

NC STATE

College of Education
Belk Center for Community College
Leadership and Research

Redefining Access:
The Power of Proximity

Gregory Adam Haile, J.D.

President
Broward College

2021 Dallas Herring Lecture

November 16, 2021

**2021
DALLAS HERRING LECTURE**

Dear Colleagues,

We are pleased to share with you the full transcript of the 2021 Dallas Herring Lecture, delivered by Gregory Adam Haile, J.D., who serves as president of Broward College in Florida. This year's lecture, held on Tuesday, November 16, 2021, was offered in a hybrid format, with a small group of invited attendees joining President Haile in person on NC State's campus and more than 800 others registering to participate virtually from across the nation. A signature program of the Belk Center for Community College Leadership and Research in the College of Education at NC State University, this lecture is held annually in honor of **W. Dallas Herring**, whose transformative vision and tireless work culminated in the inception of North Carolina's community colleges. Each year, exceptional community college leaders from around the country are invited to **speak on urgent and emerging topics**, lending their voices and insight to the critical conversations about student success taking place among community colleges across the state and inspiring continued action and progress.

In this year's lecture, "Redefining Access: The Power of Proximity," President Haile issues a powerful call to action for community colleges to develop innovative approaches to being proximate with the communities they are designed to serve. A critical step in ensuring equitable access to higher education, he argues, is understanding who colleges are reaching and who they are missing. Tracing the power of proximity back to our earliest years as learners, he describes how our future aspirations are inextricably linked to the information and signals we receive — or don't receive — about college and our postsecondary potential. Those in close proximity to higher education are more likely to know it exists, recognize the value it can bring to their lives, understand the steps necessary to access it, and ultimately see it as an endeavor in which they belong and can be successful.

President Haile reminds us that community colleges are, by design, uniquely positioned to bridge gaps in proximity, connecting students who might otherwise be missed with higher education and the many benefits it has to offer. To do this, he calls upon colleges to address proximity's multiple dimensions:

- **Physical proximity** speaks to the importance of space and place in learning. Where are our students learning, and how are they getting there? What steps can we take to minimize the physical distance between our students and our colleges?
- **Social proximity** involves how close members of our communities feel to our institutions. Are we cultivating a sense of belonging among prospective students long before they arrive on our campuses? How might we engage more deeply with our communities to ensure our constituents understand what we offer and the ways our campuses can serve them?
- **Financial proximity** describes how members of our communities view the costs of higher education. How are we working to make college affordable for all students, and what are we doing to communicate that affordability to our communities? Beyond tuition, what expenses are students incurring, and what can we do to reduce their financial burden?

In response to President Haile's remarks, we were fortunate to benefit from the wisdom and insight of three additional community college leaders, who discussed how their institutions are working to address issues of proximity: Dr. Pamela Senegal, president of Piedmont Community College in North Carolina; Lee D. Lambert, J.D., chancellor of Pima Community College in Arizona; and Dr. Sunita "Sunny" Cooke, superintendent and president of MiraCosta Community College District in California.

At an event in 1979, Dallas Herring said, "If I may use a Duplin County expression, we have to put the sawmill where the timber is or we are not going to saw very much lumber. We have to take educational opportunities to the people, where they are, in the variety they need, at a time that is convenient to them and at a cost they can afford." This is the very work President Haile describes for us, work we are still seeking to accomplish to this day. Together with our community college partners, the Belk Center commits to being in closer proximity to our students and communities — particularly those who have been historically and systematically underserved by higher education — so, in the words of President Haile, "they will know we exist for them."

If you haven't already, we encourage you to [watch this year's lecture](#), explore the accompanying [discussion guide](#), and share your thoughts and reactions with us online using the hashtag #DHL2021. We would like to thank Nohemi Ramirez, Monique Colclough, Jane Walters, and the entire Belk Center team for their contributions to this year's lecture and this booklet, and we extend our deepest gratitude to our friends at the John M. Belk Endowment for their continued support of the Belk Center and North Carolina's community colleges.

Cordially,



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Audrey J. Jaeger".

Audrey J. Jaeger, Ph.D.
W. Dallas Herring Professor
Executive Director, Belk Center for Community
College Leadership and Research



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Paola".

Paola Sztajn, Ph.D.
Professor of Mathematics Education
Interim Dean, College of Education



About Gregory Adam Haile, J.D.

Gregory Adam Haile, J.D., is the seventh president of Broward College. The institution, which serves approximately 60,000 students annually, is part of the Florida College System and was named a Top Ten finalist for the prestigious Aspen Prize for the years 2013, 2017 (with distinction), 2019, and 2021 (with distinction). Since beginning his tenure as President in 2018, Broward College has significantly expanded its business model by offering educational opportunities, workforce training, and support services directly in neighborhoods throughout Broward County through an innovative approach called Broward UP™.

Haile has served in more than 40 board or committee capacities and in more than 20 chair or vice-chair capacities. He is immediate past chair of the board of Leadership Florida and serves on the boards of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, BBX Capital, Florida TaxWatch, Everglades Foundation, the Florida Chamber, Pace Center for Girls, the Broward Workshop, the United Way of Broward County, and the Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance. He is also a member of the Orange Bowl Committee and the Council of Foreign Relations. He has twice received appointments by Governor Ron DeSantis: first, to the Department of Education Career and Technical Education Advisory Committee, and second, to the Re-Open Florida Task Force. He has received dozens of recognitions for his leadership, service, and excellence in his profession and routinely serves as a keynote speaker, primarily speaking on the transformational power of higher education. Haile was educated at the Columbia University School of Law, where he was a Harlan Fiske Stone Scholar and served as the editor-in-chief of the *National Black Law Journal* and as an editor of the *Journal on Gender and Law*. He received his bachelor's degree from Arizona State University, where he graduated magna cum laude and received the Most Outstanding Graduate award in his college. He received an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Nova Southeastern University and is also a fellow of the Vanderbilt University Higher Education Management Institute.

As an educator, Haile takes time annually to teach a self-designed 4-credit course in Higher Education Law and Policy at Harvard University (Summer School).

The 2021 Dallas Herring Lecture:

Redefining Access: The Power of Proximity

I am grateful for this opportunity to commemorate the work of Dr. W. Dallas Herring, a visionary chair of the North Carolina State Board of Education who changed the trajectory of North Carolina and has left a great legacy upon which we can build. His work is also proof positive of how an intrinsic, yet innovative, idea can materially expand educational access.

I also want to commend the work undertaken by NC State's College of Education in strengthening this legacy. By bringing together community college leaders from across the nation each year to discuss topics of critical importance to postsecondary education, you are facilitating conversations that might otherwise never happen. You have catalyzed discussions of the most pressing challenges facing our community colleges, and thereby our nation.

The challenges before us require candid conversations, and I embrace such candor, for candor and progress are inextricable. If we do not embrace the most painful truths, we have decided to perpetuate them.

Economic Disruption, Racial Reckoning, and the Pandemic Heightened the Import of Access

The need to improve postsecondary education access has always been critical to the work of community colleges, but we are at a crucial inflection point in our existence; a convergence of crises facing our communities — economic disruption, racial reckoning, and the pandemic, each in varying states with varying life spans. Economic disruption comes and goes and is here again. The nation's wound resulting from the murder of George Floyd is fresh and has spotlighted our nation's long history of racial inequality. And, we continue to endure an ever-centennial pandemic. Independently, each of the aforementioned are heavy burdens. Together, they can be crushing.

But, consider the implications of education attainment on this trio of troubles. First, when the economy faltered in 2020, those with less than a high school diploma experienced employment declines of 24%, those with a high school diploma experienced declines of 16%, and those with some college saw declines of 10%. Yet, those with a bachelor's degree saw a mere 2% decline.¹ Education attainment matters in economic downturns.

¹ Rattner, S. (2020, July 16). *Steven Rattner's Morning Joe Charts: COVID-19's Disproportionate Toll on Certain Workers* (citing Bureau of Labor Statistics). stevenrattner.com/2020/07/steven-rattners-morning-joe-charts-covid-19s-disproportionate-toll-on-certain-workers/

As to the second of the trio, regardless of race, income outcomes increase as educational attainment increases. While equity gaps exist, the promise of improved economic outcomes for all is powerful.

As to the third of the trio, the pandemic, studies looking into death rates from COVID-19 relative to education levels in the United States are still being conducted. However, a working paper published by The Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies² examining COVID-19 death rates relative to education attainment provides an alarming insight into who has borne the unequal burden of the virus. COVID-19 death rates were substantially elevated for persons without a college degree. Indeed, it appears education attainment is at least intermingled with COVID-19 mortalities.

Plainly, the work we do daily, and frankly, how well we do it, is measurably impactful to the people we serve. Perhaps especially during our most dire times. Just as important, those whom we do not serve are impacted by our absence. Again, those whom we do not serve are impacted by our absence.

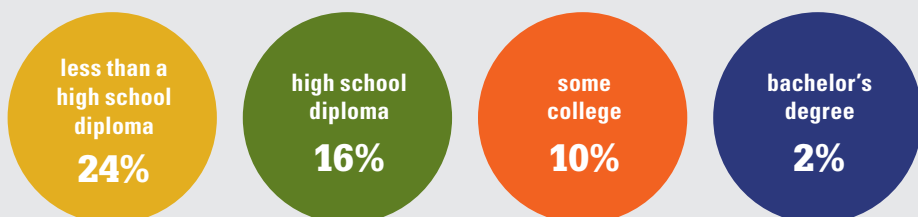
My thesis is simple: Facing these truths, community colleges are obligated to develop innovative approaches to being proximate with the communities we are designed to serve to ensure equitable access to higher education.

Allow me to contextualize my thesis by telling you a story. A young boy, a child, grows up in a violent urban neighborhood with no college graduates or attendees near or far to speak of, or with. His parents understand the value of education, but they also realize that their home address prohibits them from sending their son to any school other than the low-achieving elementary school in their neighborhood. So, as it goes, innovation is born of despair and his mother lies about the family's home address, which enables her son to

² Chen, J.T., Testa, C., Waterman, P., & Krieger, N. (2021). Intersectional inequities in COVID-19 mortality by race/ethnicity and education in the United States, January 1, 2020–January 31, 2021. *Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies*, 21(3).
https://cdn1.sph.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1266/2021/02/21_Chen_covidMortality_Race_Education_HCPDS_WorkingPaper_Vol-21_No-3_Final_footer.pdf



Employment Declines in 2020





“Most children are born with as much inherent potential as another. Per the steady refrain, talent is evenly distributed, but opportunity is not.”

attend an elementary school in another neighborhood where she believes he would be afforded a better education.

After all, the school is in a safer neighborhood and attended by students from wealthier backgrounds. But here’s the catch — to access this better school, starting in the third grade, this young boy must walk through dangerous housing projects by himself, take a bus for 45 minutes, then walk a little more just to get to his elementary school.

Fortuitously, while in the sixth grade, the young boy excitedly tells a classmate that they will be the last class of the decade, as they will graduate elementary school in 1989. The classmate responds, “No, we are going to be the last class of the millennium because we are going to graduate college in 1999.” This young boy, taken aback, had just heard the word “college” for the first time. So here it is, a sixth grader, hearing about

college for the first time from another sixth grader who knew precisely what year he would graduate from college. Just as relevant, the boy in our story never forgets the first time he heard the word “college.”

I compare his experience with that of taking my daughter, Hadley, to her first day of class in first grade in 2018. I walk up to the threshold of her classroom, and I look above the doorway, and I see the name of a college above her classroom. I look to my right and there are different college names above the doorways of each first grade classroom. My daughter, unlike this boy, will never start a day without seeing signals reminding her of her college potential.

That chasm should never exist — not for that little boy, not for your children, not for the most impoverished families, not for anyone. The difference in experiences between my daughter and the sixth-grade boy illustrates the power of proximity. Most children are born with as much inherent potential as another. Per the steady refrain, talent is evenly distributed, but opportunity is not. Higher education is simply more proximate with my daughter than it was with this sixth-grade boy.

My daughters — Sloane, six, and Hadley, now 10 — already know a number of colleges they want to attend simply because of where they live and go to school. Admittedly, having a college president as a father doesn’t hurt either. College will be present in their lives every single day. And they will never remember the first time they heard the word college — all a consequence of being proximate with college since the day they were born. It has nothing to do with their talent or their capacity, but the influence — the signals and expectations that surround them.

Community Colleges Are Charged to Remove Barriers and Provide Easy Access.

Back to the story of our young student. His mother is only able to perpetuate this false address narrative until he completes middle school. His neighborhood is unsafe, riddled with gun violence and drug abuse, and despite his mother's attempt to find another address other than her own, he now must go to his neighborhood high school, which mirrors his surrounding neighborhood.

His high school has one of the highest HIV rates, highest teen pregnancy rates, and, because of the violence, it was in the first cohort of schools to require metal detectors to enter the building. Much like the metal detectors to get into his local movie theater, and the bulletproof glass at the local convenience stores, and the bars on his home windows, he receives signals that danger is ever-present. Yet the notion of college never even flickers.

In fact, like most of his high school classmates, academic rigor and postsecondary attainment are among the least of his interests, as survival strategies dominate his thinking. His disinterest is compounded by the math teacher who tells him in a room full of other students that if he ever gets to college he will never survive.

In any event, he graduates high school among the top 15% of his class, with a rather somber 2.7 GPA. Notably, not a single college ever reached out to him. With so many deterrents, so little proximity, what could ever lead him to believe he belonged in college? Proximity means more than just physical location — although location is crucial. Proximity also must encompass the expectations and social connections a community might have to a collegiate institution.

As many of you know, the prevalent view of the American community college as a local, public institution with a commitment and connection to the community it serves was galvanized nearly 75 years ago by the 1947 President's Commission on Higher Education (Truman Commission). The Truman Commission produced a report entitled *Higher Education for American Democracy* and what stood out was the focus on equity in many respects: one's background, family, and race. Let me share three quotes from the Commission Report to add some context. In the first quote, note the reference to equality of education opportunity, but also the concern of one's birthplace dictating access to this opportunity:

*"One of the gravest challenges to which American society is subject is that of failing to provide a reasonable **equality of education opportunity** for its youth. For the great majority of our boys and girls, the kind and amount of education they may hope to attain depends, **not on their own abilities, but on the family or community into which they happened to be born** or, worse still, on the color of their skin or the religion of their parents."*

In the second quote, note the explicit charge to community colleges regarding geographic proximity and ease of access:

*“Whatever form the community college takes, **it will provide** college education for the youth of the community certainly, **so as to remove geographic and economic barriers** to educational opportunity and discover and develop individual talents **at low cost and easy access.**”*

For the third quote, it seems as if the commissioners were present here with us today — 75 years later — focusing on the need to address barriers facing some of the most vulnerable members of our communities and busting the myth that a college education isn’t for everyone:

*“The old, comfortable idea that ‘any boy can get a college education who has it in him’ simply is not true. Low family income, together with the rising costs of education, **constitutes an almost impassable barrier to college education for many young people.** This economic factor explains in large part why the father’s occupation has been found in many studies to rank so high as a determining factor in a young person’s college expectancy. A farm laborer earns less than a banker or a doctor, for instance, and so is less able to afford the costs of higher education for his children. **The children, moreover, have less inducement to seek a college education because of their family background.** In some social circles a college education is often considered a luxury which can be done without, something desirable perhaps, **‘but not for the likes of us.’**”*

Still today, so many are burdened with the belief, “not for the likes of us.”

Community colleges were designed to enhance the proximity between postsecondary education and our most challenged communities. This design was intentional. They are meant to offer an equitable opportunity to secure degrees and vocational certificates, leading to increased lifetime earnings,³ better health outcomes,⁴ and decreased criminal activity.⁵

³ Mather, M., & Jarosz, B. (2014, November 17). *Education in the U.S.: The Great Equalizer?* Population Reference Bureau. <https://www.prb.org/resources/us-inequality-education/>

⁴ *College Education Linked to Higher Pay, Job Security, Healthier Behaviors and More Civic Involvement: New College Board Report.* (2017, January 2). College Board Newsroom. <https://newsroom.collegeboard.org/college-education-linked-higher-pay-job-security-healthier-behaviors-and-more-civic-involvement-new>

Case, A., & Deaton, A. (2021). Life expectancy in adulthood is falling for those without a BA degree, but as educational gaps have widened, racial gaps have narrowed. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 118(11). <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2024777118>

⁵ Bell, B., Costa, R., & Machin, S. (2018, October 14). *Why education reduces crime.* VOX, CEPR Policy Portal. <https://voxeu.org/article/why-education-reduces-crime>



“Fifty years ago, the top quartile of income earners had about 40% of their children graduating from college with a bachelor’s degree, while the bottom quartile of income earners had about 6% of their children graduating from college.

Today, the top quartile of income earners has gone from 40% of their children graduating to 62%, while the bottom quartile has gone from 6% of their children graduating from college to only 13%.

Said, perhaps, more dreadfully, the gap in bachelor’s attainment between the top quartile of income earners and the bottom quartile has grown from an already tragic 34% 50 years ago to 49% today.”

Colleges Must Account For Who We Are Serving and Who We Are Missing

Remember that young boy from earlier? He went to college, but he is not guided by dreams of a college experience, or the lifelong benefits that will stem therefrom. He simply seeks to escape his neighborhood. Regretfully, he once asked his mother, “Why do we have to live here?” He arrives at his college a few days before the start date, sight unseen, learns he needs remedial education, realizes he has no clue how to study, and ironically, finds discomfort in the absence of metal detectors on campus. Having no proximity or familiarity with his new environment, he is the all too common student who is not college ready, wondering if he belongs.

We are obliged to bridge that chasm between talent and opportunity, and as one former U.S. president noted, eliminate the soft bigotry of low expectations. So, to assess whether we are fulfilling our obligation, a fundamental question must be addressed:

Who are we missing? Despite the Commission Report, critical gaps remain in meeting our nearly 75-year-old charge.

Fifty years ago, the top quartile of income earners had about 40% of their children graduating from college with a bachelor’s degree, while the bottom quartile of income earners had about 6% of their children graduating from college. Today, the top quartile of income earners has gone from 40% of their children graduating to 62%, while the bottom quartile has gone from 6% of their children graduating from college to only 13%.⁶ Said, perhaps, more dreadfully, the gap in bachelor’s attainment between the top quartile of income earners and the bottom quartile has grown from an already tragic 34% 50 years ago to 49% today. Even more, a Harvard Economics professor, Dr. Raj Chetty, has

⁶ The Hamilton Project. (2013, June). *Thirteen Economic Facts about Social Mobility and the Role of Education*. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/thp_13econfacts_final.pdf



“75% of students taking solely remote classes expressed that staying engaged while learning online was a major concern — even more than contracting COVID-19 or getting a job after graduation.”

produced profoundly powerful research indicating that the zip code that one grows up in is most predictive of one's income outcomes over one's lifetime.⁷

While community colleges enrolled 41% of all undergraduates nationally in Fall 2019,⁸ the unfortunate reality is that there are still many who we are not reaching. The pandemic has exacerbated the challenge. Community colleges lost nearly 10%, or 476,000, of their students between Spring 2020 and Spring 2021.⁹ Researchers right here at North Carolina State University found the need to work and financial constraints to be the prevailing challenges responsible for enrollment declines.¹⁰

As I mentioned before, the challenges are those of proximity. Allow me to expound upon the three proximities we must address to equitably reach those we are designed to serve.

The Three Proximities Imperative to Enhancing Postsecondary Access

The first is physical proximity. Even in 2021, education is geographically out of reach for millions of Americans.

Despite the advances in online learning and expedited use of remote learning during the pandemic, schools have prioritized the return to in-person learning because they know the value of educators and students being in the same room together.

An October 2020 study by the Pew Research Center¹¹ found that 68% of Americans did not believe online classes provided the same value as in-person instruction. The National

⁷ Chetty, R., Hendren, N., Kline, P., & Saez, E. (June, 2014) Where is the Land of Opportunity? The Geography of Intergenerational Mobility in the United States
<https://www.nber.org/papers/w19843>

⁸ American Association of Community Colleges. (2021). *American Association of Community Colleges (AACC): Fast Facts 2021*.
https://www.aacc.nche.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/AACC_2021_FastFacts.pdf

⁹ *Current Term Enrollment Estimates*. (2021, June 10). National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.
<https://nscresearchcenter.org/current-term-enrollment-estimates/>

¹⁰ Smith, A. (2019, February 12). *What Community College Students Say Impedes Their Progress*. Inside Higher Ed.
<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/02/12/survey-asks-community-college-students-detail-their-challenges>

¹¹ Parker, K., Barroso, A., & Fry, R. (2020, October 26). *Americans are divided on whether colleges that brought students back to campus made the right decision*. Pew Research Center.
<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/10/26/americans-are-divided-on-whether-colleges-that-brought-students-back-to-campus-made-the-right-decision/>

Association of Student Personnel Administrators¹² reported that 75% of students taking solely remote classes expressed that staying engaged while learning online was a major concern — even more than contracting COVID-19 or getting a job after graduation. These data points exemplify the importance of space and place in learning and the value of this type of proximity to the average student.

Surely by now, we have all reflected upon anecdotal evidence of students whose living arrangements do not provide a suitable learning environment; indeed, an appropriate space to learn is necessary for a student's success.

Another challenge is transportation. I once met a student who told me that she walked four miles per day, each way, between her home and our college's North Campus. She has the will of a giant. But for every one like her, we must presume there are many reasonable people who desire more but will not or cannot walk four miles each way to get to a college campus.

Of course, it is much more difficult for those in communities with no exposure to college, and even worse for those with a belief that they are inherently incapable of collegiate success. Per the Commission Report, "not for the likes of us."

The individuals that we are designed to support, those with few transportation options, those with the least amount of time — such as single parents with multiple jobs — those who are unfamiliar with our college or any college, are the same individuals that we expect to come to us. This bears repeating. The individuals that we are designed to support, those with few transportation options, those with the least amount of time, those who are unfamiliar with our college, are the same individuals that we expect to come to us.

"The individuals that we are designed to support, those with few transportation options, those with the least amount of time, those who are unfamiliar with our college, are the same individuals that we expect to come to us."

The second of the three proximities is social. Social proximity is how proximate or close members of the communities we serve feel to our institution.

Building social proximity starts long before students get to our institutions. Community colleges tend to focus on socializing students once they arrive on our campuses. We routinely refer to this as a student's sense of belonging. However, harkening back to my daughters, they are eight and 12 years away from college, respectively, and they already have a sense of belonging. I mentioned their grade school experience. They have been on the campuses of Broward College, Arizona State University, and Harvard University. We

¹² Hess, A. J. (2021, July 29). *As college students head back to class, some say benefits of online learning should not be forgotten*. CNBC.
<https://www.cnbc.com/2021/07/29/college-students-say-benefits-of-online-learning-shouldnt-be-abandoned.html>

must create this sense of belonging long before the individuals arrive, for then it is too late for an untold many. Of course, we can take grace in the fact that today, we are creating a sense of belonging for 41% of higher education students across the nation, but we must consider how many never came to us due to a lack of belonging, due to a lack of social proximity.

“As educators,
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and financial
proximity.”

The Association of American Colleges and Universities¹³ provides some context. Lower income parents are less likely to socially acclimate their children to college. While 46% of students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are likely to obtain knowledge about college from their parents, that number is 76% for students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds.

Back to the young boy whose story we have been following. Being told in high school that he would never survive college damages his sense of belonging, his social proximity to college. Then there are those individuals who receive no encouragement from family or friends. We must also create a sense of belonging for these still-worthy individuals long before they arrive on our campuses, if they ever do. Indifference is not an option, that is, if we are who we say we are.

Through community outreach organized by Broward College, I often find myself in a position to talk with folks from our communities with the least resources. I once went door-to-door in the most impoverished zip code in Broward County, introducing myself to residents. I took the opportunity to tell residents who I was and asked them to consider attending college. One response was, “I can’t go to college. All I know how to do is fix motors.” And I said, actually we have an amazing automotive program from which our graduates go

on to earn starting salaries of \$50,000-\$60,000 a year. Another resident said, “I can’t go to college because I’ve been to jail before.” Another false impression enhancing the social distance between our institutions and our constituents.

The third and final proximity is financial. Financial proximity is how residents view the possibility or opportunity to afford higher education.

The average annual sticker price for a community college is shy of \$4,000.¹⁴ Further, 44%

¹³ Soria, K. M. (2018). Bridging the divide: Addressing social class disparities in higher education. *Diversity & Democracy*, 27(4)

¹⁴ Ma, J., Pender, M., & Libassi, C. J. (2020). *Trends in College Pricing & Student Aid 2020*. College Board. <https://research.collegeboard.org/pdf/trends-college-pricing-student-aid-2020.pdf>

of full-time community college students pay no tuition or receive money to cover other expenses; about 14% pay less than \$1,100.¹⁵

Despite such relative affordability, the pandemic widened our eyes to the reality that our students need help with more than tuition support. It showed clearly how competing responsibilities between family and school can throw even the most devoted student off course. Costs for basic needs like food or housing on top of child care, medical bills, and transportation to campus. I have heard from students how these financial obligations can make the difference between success and failure, especially for students on the brink — who might have just the right amount of things go wrong — and I've seen for myself what can happen when we intercede with support.

Before the pandemic, my wife, Chae, and I went out on a date when a woman that I had never seen apparently recognized me and said, "This must be a gift from God." You can imagine the look of confusion on my face when she said that to me. I paused and she continued to stare at me and said it again, "This must be a gift from God." I began to introduce myself, and she said, "I know who you are, you are the president of Broward College." She goes on to tell me she is a straight "A" student at Broward College. She needs to take just one more class to get her degree, but she has run out of financial aid. Broward College tuition costs \$82 per credit, a little over \$100 with fees. She feared for her future due to a \$300 shortfall. This was a Friday evening, so I gave her my email address and asked her to send me an email detailing her financial challenge. I relayed this concern to my team, who went to work immediately. By Monday, we had found the \$300 for this student to take the class, which, to her credit, she went on to complete. Soon after, she emailed me her transcript, showing that she had received an "A" in her final course. Three hundred dollars made all the difference and will impact the rest of her life.

I acknowledge that financial proximity is perhaps the most well understood of the three proximities. We all have resources dedicated to reducing the financial burdens on students. Think free textbooks, free tuition, and the like.

Still, this in concert with the historical data on attainment reflects the necessity but insufficiency of these endeavors. All three proximities must be our focus. As educators, we have both a professional duty and moral obligation to meet the communities we serve wherever they are: physically, socially, and financially to bridge gaps in physical, social, and financial proximity.

¹⁵ Community College Research Center. (n.d.). Community College FAQs, "*What is the cost of community college tuition and fees?*"

<https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/Community-College-FAQs.html>

Broward College Operationalizes the Power of Proximity

Now that we have identified the three proximities, as leaders, we are entrusted with not only identifying problems, but creating solutions. It is great to celebrate what we are doing well, and among us, there are exceptional programs and innovations worthy of sharing. As we lead, however, we must also have candid, frank conversations about the necessity to improve. With all the incredible work we do, we can and should do better.

When I applied for the presidency of Broward College, my focus was clear: enhancing the lives of those we were serving and enhancing the lives of those we were missing. Looking at the data for the communities around us, it was evident there was a problem with access to Broward College. We self-audited and unveiled the reality that despite our affordability, despite our academic excellence, despite being one of the largest institutions of higher education in America, a relative few of our students hailed from our most challenged communities. Begetting the questions: are we who we say we are? Are we as good as we think we are at serving those we are designed to serve?

In 2018, we expanded our business model to address this shortcoming and launched Broward UP™ — the UP standing for “Unlimited Potential” — recognizing our obligation to help all, not just some, achieve their unlimited potential. Now, Broward UP is not likely to be a one-size-fits-all model. After all, it results from a self-audit of Broward College, an analysis of Broward County needs and assets, and an earned culture of collaboration inside and outside of the institution. In the vein of Dr. Herring, it is an intrinsic yet enterprising model to address the three proximities that challenge many if not all of the communities we are designed to serve.

The inception of Broward UP began with Broward College’s focus on operationalizing a bedrock ideal of Broward College’s existence — every resident should be empowered and enabled to pursue postsecondary education. We established Broward UP’s goals:

1. Increase college access and attendance
2. Improve degree and certificate attainment
3. Holistically raise social and economic mobility



“We stopped asking those who needed us most to take two buses to come to us. We stopped asking those with the least free time to find more time to get to us, much less get to know us and our value. We stopped asking individuals to come to the unknown, and instead, we sought to permanently be present in the places and spaces most known to them.”

And most critically, Broward UP tackles the three proximities imperative to enhancing postsecondary access head-on.

First, physical proximity. As an open-access institution with low tuition and 60,000 students — with 46% of our students being first generation in college, nearly half of our students being eligible for Pell Grants, two-thirds identifying as Black or Hispanic, and 150 countries of origin represented among our student body — it would have been easy to believe we were serving everyone equitably. Notwithstanding our beautiful diversity, Broward College decided to do more, and now is quite literally bringing college to the community instead of expecting the community to come to the college. But not before engaging in a thorough self-audit of its then-current physical proximity with our most distressed communities. When we began this work in 2018, we examined the individual zip codes within our county (which overall had a 2.8% unemployment rate at that time). We identified six zip codes (reflecting 12 of Broward County's 31 cities) with the highest unemployment rates and the corollary lowest postsecondary education attainment rates. These would become known as our Broward UP communities.

We further examined our physical locations. We were located in some of Broward County's nicest and most expensive zip codes. Of our 11 locations, we had only two learning locations on the fringe of our Broward UP communities.

In addressing these deficiencies, we did not wait to raise capital and construct new buildings. We sought out municipal, nonprofit, and county leadership with shared missions, all with the intent of leveraging their underutilized facilities like recreation centers and libraries in the heart of our Broward UP communities. Sought-after partners raised their hands in support, allowing Broward College to offer courses, workshops, and services in neighborhoods, making it impossible for residents not to be physically proximate with Broward College. Most of these partners were already providing services used extensively by our Broward UP communities, so our residents were familiar with the likes of our public libraries, the Urban League, and the Boys and Girls Club, to name a few. In three years, Broward College went from having two learning locations on the fringe of our Broward UP communities, to 26 new locations engaging our Broward UP communities.

We stopped asking those who needed us most to take two buses to come to us. We stopped asking those with the least free time to find more time to get to us, much less get to know us and our value. We stopped asking individuals to come to the unknown, and instead, we sought to permanently be present in the places and spaces most known to them.

We further decided that we would no longer bounce in and out of the communities that needed us most, but instead promised to be a fixture. No sound acculturation strategy would include sporadic engagement; it should be persistent, protracted, and sustained.

Second, social proximity. We recognized that we may never provide for the ideal conversations about college at the dinner table. Still, we challenged ourselves. From the seat that we sit in, how do we ensure a sense of belonging long before arriving on our campus? By researching and partnering with the most trusted and familiar organizations within our targeted communities, we have built a social bridge that encourages individuals to engage with the college. Our partners provide essential services ranging from classroom space to technology access and community outreach. We used the case management model to find solutions on a case-by-case basis instead of coming in from the top with what we thought students might need.

The Broward UP case management model helps students with customized goal setting and educational planning. Students connect with Broward UP in their community, at local events and community locations, and from there, they work with a case manager, known as Career Pathway Navigators, to set short and long-term goals and then identify in-demand certificates and industry certifications that provide “quick wins” to help build competence, confidence, and to build a roadmap for how to ladder into a technical certificate, associate, or bachelor’s degree. These wins are not just for the students, but they create social proximity for their family and friends.

In addition to managing student caseloads, Navigators meet with community partners and learn about their constituents, available resources, and opportunities where the most significant impact can be made. They are paired with staff at partner locations to share information, to ensure a warm hand-off when they need to connect students with resources, and to connect partners to internal college departments for specialized recruitment and support collaborations.

For those of you familiar with college student support structures, it is important to note how these Navigators are different from, but complement success coaches and advisors. At Broward College, success coaches are internal facing and work with degree-seeking students from the point of entry until their first semester, assisting them with internal college resources like the FAFSA, and then transitioning students to an academic advisor who guides them through the remainder of their educational program.

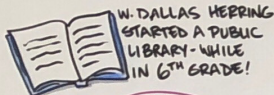
The Broward UP case management model was uniquely designed using internal and external best practices. Navigators receive basic training from all student service areas, including recruitment, admissions, advising, credit for prior learning, apprenticeships, wraparound services, financial aid, and career services. In addition, they receive training on continuing education courses and programming to understand ways that these programs can articulate into degree programs at the college.

Even more, we mobilized 140 Broward College colleagues, many who live in the same communities and have the intimate intersection of understanding of the needs of our Broward UP communities, knowledge of the power of postsecondary engagement, and a passion for transforming the lives of their neighbors. They serve as volunteers on 10

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Belk Center for Community College
Leadership and Research



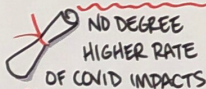
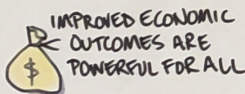
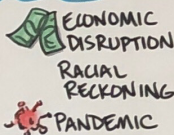
WE REMEMBER HIM AS A HUMAN:

- IMPERFECT
- PERSISTENT
- BULL HEADED

NCSU:

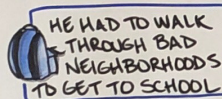
LARGEST NUMBER
ENROLLED LAST FALL
OVER
20% ARE TRANSFER
STUDENTS FROM
NC COMMUNITY COLLEGES

CANDOR +
PROGRESS ARE
INEXTRICABLE



Dallas Herring

THOSE WHOM WE DO NOT SERVE ARE IMPACTED



THE 3 PROXIMITIES:



PHYSICAL PROXIMITY



SOCIAL PROXIMITY



FINANCIAL PROXIMITY

PARENTS' FINANCES &
RISING COSTS
CREATE
BARRIERS



WHAT WOULD
LEAD HIM TO
BELIEVE HE
BELONGS?

ELIMINATE THE SOFT BAGDOPY
OF LOW EXPECTATIONS

EDUCATION IS A PATHWAY TO OPPORTUNITY

Lecture

NOVEMBER 16, 2021

BY OUR ABSENCE

ARE WE MISSING?
CODE MATTERS

ward UP

*UNLIMITED POTENTIAL
BRINGING COLLEGE TO
THE COMMUNITY!

DO. DO
WANGED
R LIFE!

OUR TEAM FOCUSES ON
INTERNAL &
EXTERNAL BEST
PRACTICES
SOME LIVE IN THE COMMUNITIES
THEY SERVE

WE MUST
BRIDGE
THE GAP



I CHALLENGE YOU TO
KNOCK ON DOORS &
FIND THOSE WHO
NEED YOU MOST

THE ONUS IS ON US TO LEAD
THE COLLABORATION & DRIVE
A SENSE OF URGENCY

UNPAID
INTERNSHIPS

OUR STUDENTS
BRING VALUE
& DESERVE PAY

I CAN'T GO BECAUSE
I'VE BEEN TO JAIL

TAKE A CLOSE LOOK
AT ENROLLMENT IN
PUBLIC SCHOOL
TO FIND WHO IS MISSING

MURALS ON
CAMPUS HELP
CREATE SENSE
OF WELCOMING
CULTURES ON CAMPUS



WE WENT FROM
2 TO 26
LOCATIONS

PARTNERSHIPS
ARE KEY!

SOCIAL EVENTS

OUTREACH

EARLY CONTACT
(3RD GRADE)

STEM
NIGHTS

BLOCK
PARTIES

MIDDLE
SCHOOLS

CONNECTIVITY
IS KEY

ACCELERATED
DEGREE PROGRAM:
H.S. & ASSOC.
COMPLETED TOGETHER

FINE ARTS ARE
A GREAT WAY TO
CONNECT & SHOW
DIFFERENT PATHWAYS

AZTEC
RESOURCE
CENTERS



FOOD PANTRY

WE NEED TO
LEAN IN
TO AGRICULTURE



Caryn Sterling
www.drawinginsight.com

cross-functional teams that focus on service learning, technology, social support services, and measurement and evaluation, to name a few. These colleagues of mine are the chief ambassadors for the college in our Broward UP communities, where the residents can see one of their own not only delivering the message, but living the message.

In further recognition of the social distance between many in our Broward UP communities and our college, we provide myth busting workshops, defying the prevailing notions of “who is college material” and “not for the likes of us.”

I remember in August 2019, when we finalized an agreement with a local municipality — the City of West Park — one of the things they said to us is that “we want to raise the Broward College flag here,” so our residents know that Broward College is now in the City of West Park to stay. By raising our flag, we symbolized our commitment to those residents that we would always be there for them, their children, and their children’s children. The thought of a resident, young or senior, walking by, looking up and seeing the Broward College flag in their home city every day reminds me of my daughter looking above the threshold of her first grade classroom.

In January of this year, we launched a mural series, one for each of our Broward UP communities. The murals tell a story and serve as conversation starters about education and its connection to upward mobility; something people feel proud to have in their community, will want to photograph and share, and serve as an inspiration for them to explore postsecondary education.

These examples of social proximity are critical to reframing who is eligible for opportunity.

Lastly, financial proximity. As Broward College has become physically proximate, and socially proximate, it has increased its financial proximity. In fact, Broward UP students access workforce training courses and workshops at no cost. Additionally, Broward UP students can access available emergency funding up to \$1,000 to cover unmet technology needs, clothing for career interviews, and for external certification exam fees. We are also able to cover their institutional debt that may be preventing the release of transcripts from other institutions or debt with the college.

My gratitude extends to the businesses of Broward County, many of whom have pledged to hire from our Broward UP communities into high-wage positions. Our partnerships are focused on creating an employee pipeline by training residents for these high-wage positions, along with preferential interviewing processes, upskilling current employees through employer tuition reimbursement programs, and exploring sponsorship-style scholarship opportunities to either develop and retain existing employees or to recruit students from the college.



“Broward UP students can expect a \$475 million increase in work-life income — an amount that figures to about \$204,000 more in additional lifetime income per student. Students will contribute an average of \$39 million to each of our Broward UP zip codes, and 83% of Broward UP students are projected to find employment within one year from credential attainment. If you think specifically about the return to the state, \$556,000 in additional annual tax revenues are projected; and for every \$1 of incurred start-up and operations costs, the state of Florida can expect to receive \$13.13 in benefit.”

Focusing on the Power of Proximity Yields Results

So, how are we doing? Broward UP is in its fourth year, and we are proud to report strong evidence of our success. As I mentioned earlier, Broward College programming is available in 26 locations in our Broward UP communities. Thousands of residents now have access to postsecondary education in a location physically proximate to their homes.

Broward UP is collaborating with a network of nearly 50 partners including municipalities, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and other local agencies. Just a few months into the pandemic, we had three Navigators working with 667 residents to complete a career and educational plan, and of those, 64% enrolled in Broward UP course offerings. To date, Broward UP has served 3,079 individuals and has awarded more than 2,000 workforce-ready certificates and industry certifications.

In addition to a self-assessment, an independent assessment was appropriate. According to an independent assessment of the value of Broward UP¹⁶ by the watchdog organization Florida TaxWatch, collectively, Broward UP students can expect a \$475 million increase in work-life income — an amount that figures to about \$204,000 more in additional lifetime income per student. Students will contribute an average of \$39 million to each of our Broward UP zip codes, and 83% of Broward UP students are projected to find employment within one year from credential attainment. If you think specifically about the return to the state, \$556,000 in additional annual tax revenues are projected, and for every \$1 of incurred start-up and operations costs, the state of Florida can expect to receive \$13.13 in benefit.

¹⁶ *An Independent Assessment of the Value of Broward up*. (2021, December 22). Florida TaxWatch. <https://floridatxwatch.org/Research/Full-Library/ArtMID/34407/ArticleID/19024/An-Independent-Assessment-of-the-Value-of-Broward-up>

According to the report, all of these benefits underestimate the true benefit of this model of access over time since higher education attainment typically leads to positive health and economic benefits to society and provides more opportunities for future generations.

Florida TaxWatch summarized its review as follows: “[We] recommend policymakers incorporate the Broward UP framework as a model for the rest of the state [of Florida].” Looking ahead, in light of significant investments, we will expand from 6 to 11 zip codes, encompassing nearly half of Broward County’s 31 cities. We will complete the model with job placement services by launching our employment solutions division and include adult general education to help adults who lack basic skills to achieve job readiness. And, perhaps most pivotal, resources have been endowed to ensure that we deliver on our promise to advance our Broward UP communities in perpetuity.

Rural Communities Can Benefit From the Power of Proximity

In rural communities, there may be a greater need to satisfy the three proximities. Partnerships with local organizations and places of worship to host programming across a county or region is an important strategy to consider. We must meet people physically, socially, and financially where they are, and leverage perhaps a rural church or library. Many of you are familiar with limited broadband internet access and, perhaps, the temporary solution provided by the State of North Carolina, which implemented Wi-Fi hotspots in 280 school buses that were dispersed throughout underserved communities.

Case in point, Wallace State Community College in Alabama had, for years, been trying to reach out to rural residents, many of whom are living in significant poverty and struggling with remote learning. Now, students who were once left to try to complete their assignments by phone will soon be able to take advantage of a community learning center the college plans to create in Arley, a town of approximately 330 people in Winston County, about 45 minutes from campus.¹⁷

Undoubtedly, rural community colleges seek to ameliorate challenges relating to access to postsecondary attainment just like their urban counterparts, and in some cases to a greater extent. A focus on the power of proximity, coupled with the necessary assessment of the given assets of the community, could prove empowering for rural institutions and the intended service areas.

“I challenge you to build on these measures, both regionally and nationally. When we rely on the power of proximity, we, as community colleges, can uphold Dallas Herring’s educational vision of providing “opportunity for all the people.”

¹⁷ Weissman, S. (2021, September 29). *Reaching Beyond Campus*. Inside Higher Ed.

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2021/09/29/two-year-colleges-ramp-community-outreach-efforts>

“The onus is on us as higher education leaders to embrace and lead collaboration among our policymakers, nonprofits, municipalities, employers, and others.”



Others Exemplifying a Focus on the Power of Proximity

Fortunately, others are embracing the power of proximity. In fact, a recent Inside Higher Ed article, “Reaching Beyond Campus,”¹⁸ recognized how, in the wake of the pandemic, institutions including Dutchess Community College in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., and the Community College of Beaver County, outside Pittsburgh, P.A., are offering classes and programs, academic help, and a variety of support services for community members at off-campus locations.

Wake Tech Community College¹⁹ tackles challenges of physical proximity in Southeast Raleigh by offering non-degree, short-term courses at the local YMCA. Pitt Community College is using off-campus locations to identify and assess the needs of Pitt County through extension services.²⁰ McDowell Technical Community College’s extended campus sites provide community-based support including training and employment programs.²¹ To address social proximity, Blue Ridge Community College’s pilot campaign, Better Skills, Better Jobs, is designed for adult learners returning to college.

I challenge you to build on these measures, both regionally and nationally. When we rely on the power of proximity, we, as community colleges, can uphold Dallas Herring’s educational vision of providing “opportunity for all the people.”

The Call for Collaborative Urgency

In my previous career as a corporate litigator, my favorite types of cases were injunctive relief cases. They were high stakes, high intensity, and they moved very quickly to and through trial. Such pace was par for the course because they involved the need to prevent immediate and irreparable harm. Every day that we allow for the disparity in the three proximities, those that we are designed to serve face immediate and irreparable harm. The onus is on us as higher education leaders to embrace and lead collaboration among our policymakers, nonprofits, municipalities, employers, and others. The onus is

¹⁸ Weissman, S. (2021, September 29). *Reaching Beyond Campus*. Inside Higher Ed.

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2021/09/29/two-year-colleges-ramp-community-outreach-efforts>

¹⁹ Fauver, M. (2021, August 27). *Wake Tech and Southeast Raleigh YMCA Team Up to Offer Workforce Training*. Wake Tech News.

<https://www.waketech.edu/post/wt-news-story/9841>

²⁰ *Community Programs - Community*. (n.d.). Pitt Community College.

<https://pittcc.edu/community/community-programs/>

²¹ *McDowell Technical Community College*. (n.d.). McDowell Technical Community College.

<https://www.mcdowelltech.edu/>

on us to drive a sense of urgency amongst our collaborators. We must start asking hard questions of ourselves, being vulnerable enough to acknowledge the shortfalls and growth opportunities, and identify and pursue solutions. We must act with collaborative urgency.

For the last time, I will harken back to the little boy that I started telling you about. You see, the little boy in the story is me. I was that sixth grader in elementary school in 1989 who was hearing about college for the first time. My high school teacher told me that if I made it to college, I would never survive. I was in the top 15% of my high school class with a 2.7 GPA, and not a single community college ever reached out to me. Perhaps my story would not have been possible but for a fortuitous conversation with another sixth grader, or the courage of my mother, who lied about her home address and sent her third grade son to navigate the rest.

I didn't hear about college until the sixth grade, yet, I stand before you today; a college president. Despite me standing before you, I imagine that you each find such fortune, or such courage, an unsatisfying long-term strategy for success — as you should. My story is often viewed as triumphant. Perhaps the better sentiment is, but who have we missed? We need to make it impossible for every resident, every child, and every adult, not to realize the opportunity for a postsecondary education. We need to ensure they know that their place of birth or zip code of residence does not define their potential. We need to be proximate, physically, socially, and financially, so they know we exist for them. Our closeness must be overt and obvious; smothering even, to counterbalance persistent doubt and contrary messages.

We must innovate around access by redefining how students get to us. We are open-access institutions, designed to serve our entire community, and we have a special calling to serve the most challenged among us. I challenge you to not only think of those you are serving, but to think about those you are missing. What will your institution do to break the history of poverty in your surrounding communities, to break the inadequate attainment levels in your surrounding communities, to ensure that the most challenged communities that you are designed to serve feel physically, socially, and financially proximate with your institution? I challenge you to have a permanent presence in these communities. I challenge you to talk to those that you are missing and personally understand their needs and the myths that need to be busted. I challenge you to knock on the doors of the members of your communities, to ensure that, just like your child, just like a family



“We need to make it impossible for every resident, every child, and every adult, not to realize the opportunity for a postsecondary education.”

member, just like a dear friend, that they know you and your institution stand ready to support them now and forever. I challenge you to not only hold yourself accountable by enrollment, but enrollment by the cities and zip codes with the highest unemployment rates and the lowest attainment rates.

In closing, when I accepted the presidency of Broward College, I promised myself that I would focus more on doing my job, rather than keeping my job. This can be uncomfortable, but our jobs are not only to keep the train on the tracks. Our job includes making sure that everyone is on the train. When we embraced these roles as leaders of open-access institutions, we embraced the imperative to change the status quo and make higher education more proximate, in every way, in every neighborhood in our nation. I stand ready to stand with each of you and co-lead this work.

Thank you.



About the Belk Center for Community College Leadership and Research

With a \$10.86 million grant from the John M. Belk Endowment, the NC State College of Education established the Belk Center for Community College Leadership and Research to enhance and strengthen its support of community colleges in North Carolina in three ways:

- **Provide ongoing leadership development to community college executives.**
The Presidents' Academy — a partnership between the Belk Center and the North Carolina Association of Community College Presidents — provides ongoing support to community college presidents in order to help them strengthen their institution's performance with student success outcomes.
- **Build capacity for evidence-based decision-making and applied research.**
By conducting and disseminating action research, the Belk Center supports community college leaders in making evidenced-based decisions for enhanced institutional performance.
- **Further the preparation of future community college presidents.**
The Community College Leadership doctoral program integrates executive leaders as professors of the practice into the redesigned curriculum. These professors of practice provide first-hand insights and experiences, field-based leadership opportunities, and examples of how theory and research inform practice. The Belk Center provides additional support to the Community College Leadership doctoral program including executive mentors, scholarships, data and writing coaches, and professional development opportunities.

Belk Center highlights from 2021 include the following:

- Arranging five virtual "Critical Conversations" to create space for leaders to discuss topics like innovations in teaching and learning, ensuring equitable student outcomes in the midst of COVID-19, and best uses of federal CARES Act funding.
- Launching a four-part Presidents' Academy teaching and learning series in partnership with the Aspen Institute's College Excellence program and Achieving the Dream (ATD).
- Hosting two professional development sessions in conjunction with the North Carolina Association of Community College Presidents (NCACCP), one focused on strategic finance in uncertain times and the other designed for new presidents to receive guidance and insights from their more seasoned colleagues in the field.



58 of 58

community colleges
received data or reports
from the Belk Center



228

touchpoints between
the Belk Center and
community colleges



93

percent of community colleges
benefited from at least
three research activities
with the Belk Center

Belk Center Leadership Team

- ▶ **Audrey J. Jaeger, Ph.D.**, Executive Director and W. Dallas Herring Professor
- ▶ **James Bartlett, Ph.D.**, Director of Academic Programs and Associate Professor
- ▶ **Monique Colclough, Ph.D.**, Director of Teaching and Learning Engagement
- ▶ **Kenneth Ender, Ph.D.**, Professor of Practice
- ▶ **Robert Templin, Ed.D.**, Professor of Practice and Senior Fellow with The Aspen Institute
- ▶ **Mary Rittling, Ed.D.**, Professor of Practice and Senior Fellow with The Aspen Institute
- ▶ **Kim Sepich, Ed.D.**, Director of Executive Leadership Programs
- ▶ **Robert Templin, Ed.D.**, Professor of Practice and Senior Fellow with The Aspen Institute
- ▶ **Jane Walters**, Program Specialist

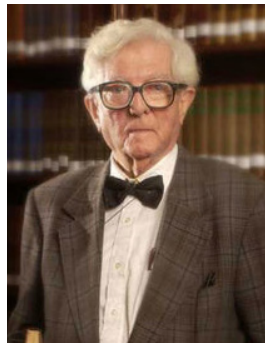
About the Belk Center Advisory Board

The Belk Center for Community College Leadership and Research National Advisory Board consists of current and former community college presidents, leaders from organizations whose work supports community colleges, and community college system leaders. The expertise of the National Advisory Board is helping to direct the Belk Center in preparing the next generation of community college leaders and addressing the most pressing issues facing North Carolina community colleges. The National Advisory Board monitors the Belk Center's progress. The 2021-2022 National Advisory members are listed below:

- ▶ **David Armstrong**, President Emeritus, Broward College
- ▶ **Thomas Brock**, Director, Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University
- ▶ **Lisa Chapman**, President, Central Carolina Community College
- ▶ **Jeff Cox**, President, Wilkes Community College
- ▶ **Kandi W. Deitemeyer**, President, Central Piedmont Community College, President, President's Association
- ▶ **Charlene Dukes**, President Emerita, Prince George's Community College
- ▶ **Pam Eddinger**, President, Bunker Hill Community College
- ▶ **John Enamait**, President, Stanly Community College
- ▶ **Kenneth Ender**, Professor of Practice, NC State President Emeritus, Harper College
- ▶ **Rufus Glasper**, President, League for Innovation in the Community College
- ▶ **David Gómez**, Retired President, Hostos Community College
- ▶ **Garrett Hinshaw**, President, Catawba Valley Community College
- ▶ **Audrey J. Jaeger**, Executive Director, Belk Center, Alumni Distinguished Professor, NC State College of Education
- ▶ **David Johnson**, President, Johnston Community College
- ▶ **Daniel Phelan**, President, Jackson College
- ▶ **MC Belk Pilon**, Chair, John M. Belk Endowment
- ▶ **Scott Ralls**, President, Wake Technical Community College
- ▶ **Mary Rittling**, Professor of Practice, NC State President Emerita, Davidson County Community College
- ▶ **Lawrence L. Rouse**, President, Pitt Community College
- ▶ **Pamela Senegal**, President, Piedmont Community College
- ▶ **Janet N. Spriggs**, President, Forsyth Technical Community College
- ▶ **Thomas Stith III**, President, North Carolina Community College System
- ▶ **Karen Stout**, President and CEO, Achieving the Dream
- ▶ **Robert Templin**, Professor of Practice, NC State Senior Fellow, Aspen Institute
- ▶ **Thomas Walker**, Senior Advisor for Economic Development and Military Affairs, University of North Carolina System
- ▶ **Gregory Williams**, President, Odessa College
- ▶ **Josh Wyner**, Founder and Executive Director, The College Excellence Program at The Aspen Institute

About Dallas Herring

Born in 1916 in Rose Hill, North Carolina, W. Dallas Herring made it his life's work to build a system that would serve all of North Carolina's residents by preparing them for productive work and active citizenship. He began his career in public service in 1939, when, at the age of 23, he became the mayor of his hometown, making him the youngest mayor in the country at the time. Beginning in 1955, Herring served on the North Carolina State Board of Education for almost 25 years. For 20 of those years, he served as chairman of the board. During his tenure on the State Board of Education, he oversaw the development of a statewide system of technical education institutes that eventually became the North Carolina Community College System. Throughout his career, Herring was guided by his vision of educational "opportunity for all the people." In a letter to *Community College Review* in 1973, he wrote:



"The only valid philosophy for North Carolina is the philosophy of total education: a belief in the incomparable worth of all human beings, whose claims upon the state are equal before the law and equal before the bar of public opinion; whose talents... the state needs and must develop to the fullest possible degree. That is why the doors to the institutions in North Carolina's system of Community Colleges must never be closed to anyone..."

When asked how he wished to be remembered, Herring shared that his hope was to be seen as "human (and I hope humane), imperfect, persistent, bull-headed..." Today, nearly 60 years after the state's community college system was founded, we reflect on Herring's accomplishments as those of a leader who grappled with the issues of his day and dared to, in his words, rock the boat. By planting seeds that have since transformed our state, Herring and his legacy live on through his many contributions to education in North Carolina.

Supporting the Belk Center



Our work is made possible by the generous support of alumni, foundation partners, and friends who share our belief in the power of transformational community college leadership.

Gifts to the **Belk Center Fund** have an immediate impact by providing resources we can use to advance our key priorities:

- **Developing exceptional leaders** - Our award-winning **doctoral program in community college leadership** is educating a diverse pipeline of aspiring executives, while the support the Belk Center provides to new and experienced leaders provides them with the knowledge and skills they need to prepare for and thrive in their roles.
- **Anticipating and responding to colleges' needs** - Guided by a national network of partners, the Belk Center acts as a catalyst for change by setting a **research agenda** that encourages colleges to consider what's possible and providing the customized tools and support networks leaders and their teams need to make informed improvements.
- **Advancing innovative partnerships** - Together with college leaders and their teams, the groups and governing bodies that support them, and like-minded organizations that recognize and center the value of community colleges, the Belk Center builds trust and a shared vision of what's possible in the future, along with a collaborative plan for how to get there.
- **Advocating for equity** - Through efforts like our **trailblazer profiles**, the Belk Center is committed to creating an equitable future where colleges promote access, opportunity, and achievement for students while increasing the representation of diverse leaders.

Gifts to the W. Dallas Herring Professorship Endowment support the work of the Dallas Herring Professor in developing, implementing, and growing the Dallas Herring Lecture Series.

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