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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## North Carolina Community College System, John M. Belk Endowment Partner to Provide \$2 Million in Hurricane Helene Relief for Western NC Colleges

**RALEIGH, N.C. (October 11, 2024)** – Following Hurricane Helene's devastating impact on Western North Carolina, the John M. Belk Endowment (JMBE) has committed \$2 million in funding to support students, faculty, staff, and communities in their recovery efforts in partnership with the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS). This funding will address immediate needs and lay the groundwork for long-term resilience across the region.

The \$2 million allocation will provide vital assistance to the 14 community colleges located within the emergency declaration zone, including:

- **Nearly \$300,000 in Direct Support:** The John M. Belk Endowment will disburse \$280,000 in discretionary funding, offering \$20,000 to each of the 14 impacted colleges to help meet urgent local needs. These funds will be made available to the colleges within the next two weeks.
- **More than \$1.7 million in Flexible Support:** Additional funds will support a variety of needs as identified by the system and colleges. This includes wrap-around services such as transportation, childcare, food assistance, and mental health support, as well as strategic consulting for emergency response. Over 2025 and 2026, flexible funding will be available for continued recovery and rebuilding efforts.

NCCCS President Dr. Jeff Cox expressed his gratitude for the Endowment's quick and generous response.

"The John M. Belk Endowment's commitment serves as a vital lifeline for our colleges and sets a standard for public-private partnerships in these challenging times," said Dr. Jeff Cox, System President. "With many hands working tirelessly to address the immediate needs of organizations across western North Carolina, we are fortunate to have this partnership and funding in place. It ensures our students and staff receive



swift, flexible support to maintain the delivery of quality education throughout the recovery period."

MC Belk Pilon, President and Board Chair of the John M. Belk Endowment, said she hopes the investment helps western North Carolina communities return "stronger than ever."

"The Belk Endowment is honored to announce this wide ranging, multi-year investment in North Carolina community colleges," Belk Pilon said. "It is our hope these funds provide system and campus leaders with a surge of resources as the recovery effort unfolds over the coming days, months, and years. Our community colleges have already demonstrated their incredible resilience, and our team is proud to stand beside them now, and always."

Donations can also be made to the North Carolina Community College System's statewide [Hurricane Helene Relief Fund](#).

To learn more about the System's response and resources for Helene victims, visit the [System's website](#).

For more information, contact Nathan Hardin, NCCCS Executive Director of Communications, at [hardinn@ncccommunitycolleges.edu](mailto:hardinn@ncccommunitycolleges.edu).

### **About the North Carolina Community College System**

The North Carolina Community College System is a network of 58 community colleges created to improve the quality of life across North Carolina by opening the door to opportunities that minimize barriers to post-secondary education, maximize student success and develop a globally and multi-culturally competent workforce. The 58 institutions located throughout the state provide easy access to low-cost, high-quality educational opportunities and academic support that focuses on increasing employability.

### **About the John M. Belk Endowment**

The John M. Belk Endowment is a private family foundation committed to transforming postsecondary educational opportunities to meet North Carolina's evolving workforce needs.

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