

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

College of Education
Belk Center for Community College
Leadership and Research



2023 - 2024

ANNUAL REPORT



CONVENE, CREATE, CATALYZE.

The Belk Center for Community College Leadership and Research serves North Carolina’s community colleges by convening leaders, creating tools, and catalyzing social and economic mobility for learners.

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 VISION

We’re working to build a North Carolina where all 58 community colleges are connected, supported, and equipped in their charge to drive statewide prosperity.

OUR VALUES

-  **EXCELLENCE**
-  **EQUITY-MINDEDNESS**
-  **LEADERSHIP**
-  **COLLABORATION**
-  **SERVICE**



OUR SUPPORTERS

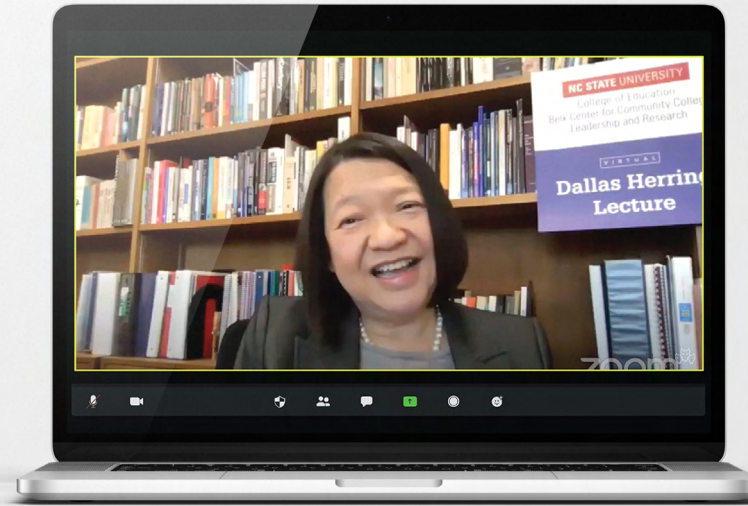
The Belk Center’s work is made possible by the generosity of philanthropic partners, NC State University alumni, and friends who believe in our mission and share our commitment to community college excellence. Thank you to our lead funders for their support and for making the work outlined in this report possible.



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CELEBRATING FIVE YEARS OF COLLABORATIVE WORK AND IMPACT

Since the Belk Center's official launch in 2019, our team and network of partners have made great strides in advancing our shared mission to develop exceptional community college leaders and teams, equip them with the information and resources they need to excel in their roles, and connect them to one another and to exemplary practitioners and practices from across the country.



2019

- Our **Statewide Leadership Conference** brings together presidents and trustees to examine data and discuss opportunities for improving student success outcomes
- Our **space** on Hillsborough Street opens to staff, college leaders, and their teams
- The **Presidents Academy** launches with a series of regional convenings focused on developing college-specific plans to increase degree and credential attainment
- Dr. Sandy Shugart, then-president of Valencia College, delivers the **2019 Dallas Herring Lecture**: "Ecosystem Thinking in Higher Education: The Future of Transfer"

2020

- Our **Critical Conversations** series launches, creating a virtual space for presidents to discuss and address leadership challenges brought on by the pandemic
- In response to the pandemic, we offer a series of workshops focused on timely topics like **moving courses online**, teaching online, and evaluating online coursework
- For the first time in its history, the **2020 Dallas Herring Lecture**, delivered by Bunker Hill Community College President Dr. Pam Eddinger, is offered live and asynchronously via Zoom and YouTube, drawing more than 1,000 registrants

2021

- We launch our **Trailblazer Profiles** series as part of the North Carolina Community College System History Project
- In collaboration with Achieving the Dream and the North Carolina Student Success Center, North Carolina's **Teaching and Learning Hubs** officially launch with the opening of the East and West Hubs
- NC Reconnect** welcomes its first cohort, and Belk Center researchers begin capturing qualitative and quantitative data about adult students' re-enrollment and retention
- Gregory Haile, J.D., then-president of Broward College, delivers the **2021 Dallas Herring Lecture**: "Redefining Access: The Power of Proximity"



CELEBRATING FIVE YEARS OF COLLABORATIVE WORK AND IMPACT

OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS, WE'VE...



Developed a portfolio of professional learning programs for community college leaders and practitioners at all stages of their careers.



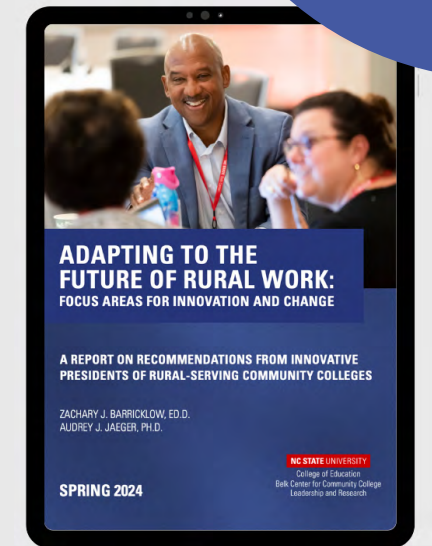
Enhanced the learning experiences of doctoral students in North Carolina State University's community college leadership program by connecting them to executive mentors, national conferences, and dissertation support.



Authored dozens of reports and briefs on the timely and relevant topics that matter most to college leaders and their teams, like engaging adult learners, supporting rural students, enhancing teaching and learning, and improving transfer student success.



Learned alongside—and shared our learnings with—thousands of state and national peers through innovative communities of practice, conference presentations, and our annual Dallas Herring Lecture.



2022

- The **Rural College Leaders Program** launches with support from Ascendium Education Group
- We publish the first edition of our **Adult Learner Guidebook**, lifting up tangible strategies and key insights from NC Reconnect colleges' work to support adult learners
- The **North Carolina Community College Leadership Program** joins the Belk Center's leadership development portfolio
- Our **Teaching and Learning Hubs** expand to serve all 58 North Carolina community colleges with the launch of the Central and Piedmont Hubs
- Our partners at the **John M. Belk Endowment** announce a transformational, \$25 million investment in our work over the next decade
- Dr. Mike Flores, president of Alamo Colleges District, delivers the **2022 Dallas Herring Lecture**: "Community Colleges in Action: Advancing Equity and Enhancing Economic Mobility Using Local Collective Impact Strategies"

2023

- The **National Community College Research Alliance** hosts its first convening in Raleigh
- Ascendium Education Group** awards the Belk Center a second grant to evaluate the impact of best practice strategies identified by colleges participating in the Rural College Leaders Program
- Avanza** launches in partnership with LatinxED and the Hunt Institute
- We are named as a partner in a four-year **US Department of Education/Institute of Education Sciences** grant focused on the transfer of college credits earned in high school
- Prince George's Community College President Dr. Falecia D. Williams delivers the **2023 Dallas Herring Lecture**: "Daring to be Extraordinary: Transforming the Structure of How We Work"
- Dr. Devon Graves** joins the NC State College of Education's doctoral program in Community College Leadership as an assistant professor

2024

- Together with the North Carolina Association of Community College Presidents, the Belk Center launches the **Aspiring Presidents Institute** and welcomes the program's first cohort
- We publish a **new guidebook** synthesizing the creation of the North Carolina Teaching and Learning Hubs
- The doctoral program in Community College Leadership welcomes two new full-time faculty members, **Dr. Makena Stewart and Catherine Hartman**
- We release the first in a series of reports focused on leading innovation and change within **rural-serving community colleges**

DURING THE LAST ACADEMIC YEAR...

 **100%** NC COMMUNITY COLLEGES ENGAGEMENT

Our work reached all 58 of North Carolina’s community colleges.

Every community college in the state engaged with us at least once via our events, tailored research, and college-specific services. Fifty-seven colleges (98 percent) attended at least one event hosted or co-hosted by the Belk Center, and two-thirds of colleges (67 percent) engaged in at least half of the Belk Center’s events.

 **83%** COLLEGE PRESIDENTS’ EVENT ATTENDANCE

Our events engaged a variety of senior college leaders, including and beyond presidents.

Forty-eight community college presidents (83 percent) attended at least one Belk Center event, and 27 presidents (47 percent) attended two or more events. Beyond presidents, the Belk Center’s events also reached vice presidents and chief academic officers from 46 colleges (79 percent), as well as deans, directors, and chairs from 53 colleges (91 percent).

 **129+** HOURS OF EVENT PARTICIPATION

Colleges invested significant amounts of time and energy in our programming.

The 57 colleges represented at the Belk Center’s events spent an average of 129 hours engaging with the Belk Center, spread across an average of 20 meetings (“touchpoints”). Thirty-five colleges (60 percent) spent more than 100 hours engaging with the Belk Center, and 15 colleges (26 percent) had 30 or more touchpoints with the Belk Center.

 **167k+** STUDENT INTERACTION FROM THE T&L HUBS

Our Teaching and Learning Hubs supported thousands of community college faculty—who taught tens of thousands of students—across the state.

To date, more than 167,000 students across the state have interacted with faculty attending professional learning sessions from the Teaching and Learning Hubs, and this number is growing as the Hubs continue to serve more faculty. Recent reports predict, on average, a six percent increase in the likelihood of fall-to-spring persistence for each student when they take an additional course with Hub-trained faculty.

 **62%** INTERACTED WITH THE BELK CENTER OUTSIDE OF EVENTS

Colleges also benefited from the research and other services we provide.

Thirty-six community colleges (62 percent) interacted with the Belk Center outside of events. Thirty-three colleges (57 percent) engaged the Belk Center to learn more about their own college through research and services. The Belk Center also fielded direct requests for things like professional learning support from 18 colleges (31 percent) and produced reports or other materials for 24 colleges (41 percent). Individuals from 15 colleges (26 percent) coauthored, co-led, or otherwise partnered with the Belk Center through research.

DEAR COLLEAGUES,

The barriers to postsecondary success are numerous and challenging: access, enrollment, retention, and transfer, just to name a few. The work is challenging, with a variety of institutional, technological and systematic complexities to navigate along the way. However, while the challenges are numerous, so too are the opportunities. Equipping the 21st century workforce. Driving regional prosperity. Promoting healthy, resilient communities. The road ahead may be long—but it is full of promise.

To that end, the Belk Center is proud to highlight our work in 2023-2024. During the last 12 months, we have published findings from our four Teaching and Learning Hubs, including preliminary evidence of the relationship between faculty professional learning and positive student outcomes, developed a five-point conceptual framework to increase adult learner enrollment and completion rates at community colleges, and expanded our programming to support rural communities in North Carolina.

The 2023-2024 year is also special in that it marks the fifth year of the Belk Center. Much has grown and changed in these last five years, but the Belk Center’s commitments have remained the same: equipping community college leaders to remain agile to evolving needs in their institutions and communities, making research accessible in order to equip leaders with the actionable insights they need to advance student success, and creating opportunities for collaboration.

In addition to celebrating the fifth year of the Belk Center, we are also gearing up to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Dallas Herring Lecture. Through this annual lecture, where we convene community college stakeholders from across the country to address emerging issues in community college education, we have garnered a number of valuable, timely insights about a variety of topics that impact student success—including workforce outcomes, economic mobility and teaching and learning. Much like the Belk Center itself, the Dallas Herring Lecture has scaled its impact and broadened its reach to lift up promising practices, promote a spirit of camaraderie and foster richer dialogue about key issues impacting the community college landscape.

Finally, this year we prepare for the 60th anniversary of NC State College of Education’s doctoral program in Community College Leadership, which we will celebrate next year. In addition to being one of the oldest

community college leadership programs in the nation, the doctoral program is the only one supported by a center like the Belk Center—which allows the program to provide critical learning opportunities for future system leaders.

None of these opportunities, accomplishments or milestones would be possible without the tireless work of our staff, the generous support from our friends and colleagues at the John M. Belk Endowment, and the many contributions of our strategic partners: the North Carolina Association of Community College Presidents, the North Carolina Community College System Office, colleagues at individual colleges, LatinxEd, myFutureNC, EdNC, NC Reconnect collaborators, the University of North Carolina System Office, the Hunt Institute, Achieving the Dream, Aspen Institute’s College Excellence Program, Ascendium Education Group, and the League for Innovation in the Community College, among many others.

As we look ahead to the Belk Center’s next five years, we are tremendously grateful for the depth of these partnerships—and we look forward to continue working together to make new investments in research and create new opportunities for leadership development. In the words of our very own Dallas Herring, “So much good is there just waiting to be done.” We thank you for your dedication and continued support of the Belk Center’s mission and hope that you’ll join us as we continue the important work of advancing economic and social mobility across the state of North Carolina and beyond.

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

LEADERSHIP & LEARNING



EDUCATION, COACHING, AND TOOLS FOR LEARNER-CENTERED LEADERS.



The Belk Center supports North Carolina's community college leaders by providing leadership development and practical resources that help their greatest ideas become our state's best practices. Whether it's an intensive leadership curriculum or in-the-moment guidance, we're ready to provide community college leaders with tools and strategies focused on student success.

CULTIVATING ASPIRING LEADERS:

We offer professional learning and continuing education opportunities to exceptional future community college leaders via the NC State College of Education's doctoral program in Community College Leadership, the North Carolina Community College Leadership Program, and our partnership with the North Carolina Association of Community College Presidents to develop an Aspiring Presidents Institute.

SUPPORTING EXISTING PRESIDENTS:

Through our strategic planning and customized support for colleges and cohort-based communities of practice like our Rural College Leaders Program, we engage presidents at all stages in their careers—and, whenever possible, their teams—to collaboratively learn and problem-solve about student success.

ENGAGING FACULTY AND STAFF:

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

DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERSHIP

Since 2019, the Belk Center has collaborated with NC State's College of Education to coordinate several supports and experiences for students participating in the university's doctoral program in Community College Leadership, including the Executive Mentorship Program, Fellows Program, internship opportunities, dissertation writing support, and more.

WELCOMING NEW STUDENTS, EXECUTIVE MENTORS, & FACULTY:

The 2024 cohort welcomed 15 doctoral students and seven community college executive leaders, who will serve as their mentors. In the last year, the program also welcomed three new faculty members: Dr. Devon Graves joined the program's faculty in Fall 2023, and two additional full-time faculty members—Drs. Catherine Hartman and Makena Stewart—came on board in Fall 2024.



CONNECTING STUDENTS TO NATIONAL CONVERSATIONS ABOUT STUDENT SUCCESS:

The Belk Center Fellows program connected 18 doctoral students to conference opportunities this spring. In February, seven Fellows attended Achieving the Dream's DREAM 2024 conference in Orlando, Florida. In March, 11 Fellows attended the League for Innovation in the Community College's Innovations Conference in Anaheim, California.

CELEBRATING 60 YEARS:

Together with our colleagues in the College of Education, the Belk Center is delighted to kick off a celebration of 60 years of the doctoral program's work to develop exceptional community college leaders. As part of the celebration, we look forward to lifting up the stories of the program's alumni and the profound impact they've had on students, institutions, and our field.



NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

In 2022, the North Carolina Community College Leadership Program (NCCCLP), a cohort-based program for selected mid-career community college professionals identified by their presidents as aspiring leaders, transitioned to its new home at the Belk Center. The approximately 35 participants in each cohort attend multi-day, in-person retreats focused on learning experiences and networking activities. The most recent NCCCLP cohort, which launched this spring, welcomed leaders from 34 of the state's 58 community colleges.

CELEBRATING THE 35TH COHORT'S GRADUATION:

In April, the Belk Center celebrated the graduation of NCCCLP's 35th cohort at Forsyth Technical Community College. President Lisa Chapman of Central Carolina Community College delivered remarks to the program's new graduates.

HONORING DR. PAT AKERS:

In October, the Belk Center hosted a retirement reception for Dr. Pat Akers, who founded NCCCLP in 1989 and led the program for more than three decades.

ASPIRING PRESIDENTS INSTITUTE

In partnership with the North Carolina Association of Community College Presidents (NCACCP), the Belk Center has developed an Aspiring Presidents Institute to expose potential presidential aspirants to the stakeholders and responsibilities of presidential leadership in our state's community college system. Each participant will be assigned to a presidential executive mentor, who will provide support and first-hand context about the presidential role, and participants will also engage with legislators, trustees, and North Carolina Community College System representatives.

WELCOMING THE INAUGURAL COHORT:

More than 30 applications from 25 institutions were received as part of the first nominating window. NCACCP's professional development committee selected an inaugural cohort of 17 senior administrators from 15 colleges, who met at the Belk Center in late September for a week of leadership development programming.

RURAL COLLEGE LEADERS PROGRAM

In partnership with Ascendium Education Group and Achieving the Dream, the Belk Center launched the Rural College Leaders Program (RCLP) in early 2022 to support presidents, senior leadership teams, and trustees at 10 rural-serving institutions in their work to improve student success outcomes at their institutions.

HOSTING ADDITIONAL CONVENINGS:

Since the program's launch, leaders from participating colleges convened five times, with a focus on collaboratively identifying opportunities to remove barriers and close gaps in institutional completion rates for students. During the 2023-2024 academic year, the Belk Center hosted two multi-day RCLP convenings and provided workforce data reports for leaders to share with members of their campus communities.

CAPTURING AND SHARING PROGRAM SUCCESSES:

In 2023, the Belk Center received additional funding from Ascendium to evaluate the impact of RCLP and the strategies and best practices being leveraged by participating colleges. More information about this next phase of the project is shared on page 17 of this report.

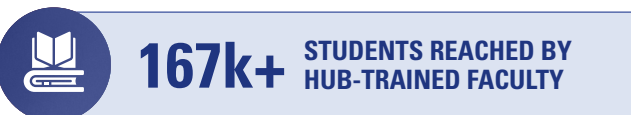


TEACHING & LEARNING HUBS

To further our shared mission of fostering student success, the Belk Center, Achieving the Dream, and the North Carolina Student Success Center (housed within the North Carolina Community College System Office) have established four Teaching and Learning Hubs dedicated to supporting community college faculty and staff. The Hubs—East, West, Central and Piedmont—engage all 58 of the state's community colleges by complementing individual colleges' teaching and learning efforts to support scalable, sustainable professional learning activities for full- and part-time faculty. Since their launch in 2021, the Hubs have worked with local campus networks to offer virtual and face-to-face workshops and seminars for educators.

DEMONSTRATING SIGNIFICANT EARLY REACH AND IMPACT:

To date, 167,281 students across the state have interacted with 2,149 faculty who have attended professional learning sessions from the Teaching and Learning Hubs, and this number continues to grow as the Hubs serve more faculty. Our most recent data, which explored the first three years of Hub operations (between Fall 2021 and Spring 2024), predicted a 6.8 percent increase in the likelihood of fall-to-spring persistence (i.e., retention, graduation, transfer) for each student that takes an additional course with Hub-trained faculty and predicted that if all North Carolina Community College System students enrolled in one additional course taught by Hub-trained faculty, an additional 4,154 students would be retained, transfer, or receive a credential each term.



SHARING INSIGHTS WITH THE FIELD:

Throughout the 2023-2024 academic year, leaders from the state's four Hubs and the Belk Center shared promising practices and early wins with interested peers from across the state and country. Representatives from the East Hub visited Craven Community College for the Pathways to Promise Summit, co-directors of the Piedmont Hub presented three sessions at Virginia Tech's Conference on Higher Education Pedagogy, and co-directors of the West Hub facilitated a webinar for the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development for leaders interested in replicating the work of the Hubs in other states. Belk Center leadership also presented about the initial impacts of the Hubs at Achieving the Dream's 2024 DREAM Conference and at the annual meeting of the American Association of Colleges and Universities and met with representatives from national networks like the Community College Research Center's Postsecondary Teaching with Technology Collaborative and Pellissippi State Community College's Hybrid Teaching and Learning Conference to provide insight into North Carolina's innovative teaching and learning work.

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND CUSTOMIZED SUPPORT FOR COLLEGES

During the 2023-2024 academic year, the Belk Center continued to support colleges' strategic planning efforts and develop other leadership programming and services tailored to the needs of specific institutions. These engagements, programs, and services are developed and facilitated by members of the Belk Center team upon special request.

FACILITATING STRATEGIC PLANNING:

Belk Center team members, in partnership with the NC Community College System Office, are working to provide strategic planning assistance to rural-serving institutions, ensuring the development of robust and actionable strategic plans that align with each institution's mission and values. Nearly 80 percent of North Carolina's 46+ rural-serving community colleges have a strategic plan expiring in the next three years. We're committed to enriching the long-term planning process of these colleges by providing practical tools, including benchmarking and facilitation support, that colleges may not have access to otherwise.

This work is being led by Dr. Zach Barricklow, who joined both teams in January 2024 in the dual role of Associate Vice President for Strategy and Rural Innovation for the System Office and Liaison for Rural Engagement and Research for the Belk Center. The System Office and Belk Center have engaged in strategic planning services with Rockingham Community College, Robeson Community College, Stanly Community College, Carteret Community College, Blue Ridge Community College, Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute, Western Piedmont Community College, Southwestern Community College, and Central Carolina Community College.

SUPPORTING NATIONAL PARTNERS:

The Belk Center also engaged with the four campuses of the College of Southern Maryland to conduct focus groups with students, faculty, and staff. The findings of these focus groups were analyzed and compiled into a report that will be used by the college's president (and NC State alumna), Dr. Yolanda Wilson, and her leadership team as they develop a new strategic plan.

PILOTING COHORT-BASED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

In partnership with Wayne and Nash Community Colleges, the Belk Center launched a year-long professional development series for faculty and administrative leaders featuring online and in-person convenings and asynchronous learning. The sessions are focused on leading for student success, effective team management, and guiding internal change. The first session, held in February, convened 35 participants from both colleges at Nash Community College, and a second in-person session was held in April at Wayne Community College.

RESEARCH & INSIGHTS



GENERATING AND SHARING ACTIONABLE DATA:

As an evaluation and learning partner and through initiatives like the PACE Climate Survey, we produce timely and relevant knowledge that colleges, their leaders, and other stakeholders can use to advance student success.

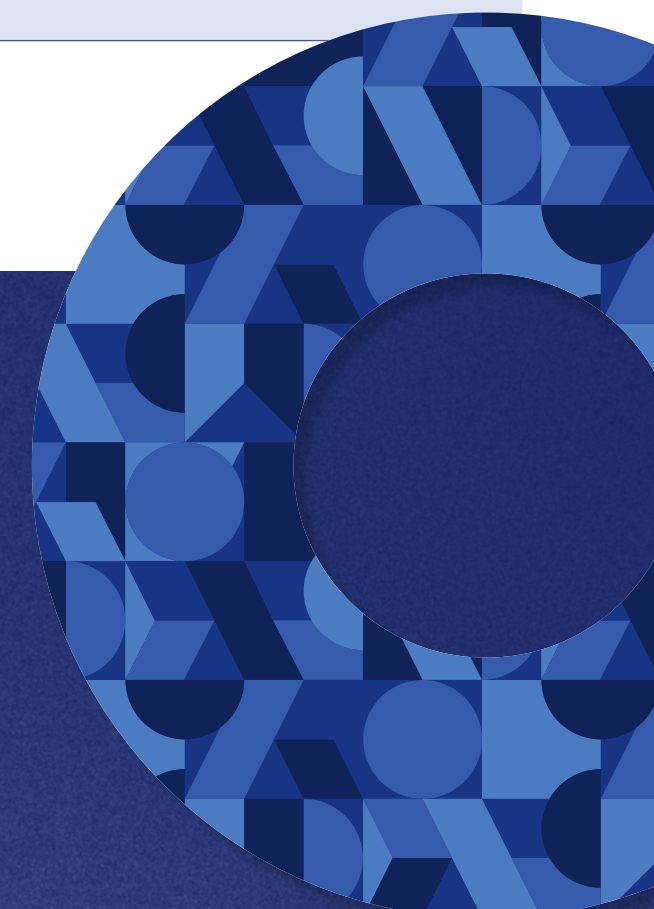
PRODUCING REPORTS AND BRIEFS:

Guided by the needs of colleges, their leaders, and other key decision-makers, we pursue high-impact research focused on what's working, what's not working, and what is yet to be learned in our field. We translate our findings into useful tools and resources that align with and are informed by our programming.

ALIGNED, ACTIONABLE RESEARCH TO INFORM POLICY AND PRACTICE.



Community college leaders need reliable insights they can act on quickly to improve student outcomes. Through reports, surveys, case studies, and other resources, the Belk Center delivers research and data to drive systemic change in North Carolina and around the country.



EVALUATION AND LEARNING PROJECTS

The Belk Center supports colleges, peer organizations, and grantmakers as an evaluation and learning partner, helping them better understand the impact of innovative projects and initiatives, explore specific research topics of interest, and share lessons learned and promising practices within the field.

NC RECONNECT:

Belk Center researchers continue to compile and analyze quantitative and qualitative data on adult students' re-enrollment and retention from colleges participating in [NC Reconnect](#), a John M. Belk Endowment (JMBE)-led initiative to connect and inform as many adults as possible about the variety of fast, flexible, and affordable education and job training programs that North Carolina's community colleges have to offer. During the 2023-2024 academic year, Belk Center researchers conducted site visits with colleges participating in the third NC Reconnect cohort—Catawba Valley Community College, College of The Albemarle, Brunswick Community College, Davidson-Davie Community College, and Edgecombe Community College—and spoke with students, faculty, staff, and leaders to learn more about their experiences re-engaging adult learners. Guided by what we've learned, our team continues to develop new briefs and resources (several of which are highlighted in more detail on pages 20-21 of this report) and facilitate presentations at NC Reconnect meetings and other events like JMBE's second annual Adult Learner Convening in April and Forsyth Technical Community College's Adult Learner Summit in August.

RURAL COLLEGE LEADERS PROGRAM:

In 2023, the Belk Center received funding from Ascendium Education Group to evaluate the impact of the Rural College Leaders Program (RCLP) and the strategies and best practices being leveraged by participating colleges. In the last year, the Belk Center's rural research team visited each of the study institutions to delve into the institutional changes happening as a result of their participation in RCLP. Researchers met with college presidents, executive teams, deans, vice presidents, student support staff, and faculty to better understand the efforts they're prioritizing.

Topics being explored include:

- **Catawba Valley Community College's efforts to reinvigorate new student orientation to effectively reach all students**
- **Stanly Community College's development of guided pathways for part-time students and efforts to share course information with students in meaningful, dynamic ways**
- **Isothermal Community College's shift from a 16- to eight-week course schedule to increase enrollment, retention, and degree completion**



BE GREAT IN EIGHT:

In July, the Belk Center collaborated with Isothermal Community College and the North Carolina Student Success Center to host a day-long workshop to share lessons learned about the college's shift to an eight-week course schedule. Representatives from 14 North Carolina community colleges and one Wyoming community college attended the inaugural event. The Belk Center will also be highlighting rural college leader innovations from Stanly Community College (contextualized English courses) and Catawba Valley Community College (redesigning onboarding and student success courses) based on site visits to the colleges in Spring 2024. Throughout the year, the Belk Center also engaged in several in-person and virtual convenings co-hosted by Ascendium and the American Institute for Research alongside representatives from the [other teams awarded rural research grants](#).

FOOTHILLS FORWARD:

In early 2024, the Belk Center was named as an external evaluation partner for the new Foothills Forward (Facilitating an Occupation-Ready Workforce by Addressing Regional Demands) initiative, led by McDowell Technical Community College, Isothermal Community College, and Western Piedmont Community College in collaboration with several regional employers and local workforce development boards. The project received funding from the U.S. Department of Education's Rural Postsecondary Education and Economic Development (RPED) Program, and the Belk Center's mixed-methods evaluation is designed to better understand students' experiences accessing and navigating the resources offered through the Foothills Forward model and determine the impact of the colleges' implementation of these new student supports on student success, retention, and completion.

TRAIN THE EAST:

In 2023, four rural community colleges in eastern North Carolina—Lenoir Community College, Wayne Community College, James Sprunt Community College and Sampson Community College—received a grant from the Anonymous Trust with support from myFutureNC to launch an innovative partnership to support Latine workforce development. As part of the two-year initiative, known as Train the East, participating colleges will receive \$250,000 to recruit, train, and support students from Latine communities. The Belk Center is collaborating with participating presidents, their teams, and LatinxED to learn more about their strategic deployment of these resources, including the supports they are prioritizing for Latine learners. As we move forward, we will join LatinxED and interview community members to learn more about the impact of the initiative on families and communities throughout the region.



CENTRAL CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE:

In 2022, the Belk Center was named as an external evaluation partner for Navigate, Central Carolina Community College's Department of Education Title III Strengthening Institutions grant. The evaluation's qualitative and continuous improvement design is meant to support the implementation of education navigators through organizational redesign and a new client relationship management software - Slate. The goals of these interventions are to 1) increase curriculum student enrollment, retention, and graduation; and 2) improve student and employee satisfaction with processes and communication. In the 2023-2024 academic year, our evaluation focused on defining a "student-centered service" framework for the Division of Student Onboarding and Success.

INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION SCIENCES GRANT:

In late 2023, the Belk Center was named as a research partner for a U.S. Department of Education/Institute of Education Sciences grant to examine the relationship between the extent to which college credits earned in high school can be successfully transferred to a postsecondary institution and applied to a degree or major. The four-year \$566,946 grant will be administered in collaboration with UNC-Greensboro and supports the shared goal across all of North Carolina's higher education institutions of improving transfer outcomes within the state. The Belk Center is responsible for leading the analysis of credit transfer using institutional data at two UNC System institutions and three North Carolina community colleges. The Belk Center will also host biannual convenings in years three and four of the grant to share findings with key stakeholders across North Carolina.

PACE CLIMATE SURVEY

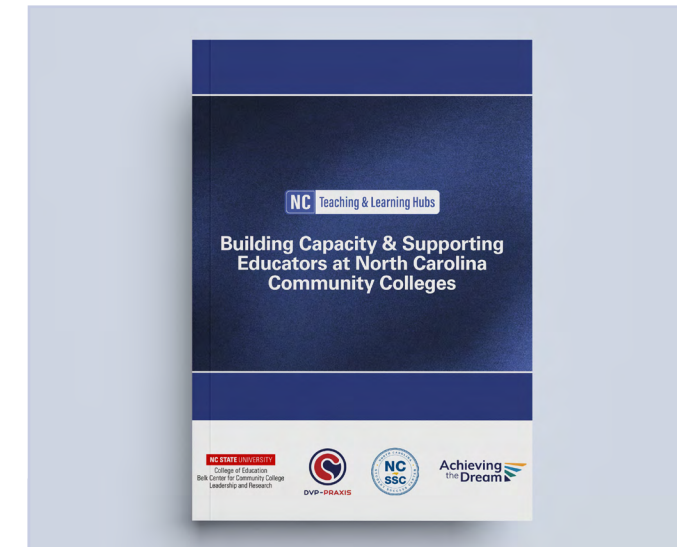
The PACE Climate Survey continues to be a valuable tool leveraged by colleges and their leaders to better understand their institutional culture and overall capacity to promote student success. The survey, which explores how college employees perceive and experience their work, helps leaders gauge their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

As the PACE Survey celebrates its 30th anniversary this year, we are recognizing our more than 170 [community college partners](#)—among them, six Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence semifinalists—who have administered the survey over the last three decades and honoring their commitment to utilizing campus climate data to understand institutional culture and overall capacity to promote student success. This year alone, the Belk Center team worked with 31 community colleges across 14 states to administer the survey.



REPORTS AND BRIEFS

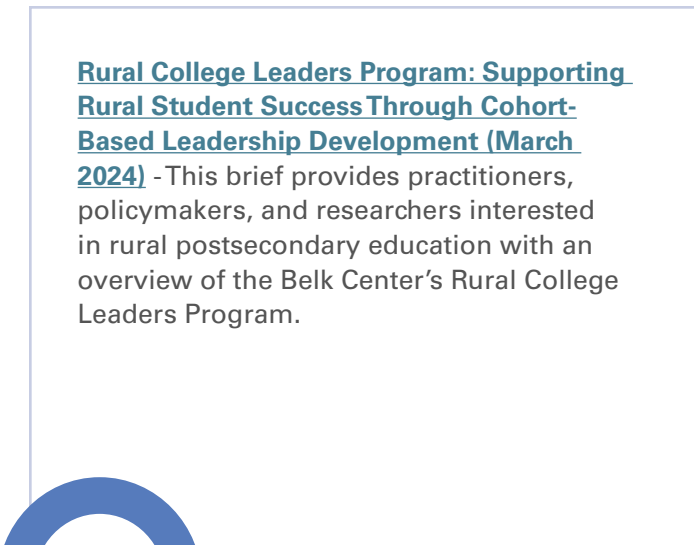
Throughout the last year, the Belk Center published several reports and research briefs on timely and relevant topics for our community college colleagues across the state. Highlights include:



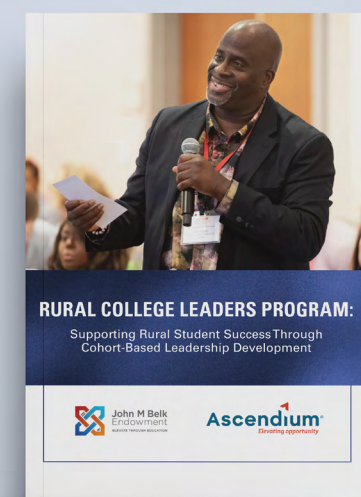
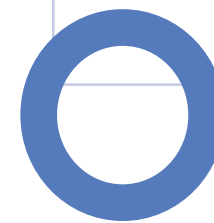
[Building Capacity & Supporting Educators at North Carolina Community Colleges \(June 2024\)](#) - This comprehensive guidebook explores the state's Teaching and Learning Hub model and its early impacts and is informed by the inaugural [Teaching & Learning Toolkit](#), released by Achieving the Dream in 2020.



[The Five Ps of the Adult Learner Journey through the Community College: A Conceptual Framework \(June 2024\)](#) - This open-access article, published in Innovative Higher Education, offers an in-depth overview of the adult learner journey via a conceptual framework meant to guide community colleges toward positive adult learner outcomes.

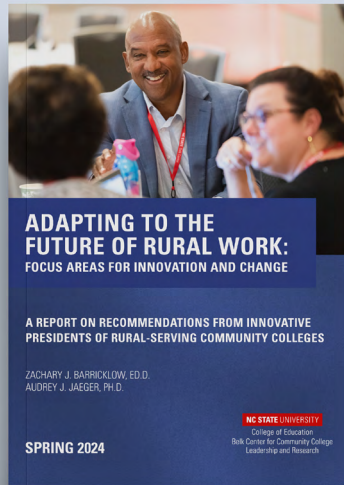


[Rural College Leaders Program: Supporting Rural Student Success Through Cohort-Based Leadership Development \(March 2024\)](#) - This brief provides practitioners, policymakers, and researchers interested in rural postsecondary education with an overview of the Belk Center's Rural College Leaders Program.

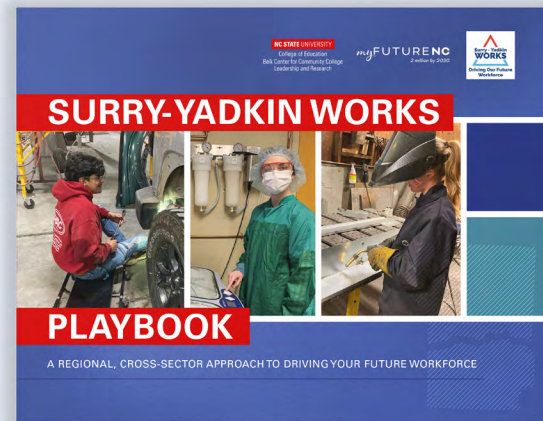


RURAL COLLEGE LEADERS PROGRAM:
Supporting Rural Student Success Through Cohort-Based Leadership Development

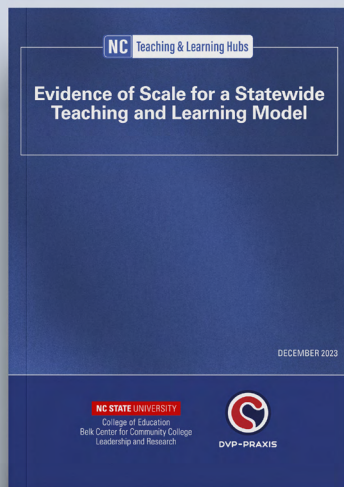




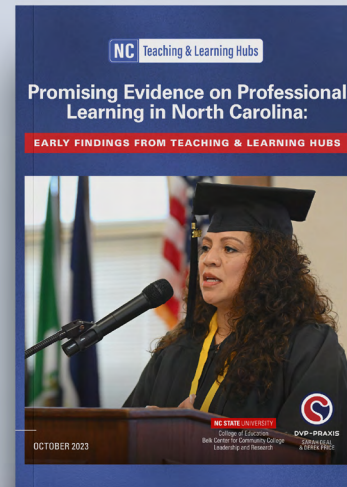
Adapting to The Future of Rural Work: Focus Areas for Innovation and Change (February 2024) - This report shares advice from community college presidents across 15 states, including North Carolina, centering on recommendations for areas of innovation that rural-serving institutions should consider to more closely align with the changing nature of work.



Surry-Yadkin Works Playbook (December 2023) - This resource, developed in partnership with myFutureNC, shares tips and best practices from a promising work-based learning model that is changing the game for students, employers, and communities in northwestern North Carolina.



Evidence of Scale for a Statewide Teaching and Learning Model (January 2024) - This second-year report on the Teaching and Learning Hubs documents the growth and reach of the Hubs and shares emergent evidence about the relationship between faculty participation and students' course success rates.



Promising Evidence on Professional Learning in North Carolina (October 2023) - This report shares early insights into the experiences of participants in Teaching and Learning Hub-offered professional learning, including what changes they are making to their teaching practices because of their participation and how they expect these changes to influence student success.



Photo Credit: EdNC

PARTNERSHIPS & CONVENINGS



INVESTING IN INNOVATIVE, CROSS-SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS:

We develop and contribute to collaborative, student-centered approaches to problem-solving in service to our state's community colleges, with a special focus on initiatives that support key student populations like adult and Latine learners and transfer students.

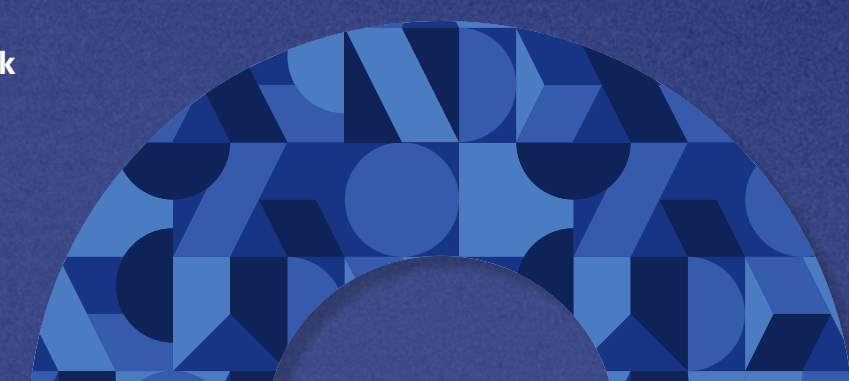
COLLABORATING WITH STATE AND NATIONAL CHANGEMAKERS:

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

CATALYZING CHANGE TOGETHER.



The Belk Center creates opportunities for North Carolina's 58 community colleges and the people who support them to come together to drive change. By connecting stakeholders and breaking down barriers, we broaden the network of support for North Carolina's community colleges and make space for institutional and systemic transformation.



DALLAS HERRING LECTURE

A record 1,500 participants signed up to join the Belk Center virtually and in person for the ninth annual Dallas Herring Lecture, delivered by Dr. Falecia D. Williams, president of Prince George's Community College, and more than 15 community colleges across the state hosted watch parties for faculty and staff. In her lecture, "Daring To Be Extraordinary: Transforming the Structure of How We Work," Dr. Williams discussed her experiences guiding her college through the COVID-19 pandemic and her team's efforts to turn challenges into opportunity and change into long-lasting transformation. Her remarks highlighted the college's strategic focus on adapting, re-imagining, and creating new processes and practices to yield extraordinary results for students. In response, J.B. Buxton, president of Durham Technical Community College, offered several questions to help community college leaders assess areas for growth and opportunities to drive transformation, and Dr. Shelley White, president of Haywood Community College, discussed the importance of responding swiftly to emerging challenges in rural communities.

As in years past, 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. Williams' remarks.



SUPPORTING LATINE LEARNERS

Building on the success of the first cohort of *Avanza*—an innovative community of practice for community colleges that are advocates for Latine students and/or play critical roles in recruiting, supporting, and graduating Latine students—the Belk Center collaborated with LatinxEd and the Hunt Institute to engage a second cohort of colleges in *Avanza* programming throughout the 2023-2024 academic year.

Through a series of shared learning experiences, the Belk Center also deepened its relationship with LatinxEd in pursuit of other collaborative opportunities to support Latine learners. In February, LatinxEd's co-founder and executive director, Elaine Utin, joined members of the Belk Center's team at Achieving the Dream's DREAM 2024 Conference in Orlando, Florida. In April, the Belk Center joined LatinxEd and representatives from the Governor's Advisory Council on Hispanic/Latino Affairs for a site visit to Greene Central High School and Lenoir Community College to learn more about several efforts underway to advance Latine student success in eastern North Carolina, including the Train the East initiative described earlier in this report.



ADVANCING TRANSFER PRACTICES

To sustain North Carolina's status as a national business leader and unlock additional economic opportunity through clear and affordable pathways to bachelor's degrees, the Belk Center focused much of its efforts in the last year on serving the state as a leader in transfer research and a provider of strategic support to help more students realize the benefits of transfer.

Building upon our ongoing partnership with the Aspen Institute to accelerate existing efforts to increase transfer student success, the Belk Center continued convening leaders to identify common priorities among two- and four-year institutions and developing tangible collective transfer goals for North Carolina's higher education systems and institutions. This cross-system and stakeholder group, consisting of a dozen presidents and senior system leaders from across the University of North Carolina System, North Carolina Community College System, and North Carolina's Independent Colleges and Universities, is focused on supporting a broader ecosystem for community college transfer students in the state. The Belk Center also engaged in the University of North Carolina System Faculty Fellows program, whose focus this year is on improving, supporting, and sustaining transfer student access and success amid changing community college demographics and declining enrollment.

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