

Testimony of
Dr. Paul Broadie II

President, Santa Fe College

Before the **United States Senate Special Committee on Aging**
Hearing on “*Aging with Purpose: The Positive Impact of Seniors in Today’s Economy*”

December 10, 2025

Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Gillibrand, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the critical role community colleges play in empowering older Americans to remain active, engaged, and economically secure. I am honored to speak on behalf of Santa Fe College and the more than 1,000 community colleges serving over 10 million students nationwide—institutions that stand at the intersection of lifelong learning, workforce development, and community well-being.

Santa Fe College has been continuously recognized for excellence, including:

- **Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence** as the Nation’s #1 Community College;
- **2025 Carnegie Foundation Classification**, recognized for providing higher access and higher wages to students and graduates, with SF graduates earning 30% more than the regional average;
- **#1 graduation rate** for the Florida College System with an 85% student success rate;
- **Best for Vets**, with the college being named one of the best colleges for military and military spouses; and
- An **economic impact of \$413 million**, supporting 4,866 jobs locally.

Thanks to the support from our community, state, and federal partners, we continue to build on that success while keeping college affordable.

Community colleges are designed for expanding access to all learners across our communities and regions. They serve learners of every age, background, and stage of life. Today’s hearing topic - *Aging with Purpose: The Positive Impact of Seniors in Today’s Economy*- aligns directly with the mission of our institutions.

From helping older students gain basic computer skills to participate in today's technological society, to breaking cycles of poverty by supporting parents and their school-aged children, to ensuring that everyone in our community, regardless of age, has the opportunity to interact and engage with each other, community colleges in general, and Santa Fe College in particular, is in a unique position to support older learners.

I. Older Americans Are a Growing and Vital Part of the Community College Population

Community colleges have become one of the nation's largest access points for older Americans seeking new skills, new opportunities, or a renewed sense of purpose. According to national data from the Association of Community College Trustees, more than 90,000 individuals aged 50 and older earned a degree or credential in the 2023–2024 academic year, a substantial share through community colleges.

Older learners enroll because they are:

- Reentering the workforce
- Pivoting into new career fields
- Seeking rapid reskilling
- Remaining mentally active
- Engaging socially and civically
- Reskilling for a second career
- Pursuing lifelong passions

Their participation strengthens the workforce and enriches classroom learning.

At Santa Fe College—a reflection of national trends—462 degree-seeking students were age 50 or older last year, with more than 1,200 over age 40. These students are enrolled in areas such as Health Services Administration, Nursing, and Programming & Analysis.

The stories of our older graduates illustrate the deep value of community colleges as engines of lifelong opportunity.

- *Judith*, age 65, completed her associate degree after first enrolling four decades earlier.
- *Carlos*, age 81, graduated from our Phlebotomy certificate program, excelled during clinical rotations at UF Health, and continues to pursue additional credentials today.

These individuals embody purpose, persistence, and the spirit of learning that fuels America's economy.

Beyond our degree-seeking students, the Oak Hammock and Village at Gainesville retirement communities frequently engage with the college by taking classes, attending Fine Arts and other cultural events at the college, and serving as judges of student research process.

II. Community Colleges Offer the Most Affordable and Accessible Pathway to Rapid Reskilling and Economic Mobility

Older Americans often seek education that is affordable, flexible, and aligned with real employment opportunities. Community colleges deliver on all three.

Affordability

Community colleges remain the most cost-effective institutions in higher education. Many states - including Florida- allow residents aged 60 and older to audit courses at no cost, providing robust intellectual engagement without financial strain.

Accessibility

Community colleges are geographically embedded in nearly every community - urban, suburban, and rural - making education physically accessible to older adults.

Workforce Relevance

Community colleges collaborate directly with industry partners to offer short-term, employer-driven programs in high-demand fields such as healthcare, IT, advanced manufacturing, and public service. For older Americans seeking rapid reskilling, these programs provide pathways to sustainable employment and economic stability.

Additionally, at Santa Fe College, we have quick, stackable, credential courses to help enhance a student's existing skills. For example, we have physicians taking Biotech courses within our Emerging Tech programs to hone their skills.

III. National Exemplars of Community College Innovation

Across the country, community colleges design programs tailored to adults experiencing transitions, returning to the workforce, or supporting multigenerational households. Santa Fe College demonstrates two such models that illustrate how community colleges can transform lives on a national scale.

The Displaced Homemaker Program: A Lifeline for Adults Re-Entering the Workforce

For more than 50 years, Santa Fe College's Displaced Homemaker Program has provided critical support to individuals - often older adults - who must return to the workforce after the death of a spouse, divorce, or a major change in life circumstances. Many completers of the program have landed gainful employment opportunities as a result of the skills they learned.

More than 4,500 individuals have benefited from:

- Career counseling
- Digital literacy training
- Job readiness and professionalism workshops
- Personalized financial literacy support
- Confidence building
- Job placement support

Programs like this, mirrored in other states, demonstrate how community colleges help older adults overcome barriers, rebuild stability, and access high-demand careers.

The ACB Excel Program: A National Award-Winning, Two-Generation Model for Economic Mobility

Another nationally recognized example is Santa Fe College's ACB Excel Program, which takes a powerful, innovative approach to strengthening families and improving economic outcomes. Although rooted in our community, it represents the type of visionary model that can be scaled across the nation.

ACB Excel empowers entire families by providing parents and their school-aged children with simultaneous access to academic programs, support services, and enrichment activities. This two-generation framework is free for all participants and has proven to be a catalyst for economic and social mobility. It also addresses the growing trend of grandparents raising their grandchildren and needing to reskill to enter the job market.

Parents:

- Enroll in rapid credentialing programs that lead to high-wage, in-demand jobs
- Receive personal financial literacy education
- Work directly with academic and career success coaches
- Build connections to employer partners through job placement pipelines

Children:

- Engage in hands-on STEM and literacy activities
- Participate in teamwork and resilience-building programming
- Receive social-emotional and academic support
- Experience a stable, enriching environment while parents pursue training

The program fosters deep community impact through:

- Volunteer opportunities
- Mentorship and internship connections
- Employment pathways
- Cross-generational learning and engagement

By strengthening both parent and child simultaneously, ACB Excel directly enhances economic stability, workforce participation, and long-term family well-being. It exemplifies the kind of community-integrated learning model that community colleges nationwide are uniquely positioned to deliver.

IV. Lifelong Learning Supports Healthy Aging, Mental Well-Being, and Social Connection

Community colleges also play an essential role in supporting older adults outside the traditional workforce.

Nationwide, colleges offer:

- Noncredit lifelong learning courses
- Arts, humanities, and enrichment activities
- Health and wellness education
- Technology and digital literacy workshops
- Civic engagement opportunities

Programs like Santa Fe College's Community Education program- where more than 65% of students are age 50 or older- provide critical social connection, intellectual stimulation, and community belonging. These are proven contributors to healthy aging and reduced social isolation.

Community colleges further strengthen communities through intergenerational learning, where older adults serve as mentors, volunteers, research judges, and advisory board members.

V. Supporting Older Military Veterans: A Critical Part of Our Mission

Military veterans- many of whom return to education later in life - represent one of the most important older adult populations served by community colleges.

According to the Postsecondary National Policy Institute, nationwide 63% of veteran students were aged 30 or older¹, and many face unique challenges including career transitions, disability accommodations, and the loss of military community.

Many colleges provide a veteran student support center on campus. Santa Fe College's Veterans & Military Success Services is a national model for how community colleges can support these learners. The program provides:

- Dedicated academic advising and transition support
- Assistance navigating VA educational benefits
- Mental health counseling and a supportive environment of peers
- Priority registration and textbook assistance
- Partnerships with local employers committed to hiring veterans
- Specialized career pathways for veterans entering fields such as public safety, logistics, nursing, and IT

Santa Fe College is proud to have been named “Best for Vets”, reflecting our commitment not only to active-duty and retired service members, but also to older veterans seeking meaningful second careers.

Many of our older veteran students choose programs that build on their military experience - advanced manufacturing, first responder programs, logistics, cybersecurity - as well as others who pursue new callings in healthcare, social services, or business.

Supporting veterans supports our workforce, strengthens families, and honors national service.

¹ Postsecondary National Policy Institute, “Veterans in Higher Education: Fact Sheet,” April 2025, https://pnpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Veterans_FactSheet_Apr25.pdf

VI. Policy Recommendations to Support Purposeful Aging Through Community Colleges

To enhance the role community colleges play in strengthening the lives of older Americans, Congress may consider:

- Expanding federal support for short-term, stackable workforce credentials
- Supporting two-generation learning models that benefit entire families
- Investing in digital literacy initiatives for older adults
- Funding wraparound services that reduce barriers for older learners
- Supporting replication of programs like Displaced Homemaker and ACB Excel

These investments strengthen not only older Americans, but our workforce, our communities, and our economy.

Conclusion

Older Americans bring wisdom, experience, dedication, and purpose to our campuses and our communities. Community colleges- accessible to all and responsive to local needs- are uniquely positioned to help them continue contributing to the nation's economic vitality and civic life.

Through rapid workforce training, two-generation learning models, enrichment programs, and community-based partnerships, community colleges provide older Americans with the tools to remain engaged, productive, and connected. Programs like the Displaced Homemaker Program and the ACB Excel Program show what is possible when community colleges are empowered to innovate.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer this testimony. I welcome your questions and look forward to working with the Committee to strengthen opportunities for older adults across our nation.



Displaced Homemaker Program

The Displaced Homemaker program assists the community by offering empowerment and educational assistance to homemakers who are seeking employment. The program offers free classes and workshops throughout the year. Since 1984, DHP has assisted over 4500 women in Alachua and Bradford counties, resulting in tremendous impact to our local communities through increased wages and buying power, and the reduced need for social services.

To be eligible for the program, candidates must:

- Be 30+ years of age, and
- Have mostly been homemakers during their adult life, and
- Be unemployed or not adequately employed, and
- Have been dependent upon a family member for support which is no longer available or have been dependent upon public assistance



Offering classes to support growth in:

Life Management

- Goal setting and value clarification
- Problem solving
- Self-esteem building
- Budgeting and time management
- Stress management
- Assertive communication skills

Professional Development

- Internet safety
- Job search planning
- Resumé development
- Online applications
- Typing and word processing
- Emailing and attachments
- Interview techniques

Educational Assistance

- Applying to Santa Fe College
- GED classes and testing
- CPR and other programs

Contact us!

352-395-5047 or DHP@sfcollge.edu

sfcollge.edu/DHP

Santa Fe College

3000 NW 83rd Street, I-40

Gainesville, FL 32606

Commitment to Equal Access and Equal Opportunity

Santa Fe College is committed to an environment that embraces diversity, respects the rights of all individuals, is open and accessible, and is free of harassment and discrimination. For more information, visit sfcollge.edu/eao or contact equity.officer@sfcollge.edu.



Key Components

- Make a difference in the lives of our youth.
- Prepare the next generation.
- Provide work opportunities for those from underserved and underprivileged communities.
- Help those most in need to rise out of poverty.

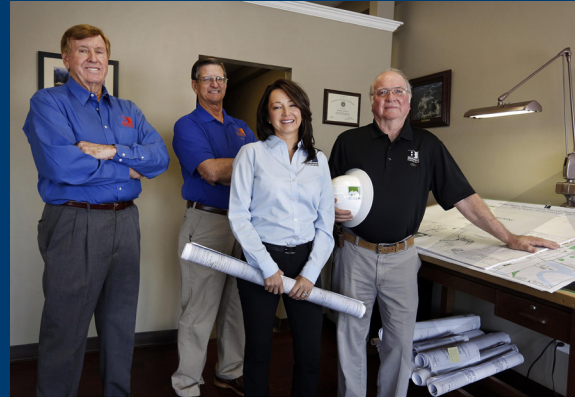
ACB Programs of Study

- Accounting A.S.
- Air Conditioning, Refrigeration and Heating Technology, Certificate
- Automotive Service Technology, Certificate
- Central Sterile Processing Technology (C.C.C.)
- Dental Assistant
- Emergency Medical Technician
- Law Enforcement, Certificate
- Nursing Assistant
- Office Specialist, Certificate
- Phlebotomy, Certificate
- Plumbing Technology, Certificate
- Practical Nursing, Certificate
- Revenue Cycle Management Medical Coder-Biller, Certificate
- Surgical Technology, Certificate
- Welding, Advanced Technology, Certificate
- Welding, Applied Technology Certificate



Santa Fe named the program ACB for Annette Cornwell Bauer, president and founder of Blakeland Construction.

As a successful female in a male dominated profession, Ms. Cornwell Bauer exemplified the value of a diverse workforce and cultivating the talents within each of us, inspiring individuals to pursue their dreams and overcome challenges in pursuit of their career goals. Ms. Cornwell Bauer sought to make a difference in the lives of young people by providing them with workforce opportunities and helping those most in need to rise from poverty. Ms. Cornwell Bauer believed that business and industry should play a major role in serving those in need in our communities and exposing them to the variety of opportunities available by serving as mentors and providing employment opportunities.



Annette Cornwell Bauer and her team at Blakeland Construction

**SF SANTA FE
COLLEGE**

**Donate today to the ACB Excel Program
at sfcollege.edu/foundation**

Donations can be sent to 3000 NW 83rd Street, F-207, Gainesville, FL 32606

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ACB Excel Program



**SF SANTA FE
COLLEGE**

Providing economic and social mobility, one family at a time.

In line with our strategic priorities and commitment to the success of individuals throughout our community, Santa Fe College is pleased to introduce the ACB Excel Program, which provides an avenue for parents and children to engage in academic and social activities simultaneously. This innovative initiative takes a two-generational approach to addressing educational needs while propelling individuals into high-wage, in-demand jobs. This program underscores SF's commitment to creating a college-going culture, breaking cycles of poverty through the delivery of educational opportunities and promoting economic and social mobility among our citizens.

ACB Excel is focused on building pathways for individuals to achieve success, providing the tools for them to conquer life's challenges, and empowering individuals to believe in their ability to further individual and generational career success. The ACB program is designed for individuals to excel in reaching their goals.

A guiding principle at the founding of Santa Fe College was to educate the “whole student.” It meant the college considers all the life circumstances of each student to better educate him or her.

ACB Excel will offer services to parents and their children simultaneously. Key components include enrollment in identified in-demand, high-wage academic programs; full academic and personal support to facilitate academic success; services; achievement and career coaching; financial literacy; funds for unexpected challenges that present barriers to persistence; mentorship; internship and job placement support from the business community.

In terms of economic assets, for example, a relatively small increase in household income can have a significant, lasting and positive impact on the life of a child. A \$3,000 difference in parents' income when their child is young is associated with a 17 percent increase in the child's future earnings.

The multiplier effects for parents and children is one of the most compelling rationales for an integrated two-generation approach to service delivery, according to the Urban Institute. Having both parent and child participate in coordinated services leads to multiplier effects that could not be achieved when parents and children are enrolled in separate and uncoordinated programs. Spurred on by their children's success, parents may pursue more education and obtain a better job. Further improvement in children's development might well follow.

The National Mentoring Partnership examined how top U.S. businesses collaborate with the public and non-profit sectors to connect youth in their communities to transformative mentoring relationships and the value gained by the businesses and its employees. It found that youths with mentors are more likely to be successful in school, leaders in their communities and to enter young adulthood with opportunities for ongoing education and career choices. Yet one in three youths will reach the age of 19 without having had a mentor of any kind outside of their family.

“We believe that there is no other way society will achieve large-scale progress against the urgent and complex problems of our time, unless a collective impact approach becomes the accepted way of doing business.” (Hanleybrown, Kania & Kramer, Stanford Social Innovation Review, January, 2012.)

Santa Fe College, the Alachua County Schools and the members of the Business Sector have united to collectively develop this program which will lead to many positive outcomes for our community and the lives of our residents.

Criteria

- New Students
- Parent
- Employed full or part time or a history of employment
- Complete application and interview process
- Low income resident of Alachua County

Participant Must

- Attend Workshops
- Engage in Professional Development
- Meet with Program Specialist
- Create Resume
- Participate in Mock Interviews
- Maintain a 2.0 GPA

Wrap Around Services

- Mentoring
- Financial Literacy
- Career Development
- Financial Aid
- Advising
- Growth Mind-Set
- Support and Development of School-age Children of participant
- Emergency Aid support for unexpected events

