

1:30 p.m.

Press conference summary

Wilmington Chamber of Commerce
Megan Mullins, Chief Marketing & Engagement Officer
mullins@wilmingtonchamber.org
910-762-2611 x 216

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 18, 2023

New Hanover Community Endowment Funds Groundbreaking Collaborative Effort to Revolutionize Healthcare Workforce in New Hanover County

Wilmington, N.C. – Today, the New Hanover Community Endowment announced grants totaling more than \$22.3 million awarded to Cape Fear Community College, New Hanover County Schools, the University of North Carolina Wilmington, and the Wilmington Chamber of Commerce. This transformative partnership, bolstered by grant funding, aims to address critical workforce challenges in New Hanover County, focusing on the recruitment, training, and retention of healthcare professionals committed to serving our communities.

The collaborative effort focuses on key areas of investment:

- **Support for Success:** Providing wrap-around services, recruitment, and enrollment resources, alongside retention structures to foster student achievement.
- **Enhanced Infrastructure:** Improving facilities, implementing holistic admissions processes, and reinforcing recruitment resources to strengthen educational foundations.
- **Pathway Programs:** Developing and expanding pathway and pipeline initiatives aimed at guiding aspiring healthcare professionals.
- **Innovative Learning:** Collaborating on simulated learning, healthcare professional cohort programs, and standardized exam study assistance across institutions.

"This is exactly the kind of thing that we want to invest in. We believe no change happens without collaboration," emphasized William Buster, president and CEO of the New Hanover Community Endowment. "Ultimately, and with these strategic partners, we believe that there's going to be substantive change in our community. Now, we understand that this is more than just about funding for opportunities around jobs. We're excited, especially because this is about maintaining and keeping homegrown talent. We're looking forward to having folks who live here work here and have the opportunity to stay here and work in the field that they choose, like healthcare and nursing."

Reflecting on the significance of the initiative, UNCW Chancellor Aswani Voley highlighted, "The three words you're going to hear over and over again today are partnership, collaboration, and problem-solving."

Cape Fear Community College President Jim Morton added, "This collaboration, bringing together public and private partners, in pursuit of a shared objective, is truly transformative. I believe this level of partnership is unparalleled nationwide and I hope this serves as a source of inspiration for other communities working to reshape the healthcare careers landscape."

New Hanover County Schools Superintendent Charles Foust emphasized, "This goes along with our strategic planning goals to increase the percentage of Career and Technical Education programs of study by 40% through the implementation of CTE pathways. This is also able to help us increase our pathways that strategically were able to help develop our community, and help to engage our community in not the 'what ifs' anymore; it's the 'right now.'"

Novant Health Coastal region Chief Nursing Officer, Amy Akers, announced Novant Health is committing \$10 million to boost the number of trained healthcare workers locally. "When one of us or someone we care about needs care at a doctor's office, a nursing home, in a community or educational setting, or a hospital – we rely on trusted clinicians to provide the care we need," Akers said. "Our commitment – and the work of these partnering organizations in this room – is designed to ensure help will be there today – and in the years to come."

Natalie English, President, and CEO of the Wilmington Chamber of Commerce, affirmed, "The Wilmington Chamber is playing a pivotal role in uniting these diverse stakeholders and breaking down some historically isolated work environments. In Wilmington, our focus remains on empowering business growth, facilitating access to essential talent, and actively nurturing our community's skill sets to prepare citizens for fulfilling employment opportunities in our region's high growth sectors."

The success of this collaborative initiative hinges on educating and supporting a healthcare workforce that mirrors and effectively serves the needs of New Hanover County.

###

For media inquiries and further information, please contact:

Christina Hallingse, Director of Media Relations
Cape Fear Community College
910-297-9480

challingse@cfcc.edu

Contact Christina for CFCC-focused brooll and images of nursing students.

Salvatore Cardella, Chief Communications Officer
New Hanover County Schools
salvatore.cardella@nhcs.net

Andrea Weaver, Chief Marketing and Communications Officer
UNC Wilmington
910.962.7631 / weavera@uncw.edu
Contact Andrea for UNCW-focused broll and images of nursing students.

Megan Mullins, Chief Marketing Officer
Wilmington Chamber of Commerce
910-547-9567
mullins@wilmingtonchamber.org