



## **Aiken Technical College, Competitive Environment Scan**

**Client: Aiken Technical College**

**Year: 2011**

### **Project Description:**

During the past fifteen years, the service area of Aiken Technical College has experienced significant changes in its traditional economic sectors. In 2005, the area lost 2,000 textile industry jobs with the tragic train derailment at Graniteville, SC. This event brought the total loss of jobs in this once iconic industry for the area to more than 24,000 since 1997. The financial and housing collapse brought on by the recession that began in 2007 caused unemployment to rise to the highest numbers that the nation had seen in decades. The states of Georgia and South Carolina were hit especially hard with 10.2 and 10.7 percent respectively by the end of 2010. Clearly Aiken County, South Carolina and the surrounding area are faced with a number of economic challenges and dependence on the low-skilled, low-wage jobs that have characterized the economic base for centuries cannot sustain the Region as it continues to move forward in the 21st Century's knowledge-based economy.

During the final quarter of 2010 and into 2011, Aiken Technical College with the assistance of Thomas P. Miller & Associates, LLC and Janus Economics laid the foundation for a strategic planning process that included a demographic and economic base analysis. The scan included five counties in South Carolina and ten counties in eastern Georgia. The Project Team collected data on the Study Region's demographic changes as well as information on industries that are emerging, declining or remaining stable during a study period from 2002 to 2010. In addition, focus groups were conducted along with meetings, interviews and a public survey to provide a clearer picture of the economic and competitive environment to assist Aiken Tech to better position itself in the educational marketplace.

### **Outcome**

Findings were developed in the areas of reputation/image, the Enterprise Campus Concept, and how the college fares among its peer technical colleges. Overall, the competitive environment scan provided college officials with guidance as ATC enters into a new strategic planning cycle. The higher education market is ever evolving with the incorporation of new delivery methods of training, need for speed and flexibility to meet employer needs, increased competition from for-profit institutions, and increased demands on institutions with fewer resources available.