

The Open Door

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Ralls sets priorities for system presidency

By Peggy Beach, System Office,
Public Affairs

When Dr. R. Scott Ralls became president of the North Carolina Community College System in May, he faced several challenges both personal and professional.

“Obviously, the biggest challenge was timing,” Ralls said. “I walked right into a legislative budget session while trying to establish priorities for the system. Also, my first week here, my mother-in-law died, and my family is still in the process of moving, so it’s been challenging.”

Ralls is quick to point out that many community college students face difficulties while going to classes. “Our students overcome more serious challenges every day. They have jobs and children and are still going to college,” he said. “I always remember that when I have a difficult day.”

Ralls said he became interested in work force issues while visiting Japan in 1986 as part of a five-month postgraduate study program.

“I visited a facility in Yokohama. It was so big and had so much automated equipment,” he said. “I began studying technology and work force issues right then. I knew the future was here.” He said he believes that this interest put him on the path to the system presidency.

While attending graduate school at the University of Maryland, Ralls lived in a Japanese language school in Washington,



Dr. R. Scott Ralls, N.C. Community College System president, speaks at the 2008 spring graduation ceremony at Vance-Granville Community College. Since becoming system president in May, Ralls has visited numerous campuses around the state. (VGCC Photo)

D.C., where he learned how to speak Japanese. He said he can still understand the language when it’s spoken but can no longer speak it fluently.

Ralls said the United States and North Carolina are now facing three great challenges that collide with each other and greatly affect both the economy and work force.

“The first challenge is the increasing number of baby boomers who are retiring,” Ralls said. “We will have to produce more graduates to meet the demand.”

International competition has also been increasing, Ralls said. “Many more nations

around the world are focusing on education and economic and work force development, so we have to step up our efforts too,” he said, naming China, India, Brazil and South Korea as just a few competitors.

The new system president also said that too many high school students are dropping out of school. “We can’t let them get so discouraged that they drop out. They’ve got to get an education,” Ralls said.

In a meeting with the staff of the System Office in early May, Ralls outlined 10 strategic emphases designed to address these and other challenges. They are to:

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- Foster system simplification and facilitate colleges to be nimble, effective, efficient and accountable
- Enhance completion rates and bridges between programs
- Foster opportunities and clearer pathways for low-income students
- Expand health care programs
- Re-energize technical education
- Develop stronger training infrastructure and focused partnerships to enhance economic development
- Support dropout prevention and increase outreach, awareness and college-readiness of middle and high school students
- Enhance 2+2 partnerships through distance education and provide focus to the strategic workforce areas of teachers, nurses and engineers
- Focus on utility of technology

to enhance student learning and customer service and promote economies of scale with educational partners

- Foster community college champions and increase community college awareness

Ralls believes that community colleges are the key to addressing the state's transition from a manufacturing-based economy to an information-based economy. He expressed this belief in a signature piece he wrote for a 230-page study conducted by the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research (*see sidebar article*). The study was released in May.

Ralls said he believes that community colleges are ready to meet these challenges because they are the most flexible of institutions in responding to the needs of their communities. "What is remarkable to me is the innovation at our community colleges," he said. "Necessity is the mother of invention. We have many talented and motivated faculty and staff to serve our students."

Center releases study on future of community colleges

In May, the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research released a 230-page study on the future of the state's community colleges. The study included a comprehensive article from Dr. R. Scott Ralls, president of the North Carolina Community College System.

Among the study's findings:

- Community colleges are the key to addressing the transition in the state's economy from a manufacturing base to a technology base.
- Community colleges need improved financial aid programs.
- Changes are needed for the community colleges to address the shortages of nurses, teachers and biotechnology workers.

For more information on the study, check the Center's Web site at www.nccppr.org.

Community colleges raise the bar for performance standards

Colleges still great for North Carolina business

Perfect. That's the score North Carolina's community colleges earned from business in the 2008 Critical Success Factors report, as all 58 community colleges met or exceeded stringent requirements for client satisfaction with customized training.

Exceptional. That's the designation earned by seven North Carolina community colleges who met the challenge of new, improved, and much tougher performance measures in the annual reporting process required by the General Assembly. Those colleges are: Bladen, Coastal Carolina, Sandhills, Southwestern, Wayne, Western Piedmont and Wilkes. Their reward for reaching this level is to split all college budget funds that are returned to the System Office after all the bills are paid.

The full report is a compilation of assessments of the 58 community colleges on indicators of service provided during the 2006-07 academic year. This reporting is part of the strict accountability requirements of the General Assembly. Five areas are covered: student success, work force development, diverse populations learning

needs, resources and technology.

Indicators show that the customized training provided to students by every one of the 58 colleges met or exceeded the expectations of the businesses that employ those trained. Also, the students at 56 colleges were more than satisfied with the academic programs offered there.

This is the eighth year that the report has included designation of top-performing institutions. Recognizing the need to raise the bar to spur continued improvement, the State Board of Community Colleges modified the requirements with permission from the General Assembly. Previously, colleges had to meet six core indicators of the 12 performance standards to be deemed superior. Working with representatives from the colleges, the State Board changed the designation to "exceptional institutional performance," refined the standards to reduce the number to eight, established the requirement that colleges meet or exceed all eight and imposed two additional criteria for "exceptional" status—87 percent of their students who transferred to University of North Carolina institutions had to

perform as well as native UNC sophomores and juniors within a designated time and, for each licensure or certification exam for which the college had the responsibility of verifying a student as being prepared for the exam, 70 percent or more of their students who took licensure or certification exams had to pass the first time they took them.

Other areas measured include the progress of basic skills students, the passing rates of students taking developmental courses, the success rates of developmental students taking college level courses, and the retention, graduation and transfer rates of curriculum students.

Fifteen colleges met or exceeded all eight performance standards this year, even with the changes. Four of those colleges are missing data in two areas, but they were not penalized because the problem was at the System Office, not the college.

The complete 2008 Critical Success Factors report is available on the North Carolina Community College System Web page at: <http://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/Publications/docs/Publications/csf2008.pdf>.

Students unearth Spanish, Indian artifacts in N.C.

By Victoria Hartz, Summer Intern,
System Office, Public Affairs

This summer, 22 students from **Western Piedmont Community College** (WPCC) are helping to excavate a 16th-century Spanish fort that archaeologists say was the earliest European settlement in the interior of the U.S., having been established decades before the Lost Colony and Jamestown and only two years after St. Augustine on the Floridian coast. They hope the excavation will yield evidence of how Spanish soldiers interacted with Native Americans during their conquest of the New World.

“This is going to change history textbooks,” said Mary Charlotte Safford, dean of humanities and social sciences at WPCC. “It’s local history, state history and global history, and our students have the opportunity to dig it up and hold it in their hands.”

The 12-acre site, named the Berry site after the family who has owned it since the 1770s, is located in Burke County, just 10 miles north of the WPCC campus. Archaeologists have identified it not only as the location of Fort San Juan, but also as the once-occupied native town of Joara.

The excavation project is a partnership between Warren Wilson College—a four-year private college in Swannanoa—and WPCC in Morganton. Every summer, Dr. David Moore of Warren Wilson College, Dr. Robin Beck of the University of Oklahoma and Dr. Chris Rodning of Tulane University lead a field school at the site. WPCC has helped fund the project since 2001.

The field school is a credit course offered through WPCC’s humanities department but available to students in any program of study. The course combines lectures on cultural history with hands-on instruction about the basics of archaeology.

“Without the community college, I would have never done it.”

-David Heavner, a fourth-time participant in the Berry site archaeological field school



Western Piedmont Community College students help uncover a 16th-century Spanish fort located near Morganton. Twenty-two WPCC students are participating in the excavation this summer.

“The collaboration has worked out very nicely,” Moore said. “It gives us the chance to work with local folks and get them more involved in the project.”

The half-acre plot on which students are working this summer consists of five Spanish housing structures arranged around a central plaza and located beside a Native American ceremonial mound. Moore said he expects to eventually find a palisade, or staked fence, that links all five structures.

“Mainly what we’re interested in is trying to understand as much as we can about these buildings, how the Spanish were living at this site and how the interactions between the Spanish and the Indians were carried out,” Moore said. “We’re hoping that the interiors of the buildings will give us some clues.”

Sixteenth-century accounts indicate that Juan Pardo, a Spanish military captain, led an expedition through the upper Catawba River Valley in 1567 in an attempt to claim the region for Spain and find a route to the silver mines of Mexico. He built six forts in what is today the Carolinas and Tennessee.

The soldiers at Fort San Juan coexisted peacefully with the Native Americans for 18 months, but then, according to documents, the natives attacked. They killed all but one soldier, burned the fort and buried the debris.

Moore said recent archaeological evidence corroborates these Spanish accounts. “The excavations have confirmed that the buildings were standing for a relatively short period of time and that all five were burned at the same time, then deliberately covered, which seems to suggest a single event,” Moore said. “But we don’t know if it was an ambush or if it was a situation in which the Indians had already killed the soldiers, and we don’t know what motivated the attack.”

Fort San Juan is the only fort from the Pardo expedition that’s been found. In 1994, Moore and Beck were the first to posit the claim of its location in Burke County, citing remarkable similarities between the pottery found at the Berry site and that found at Santa Elena, the Spanish capital of continental America during the 16th century, located in present-day South Carolina.

Since 2001, students and archaeologists have been finding lead shot, nails, copper lacing tips for clothing, links of chain mail, glass beads and olive jar shards—all of

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N.C. community colleges break through learning barriers with nationwide initiative

By Victoria Hartz, Summer Intern,
System Office, Public Affairs

In fall 2006, six of North Carolina's community colleges joined the Breaking Through initiative to help low-skilled, low-income adults transition from non-credit to credit programs. Although funding will end in September, the concept behind the initiative is still running strong, having served as a launch pad into new and lasting institutional changes that will better serve community college students.

"Breaking Through is changing lives," said Dr. Christine Kelly-Kleese, dean and department head of developmental education and instructional support at Durham Technical Community College. "It's providing experiences for these students in which they're being celebrated and encouraged. It's letting them know they have the potential to do this."

Twenty-six community colleges nationwide participate in Breaking Through, a partnership of Jobs for the Future (JFF) and the National Council for Workforce Education (NCWE).

North Carolina has more participating colleges than any state and is the only college to have taken a system approach.

"What's unique about North Carolina is that we're getting together and sharing our best practices so that other colleges can benefit," said Audrey Bailey, public information officer, System Office. "Our Breaking Through colleges are presenting at system conferences so that other colleges can learn what works and what doesn't."

The project was motivated by the need for improved data tracking. JFF and NCWE are urging community colleges to better monitor student participation and track progress toward program goals to ensure that every student is obtaining a college degree.

A holistic approach

Breaking Through is designed for students experiencing life issues that hinder their education. Strategies are personalized, fitted to the unique circumstances of each student.

According to the National Center for



Quincy Wright, center, tutors students Jeremy Allen and Patricia Rodriguez-Hernandez as part of the Breaking Through initiative.

the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, almost half the students who leave adult education do so because of non-instructional factors, such as the loss of child care, a job change, personal or family illness, a change in housing or transportation challenges.

"Not all elements work together for adult students like they do for students right out of high school," said Vonna Viglione, resource development coordinator, System Office. "We want to address both the academic and nonacademic needs of our students when we're deciding on a pathway for them."

Funding

The North Carolina GlaxoSmithKline Foundation (NCGSK) funded the initiative in North Carolina.

JFF and NCWE chose Durham Tech to be a Leadership College based on its prior commitment to innovation in learning, entitling it to the bulk of the funding. There are seven Leadership Colleges nationwide.

The NCGSK grant also enabled five of the state's community colleges to participate as Learning Colleges, meaning that they receive travel funds to participate in the semi-annual peer learning meetings, during which the nation's community colleges, Breaking Through partners, evaluators and technical assistance providers share lessons learned from their work.

Leading the way: Durham Technical Community College

Durham Tech's approach is based on a series of milestones and incentive awards of

Only 7 percent of students enrolled in Adult Basic Education in the U.S. complete their GED, and only 4 percent of those who obtain a GED go on to earn a two-year degree, according to a 1998 review by the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy.

Breaking Through is seeking to increase those numbers to 100 percent by using the following strategies to promote seamless education:

1. Reorganize colleges
2. Accelerate learning
3. Assure labor market payoffs
4. Provide comprehensive supports

up to \$475 in cash and bookstore vouchers. Students receive an incentive when they enroll in and complete certain programs and when they show progress, as measured by attendance and test scores.

"We believe that in order to get them to that point (of self-sufficiency), we need to support them now," Kelly-Kleese said. "But instead of just handing them the money, we're building the funds in as incentives so that every time they meet with success, we're rewarding them."

In addition, Durham Tech has hired two Breaking Through faculty members who contextualize the curriculum, three peer mentors who have already transitioned to college and a case manager/counselor.

"A student's connection with a person on a college campus can make a difference between them persisting or not," Kelly-Kleese said. "We need someone who's trained to have conversations with these students, to engage them in a real way."

To receive Breaking Through services and incentives, students have to sign a contract indicating their intent to eventually transition into college. "We tell them that their goal needs to be to walk across the stage twice—once with a high school diploma and once with a college degree," Kelly-Kleese said. "If they're willing to commit to that path, we're willing to put everything we have behind them."

Kelly-Kleese said Durham Tech will take on the financial responsibility

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of Breaking Through when funding is terminated this fall.

Davidson County Community College

Pat Phillips, associate dean of basic skills at Davidson CC, said the college's major innovation under the initiative has been to contextualize the curriculum.

"What we do is we take the first textbook a student would use in a degree program, then we pull paragraphs from it and begin to introduce them to the content while they're still in basic skills," Phillips said. "That way, they're more prepared when they enter their career path."

Accelerated transition rates attest to the success of the new curriculum. This year, 82 percent of students who used the contextualized curriculum at Davidson CC have since transitioned into a credit program.

Phillips said the college has benefited greatly from peer learning. "It's helped us see what people are doing in other parts of the country so we can draw from those methods and make them our own."

Forsyth Technical Community College

Forsyth Tech is focusing on four areas of development: assessments, advising, academics and human resource development.

"There are a lot of approaches, but one goal: to help students go beyond short-term training and see the big picture," said Michael E. Harris, dean of job readiness and community services at Forsyth Tech. "We believe that if we're going to give students that intent, then we have to work together with the community to break down those barriers."

The college is partnering with local agencies, such as the Employment Security Commission and Goodwill Industries, to make sure students are provided with basic resources.

Harris considers the college's improvement in retention and recruitment to be the primary success at Forsyth Tech.

Pamlico Community College

Breaking Through has prompted Pamlico CC to identify 11 distinct career pathways and to reorganize its continuing education programs into two groupings, each with its own director.

A major success for Pamlico CC has been to cut in half the amount of time it takes students to earn a GED. Under the initiative, students starting out with skills below the ninth-grade level have been earning a GED within an average of 10

weeks, said Dr. Clark W. Dimond III, dean of institutional advancement at Pamlico CC.

This success is due in part to the use of a self-paced learning model in the college's basic skills classes. The college has also accelerated student progress by compressing two semesters of basic math into one through a hybrid course involving both classroom and online instruction.

"The most important thing for our students to understand is that getting a GED isn't the end," Dimond said. "It's really just the beginning." He said Pamlico CC is now assessing its students' needs early on so that by the time students complete their GED, they'll know the next step to take and will be prepared to take it.

"This is going to change the way North Carolina operates."

-Michael E. Harris, dean of job readiness and community services at Forsyth Tech

Pitt Community College

Pitt CC is focusing on creating degree pathways from multiple entry points so that all students can achieve academic and work force success, regardless of the level at which they're entering. The college is also working to connect on- and off-campus resources.

Thus far, Pitt CC has identified its starting population as well as specific entry and exit points for degree programs.

"We're still in the starting stages, but just the level of commitment and energy we're seeing lets us know this is something the students are interested in," said Cheri White, who was hired in February as an achievement coach for Breaking Through students. "It gives students a sense of accountability and responsibility, and it's to the point where they're actually seeking me out."

In May, Pitt CC formed an advisory council to discuss further strategies for student success. These strategies should be in place by next summer, White said.

South Piedmont Community College

South Piedmont CC has developed its first degree pathway for health technology.

The college created a detailed plan for students interested in pursuing the field, listing the jobs for which the academic pathway will prepare them and the starting pay for entry level positions. The plan also sets program prerequisites and gives a recommended timetable for completion.

Linda Kappauf, director of human resource development at South Piedmont CC, said the president of the college wants to develop a career pathway for all disciplines by the 2008-09 academic year.

In addition to mapping careers, the college has also hired a support counselor for students. "The best thing we did was hire Makena Stewart," Kappauf said. "That was the piece that was missing."

Breaking Through students are required to meet with counselor Stewart once a week. Kappauf said Stewart gives students an entry point into the program but then tries to gradually wean them away from herself, "because the whole point is to make them independent and self-sufficient," Kappauf said.

Spreading the impact

Now that the results are in, the Breaking Through mission is fanning out to other community colleges throughout the state.

"This isn't in a vacuum," Kappauf said. "We want colleges to be able to call us and ask, 'How did you do so-and-so?' We want to share what we've learned through this initiative and teach colleges how to develop similar models."

Harris said the initiative has served as an impetus into new and greater things for the state's community colleges.

"This is going to change the way North Carolina operates," Harris said. "It strengthens the idea of seamless education and it really will empower these students to get that degree."

The Open Door

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The Open Door is an information and idea exchange for employees and friends of the North Carolina Community College System. The ideas and opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the official policy or view of the State Board of Community Colleges or the Community College System.

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AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

Community college students start state government internships

By Victoria Hartz, Summer Intern, System Office, Public Affairs

Two of North Carolina's community college students are participating in a paid internship with the state government this summer, and they're learning everything from coloring book design to spatial enablement.

Jeff Booker of **Pitt Community College** and Meena Patel of **Wake Technical Community College** are two of 100 college students statewide who were offered a position in the program. The North Carolina Internship Council selected these students from a pool of 586 applicants. Booker, 34, is working for the Commission of Indian Affairs to develop a children's coloring/activity book about the state's American Indian tribes. Patel, 60, is working as a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technician for the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

"I'm absolutely loving it," Booker said of his internship. "I applied because I wanted to be able to use my creative ability for something productive, and I thought it would be fun to learn about a different culture."

Since he started the internship May 27, Booker has been conducting research on the American Indian tribes that live in North Carolina,

finding out about their histories, their cultural practices and the organizations that support them. He must then adapt this information to a coloring/activity book format that educates and appeals to school-aged children.



Jeff Booker is designing an activity book to teach kids about North Carolina's Indian tribes.

The book will be used as an online resource for North Carolina's elementary school teachers. It will include stories, questions, maps and activities that teachers can print out and use in the classroom.

"It's going to be a much broader resource than what was originally anticipated, and that's because of Jeff's background and his vision," said Kimberly Hammonds, Booker's supervisor. "We're expecting that teachers in North Carolina will base their American Indian curriculum on this book."

Hammonds said almost all the American Indian resources currently available to teachers are about Western tribes only. "I'm excited that this book will provide information about the tribes specific to North Carolina," she said.

One way in which Booker has been gathering information has been by meeting and interacting with members of the American Indian community, which he said is one of his favorite parts about the job.

"I get to sit down with some of the older American Indians and listen to their stories," Booker said. "I also sit in on the commission's meetings and get to hear tribal leaders speak."

Booker has been collaborating with the Department of Administration's public information office, by which all projects

of the commission must be approved. He's also been drawing on the expertise of department heads and museum directors in the state who deal with American Indian affairs.

"Jeff is really taking initiative and heading this project himself," Hammonds said. "He knows what he wants to see and he's pitching that to the department." By the third week, he had already drawn up some preliminary sketches and designs, she said.

Booker plans to graduate from Pitt Community College in December with an associate's degree in business and elementary education. He then plans to attend East Carolina University as he works toward his bachelor's degree. He said he's mainly interested in the administrative aspect of education and would possibly like to work for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction or the U.S. Department of Education after he graduates and teaches for a few years.

Patel, on the other hand, has been testing out the field of geocoding. Geocoding is the process of taking street addresses in text form and deriving latitude and longitude coordinates for each address so that its location can be displayed on a map. Patel is responsible for geocoding at least three important departmental databases and turning them into GIS datasets that will be published for use by state, federal and local government agencies.

"I like it because it's totally new to me," Patel said. "I'm learning new things all the time. I'm learning about geography and databases and how they can go together."

Meena Patel is entering geographic coordinates into a database to update state records.

Julia Harrell, Patel's supervisor, said the learning curve for this project is steep because it requires an understanding of GIS software. But Patel is progressing nicely, she said.

"Meena did have some background with relational databases, so she has some understanding of data structures and management concepts," Harrell said. "She's a conscientious worker, and she's getting things done."

GIS stores, manipulates and analyzes data, linking together multiple geographic factors in response to queries and presenting the results in a succinct manner. Its map-centric display of information reveals relationships and patterns that may otherwise be hidden.

However, some of the department's records cannot be used with GIS in their current format because they have no location coordinates associated with them. By geocoding database information this summer, Patel will be making it possible for agencies to perform spatial analysis as a decision support function for planning, emergency response and mapping operations.

"Some information is lacking, and some information isn't up-to-date," Patel said. "That's where I come in." She said the task

10th Student Leadership Institute class convenes in Raleigh



Thirty community college students across the state met in June for the first session of the 2008-09 Student Leadership Institute. At above left, students work themselves out of a human knot as part of a team-building exercise. At above right, students participate in an ice-breaker activity.

By Victoria Hartz, Summer Intern, System Office, Public Affairs

The North Carolina Community College Student Leadership Institute (SLI) kicked off its 10th year this June when the newly selected 2008-09 participants met for a weeklong session at Peace College in downtown Raleigh.

During this session, students attended several workshops and created one of their own, which they will take back to their respective campuses for presentation. They also met with state legislators and community college administrators to discuss issues concerning the community college system.

"I really love being around people who have the same leadership goals as me," said Corrie Wilson, a student participant from **Western Piedmont Community College**. "We're all speaking on the same plane. We're having intelligent conversations about how we can improve our schools."

Thirty students across the state were chosen for this leadership training opportunity. Each college can nominate up to two students, and only 30 students can be accepted each year.

Karen Yerby, associate director for student support services at the system office, and Joan McLendon, director of admissions and counseling at **Johnston Community College**, drew up the original proposal for the SLI in 1994. The institute had its first session in summer 1999 under the direction of Yerby and McLendon, who still serve as directors today.

Yerby said the institute was established to help students acquire those personality traits, social skills and habits that go beyond the technical requirements of a job and really mark a person.

"We saw that our students had leadership potential but not the soft skills needed to reach that potential," she said. "We want to help them develop their soft skills so that they can not only get a job, but they can hold a job." She said confidence, professionalism and self-understanding are some of those skills.

When students arrive for the summer session—the first and longest of three throughout the year—they're separated into four groups based on diversity of personality types and are immediately given their group project assignment, which is to create a 50-minute workshop relevant to college students.

"These students have never met each other, yet they only have six days to combine their talents, design a workshop and present it," Yerby said. "It's a very bonding activity

"It's cool to see how people come together from different backgrounds to work toward a common goal. Everyone has something to bring to the table, and you learn something from everyone you meet."

-Jason Britt, 2008 SLI graduate

and it also gives the students a better understanding of how leadership works within a group framework."

Each group is given a \$100 budget and is responsible for creating publicity materials, handouts and a PowerPoint presentation. At the end of the session, each group presents a 15-minute promotional workshop to SLI staff and fellow participants.

Student participant Antonio McNeill of Johnston Community College said the group project taught him the importance of compromise and effective communication.

"I've learned that I have a particular personal process I go through when I'm doing a project, and it's very different from other people's personal processes," McNeill said. "I had to learn to put aside my own way of doing things so that we could come together as a group and actually get things done."

Students also hone their leadership skills through independent projects. For example, each student is required to write at least one article for the session's daily newsletter and introduce a guest speaker.

Students also fill out a daily leadership journal in which they answer questions about themselves, such as what they've learned, how they define leadership or what they'd like to change about themselves. After the spring session, the program directors read the journals, write comments and mail them back to the students.

"Reading the journal after I graduated was one of my favorite parts," said Cyn

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Ragsdale, a 2006 graduate of the institute. “You’re so busy when you’re writing it, but when you actually sit down to read what you wrote, you get to say, ‘I was there, and now I’m here,’ and you can see how much you’ve grown.” She said she still reads her journal to this day.

In addition to participating in three sessions, students are required to create and present two to five workshops on their campus or in their community. This see-do-teach philosophy is the backbone of the program.

“We want students who will share what they’ve learned when they return to their campuses,” Yerby said. Students should be committed not only to improving themselves, she said, but also to improving the leadership competencies of their college peers.

Jaimie Brown, an alumna from the institute’s first class, said the SLI gave her confidence and direction in her life by teaching her a lot about her personality.

“I had been to a different college, I had changed my major, and I was just trying to figure everything out,” Brown said. “And then you go to the Student Leadership Institute, and you learn about yourself and how you function and how others view you.”

Johnathan Martin, a 2003 graduate of the SLI, said his participation in the program gave him a different perspective on leadership. “It made me realize that leadership is servanthood,” Martin said, “and that to be a leader, you have to take into consideration more than just yourself.”

The SLI costs approximately \$30,000 per year to run. Completely free to students, the institute is funded by fees from the

state’s 58 community colleges, ranging in amount from \$150 to \$400 based on the size of the college. There is also a registration fee paid only by the colleges that nominate a student.

This funding has enabled 183 students to come through the program thus far. And with their newly acquired knowledge in public speaking, parliamentary procedure, ethics and etiquette, these graduates are entering the work force with a competitive advantage.

“I never saw myself as a leader,” Ragsdale said, reflecting back on her life before her participation in the SLI. “But the program really brought out a lot of my leadership qualities so that I was able to recognize—hey, I have these qualities—and now I know how to use them to my advantage.”

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which indicate a Spanish presence. They’ve also found numerous Indian artifacts, such as pottery, arrow heads and game pieces.

David Heavner, a retired school teacher, worked at the site for two years through WPCC’s continuing education program. He said the low cost is what enticed him to enroll.

“Without the community college, I would have never done it,” he said. “It’s not very often you get to work with professional archaeologists on a national site, and for the cost of a community college course. David (Moore) is making the site accessible to the public, and it’s a real service to the community.” Heavner now works as a paid assistant at the site.

Moore said the field school emphasizes experiential learning, giving students the opportunity not only to observe archaeologists at work, but also to perform tasks themselves.

“Students learn how to screen all the soil and learn what to watch for,” Moore said. “They learn how to use the tools, how

to do the basic techniques, and they get a good sense of how an archaeological site works.” Moore said students are involved in most aspects of digging, labeling, washing, sorting and cataloging, but those with specialized training do the more detailed analysis, he said.

Professors and administrators from WPCC have also worked at the site. Safford, who participated in 2001, said the experience gave her a deeper appreciation for the culture of the Catawba Indians.

“I’ve never been so dirty in my life, but it was one of the most wonderful experiences I’ve ever had,” she said. “When you pull a piece of pottery off that screen, you’re holding something that was crafted by a native 450 years ago, and it’s magical.” She said she got goose bumps every time she saw fingernail markings in the clay.

Because the majority of participants are inexperienced in archaeology, Warren Wilson College has hired a 14-member crew to work and supervise.

“This isn’t like digging a hole in your backyard,” Heavner said. “There are certain



David Heavner, a former Western Piedmont Community College student, works at an archaeological site building water screens to wash the artifacts students find.

ways you throw dirt and store dirt, and you have to be careful where you step. You get absolutely filthy, but it’s always exciting to see what’s under that next shovelful.”

Moore said he plans to continue his collaboration with WPCC until the entire site is excavated, which he said could take as long as 20 years.

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seemed overwhelming at first because she was unfamiliar with the software, but now that she’s completed the training modules, she feels more comfortable using GIS, she said.

Patel graduated from the University of Mumbai in 1970 with a bachelor’s degree in chemistry. She moved to the U.S. in

1976 and just recently decided to go back to school.

“I wanted to continue my study with information technology and add something more to my knowledge,” Patel said. She’s been attending Wake Tech for one year and plans to earn an associate’s degree in database management systems next spring.

Patel said she’d like to work for the

state after she gets her degree and hopes her internship will give her the experience needed to qualify her for a database management position.

“I’ve enjoyed getting hands-on experience on a real database,” Patel said. “I appreciate the department and supervisor because they’ve taught me that I can do the job.”

New college presidents take office



Dr. Carol S. Spalding is the new president of **Rowan-Cabarrus Community College**. Spalding holds a bachelor's degree in international studies from the University of Louisville in Kentucky and a master's degree in human resource management from Pepperdine University in California. She earned a doctorate in education from Columbia University in New York. She has served as president of the Open

Campus, a student-centered global web of educational services, of Florida Community College at Jacksonville since 1988. Spalding, who takes office in August, will succeed Dr. Richard L. Brownell, who retired in May.



Dr. Catherine Chew is the incoming president of **Craven Community College**. Currently the vice president for academic affairs at Orange County Community College (SUNY Orange) in Middletown, N.Y., Chew earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education from Tennessee Tech University. She also has earned a master's degree in student personnel and a doctorate in career education,

both from Virginia Tech. Chew assumes her duties in the fall. She replaces Dr. R. Scott Ralls, who left Craven to become the system president in May. Chew is no stranger to North Carolina – her mother, son and sister live in Charlotte.

Dr. William Findt is the new president of **Bladen Community College**. Findt earned a bachelor's degree in history from Wake Forest University, a master's degree in higher education administration from Appalachian State University, and a doctorate in higher education administration from Virginia Tech. He was most recently the executive vice president for development and community relations at **Mitchell Community College** and has also worked at **Alamance Community**

College. Findt succeeds Dr. Darrell Page, who retired in June.



Dr. T. Eston "Bud" Marchant is the incoming president at **Central Carolina Community College**. Born and raised in Columbia, S.C., Marchant earned a bachelor of science degree in history and education from the University of South Carolina and a master's degree in education in administration from Winthrop College. He earned a doctorate degree in educational leadership from the University of Sarasota. He has also earned a certificate from the Institute for

Management of Lifelong Education at Harvard University. He has been the vice president for educational affairs at Piedmont Technical College in South Carolina since 2004. Marchant begins his new responsibilities on Aug. 15. He replaces Matt Garrett, who retires on Sept. 1.



Biotech company creates scholarship program

The North Carolina Community College System **BioNetwork** and Biogen Idec have announced the creation of a scholarship program for students interested in obtaining an associate's degree in the biotechnology field. Biogen Idec, located in Research Triangle Park, has donated \$25,000 to the North Carolina Community College System to help students with limited financial resources who demonstrate a commitment to the life sciences industry pursue a two-year degree. Graduates may then join the ranks of the biopharmaceutical industry or go on to pursue a related four-year degree. Students interested in applying for the scholarship should visit www.ncbionetwork.org.

Duke Energy awards grants to community colleges

Four community colleges will share almost \$1 million in the latest grant awards from the Duke Energy Community College Grant Program. **Blue Ridge Community College** will receive \$250,000 to enhance programs in machining and other manufacturing training. **Cleveland Community College** will receive \$250,000 to upgrade and expand its welding program. Welding is also the focus of a \$219,464 grant to **McDowell Technical Community College**. **Forsyth Technical Community College** will receive \$197,372 for

training programs in supply chain management.

"This is an exceptional investment in vital workforce training for manufacturing from one of our most important funding partners," said **Dr. R. Scott Ralls**, president of the North Carolina Community College System. Ralls serves on the program's advisory committee, which awards the grants, with Jim Fain, secretary of the North Carolina Department of Commerce; and Tony Almeida, vice president of business relations and economic development, Duke Energy Carolinas.

Duke Energy began its Community and Technical College Grant Program in 2004. The awards bring the number of grants to 33, with a total investment of almost \$7 million and an additional \$7 million available for future grants. Twenty of the state's 58 community colleges have received grants.

Foundation chair is finalist for national award

Edward J. Snyder Jr., chair of the foundation at **Stanly Community College**, has been named the regional winner of the Council on Resource Development (CRD) Benefactor Award. Snyder was one of the original 10 donors who helped create the Stanly Heritage

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Endowed Scholarship program. He is a finalist for the national award to be given in November in Washington.

Continuing education VP speaks before legislature

In June, **Jeanie Moore**, vice president for continuing education programs, **Rowan-Cabarrus Community College**, testified before a U.S. House panel in Washington about the college's experiences in assisting and re-training displaced workers. The panel was held by a subcommittee of the U.S. House Committee on Science and Technology. U.S. Representative Brad Miller, D-N.C., is chair of the subcommittee. Moore told the panel about the college's successful work in assisting former employees of Pillowtex. Shortly after the Kannapolis Pillowtex plant closed in 2003, Rowan-Cabarrus secured a \$2.5 million National Emergency Grant to provide education and job training programs for the 2,000 workers affected.

Forsyth Tech partners with race car company

In June, **Forsyth Technical Community College** and Creation Autosportif, an international racing and race car manufacturing company, entered into an agreement that will enhance the college's race car technology training. Students will have co-op education experiences with the company, both in the shop and on-site at

race events. The cars Creation Autosportif builds and races at the Le Mans and other international competitions differ significantly from the cars in NASCAR. Shortly after the new partnership was announced in June, the Forsyth Tech logo was applied to Creation Autosportif's entry in this year's Le Mans, Car No. 14.

High school student development program kicks off

The Smithfield Foods Learners to Leaders™ will fund a student development program for ninth through 12th-graders at Lumberton area high schools starting with the 2008-2009 academic year. Students who visit the program and enroll at **Robeson Community College** will receive a \$1,000 scholarship for tuition and expenses and up to \$500 for books.

Student wins third in international competition

Martha Hall, a student at **Southwestern Community College**, won a third-place bronze medal at the International Sustainable World Science Fair in Houston, Texas, in June. Hall constructed a functional pumping/upflow filter using inexpensive, recycled materials. She said that no electricity is needed to power the pump and the amount of chemicals going into the water is reduced. In addition to a scholarship to Ohio Wesleyan, Hall received \$500 cash.

Students use discarded cooking oil to power truck

By Victoria Hartz, Summer Intern,
System Office, Public Affairs

Two students from **Cape Fear Community College** recently learned that fryer grease can serve a healthy purpose: it can be used as an alternative fuel source to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and save drivers money.

At the suggestion of their automotive technology instructor Thomas Butler, roommates Jonathan Davison and Joe Hernandez converted Davison's 1996 Ford F-250 to run on vegetable oil, being the first students at the college to do so.

"These guys did months of research," Butler said. "They made the purchase, they did the installation, and now they're making it work."

Davison purchased a conversion kit for \$1,355 from Greasecar, a vegetable fuel systems company based in Easthampton, Mass. The kit comes with valves, hoses, brackets and other various small parts, as well as a heated, 40-gallon vegetable oil tank that sits in the bed of the truck. It also includes a detailed instruction manual, but Davison said he recommends that buyers have a basic understanding of diesel engines before attempting the installation themselves.

"You have to know how to bleed systems and reprime pumps," he said. "You have to be sure of how to mount all

your gauges and switches without hurting anything else, and understanding the fuel systems and solenoids is a must." He said he and Hernandez installed the system in 30 hours, saving \$1,400 in installation fees.

The purpose of the conversion system is to thin the vegetable oil through heating so that it's broken down sufficiently and can burn properly when it enters the combustion chamber. The new system also eliminates the risk of engine damage that would result from pouring the oil directly into the diesel tank.

Greasecar drivers have to start the engine on diesel to allow it to heat up. When the engine reaches about 160 degrees Fahrenheit, a light turns on, indicating that the driver can press a button to switch the system to vegetable oil if he or she so chooses. Then, before shutdown, the driver must switch back to diesel to ensure that no vegetable oil remains in the engine or fuel lines when the car is started from cold again.

Hernandez helps Davison collect used oil from local restaurants, which most restaurants are happy to give away, Butler said, so that they don't have to pay disposal fees. They then transport the oil to their garage, where they filter and dewater it before pouring it into the tank. Davison said they fill the tank about every two and a half weeks, or every 800 miles.

While some people consider these tasks too burdensome, Davison said the effort is well worth the money he saves.

"I spend about two hours collecting and filtering 150 gallons for use," he said. "With 150 gallons of diesel costing roughly \$750, I just made myself, or saved myself—however you want to look at it—\$375 an hour," he said.

Davison said he's even noticed a smoother ride and better mileage since he started using vegetable oil.

But raw vegetable oil fuel is not without its red tape. Because it's not registered with the Environmental Protection Agency as a legal motor fuel, users are subject to fines.

"The government doesn't want me not paying road taxes, so I need to figure out how I can pay them per gallon to make them happy with the idea," Davison said. He said he's still in the process of filling out the proper paperwork to make his Greasecar "legal."

Butler said Davison and Hernandez inspired him to take on the same project with his own car.

"To discuss this with such a young group and then for two of them to actually go out and do it is amazing," Butler said. "I was so enthused by what they're doing that I actually purchased a vehicle that I'm going to convert, and as soon as I get that finished, I'm right behind those guys."

Campus highlights

Alamance Community College Graham, North Carolina

- Recent graduates Sarah Petty and Kristi Janey have been accepted into the highly competitive radiologic science program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for fall 2008.
- Dustin Holt, culinary technology student, is the first Alamance student ever to receive a gold medal at the annual American Culinary Federation (ACF) competition in Greensboro.
- The college's new Powell Allied Health and Biotechnology Building was dedicated in November in recognition of the contributions made by the Powell family of Alamance County to the college and the community.
- A new 46,000-square-foot Burlington Center opened in January 2008 and is double the size of the previous building. It's home to the college's continuing education courses, basic skills and literacy, the Small Business Center and the cosmetology program.
- Dr. William Taylor, the college's first president, died in September 2007. He served the college from 1962 to 1982.

Catawba Valley Community College Hickory, North Carolina

- Richard Eller, history instructor, is the author of "Piedmont Airlines: A Complete History, 1948-1989." The book, published by McFarland Press, is Eller's second book. Eller co-authored a previous publication, "The Tarheel Lincoln." He has taught history full time at Catawba Valley since 2002.
- The family of Dr. Linda Hester Phillips, former vice president of academic and student affairs, announced plans in June to establish a memorial garden and fountain at the entrance of the college's multipurpose complex. Phillips, who worked for the college for 26 years, lost her battle with breast cancer in 2007.

Cleveland Community College Shelby, North Carolina

- The Cleveland Early College High School (CECHS) will open its doors to students on Aug. 11. CECHS will include an Expeditionary Learning (EL) School. EL is a curriculum designed to promote critical thinking, academic achievement and personal development through

the use of in-depth investigations that engage students in community projects and service.

- Dandria Young, a May 2008 graduate, presented her paper, "Dracula: From Victorian Character to Popular Culture Icon," in the session entitled *Vampirism: Classic and Post-Modern* at the conference of Popular Culture Association in the South in Jacksonville, Fla., in September. Young, who will attend the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill this fall, was the only presenter not to have at least a bachelor's degree. The paper was her final project in English 113, Literature-Based Research, taught by Dr. B.J. Zamora.
- Dale Koontz, communications instructor, published her first scholarly work, "Faith and Choice in the Works of Joss Whedon." The book's publisher is McFarland and Company. Koontz has studied Whedon's creations, which include "Buffy the Vampire Slayer," "Angel" and "Firefly" TV series.
- In May, the System Office staff presented retired system president H. Martin Lancaster with "Calling Me Home," a quilt made by Cleveland County's own Tammie Lee. Lee teaches machine quilting in the continuing education unit at the college.

Edgecombe Community College Tarboro, North Carolina

- A new preservation trades school will be held Sept. 27 at historic Coolmore Plantation in Edgecombe County. Students will receive informal instruction in masonry, carpentry, window restoration and other areas of historic preservation. This event is a precursor to the college's new continuing education certificate program in historic preservation, which will begin this fall.
- The college signed a cooperative agreement in April with educational leaders from Finland to create collaborative opportunities between Edgecombe and several Finnish educational institutions. Projects include a collaboration of workforce development training and an exchange of best practices.
- A new building for cosmetic arts has been completed on the Tarboro

campus. The 8,000-square-foot facility includes classroom and lab space for some 90 students. The state-of-the-art environment will strengthen programs in hair, nails and esthetics.

Haywood Community College Clyde, North Carolina

- Haywood County voters recently approved a 1/4-cent sales tax increase to support the college. County commissioners pledged 100 percent of the additional revenue generated by the tax to fund capital projects at Haywood.
- HCC became the first community college in the state to offer an associate's in applied science degree in entrepreneurship and the first to enter into an articulation agreement for entrepreneurship with Western Carolina University.
- The college's advanced machining center is nearing its first anniversary. The center, funded by a grant from Golden LEAF, is a state-of-the-art education and training center for advanced metal forming, machining up to and including five-axis contours, computer aided design, manufacturing and engineering.
- The college was awarded several grants this past year. The Biofuels Center of North Carolina awarded \$135,000 to Haywood for the Haywood County Biofuels Production, Education and Training Project. This project is a countywide partnership and initiative. The biodiesel facility will be used as a demonstration and training site. The college also received a \$77,522 grant from the USDA Forest Service to begin a pilot wood products program through the continuing education department at the school. The college also received two BioNetwork grants totaling \$80,000 from the System Office.

Lenoir Community College Kinston, North Carolina

- The college has been celebrating its 50th anniversary special events throughout the year. The college was chartered April 3, 1958.
- The college experienced record-breaking enrollment during its 50th anniversary,

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with 3,572 students enrolled for fall 2007 and 3,418 students enrolled for spring 2008. More than 1,000 students each semester from the previous year.

- Groundbreaking ceremonies were held in June for the new Jones County Center to be located on N.C. 58 across from the Jones County Industrial Park in Trenton. Renovations and the addition to the Greene County Center have been completed.
- In May, the Lenoir Lancer 2008 baseball team was ranked number one in the nation with an overall record of 54 wins and 12 losses and was the national runner up in the World Series of the National Junior College Athletic Association in Millington, Tenn. Keith Spinner, Drew Sowers and T.J. Hinson placed in the top 10 for earned run average. Coach Stony Wine was named the National Coach of the World Series as well as the Mid-Atlantic and Region X Coach of the Year. The Lancers also held sixth place nationally with a team batting average of .375 and was second nationally in the win/loss percentage. Ben Billingsley was selected to play for the Seattle Mariners in the 16th round of the Major League Baseball draft. Lancers Kent Burford and Ryan Norton were named to the All-Tournament Team, and Norton and Lancer Hunter Chase were named All-American.

Montgomery Community College Troy, North Carolina

- The college began offering its practical nursing program in a hybrid/evening/weekend format last fall. The first class will graduate in August.
- This fall, the college will break ground on a new forestry building. The dental assisting program will move from its off-campus site to the main campus.
- A 91 percent increase in distance learning enrollment was experienced over the last two years, due in part to Learn and Earn Online, while high school enrollment increased by 331 percent this summer.
- The college is now offering courses in 30 different locations throughout Montgomery County as partnerships continue to build and outreach becomes a priority with the cost of transportation increasing.
- In April, the college worked with local law enforcement and EMS to host rapid deployment training on campus.

Employees played the roles of victims in active shooter situations during the five hours of drills. First response teams became certified after the drills and MCC employees were given the experience necessary to plan for such an eventuality.

Richmond Community College Hamlet, North Carolina

- Dr. Sharon Morrissey, the new college president, spent the first five months of her presidency talking with the board of trustees, faculty, staff, students and community leaders about their perceptions and expectations of the college. This input will be incorporated into the college's strategic plan.
- Richmond has completed a capital campaign in Scotland County for construction of a new classroom and industrial training facility. Construction on the \$3.4 million project should begin in the fall.
- The college is beginning a capital campaign in Richmond County for construction of an industrial training center in the Richmond County Industrial Park located on Interstate 74. In additional training facilities, the center will house the Focused Industrial Training and Small Business Center.

Southeastern Community College Whiteville, North Carolina

- Kayla Faulk of Whiteville received first place in business law at the state Phi Beta Lambda conference. Faulk will represent the college this summer at the National Leadership Conference in Atlanta. Elizabeth Jackowski received fourth place in help desk, and Ashley Nye received eighth place in word processing.
- The college has instituted the Hispanic Initiative to provide a one-stop resource for the Hispanic community and those who want to engage with the Hispanic market in Columbus County. Part of the college's continuing education division, the initiative has become a central resource center for the Hispanic community living in Columbus County.
- The late Ben L. Nesmith III and Lucy Nesmith of Tabor City willed the college foundation more than \$3 million. A portion of this gift is earmarked to build the Nesmith Bicentennial Amphitheater on campus. This new outdoor facility will be dedicated as part of Columbus County's bicentennial celebration this fall.
- Rebecca Westbrooks, environmental

science technology instructor, Teresa Lengner, agricultural biotechnology lab technician, and Brooke Pritchett, a agricultural biotechnology student, recently delivered 50 Venus flytrap plants to the North Carolina Zoo. Lengner and Pritchett have grown thousands of Venus flytrap plants in the controlled environment of the college's agricultural biotechnology lab.

- Ray Mize, English instructor, was one of 25 scholars selected to engage in a four-week in-depth study of William Butler Yeats at the 2008 National Endowment for the Humanities' Institute for College and University Teachers in Ireland.
- Faculty and staff are moving into the new Cartrette Technology Building. The building is home to the agricultural biotechnology, broadcast production technology and computer information systems programs.

Tri-County Community College Murphy, North Carolina

- This spring, renovations were completed on the new Cherokee County Center for Applied Technology. Cherokee County purchased the building to be used for workforce development and to house the college's machinist training program. Renovations were funded by grants from Economic Development Association and the North Carolina Rural Center for \$967,000.
- The college continues to expand program offerings with recent additions of esthetics, manicure and nail technology, machining technology, biblical studies and a legal concentration in office systems technology.
- The college foundation celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Children's Theatre with two events in 2008. The Children's Theatre introduces elementary school children from Cherokee, Clay and Graham counties to cultural events while familiarizing them with the college. This year's performances were Billy Zanski's West African drumming and the North Carolina Dance Theatre, which was made possible by a grant from the North Carolina Arts Council's cARTwheels program.
- The college celebrated Earth Day by opening a new walking trail and completing landscaping projects around the campus. Vendors were also on site promoting the local farmer's market, recycling, green home construction and more.