



College of Education
Belk Center for Community College
Leadership and Research



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**John M. Belk Endowment Awards NC State University's Belk Center
\$25 Million to Support Community College Leadership and Student Success**

Raleigh, NC - MC Belk Pilon, president and board chair of the John M. Belk Endowment announced today a long-term, \$25 million investment by the Endowment to advance the mission and work of the Belk Center for Community College Leadership and Research at North Carolina State University over the next ten years.

Today's announcement was made during a special luncheon event immediately preceding the Belk Center's national Dallas Herring Lecture, that included top leaders from across North Carolina and the nation.

"This is the 10th Anniversary of the John M. Belk Endowment. We were created because we know education is the single most important means to greater equity, personal fulfillment, economic success, and community vitality," said MC Belk Pilon. "That is why it has been our honor to support and partner with Dr. Jaeger and the Belk Center team since the Center's formation with the shared goal of improving and accelerating the success of North Carolina's community colleges and their students.

"The Endowment is delighted about this opportunity to advance the Belk Center's work in developing exceptional community college leaders and teams, equipping them with the information and resources needed to excel in their roles, and connecting them to one another and to exemplary practitioners and practices from across the country. The work of this investment promises to not only cultivate exemplary leadership for our state's community colleges but will have a lasting and significant impact on the lives of students and families all across North Carolina."

NC State University Chancellor Randy Woodson and Dr. Audrey J. Jaeger, Belk Center executive director, helped celebrate the major announcement.

"I can't help but think back to June 2018 when I had the privilege of announcing the first transformational gift from the John M. Belk Endowment to partner with the College of Education," said Woodson. "That gift has

allowed us to ensure the ongoing preparation of strong community college leaders who are able to effectively address evolving labor markets and meet the state's future workforce needs. Today, we get to celebrate again.

"The continued financial support of the Belk Endowment shows that the work the Belk Center is doing is making a difference. This is what it means to 'Think and Do.' It is research and knowledge that leads to action and transformation."

During her remarks, Dr. Jaeger highlighted several ways the Belk Center is working closely with community colleges across the state. In just the past year, in the state's Teaching & Learning Hubs, 280 faculty members have taught over 2,400 courses impacting more than 20,000 students across 30 different colleges, to help build greater equity in learning and student success.

"Since we launched our work in 2018, our goal has been to establish the Belk Center as a key provider of professional learning for community college leaders and their teams across the state," said Dr. Jaeger.

"Our team has supported all 58 North Carolina community colleges and the System Office with leadership development, data and reports on student success-related topics, and convening national practitioners and experts to help us envision and catalyze change.

"We are deeply grateful to MC Belk Pilon and our many friends at the John M. Belk Endowment for their past and continued generous support of the work being done on community college campuses - and that of the students and communities being served all across our great state."

Burr Sullivan, board chair, and Dr. Bill Carver, interim president of the North Carolina Community College System, were joined by more than three dozen community college presidents from across the state for the announcement.

Dr. Jeff Cox, president of Wilkes Community College, and president of the North Carolina Association of Community College Presidents acknowledged and celebrated the announcement:

"On behalf of the great 58 community colleges in our state, we extend our very special thanks to the John M. Belk Endowment and the Belk Center for this amazing announcement today and their ongoing support of all that we do," said Dr. Cox.

"The work and support you offer all of us is tremendously helpful to ensuring more students are prepared for a lifetime of opportunities and that we are even better positioned to meet North Carolina's future workforce needs. Our community colleges and the students we proudly serve have no greater champion than MC Belk Pilon."

During the announcement, the speakers underscored that North Carolina's long-term vitality is largely dependent on the development and growth of a workforce that is highly skilled, credentialed and diverse. A responsive and thriving community college system will be key to meeting the needs of local employers and producing that workforce.

“Our shared goal is to advance student access and success and to increase degree and credential attainment over the next decade. We believe the support the Belk Center provides our community colleges is essential if we are to meet North Carolina’s ambitious postsecondary attainment goal of 2 million adults with a high-quality degree or credential by 2030,” said MC Belk Pilon. “We are very excited to help sustain and accelerate this work.”

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About the Belk Center for Community College Leadership and Research

The Belk Center for Community College Leadership and Research is part of NC State's College of Education, one of the leading land-grant colleges of education in the nation. The Center develops and sustains exceptional community college leaders who are committed to advancing equitable college access and student success, the social and economic mobility of their colleges’ students, and the economic competitiveness of their regions. The Center provides professional development and research related to current and emerging student success opportunities and challenges facing community college leaders and policymakers in North Carolina and the nation. For more information, please visit <https://belk-center.ced.ncsu.edu>.

About the John M. Belk Endowment

The John M. Belk Endowment is a private family foundation committed to transforming postsecondary educational opportunities to meet North Carolina’s evolving workforce needs. Its mission is aligned with the vision of its founder, the late John M. Belk, who served four terms as mayor of Charlotte and was CEO of the department store company Belk, Inc. Now led by Mr. Belk’s daughter, MC Belk Pilon, the John M. Belk Endowment continues to partner with innovative, results-oriented programs in North Carolina to further Mr. Belk’s values, legacy, and focus on the value of education as a means to personal fulfillment and community vitality. For more information, please visit jmbendowment.org.