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Regional Convenings Week 2 Recap: Wayne and Gaston Colleges

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From pickles to pioneering textiles, this week's regional convenings offered a firsthand look at the industries that help North Carolina thrive, and the community colleges preparing people to power them. Stops at Wayne and Gaston brought college leaders and community partners together to explore what's working and what's possible.

Week Two Highlights

- **Wayne Community College:** Leaders from Carteret, Lenoir, Sampson, and Wayne community colleges gathered at Wayne Community College on Monday. A Wayne Community College graduate led the group on a tour of Mt. Olive Pickle Company, the largest privately held independent pickle company in the United States.

- **Gaston College:** On Wednesday, leaders from Gaston, Cleveland, and Central Piedmont community colleges gathered to discuss regional workforce priorities, growth, and opportunities for collaboration. The visit included tours of Dixon Quick Coupling's 170,000-square-foot manufacturing facility, and Gaston College's Duke Kimbrell Fiber Innovation Center, highlighting the nationally recognized region's manufacturing and textile industries.



At the intersection of Cucumber and Vine, a Wayne Community College graduate gives college leaders an inside look at Mt. Olive Pickle Company.



Dr. Patricia A. Pfeiffer, president of Wayne Community College and Dr. Monty Sullivan tour of Wayne's Center for Industrial Technology and Engineering (CITE).

Key Takeaways

- Scholarships are opening doors and strengthening the workforce. Leaders shared how financial support helps students pursue and complete training, including employer partnerships that connect scholarships with local job opportunities.

- Regional collaboration is extending colleges' reach. Shared instructors, jointly delivered programs, and regional partnerships are helping colleges combine expertise and bring more training opportunities to their communities.

- A more connected student experience can support lifelong learning. Colleges are exploring ways to simplify applications and connect short-term credentialing with degree programs, making it easier for students to continue their education as their career goals evolve.

- Community colleges are active partners in economic development. Leaders highlighted how business partnerships, product testing, and dedicated training spaces help colleges support new and expanding employers.



Jasmine Cox, vice president of the W. Duke Kimbrell Campus & Textile Technology Center at Gaston College, discusses how the center partners with industry to commercialize and scale innovative textile technologies for companies and government entities nationwide.

Coming Up Next

The regional convenings continue next week at **Forsyth Technical Community College** and **Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College**, where Culinary Day will offer a taste of student talent.

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