

WEST GEORGIA TECHNICAL COLLEGE – PUBLIC RELATIONS
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – November 19, 2015
CONTACT: AARON SONES, External Affairs Coordinator
c: 770.823.5295 e: aaron.sones@westgatech.edu

**LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS GET HEAD START ON THEIR COLLEGE CAREERS
THANKS TO WEST GEORGIA TECHNICAL COLLEGE AND MOVE ON WHEN READY
INITIATIVE**

Thanks to the Georgia Department of Education’s new “Move on When Ready” (formerly known as the Dual Enrollment program), hundreds of local high school students are getting a head start on their college careers by attending West Georgia Technical College.

Move on When Ready (MOWR) allows high school students to attend a postsecondary institution, such as West Georgia Tech, and receive high school credit and college credit simultaneously while still in high school.

West Georgia Tech has seen about a 40-percent spike in enrollment from last fall to this fall.

West Georgia Technical College President Steve G. Daniel has seen firsthand the surge of students participating in dual enrollment since he took office in July of last year.

“I don’t know if there is a more impactful component of our College than our MOWR program,” Daniel said. “This initiative has changed so many young lives in such a positive way and I am proud that West Georgia Technical College is one of the leaders in this effort. Our collaboration with local school systems and local business / industry partners are helping us to produce graduates that are prepared for the desperately needed careers in our region. The Move on When Ready program is expected to grow exponentially in the coming years and we are preparing for this as a College.”

The recent rise in enrollment numbers can be attributed mostly to Senate Bill 132, which was passed by the Georgia General Assembly last session, according to West Georgia Technical College Provost Dr. Perrin Alford.

“Senate Bill 132 made some adjustments to the previous MOWR law that was passed in 2009, which has led to us seeing our numbers increase significantly,” Alford said. “The new law reduces or eliminates previous barriers that were in place. Students can now dual enroll and not pay a dime in tuition or for books. There are no mandatory fees. It removed all residency requirements and opened up program offerings across the board.”

The bill also expanded the pool of potential students to include high school freshmen and sophomores. Previously, dual enrollment was only available to high school juniors and seniors.

Alford said that West Georgia Tech has 773 high school students dual enrolled at West Georgia Tech this fall and he expects that number to grow to more than 900 for the spring semester.

“There is no question that the recent changes to Move on When Ready have basically opened up the floodgates as far as overall enrollment is concerned. We’ve hired additional staff to accommodate future growth,” Alford said.

West Georgia Tech named Kevin Cain, previous Director of Institutional Advancement for the College, to take over the newly created position of Director of High School Initiatives.

Cain will oversee WGTC’s application of the Move on When Ready program as well as directly interface with local school systems in an effort to serve as a liaison between the College and local high schools. Cain began his new role on September 1 and reports to Alford.

“With the increases in eligibility made possible by Senate Bill 132, we feel it is imperative to get the word out as effectively and as often as we can to make sure all of the high school students in our service area are aware of their options,” Cain said. “This is an incredible opportunity for high school students to earn college credit while in high school, experience the college curriculum and graduate from high school with a jump start on college.”

Assisting Cain in his efforts are West Georgia Tech High School Coordinators Ginny Griffin and Leigh Cunningham.

Griffin and Cunningham serve as the College’s primary recruiters and points-of-contact for local high school guidance counselors and parents.

Griffin’s territory includes Haralson, Douglas and Carroll counties, while Cunningham oversees Troup, Meriwether, Heard and Coweta counties.

Alford and his team all anticipate the total number of dual enrolled students at West Georgia Tech to continue to increase in large numbers over the next few years. With the addition of ninth and tenth grade students, along with the reduction in costs and other barriers previously in place, West Georgia Tech’s dual enrollment numbers could exceed the 1,000 mark by the Fall Semester of 2016.

Every high school in West Georgia Tech's service area is serviced by one of the two high school coordinators. And every high school student within West Georgia Tech's seven-county footprint can dual enroll at West Georgia Tech, provided they meet application requirements.

West Georgia Tech has partnered with four college and career academies, all of which are located within the College's seven-county service area: the thINC Academy in LaGrange, serving the Troup County School System; the College and Career Academy in Carrollton, which serves the Carroll County School System; the Central Educational Center in Newnan, which is affiliated with the Coweta County School System; and the Douglas County College and Career Institute in Douglasville, which is part of the Douglas County School System.

All four college and career academies are located near or even within a West Georgia Technical College campus.

NOTE: SEE STATEMENTS FROM EACH COLLEGE AND CAREER ACADEMY CEO AT THE END OF THE RELEASE. FEEL FREE TO USE ANY STATEMENT THAT APPLIES TO YOUR COVERAGE AREA.

Students enrolling in Move on When Ready can take classes at either of one of those four college and career academies, one of the five West Georgia Tech campuses or one of two West Georgia Tech instructional sites, which are located in Franklin and Greenville.

Research suggests that students who participate in MOWR are more likely to graduate from college, according to the Georgia Department of Education.

The benefits of Move on When Ready are both measurable and profound, both to the student and to his or her parents.

With college credit already earned upon entering a four-year college or a technical college, a student can earn their degree in less time – which equates into less money being spent on college education.

No one knows that better than Douglasville resident Michelle Berry.

Her son, Brix, went through the MOWR program at West Georgia Tech before enrolling at Auburn University. She said that her family saved over \$13,000 in tuition costs at Auburn.

High school students who dual enroll prepare themselves for the rigors of college curriculum, as they attend classes with college students who could be twice their age, in some instances.

“Being in a classroom with older adults was intimidating on the first day,” Brix Berry said. “I had never been in a college setting before. But all of my teachers respected the fact that I was experiencing that environment for the first time. They gave me personal, hands-on experience. By the second and third day in, I was comfortable.”

The first day of college for any student is nerve-racking. Their entire world changes in an instant.

But not for Brix Berry and the hundreds of other students who have passed through the Move on When Ready program.

“Going to West Georgia Tech as a dual enrolled student was the best decision I have ever made. My first day at Auburn wasn’t intimidating at all. I knew exactly what to expect. Even though I was on a campus for the first time with more than 20,000 students, I felt like I was already a sophomore or a junior,” Berry said.

And in a sense, he was. Berry transferred twelve credits from West Georgia Tech to Auburn University. Berry had already satisfied the English 1101 and 1102 courses, as well as the Political Science core requirements.

Another proponent of Move on When Ready is Bremen High School Principal Dr. Tim Huff.

Dr. Huff says that in the 2013-14 school year, Bremen had 19 students participate in MOWR through West Georgia Tech. Last year that number climbed to 48 students and Huff anticipates that number to increase to around 60 this school year.

“Academics at Bremen High School is a top priority,” Huff said. “One area where we did not feel that we were meeting our potential is in accelerated credits. West Georgia Technical College has partnered with us to help us reach our goals. We are excited to see the changes in Move on When Ready and believe we are just scratching the surface of what is to come as our students gain increased access to classes through MOWR.”

One of the Bremen High School graduates who took advantage of Move on When Ready at West Georgia Tech is Alexis Nappi, now a student at Augusta University.

Nappi transferred 39 college credit hours to Augusta University from the MOWR program at West Georgia Tech.

“Dual enrollment was the best decision I ever made during my high school career,” Nappi said. “Starting college with 39 hours gave me a jump-start in my career and prepared me for the challenges of a college setting.”

She also saved her family a significant amount of money in tuition costs, allowing Alexis to pursue a minor in Spanish while taking her Pre-Med classes without exceeding her allotted Hope Scholarship credits.

Nappi's brother, Dylan, also participated in the MOWR program. He said that he was able to graduate in half of the time that it usually takes because of the credit hours he earned at West Georgia Tech as a high school student.

There are hundreds more stories out there similar to Brix Berry, Alexis Nappi and Dylan Nappi.

High school students are getting a head start on their college careers, saving money in future tuition costs and learning how to work and interact with older adults in a college environment. And many of them are discovering their future career paths, all while still in high school.

And they are doing it at little or no cost to them.

Students or parents interested in learning more about Move on When Ready at West Georgia Tech should contact their school's guidance counselor, or visit West Georgia Tech's MOWR website, at www.westgatech.edu/MOWR.

You can also seek information by emailing:
Perrin Alford (perrin.alford@westgatech.edu),
Kevin Cain (kevin.cain@westgatech.edu), or
WGTC High School Coordinators at (MOWR@westgatech.edu).

###

West Georgia Technical College, with campuses in Carroll, Coweta, Douglas, Haralson and Troup counties and class sites in Heard and Meriwether counties offers over 120 associate degree, diploma and technical certificate programs of study. A unit of the Technical College System of Georgia, West Georgia Tech is the fourth largest of the state's 22 technical colleges.

STATEMENTS FROM COLLEGE AND CAREER ACADEMY CEOs

thINC Academy in Troup

Kathy Carlisle, CEO

The thINC Academy, serving the Troup County School System, opened its doors in the fall of 2015. Those doors happen to be housed on West Georgia Tech's LaGrange Campus. thINC Academy CEO Dr. Kathy Carlisle said that Move on When Ready is the perfect path for success for those students who are ready for an accelerated experience in high school.

"West Georgia Tech is well-equipped and ready to assist students with their academic plans to ensure career and college goals are accomplished. I challenge parents and students to explore college options during high school. It is a tremendous advantage for students to graduate from high school having earned a college certificate or credits," Carlisle said.

Carroll County College and Career Academy in Carroll

Cindy Clanton, CTAE Director

Carrollton's College and Career Academy Director Cindy Clanton said that the relationship between the Carroll County College and Career Academy and West Georgia Tech is making a significant difference throughout the Carroll County area.

"With the Move on When Ready program, the Carroll County College and Career Academy and West Georgia Technical College are partnering to offer our students multiple avenues to post-secondary education while still in high school. Students may opt to graduate high school early or earn credit towards a technical college certificate, diploma or degree."

Central Educational Center in Coweta

Mark Whitlock, CEO

Central Educational Center CEO Mark Whitlock said that West Georgia Tech's Move on When Ready effort is the most efficient and effective educational system in place today.

"West Georgia Tech and Move on When Ready are the greatest opportunity and value in education," Whitlock said. "It allows students to convert from high school to college while still in high school. It saves families thousands of dollars and ensures the chance for students to complete college. I feel like this program is going to explode over the next few years as more families and students become aware of the benefits of this program."

College and Career Institute in Douglas

Mandy Johnson, Director of College and Career Programs

Mandy Johnson, Douglas County's College and Career Institute Director of College and Career Programs, said that the partnerships between the Academy and other entities within the community, such as West Georgia Technical College, have helped the Academy grow.

"CCI continues to be an integral part of the Douglas County community due to the special partnership between the Douglas County School System, West Georgia Technical College and the Douglas County Chamber of Commerce. We are in our seventh year and the partnership continues to flourish because of the strong relationships formed at the WGTC Douglas campus."