



2024-2025

# ANNUAL REPORT



HAYWOOD COMMUNITY COLLEGE



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Vision:

***To enrich everyone  
through education.***

Mission:

*We serve the educational needs and  
economic growth of our community,  
by promoting lifelong student  
learning and success.*



# We Are HCC

## Dear HCC Family,

The 2024–2025 academic year will stand out as a year of both challenge and forward movement for Haywood Community College—one that tested our values and required us to live them out in real and meaningful ways.

Early in the year, Hurricane Helene had a significant impact on our region, devastating communities and disrupting daily routines for students and employees alike. Amid the uncertainty, HCC responded with compassion and flexibility. Instruction was adjusted, support services were mobilized, and the well-being of our community remained the top priority, even as we worked to maintain continuity in learning and operations. The way our campus came together during this time reflected not only a level of preparedness, but a genuine commitment to one another and to the communities we serve. A number of these activities can be found on pages 16-17.



At the same time, the year brought encouraging signs of growth and opportunity. Enrollment increased through NC Reconnect, as adult learners returned to complete degrees and credentials they had once put on hold. These students brought determination, perspective, and a renewed sense of purpose.

Their return underscores the role HCC plays as an accessible institution—one that removes barriers, opens doors, and meets students where they are.

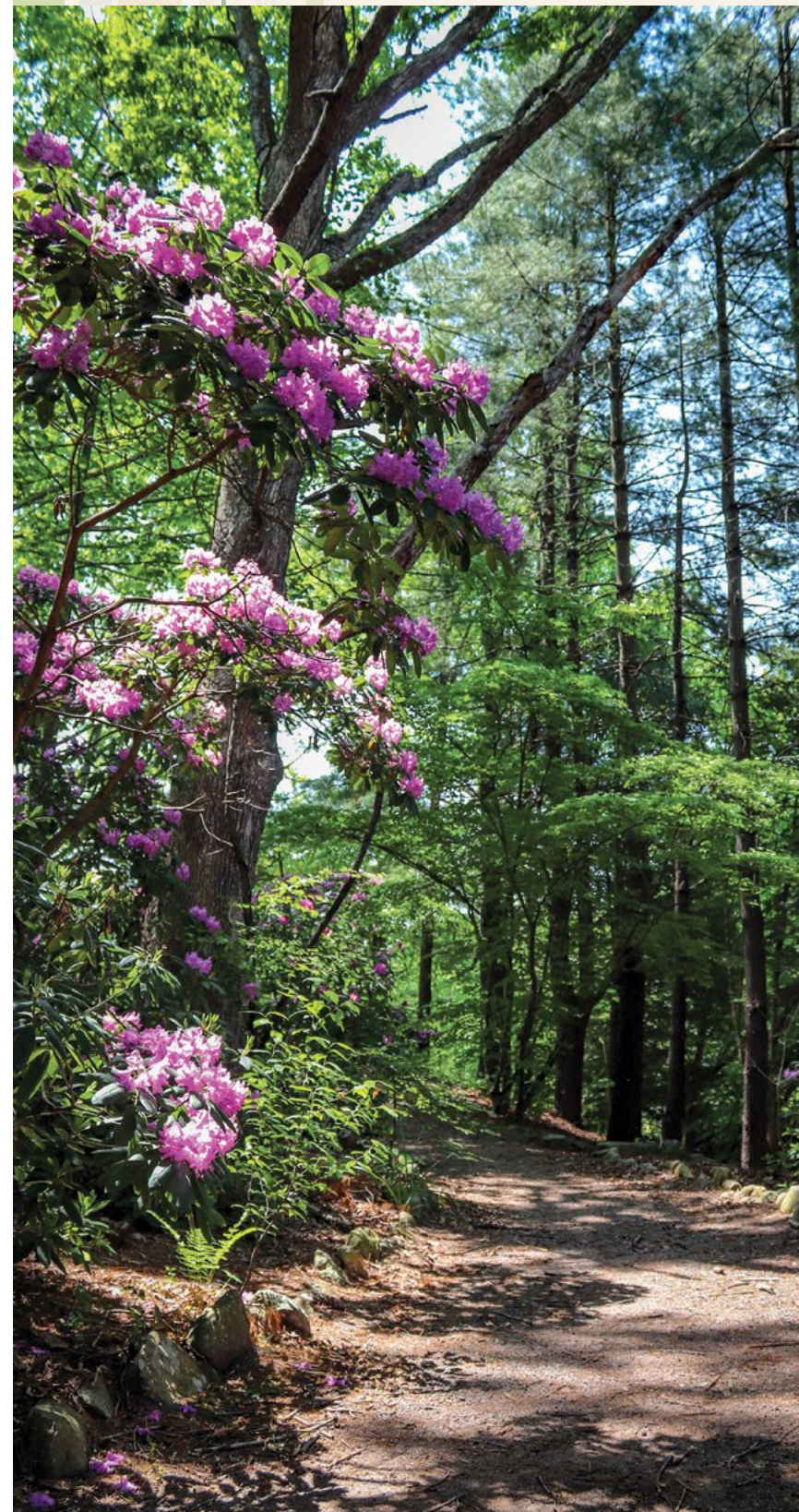
We also celebrated an important milestone with the groundbreaking of our new Workforce Outdoor Training Site. This facility will support CDL Truck Driver, Lineworker, and Public Safety training, expanding hands-on learning opportunities tied directly to regional workforce needs. It represents a strategic investment in both our students and the economic future of our community.

These moments tell a clear story that HCC is resilient, responsive, and focused on the future. As this annual report shows, our progress is made possible by dedicated employees, engaged students, strong partnerships, and the continued trust of our community.

Thank you for your ongoing support of our mission. The challenges we faced this year strengthened us, and the opportunities we embraced moved us forward. We look ahead, guided by purpose and united in our commitment to student success.

With gratitude,

Shelley Y. White, Ed.D.  
President, Haywood Community College



# Strategic Plan for Institutional Excellence

## ■ Enrollment

Increase enrollments by 5% over a three-year period college wide, with a focus on targeted populations and an emphasis coming from Haywood County residents.

## ■ Engagement

Consistent year-over-year improvement on our engagement levels with students, community, and employees.

## ■ Infrastructure

Progress on our short- and long-term facilities and infrastructure needs based on our comprehensive infrastructure academic and facilities master plan.

## ■ Employees

Meet or exceed expectations on employee engagement, diverse representation, people development, and talent recruitment, based on a defined workplace culture of excellence, well-being, and high performance.

## ■ Student Success

Increase student success metrics by 5% over a three-year period, to ensure students are progressing on or meeting their goals and the college is providing skilled workers to the community.



# We Are HCC

## 2024-2025 Board of Trustees

The role of the Board of Trustees is to provide direction and oversight for Haywood Community College.



Lynn Milner  
CHAIR



Kaleb Rathbone  
VICE CHAIR



Gorham Bradley



Dr. Ed A. Brown III



H. Lee Davis



Jon Overbay



Carol Larsen



Tammy Hall McDowell



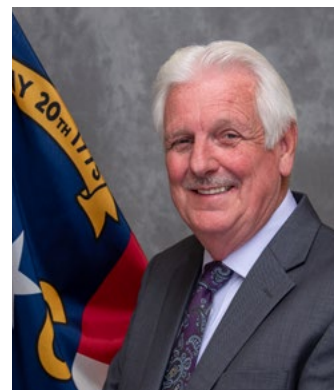
Tom Olliff



Rhonda Schandavel



John Wadsworth



Danny Wingate



## About HCC

Haywood Community College was founded in 1965 and continues to offer an array of high quality, affordable programs with small class sizes so students receive the personalized attention they deserve.

Aside from classroom instruction, students have the opportunity to participate in hands-on learning experiences through their program and student clubs.

Tucked away in the Great Smoky Mountains, the campus is a designated arboretum and features beautiful gardens, a disc golf course, and an expanded hiking trail.

The campus woodlands contain over 1,000 trees, which range in age of up to 140 years old. Today, the arboretum provides an outdoor laboratory for many fields of study and provides a beautiful college campus for students and the community to enjoy.



# By the Numbers

## Operating Expenses

Salaries and Benefits .....	\$13,660,451.35
Supplies and Services.....	\$3,965,542.29
Scholarships and Fellowships.....	\$3,163,412.25
Utilities.....	\$496,020.91
Depreciation/Amortization .....	\$2,032,685.95
<b>Total Operating Expenses.....</b>	<b>\$23,318,112.75</b>

## Operating Revenues

Student Tuition and Fees, Net .....	\$674,153.60
Federal Grants and Contracts .....	\$139,880.69
State and Local Grants and Contracts.....	\$404,286.25
Sales and Services .....	\$1,006,253.63
Other Operating Revenues .....	\$457,418.90
<b>Total Operating Revenues .....</b>	<b>\$2,681,993.07</b>

## Nonoperating Revenues

State Aid.....	\$10,657,290.28
State Aid - Coronavirus .....	\$76,908.00
County Appropriations.....	\$3,428,373.00
Student Financial Aid .....	\$3,058,024.87
Noncapital Contributions .....	\$1,546,219.57
Investment Income	
(Net of Investment Expense of \$77,937.53) .....	\$2,089,943.77
Interest and Fees on Debt .....	(\$30,960.78)
Other Nonoperating Expenses .....	(\$6,711.80)

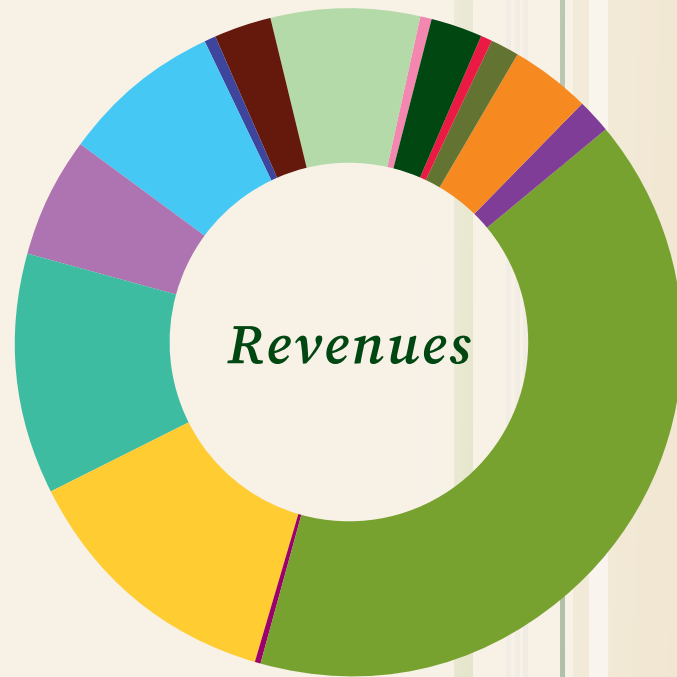
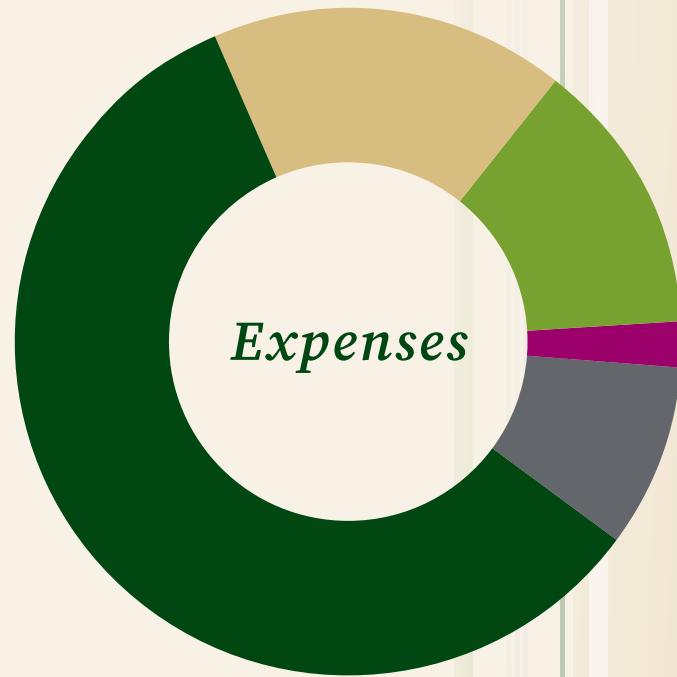
<b>Net Nonoperating Revenues .....</b>	<b>\$20,819,086.91</b>
<b>Income Before Other Revenues.....</b>	<b>\$182,967.23</b>

## Other Revenues

State Capital Aid .....	\$148,231.01
County Capital Aid.....	\$720,634.15
Capital Contributions .....	\$1,908,228.38
Additions to Endowments.....	\$97,627.77
<b>Total Other Revenues .....</b>	<b>\$2,874,721.31</b>
<b>Increase in Net Position.....</b>	<b>\$3,057,688.54</b>

## Net Position

Net Position - July 1, 2024.....	\$50,806,781.03
<b>Net Position - June 30, 2025 .....</b>	<b>\$53,864,469.57</b>



Source: Haywood Community College Statement of Revenues, Expenses, and Changes in Net Position For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2025 (Unaudited)

# Enrollment Statistics

## Curriculum Studies

### Top Program Types

Career and Technical Education.....	39.3%
Career and College Promise.....	22.2%
College Transfer .....	20.4%
Early College .....	9.7%
Special Credit/Other .....	9.5%

### Top Majors – Curriculum Studies

- Associate in Arts
- Associate in General Education - Nursing
- Early Childhood Education
  - Career Option Non-Transfer Track
- Business Administration
- Early Childhood Education
  - Birth-Kindergarten Transfer Licensure Track
- Associate in Science
- Fish and Wildlife Management Technology
- Criminal Justice Technology
- Information Technology

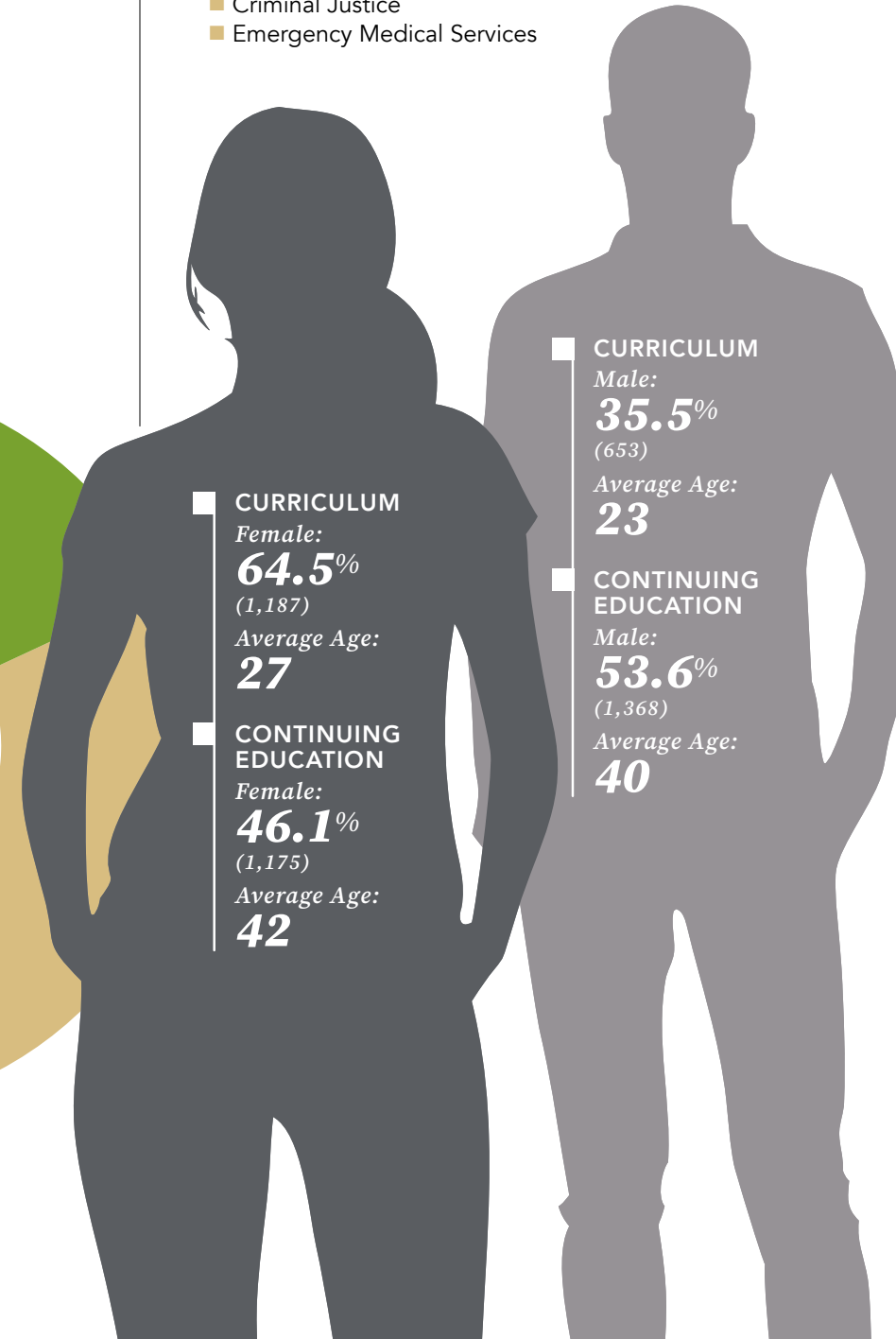
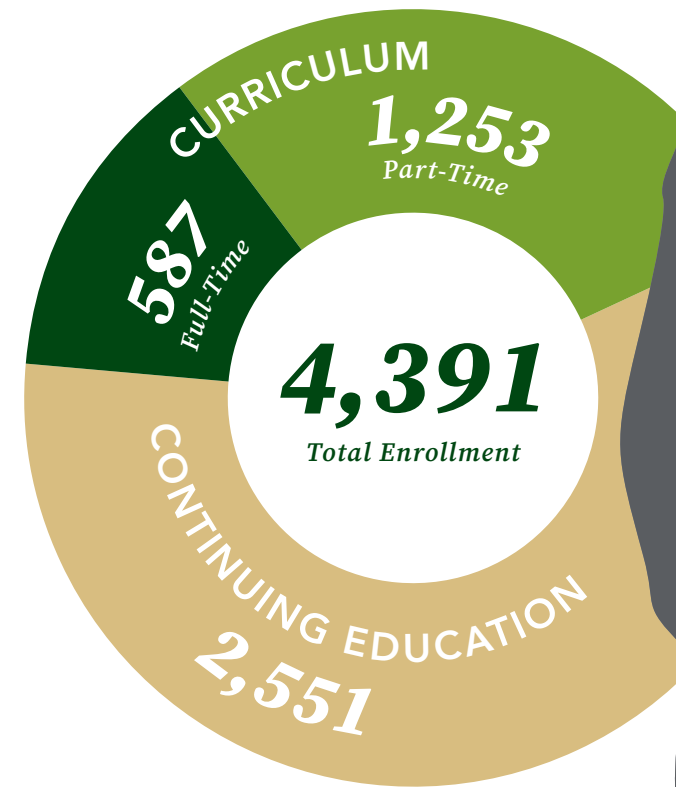
## Continuing Education

### Program Types

Credential .....	39.6%
Non-Credential .....	60.4%

### Top Programs – Continuing Education

- Short-Term Workforce Development
- Health Occupations
- Community Service Programs
- Fire & Rescue Services
- Criminal Justice
- Emergency Medical Services





# Engagement



## Boo-Thru

To rally the community together in October, the team decided to bring back a popular event, the Boo-Thru. Employees created a candy distribution path with decorations around campus so families could drive through in their costumes and have a little Halloween fun. This was especially important this year as the community was still in process of hurricane recovery and neighborhoods and other community centers that would normally do these activities may not have been able to host their traditional Halloween events.



## NCCCS campus visit

HCC was selected to host the North Carolina Community College System's board meeting for the month of September. This board often holds their meetings at community college campuses throughout the year to see each campus and observe the amazing work they do. The board was able to not only hold their meeting but also observe state-of-the-art equipment used by our nursing students, see a Lumberjack team demonstration, and other areas of campus.

## Environmental Summit

The HCC Sustainability Committee planned and executed an amazing community event, the Environmental Summit. Bringing high schoolers and community members to campus, this event showcased HCC student work, community initiatives, and experts to share information about sustainable efforts in our region.



### Case Study - The Decline of Oak-Hickory Forests

Without fire, laurel and rhododendron replaces oaks—changing the ecosystem.



What role could traditional play in restoration?



# Engagement

## ■ Career Connect

Bringing together educational programs and employers, HCC hosted Career Connect. This event provided program information to potential students with employers on-hand to share employment opportunities and how HCC credentials can lead to a new career path.

## ■ Plant & Craft Sale

The combined craft and plant sale was another huge success with many plants selling out in just a few hours. Funds from each sale benefited the student club or group on campus to support ongoing efforts for involvement and learning opportunities.

## ■ Parades

It wouldn't be the holidays without a community parade. This season, we attended two events and interacted with parade-goers along each route. What a fun way to remind the community of all the amazing programs available at HCC!



## ■ Car Show

The threat of weather didn't keep these car enthusiasts away for our annual Car Show! With 80 vehicles on display and family friendly activities, the community came out to view vehicles and have some fun, all while supporting our Student Automotive Club. Awards were given out to the top vehicles in each category with a motorcycle taking home the fan favorite!

## ■ Week of Welcome

Kicking off the semester with some fun, the Student Life team and others welcomed students to campus with some swag and resource information.





# Engagement



### ■ Kickball

With a small schedule adjustment, Student Life was able to still hold the annual employee vs. student kickball tournament. Although the employees haven't yet won first place, they surely won't stop trying! This is the most popular event of the year with players and cheering teams alike.

### ■ Ice Fest

As part of the Haywood County Tourism Authority Ice Fest event, HCC hosted the Frosty 5k on campus. This family-friendly 5k is great for walkers, runners, and hikers alike. The goal is to support the county-wide event while reminding folks that you can still exercise in the winter and enjoy each season in Western North Carolina.

### ■ Natural Resources Open House

It's always great to showcase unique programs and the Natural Resource Open House did not disappoint. The community was invited to campus to learn more about the program and see Lumberjack Team demonstrations.

## Upholstery & Quilt Show

To showcase the amazing work of the regional quilting and upholstery community and recognize a long-standing employee, Lani Hendrix, the HCC Creative Arts team organized the Upholstery and Quilt Show. This event featured over 20 items on display in the gallery which were available for viewing for 4 weeks, an opportunity to network, and a commemorative video celebrating instructor Lani's years of service and dedication to the quilting and upholstery programs.





# Infrastructure



McMillan Pazdan Smith illustration

## Outdoor Workforce Training Facility

HCC was excited to officially break ground on the new Outdoor Workforce Training Facility adjacent to the main campus. This facility will offer space for truck driver training, lineworker training, and BLET vehicle maneuver simulations. Having a dedicated space for these courses will be a valuable asset to the students and community for years to come.



## Fowler Property bridge

The project began in November 2022 as an initiative of the Society of American Foresters Club to improve access to the upper areas of the approximately 250-acre Fowler Teaching Forest. During planning, access challenges were identified that required passage through two privately owned gates. The property owner, Chris Britton of Buckeye Bridge, LLC, offered assistance and proposed constructing a vehicular bridge to support both student access and emergency fire crew access during wildfire events. The bridge was constructed under the supervision of project superintendent Drew Fulkerson with all materials and labor donated, representing an in-kind contribution valued at approximately \$78,600.

## New Moon Tree

HCC officially welcomed a second Moon tree during an Earth Day celebration. The sweetgum grew from a seed that spent 25 days in space on the Artemis I flight, traveling more than 1.4 million total miles and 40,000 miles beyond the dark side of the Moon.

## New signage on campus

Continuing to beautify campus, new directional signage was installed around campus. This signage not only looks great, but it also helps visitors to navigate the roads and buildings whether they are here for a short visit or starting class with us!





# Hurricane Helene Relief



## Fiber and blanket auction

Students in the Professional Crafts Fiber program found a unique way to support those in need after the hurricane. They graciously accepted a donation of wool from a business that was closing their doors and crafted blankets. These blankets were part of an online auction with proceeds benefiting local organizations that were helping with recovery efforts.

## Forestry students offer physical support in community

Forestry students quickly went to work in the community using their learned skills to cut tree limbs and remove mud. They saw the devastation in the community and were eager and willing to get dirty and help whoever they could.

## Individual outreach efforts

Following the devastation of the hurricane, many on the outreach team went to work contacting students to assess their needs. Based on the student's situation, follow-up was conducted with our internal resources to get them what they needed. These resources ranged from hotspots to emergency funds and grants, and other supports.

## HCC Foundation financial support

The HCC Foundation distributed over \$82,200 to students during this time. Funds supported everything from tires to food and gas to get students back on their feet and able to re-focus on their coursework after their basic needs were met and their situation stabilized.

## Holiday Heroes

Holiday Heroes was a program quickly put together in coordination with 8 other colleges to support holiday gift needs following the hurricane. Students submitted their gift lists for themselves and their family. We were excited to see every request filled and the students were overjoyed when they came to pick up their items. It's the quick work and support of many in our region that made the holidays extra special for our students.

## Thanksgiving side dishes handout

As Thanksgiving came quickly on the heels of Hurricane Helene, it was evident that many may not have the means or time to gather items needed to make their Thanksgiving meals complete. Coordinators went to work making side dish kits that could be easily picked up on campus to supplement holiday meals.

## Stock-Up stations

The community held different supply stations across the county, and we were all very grateful for that. The HCC team worked closely with the community to establish Stock-Up Stations around campus for students and employees to stock up on pantry and household items. This allowed them to simply grab what they needed, when they needed it. Employees restocked the stations regularly and even took special requests.

## Logo and t-shirts

As we looked toward the fall timeframe, and Spring registration being open in the storm's aftermath, the engagement team wanted to create a special message that would resonate with the county. HCC's message of a sense of community was brought into the forefront with the advertising campaign and employee t-shirts. Distributed during the employee holiday party, each employee received a shirt to emphasize our community spirit while building on our own sense of family at the college.



## Free tuition

As the impacts of the hurricane became more evident around the region, the NC Community College System implemented multiple ways to support all the colleges that were impacted. In addition to raising funds to support students on a larger scale, the System Office also worked tirelessly to use funds to cover tuition for the Spring term. With students already balancing their family, work, and school lives, this offering eased their burden by eliminating one more thing for them to worry about. Students were very appreciative of this financial support, leading to an increase in enrollment for the college.

## Notes of kindness

As students across the state saw the impacts from the storm, they wanted to reach out to HCC students with messages of support. This helped to develop Notes of Kindness. A simple template was provided to other colleges

to print out and write a message of kindness or support. These were collected and put on display throughout campus so HCC students could read them as they returned to the classroom.

## Resiliency meetings for employee support

Much of the support offered following Hurricane Helene was student focused. As employees returned to campus, it was evident that they were facing their own set of challenges. We worked quickly with a local group to setup resiliency meetings on campus. This allowed employees to join any session to talk through what was on their minds in a group setting while discovering new techniques to help settle the mind and work through feelings or situations they found themselves in. These sessions offered a safe space to connect with experts on the topic of resiliency and each other.



# Enrollment



### HRMC Scholarship

A new tuition sponsorship opportunity is now available to HCC Nursing students thanks to Haywood Regional Medical Center. Students are selected to be a part of this program with their tuition covered and a direct path to employment at HRMC following graduation.

### Peak Week

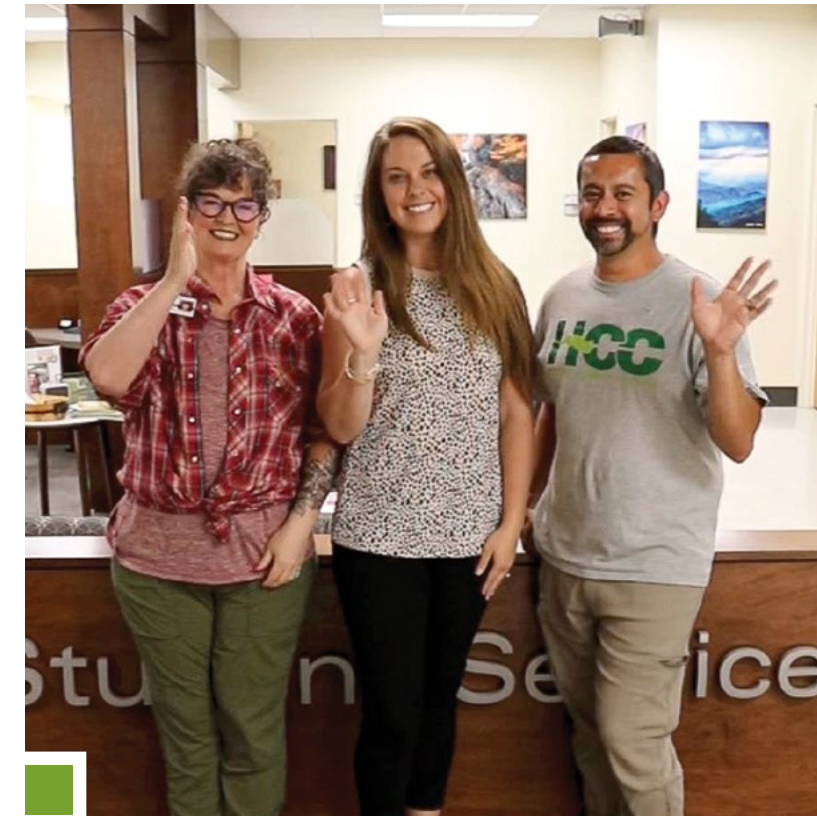
Each summer, Peak Week is held to roll out the red carpet for potential students. This week is dedicated to getting students prepared for fall as they meet with our team to get enrolled and comfortable with next steps to be ready for their first day.

### Community Science Night

As part of the NC SciFest, HCC held Community Science Night to welcome middle school aged children and their families to campus for an exciting night of science. There were six stations featuring a different activity to expose attendees to the variety of sciences available to them as potential careers and how you can apply science to everyday life.

### HCC's new ambulance

HCC received a grant to fund a training ambulance for students. This ambulance is a simulator that better reflects the real-world environment so students can practice their skills in a situation they may directly face in the field. The exterior was designed by HCC's graphic designer with a special hidden "Clyde" to add a fun element when showcasing this ambulance to community members and children.





# Employees



### Dr. Shelley White named President of the Year

In March, Dr. Shelley White was awarded the esteemed President of the Year Award by the North Carolina Community College system. This award recognizes exceptional leadership and achievements of a community college president who has significantly contributed to their institution and the broader North Carolina Community College System. With Dr. White's leadership, she has demonstrated a steadfast commitment to innovation and student success with expanded short-term workforce training programs, enhanced learning spaces, and streamlining processes to better serve students, she is very well deserving of this award.

From left:  
HCC trustee  
Rhonda  
Schandavel,  
Dr. Shelley  
White, Lee  
White, and  
HCC Board  
Chair Lynn  
Milner.



### Superior Staff Award

A big congratulations to Cheryl Fulghum who won the Superior Staff Award! This peer-nominated award is given to an employee that shows hard work and dedication in everything they do. Cheryl oversees HCC's Online Learning Department which works with our instructors on a regular basis supporting their needs for excellence in the classroom.

### Master Teacher Award

Lucy Lowe was the well-deserved recipient of the Master Teacher Award. Her support of students goes beyond the classroom, doing amazing work with her students throughout the year.

### Halloween

Student Life brought back a campus favorite, the Halloween Costume contest. Students and employees can dress like their favorite character or just something a little fun or unique. The judges handed out awards to the top winners bringing a festive vibe and competitive element to the event.





# Student Success



### Medical Assisting pinning

As part of the completion ceremonies for Medical Assisting, these students also receive a special pin to recognize their accomplishments. Given to them at a dedication ceremony, this offers a more intimate time with their loved ones to honor and celebrate their hard work leading up to graduation.

### Millpond Mosaic

Back for a second year, the Millpond Mosaic grew even larger in size thanks to the amazing submissions of students. This publication offers a creative outlet for any student to share a short story, artwork, or photography that is meaningful to them and supportive to others.

### Charge-up events

Our team understands how stressful finals can be. With Finals Week Charge-Up held leading up to finals, students have the opportunity to connect with each other, relax, and receive a free blast of caffeine. Established to take a break or study with each other, this event is one of the more popular Student Life events during the year supporting students' hard work going into finals week.



### WGU MOU

Adding another university transfer option for HCC students, HCC and Western Governors University signed a formal agreement to make the transfer process easier for students. HCC graduates have access to flexible, personalized learning pathways at WGU. This agreement formalizes the transfer credits between the schools and also opens the opportunity for a \$2,500 scholarship for HCC students attending WGU.



# Student Success



## ■ Paramedic Graduation

In the fall of 2024, 18 students graduated from the Paramedic class at HCC. This intensive 1,300-hour program spans 13 months and prepares students for what they may face on the road or at the scene of a call. This is the largest graduating class that HCC has graduated to date and almost all students were able to find employment immediately following graduation.

## ■ Grad Day

Graduation is a special time of year and to recognize this with our grads, Grad Day brings a sense of excitement to what's on the horizon for students. During the event students can grab a snack, order graduation invitations, receive alumni swag, and new for this year - pick up a Graduate yard sign.



# Graduation

Our favorite time of year! Graduation! A heartfelt congratulations to all graduates is in order. This was a year of resiliency and support, and these graduates worked hard with much dedication to achieve this milestone. We can't wait to see where their futures take them!



# Small Business Center



Businesses Started	Jobs Created	Jobs Retained	Counseling Clients	Counseling Hours	Total Events	Total Attendees
22	92	85	129	402	115	607



The primary purpose of SBC counseling is to provide sufficient guidance to assist entrepreneurs and business owners in starting and managing successful businesses.



Touring Jehovah Raah Farm.



Smoky Mountain Mangalitsa

## Strengthening Haywood County's Agricultural Economy Through Strategic Partnerships

In collaboration with NC State University Cooperative Extension and the Empowering Mountain Food Systems (EMFS) initiative, the Haywood Community College Small Business Center (SBC) has played a pivotal role in advancing AgriBusiness and AgriTourism programming for local farmers. This partnership has enabled us to deliver targeted educational and business development services that support the growth and sustainability of small farms in our region.

Through this initiative, the SBC provided technical business advisory support, budget planning, and one-on-one counseling to 25 agribusinesses in Haywood County. EMFS complemented these efforts by offering over \$45,000 in grant funding, which supported equipment purchases and advanced business services. Together, we hosted 20 agribusiness seminars covering essential topics such as food safety, record keeping, bookkeeping, and tax preparation.

A highlight of our programming was the August 2024 Educational Farm Tour Series, which showcased innovative agritourism models and fostered peer-to-peer learning among farmers. Participating farms included:

**Smoky Mountain Mangalitsa:** Demonstrated how glamping and primitive camping boosted pork sales and diversified revenue streams.

**Sustainabilities:** Showcased integration of organic farming, herbal production, and educational workshops.

**KT's Orchard:** Highlighted the success of pick-your-own operations and a thriving farm store.



Julie Wilson of Jehovah Raah Farm.

**Jehovah Raah Farm:** Offered immersive Airbnb experiences with hands-on fiber arts and livestock engagement.

**Ferguson Historical Mercantile and Glamping:** Presented a multi-generational farm's transition into agritourism with live music and event hosting.

In addition to experiential learning, we addressed the legal aspects of agritourism, including liability, insurance, and regulatory compliance, ensuring that farmers were equipped to navigate the complexities of hosting visitors on their properties.

This collaborative effort has not only strengthened the local food system but also enhanced the economic vitality of Haywood County's agricultural sector. By combining education, funding, and strategic partnerships, the SBC continues to empower agripreneurs to innovate, diversify, and thrive.



### Dahlia Ridge 5K

The 3rd Annual Dahlia Ridge Trail Run 5K took place on September 13, 2025, on HCC's main campus. The event featured a scenic route winding through the Dahlia Ridge trail system and paved roads, offering a timed challenge that was fun for the whole family. All proceeds benefited the Lavender Fund, which provides emergency financial assistance to HCC students for essential needs such as rent, groceries, childcare, and transportation.

### Dear Foundation,

I want to sincerely thank you for all the help you have provided me these last few months. I do not think I would've stayed enrolled at the school if it hadn't been for your advice and helping hand. Your help after the hurricane and just recently with my car issues have made my educational and career journey ahead of me more optimistic. I hope that in the future, I can also pay it forward to someone else in need.

Best Regards,

Sydney H.  
Fish and Wildlife Student  
Haywood Community College



## Innovate for Impact

The Haywood Community College Foundation held its annual gala event to raise funds for tools and technology needs for students on March 13 at the HCC library. In addition to benefiting student needs, there was also a silent auction featuring various local items. The Asheville Jazz Orchestra provided the music for the evening. Program areas with the greatest need for this financial support include but are not limited to automotive, welding, nursing, and cosmetology. Representatives from each program were at the event to speak with guests and give demonstrations. Hylah Birenbaum, the Executive Director of the HCC Foundation, shared that Innovate for Impact was a "festive event to see firsthand what our students need in their programs to make them successful during their time at HCC."

## Foundation Board of Directors

- Dr. Lucina Lampila, *Chair*
- Mr. Jack Bishop, III, *Vice-Chair*
- Ms. Amy Boyd Sugg
- Ms. Angie Guy Leatherwood
- Ms. Celesa Willett
- Mr. Chad McMahon
- Mr. Chris Brown
- Ms. Colleen Hannah
- Ms. Danya Ledford
- Mr. Dennis Weber
- Mr. Doug Hillman
- Dr. Ed Brown, III
- Dr. Elizabeth Ferguson
- Ms. Jane Clark
- Mr. Jim Owens
- Mr. Jon Overbay
- Dr. Joseph Ramellini
- Ms. Laura Tragesser
- Ms. Margot Dale
- Ms. Marion Hamel
- Mr. Matthew Williamson
- Dr. Myra Watson
- Mr. Scott McLeod
- Mr. Tyler Trantham
- Ms. Wendolyn Forbes
- Mr. Charles Henson, *Emeritus*



Dr. Lucina Lampila

- Ex-Officio Members:**
- Dr. Shelley White, *President*
  - Hylah Birenbaum,  
*Foundation Executive Director*
  - Ms. Karen Denney, *VP of Operations*
  - Ms. Christie Medford, *VP of Operations*



# Foundation

Hurricane assistance:  
how did we help?

Computer  
Linens and bedding  
Gluten-free food  
**Medical Bills**  
Moped  
Propane  
Internet bill  
Plumber  
Rent  
Towing  
Gas cards  
Starlink  
Boots  
Car insurance  
Windshield  
Dehumidifier  
Vet bill  
Cleaning supplies  
Hotel  
Clothes  
Notary  
Tires  
Medication  
Tag and title of car  
Electric bills  
Car repair  
Brakes  
Pet food  
Daycare  
Glasses and Eye Doctor  
Car payment  
Tree service  
Fan  
RV campground  
Cell phone bill  
Grocery cards



## Dear Foundation,

First off, I want to say thank you for helping me to keep my lights and heat on for my family. My name is Brittany. I am a wife and a mother of two children ages 8 and 5.

We moved to Lenoir, North Carolina, in 2022. Since moving here and both of my children have been able to attend public school, I have been on a journey to find a job that will work with my children's schedule. I found that most places require a degree. I am a stay-at-home mom so I figured during the time my children were at school I would also attend school to pursue my dream of becoming a social worker and finally be able to help my husband financially.

I started at Haywood Community College in fall of 2024. Life was smooth sailing until hurricane Helene hit. My family was taking

care of my mom's animals while she was on vacation, and we got stranded on Elk River in Avery County. My husband missed a week's work due to being stuck. That missed week set us way back. Shortly after things returned to semi normal it was time for the holidays and that put an even bigger financial burden on my husband.

We got far behind on our bills. We have been living paycheck to paycheck and you all took some of the burden and stress off of me and my husband and I want to say thank you for helping me to continue my journey of becoming a social worker. I am grateful and hope one day I am in the position to help others the way you all helped me.

*Thank you from the bottom of my heart,*

*Brittany G.*



## Scholars Day

Scholars Day is a special opportunity for donors and students to connect. Students gain a deeper understanding of the impact their scholarship has on their education, and donors have the chance to meet the individuals whose lives they are helping shape.



## The Christmas Tree Project

### *A Living Classroom in Morrow Forest*

In the spring of 2025, the Christmas Tree Project was launched by HCC Forestry Management Instructor Dr. George Hahn with support from Mini-Grant funding, marking the beginning of a long-term, hands-on learning initiative for students across multiple forestry and environmental science courses. The vision: to establish a small-scale Christmas tree farm in the southeast corner of Morrow Forest—a half-acre grassy field already cleared and conveniently accessible from the main road.

This site was selected not only for its proximity to campus but also for its suitability for Fraser fir seedlings, as confirmed by soil samples taken by students in the Soils and Hydrology course in fall 2023. The results showed that approximately half the area could support healthy Fraser fir growth.

In February 2025, 20 Fraser fir seedlings were purchased from Chief River Nursery in Wisconsin at \$8.60 per seedling. The nursery was chosen based on strong reviews and availability. Students planted the seedlings in March, spacing them 6 feet apart in a grid pattern.

By mid-July, students in the Logging and Marketing course conducted a survival audit and found that all 20 seedlings were alive and thriving, with only one showing signs of reduced turgidity. Throughout the summer, Hahn continued mowing around the trees, and students took over mowing duties in the fall, along with conducting formal survival checks as part of their coursework.

Looking ahead, the project will continue to evolve. Another 20 Fraser fir seedlings have been purchased from the NC Forest Service Nursery for the spring 2026 planting season—this time at a lower cost of \$3.75 per seedling. Students will not only plant and maintain these trees but also learn to prune and shape them as they grow. Eventually, when the trees reach commercial size—in about 10 years—students will market and sell them, then replant new seedlings to sustain the cycle.

This living laboratory will benefit a range of classes including Silvics and Silviculture, Forest Management, Forest Measurements, and Logging and Marketing. An account has been established to manage project funds and revenues, ensuring the sustainability of this educational endeavor for years to come.





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