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Alabama Commission on Higher Education

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ACHE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NAMED

The Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) has announced the appointment of James E. Purcell as executive director.

“Dr. Purcell will be a tremendous asset to all of education in Alabama,” said ACHE Commissioner Randy McKinney, chairman of the search committee. “His experience includes executive officer positions for higher education in three other states: Rhode Island, Louisiana and Arkansas. His track record reflects heavy involvement in economic development leadership which is key to a balance of education and workforce.”



Dr. James E. Purcell

Purcell, a native Alabamian, will be returning from Rhode Island where he serves as the Commissioner of Postsecondary Education. In that role he has been responsible for developing a strategic plan for postsecondary education, which centered on increasing completion rates, making college affordable, supporting the state’s economy and creating effective institutions.

While serving as the state higher education executive officer with the Louisiana Board of Regents, Purcell coordinated the efforts of fourteen universities, thirteen community colleges, three technical colleges, two health science centers, a health research unit and a marine science research center.

As the state higher education executive officer in Arkansas, he served as a member of the Governor's Cabinet and the Workforce Cabinet and oversaw the state's 21 financial aid programs.

His educational background includes a doctor of education degree from the University of Alabama where his dissertation focused on the impact of high-risk indicators on student retention. He holds a master's degree from the University of Montevallo and a bachelor of science degree from Auburn University. He graduated from Marbury High School in Autauga County.

He is a professional member of the New England Board of Higher Education and has served on the executive board of the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) and as a board member of the Southern Regional Education Board.

He has co-authored numerous educational publications related to the use of educational data, developmental educational innovations and college readiness and completions.

"As an Alabama native, I am excited about the opportunity to serve as executive director of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education," said Purcell. "I will work to strengthen our colleges and universities."

The Alabama Commission on Higher Education, founded in 1969, is the state's coordinating board for all public institutions of higher education.