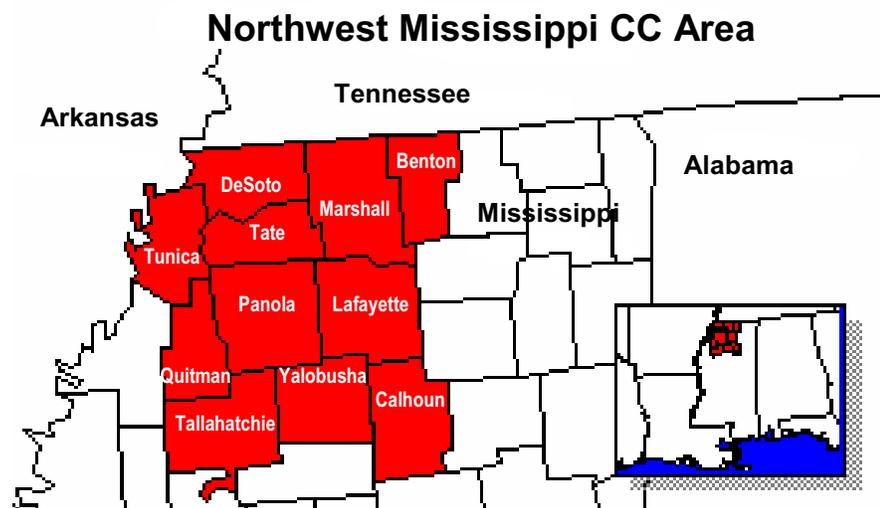


History

Northwest Mississippi Community College has its roots in the system of agricultural schools which were set up throughout this rural state in the early years of this century. First organized as Tate County Agricultural High School in 1915, the school began to offer college level classes in the fall of 1926. With encouragement from the State Department of Education and leadership from Porter Walker Berry, who became the college's first president, this initial endeavor proved to be successful. Two years later Quitman County pledged its support for the expanded class offerings. Meanwhile the Mississippi Junior College Commission urged school officials to convert the established classes into a complete two-year program. As a result in the fall of 1928 a fully sanctioned junior college, later named Northwest Mississippi Junior College and accredited by the Mississippi Junior College Accrediting Association, opened its doors to fifty-nine students.



Like all public institutions Northwest has been influenced by the political and economic climate in the state. When the Great Depression struck Mississippi with particular virulence, students were allowed to pay for their board by donating garden and farm products to the dining hall, while the government's public works program provided funds to supplement the school's budget. During World War II an accelerated program was introduced to allow young men to complete their educations quickly so that they could join the war effort. As returning veterans enrolled in large numbers after the war, the curriculum was expanded to fit their needs, and new buildings were constructed from government surplus materials.

Throughout this time the course offerings, the physical facilities, and the extracurricular activities of the school were growing. By the end of its third decade of operation the curriculum had expanded from a basic program of liberal arts and agriculture to include science, art, and journalism in addition to a variety of vocational-technical courses. The original three buildings had been supplemented with a cafeteria, additional dormitory and classroom space, sports and recreational facilities, and acreage for a model farm. In 1953 the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools commended Northwest as a "bargain in educational facilities" and granted the college its coveted accreditation. During the next few years the college continued to prove that it deserved this honor by broadening its capacity to serve the needs of the eleven-county district it had grown to encompass. A bus route began to provide free transportation for commuters, while night classes and off-campus courses offered extended educational services. Recent innovations include accelerated classes and non-traditional scheduling to accommodate adults, as well as short noncredit courses of interest to all ages. Northwest's first distance learning programs were offered on the Internet in the spring of 1999.

Today Northwest comprises four campuses which, along with the farm, are valued at more than \$59 million. In addition to the main 247-acre campus in Senatobia, the college includes DeSoto Center at Southaven and Olive Branch, and Lafayette-Yalobusha Technical Center at Oxford. Enrollment in 2002 exceeded 6,200. Yet after seven decades of growth and at the beginning of the school's eighth administration, the mission of Northwest remains true to the vision of its founders. Northwest strives today, as it did in 1926, to bring higher education closer to the people as it serves the academic, employment, physical, cultural, and special needs of the citizens of northwest Mississippi.

