



Molly Steur <msteur@ednc.org>

Wake Tech, Wake County Public Schools Launch Youth Apprenticeship Academy

1 message

Molly Steur <msteur@ednc.org>
To: msteur@ednc.org

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New partnership will expand access to career-connected skilled trades education for high school students across Wake County.

The \$4 million award is the largest grant in Wake Tech's history.

RALEIGH, N.C. (June 8, 2026) - Wake Tech Community College and the Wake County Public School System are launching the WakeWorks® Youth Apprenticeship Academy, a groundbreaking partnership designed to connect high school juniors and seniors with in-demand skilled trades careers. Supported by \$4 million from Bloomberg Philanthropies, the WakeWorks® Youth Apprenticeship Academy in Raleigh is one of nine regions in Bloomberg Philanthropies' first-of-its-kind \$90 million [national skilled trades initiative](#). This investment is the largest in Wake Tech's history.

The new program will expand college and career pathways for students across Wake County, providing opportunities to earn college credit, gain hands-on skilled trades experience, and prepare for high-wage, in-demand careers as automotive technicians, construction workers, electricians, HVAC technicians, plumbers and welders.

Over three years, the program is expected to serve 250 students, beginning with a first cohort of 60 students in January 2027.

"We are deeply grateful to Bloomberg Philanthropies for this historic investment, which will help us expand life-changing opportunities for students while strengthening the workforce pipeline for our community," said Wake Tech President Dr. Scott Ralls. "Through this partnership with Wake County Public Schools, we are creating a powerful new model that allows students to begin building meaningful careers while still in high school."

The program responds to growing regional workforce needs across North Carolina's skilled trades sector. The state's construction industry is projected to [add nearly 12,800 jobs by 2034](#). At the same time, Wake County is experiencing significant population growth, [having added more than 103,000 residents since 2020 and projected to need an additional 125,000 to 175,000 housing units over the next 10 to 15 years](#). These trends are expected to further drive demand for skilled workers across fields.

"Millions of good-paying jobs are going unfilled, and too many students never get a chance to learn the skills necessary to get them. This new initiative will help change that," said Michael R. Bloomberg, founder of Bloomberg LP and Bloomberg Philanthropies and three-term mayor of New York City. "By bringing schools, unions, and employers together as partners, we can offer students free training and credentials that lead directly to rewarding careers. Jobs in the skilled trades helped build America's middle class, and now they can help a new generation enter and strengthen it."

Bloomberg Philanthropies' investment will fund key elements needed to scale the youth apprenticeship model, including student stipends, books, tools, and wraparound support, such as

coordinated advising, coaching, transportation assistance, and other services that help students succeed. It will also fund employer wage subsidies, additional instructors, and outreach staff.

Students begin the Academy in their high school junior year as pre-apprentices through Career and College Promise (CCP), taking tuition-free Wake Tech courses and earning a stipend while completing career exploration and related instruction. In their senior year, students advance to a Registered Youth Apprenticeship, continuing their coursework while earning wages while working alongside an employer. After graduating from high school, students can continue their registered apprenticeship, complete their degree at Wake Tech, or enter the workforce.

“We are incredibly excited and grateful for the opportunity this program will afford our students. Our partnership with Wake Tech enables young scholars to grow into adults ready to thrive and strengthen the community. The Youth Apprenticeship Academy will create a pathway to success for students from all backgrounds,” said Dr. Robert P. Taylor, Wake County Public School System Superintendent.

Through this initiative, Wake Tech will expand its nationally recognized apprenticeship program into a distinct youth apprenticeship pathway for high school students. Wake Tech Apprenticeship, powered by WakeWorks®, launched in 2020 as a partnership between the college and Wake County to address the region’s shortage of technical workers. The program has 140 active employer partners and has served nearly 550 apprentices this year. Wake Tech also is recognized as a U.S. Department of Labor Apprenticeship Ambassador. Wake County Public Schools brings deep experience in career and technical education, serving more than 63,000 unique students each year.

“We applaud Wake Tech for expanding the successful WakeWorks® apprenticeship program, which we helped launch in 2020, to include high school students,” said Wake County Board of Commissioners Chair Don Mial. “Our county is growing by 24,000 people each year, creating a strong demand for services in the skilled trades. Extending this talent pipeline will help teens discover these high-demand fields even sooner and gain the experience they need to land jobs after graduation.”

Learn more at youthapprenticeship.waketech.edu.

Regards,

Michelle Fauver
Communications Manager
Wake Tech Community College
ml 919.961.3707
mlfauver@waketech.edu



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