LBWCC rolled out its first physical science course completely online, including laboratory requirements. “This is yet another course completely online and available to students no matter where they live, and it is one of several online core curriculum classes available toward an Associate Degree,” said LBWCC President Dr. Herb Riedel. “Our goal is to reach 100 percent online availability of all core curriculum courses, which we hope to achieve in the near future.”

LeAnn Judah, LBWCC division chair for mathematics and science, said the online physical science course was in development for a year. “This physical science course is comparable to a traditional course. The laboratories are developed specifically for online access so students can complete them at home without coming to campus, as they would in a traditional or hybrid course,” she said.

This course was first offered in an eight-week fall session and provides students with an introduction to the basic principles of geology, oceanography, meteorology, and astronomy, she added. “It is an earth science class, beginning with rocks and minerals and goes all the way to the solar system, atmosphere, weather and climate, and how our earth was formed.”

The second physical science course in the sequence is currently in development for online access, aiming for completion by spring 2020, she said.
Pridgen, 14, adjusting to college classroom

At the age of 14, Morgan Pridgen is exploring a new setting in education as he adjusts to a classroom setting of college students at Lurleen B. Wallace Community College in Andalusia during his second semester.

Son of Michael and Rachel Pridgen of Opp, Morgan’s first experience in a classroom setting is LBWCC’s chemistry course.

“Home schooling was always in the back of our head as an option when he was diagnosed with autism,” said Rachel. “He had therapists in a lot of different places and it just fit better to teach him at home. Being able to challenge him academically while working on social skills in therapy was the best option.”

Morgan’s first spoken words came as he brought a book to his parents and started reading to them, she said. “We’ve always been open with Morgan about autism, explaining that his brain is wired differently and some things would be easy for him and some things would be harder. He’s advanced in math and struggled with a speech class. It’s hard for him to talk about himself.”

Rachel said a family rule is Morgan to complete a high school credential and earn an Associate in Science degree in December 2019, then graduate with a Bachelor’s Degree at the age of 16.

Morgan took the ACT at LBWCC at the age of 13 and scored 29. “We knew he could get into most colleges with that score, so he enrolled in an online microcomputer application class with LBW. We wanted to make sure he could handle the pacing, scheduling, and contact with professors. He passed the class with an ‘A.’”

He then took three LBWCC classes and one at Troy University over the summer and made ‘As’ in those classes, she said. “This fall, we said there’s no reason not to do all classes at college.”

He’s currently enrolled in 16 credit hours, half the classes at LBWCC and half at Troy University. As a dual enrollment student, he is earning college credits and high school credits at the same time.

Morgan said his interest is in computer programming, with Python his favorite programming language so far. He also uses C++, Java, and JavaScript, he said.

While most people review computer code line by line, processing each line as they scan it, said Rachel. On his laptop computer, he is currently building a game, he said. “His interest in computers will probably lead to a career in cyber security, virtual reality, or artificial intelligence,” said Rachel.

Morgan continues developing social skills while at LBWCC. Although the chemistry class is the first time he’s interacted with other students in a classroom setting, he is obviously making an impact with them. While sitting in the student center between classes, a classmate approaches for confirmation of quiz and exam dates, then asks for a study time with Morgan.

Current projections are for Morgan’s first experience in a classroom setting of college students at Lurleen B. Wallace Community College in Andalusia during his second semester.
OER saves cost of textbooks for students

LBW Community College students are experiencing financial savings as more courses are converted from typical textbook usage to open education resources (OER).

“A few years ago, our mathematics faculty successfully redesigned several basic math courses using OER material, saving students more than $300,000 on average each year they would have paid for required textbooks and computer codes,” said LBWCC President Herb Riedel.

“Now, as we convert more and more courses in academic transfer and technical training, the cost savings will continue to climb.”

OER is a national trend for two-year and four-year institutions of higher education, he said.

The U.S. Government Accountability Office reported in 2013 that textbook prices rose 82 percent between 2002 and 2012, at three times the rate of inflation.

“For at least the last 15 years, more and more materials in a number of subject areas have become available online. By using freely accessible, openly-licensed material, students are saving a lot of money.”

Haley White of Red Level and Treyvon McClain of Georgiana discuss how LBW is saving the cost of some textbooks through the use of open educational resources.

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State’s first CNG engine repair training at LBWCC

LBWCC’s diesel and heavy equipment mechanics program is the only two-year college program in Alabama currently offering instruction on repair of compressed natural gas (CNG) engines to meet the evolving needs of the trucking industry, according to officials.

“In June, UPS (United Parcel Service) announced it is ordering 730 CNG vehicles and building five additional domestic CNG fueling stations,” said LBWCC President Dr. Herb Riedel. “We are currently the only college in Alabama prepared to meet the changing needs of the industry by training students to maintain and repair these types of engines.”

According to the announcement by UPS, the company and its rivals face pressure from regulators in major cities around the world to lessen the environmental impact of fleets. “As more and more delivery and transportation fleets transition to alternative CNG engines, LBWCC’s program graduates will be qualified to fill industry employment needs for maintenance and repair. This is a great example of how LBWCC’s technical program training stays current with the needs of industry,” said Riedel.

LBWCC expanded the program on the MacArthur Campus in Opp to a two-year Associate in Applied Science Degree program. Area businesses and organizations helped with the additional training requirements. A grant from the National Science Foundation provided means for natural gas curriculum development and professional development of instructors to teach the new courses. In addition, a Workforce Grant awarded by Alabama Community College System provided funds to purchase two natural gas engine trainers and two late model diesel engine trainers along with specialty tools and supplies for the natural gas engine lab.

Davis recognized for summer incentive grant

LBW Community College’s Dr. Arlene Davis is the 2018 recipient of the Innovation Champion Award. This employee recognition program provides an opportunity to showcase innovations employees have successfully designed and implemented which positively impact the College.

The award recognizes Davis, associate dean for institutional advancement, for her role in the development of a summer incentive grant that benefited 40 students and resulted in a 44 percent increase in LBWCC’s enrollment from the previous year, the highest summer increase in the state’s two-year system. By way of this recognition, Davis is also named as the College’s choice for the national John & Suanne Roueche Excellence Award established by the League for Innovation to recognize faculty, staff, and administration for excellence in leadership and innovation in higher education. She will be recognized at the League for Innovation’s conference in New York City in February.

Selection for the award was based on the criteria of quality, efficiency, cost effectiveness, creativity, timeliness, learning, and collaboration.

2018 Chancellor Award recipients

LBWCC employees recognized as 2018 Chancellor Award winners are, from left, Outstanding Support Staff Darlene Hogg; Outstanding Technical Faculty Mark Hains, Outstanding Academic Faculty Maria Thigpen; and Outstanding Administrator Wendy Johnson.