Therefore, I will continue to focus on education as seeds of growth and view it as a multifaceted career.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT TEAM



WAYNE GILREATH

Videographer/Photographer

I am Wayne Gilreath, videographer and editor for the UNCF LAIC Talladega College Innovation Center Lesson Studies project. It will be my job to display our work to the world. Most of my life I have been interested in communications, which for me is essentially storytelling. I began my career on Maryland's Eastern Shore at a television station where I learned the fundamentals of broadcasting.

From there I moved across the Bay (Chesapeake), to the big city of Baltimore. I worked as a newscast director for a new news organization that set the standard for visual storytelling in the market. I learned from the best how to put together a compelling story.

Moving to the Mayor's Office of Cable and Communications allowed me to complete my skill set. I knew my way around a control room but lacked experience shooting and editing video. Now I could put into practice what I had observed as a director. I was the one telling stories of businesses, personalities and events around the region.

These skills would come in handy when I moved to New York to join Cornerstone Literacy as Senior Fellow for Videography and Technology. There I met two very busy women, Janet Cumbee and Dr. Rebecca McKay. At the time they were delivering rock-solid professional development to teachers while acting as their own producer, shooter and editor of video!

We collaborated to model and record best practices in classrooms from Georgia to Massachusetts. I am glad our divergent paths have converged once again to tell this important story.

On a personal note I still live in Maryland with my beautiful wife Paris. We have five sons, two grandchildren and one dog between us.



*"We are not a team because we work together.
We are a team because we care, trust, and
respect each other."*

ACUE LESSON STUDY TEAM



DR. LOU AVOTRI

Director of Student Retention and Success

I am Lou Ellen Riggans Avotri from Elizabethtown, North Carolina. My husband and I moved to Mobile, Alabama in 2017 when he accepted an offer to work at a clinic. He loves the weather, which is why he accepted the offer. Education is my passion and I consider myself a lifelong learner and a student-centered administrator. Since completing my doctorate degree, I have completed the Chamber of Commerce Leadership Program when I moved to Mobile with hopes of getting involved with the community. I have also completed the Public Administrators Leadership Program, NACADA Summer Institute, American Association of Community College Future Leadership Institute, Leadership North Carolina (Class XII). In addition, I completed the North Carolina Real Estate Course and passed the state test.

Since moving to Mobile, my work included student services; now retention, and student success. Prior to moving to Mobile, I worked for the City of Fayetteville as Manager of Training and Development, Fayetteville State University as the Director of Transfer Advisement with oversight of student success, James Sprunt Community College as Dean of Continuing Education, Nash Central High as the Testing Administrator, I taught GED at a federal prison (which I enjoyed), and I taught CTE classes to seventh and eighth-graders. After working with middle-grade students for one academic year, I allowed my teaching license to expire. Middle-grade education was NOT for me. Since moving to Alabama, my work has been with private institutions. Prior to moving to Alabama, my work was always with public institutions. I must say, private and public institutions are very different. Private institutions have been an adjustment for me.

My education includes a terminal degree in Higher Education Administration, earned from North Carolina State University in Raleigh, North Carolina; a graduate degree in Business Education, and an undergraduate degree in Business Administration; both from North Carolina Central University in Durham, North Carolina. I graduated high school from East Bladen in Elizabethtown, North Carolina.

I love family. My favorite holiday is Thanksgiving because that is the holiday that my family celebrates and everyone comes together for cooking competitions and a great meal. My family is huge. I am the youngest of 11 brothers and sisters; five boys and six girls. Unfortunately, I lost my mother in 2018. She was 99 years old. I miss her dearly, but thankful we had her for 99 years. My father passed in 1984. In case you are wondering; yes, we all had the same parents. The question is often asked about us having the same parents; therefore, I decided to answer prior to anyone asking. I have a host of nieces and nephews. My goal was a career; therefore, I opted not to have children, only dogs. I was a mom to Gemini and Aries for approximately 11 years until they both died of diabetes. Gemini passed December 26, 2013, and Aries passed on June 23, 2014. Aries grieved herself to death after Gemini passed; they were twins.

Personal memberships include Delta Sigma Theta Sorority and Faith Baptist Church. Current work memberships include the Alabama Association of Higher Education Diversity Officers, and Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education. Previous work committee involvement included serving on two President Cabinets, Strategic Planning Committee, Institutional Effectiveness, Academic Advising Effectiveness Committee, Chair of the Transfer Advisory Committee, and Chair of the Academic and Financial Aid Appeals Committee. My volunteer work includes Center Stage, community kitchens, hospitals, and elementary schools. My hobbies include real estate (I LOVE looking at houses), bowling, traveling, spending quality time with family, and enjoying a great meal at a great restaurant, which I am looking forward to when Covid-19 is over.

ACUE LESSON STUDY TEAM



DR. DERRICK
SHAPLEY

Chair of Sociology

My name is Derrick Shapley. I was born and raised in Town Creek Alabama and went to a small school called Hatton for my elementary and high school experience. After high school, I went to college at Auburn University and graduated with a degree in political science and history. During college and afterward I worked on political campaigns for approximately 10 years. During my time in politics, I lived and worked in over 17 states and briefly in the District of Columbia. I then decided to go back to college to get my master's and PH.D. I first got another undergraduate degree at Athens State University in Sociology. I then went to Mississippi State University for my master's (2010) and Ph.D. (2015).

While at Mississippi State, I was a Graduate Teaching and research assistant. I worked on studies primarily of rural residents of the south. I also worked with a large number of students at Mississippi State. I moved on from Mississippi State to teach at Troy University Montgomery campus for 1 year as a lecturer. After the lecturer period is over, I decided to move to Talladega College and become an Assistant Professor of Sociology.

After our department chair retired from Talladega College, I became the full-time department chair. We have had enormous success within the Sociology department growing the department and adding service-learning programs. My primary research interests are in the areas of rural health. I have recently had a paper published by Contexts describing how the COVID epidemic has affected rural areas. I have also had papers published on Immigrant usage of English, public support of the death penalty, transportation infrastructure, and health benefits, along with many others.

I am supportive of this project because I believe that teaching is an often-undervalued skill both in society and even among the profession of academic professors. We all have a responsibility to improve our teaching skills. This grant provides a perfect opportunity to move forward in that regard.

ACUE LESSON STUDY TEAM



DR. ANDREW
COLEMAN

Professor of Biology

I am Dr. Andrew Coleman, but I go by Andy with most everyone I know. I am from Greenville, Alabama, and I am a son of two public school teachers/counselors. I attended the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, where I obtained my B.S. in Biology in 2002. I then migrated north to Boone, North Carolina, where I attended Appalachian State University for M.S. in Biology. Because that part of the world is a hotspot for salamander biodiversity, my thesis focused on the speciation of two species of salamanders. I greatly enjoyed my time being out late at night in the mountains of North Carolina looking for my study species. As I was completing my degree, I knew I wanted to continue my education and pursue a Ph.D. Although I loved studying salamanders, I had great interest in studying turtles and conservation, and I found an advisor at U.A.B. who mainly studied sea turtles but had recently received funding to study diamondback terrapins along the coast of Alabama. So, I came back home and attended graduate school at U.A.B. from 2005-2011. During my time at U.A.B., I began to think that I might be interested in a career in environmental policy and law, so I also completed a M.S. in environmental sciences and policy through the Johns Hopkins University. In 2011, I was awarded a John A. Knauss Fellowship, where I lived in Washington D.C. and worked in a U.S. Senate office focused on ocean issues and policy. Two of the greatest lessons I learned that year was that 1. I missed doing research and field work, and 2. I hated wearing suits to an office job every day. I left my quick stay in the world of politics for a sea turtle biologist position on the coast of Mississippi. After holding that position for 3 years, I moved back to Birmingham for a non-profit biologist position with Birmingham Audubon Society, where I was until I began my full time teaching career in 2018. That year, I also created the Urban Turtle Project, a conservation project based in Birmingham that aims to study the turtle populations in the Birmingham area and beyond and involve citizen scientists in the research. I published a number of peer-reviewed papers in scientific journals, with my most recent one appearing in the December issue of *Chelonian Conservation and Biology*.

As for my work in education, prior to teaching at Hueytown High School in Jefferson County, I taught biology as an adjunct for a couple of junior colleges. But, my experience at Hueytown opened my eyes to the inequities in the education system that affect low income and underrepresented communities. Science is a passion of mine, and I see, almost on a daily basis, the impacts of low scientific literacy for the general public. I feel blessed to have been offered a position at Talladega College in 2019, and I am completing my second year at TC. I can combine my love of teaching science with working to provide opportunities to my students that they may not have otherwise. I hope I can inspire students to possibly pursue scientific career paths that they did not even know existed before coming to Talladega. I also want to collaborate with the Education Department to train the next generation of science teachers, so we can work together to do away with some of those inequities. But, as I feel like I am continually becoming a better scientist, I feel that I have so much more room to grow as a teacher and mentor.

I live in Trussville with my wife, Jen, who is a high school English teacher and my personal editor, and our two kids, 5 year old, LilyAnne, and 3 year old, Cooper. During the warmer months, you will find me most weekends checking turtle traps in a variety of creeks and rivers in the state. I feel lucky to be involved in this group, and I know I will learn so much more about being an impactful educator.

ACUE LESSON STUDY TEAM



TIFFANY SAYLES

Professor of Psychology

I am Mrs. Tiffany Sayles and I am a resident of Gadsden, Alabama where I reside with my husband Willie and our three daughters- Willow, Willany, and Willay. I love my family and they are truly the wind beneath my wings. In addition to loving and growing with my family, I have a passion for Psychology. I graduated as the "Top Graduate" from Grambling State University with my BA in Psychology in 2000 with hopes to continue and earn my doctorate degree. However, upon graduation, I had to return home due to a family crisis that altered my plans. I married my husband and began graduate school at Jacksonville State University. There were no desirable psychology programs at that particular college therefore I adjusted to a similar field-counseling. This led to me obtaining my MS in Counseling Education in 2003. I then pursued my career in counseling while desiring to further my studies in Psychology. I worked as a School Interventionist in the Talladega County School System. I transferred to Munford High School in the fall of 2016 and began my tenure as a school counselor.

Starting and growing a family became a priority and I happily worked in the counseling field. After the birth of our second daughter, I relocated to Gadsden City Schools where I have been employed as an elementary school counselor since 2010. I was highlighted as a Spotlight Educator in 2014 and earned Teacher of the Year for Oscar Adams Elementary School and Elementary Teacher of the Year for Gadsden City Schools in 2019. While employed with Gadsden City Schools, I was introduced to online education and decided to pursue my graduate degree in Psychology. I was able to obtain my MS in Psychology in 2016 from Grand Canyon University's prestigious online educational program. I became a member of the Psi Chi Honor Society during this time as well. This allowed me to extend my career path to include college instruction.

I have been fortunate to continue working as an elementary counselor while expanding my love for instruction and guidance to the college population. I have had the pleasure of being part of the Talladega College family for four years and I love being able to share my online experience to encourage my students to navigate through their own journey. I often state that "student success is my passion". My students range from pre-K students at my elementary school to college students. It is my desire to see each student successful according to their goals and ambitions. I am eager to learn more about our students' journey to now and how I can help them to access and navigate their future goals. As an educator, I am forever a learner. In addition to continual professional development, I am excited to soon begin Grand Canyon University PhD Cognition and Instruction program. This will afford me the opportunity to continue to expand my knowledge and better support our students.

ACUE LESSON STUDY TEAM



AMANDA
HAYWOOD-COTTEN

Professor of English

My name is Amanda Haywood-Cotton, but, please, I'm just plain old Mande. I was born and raised in Eastaboga Alabama, which is in the Talladega County School system. My family was poor. I always had food, a clean thrift store or Walmart clothes, and a roof over my head; however, I honestly thought that holes in the floor and bugs were like a normal part of everybody's life! LOL Neither of my parents ever went to college. In fact, my dad only had a GED. {Which has now changed, but that is another story.} They both worked hard jobs and were really uninvolved parents. By the time I turned 16, I had a job, signed my report cards and permission slips. When I graduated high school, nobody in my family showed up. At 18, I got a music scholarship for Gadsden State Community College where I earned my associate degree in Science with a certificate in Medical Technology. A two-year degree took me four years to finish. Why? Because at 19, I decided I wanted to be grown and get married. That meant I had to get a job to help pay the bills, and that is when I started working 40 hours a week, Monday-Friday, at LabCorp. When I finally finished my two-year degree, I knew that I did not want to be in the medical field forever. I wanted to teach. Teaching had been my passion since I was little! I remember using the back of my door, in our single-wide trailer, like a chalkboard, and my baby dolls were my students. ☺ As soon as I graduated from GSCC, I enrolled at Jacksonville State University. When I told my mom that I wanted to get a bachelor's degree in English and teach, she told me that was a waste of time, and I needed to get a good old factory job and make money. That was the last time I talked to her about school but whatever.

At JSU, I met with an advisor who informed me that I could never work a full-time Monday through Friday 7-4 job and earn a degree in Education. Quitting my 40 hour a week job was not an option, so I went over to the English department where another advisor told me I would never earn a B. A and work a full-time job. Once again, whatever. It took me six years to get that B.A, but I got it and the next semester I was enrolled in Grad school and getting a divorce! As much as I wanted that degree in Education, I was never able to quit my job, so I got my Master's in English. I honestly thought that by having a master's degree in English, public schools would hire me. What was I thinking!?! However, I did not give up on my teaching dream! As soon as I graduated, I started sending out resumes to every local college around here. In 2014, a year after I got my M.A., Dr. Rice called me and hired me as an English adjunct here at Talladega College. I taught college at night and worked my LabCorp job during the day. During that time, I found God. I talked to Him and told Him of my passions, and He told me to send out my "seeds", aka resumes, to different secondary schools; however, not as a teacher, but as a secretary! Did I mention I am an awesome secretary? Anyway, I trusted God and did just that, and in 2018 the principal at Saks Middle School called me and hired me! God knew I needed that bridge to education because OMGOSH the medical field is ENTIRELY different than the Education field. I needed to learn a few "professional educational" rules, and I learned a few of them at SMS; however, I am still learning those "professional educational" rules, so, please, be patient with me. ☺ {I know this is long, and I am finishing up! I promise!! If you have stuck with me this long, bless your heart!!}

In October of 2018, Dr. Blumer called and asked if I would be interested in teaching temporary full-time at TC. That was a scary offer!! The word temporary SCARES the heck out of me; however, I have trusted God and a year later I am still here!! Finally, I have achieved what SO MANY people said I would never achieve! I never had a cheerleader in my life, so I think that is why I tell my students that I will ALWAYS be their biggest cheerleader.

When I was asked to join this table of super smart, super amazing educators, where I feel so humbled but totally unworthy to be, my first thought was "Me? Dr. McKay are you sure? I am just plain old Mande! I have no Ph.D., no special skills, and I have only been teaching for a year!" She sees something in me that I don't, so I will trust her. ☺ In closing, I guess I will be the underdog of this wonderful group, and I will bring with me the only thing I can bring to this table; my passion to teach and learn; my passion to be my students' BIGGEST cheerleader and my simple love for my students.

Thank you all for this wonderful opportunity to learn from you.

ACUE LESSON STUDY TEAM



DR. JACQUELINE
TRASK

Chair of Social Work

I am Dr. Jacqueline Trask, Chair and Associate Professor of Social Work at Talladega College. My educational background includes a Doctor of Philosophy degree from the University of Alabama, a Master of Social Work degree from Clark Atlanta University and a Bachelor of Social Work degree from Jacksonville State University.

As a professor, I support active learning and I encourage my students to become the leaders of their educational journey through creative exercises and freedom of expression. I believe that students learn and retain a higher level of understanding when they actively become a part of the learning process. I believe that each student has a passion or interest that makes him or her unique and it is my responsibility to offer them opportunities to explore those interests in a safe, learning environment. Active participation is necessary for students to grow, learn and even make mistakes while developing the skills needed to work with diverse populations. I encourage my students to ask questions and I challenge them to find solutions. I give them opportunities to explore different options with no judgement and I support their creativity.

As social workers, it is imperative that my students be able to apply what they have learned in the classroom to real-life situations. I look forward to working with other educators as we develop fun, interactive opportunities for our students to explore their purpose and build a solid foundation for their future.



"All genuine learning is active, not passive. It involves the use of the mind, not just the memory. It is a process of discovery, in which the student is the main agent, not the teacher."

MORTIMER ADLER