



NC STATE UNIVERSITY

College of Education
Belk Center for Community College
Leadership and Research

2022-2023

Annual Report





CREATING TOOLS, CONVENING LEADERS, AND CATALYZING CHANGE

The Belk Center for Community College Leadership and Research works with educators, researchers, and policymakers to further more equitable community college outcomes in North Carolina and across the nation.

We equip community college leaders with actionable insights and create opportunities for collaboration as we tackle the most pressing issues facing students and campuses to build stronger, more resilient communities. The Belk Center is housed in

the College of Education at North Carolina State University, a land-grant university that shares our commitment to community colleges and the critical role these institutions play in creating and expanding opportunities for all North Carolinians.

OUR VALUES



EXCELLENCE



EQUITY-MINDEDNESS



LEADERSHIP



COLLABORATION



SERVICE

OUR SUPPORTERS

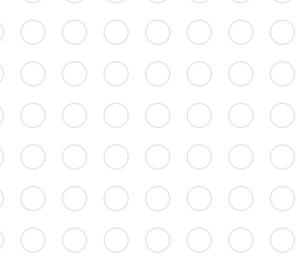
Thank you to our funders for their generous support of the Belk Center and for making the work outlined in this report possible.



John M Belk
Endowment
ELEVATE THROUGH EDUCATION

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Elevating opportunity

IES Institute of
Education Sciences



JOHN M. BELK ENDOWMENT MAKES TRANSFORMATIVE \$25M COMMITMENT TO THE BELK CENTER

The Belk Center for Community College Leadership and Research is thrilled to continue our partnership with the John M. Belk Endowment (JMBE), a private family foundation based in Charlotte committed to transforming postsecondary educational opportunities to meet North Carolina’s evolving workforce needs. Through a 10-year, [\\$25 million investment](#) announced in November 2022, our partners at JMBE will further the mission and work of the Belk Center over the next decade.

North Carolina State University Chancellor Randy Woodson was joined by Burr Sullivan, then-chair of the State Board of North Carolina Community Colleges, Dr. Bill Carver, then-interim president of the North Carolina Community College System, and more than three dozen community college presidents from across the state for the announcement, made by JMBE president and board chair MC Belk Pilon prior to the 2022 Dallas Herring Lecture. This award builds on several critical investments made by JMBE in North Carolina State University’s College of Education in recent years, including a [\\$10.8 million award](#) in 2018 that launched the Belk Center.

“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.”

MC BELK PILON

President and Board Chair of the
John M. Belk Endowment

“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.”

DR. AUDREY JAEGER

Executive Director of the Belk Center



DEAR COLLEAGUES,

Globally, educators have spoken at great lengths about what a difficult time it is to be in higher education. And while that's certainly true, it's also an exciting and pivotal time for community colleges. Across North Carolina, and around the nation, community colleges are anchors in their communities – increasing student success and investing in tomorrow's leaders, while also generating economic impact and extending valuable resources to their regions. During this time, the Belk Center has had the privilege of engaging North Carolina's community colleges and collaborating to address today's and tomorrow's challenges.

As one of the Belk Center's busiest years to date, 2022-2023 allowed us to launch new initiatives, expand innovative programming and collaborate with educators, researchers and policymakers to further more equitable community college outcomes in North Carolina and beyond. Over the past year, we have engaged with community colleges through our commitments to leadership and learning, research and insights, and partnerships and convenings.

LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

The Belk Center worked alongside North Carolina community colleges to deliver opportunities for leadership development and create resources that equip leaders with innovative ideas and best practices to advance student success and address pressing issues in their communities. We sustained our support of emerging leaders

and new community college presidents through rural college initiatives, orientation programs and professional development opportunities through our expanded North Carolina Teaching and Learning Hubs. In 2022, the Belk Center also proudly became the new home of the North Carolina Community College Leadership Program.

RESEARCH AND INSIGHTS

Through briefs, resource guides and reports, we offered North Carolina community college leaders practical research, data, and insights to inform decision-making and drive lasting change. The Belk Center's research efforts have continued to focus on best practices for supporting transfer students and adult learners – leading to the recent launch of the second edition of our Adult Learner Guidebook. We are also excited to launch our forthcoming playbook

about Surry-Yadkin Works, an innovative regional approach to work-based learning focused on the power and promise of youth apprenticeship. Through our Trailblazer Profile series, we've continued to highlight and celebrate the work of leaders of color in the North Carolina Community College System, which we hope will inspire support for diversifying the presidential leadership pipeline in the years ahead.

PARTNERSHIPS AND CONVENINGS

In collaboration with our partners across the state – and around the country – the Belk Center created opportunities for community college stakeholders to come together and drive change. The 2022 Dallas Herring Lecture welcomed a record nearly 1,200 virtual attendees for Dr. Mike Flores’ keynote presentation “Community Colleges in Action: Advancing Equity and Enhancing Economic Mobility Using Local Collective

Impact Strategies.” And in the spring, we hosted the inaugural convening of the National Community College Research Alliance and partnered with the Hunt Institute and LatinxED to host the first convening of Avanza – a community of practice designed to provide institutional leaders with a space to discuss best practices and barriers to Latinx student success.

In the pages ahead, you’ll find a lot to celebrate about our work – none of which would be possible without the support of our friends and colleagues at the John M. Belk Endowment, whose \$25 million commitment will further the mission and work of the Belk Center over the next decade. We are also immensely grateful for the contributions of our external strategic partners: the North Carolina Association of Community College Presidents, the North Carolina Community College System Office, colleagues at individual colleges, LatinxED, the University of North Carolina System Office, myFutureNC, EdNC, the Hunt Institute, the North Carolina Office of Strategic Partnerships, NC Reconnect collaborators, Achieving the Dream, Aspen Institute’s College Excellence Program, and the League for Innovation in the Community College, among many others.

Together, we’ve achieved so much, and I hope that you’ll join us as we work toward more improved student outcomes and enhanced leadership opportunities at community colleges nationwide. Thank you for your dedication and continued support of the Belk Center’s mission.

Warmly,



AUDREY J. “AJ” JAEGER, PH.D.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE BELK CENTER FOR
COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERSHIP AND RESEARCH,
W. DALLAS HERRING PROFESSOR OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE EDUCATION



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Leadership & Learning

The Belk Center works within and across North Carolina's community colleges to provide leadership development, coaching, and practical resources that help leaders' greatest ideas become our state's best practices. Together, we're building a pipeline of exceptional leaders across campuses and at all stages in their careers, and equipping them to champion equitable student success and adapt to meet the evolving needs of their students, colleges, and communities.

58

North Carolina community colleges engaged in Belk Center-led professional learning opportunities for leaders, their teams, and faculty and staff educators

10

Rural-serving institutions committed to advancing equitable success for their students by engaging in the Belk Center's Rural College Leaders Program

35

Mid-career community college professionals from across the state enhanced their leadership skills and professional networks by participating in the most recent cohort of the North Carolina Community College Leadership Program

20

Aspiring presidents will be selected to join the first cohort of the Aspiring Presidents' Institute, a groundbreaking effort to provide targeted support to outstanding executive leaders from the state's community colleges co-developed by the North Carolina Association of Community College Presidents and the Belk Center

17

Doctoral students gained valuable learning and networking opportunities while representing the Belk Center at national conferences as Belk Center Fellows

28

Community college presidents engaged in a November 2022 Critical Conversation about workforce trends in higher education at the regional and state level, co-presented by the North Carolina Association of Community College Presidents and the Belk Center

1,406

Employees from all 58 North Carolina community colleges participated in professional learning opportunities via the Belk Center's Teaching and Learning Hubs

We provide professional learning and continuing education opportunities to exceptional future community college leaders via several programs, including the North Carolina Community College Leadership Program, Aspiring Presidents' Institute, and North Carolina State University's doctoral program in community college leadership.



NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

The Belk Center is thrilled to be the new home of the [North Carolina Community College Leadership Program](#), a six-month, cohort-based program that provides professional learning opportunities for selected mid-career community college professionals identified by their presidents as aspiring leaders. The approximately 35 participants in each cohort attend four multi-day, in-person retreats filled with learning experiences, networking activities, and opportunities to discover and apply best practices aligned with pressing needs and issues facing North Carolina's community colleges.

Plans for the program first emerged in the 1980s, when former governor and then-president of the North Carolina Community College System, Bob Scott, requested a dedicated effort to develop the leadership skills of the state's community college employees. Founded in 1989 by Dr. Pat Akers, a retired faculty member and former administrator at Davidson-Davie Community College, the North Carolina Community College Leadership Program has served more than 1,200 community college employees to date and officially joined the Belk Center's leadership development portfolio in 2022.

ASPIRING PRESIDENTS' INSTITUTE



Together with our colleagues at the North Carolina Association of Community College Presidents (NCACCP), the Belk Center is developing an Aspiring Presidents' Institute to expose potential presidential aspirants to the stakeholders and responsibilities of presidential leadership in our state's community college system.

Approximately 20 participants – all senior leaders at community colleges who have been nominated by their presidents – will participate in programming designed to build critical skills necessary for the presidency and develop relationships among cohort members, sitting presidents, and other leaders within the system. As part of the Institute, each aspiring president will be assigned to a presidential executive mentor to provide support and first-hand context about the presidential role. Recruitment for the program will begin in winter 2023, with the first cohort announced in spring 2024.

In collaboration with members of the NCACCP Professional Development Committee, the Belk Center is supporting the recruitment and selection process and designing curriculum and associated materials for the inaugural cohort of the Aspiring Presidents' Institute. Anticipated session topics for the 2024 Institute include:



Interviewing



Data-Informed Decision Making



Institutional Culture and Fit



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion



Fundraising and Development



Navigating Local Politics



Public Relations and Storytelling



Board and Legislative Engagement



Student Success



Leading Impactful Teaching and Learning



Building Institutional Data Capacity

DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERSHIP

The Belk Center continues to coordinate various supports for students enrolled in North Carolina State University's doctoral program in community college leadership, including integrating community college executives as mentors and professors of practice and providing writing support to students to facilitate the completion of their dissertations. Together with the NC State College of Education, we celebrated two December 2022 and six May 2023 graduates of the program and welcomed 18 new students to the Raleigh 2023 cohort, who began their coursework this spring.

Additionally, through the Belk Center Fellows program, current doctoral students are invited to attend national conferences and learn more about their research interests while engaging in important conversations about community college and student success. Seven Fellows were selected to attend Achieving the Dream's [DREAM 2023](#) conference, held in Chicago in February 2023, and 10 Fellows attended the League for Innovation in the Community College's [Innovations Conference](#), held in Tempe in March 2023.

DREAM
ANNUAL CONVENING
2023



RECENT GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT:
DR. ABRAHAM DONES (RALEIGH 2019 COHORT)

CURRENT ROLE: VICE PRESIDENT & CHIEF STUDENT SERVICES OFFICER AT DURHAM TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE



ON THE POWER OF REPRESENTATION:

“My most memorable moment occurred during a lecture in a class. Our professor brought in a guest lecturer, Dr. David Gomez, who identified as a Puerto Rican male. It was the first time in my academic career from K-12 and all my higher education experiences where the individual in front of the classroom represented me. It was the first time in an academic setting of higher education where I felt the person in front of the classroom understood me from a racial/cultural perspective. It was a moment that left me speechless. All of my classmates who understood such an experience allowed me the space to live that moment. It is a memory that will last a lifetime. I would challenge anyone who says that representation does not matter; it does and it makes a difference.”

ON PERSONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT:

“The program allowed access to a network of professionals that contribute to my professional growth and development. I also engage with them to exchange information and ideas as peers. This experience helped me to remove the stigma of imposter syndrome and allowed me to build upon my confidence and what I contribute to the profession.”

To hear more from Dr. Dones about his experiences in the doctoral program, we encourage you to check out this [April 2023 interview](#) and [May 2023 profile](#), both produced by our colleagues at North Carolina State University, from which these reflections were excerpted.

ON CAREER ASPIRATIONS AND NEXT STEPS:

“I hope to become a community college president and a national leader in reforming the community college system to better serve the people and communities in which we reside. The community college is where I know I belong. I want to be in a position where I can serve as an example for others who may not come from such affluent backgrounds with exposure to higher education — in particular for our Black and Brown students — and show that regardless of where they are in their journeys, through perseverance, dedication, and understanding their cultural wealth, they are equipped with what they need to be successful in college and beyond and it is where they belong.”

We engage presidents at all stages in their careers – and, whenever possible, their teams – in a variety of opportunities to collaboratively learn and problem-solve about student success.

PRESIDENTS’ ACADEMY AND CRITICAL CONVERSATIONS

Support for our 58 North Carolina community college presidents remains a centerpiece of the Belk Center’s work, and we continue to offer programming and professional learning opportunities for sitting presidents that encourage collaboration, unify leadership development efforts, and advance student success outcomes by bringing critical knowledge and resources from national organizations to address pressing issues facing our state’s community colleges.

In November 2022, we collaborated with the Professional Development Committee of the North Carolina Association of Community

College Presidents to host Laura Ullrich, senior regional economist with the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, for a discussion with 28 presidents about workforce trends in higher education at the regional and state level. The Belk Center continues to support the Professional Development Committee by developing content for biannual presidents’ conferences and New Presidents’ Orientation. In the coming year, the Belk Center will support the development of an Aspiring Presidents’ Institute that will draw from the curriculum created for the Presidents’ Academy.

ONBOARDING FOR NEW PRESIDENTS

In July 2023, the Belk Center partnered with the Professional Development Committee of the North Carolina Association of Community College Presidents to conduct a second New Presidents’ Orientation, held in conjunction with their summer meeting. Twenty-one presidents from across the system engaged as participants and presenters in sessions about leading for student success, budgeting, connecting with your community and board, and engaging with the system office. Several presidents elected to repeat the New Presidents’ Orientation because they found the content so helpful the first time they participated.



RURAL COLLEGE LEADERS PROGRAM



In partnership with Ascendium Education Group and Achieving the Dream, the Belk Center launched the Rural College Leaders Program in early 2022 to support presidents, senior leadership teams, and trustees at 10 rural-serving institutions in their work to improve student outcomes and advance equity. Since the program's launch, leaders from the colleges in the initial cohort have convened three times, with a focus on collaboratively identifying opportunities to remove systemic barriers and close gaps in institutional completion rates for historically underserved populations, including low-income students and American Indian, Black and Latinx students.

The most recent convening, hosted in March 2023, kicked off the second year of the program, with more than 75 attendees participating in person to disaggregate student data and make plans to scale student success efforts across their campus and community. This convening built on the success of the group's September 2022 gathering to review early data, prioritize student success goals and draft action plans. Through in-depth work with coaches, assessment of institutional data capacity, and peer feedback sessions, participating colleges developed core strategies for implementation in the coming year.

In early 2023, the Belk Center received additional funding from Ascendium Education Group to continue its work supporting rural-serving institutions across the state through the Rural College Leaders Program. Ascendium's \$490,200 grant will enable the Belk Center to evaluate the impact of the program and the strategies and best practices being leveraged by participating colleges. The results of this assessment will inform our future efforts to support additional rural colleges across North Carolina, including the provision of direct technical assistance, leadership convenings, and action planning.

“Participating in the Rural College Leaders Program is helping our college put a microscopic lens on data to improve equitable outcomes for all students. The program is also assisting our college in formulating an annual action plan that turns data into workable strategies and creates a college culture where all students can reach their potential.”

DR. MURRAY WILLIAMS

President of Roanoke-Chowan Community College

COLLEGE SERVICES

The Belk Center continues to provide leadership programming and other services – including strategic planning and support for equity-focused initiatives – tailored to the needs of individual colleges.

These programs and services are developed and facilitated by members of the Belk Center team upon special request. In the last year, Belk Center team members facilitated strategic planning engagements with Robeson Community College, Rockingham Community College, and Lenoir Community College. Looking ahead, we are excited to pilot cohort-based professional development in partnership with Wayne and Nash Community Colleges and provide strategic planning support to Stanly Community College.



We provide scalable, sustainable professional learning activities for full- and part-time community college faculty and staff educators to ensure that teaching and learning are centered in efforts to improve student success.

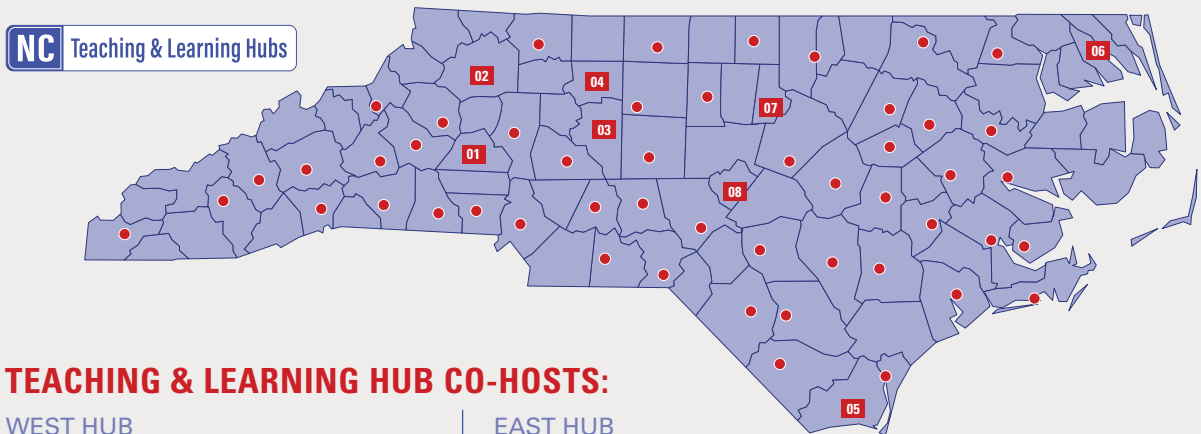
TEACHING AND LEARNING HUBS

Together with our partners at Achieving the Dream, the North Carolina Student Success Center, and the North Carolina Community College System Office, the Belk Center has spent the last three years working to develop a unique statewide model of providing professional learning support for community college faculty and staff educators aimed at increasing student success. Working together, we've established four North Carolina Teaching and Learning Hubs – East, West, Central, and Piedmont – that now engage all 58 of the state's community colleges and complement individual colleges' teaching and learning efforts.

Hubs are led by faculty co-directors from our North Carolina community colleges, who bring a wealth of experience to their work developing program content alongside local faculty and campus leaders. Community

colleges within a specific geographic area are paired with a corresponding Hub as affiliate campuses. Workshops and seminars are delivered to participants in person, virtually, or through a hybrid model, and faculty and staff educators attend sessions hosted by their college's regional Hub.

A [February 2023 article](#) in Inside Higher Ed, co-authored by Audrey J. Jaeger, Ph.D., Executive Director of the Belk Center and W. Dallas Herring Professor of Community College Education at NC State, and Karen A. Stout, Ed.D., President and CEO of Achieving the Dream, highlighted North Carolina's Teaching and Learning Hubs and the promise of this innovative model to promote evidence-based instructional practices, personalized instruction, and an institutional culture that embraces professional learning and improvement.



TEACHING & LEARNING HUB CO-HOSTS:

WEST HUB

- 01** Catawba Valley **02** Wilkes

PIEDMONT HUB

- 03** Davidson-Davie **04** Forsyth Tech

EAST HUB

- 05** Brunswick **06** College of The Albemarle

CENTRAL HUB

- 07** Durham Tech **08** Central Carolina

TEACHING AND LEARNING HUB GROWTH: 2021-22 TO 2022-23

In early 2023, our evaluation partners at DVP-PRAXIS released an [initial report](#) documenting the reach of the first two Hubs during the 2021-22 academic year, including the number of colleges, faculty, staff, and students reached by both Hubs. Later in 2023, additional data about the reach of all four Hubs during the 2022-23 academic year became available.

	2021-22 (EAST & WEST HUBS)	2022-23 (EAST, WEST, CENTRAL, & PIEDMONT HUBS)
# OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES REACHED	38	58
# OF PARTICIPANTS IN HUB-SPONSORED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES	513	1,406
# OF ACTIVELY TEACHING FACULTY AND STAFF INSTRUCTORS REACHED	295	1,001
# OF COURSES TAUGHT BY PARTICIPATING FACULTY AND STAFF INSTRUCTORS	1,955	6,515
# OF STUDENTS REACHED	18,772	62,812

In their inaugural year (2021-22), the East and West Hubs engaged 513 employees across 38 of North Carolina's 58 community colleges. In their second year, all four Hubs had extensive outreach to faculty and staff from all 58 colleges and engaged 1,406 employees. To date, the Teaching and Learning Hubs have engaged 1,753 unique community college employees across the state in Hub-sponsored professional learning activities.

In 2021-22, Hub-sponsored professional learning reached 295 actively teaching faculty and staff instructors, who collectively taught 1,955 courses that same year. In year two, Hub-sponsored professional learning opportunities reached 1,001 actively teaching faculty and staff instructors (125 of whom also taught in 2021-22), who collectively taught 6,515 courses in 2022-23. To date, instructors engaged in Hub-sponsored professional learning opportunities have taught

8,510 courses either prior to or concurrently with their Hub engagement between fall 2021 and spring 2023. These instructors teach an average of four courses in an academic year with approximately 16 students per course, impacting a total of 74,210 unique students between fall 2021 and spring 2023.

Anecdotally, we are already hearing about the impact of the Hubs on participating faculty, who are deploying new instructional strategies, revising syllabi, reconsidering advising frameworks, and honoring the needs and identities of students in their classrooms. Future reports from our evaluation partners at DVP-PRAXIS will assess the relationship between instructor participation in Hub-sponsored professional learning and equitable student success across North Carolina, with impact data from the first year of statewide implementation (the 2022-23 academic year) available in early 2024.



CHECK OUT OUR TEACHING & LEARNING WEBINAR SERIES!

This five-part series features presenters from across the North Carolina Community College System and walks participants through the foundational steps related to building a culture of teaching and learning to promote student success. Each webinar highlights North Carolina-specific examples, policies, and institutional structures representative of teaching and learning excellence.

01

[*Building a Culture of Teaching, Learning, and Student Success*](#) featuring Fayetteville Technical Community College and Wilkes Community College

02

[*Data Informed Decision Making: Using Classroom Analytics for Student Centered Decisions*](#) featuring Central Piedmont Community College and Stanly Community College

03

[*Establishing and Sustaining a Teaching Center*](#) featuring Blue Ridge Community College and the Central Teaching and Learning Hub

04

[*Intentional and Meaningful Learning through Faculty Learning Communities*](#) featuring the East and West Teaching and Learning Hubs

05

[*Developing NC Community College Educators From Every Seat*](#) featuring Central Piedmont Community College, Durham Technical Community College, and Rowan-Cabarrus Community College



Research & Insights

The Belk Center informs North Carolina community colleges' policy and practice by connecting leaders with reliable insights they can act on quickly. We deliver timely, relevant, and practical research and data to leaders as they work to drive systemic change across the state and around the country.

6

Research briefs were developed by the Belk Center to connect our community college colleagues with actionable insights including best practices for supporting transfer students and adult learners

10

Workforce reports were produced by the Belk Center for colleges participating in the Rural College Leaders Program detailing top current and projected occupations within an hour's drive from each college along with related education and earnings data

2,500+

The first edition of the Adult Learner Guidebook has been viewed and/or downloaded 2,500+ times since it was released in July 2022

205

Adult learners and community college support staff, faculty, and presidents participated in more than 70 interviews and focus groups led by the Belk Center to better understand how NC Reconnect colleges are recruiting and supporting adult learners on their campuses

16

Community colleges in North Carolina have leveraged the PACE Climate Survey to better understand the perspectives of their employees, identify areas for growth or improvement, and set the stage for data-informed decision making and strategic planning

12

Trailblazer Profiles have been developed by the Belk Center to highlight and celebrate the work of leaders of color in the North Carolina Community College System

We translate existing research and findings into practical tools and resources for colleges, their leaders, and other key decision-makers.

RESEARCH BRIEFS

Throughout the last year, the Belk Center published several research briefs on timely and relevant topics for our community college colleagues across the state. Highlights include:

- A [brief](#) highlighting the importance of strong transfer options for Applied Associate Degree (AAS) earners;
- A [brief](#) exploring the influence of high-impact practices – specifically service-learning and study abroad participation – on the postsecondary experiences of Hispanic transfer students; and
- The first [four briefs](#) in a series intended to expand on the Adult Learner Guidebook by highlighting learnings from cohorts one and two of the NC Reconnect initiative.



WORKFORCE REPORTS

In the last year, the Belk Center also produced individual workforce reports for each of the 10 colleges engaged in the Rural College Leaders Program. These reports detailed top current and projected occupations within an hour's drive from each college, as well as the typical education level among entry-level employees and aggregated annual earnings

data for each occupation. Reports were used to align each college's current and planned program offerings with their local and regional workforce needs. The Belk Center's workforce reports also built on available state and regional workforce information by including data from across state lines for colleges located near state borders.

ADULT LEARNER GUIDEBOOK (SECOND EDITION)

After the first NC Reconnect cohort's launch in 2021, Belk Center researchers began compiling and analyzing data on adult students' re-enrollment and retention from the participating colleges.

Building on this initial data, the Belk Center hosted interviews and focus groups with community college leadership, faculty, staff, and adult learners. These conversations yielded valuable insights about the leadership decisions of executives, the day-to-day

operations of student services staff, and the lived experiences of adult learners. From this work, the Belk Center released the [first edition](#) of the Adult Learner Guidebook in July 2022. This well-received resource, which has since been [updated](#) to synthesize findings and lessons learned from participating North Carolina community colleges in the first three cohorts of NC Reconnect, offers tangible strategies and recommendations on reimagining postsecondary education for adult learners at North Carolina community colleges.



We contribute to the existing body of community college-focused research by producing timely and relevant knowledge that colleges, their leaders, and other stakeholders can use to advance student success.

INTERNAL EVALUATION EFFORTS

The Belk Center spent the last several months engaging with our evaluation partners at DVP-PRAXIS to develop a comprehensive evaluation plan that will provide a more holistic picture of stakeholders' annual engagement with the Belk Center across all of our programs and activities, including the actions and/or results that follow from that engagement. Beginning in early 2023, Belk Center staff and the evaluation team from DVP-PRAXIS collaborated to explore how current participation data are collected for each Belk Center program and discuss how staff are evaluating or thinking about evaluating the areas of work for which they are responsible. A Reference Guide has been produced to ensure consistent, systematic data collection about the engagement of colleges and individuals across Belk Center activities and events, and these data collection techniques will leverage Neon, the Belk Center's new data management system.

In the last year, our partners at DVP-PRAXIS also produced a [comprehensive report](#) detailing the reach and progress of the Teaching and Learning Hubs in their inaugural year and a forthcoming Promising Practices report summarizing the experiences to date of participants in Hub-sponsored professional learning.

PACE CLIMATE SURVEY

The PACE Climate Survey continues to be a valuable tool leveraged by colleges and their leaders to better understand their institutional culture and overall capacity to promote student success. By surveying college employees about how they perceive and experience their work, leaders are able to gauge their progress toward improving climate, identify areas for growth or improvement, and set the stage for data-informed decision-making and strategic planning.

Thanks to the generous support of Ascendium Education Group, the Belk Center continues to offer the PACE Survey to all 58 North Carolina community colleges at no cost. As of September 2023, the Belk Center has administered the survey to 16 community colleges in North Carolina, and several additional institutions have signed up to administer the survey during the coming academic year.

In September 2022, the Belk Center hosted a panel of presidents from three rural community colleges at the North Carolina Community College System Conference, who discussed their experiences administering the survey and how they use PACE data. Participating presidents emphasized how useful the survey has been in developing their strategic plans, highlighting the need for a salary study, and communicating impact to faculty and staff. Additionally, the Belk Center presented in early 2023 at the annual meeting of the Council for the Study of Community Colleges about perceptions of campus climate in the post-COVID workplace using survey data from a broad sample of colleges, including those in North Carolina and our other national PACE partners.

TRAILBLAZER PROFILES

The [Trailblazer Profiles](#) are part of the Belk Center's North Carolina Community College System History Project, designed to highlight and celebrate the work of executive leaders of color throughout the system. Through this project, we hope to re-center conversations about who we recognize as important in the history of community college leadership in North Carolina and inspire support for diversifying the presidential leadership pipeline.

Each profile involves the collection of an oral history interview, which are now saved in the [Southern Oral History Program Archives](#). To date, 12 Trailblazer Profiles have been released, and additional profiles will be shared in the coming months, including a profile of Dr. Patrena Elliott, the new President of Halifax Community College.





Partnerships & Convenings

The Belk Center is building a broad network of support for North Carolina’s community colleges by creating opportunities for colleges and the people who support them to come together to drive change. We connect stakeholders and break down barriers, making space for institutional and systemic transformation.

20

Organizations from across the country participated in the National Community College Research Alliance’s inaugural convening at the Belk Center in March 2023

2,035

Adult learners enrolled in North Carolina community colleges over the past three years as a result of NC Reconnect and related partnerships between the John M. Belk Endowment, Belk Center, North Carolina Community College System Office, myFutureNC, InsideTrack, CRISP Communications, and VisionPoint Marketing

10

North Carolina community colleges engaged in Avanza, an innovative community of practice designed to provide institutional leaders with a space to discuss best practices and barriers to Latinx student success

1,161

Attendees joined in person or virtually for the 2022 Dallas Herring Lecture, “Community Colleges in Action: Advancing Equity and Enhancing Economic Mobility Using Local Collective Impact Strategies,” delivered by Dr. Mike Flores, Chancellor of the Alamo Colleges District

20+

Conference presentations by Belk Center staff and faculty affiliates highlighted our work for audiences across the state and nation



We develop and contribute to collaborative, student-centered approaches to problem-solving in service to our state's community colleges.

NATIONAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE RESEARCH ALLIANCE

To further advance the efforts of community colleges nationwide, representatives from research centers across the country joined forces with the Belk Center to establish the National Community College Research Alliance (NCCRA). Launched in early 2023, the Alliance aims to foster increased capacity, communication, and collaboration among prominent centers of community college research to help community colleges overcome the challenges of today and prepare for the opportunities of tomorrow.

The Belk Center was pleased to convene NCCRA partner organizations along with individual researchers and representatives from national grantmaking foundations – a total of more than 40 participants representing more than 20 organizations – for the first time at the NCCRA's [inaugural summit](#) in Raleigh in March 2023. Based on the idea of collective impact, the convening allowed participants to lay the groundwork for a collective community college research agenda. The Belk Center also produced and shared a [video recap](#) and [executive summary](#) of the inaugural convening of the Alliance.

INVESTING IN INNOVATIVE,
CROSS-SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS



CENTERS ENGAGED:



CCRC COMMUNITY COLLEGE RESEARCH CENTER

OCCRL



Texas Success Center



Wheelhouse

The Center for Community College Leadership and Research

NORTH CAROLINA WORKING GROUP ON DEVELOPING TALENT THROUGH TRANSFER

In early 2023, the Belk Center hosted two meetings of the North Carolina Workgroup on Developing Talent Through Transfer, consisting of a dozen presidents and senior system leaders from two- and four-year institutions across the state and focused on accelerating existing efforts to increase transfer.

Participants included five community college presidents (representing Wilkes Community College, Vance-Granville Community College, Central Carolina Community College, Piedmont Community College, and Forsyth Technical Community College), six four-year college presidents (representing East Carolina

University, UNC Charlotte, UNC Wilmington, North Carolina State University, North Carolina A&T State University, and Wingate University), and three system representatives (representing the UNC System, NC Community College System, and NC Independent Colleges and Universities). In the coming months, the Belk Center will work with members of the North Carolina Association of Community College Presidents, the Transfer Advisory Committee, the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association, and system representatives to discuss alignment of existing transfer initiatives and opportunities for increasing transfer by 2030.

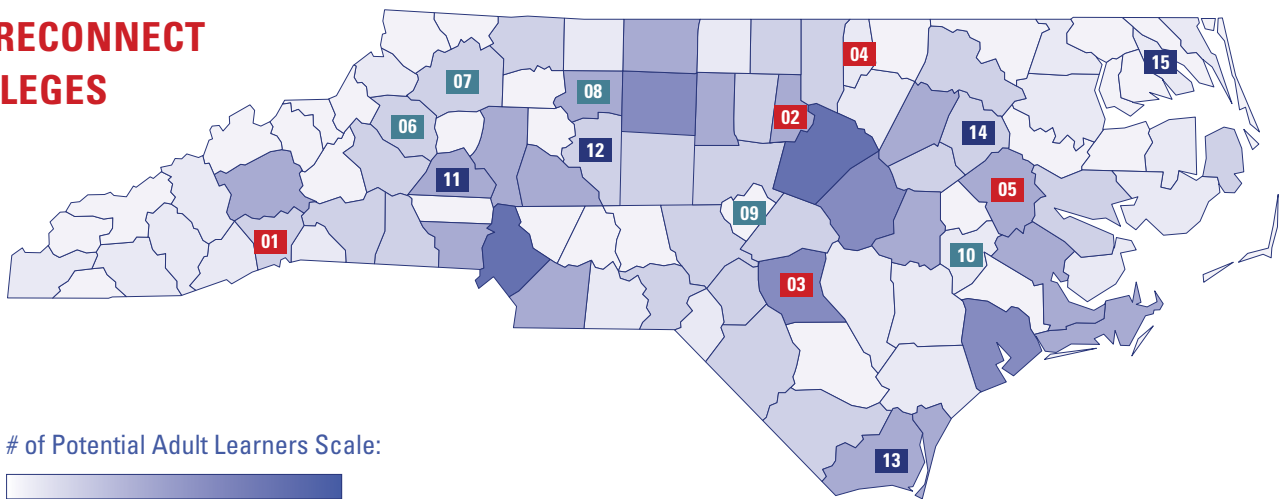


NC RECONNECT

Made possible through a collaboration with the John M. Belk Endowment, NC Reconnect aims to engage adult learners and improve student retention – specifically among adult learners – in North Carolina. The initiative is designed to help former students successfully navigate the complexities of re-enrollment and re-entry while developing a plan to complete a degree or credential. The Belk Center supports the work of NC Reconnect by compiling and analyzing data on adult students’ re-enrollment and retention from participating colleges. To better understand each college’s approach and the many lessons being learned through the initiative, Belk Center researchers also conduct interviews and focus groups with community college leadership, faculty, staff, and adult learners.

Following the successful release of the [original](#) Adult Learner Guidebook in July 2022, the Belk Center began working on a [second edition](#) of this well-received resource that synthesizes lessons learned from participating North Carolina community colleges in the first three cohorts of the NC Reconnect program. The updated guidebook was officially released in early September 2023 and highlights several new insights and promising practices for colleges interested in better serving the adult learners in their communities.

NC RECONNECT COLLEGES



of Potential Adult Learners Scale:



COHORT ONE

- 01** BlueRidge Community College
- 02** DURHAM TECH
- 03** FTCC Fayetteville Technical Community College
- 04** Vance-Granville Community College
- 05** PITT Community College

COHORT TWO

- 06** ccc&ti Caldwell Community College & Technical Institute
- 07** WILKES COMMUNITY COLLEGE Wilkes • Ashe • Alleghany
- 08** Forsyth Tech Community College
- 09** CENTRAL CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE
- 10** LENOIR COMMUNITY COLLEGE

COHORT THREE

- 11** Catawba Valley Community College
- 12** Davidson-Davie Community College
- 13** BRUNSWICK COMMUNITY COLLEGE
- 14** Edgecombe Community College
- 15** COLLEGE OF THE ALBEMARLE

AVANZA

Together with our partners at LatinxED and the Hunt Institute, the Belk Center co-hosted a convening at Forsyth Technical Community College in March 2023 to provide community college leaders from across the state with a space to discuss best practices and barriers to Latinx student success. The gathering – known as Avanza, Spanish for “to advance, progress, and/or move forward” – and the collaborative partnership behind it was featured in an [April 2023 OpEd](#) in The Hill by the Hunt Institute’s President and CEO, Dr. Javaid Siddiqi.

This community of practice includes 10 North Carolina community colleges that are advocates for Latinx students and/or play critical roles in recruiting, supporting, and graduating Latinx students. Over the course of the next year, participating leaders will receive technical assistance and policy support to help build capacity to lead and innovate in order to advance access and attainment for Latinx North Carolinians.



We design and participate in research-based professional learning opportunities that advance the field, meet the needs of North Carolina's leaders and colleges, and inspire continued action and progress.

DALLAS HERRING LECTURE

Together with our partners at the North Carolina State College of Education, the Belk Center was thrilled to host Dr. Mike Flores, Chancellor of the Alamo Colleges District in Texas, as the keynote speaker for the 2022 Dallas Herring Lecture. Delivered in a hybrid format, the 2022 lecture engaged a record 1,161 attendees, including participants from every North Carolina community college, 35 states, and 3 countries.

This year's lecture, entitled "Community Colleges in Action: Advancing Equity and Enhancing Economic Mobility Using Local Collective Impact Strategies," focused on the notion that community colleges can advance equity and enhance economic mobility by becoming critical actors in local collective impact strategies that utilize a framework focused on student success and ensure the elevation of our diverse communities.

Dr. Flores' remarks highlighted the collective

impact work undertaken by the Alamo Colleges District in partnership with regional residents and the stories of several students that spotlighted the power education can have on eliminating generational poverty. Those stories were echoed by Dr. Janet Spriggs, president of Forsyth Technical Community College, who delivered the lecture response. Beyond sharing similar stories about several Forsyth Tech students, Dr. Spriggs also reflected on her own powerful personal experience as a low-income, first-generation college student.

The Belk Center fostered meaningful engagement among participants during and after the event by developing and distributing an [online discussion guide](#), a [video recording of the lecture](#), and a [booklet](#) containing a transcript of Dr. Flores' remarks.



MEETINGS AND CONFERENCES

Throughout the last year, the Belk Center and its work were highlighted in several state, national, and international meetings and conferences.

In North Carolina, Belk Center team members facilitated presentations during gatherings organized by our peers and partners, including two presentations and a reception at the October 2022 North Carolina Community College System Conference focused on promoting the Teaching and Learning Hubs and a presentation in June 2023 to the UNC System's Adult Learners Network about findings and promising practices from the NC Reconnect initiative.

Across the nation, the Belk Center's work was featured during several national conferences including two sessions at the annual DREAM Conference in February 2023, hosted by Achieving the Dream in Chicago – one focused on the work and progress of our Teaching and Learning Hubs, and the other highlighting NC Reconnect and the innovative work underway in North Carolina to support adult learners.

Additionally, members of the Belk Center's team facilitated a session at the annual conference of the Association for Education Finance and Policy (AEFP), held in Denver in March 2023, about the outcomes of STEM transfer students from rural-serving community colleges in North Carolina. Belk Center staff and faculty affiliates were also invited to present at the League for Innovation in the Community College's Annual Conference, held in March 2023 in Tempe, AZ; the annual Council for the Study of Community Colleges (CSCC) Conference, held in April 2023 in Chicago; and the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Annual Meeting, also held in April 2023 in Chicago.

In June 2023, the Belk Center's Executive Director, Dr. Audrey Jaeger, [traveled to the United Kingdom](#) as part of a delegation of North Carolina government officials, university and community college leaders, and economic developers. The group visited Liverpool, Manchester, and North Wales to learn more about how industries of the future can contribute to economic development and increased trade and investment.



SYSTEM OFFICE SUPPORT

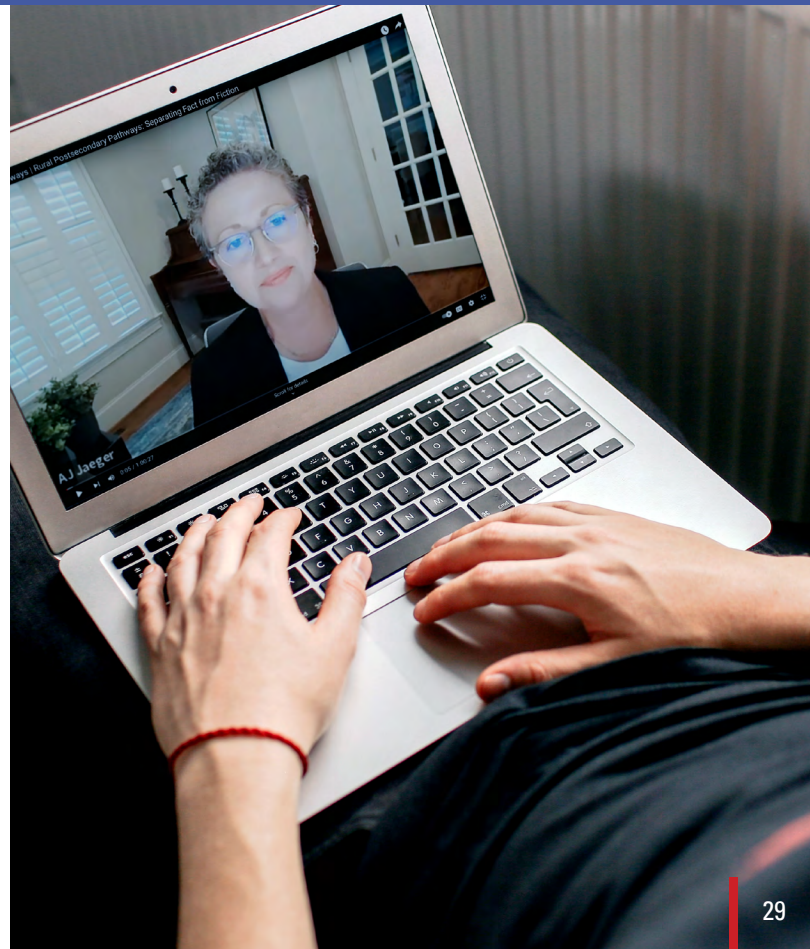


Throughout the 2022-23 academic year, the Belk Center engaged members of the North Carolina Community College System Office senior team in a professional learning series intended to strengthen internal collaboration and advance efforts to realize the system's goals.

Sessions focused on collaboration and goal-setting with the senior leadership team, developing effective communication strategies and concluded with a set of action planning sessions to set strategic goals and evaluation measures across system functions and stakeholders to align with the system's strategic plan. The team also developed the foundations of a service catalog to inform internal and external stakeholders about system office functions.

POSTSECONDARY PATHWAYS WEBINAR SERIES

To better align current efforts to increase postsecondary attainment and highlight postsecondary pathways available at community colleges in North Carolina and beyond, the Belk Center and our partners at the Hunt Institute recently partnered on a [three-part, community college-focused webinar series](#). Launched in August 2022, the series focused on three key efforts: postsecondary attainment, closing equity gaps in access to higher education, and North Carolina's efforts to engage adult learners. Moderated by representatives from the Belk Center the Hunt Institute and led by industry experts offering perspectives and recommendations for the future of postsecondary education, each webinar invited participants from across the country for a 30-minute discussion followed by an interactive question-and-answer session. The Belk Center's partnership with the Hunt Institute will continue with a quarterly webinar series in the 2023-24 academic year focusing on rural community colleges.



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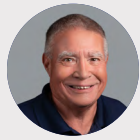
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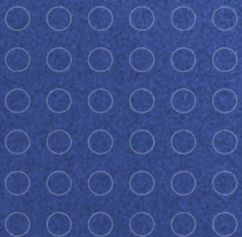
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