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Clarion Ledger

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Classroom to workforce

MS community colleges to offer free courses for adults, bill says

Bea Anhucl

Mississippi Clarion Ledger

USA TODAY NETWORK - TENNESSEE

A program that would offer select free community college courses to adults is set to become law within the next week.

The program, branded as UPSKILL by sponsor Sen. Nicole Boyd, R-Oxford, and touted as one of Lt. Gov. Delbert Hosemann's priorities for the session, will allow people to go back to school to upgrade their skills without having to

spend huge amounts of money they may not have, Boyd said.

Students will have to be at least 24 years old and pursuing classes in priority sectors, as determined by the Mississippi Office of Workforce Development, to be eligible for the program. The fund would cover tuition costs for eligible students after all federal aid is disbursed.

The average cost of attending a semester at a Mississippi community college is around \$3,000, according to data for the 2025-2026 school year from the

state treasury, but can climb to double that at some schools throughout the state. The financial aid from the state would go a long way, said Hinds Community College student Tae Jones.

Jones enrolled at the school last year to get a welding certificate, he said in a March 28 interview, because he felt like he had been wandering from one low-paying job to another. He worked in retail and food service before going back to Hinds Community College, he

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The UPSKILL program, which Sen. Nicole Boyd, R-Oxford, has championed since the start of the session, is set to become law.

AYRTON BRECKENRIDGE/CLARION LEDGER



Union Station is seen in Downtown Jackson on Wednesday, April 1.

What renovations are planned for Union Station?

Development handled by the Jackson Redevelopment Authority

Charlie Drape

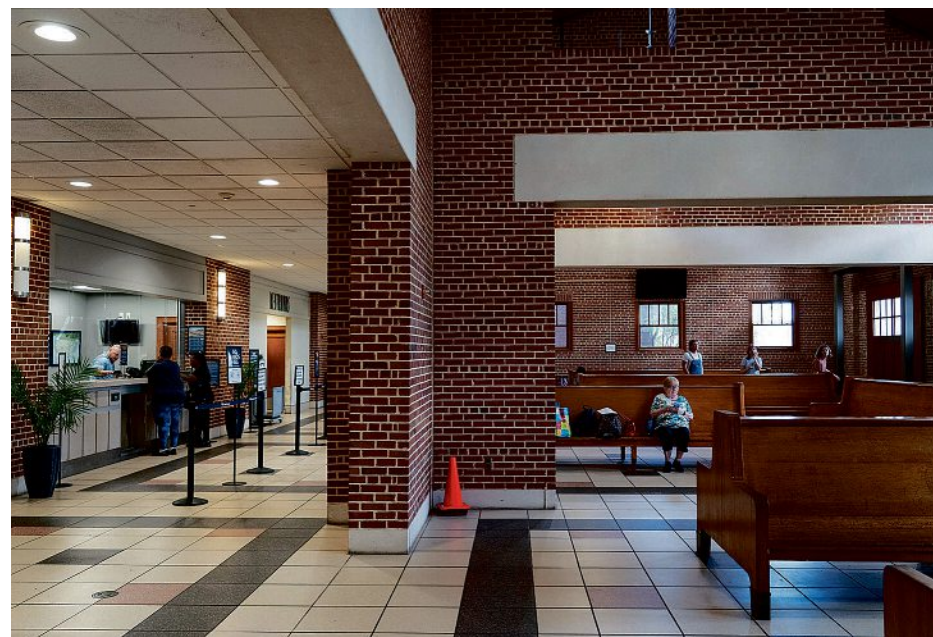
Mississippi Clarion Ledger

USA TODAY NETWORK

Renovations are planned for Jackson's Union Station, but officials have not said what those improvements will include. Plans have been discussed for years — with millions committed — but additional details won't come until later this month.

Those plans have included a food hall, open-air market and arcade, but a walk through Union Station today shows little evidence those ideas have taken shape.

The space is clean and offers ample seating, but there are no food options, no arcade and no market. Beyond Amtrak and Greyhound operations, the station is largely quiet and filled with



PHOTOS BY LAUREN WITTE/CLARION LEDGER

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This rendering at The Gallery in Madison looks South down Royal Street. It will be a French-inspired, New Orleans-style walkable area lined with local restaurants, boutique retail and upstairs office space.

PROVIDED BY BELLAMARE DEVELOPMENT

\$60 million entertainment complex in Madison set to go vertical

Ross Reily

Mississippi Clarion Ledger

USA TODAY NETWORK

While ground has already officially been broken on the arts and entertainment district known as The Gallery in Madison, actual development construction is expected to get started in the near future.

Bellamare Development Services Vice President Anna Jane Stanley told the Clarion Ledger that she didn't want to overpromise, but she expects the project to go vertical by early summer.

The project passed its latest test before a board in Madison in October of 2025, when the City of Madison Board of Aldermen gave The Gallery a vote of approval for site plan and architectural design for all six buildings of the development. The Gallery is a privately funded, mixed-use destination that will include entertainment, dining, retail and office space in a designed community.

Work has begun on the Madison development project, located off Galleria Parkway on 17 acres visible from I-55 North.

A local development group in April of 2025, announced intentions to build the \$60 million arts and entertainment district for Madison.

"We are incredibly grateful for the City of Madison's continued support and shared vision in bringing this project to life," Stanley said. "Their commitment to creating a meaningful,

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