

History

Southern Union State Community College was formed on August 12, 1993, when the Alabama State Board of Education effectively merged Southern Union State Junior College, located in Wadley, Valley, and Opelika, with Opelika State Technical College in Opelika. Final approval was granted on August 11, 1994. Each partner brought to the merger a history rich in tradition of service to students.

The older of the two colleges, Southern Union, was chartered as Bethlehem College on June 2, 1922, by the Southern Christian Convention of Congregational Christian Churches. Wadley was chosen as the site for the college because of its proximity to a large number of the denomination's churches and because of the donation of a forty-acre site by John M. Hodge, a local banker.



Southern Union Log Cabin, Wadley Campus

From its opening with 51 students in a single building on September 13, 1923, until 1964, the College remained church related, operating as Piedmont Junior College, Southern Union College, and The Southern Union College. On October 1, 1964, the college was deeded to the State of Alabama and became part of a newly created system of two-year colleges under the governance of the Alabama State Board of Education. The name of the college became Southern Union State Junior College, and it achieved accreditation in 1970 from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Opelika State Technical College was created by an act of the Alabama State Legislature on May 3, 1963, in response to a recognized need to establish vocational/technical colleges in industrial areas of Alabama. Contributions of local governmental entities such as the Lee County Commission, which donated 63 acres of land for the college site, and the City of Opelika, which provided access to utility services, helped make the college a reality. The college opened on January 10, 1966, as Opelika State Vocational Technical Institute but was designated Opelika State Technical College on August 22, 1973, by the Alabama State Board of Education and accredited in 1971 by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Southern Union State Community College serves residents of an eight-county area of East Central Alabama as well as neighboring Georgia counties from its campuses in Wadley, Valley and Opelika. A three-faceted educational emphasis is on academic programs for transferability, technical/vocational programs for specialized career competencies, and nursing and allied health programs for specialized training in health sciences.