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# Regional Convenings Week 4 Recap: Cape Fear and Caldwell

**N.C. Community Colleges** <news@nccommunitycolleges.edu> Fri, Nov 13, 2026 at 3:08 PM
Reply-To: "N.C. Community Colleges" <news@nccommunitycolleges.edu>
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NC COMMUNITY COLLEGES
CREATING SUCCESS

North Carolina's community colleges are finding new ways to meet workforce demands through innovative programs, strong employer partnerships, and regional collaboration. This week's convenings took us from the coast to the mountains, where college leaders shared how they're expanding opportunities for students, making resources go further, and strengthening the communities they serve.

**Week Four Highlights**

- **Cape Fear Community College:** Leaders from Cape Fear, Southeastern, and Brunswick community colleges gathered Tuesday in Wilmington to discuss workforce growth, facility needs, and opportunities to strengthen support for local employers. Discussions highlighted increasing enrollment and the importance of ensuring colleges have the resources and flexibility to meet that demand.

- **Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute:** Leaders from Caldwell, Catawba Valley, Wilkes, Surry, Western Piedmont, Mitchell, and Blue Ridge community colleges gathered Thursday to share innovative approaches to workforce training and student success. From employer-designed training academies to shared health care programs and apprenticeships, discussions highlighted how colleges are collaborating to expand opportunities while responding to the distinct needs of their communities.




*Conversation with Mary Naylor, Dean Healthcare Strategy and Partnerships, while touring the Health and Human Services building at Cape Fear Community College.*



*Dr. Monty Sullivan gathers with presidents and trustees from Caldwell, Catawba Valley, Wilkes, Surry, Western Piedmont, Michell, and Blue Ridge community colleges before lunch prepared by students in CCC&TI's Culinary Arts program.*

## Key Takeaways

- **Enrollment is growing as employers look to community colleges for talent.** Targeted investment in facilities, equipment, and resources lets colleges turn that momentum into capacity in fields where North Carolina is hiring.

- **Regional partnerships help colleges expand opportunities.** Shared health care programs, employer-designed training, and apprenticeships allow colleges to pool resources and connect more students with careers, particularly in rural communities.

- **Funding flexibility helps colleges respond to local priorities.** Leaders welcomed additional resources through Propel NC while highlighting opportunities for greater flexibility in spending, carrying forward funds, and supporting shared programs without financially disadvantaging participating colleges.

- **Simpler processes can help colleges respond more quickly.** From apprenticeship administration to program approvals, leaders identified opportunities to reduce administrative barriers and give colleges greater flexibility to meet student and employer needs.




*On-site at Exela Pharma Sciences in the Elma Building, for a tour and conversation with Celeste Brantolino, Senior Director, Learning and Development at Exela Pharma Sciences.*

## Coming Up Next

The regional convenings resume Dec. 8 as Dr. Sullivan continues connecting with college leaders and community partners across North Carolina.

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