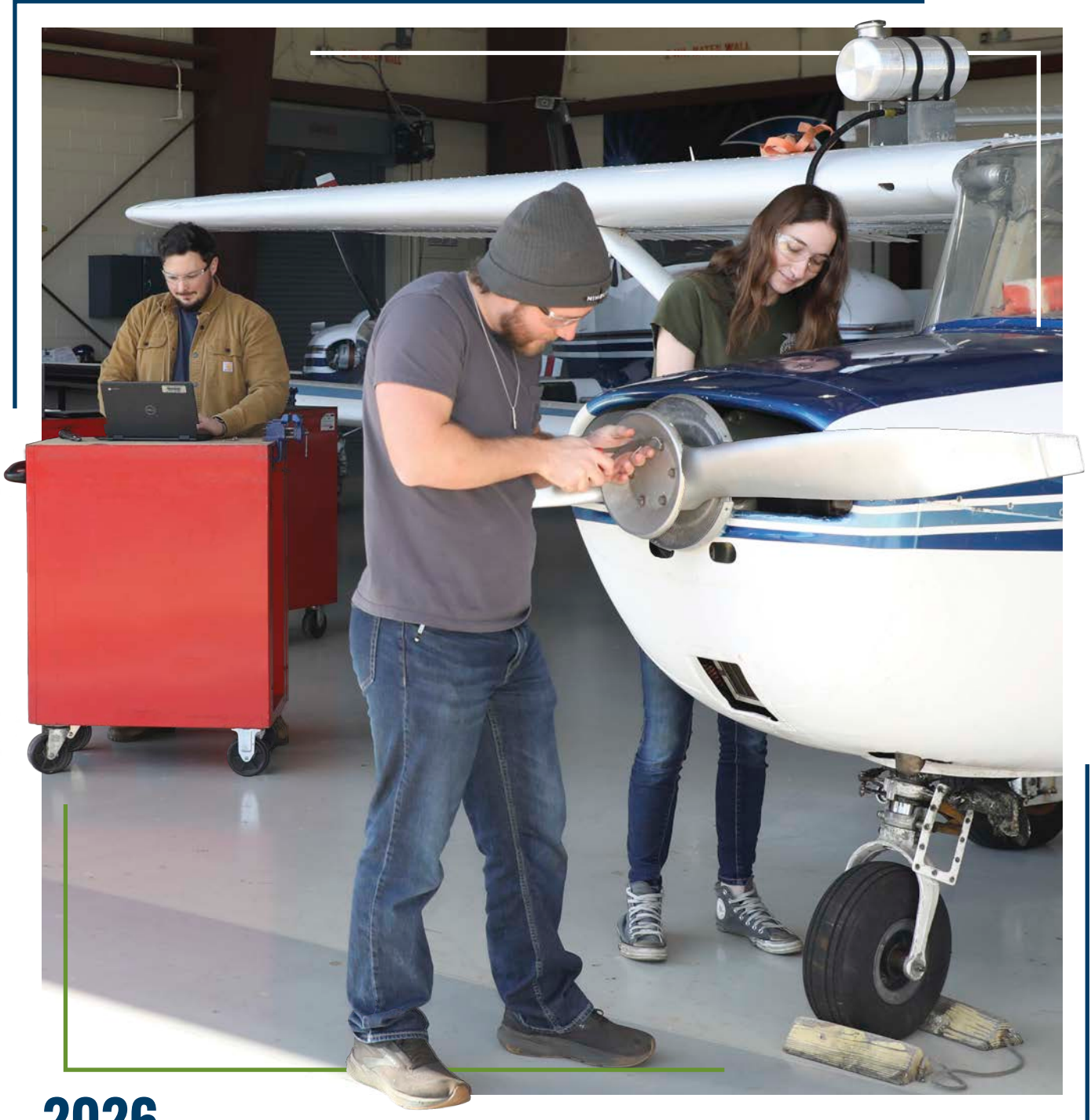


CRAVEN

COMMUNITY COLLEGE MAGAZINE





ON THE COVER:

Students in Craven's Aviation Systems Technology program gain hands-on aircraft maintenance experience.

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A LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

This year, our nation is celebrating the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence; reflecting on our shared history and on all that is yet to be achieved.

Our Founding Fathers recognized that education, including comprehensive access to it, is a key cornerstone for sustaining a free people. James Madison taught that "(A diffusion of) knowledge is the only guardian of true liberty." Education is the enduring way each generation prepares the next to lead, serve, and strengthen their communities.

This spirit of generational stewardship has defined Craven Community College for more than six decades.

Across our region, we are blessed to have individuals, businesses, and organizations investing in opportunities that will benefit students long after today's classrooms have emptied. This year, we were humbled by an extraordinary expression of that commitment through Tim and Linda Hinkin's transformational \$2.4 million gift—the largest private donation in the College's history. Their generosity joins that of countless alumni, foundations, corporate partners, and community supporters whose investments open doors for students and strengthen Eastern North Carolina.

This year marked the opening of our new Corporate Training Center, the first new building constructed on the New Bern campus in nearly two decades. Designed to support workforce development, professional training, and community engagement, the facility expands our ability to bring students, employers, and community partners together. Construction is also nearing completion for our new Public Safety Training Center, a 30-acre regional campus that will expand education for firefighters, law enforcement officers, emergency medical personnel, and other first responders for generations to come.

Our partnerships with the military community are another important investment in our shared future. Working alongside Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, Fleet Readiness Center East, Allies for Cherry Point's Tomorrow, and many other regional partners, we continue creating educational pathways that prepare students, veterans, and transitioning service members for meaningful local careers.

As you read this year's magazine, you'll find stories of innovation, resilience, partnership, and service. Each reflects people who understand that strengthening a community is not just the work of a single generation. It is an endeavor now spanning 250 years in America, where citizens have invested their time, talents, and treasures in a way that their successors can continue to build a strong future.

That has been the story of Craven Community College since 1965. Every student who graduates, every partnership we form, every facility we build, and every gift entrusted to the College contributes to a legacy that extends well beyond today's campuses. Thank you for being part of that mission. Whether you are a student, alumnus, donor, business partner, volunteer, or just a friend to the College, your support ensures that Craven Community College continues transforming lives and building a stronger future for Eastern North Carolina.



A handwritten signature of Dr. Ray Staats in black ink.

DR. RAY STAATS
PRESIDENT

IN THIS ISSUE

- 4 NEWS BRIEFS
- 8 MILITARY PARTNERSHIPS
- 12 COMMUNITY FABRIC AWARDS
- 13 EMPLOYEE EXCELLENCE
- 14 CRAVEN EARLY COLLEGE
- 17 PANTHER PRAISE
- 18 SUMMER CAMPS
- 20 CONSTRUCTION UPDATE
- 24 FOUNDATION SUPPORT
- 27 DONOR SUPPORT
- 31 IN MEMORIAM
- 32 PUBLIC RADIO EAST
- 36 STUDENT SPOTLIGHT
- 38 CAMPUS & COMMUNITY



Lt. Gov. Hunt Visits Havelock Campus

Craven Community College welcomed Lieutenant Governor Rachel Hunt to its Havelock campus on Feb. 10 as part of her Future-Ready Community College Tour.

During the visit, Hunt toured the College's Institute of Aeronautical Technology and the STEM Center, which is home to Craven's partnership with North Carolina State University through the NC State Engineering Program.

The tour highlighted the College's aviation-focused programs and strong partnership with Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, emphasizing how these collaborations create clear pathways from education to high-demand careers.

As a member of both the State Board of Education and the State Board of Community Colleges, Hunt emphasized the vital role North Carolina's 58 community colleges play in workforce development.

"I see people having 100 percent employment," she said. "These students all have jobs before they graduate. And they're staying right here at home. I grew up in a rural area, Wilson County, and we lost so many students to large cities and other places. We are going to make sure this is replicated all over the state."

College leaders and students had the opportunity to share how Craven's Havelock campus aligns with statewide priorities focused on economic growth, industry and military partnerships, and building a future-ready workforce for North Carolina.



Craven CC welcomed Lt. Governor Rachel Hunt, center, to the Havelock campus on Feb. 10 as part of her Future-Ready Community College Tour. Also pictured left to right are Havelock Campus Associate Dean Cameron Kishel, Allies for Cherry Point's Tomorrow Executive Director Marc Finlayson, Havelock Campus Executive Director of Student Services Sylvia King, City of Havelock Mayor Will Lewis, Craven CC President Dr. Ray Staats, Havelock Campus Dean Ricky Meadows, Craven CC VP for Development Dr. Gery Boucher, and Fleet Readiness Center East Executive Director David Rose.



Craven Introduces GAIM Initiative

The College kicked off its Generative Artificial Intelligence Momentum (GAIM) initiative with a collegewide GAIM Day event on Jan. 8. Faculty and staff explored practical ways AI can enhance classroom instruction, streamline everyday tasks, and support student success.

Designed to encourage thoughtful exploration of emerging technology, GAIM introduces employees to AI tools, effective prompting strategies, and examples of how AI can be used across a variety of roles.

The Center for Teaching & Learning will continue offering professional development and faculty learning sessions throughout the year, helping employees build confidence with AI while sharing best practices.

Biology Instructor Reps Team USA

Craven CC biology instructor Jennifer Bogdanoff represented Team USA at the 2025 World Triathlon Championships in Wollongong, Australia, competing alongside elite amateur athletes from around the world.

Despite battling an illness, Bogdanoff finished fourth in her age group in the Standard Aquabike and also completed the Sprint Triathlon—an impressive achievement just two years after competing in her first race.

She began competing in triathlons in 2023. During her first season, she won her age group and finished third overall at the North Carolina State Championship in White Lake, qualifying for the 2024 National Championships in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

In only two years, Bogdanoff progressed from competing in her first triathlon to representing the United States on the world stage.



Craven CC, UNCW Launch STEP-IN Teacher Education Partnership

Students now have an affordable pathway to become licensed teachers while remaining in Eastern North Carolina, thanks to a new initiative between Craven CC and the University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW). Last July, both institutions came together to launch the Secondary Teacher Education Partnership Initiative (STEP-IN).

Through the program, students earn an Associate in Arts or Associate in Science degree at Craven CC before completing a bachelor's degree through UNCW with fully online coursework.

"This partnership is about removing barriers," said Dr. Kathleen Gallman, Craven CC Vice President for Instruction. "By keeping talented students rooted in their communities, STEP-IN not only helps individuals achieve their dream of becoming teachers but also addresses the broader challenge of teacher shortages in rural North Carolina."

Student teaching placements take place in local communities, allowing students to gain classroom experience close to home while helping address teacher shortages across the region.



New ECU Partnership Supports Industrial Technology Careers

On June 29, Craven CC and East Carolina University (ECU) signed a guaranteed admission agreement that creates a seamless transfer pathway for graduates of 10 eligible Associate in Applied Science programs into ECU's Bachelor of Science in Industrial Technology program.

The partnership allows students to continue their education while staying in Eastern North Carolina, with five of the program's seven concentrations available fully online. The agreement expands affordable pathways to bachelor's degrees while strengthening the region's workforce.



Craven CC Joins NC State's Wolfpack Connect Program

Craven CC has joined NC State University's Wolfpack Connect partnership, creating a guaranteed transfer pathway for students pursuing bachelor's degrees.

The agreement allows eligible students to earn an Associate in Arts or Associate in Science degree at Craven CC before transferring to NC State with guaranteed admission into qualifying majors.

In addition to a streamlined transfer process, students benefit from coordinated academic advising, guided course planning, and a waived NC State transfer application fee.

Craven Connects with WCU

Craven CC has joined Western Carolina University's WCU Connect program, providing students with another guaranteed transfer pathway to a four-year university.

The program offers guaranteed admission to eligible community college transfer students while providing early access to university resources and support throughout the transfer process. WCU Connect reflects a shared commitment to expanding educational opportunities and helping students successfully complete a bachelor's degree.

Craven, CarolinaEast Start Patient Service Representative Course

Last August, Craven CC announced a new partnership with CarolinaEast Health System to offer a Patient Service Representative course. This monthly training is held at the Volt Center and prepares individuals for frontline administrative roles in healthcare settings.

This comprehensive program equips aspiring patient service representatives with the essential knowledge and skills needed to thrive in today's fast-paced healthcare environment. Developed in collaboration with CarolinaEast, the curriculum emphasizes real-world applications and industry standards to ensure participants are job-ready upon completion.

Students explore key topics including medical terminology, patient confidentiality, appointment scheduling, insurance verification, and effective communication techniques tailored to healthcare settings. The course also includes interactive sessions, role-playing exercises, and hands-on scenarios that simulate the day-to-day responsibilities of a patient service representative.

"This partnership with CarolinaEast allows us to directly align our training with the needs of our region's healthcare providers," said Volt Center Dean Jeff Schulze. "Together, we're building a more skilled and responsive healthcare workforce."



Craven Students Raise Funds for New High School Initiatives

Students in Craven's Barbering Concepts and Massage Therapy programs hosted a community event on June 5, inviting local residents to support the launch of two new workforce programs at New Bern and West Craven high schools.

Community members received complimentary chair massages and haircuts from students. Donations from these patrons helped purchase equipment and supplies for a new Nail Technician program at

West Craven High School and a new Barbering program at New Bern High School.

"This event is an excellent example of our students using their skills and talents to give back to the community while also investing in the next generation," said Zomar Peter, Associate Vice President for Students. "These new high school programs will provide students with hands-on career training and valuable pathways toward future employment and continued education."



Visual Arts Students Shine at Annual ArtWalk

Craven CC's talented visual arts students recently shared the limelight at the annual April ArtWalk, hosted by the Craven Arts Council at New Bern's Bank of the Arts. The exhibit featured artwork in a variety of media, showcasing the students' creativity, technical skill, and artistic growth. The event gave students an opportunity to gain public exposure, showcase their talents, connect with the community, and offer their artwork for sale.

The 2026 Presidential Art Award was presented to student Alex Champion for her white charcoal artwork titled "Clarity." Each year, selected works of art become



Craven visual arts students present their work at ArtWalk in April.

permanent pieces in the President's Art Collection. The annual award recognizes the artistic achievement and potential of students in the College's Associate in Fine Arts – Visual Arts program. Pieces from the collection are displayed in various locations across the College's campuses.



This white charcoal artwork titled "Clarity" was created by student Alex Champion and received the 2026 Presidential Art Award.

Cybersecurity Students Earn National Recognition

Approximately 60 Craven CC students competed in the National Cyber League (NCL) competition this spring, earning national recognition and continuing the College's tradition of excellence in cybersecurity.

Craven once again ranked as the No. 1 team in North Carolina, finishing ahead of institutions including Forsyth Tech, Wake Tech, Fayetteville Tech, and Appalachian State University. Nationally, the College placed 34th overall, 14th in the Eastern region, and ranked as the nation's fourth-highest two-year college. It also marked Craven's fourth consecutive finish in the top 100.

Craven's top individual competitor finished 130th out of more than 7,000 participants nationwide, while Craven's top team placed 44th among 3,634 teams.

"This accomplishment reflects the dedication and talent of our students and the strength of Craven's cybersecurity program," said Brad Nicolajsen, Craven CC Cybersecurity instructor. "We are proud to see our students competing and succeeding against colleges and universities from across the nation. They put in a tremendous amount of

time and effort to expand their cybersecurity, networking, and programming skills."

The National Cyber League challenges students to solve real-world cybersecurity scenarios involving digital forensics, ethical hacking, cryptography, network analysis, and other technical disciplines.



Several students compete in the National Cyber League event from the computer lab in Bate Hall. Pictured left to right: Kyle Bayliss, Jeff Odonnell, Ethan Wetherington, and Austen Cornwell.

PRECISION & PURPOSE



How Military Partnerships are Shaping Eastern NC

Craven Community College's military partnerships extend well beyond the classroom. Working alongside military installations, employers, and community organizations, the College is connecting education with careers while strengthening Eastern North Carolina's aviation and defense industries.

DRIVING THE DEFENSE ECONOMY

As Eastern North Carolina's workforce demands grow, Craven Community College continues to meet the challenge. The College's latest workforce initiative, the Fleet Workforce Education Center (FWEC), will serve as a training hub for careers in aerospace, aviation, manufacturing, and maritime industries.

Building on the College's longstanding commitment to workforce development, the FWEC will provide industry-aligned training that prepares students, veterans, transitioning service members, and working adults for high-demand careers supporting regional employers. The initiative reflects the College's mission to meet evolving workforce needs while creating pathways to family-sustaining careers.

The College already offers programs supporting these industries, including Aviation Systems Technology, FAA Airframe and Powerplant certifications, Advanced Manufacturing Tools for Veterans, and Welding.

The FWEC will expand these offerings to include emerging fields such as avionics, advanced materials, additive manufacturing, quality control, and precision manufacturing.

Developed through years of collaboration with regional employers, military partners, and economic development organizations, the FWEC is designed to ensure training aligns with workforce needs.

"A strength of Craven CC is establishing relationships with key stakeholders," said Dr. Gery Boucher, Craven CC Vice President for Development. "Through listening sessions and advisory boards with military and industry partners, we work together to identify, develop, and implement the programs that best support our region's workforce needs."

Strategically located at the Havelock campus, the FWEC leverages Craven CC's close proximity to Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, the College's partnerships with aerospace and manufacturing employers, and the NC State Engineering programs offered on campus. Together, these resources help strengthen the region's technical workforce while providing students with clear pathways to high-demand careers. By investing in workforce education and industry partnerships, Craven CC is strengthening the regional economy while preparing skilled professionals to meet the evolving needs of regional employers.

FUELING GROWTH IN THE AVIATION INDUSTRY

While larger plans for the FWEC continue to take shape, Craven CC is already preparing tomorrow's aerospace workforce through its new Introduction to Mixed Aviation Trades (IMAT) program.

Developed in partnership with Fleet Readiness Center East (FRC East), IMAT equips participants with foundational skills across multiple aviation disciplines, preparing them for careers in aircraft maintenance and the broader aerospace industry. The first cohort launched in May 2026, with additional cohorts already underway.

Students gain experience in disciplines such as aircraft systems, avionics, sheet metal fabrication, composites, quality management, additive manufacturing, and workplace safety.

The curriculum also emphasizes skills that are essential in today's aerospace workforce: communication, teamwork, and critical thinking. Flight simulator experiences give participants a unique perspective on the relationship between pilots and maintenance crews, reinforcing the importance of precision and collaboration.

As the program gains momentum, it will expand to include more advanced training in sheet metal, composites, aviation electrical systems, avionics, and airframe assembly.

This fall, Craven CC will introduce an IMAT course exclusively at Havelock High School, giving students an early opportunity to explore aviation careers while earning valuable technical skills. College officials are also working with Lenoir Community College to create a regional training model.



Students in the Introduction to Mixed Aviation Trades (IMAT) program gain hands-on experience working with aircraft systems while developing the technical and teamwork skills valued by the aviation industry.

SERVING BEYOND THE UNIFORM

Every year, highly trained Marines transition from military service to civilian life. Through a new scholarship initiative, Craven CC and Allies for Cherry Point's Tomorrow (ACT) are helping to ensure more of that talent remains in Eastern North Carolina.

Supported by a \$10,800 Duke Energy Foundation grant, ACT is funding scholarships that help transitioning Marines earn short-term workforce credentials at Craven. The scholarships cover specialized training that is often not funded through the GI Bill, providing a direct pathway into local careers.

“The scholarships fund short-term workforce courses that lead directly into employment,” said Dr. Ray Staats, Craven CC President. “So, for a Marine that's separating from active-duty service and going into civilian life, we provide training that gives them an opportunity to immediately go to work and stay here in the local area. We keep that talent here with us.”

Programs covered by the funding include high-demand trades such as welding, HVAC, plumbing, electrical, and forklift, as well as Federal Aviation Administration airframe and powerplant certifications, which allows transitioning members to go from working on military aircraft to working on civilian aircraft.

Approximately one in four Craven residents are connected to Cherry Point, while MCAS Cherry Point and Fleet Readiness Center East support more than 10,000 jobs and generate an estimated \$2.2 billion in regional economic impact. By helping transitioning Marines remain in Eastern North Carolina, the scholarship program helps ensure the highly skilled workforce developed at Cherry Point continues contributing to the region after military service.

“It's one of the great cases where the mission of the College and the mission of Allies for Cherry Point's Tomorrow come together, where we're interested in the welfare of our military members and encouraging them to stay in the area post-transition,” added Staats.

While their military service may be ending, these Marines continue making an impact on the region—this time with their boots on the ground in Eastern North Carolina's civilian workforce.

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For a Marine that's separating from active-duty service and going into civilian life, we provide training that gives them an opportunity to immediately go to work and stay here in the local area. We keep that talent here with us.

— Dr. Ray Staats
Craven CC President

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SHOOTING FOR THE STARS

The horizon at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point is defined by the sharp silhouettes of advanced aircraft and the steady drone of jet engines. It's a place where high-tech innovation meets national defense.

Now, it's also a place where local fifth graders learn to build flightpaths, code robotics, and envision their own futures in global technology.

This transformation is the result of a historic new partnership. Through the combined efforts of Allies for Cherry Point's Tomorrow (ACT), MCAS Cherry Point, and Craven CC, Eastern North Carolina has officially launched STARBASE Cherry Point.

While the Department of Defense (DoD) program operates nationwide, this specific launch marks a monumental first: It is the only STARBASE program in the country located aboard a Marine Corps installation.

STARBASE is a federally funded DoD initiative designed to spark interest in science, technology, engineering, art and design, and math (STEAM). Bringing a major federal program to life locally requires strong leadership and complex logistics. That is where the connection between community advocacy, military capability, and higher education comes into play.

ACT serves as the driving force behind the vision and anchors the program to the region's long-term economic goals. MCAS Cherry Point and Fleet Readiness Center East offer world-class facilities where cutting-edge aviation technology serves as inspiration for young minds.

While the DoD supplies the funding, Craven CC provides the personnel support that makes the daily mission possible. By recruiting and managing the civilian instructors and administrative staff who work inside this high-security base, the College ensures local students receive top-tier instruction.

The heart of the program is an intensive, 25-hour curriculum designed around an immersive, "hands-on, minds-on" approach to STEAM. Fifth-grade students from Craven, Jones, and Pamlico counties step out of their traditional classrooms and into design challenges, experiments, and demonstrations.



By interacting directly with military personnel, these fifth graders see exactly how classroom lessons apply to real-world aviation, engineering, and defense careers. An estimated 1,000 students are expected to go through the program each year.

For Craven CC, this partnership represents an investment that looks decades into the future. By capturing the imagination of students at a pivotal age, the college and its military partners are cultivating a homegrown pipeline of technical talent.

The fifth graders exploring STARBASE today are the future engineering students, aviation technicians, and cybersecurity specialists who will eventually power the region's workforce. By partnering with ACT and MCAS Cherry Point, Craven CC is doing more than just supporting a youth program—it is securing Eastern North Carolina's position as a thriving hub for technological advancement.

ENGINEERING THE FUTURE

The NC State Engineering Program at Craven CC's Havelock campus was created with one goal in mind: preparing engineers to meet the needs of Eastern North Carolina's aviation and defense industries. Two decades later, that mission continues to shape how the program grows.

As aircraft systems have become increasingly electronics-driven, the program added an Electrical Engineering Systems concentration to complement its existing Mechanical Engineering Systems curriculum. Students in both pathways collaborate on multidisciplinary design projects, gaining experience that mirrors the integrated engineering environments they will encounter throughout their careers.

The Havelock Engineering Program gives students the opportunity to earn an NC State engineering degree close to home while preparing them for careers in aerospace, aviation, and defense. Its impact can be seen in graduates such as Savannah Tabor Mendoza and Andrew Wilwerding, who combined classroom instruction with hands-on experience at FRC East before launching careers in engineering.

After earning associate degrees in science and engineering from Craven, Mendoza transferred to the NC State Engineering Program in Havelock, where she graduated in 2024 with a Bachelor of Science in Engineering with a concentration in Mechanical Engineering Systems. While completing the program, she interned at FRC East before joining the organization full time as a Support Equipment Mechanical Engineer for the MQ-9 Reaper under the Unmanned Aerial Systems Fleet Support Team.

"Working as an engineering intern at FRC East throughout college, I was mentored by exceptional leaders to solve real-world military problems, which rapidly built my professional communication, organizational, and technical skills under high-responsibility conditions," said Mendoza.

“This hands-on experience perfectly complemented my academic studies, as our local program staff assigned semester-by-semester labs that allowed me to apply classroom engineering concepts both analytically and experimentally, both ultimately preparing me for my career.”

U.S. Marine Corps veteran Wilwerding graduated from the NC State Havelock Engineering Program in 2020. After working as an intern at FRC East, he joined the organization full time, later earned a master's degree in mechanical engineering from Purdue University, and now teaches upper-level mechanical engineering labs in the Havelock Engineering Program while continuing his career at FRC East as an H-1 Drives and Diagnostics Engineer.

“It's extremely gratifying to teach at a program that has had such a positive impact on me and my family,” he said. “Knowing that the knowledge and skills they are learning will benefit both them and many others is very rewarding.”

For NC State Havelock Engineering Program Director Nathan Rowland, maintaining close partnerships with regional employers like FRC East is central to preparing graduates for careers in the aviation and defense industries.

“People from Eastern North Carolina will continue to have the opportunity to earn their NC State engineering degree in Havelock without having to uproot their lives or leave their community,” he said. “By listening to leadership and the engineering team, we can continue to meet workforce needs and ensure our graduates are prepared to make meaningful contributions to the long-term growth and competitiveness of Eastern North Carolina's aviation and defense industries.”

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People from Eastern North Carolina will continue to have the opportunity to earn their NC State engineering degree in Havelock without having to uproot their lives or leave their community.

— Nathan Rowland
NC State Havelock Engineering Program Director

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BY THE NUMBERS

119 GRADUATES SINCE 2012

95% INTERN AT FRC EAST

78% HIRED BY FRC EAST



NC State Havelock Engineering Program Director Nathan Rowland, left, guides the next generation of engineers.



Savannah Tabor Mendoza now works as a Support Equipment Mechanical Engineer for the MQ-9 Reaper under the Unmanned Aerial Systems Fleet Support Team at FRC East. Photo courtesy of Jen Bittinger/Fleet Readiness Center East



Andrew Wilwerding now works at FRC East as an H-1 Drives and Diagnostics Engineer and also teaches upper-level mechanical engineering labs for the NC State Havelock Engineering Program. Photo courtesy of Jen Bittinger/Fleet Readiness Center East

COMMUNITY FABRIC AWARDS

The Community Fabric Awards hosted its 16th annual ceremony at the Riverfront Convention Center of Craven County on April 29 to a crowd of approximately 500 people. Presented by the Craven Community College Foundation, the event recognizes individuals and businesses that have shown outstanding initiative, impact of service, and inspiration of others.



CHUCK TYSON
Individual Leadership Award

Chuck Tyson has spent decades helping shape Craven County and the town of Trent Woods through his leadership and commitment to community growth. A New Bern native and longtime real estate professional, Tyson began his public service as a Trent Woods commissioner before serving on the Craven County Board of Commissioners and later as mayor of Trent Woods for nearly 20 years. He helped lead major projects, including the development of the Riverfront Convention Center of Craven County, expansion of the Coastal Carolina Regional Airport, creation of Creekside Park, and improvements throughout Trent Woods. He also served on numerous local boards and organizations, including the Craven CC Board of Trustees. His years of service have left a lasting impact on Craven County and the communities he served.



HEARNE'S FINE JEWELRY
Business Leadership Award

Hearne's Fine Jewelry is a family-owned business that has served New Bern for more than 50 years. Founded in 1972 by Mickey and Laura Hearne, the company has grown into a multigenerational operation led today by Mike and Michelle Hearne alongside their daughter, Madison. Known for exceptional customer service, Hearne's has helped generations of families celebrate life's most meaningful milestones while building a reputation for quality, trust, and integrity. Beyond business success, the Hearne family is known for its commitment to the community, supporting local nonprofits, schools, and charitable initiatives throughout the year. Through five decades of service and leadership, Hearne's Fine Jewelry has become a trusted institution and a cornerstone of the local business community.



KELSIE McBRIDE
Education Leadership Award

Kelsie McBride, director of nursing programs at Craven CC, has dedicated her career to nursing education and service to the community. A Craven CC alumna, McBride returned to the college as a nursing instructor in 2015 after a successful career as a registered nurse and now leads the college's nursing programs. She helps prepare the next generation of healthcare professionals while promoting collaboration and innovation across academic programs. She is also an active volunteer and advocate, serving with organizations such as the MERCI Clinic and the Monarch Human Rights Committee to expand access to care and support underserved populations. Through her commitment to education, healthcare, and community service, McBride continues to make a lasting impact on the lives of students, patients, and residents throughout the region.

The **Community Fabric Awards** have **raised** over **\$700,000** since starting in **2011**

EMPLOYEE EXCELLENCE

Craven's annual Excellence Awards celebrate employees whose exceptional efforts reach beyond their everyday duties in the workplace and the community.



"My favorite part of my job is the opportunity to serve others. I lead with a servant's heart, and being in a position where I can uplift, guide, and support students through their journey is incredibly rewarding. Watching them rise above challenges and step into their purpose means everything to me."

SYLVIA KING
STAFF EXCELLENCE

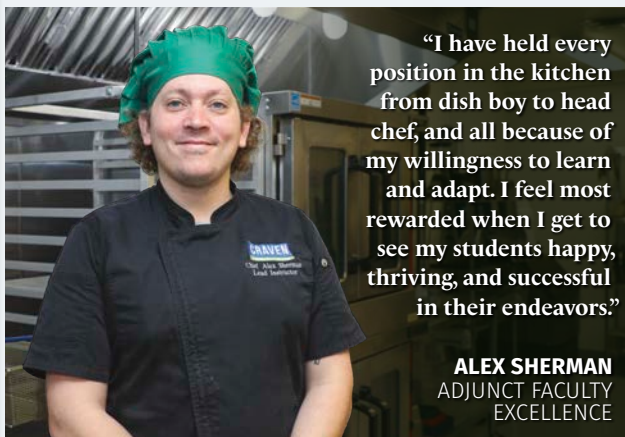
Sylvia has dedicated her career to helping students discover their potential and achieve their goals. She joined Craven in 2009 as an Enrollment Specialist, transitioned to Financial Aid Advisor, and now serves as Executive Director of Student Services at the Havelock campus. Inspired by her own experiences overcoming challenges and defying expectations, she is passionate about encouraging others to believe in themselves and pursue life-transforming opportunities. Throughout her career, she has helped countless students navigate challenges and pursue new opportunities. Her greatest reward comes from watching them build confidence, overcome obstacles, and achieve success they once thought was beyond their reach.



"To me, excellence means showing up with purpose, serving others well, and never underestimating the power of education to change a life. Excellence is built one day, one student, and one act of dedication at a time."

DR. ANGELA FOSTER
FACULTY EXCELLENCE

Angela's career has been focused on helping students discover their potential and find confidence in their abilities. She began as an adjunct biology instructor in 2012 before moving into a full-time role as communication faculty in January 2020. Guided by a belief in the power of education to transform lives, she is passionate about helping students strengthen their communication skills and recognize strengths they may not have fully seen in themselves. Her greatest accomplishment has been the opportunity to make a meaningful difference in students' lives, both academically and personally. She takes pride in watching students grow into stronger, more confident communicators and seeing the impact that confidence has on their future success.



"I have held every position in the kitchen from dish boy to head chef, and all because of my willingness to learn and adapt. I feel most rewarded when I get to see my students happy, thriving, and successful in their endeavors."

ALEX SHERMAN
ADJUNCT FACULTY
EXCELLENCE

Since joining the Volt Center in 2022, Alex has brought years of culinary experience and a passion for helping others succeed in the industry. His culinary career began in New Bern at age 15, washing dishes and assisting with food preparation. He worked his way through every role in the kitchen, gaining experience in country clubs, butcher shops, and upscale restaurants while building his career through hard work, adaptability, and a commitment to continuous learning. He believes success comes from a willingness to grow and seize new opportunities. His greatest reward comes from seeing students gain confidence, achieve their goals, and build successful careers of their own.

20 YEARS OF INNOVATION



Craven Early College Celebrates Milestone Anniversary

When Craven Early College (CEC) first opened its doors in 2006, the concept of early colleges in North Carolina was still taking shape. Formed during a nationwide effort to create schools that would combine the high school and college experience, CEC took its mission a step further by creating a project-based, blended-learning environment. This framework not only made the early college unique among its class, but it also established the school as a beacon for innovation that has continued to shine for 20 years.

ORIGINS AND VISION

North Carolina Governor Mike Easley launched the “Learn and Earn” Early College High School Initiative in 2004 as a response to workforce needs across the state and the growing support for a national “new schools” program.

Designed to improve high schools, prepare students for college and careers, and to create a seamless curriculum between high school and college, these new schools would be located on the campuses of two- or four-year colleges and universities.

These early colleges would provide an academically rigorous course of study with the goal of ensuring that every student who remained enrolled in the program for five years would be able to graduate with both their high school diploma and two-year associate degree at no cost.

Led by then-Craven Community College (Craven CC) President Dr. Scott Ralls and then-Craven County Schools Superintendent Bill Rivenbark, CEC began to take its shape in the spring of 2006. Veteran Craven County educator Dr. Annette Brown was chosen as the high school's first principal. The initial team included curriculum coordinator Kathi Whitfield, guidance counselor Sandy Moser, administrative assistant Kim Quinn, and Daniel Colvin, who served as the community college's liaison to the new high school before taking over as principal in 2008.

"Being the visionaries that they are, Dr. Ralls and Mr. Rivenbark jumped on the 'new schools' project's early proposal," said Brown. "And it was clear to those of us that were put in leadership of that, that it shouldn't look like any other early college."

While most of the "new schools" opted for traditional approaches to the classroom, Whitfield developed a blended, project-based learning model that integrated a variety of subjects.

"We could not have accomplished those thematic endeavors without her work," said Brown. "We were one of the few that had a totally integrated thematic curriculum with a project-based overlay. Our freshman year would be totally integrated with science, social studies, and language arts."

This foundation has withstood the test of time as CEC's 20th freshman class begins this fall under the same principles.

"We're still big proponents of blended learning," said Dr. Marlow Artis, CEC Principal. "The experience that students receive at our school should not be the same thing they would receive at a traditional school because we're mandated by state statutes to have innovative instructional practices. Our teachers are really focused on that."



“

We want our students to see how life is interconnected. Life is a big puzzle, and we're trying to figure out how to fit all the pieces together.

— Dr. Marlow Artis
Craven Early College Principal

”

CEC has scheduled time into its program development each year to ensure that innovation and opportunities for blended learning are allowed to continue and evolve.

"Twice a year we have interdisciplinary days," said Artis. "The teachers co-design, co-plan, and co-deliver that instruction. A lot of things that you will see is project-based learning. It's the collaboration. That's something that we can't get away from. We want our students to see how life is interconnected. Life is a big puzzle, and we're trying to figure out how to fit all the pieces together."

Craven County Schools Superintendent Dr. Matthew Cheeseman echoed the value of classroom innovation.

"For 20 years, Craven Early College High School has represented the very best of what is possible when innovation, vision, and strong partnerships come together in support of students," he said. "As we celebrate this milestone, we honor the phenomenal leaders, educators, staff, students, families, and community partners who have helped shape Craven Early College into the outstanding school it is today."

ADMISSIONS PROCESS

Early colleges were created to prioritize students who have traditionally been underrepresented in higher education, including first-generation college students, students from low-income families, members of underrepresented minority groups, and those who have struggled in traditional school settings. To ensure this opportunity remained open for all students in Craven County, the early college developed a lottery system.

"You couldn't just apply and be accepted because you were a high-performing student or because you had the money to get in there," said Brown. "It was simply a lottery-based program that if you applied, your name went in a lottery, and you were accepted at that point."

The early college received 120 applications during its first year and accepted 50 students to begin in the fall of 2006.

"It was very diverse," said Brown. "We had everything from spectrum disorder to extremely gifted. They had to learn to get along because they came from West Craven, they came from Havelock, and they came from New Bern. So, you had three distinct demographic areas."

FINDING A HOME

Classroom space has always been a precious commodity at Craven CC, and finding a home for the Early College was no different.

The Bosch Advanced Manufacturing Center was under construction at the time and being considered for CEC's future home, but Craven CC had an even greater need for career and technical labs.

College administrators found a compromise by placing three trailers in a "U" formation on the center campus lawn. Two of the trailers were used for classroom space and the third was used by administrators.

"We had our own trailer park in the middle of campus," laughed Brown. "So, when all students were on break during the day, I'd just walk out into the courtyard, and we had picnic tables with umbrellas, and the kids got together and did what they needed to. It was our own little family."

In January 2000, Craven CC purchased an ambulatory recovery center that was first used for continuing education classes. CEC moved into the building, later known as the Mary Dale Bender Center, in the fall of 2009 and remains there today.

TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE

CEC's approach to the classroom has proven successful for students, as well as administrators who are evaluated by the State of North Carolina.

CEC is the only Craven County School to show "exceeded growth" for the last four consecutive years and has received letter grades equaling seven As and two Bs over the last 11 years (two years were not measured due to COVID).

"CEC's long-standing record of academic excellence, including repeated 'A' school distinction and consistently exceeding growth, as defined by the state accountability model, is a reflection of the dedication, hard work, and high expectations that define this school community," said Cheeseman. "We are incredibly proud of every student who has walked the halls of Craven Early College and grateful for the lasting impact this school continues to have on Craven County Schools."

CEC's success record is no secret among Craven County parents. As more students graduated from CEC, the demand grew to add a second early college in Havelock. The Early College of Eastern Applied Science and Technology (EAST) opened in 2010 to serve students on the Havelock campus.

"This community really values early college because we wouldn't have two programs if it didn't," said Artis. "We have three traditional high schools, and we have two early colleges. That says that the people in this community value early college and want to have this as an option for their students."

Created as a strong partnership between Craven County Schools and Craven CC, CEC exists today as a Cooperative Innovative High School under the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.

Students are dually enrolled as high school and college students, with access to many of the support structures and amenities available to traditional college students.

"Through our valued collaboration with Craven Community College, CEC students have been given a remarkable opportunity to earn both a high school diploma and an associate degree at no cost to their families, opening doors to college, careers, and future success," Cheeseman added. "Congratulations to Craven Early College on 20 years of excellence, opportunity, and student success. We look forward to many more years of preparing our learners for bright futures." 🦉



Through our valued collaboration with Craven Community College, CEC students have been given a remarkable opportunity to earn both a high school diploma and an associate degree at no cost to their families, opening doors to college, careers, and future success.

— Dr. Matthew Cheeseman
*Craven County Schools
Superintendent*



PRINCIPALS

2006–2008: Dr. Annette Brown

2008–2013: Daniel Colvin

2013–2022: Todd Bradley

2022–Present: Dr. Marlow Artis

Emeritus Class of 2026

Behind every Craven CC graduate are employees whose guidance and commitment help students achieve their goals. During the College's 59th commencement ceremony, three retirees were awarded emeritus designation in recognition of their years of exceptional service and lasting contributions.

The Emeritus program honors faculty and staff whose work has advanced the College's mission and enriched the lives of students throughout their time at Craven. The designation also recognizes individuals whose leadership and lasting impact continue to shape the College.



MAUREEN ABRAHAM
Faculty Emeritus

For 25 years, Maureen helped prepare the next generation of nurses while modeling the compassion and professionalism she expected from every graduate. She joined Craven in 2000 as a full-time nursing instructor, becoming the primary instructor for maternal-child nursing before stepping into the role of Director of Nursing Programs in 2020. She served in this role through her retirement in 2025. She helped Craven nursing programs achieve National League for Nursing accreditation in 2022, expanding opportunities for graduates to serve in government healthcare settings. Her legacy is found in the thousands of students she mentored and the patients and families whose lives have been touched through their care.



SUSIE GAMES
Staff Emeritus

For many students, the path to a college degree begins with someone who believes it's possible. During her 24 years in Craven's Financial Aid office, Susie became that person for countless students. Joining the College in 1998 as Assistant Director of Financial Aid and later serving as Executive Director, she approached every student with empathy, determination, and a genuine desire to help. Whether identifying scholarships, navigating complex regulations, or finding creative solutions, Games helped ensure finances were never the reason a student's academic dreams had to end. Her dedication opened doors to opportunity for generations of Craven learners. She retired in 2022.



YUKO BOYD
Staff Emeritus

Yuko built a career behind the scenes, making sure every student's academic journey stayed on track. After joining Craven in 1999 as a Student Services secretary, she became Registrar in 2018 and earned a reputation as the College's trusted expert in curriculum standards, Informer reports, Colleague, and programs of study. Recognized with the Staff Excellence Award during the 2018–2019 academic year, Boyd combined technical expertise with an unwavering commitment to students until her retirement in 2024. Her careful stewardship of academic records helped guarantee that when graduation day arrived, every graduate had earned the opportunity to cross the stage with confidence.

Challenge Coin Wins National Award

In March, Craven CC earned a Gold Paragon Award from the National Council for Marketing & Public Relations (NCMPR), receiving first place in the Novelty category for its 2025 challenge coin.

Designed by Marketing & Communications Coordinator Holly Desrosier, the commemorative coin celebrates the College's 60th anniversary and features the STEM Center and Veterans Memorial Park.



SUMMER FUN

EXPANDED CAMP SELECTIONS INSPIRE FUTURE CAREERS

Many college campuses are quiet in the summer as students take a break from their classes, but that was not the case this year at Craven Community College. More than 160 middle and high school students visited the College for summer camps to explore ceramics, aviation, submarines, engineering, music, welding, and much more. This summer marked one of the busiest years for summer camps, which included four new career and technical camps, as well as Craven's second year offering the Charting Your Course pre-apprenticeship.

"We want Craven to be a place where students discover what's possible," said Katrina Bishop, Dean of Arts & Sciences. "Summer camps offer an early introduction to learning, creativity, and career exploration, helping young people build confidence and begin charting a course toward their future goals."

Craven offered 14 camps in 2026 across its New Bern and Havelock campuses. Camps on the New Bern campus included a mix of pottery, music, writing, and STEM-based learning, as well as the introduction of new camps from Career & Technical Programs. These popular new additions filled up quickly and included Babysitting, Cosmetology, Automotive Skills, and Welding.



Babysitting 101 campers build confidence and practical childcare skills through realistic caregiving experiences.

"Students learn best when they can see, touch, and experience something for themselves," said Matthew Berg, Dean of Career & Technical Programs. "These camps give young people the chance to step into our labs and classrooms, work with industry equipment, and explore careers in a way that is engaging, practical, and fun. By introducing these camps, we hope to spark interest early and show students that rewarding careers and educational opportunities are available close to home."

The Havelock campus welcomed 81 campers this year for hands-on learning opportunities, including Engineering, 3D Modeling, 3D Printing, and a brand-new camp called Building Giants. Designed for students 12–14 years old who are interested in careers in maritime and advanced manufacturing, Building Giants welcomed 16 campers in June for free, thanks to a grant from SparkForce.

“Building Giants provided students with a unique opportunity to explore high-demand technical careers in a fun and engaging environment,” said Rick McCormac, Craven CC Dean of Workforce Development. “We’re excited to inspire the next generation of builders and innovators.”

Campers participated in a series of interactive metal fabrication labs, including welding, sheet metal work, laser technology, and machining. Throughout the week, they put those skills into practice by designing and 3D printing an object and constructing an operational model submarine, which they tested for buoyancy on the final day.

In addition to the middle school camps, Craven offered rising high school seniors and recent graduates a chance to explore their career options for a second year with Charting Your Course.



Students in the new Building Giants camp collaborate on a hands-on engineering design challenge.

This pre-apprenticeship program ran for five weeks at no cost, and students who completed the program received a \$500 stipend.

“Many students know they want a successful future but aren’t always sure which direction to take,” said Zomar Peter, Associate Vice President for Students. “Charting Your Course provides a supportive environment where they can explore careers, build practical skills, and better understand the educational and employment pathways available to them.”

Seven participants explored aviation technology through hands-on experiences in aviation maintenance, workplace safety, employability skills, and aerospace career pathways. Charting Your Course will return for a third year in 2027 with another aviation-focused cohort, along with a new pre-apprenticeship for students interested in trades and manufacturing. 🌐



Charting Your Course campers develop foundational electronics skills through labs focused on aviation technology.

“

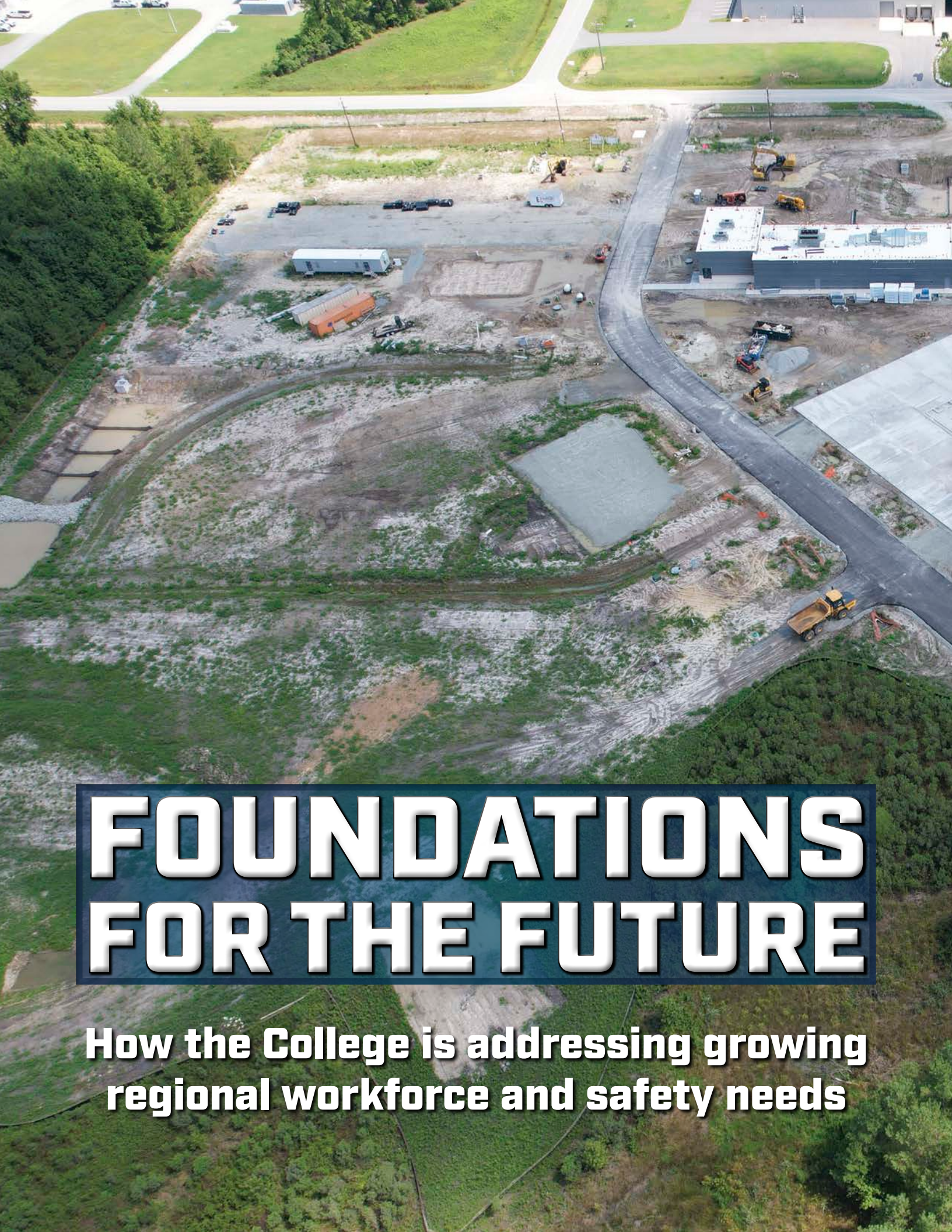
We want Craven to be a place where students discover what's possible. Summer camps offer an early introduction to learning, creativity, and career exploration, helping young people build confidence and begin charting a course toward their future goals.

— Katrina Bishop
Dean of Arts & Sciences

”

2026 SUMMER CAMPS BY THE NUMBERS

- 🌐 162 Attendees
- 🌐 14 Camps
- 🌐 1 Pre-Apprenticeship
- 🌐 2 Locations

An aerial photograph of a large-scale construction project. A new road curves through the site, separating a large, cleared area from an existing building complex on the right. The cleared area contains several large, rectangular concrete foundations. Various pieces of heavy machinery, including excavators and trucks, are visible throughout the site. The surrounding landscape includes green grass, trees, and a parking lot in the upper left corner.

FOUNDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

**How the College is addressing growing
regional workforce and safety needs**

Two major construction projects are expanding Craven CC's ability to serve students, employers, and the community. These new facilities reflect the College's continued investment in meeting the evolving needs of Eastern North Carolina.

ANSWERING THE CALL

Eastern North Carolina's growing demand for trained first responders is the driving force behind Craven CC's next major capital project: the Public Safety Training Center (PSTC).

This state-supported \$12 million initiative, developed in partnership with Craven County and supported by local and state leaders, will serve as a premier regional hub for training firefighters, law enforcement, EMS, and other first responders across Eastern North Carolina.

Located at the Craven County Industrial Park, the 31-acre facility will feature state-of-the-art resources including a 20,000-square-foot firearms training building, combined burn building and drill tower, driving pad, and more, addressing critical workforce needs in emergency services.

"This has been something that's been coming for more than 20 years," said Staats. "With the help of our legislators, our Craven County commission, the City of New Bern, the Fireman's Association, and our law enforcement partners, we finally placed all the pieces together. This campus will sustain the critical first responder training pipeline for Craven County and the surrounding region for generations to come."

Its launch comes at a pivotal moment, as North Carolina continues to face significant shortages in EMS, fire, and law enforcement personnel.

High turnover and persistent vacancies have created growing demand for training programs that prepare the next generation of first responders.

By centralizing high-tier instruction on everything from specialized driving pads to an indoor firing range, the College is directly addressing this statewide emergency by constructing a premier pipeline to recruit, train, and retain the next generation of lifesaving personnel.

A groundbreaking ceremony on Nov. 3 marked the official start of construction. The anticipated completion date is early 2027.



Construction officially starts on the Public Safety Training Center during a groundbreaking ceremony on Nov. 3.

PSTC DESIGNED FOR REAL-WORLD TRAINING

Fire & Rescue

- Two-story residential burn building
- Four-story drill tower
- Exterior burn area
- Drafting pit

Law Enforcement

- Indoor firearms training facility with 10 firing lanes
- Vehicle driving range with skid pad
- Specialized response training

- Hazardous waste training area
- Vehicle extrication pad
- Large truck training course with railroad crossings and bridge overpass

North Carolina Public Safety Workforce

- **20–30%** annual EMT/paramedic turnover
- **70%+** of NC fire departments rely on volunteers
- **Nearly 50%** of NC law enforcement agencies report vacancy rates above 10%

Sources: American Ambulance Association, NC Department of Insurance/OSFM, NCDPS

CREATING SPACE FOR SUCCESS

For years, Craven Community College's growing programs and community partnerships have outpaced the available space on campus.

From workforce training and large-scale student activities to nursing simulations and Foundation fundraisers, the College often had to look beyond its own campus to accommodate its needs.

The completion of the new Corporate Training Center (CTC) changes that.

Completed in June 2026, the CTC is the first new building constructed on the New Bern campus since 2009. The 12,296-square-foot facility provides flexible meeting and

training space that will serve students, employees, business partners, and the community.

“This is an exciting moment for our College and the entire community,” said Craven CC President Dr. Ray Staats. “We're opening a facility specifically designed to support large-scale professional development opportunities, workforce training, industry educational partnerships, and to increase our capacity for community engagement initiatives. The new Corporate Training Center reaffirms the College's long-standing commitment as a community convener—serving our students, supporting our educational, governmental, and industry partners, and being an engine for regional and local economic development.” 🦋



The College's new Corporate Training Center will serve as a community hub for professional development.

“

This is an exciting moment for our College and the entire community. We're opening a facility specifically designed to support large-scale professional development, workforce training, industry educational partnerships, and to increase our capacity for community engagement.

— Dr. Ray Staats
Craven CC President

”



Craven CC hosts a ribbon-cutting event to mark the official opening of the Corporate Training Center on June 10, 2026.

The Craven Community College Foundation and its donors helped more than 2,700 students realize their educational dreams over the past academic year. Your donations have a real impact, allowing our community to grow stronger with each graduating student. Together, we can turn aspirations into accomplishments, ignite potentials, and invest in dreams.



Craven CC Foundation's Light Up a Life Event Illuminates Student Success

The Craven CC Foundation hosted its inaugural Light Up a Life event at the Volt Center last November, welcoming more than 150 Foundation board members, community supporters, and donors for an evening dedicated to student success. The event raised more than \$100,000 to support students across the College.

One of the evening's highlights was a centerpiece competition, where faculty, staff, and students creatively showcased Craven's academic programs and services

through displays designed to spark conversation and celebrate the College's impact. Guests also participated in a live auction and other activities supporting student success.

"Light Up a Life is about much more than scholarships," said Foundation Assistant Director Christina Bowman-Murray. "The funds raised are removing barriers for students wherever the need exists by supporting everything from workforce training supplies and certification costs to graduation expenses and emergency assistance."



Over 150 guests attend the Foundation's Light Up a Life event to bid on a variety of items that support student success.

Gene Haas Foundation Fuels Future Machinists with \$14K Donation

The College received a significant boost to its machining program last October thanks to a \$14,000 donation from the Gene Haas Foundation. In addition, students received brand-new tool kits, giving them the resources needed to sharpen their skills and prepare for machining careers.



The Gene Haas Foundation contributes \$14,000 to support scholarships for students in Craven CC's Machining program.



Students in Craven's Computer-Integrated Machining program receive new tool kits from the Gene Haas Foundation.

AHIMA Grant Supports HIT Students

This spring, Craven's Health Information Technology (HIT) program was awarded a \$32,356 grant from the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) Foundation. The grant was made possible through the partnership and support of the Craven CC Foundation, which received the funds on behalf of the College.

The funding will help students cover the costs associated with earning professional credentials, including educational materials, technology, certification preparation, and other program-related expenses.

"As the demand for HIT professionals continues to grow, it's more important than ever to remove barriers to education," said HIT Program Director Crystal Smith. "This funding opens doors for students pursuing professional credentials who might not otherwise have the opportunity."

Home Builders Association Supports Trades Students at Volt Center

The Home Builders Association of Craven and Pamlico Counties donated \$7,500 in March to support Volt Center students enrolled in workforce development courses related to the building trades.

The funding reduces training costs and better prepares students for careers in one of the region's most in-demand industries.



The Home Builders Association of Craven and Pamlico Counties donates \$7,500 for building trades students.

International Paper Grant Supports Panther Pantry

The College received a \$6,000 grant from International Paper in support of the Panther Pantry, along with a donation of more than 200 feminine care products to help ensure students have access to essential items.

These contributions will support students across the New Bern, Havelock, and Volt Center campuses, ensuring access to essential resources when they're needed most.

The Panther Pantry empowers students to focus on their studies and work toward a brighter future by directly addressing hunger and other barriers to student success.



International Paper donates \$6,000 and feminine care products to the College's Panther Pantry.

foundation support

FUNDING STUDENT SUCCESS

Historic Gift Expands Opportunities

In February, the Foundation received a \$2.4 million gift from Dr. Tim and Linda Hinkin, the largest private donation in the College's history. The bequest will support capital projects, expand workforce development initiatives in healthcare, and establish the Tim and Linda Hinkin Memorial Scholarship Endowment to benefit future students.

A significant portion of the funding has been earmarked for a new Health Sciences facility near the Volt Center, expanding training opportunities in high-demand healthcare fields while helping address growing enrollment needs. It will also strengthen engineering and aviation workforce initiatives at the Havelock campus, further aligning academic programs with regional employer needs.

A longtime professor at Cornell University, Dr. Hinkin devoted his career to education and scholarship. His gift will expand educational opportunities at Craven while supporting the College's continued growth.

"We're incredibly grateful for the Hinkins' vision and generosity," said Charles Wethington, Executive Director of Institutional Advancement. "It's a legacy that will benefit our community for generations."

Students Connect with Donors

Craven CC scholarship recipients connected with the generous donors who made their education possible during the Foundation's annual Donor-Student Luncheon in September 2025. Students shared how scholarships are helping them pursue their educational goals, while donors heard firsthand about the impact of their support.

The Foundation also received an \$18,000 gift from State Employees' Credit Union to support the Bridge to Career Program, helping unemployed and underemployed adults gain the skills needed for meaningful employment.



The Craven CC Foundation receives a donation from State Employees' Credit Union to support unemployed and under-employed students.

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WE APPRECIATE OUR DONORS!

The Craven Community College Foundation continues to help thousands of students reach educational goals and new career opportunities. We appreciate your generosity and investment in each student's future as we all work together to build a stronger community.

**The following donor list includes all cash and in-kind gifts received in the 2025–2026 fiscal year (July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026)*

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Invest in the future of education and empower future generations. By including the Craven CC Foundation in your estate plans, you can make a meaningful impact on deserving students. We'll work with you to maximize your gift, whether it's cash, securities, or other assets. Contact the Foundation to discuss planned giving.



Craven CC, Appalachian State Launch Health Sciences Transfer Partnership

Craven CC has partnered with Appalachian State University to create a streamlined transfer pathway for graduates of select Associate in Applied Science programs in Health Sciences. Effective July 1, 2026, eligible graduates can transfer into Appalachian State's Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences program with junior standing.

The agreement provides eligible students with a minimum of 30 block transfer credit hours, allowing them to build on the education they received at Craven while preparing for expanded career opportunities in healthcare. Eligible

programs include Associate Degree Nursing, Health Information Technology, Medical Assisting, Medical Office Administration, and Physical Therapist Assistant.

"This agreement creates an outstanding opportunity for our graduates to continue their education without losing momentum," said Dr. Alec Newton, Associate Vice President for Instruction at Craven CC. "By providing a clear transfer pathway, we're helping students advance their careers while meeting the growing workforce needs of the healthcare industry."

In Memoriam

BLACKWELL STITH

The College experienced a difficult loss this year with the passing of Blackwell Stith, who worked in the IT department since 2018 and was a proud Craven graduate. Blackwell was born in New Bern on September 28, 1992, and passed away on March 10, 2026, at the age of 33.

Known for his wit, warm personality, and deep love for family and friends, Blackwell brought light and laughter to everyone around him. A classically trained violinist and accomplished professional, he shared his expertise both at Craven as Office 365 Systems Administrator and nationally through presentations and seminars.

Beyond his career, he enjoyed nature, music, comic books, vinyl records, and traveling the world. Above all, he treated others with kindness, respect, and an infectious sense of humor.



MATTHEW SALERNO MEMORIAL GARDEN

Craven Community College hosted a dedication service on Oct. 2, 2025, for the Matthew "Matt" Salerno Memorial Garden. Colleagues and family members gathered to celebrate Matt's life and legacy following his passing on Feb. 22, 2024.

The memorial garden honors Matt Salerno, a Craven graduate who later served as the College's Director of Information Technology. Centered around a dwarf crepe myrtle and surrounded by nandina, a bench, and two Adirondack chairs, the garden is located just outside Bate Hall, home of the College's IT department and information technology programs.

The garden's design mirrors that of the Dr. Bruce Waugh Memorial Garden on the same side of Bate Hall, which was dedicated in August 2018 to honor the former IT instructor.





ON THE AIR

Public Radio East rises above funding challenges with community support

Towering 550 feet above Craven Community College's New Bern campus, the Public Radio East (PRE) antenna is a constant reminder of how deeply rooted the station is in Craven County's community.

The past year saw those roots grow even stronger as PRE listeners stepped up to cover an unexpected budget shortfall that occurred when the station lost all its federal funding.

Founded in 1984, PRE is a nonprofit noncommercial station that has operated on the 89.3 FM frequency for nearly 42 years and is one of only six 100,000-watt public radio transmitters in the United States licensed to a community college.

Funding has traditionally been provided by listener donations, corporate underwriting, grants, space rentals, and federal funding. Listener support comprises the bulk of the station's funding, but PRE also received 10% of its funding from the federal government.

In July 2025, Congress voted to eliminate funding for public media, resulting in a \$140,000 cut to PRE's annual budget and restructuring the station as being 100% listener supported.

"We knew there was a chance we could lose federal funding," said PRE General Manager Ben Donnelly. "We have always planned to ask our listeners to make up the difference if it happened. It was a wakeup call. People respond when they know their donations are making a tangible difference for their community."

Over 25% of the station's sustaining members increased their monthly gifts in the months that followed, and more than 300 individuals made first-time contributions. However, current projections indicate the increased sustaining gifts will only cover 50% of the loss of federal funding.

"As we enter the second year without federal funding, our challenge is to sustain the increased level of giving, since the elimination of federal funding is permanent," added Donnelly. "For fiscal year 2027, we are focusing on sustaining funding to replace the lost federal funds and maintaining our current programming schedule."

SERVING EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA

Soon after its founding, WTEB had about 9,000 weekly listeners. Today, over 60,000 Eastern North Carolinians listen to PRE's networks each week, thanks largely to a programming schedule of classical music and local news. The station's most popular programming includes award-winning National Public Radio programs such as Morning Edition and All Things Considered, as well as music shows featuring a full range of genres that include classical, jazz, Americana, roots rock, Latin, blues, and folk music.

In June 2026, PRE won the prestigious Regional Edward R. Murrow Award for Best News Series in small market radio for reporting. The award was given to PRE for coverage of "The Camp Lejeune Water Crisis," an extensive investigative series probing the ongoing health fallout and legal battles surrounding toxic water exposure at the local military base.

"Local journalism really is the lifeblood of Eastern North Carolina because it tells the stories that national networks completely miss," said Weston. "As news deserts expand across North Carolina, entire communities are being left in the dark without anyone to tell their stories or hold institutions accountable.

At Public Radio East, we are actively fighting this crisis by keeping our journalism completely free and accessible to all. There are no paywalls here—if you can spin a radio dial or log onto the web, you have access to the truth."

GETTING THE WORD OUT

One of the biggest hurdles for PRE to overcome during its funding cut was the installation of its new antenna on its flagship station. The 75-foot antenna atop the 550-foot tower had reached the end of its operational lifespan and needed to be replaced to restore transmission to the maximum allowable coverage for PRE's FCC license. With a pricetag of \$100,000 for the antenna and climbing crew, PRE turned to its listeners for support.

"The replacement was 100% donor supported," said Donnelly. "To help avoid situations like those recently experienced with the WTEB antenna replacement, PRE is focused on proactively planning and funding infrastructure upgrades. By prioritizing timely replacement of aging equipment, we can reduce the risk of unexpected failures and minimize potential service disruptions."

PRE maintains four towers and five antennas to support its network of stations.



PRE Assistant General Manager Jared Brumbaugh enters the studio, home to local news, music, and programming throughout Eastern North Carolina.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

While PRE's 550-foot tower may be its most prominent structure, its staff and volunteers provide the station with its strongest support and remain its most valuable assets.

Five full-time and three part-time employees are on staff at the station; however, PRE also relies on a team of more than 60 volunteers to help during fund drives, represent the station at local events throughout the year, and assist with a variety of administrative tasks.

"I believe in local public radio because it is the ultimate antidote to news chaos which, in turn, serves to agitate and divide," said Darlene Brown, PRE board member and volunteer. "Public radio presents fact-based news and ideas, allowing me to think for myself, while reminding me that our shared human stories matter far more than our differences. We are facing a decline in local reporting, making our local public radio station, Public Radio East, mission critical as a reliable news and ideas beacon in our community."

LOOKING AHEAD

Despite losing the funding structures that were in place for the past four decades, PRE developed a clear vision for the road ahead. By combining proactive planning with the generosity of listeners and volunteers, PRE is rebuilding a strong financial foundation to ensure its service to Eastern North Carolina continues for years to come.

"The outpouring from our listeners has been amazing," said Donnelly. "We are excited to now be 100% community supported. Over the next two years, PRE will focus on strengthening its financial foundation while proactively planning for and investing in critical infrastructure upgrades, with a fundraising goal of \$1 million."

Once the \$1 million goal is reached, PRE plans to better serve Eastern North Carolina by expanding local news coverage, creating more local programming, and deepening support for the arts and cultural resources across Eastern North Carolina. 📻

“

The outpouring from our listeners has been amazing. We are excited to now be 100% community supported. Over the next two years, PRE will focus on strengthening its financial foundation while proactively planning for and investing in critical infrastructure upgrades, with a fundraising goal of \$1 million.

— Ben Donnelly
Public Radio East General Manager

”



PRE General Manager Ben Donnelly helps guide the station as it continues to expand community support and local programming.



PRE News Coordinator Annette Weston prepares local news and programming from the station's broadcast studio.

By the Numbers

Year Founded: 1984

Frequencies: 5

Counties Served: 17

Weekly Listeners: 60,000

Annual Budget: \$1.4 Million

Community Funded: 100%



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Student Talent Takes Center Stage at SkillsUSA

Students in Craven CC's Career & Technical Programs once again showcased their talent at the SkillsUSA North Carolina State Leadership and Skills Conference in April, earning 25 medals across a wide range of technical disciplines.

Their outstanding performance highlighted the exceptional talent, dedication, and hard work of both students and instructors throughout the year.

Nine students earned first-place finishes and advanced to represent Craven CC at the SkillsUSA National Leadership and Skills Conference in June in Atlanta. Students advancing to nationals included Dylan Hoffman (CNC Programming); Morgan Payne (Computer Programming); Carlos Santana, Heidy Herrera, and Brina Van Apeldoorn (Crime Scene Investigation - team); Gavin Halder (Technical

Drafting); Kalei Johnson (Welding Sculpture); Angelica Gaskins (CNC Turning - High School Division); and Greyson Parker (CNC Milling - High School Division).

Craven students also earned medals in Aviation Maintenance Technology, Cybersecurity, Technical Drafting, Additive Manufacturing, Internetworking, Automotive Service Technology, Early Childhood Education, Information Technology Services, Related Technical Math, Welding, and Welding Fabrication.

"The SkillsUSA competitions give our students the opportunity to test their skills against some of the best career and technical students," said Matthew Berg, Dean of Career & Technical Programs. "For many, it's also their first opportunity to travel beyond Eastern North Carolina, making the experience as rewarding personally as it is professionally."



Above: Craven CC faculty, staff, and students gather during the SkillsUSA National Leadership and Skills Conference in Atlanta.

Left: Craven students and employees get ready for an exciting day. Front row L-R: CNC Turning student Angelica Gaskins, Computer Programming student Aaren Bryant, Technical Drafting student Gavin Halder. Second row: CNC Programming student Dylan Hoffman, CSI student Heidy Herrera, Aviation Systems Technology Director Russ Boyce. Third row: CNC Milling student Greyson Parker, CSI student Carlos Santana, CSI student Brina Van Apeldoorn, Welding Sculpture student Kalei Johnson, CAD instructor Jeff Brown. Fourth row: Criminal Justice instructor LauraAnn Avery, Dean of Career & Technical Programs Matthew Berg, CNC instructor Alex Block. Back row: Automotive Systems Technology instructor Walter Hurst, Welding instructor Caleb Wetherington, Havelock Campus Dean Ricky Meadows, Automotive Systems Technology instructor Alexander Jestness.

Growing Sustainability Through Campus Composting

Members of Craven CC's Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) Honor Society have launched a campus composting initiative designed to reduce food waste while supporting the College's greenhouse and garden.

The project brings together students and departments from across the College, including PTK, the Transitions Academy, Juvenile Crime Prevention Council (JCPC) students at the Volt Center, and Marketing and Communications.

PTK selected composting as its 2025–2026 college project after presenting the idea to the College's Executive Leadership Team. The initiative complements ongoing sustainability efforts led by the Transitions Academy, whose students maintain the campus greenhouse and had already developed composting practices to support the greenhouse and garden.

Transitions Academy students constructed composting systems for the greenhouse using untreated lumber while learning woodworking skills and sustainable gardening practices. Through JCPC, students at the Volt Center built two compost bins for the project, while Marketing and Communications partnered with PTK to create educational materials explaining what can and cannot be composted.

Compost bins have been installed on the New Bern campus near the greenhouse and at the Volt Center, making participation easy for students and employees.

Educational signage at both locations helps participants understand what can and cannot be composted, encouraging proper use of the bins. The finished compost will be used to enrich soil in the campus garden and greenhouse.

“This project serves as a learning opportunity for everyone at Craven through our digital and physical marketing efforts, which display compostable items and non-biodegradable materials, guiding the usage of the bins by our students and staff,” said August Paw, Craven CC student and PTK Vice President of Public Relations. “Our goal is to promote healthier and more sustainable practices on campus and inspire others to bring similar efforts into their community.”



Students in Craven's Transitions Academy maintain a multi-bay compost bin system built from wooden pallets.

DID YOU KNOW? 🌱

Composting is the natural process of breaking down organic waste into nutrients that nourish plants while reducing landfill waste.

WHAT CAN YOU COMPOST? 🌱

- Fruits & vegetables
- Coffee grounds & tea leaves
- Eggshells
- Yard trimmings
- Houseplants
- Nut shells
- Paper napkins
- Plain cardboard

CAMPUS & COMMUNITY

Craven strengthened its connection with the community throughout the past year by hosting and supporting events across Craven County. Here's a snapshot of the fun, learning, and service that brought people together. See more at CravenCC.edu/Social.



- 1) PantherFest brings the New Bern campus to life with games, prizes, food, and Panther spirit.
- 2) Phi Theta Kappa and Student Veterans of America students participate in an Earth Day cleanup at Lawson Creek Park.
- 3) The Home Builders Association of Craven and Pamlico Counties hosts "Be Pro, Be Proud" at the Volt Center, introducing students to skilled trades through hands-on simulators.
- 4) Students place American flags along pathways on the New Bern campus during Craven's annual 9/11 memorial.
- 5) Students and employees hit the dance floor and celebrate Craven traditions during the annual Founder's Day Ball.
- 6) Families explore interactive activities during STEM Night on the New Bern campus.
- 7) The Havelock campus welcomes thousands of visitors during this year's MCAS Cherry Point Air Show.
- 8) Dr. Darryl Thomas, New Bern High School principal, speaks during the Black History Month event, "A Shared Dream: Remembering the Past, Envisioning the Future."
- 9) Craven welcomes prospective students during its annual Open House and inaugural Military Resource Fair.



CONGRATS, GRADUATES!

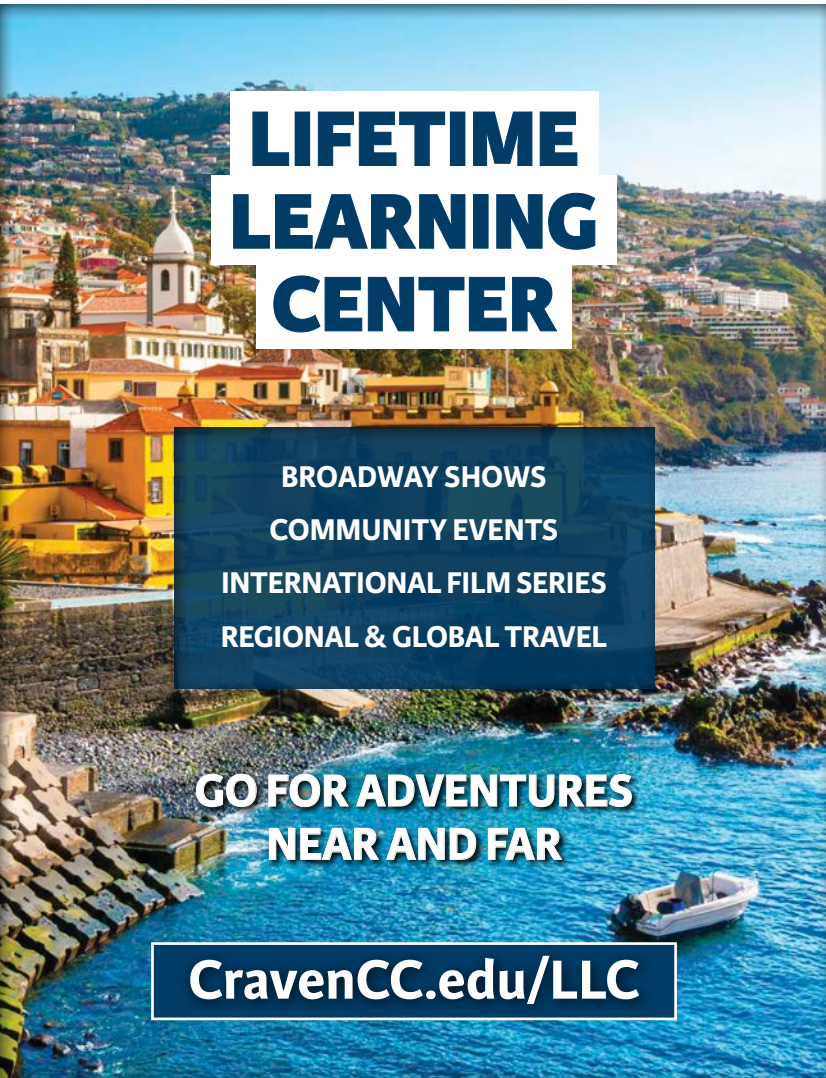


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