

# EDUCATION

## A-B Tech Journal

SPRING 2022

GRADUATING CLASS OF 2022

### A-B Tech Celebrates Graduation Season

Craft Beverage Institute of the  
Southeast Marks 10 years

High School Students Earn  
Tuition-Free Degrees

**ABTech**  
Community College

# A-B Tech EDUCATION Journal

SPRING 2021

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**A-B TECH CELEBRATES  
GRADUATES, P. 4-8**



**HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS EARN  
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**CRAFT BEVERAGE INSTITUTE OF THE  
SOUTHEAST AT 10, P. 10**

# A Message from the President



Dr. John Gossett

As we begin the 2022-23 academic year, it finally feels safe to say, "welcome back"! We just held the first in-person Commencement in two years for 1,000 students who earned degrees and diplomas this year, as well as a series of program graduations for the Barber Academy, Basic Law Enforcement Training, Emergency

Medical Science, Fire Academy, High School Equivalency, Project Search, and Second Chance Pell at Craggy Prison. I'm proud of every student and grateful to the faculty, staff, and families who supported them.

All graduations are special, but it was especially heartening to see the first Barber Academy graduation in an auditorium filled with the graduates' proud families and friends. This inaugural barbering class began in January 2020 and was especially hard hit by the pandemic since most of the training had to be in-person. But the students persevered and completed the required 1,528 hours of training in 30 months, instead of the usual 15 to 22 months. Credit also goes to Academy head and master barber Jay Kaufmann, who was touted as the best in his field by no less than the NC Board of Barber Examiners leadership.

As the only college in North Carolina offering the Second Chance Pell program for imprisoned individuals last year, A-B Tech also had six graduates from Craggy prison. We know education changes lives

and it felt especially good to help these students succeed.

This year, A-B Tech also is once again able to offer a full slate of Continuing Education and Workforce Training classes, as well as several new academic programs and certificates. The new Cardiovascular Sonography program was begun due to community demand and offers graduates an average salary of \$70,000 a year. We also began a short-term Truck Driver Training program this spring that seems to be a hit with the community. You can learn more about these programs and other new offerings in this issue.

On the workforce front, we are expanding our apprenticeship and work-based learning opportunities and partnering with more companies for customized training, including GE Aviation as it staffs back up and helping Pratt & Whitney hire and train its employees.

A-B Tech is the community's college, and we offer something for practically everyone. I encourage you to visit any of our locations and explore our website at **abtech.edu**.

Sincerely,

John Gossett  
President

## RISE Culture of Service Statement

A-B Tech commits to demonstrating an inclusive and welcoming culture of respect, integrity and support for everyone.



# “Your Dreams, Our Mission” is More than a Slogan, A-B Tech Celebrates Student Success During Graduation Season



We tout “Your Dreams, Our Mission” to entice students to enroll at A-B Tech, but the dreams come to fruition when our students graduate, prepared to attend a four-year college or begin working in their chosen careers.

This year, A-B Tech awarded degrees and diplomas to 1,000 students who completed academic programs at the annual Commencement ceremony on May 14. Nearly half of them will continue their education at four-year colleges or universities, while others will begin careers in a wide range of fields. We also held program graduations this spring for A-B Tech’s Barber Academy, Basic Law Enforcement Training, Emergency Medical Science, High

School Equivalency, Project SEARCH, and Second Chance Pell at Craggy Prison .

Commencement marked A-B Tech President John Gossett’s first in-person ceremony and he served as the keynote speaker. Gossett noted the perseverance and resiliency of the Class of 2022, referring to them as the “pandemic class”.

“They came to us in faith as we had to quickly pivot to fully online instruction back in March 2020,” he said. “We all learned to accept and extend grace to each other as we struggled together. They hung in there with us, wearing masks and taking safety precautions on campus, or taking virtual classes in pajamas with their families and pets sharing screen time.”







Getting back to in-person attendance and events this year, “seeing more employees, seeing more students, that has done my heart good. We’re getting back to that feeling a college campus is supposed to have,” Gossett said.



for those that contracted COVID-19. A-B Tech also assisted students financially through the Trailblazer Promise and HEERF Grant distributions. That took such a weight off my shoulders.”

Graduation season is a special time of year when A-B Tech faculty and staff celebrate our graduates with their families and friends. We hope you enjoy seeing the smiling faces as much as we did!



SGA President Bethany Duke, who graduated with a degree in Accounting and Finance, echoed Gossett’s sentiments about the pandemic. “I, as (were) many others, was overwhelmed at the beginning and middle of the pandemic,” she said. “A-B Tech once again came to save the day. Leniencies were put into place





## Emergency Medical Science

All Emergency Medical Science graduates in the Class of 2022 passed the North Carolina Office of Emergency Medical Services state exam for Paramedics. Alexis Sabo was the Capstone Award winner for the year.



## Barber Academy

After starting in January 2020, the first cohort of 11 Barber Academy students graduated June 18 and will sit for the Apprentice licensing examination by the North Carolina State Board of Barber Examiners. See p. 8



## High School Equivalency

A-B Tech's Transitional Studies Department had 120 students complete their High School Equivalency this academic year. They celebrated June 16 in a recognition ceremony where three students received scholarships to continue their education at A-B Tech and six student speakers shared their stories.



## Project SEARCH

Project SEARCH Asheville held its graduation May 24. The program is a collaboration between The Arc of North Carolina, A-B Tech, Vocational Rehabilitation, Vaya Health, and the North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities. Selected in-terns participate in three internships over a period of a year. The goal is to develop workplace skills and prepare for seeking and attaining employment after completing the program.



## Basic Law Enforcement Training

Basic Law Enforcement Training graduates were honored in a ceremony June 2. The 13 graduates will be working for agencies including the Asheville Police Department, Buncombe County Sheriff's Department, and Black Mountain. The ceremony was bittersweet, highlighting the accomplishments of the class and saying goodbye to Director Marty McNeely, who presided over his last graduation before retirement.



## Fire Academy

A-B Tech's Fire Academy graduation was held on May 27. The graduates are a mixture of students who completed the firefighter academy at A-B Tech's Woodfin Campus, and students from Owen High School who completed the academy there. The next Academy starts in August and will end before the end of the year.



## Second Chance Pell Graduation at Craggy Prison

A-B Tech graduated six students on May 17 from the Second Chance Pell program at Craggy Correctional Center. It was the state's only Second Chance Pell program this year and all participants made the President's List or Dean's List. From left: Dr. Julie Jailall, Karen Tikkanen, Sara Cobb, Chris Church, Brooke Wheeler, Joshua Lipe, Vernon Toomer, William Adams, Michael Belcher, Brandon Childress, and Dr. Gene Loflin.



Brianna Mace

## High School Students Earn Tuition-Free Associate Degrees Through A-B Tech's Career & College Promise Program

Among A-B Tech's Class of 2022 were high school seniors who earned tuition-free associate degrees through the Career & College Promise high school dual enrollment program. These so-called "super seniors" often receive their college degrees several weeks before graduating high school. This year, 59 high school students in A-B Tech's service area of Buncombe and Madison counties received associate degrees.

Madison County student Brianna Mace was one of the super seniors who earned an associate degree before her high school graduation. Through Career & College Promise, Mace combined high school courses with classes at A-B Tech, enabling her to finish high school and earn a two-year degree in just five years.

"Early College made sense to me," Mace said. "With two years of free college, why would you do anything else?"

Mace also is taking Nurse Aide I classes on Tuesday and Thursday evenings so that she can enroll in A-B Tech's RIBN Nursing program in partnership with Western Carolina University. Her ultimate goal is to become a Nurse Practitioner.

"I knew since the ninth grade that I wanted to be in the medical field," she said. "I thought about becoming a doctor, but the nurse option was better for me. I was always the person with the first aid kit and knew how to use it, and the one who always needed the first aid kit."

During the 2021-22 academic year, 2,659 high school students in Buncombe and Madison counties enrolled in 8,628 classes and earned 25,359 credit hours.

A-B Tech's Career & College Promise program offers structured opportunities for qualified high school juniors and seniors to accelerate their completion of college certificates, diplomas, and associate degrees that lead to college transfer or provide entry-level job skills. Learn more at [abtech.edu/CCP](https://abtech.edu/CCP) or email [ccp@abtech.edu](mailto:ccp@abtech.edu).





A-B Tech Barbering Academy, First Graduating Class

# A-B Tech Barber Academy Graduates First Class After Covid Delays

The A-B Tech Barber Academy launched in January 2020, but unexpectedly had to suspend operations less than eight weeks later when the COVID-19 pandemic struck. As a hands-on program, most classes had to be delayed until the students could be taught in person.

Two and half years later, 11 students graduated June 18 and will sit for the Apprentice licensing examination by the North Carolina State Board of Barber Examiners. The program is one of few barber training programs in the state offered by community colleges and the only one offered west of Shelby.

"I am proud of the perseverance these graduates have shown," said Jay Kaufmann, Coordinator and Lead Instructor of the Barber Academy. "With all of our lives turned upside down with the pandemic, these graduates never wavered, never lost their dedication and commitment to becoming professional barbers."

During the pandemic, Kaufmann said his graduates persisted through months of suspended classes, splitting into two groups for training, eventually completing 30 months of classes instead of the usual 18 to 22 months, and learning a myriad of policies, procedures, and standards.

The employment outlook for barbering graduates is excellent, according to Kaufmann. "The need for professional barbers in WNC is at an all-time high. Since the barbering program at A-B Tech is the only one in WNC, our graduates will have employment opportunities wherever they go."

Graduate Brock McKee at 21 is the youngest in the class and already has a job lined up once he passes the exam. "I think I was at the point in my life I needed to make a decision," he said. "I looked up to my barber and thought that would be a great career choice. I enjoy the life lessons you learn from each person each day."

A-B Tech began the Barber Academy at the request of area barber shops and hair salons that were unable to find qualified, trained barbers. Demand was apparent when dozens of people lined up on the first day of admissions for only 20 openings. Kaufmann has maintained a wait list and said new students will be admitted on a rolling basis going forward.

Barbering programs in the State of North Carolina are required to provide a minimum of 1528 clock hours of instruction. The Barber Academy is a full-time program that would normally take 18 – 22 months to complete. Learn more at [abtech.edu/barber](https://abtech.edu/barber) or call 828-398-7609.





Pam Silvers STEM

# Silvers Completes Successful STEM Grant Programs, Increases Recruitment and Retention of Women and High School Students

A-B Tech Computer Technologies Instructor Pamela Silvers received three National Science Foundation grants over the past decade that were aimed at increasing awareness of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) opportunities in the technology field.

Her first effort was to evaluate strategies to retain more female college students in two-year technician preparation programs. Over a three-year period, the college increased the number of female students in targeted STEM programs from 12 percent to 19 percent.

"Since 2012, we were able come up with good strategies and make sure we were doing things to be inviting to all students," Silvers said. "We wanted to make sure all students are included in technology. If you went back to 2012 almost all marketing was targeted to men."

The next grant, titled Skilled Workers Get Jobs 2.0: Appalachian Impact, was to support a project to improve technician training and increase the number of highly skilled workers in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics priority areas.

"I never use the word 'STEM' because many people don't know what that means," Silvers said. "I think the whole awareness has changed. People have also been pigeonholed into a certain career because of their gender. There have been shifts and people are more aware of opportunities. I became more aware of terminology I used."

Her third grant project, Skilled Workers Get Jobs 2.1: High School Engagement, resulted in a 50% enrollment increase for high school students in targeted programs in information technology and engineering.

The project's approach resulted in outreach to more than 3,500 people. "The project was successful in letting targeted groups know about the technology programs and the paths students can follow at A-B Tech," Silvers said.

According to Silvers, earning an associate degree in technology fields yields an average pay increase of more than \$7,000. "Everyone needs a computer person," she said. "Any company over 20 employees is going to hire them. COVID has shown we need these computer people even more. You can get a job with a high school diploma, but will it be a job you want to do the rest of your life?"

Learn more about A-B Tech's Computer Technologies, Engineering, Math and Science programs at [abtech.edu/programs](https://abtech.edu/programs) or call 828.398.7900.

# A-B Tech's Craft Beverage Institute

## of the Southeast Marks 10-Year Anniversary



The Craft Beverage Institute of the Southeast® was developed in 2012 to meet the needs of the rapidly growing beverage industry in Western North Carolina. The following fall, A-B Tech launched the nation's first two-year Brewing, Distillation, and Fermentation degree program with Jeff "Puff" Irvin at the helm as Brewmaster. Much has changed in the past decade.

"We keep expanding and adding more opportunities and equipment," said Irvin who is now Director of the Institute and Chair of the program. He cited the growing trend of hard seltzers and ciders as an example of changing to address current needs.

The Institute has added more commercial equipment as well. "While brewing was the focus for the first year or two, the curriculum has grown to provide for the scope of fermented products that we produce," Irvin said.

Irvin and current Brewmaster John Lyda, the original brewmaster for Highland Brewing Co., have established partnerships with brewers and distilleries throughout the region to establish internships for students, in-house training for breweries and

distilleries, and job opportunities for CBI graduates. Alumni work at Highland Brewing, Hi-Wire, Wicked Weed, Catawba, New Belgium, Sierra Nevada, Inbox Beverage Company, and dozens of other locations. Several graduates also have opened their own breweries.

"Getting a degree in Brewing, Distillation, and Fermentation helps a person understand the 'why' of the beverage creation," said Irvin. "This can help solve problems. You can mitigate mistakes, make changes, or stop bad things from happening. When you have the recipe, you know the 'how' but don't understand it completely. A degree sets the resume apart from other candidates applying for the jobs. Our graduates seem to move up the ladder much faster."

Irvin also created Consuming the Craft, a popular, award-winning podcast with the tagline "Listen, Laugh, Learn" to provide entertaining educational content about the field. Look for it on your favorite podcast apps.

Limited spaces are still open for the Fall 2022 cohort of the Brewing, Distillation and Fermentation program. Irvin prefers that students register before a new student orientation on July 19, but applicants will be accepted through the August 22 start date for fall classes. For more information visit [abtech.edu/CBI](https://abtech.edu/CBI) or call 828.398.7191.



## Biltmore Supports A-B Tech Culinary and Baking Arts Programs



In partnership with A-B Tech, Biltmore will award four Training Scholarships to students of the college's renowned Culinary Arts or Baking & Pastry Arts programs. Students will "learn and earn" through an individualized training program supported by the scholarship. The first recipient is Baking & Pastry Arts student Andjela Legrand.



Biltmore also is sponsoring the A-B Tech student culinary team's trip to the American Culinary Federation (ACF) National Finals competition in Las Vegas this summer. Team members include, left to right: Christy Greer, Josh Waters, Jason Gray, Roman Nourse, Emmer Moraza, Michael Tan.



# New Programs Added

## A-B Tech Launches Truck Driver Training Program to Address Trucking Industry Need for 80,000 Drivers

A-B Tech has partnered with TransTech to provide five-week training sessions and testing for a Commercial Driver's License (CDL).

"A-B Tech is in the business of training adults for lucrative careers and truck driving is currently one of the best opportunities," said Deborah Wright, the college's vice president for Continuing Education and Economic & Workforce Development. "The trucking industry needs 80,000 truck drivers nationally and there are hundreds of job openings in our area. We're excited to have found the right partner in TransTech to help us provide this valuable program."

The course allows a student to obtain a Commercial Driver's License in as little as five weeks through a hybrid program consisting of both online and behind-the-wheel training, said program coordinator Carol Faust. The course consists of 56 hours of online coursework and 120 hours of behind-the-wheel training. Students will obtain a CDL permit from the NC Department of Motor Vehicles and then pass the NC CDL test at TransTech to obtain a CDL license. The college also offers 10-week evening and weekend sessions.

Successful applicants must be 18 (or 21 for interstate commerce or hazardous materials trucking), hold a valid NC driver's license and Social Security card, and pass a criminal background check and Department of Transportation physical and drug screen. For more information, visit [abtech.edu/truck](http://abtech.edu/truck), email [truck@abtech.edu](mailto:truck@abtech.edu), or call (828) 398-7924.



Truck Driver Training Launched in Continuing Education

## A-B Tech to Offer Cardiovascular Sonography Degree, Profession Has Hundreds of Job Openings with Average Pay of \$70,000



Cardiovascular Sonography program

A-B Tech Community College has added a new Cardiovascular Sonography degree to its Allied Health curriculum.

Cardiovascular sonography is a growing, in-demand field that pays an average salary of \$70,000 a year. A-B Tech's program is designed to qualify graduates for hundreds of job openings in Western North Carolina and thousands of jobs nationwide.

Cardiovascular sonographers, also known as echocardiographers, are trained to use imaging technology to assist physicians in identifying heart problems. With heart disease already the leading cause of death nationwide and projected to increase along with the aging population, cardiovascular sonographers will be vital to the diagnosis and treatment of heart disease.

"We constantly survey the local healthcare market to determine if there are needs that our current programs do not address," said Jon R. Wiener, dean of A-B Tech's Allied Health Division. "Mission Hospital and other healthcare providers identified a pressing need for cardiovascular sonographers as more aging patients experience heart issues."

Employment opportunities in the profession have increased more than 60 percent in Buncombe, Madison and Henderson counties over the last five years and will continue to experience faster than average job growth locally and nationally for the next decade, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Learn more at [abtech.edu/cardiovascular](http://abtech.edu/cardiovascular) or call 828.398.7900.

# Radio Museum New Exhibits

The Asheville Radio Museum, located in the Elm Building on the A-B Tech Asheville campus, received new exhibits of a television, jukebox, and console radio this spring.



## 1949 TV with a tiny screen.

Imagine the family gathered around this tiny TV almost 75 years ago watching grainy black and white images. This is how home TV was watched in the early days of television. The TV still works and picks up local station WLOS. The TV was restored and owned by the late electronics repairman Les Goldberg.

## 1946 Rock-Ola Jukebox.

The selected record swings out of the record stack, with the platter rising from below to lift the record to the waiting tonearm. The unit is currently undergoing restoration by the radio museum. Once restored it will be placed in a location where faculty and students can see and admire it. This is an amazing and generous donation to the museum from a local family who owned it for more than 50 years.



## 1936 Zenith Stratosphere console radio.

It contains seven beautiful exotic veneers in its cabinet and is stunning to behold. Only 350 of these radios were produced in the 1930s because their price tag was so high at \$750. That was more than the cost of a brand new Buick and only the very wealthy could afford them. Only 40 of the Stratosphere radios are known to exist today, and the museum received one from the very generous family members of the recently deceased owner.

The museum is free and open to the public.  
For more information and operating hours, visit [avlradiumuseum.org](http://avlradiumuseum.org).



# News Briefs

## Nursing Program Achieves National Accreditation and Receives Mission Health Funding

A-B Tech's Nursing Program is the first associate degree program to receive national accreditation by the National League for Nursing Commission for Nursing Education Accreditation.

"Earning national accreditation demonstrates that the program meets or exceeds established quality standards in nursing education," said Christy Andrews, the Jack and Carolyn Ferguson Endowed Nursing Chair at A-B Tech. "Having accreditation benefits graduates by facilitating their access to additional academic and employment opportunities."

The college also received funding for a nursing position from Mission Health for the 2022-23 academic year, enabling the Nursing program to admit 10 more nursing students to increase its total to approximately 150 students per year. "This is the type of partnership that we've needed for quite some time, The more faculty you have, the more opportunity you have to admit students," Andrews said.



## Culinary Team Heads to National Finals

A-B Tech's Student Culinary Team will compete in the American Culinary Federation (ACF) National Competition for a record 13th time at the end of July in Las Vegas. No other culinary programs in the country have won their regional contests and made as many trips to the finals. Competing team members are Roman Nourse (captain), Emmer Moraza Rodriguez, Michael Tan, Christy Greer, and Josh Waters. The team manager is Jason Gray.

## Longtime A-B Tech Employee and Trustee Max Queen Dies

Max Queen – an A-B Tech Trustee, retiree, graduate, and longtime friend of the college – passed away at his home March 29 after battling pancreatic cancer. Queen, 66, began his association with A-B Tech in 1975, enrolling in the first daytime EMT Program, the first step in his training to become a paramedic and critical care nurse. Queen was hired to teach Emergency Medical Science in 1982 and rose through the ranks as EMS Chair, Dean of Emergency Services, Vice President of Continuing Education and Workforce Development, Chief Learning Officer, and retired as Vice President of Administrative Services in 2012.



## Solar Panels installed at A-B Tech

Buncombe County is nearing completion of work across A-B Tech's main campus to install solar panels on the roofs of seven buildings. Projected cost savings will fund installation of the solar panels and save the college approximately \$90,000 a year in electrical costs.

# Campus Events

## Employees of the Year Awards

Six employees were selected for annual honors. From left, are Serietha Miller, Adjunct Faculty Member of the Year; James Atkinson, Staff Member of the Year; Pete Kennedy, Advisor of the Year; and Jillian McMeans, Co-Faculty Member of the Year. Not pictured are Susan Russell, Co-Faculty Member of the Year and Mark Applegate, Continuing Education Instructor of the Year.



## King Commons Dedication

A-B Tech welcomed back President Emeritus Dennis King to dedicate the King Commons, an area of campus he identified for conversion to a green space for students prior to his 2020 retirement. Dr. King and his wife Jan Clarson King attended the dedication with A-B Tech President John Gossett, President Emeritus K. Ray Bailey, many current and former A-B Tech Board of Trustees, Foundation Board, faculty and staff members, as well as friends.





# Campus **Events**

## K. Ray Bailey Golf Tournament



Bailey and his family

The 18th annual K. Ray Bailey Golf Tournament was held June 8 at Mt. Mitchell Golf Club to raise scholarship funds. More than 100 scholarships have been given since the inception of the tournament named in honor of President Emeritus Bailey, who retired from the college in 2007.



## Calendar of Events

July 19 **Craft Beverage Institute student orientation**

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July 21 **Find Your Future College & Career Fair**

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August 22 **Fall Semester classes begin**

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September 5 **College closed for Labor Day**

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October 13 **Autumn in Asheville**

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**A-B Tech Asheville Campus**

For more information, visit **[abtech.edu/future](https://abtech.edu/future)**  
or call 828.398.7900.

**Register NOW** for Fall Classes that begin August 22!



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