

CTE Dual Credit Programs Expand

This fall, hundreds of high school students across Lee College's service area will begin earning college credit, industry-recognized credentials and hands-on workforce training before they ever receive a high school diploma.

Through expanded Career and Technical Education (CTE) dual credit partnerships with local school districts, approximately 300 students are expected to participate in new and enhanced programs during the 2026–27 academic year. The initiative prepares students for high-demand careers while helping address the Gulf Coast region's growing workforce needs.

New and expanded dual credit pathways include Heating, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration (HVAC), Logistics, Process Technology, Welding, Network Maintenance, Computer-Aided Drafting and Design (CADD), Cybersecurity, Pipefitting, Instrumentation and Electrical Technology. Additional pathways are available in Culinary Arts, Automotive, Cosmetology, Business and Education.

Dr. Priscilla Sanchez, executive director of School & College Partnerships at Lee College, said the expansion reflects the college's commitment to making workforce education more accessible and affordable while preparing students for careers that are in demand across the region.

"Lee College is increasing access to high-demand CTE dual credit programs so more students can prepare for local, high-wage careers while still in high school," Sanchez said. "Dual credit provides an affordable pathway for students to earn college credit and industry credentials, helping reduce the cost of education while strengthening the region's future workforce."

After graduating from high school, students can continue their education through Lee College's First Time Free with Lee program, allowing many to complete a certificate or degree with even greater affordability.

The expansion also reflects increasing interest from students and school districts. Welding enrollment has grown by 400 percent, while participation in HVAC has increased by 56 percent. Lee College is also reintroducing Process Technology dual credit and launching a new Logistics pathway in response to evolving industry demand.

Participation has expanded across the college's service area, with particularly strong growth in Goose Creek CISD and Dayton ISD. To meet demand, Lee College added 11 new welding sections serving students from Stuart Career Tech High School, Dayton ISD and Barbers Hill ISD while expanding opportunities for students from Goose Creek Memorial, Robert E. Lee and Ross S. Sterling high schools.

As a result, all 62 first-year welding students are on track to earn their Welding Helper credential within one year, giving them a valuable industry credential before high school graduation.

By allowing students to earn college credit and workforce credentials while still in high school, Lee College and its K–12 partners are creating seamless pathways from the classroom to college and ultimately to meaningful careers. The partnerships not only help students reduce the cost of higher education but also strengthen the region's pipeline of skilled workers for years to come.

Leia Miller, GCCISD director of Career and Technical Education, emphasized the long-term value of expanding dual credit opportunities for high school students.

“Expanding CTE dual credit opportunities gives our students a true head start. They graduate with college credit, industry credentials, and real workforce experience that prepares them for success after high school,” she said.

“Together with Lee College, we're building strong career pathways that benefit our students, our local employers, and the future of our community.”