



The Community College as Change Agent

**How Community Colleges Address
Health Issues in Counties Served by the
Healthy Places North Carolina Initiative**

A report to the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust

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--FINAL REPORT--

Introduction

Community colleges serve a unique purpose in American higher education. For many students, these institutions present the best opportunity for the postsecondary credential needed to pursue a living-wage job with career potential. For others, a community college represents the gateway to a four-year institution or beyond, and potential career paths in an even wider array of disciplines.

But the role of community colleges, particularly in rural areas, extends beyond the academic. Rural community colleges are often the only postsecondary institution in their community, and in that role they serve as a workforce trainer, leading employer, community convener, cultural ambassador, and change agent. In each of these capacities, community colleges are positioned to make significant contributions to the overall improvement of the community's health.

The six colleges that serve the counties currently in the Healthy Places North Carolina Initiative (HPNC) sponsored by the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust all play these roles—and more. With support from the Trust, MDC, which has nearly 50 years of experience working with community colleges, conducted research and analysis of the six colleges' current and potential role in improving health outcomes and influencing healthy behaviors in the communities they serve.

The six colleges are:

- Beaufort County Community College (Washington)
- Edgecombe Community College (Tarboro)
- Halifax Community College (Weldon)
- McDowell Technical Community College (Marion)
- Rockingham Community College (Wentworth)
- Western Piedmont Community College (Morganton)

The analysis consisted of two main activities. First, MDC brought together representatives of the six colleges, including four college presidents, to Winston-Salem for a two-day meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to inform the colleges about the HPNC initiative and to learn more about how each of the institutions saw their role in meeting their community's broad health needs.

The second phase of the research involved site visits to each of the six colleges. At the sites, MDC staff sat down with faculty, staff, and students to explore in detail their colleges' current programs and offerings aimed at addressing health needs on campus and in the community at large.

The findings from those visits are presented below in three main sections:

- 1) Overall findings from the research
- 2) Recommendations for enhancing the community colleges' health-related programs
- 3) Profiles of each of the six institutions

Overall Findings

At the August HPNC convening of community college presidents, MDC encouraged participants to examine the different roles their institutions can play in improving health outcomes in their communities. Three main roles were identified:

- **Training the local workforce:** Community colleges are the major source of workforce training for local employers, which helps local businesses expand and attracts new firms to the area, which in turn stimulates economic development.
- **Creating a culture of healthy living on campus:** Community colleges can directly influence their communities through the provision of services and educational instruction directly to those most closely aligned with the campus—the students who attend the institution and the employees who work there.
- **Community outreach:** Community colleges can provide a wide variety of services to the communities they serve beyond their educational mission, through activities such as serving as a regional convener, a broker of services, and even, in some cases, a provider of direct services beyond the campus walls.

The different ways in which each of the six institutions fulfill these roles are examined in more detail in the following section. This section offers some general observations from our scan of the six colleges and from MDC's experience in working with community colleges around the country. The findings are sorted by the three major roles of a community college as identified at the August convening.

Community College Role: Training the Local Workforce

HEALTH-CARE WORKFORCE PROGRAMS BENEFIT GREATLY FROM CLINICAL PREPARATION BUT COULD BE BETTER CONNECTED TO EMPLOYERS

A consistent challenge for community colleges, and indeed all postsecondary institutions, is finding ways to give their students critical on-the-job training. Employers are often reluctant, or unable, to offer programs that provide students the essential experience gained from actually participating in a work environment.

If there is an exception to this challenge, it is in the health-care field. In most of the health-care industries in which students are trained in the community college setting, students are required to work a certain number of clinical hours. Thus, an individual training to be a nurse would log hours in an actual hospital or a physical therapist trainee might work in a doctor's office.

These experiences are not only valuable for the student, offering him or her valuable understanding of what will be required in the career on a day-to-day basis, they also offer valuable information to the institutions themselves to make sure that the coursework they are providing is meeting the actual needs of the employers. The workplace placement also creates a natural channel of

communication for colleges to engage employers and make sure that there are enough openings in the region to meet the supply of workers educated by the institutions.

Regular contact with local employers can allow the colleges to assess which programmatic offerings need to be expanded or, in some cases, contracted. Beaufort County Community College, for example, recently approved a new associate's in health and fitness science program with the first class expected to graduate in 2015. The impetus was an environmental scan of local industry and the identification of a growing regional demand for personal trainers and health instructors.

While the colleges do spend a great deal of time working to place their students into clinical positions, colleges are not able to focus as much on overall industry trends in the region serviced by the college. It should be stressed that this is not due to a lack of effort on the part of the institutions, but usually a lack of resources to allow the colleges to forecast beyond the direct needs of current students and the immediate needs of employers, who are already working with the colleges. Most of the colleges have advisory panels from the local health-care industry, but with the exception of Edgecombe Community College, these groups tend to meet on an irregular basis, and there does not seem to be any systematic collection or analysis of new developments in the industry, such as forecasting high-growth areas in particular disciplines or types of health-care related employment.

Community College Role: Creating a Culture of Healthy Living on Campus

THERE IS LITTLE AVAILABILITY OF DIRECT HEALTH SERVICES ON CAMPUS

The six colleges profiled offer limited direct health services to their students. None of the six have dedicated health clinics on campus or provide a nurse or physician extender for regular consultation, with emergency services used in extreme situations. In some instances, colleges have even relied on those students being trained in health professions to assist in medical emergencies.

The same generally holds true for mental-health concerns. While many of the colleges employ counselors, these individuals' responsibilities are primarily geared to offering academic or career advice and are not typically focused on providing mental-health counseling.

Most the colleges do, however, maintain active referral networks to accommodate the mental and physical health needs of students, faculty, and staff, and can suggest places for specialty care if needed. Mental-health options tend to be more limited, however, which is primarily a function of the lack of quality care in this area in most rural communities.

It should be pointed out that these colleges are not unique in their lack of dedicated staff to focus on mental-health issues. A 2012 survey by the American College Counseling Association found that only 13 percent of community colleges in the nation offer a form of psychiatric services to their students, compared to 56 percent of four-year colleges. Sixty-eight percent of community colleges

do provide some sort of mental-health counseling, but this is still at a rate far lower than four-year institutions.¹

In addition to a lack of direct health-care services for students, colleges also do not provide any dedicated programs to assist students in selecting health insurance under the provisions of the Affordable Care Act. Colleges interviewed were open to reaching out to students to offer such services, and some institutions, such as Rockingham Community College, had even hosted health-care Navigators to assist students in the enrollment process. These services, however, were generally done on an ad-hoc basis.

HEALTHY LIVING INSTRUCTION ON CAMPUS COULD BE EXPANDED

The primary mission of community colleges is, of course, providing educational instruction to their students. Subjects covered ranged from general liberal arts classes, usually focused on preparing students for transfer to four-year colleges, to more technical training geared toward helping students learn a specific skill set to enter a particular field of work.

Health related instruction on the profiled campuses is generally limited to course-specific offerings. For instance, physical education classes provide detailed information on the impact of physical activity on a person's health. Similarly, courses related to the health professions focus on health to allow students to understand the components of the work-related disciplines. Some colleges, however, are trying to provide more exposure to health and wellness instruction for their students. Beaufort County Community College, for instance, requires students in its transfer degree program to take a health and wellness class.

There are some opportunities, however, for colleges to offer information about healthy living in more general education settings. Foremost among these is in student success classes, classes that generally are aimed at helping students manage their studies in a college setting. Several colleges visited included information about healthy living choices in these classes, though information usually related to stress-management rather than providing fuller information about overall health behavior change.

More commonly, health information is imparted to students during health fairs or health-workshops offered periodically to students. These have not been traditionally offered in a systematic way and attendance at these events is not usually tracked, making it difficult to ascertain the impact these efforts are having on participating students.

PHYSICAL SPACE CONSTRAINTS LIMIT COLLEGES' ABILITY TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR FITNESS ACTIVITIES

All six colleges aim to provide their students and staff opportunities for physical activity on campus. However, the ability of the colleges to offer these opportunities varies completely by facility and availability. For instance, Rockingham Community College has a large gymnasium that can support an intercollegiate basketball program and a fitness room that is staffed, allowing students to use a

¹ <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2012/04/community-colleges.aspx>

range of workout machines and weight equipment. By contrast, Edgecombe Community College has no physical education facilities on campus. Indeed, that college has to borrow space from local recreation centers to allow police officers training at the college to get required physical activity credits.

All colleges have been looking for ways to encourage physical activity, primarily through the expansion of walking and exercise trails on campus. These trails have two primary advantages. One, they can be utilized by the community beyond the campus, and second, they generally do not require any staffing. Facilities such as exercise rooms do require some staff monitoring to ensure that equipment is used in a safe and responsible manner.

FACULTY AND STAFF DO PARTICIPATE IN SELECTED COLLEGE-SPONSORED HEALTH PROGRAMS

The community that these institutions serve is usually thought of as just the thousands of students reached through curriculum and continuing education programs. But the six institutions also serve a large number of faculty and staff. Indeed, in all the colleges in the HPNC counties, the community college is one of the largest employers, meaning a captive audience to influence health behaviors and outcomes.

Certainly, the most direct way the colleges provide health services is through participation in the State of North Carolina's health insurance plan. This plan offers comprehensive coverage along with the opportunity to take advantage of educational resources on healthy living such as an interactive website.

Colleges that have been offering one-off health fairs or health education workshops encourage faculty participation. These offerings range from providing information about disease prevention to more direct services, such as flu shots, all of which are made available to college employees as well as students.

More directly, colleges have been encouraging healthy behavior among faculty through physical activity. All the profiled colleges with fitness facilities encouraged faculty and staff to use them without charge. Just as importantly, several colleges provided opportunities for staff to use the facilities during work hours.

The colleges with the most active programs promoting faculty health do so through the existence of faculty wellness committees. These committees meet regularly to develop health planning for the entire campus, usually with a special emphasis on improving the health outcomes of faculty. For example, McDowell Tech's wellness committee encourages healthy behaviors by their employees, including providing opportunities to attend smoking-cessation classes. Western Piedmont Community College promotes health and wellness by allowing its faculty and staff to take one physical education class per semester for free. Additionally, from 2007–2010, Edgecombe Community College established an Employee Wellness Committee (EWC) designed to increase the effectiveness and long-term sustainability of health promotion programs, encourage all types of employees to participate in the programs, and tailor health promotion programs to fit the college's worksite culture. Edgecombe's EWC developed a "walking teams" program to incentivize physical

activity; the committee also proposed a policy allowing full-time employees to incorporate physical activity into their work hours.

THERE ARE FEW PROGRAMS AIMED AT NUTRITION AND PROMOTION OF HEALTHY EATING

Given the amount of time students are required to spend on campus, food service is a necessity for colleges. While almost all colleges offer some healthy options in their dining facilities, they are limited to items such as prepackaged fruit salads, yogurts, and other easy to prepare items, and are dwarfed by more typical diner fare such as fried foods and hamburgers.

Most college representatives were in agreement that the lack of healthy eating options on campus was a problem. However, several colleges noted that the current menu options in their dining facilities were actually an improvement over the even more unhealthy options that were offered before. For instance, Rockingham Community College now contracts with Subway, which offers more salad options than the previous vendor. Edgecombe Community College works with a locally owned restaurant, On the Square, to provide a menu with more healthy options than were available previously. And all interviewed believed that college food offerings were much better than what was served by most of the fast food restaurants in their communities.

Nutrition and healthy eating information is offered to students in some curricular courses, particularly in health-related fields. Similarly, healthy eating is promoted in many of the ad-hoc health fairs that are offered by the colleges. Western Piedmont Community College offers a free nutrition seminar to students through its student services department.

Community College Role: Community Outreach

THOUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGES PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THEIR COMMUNITIES, HEALTH-CARE SERVICES REMAIN LIMITED

Most of the community colleges profiled in this paper are seen as one of the most, if not the most, respected institutions in their communities. From serving as one of the major employers in the region, to training the regional workforce, to serving as a neutral convener of communities with disparate interests, community colleges play a critical role in the lives of the counties in which they are located.

For example, Halifax Community College serves as the cultural hub for Halifax County, bringing a world-renowned ballet and other performing arts to campus and opening up these events to the community at large.

Colleges have always played a critical role in local health outcomes by serving as the primary training ground for much of the health-care industry in these rural counties. From registered nurses to home-health aides, community colleges provide the training needed to meet the workforce needs of local hospitals and doctor offices.

But beyond workforce training, community colleges' current offerings to the community at-large are limited. In terms of direct health services, for instance, the colleges generally are referral agencies, providing students and faculty with information about who they can see locally when

faced with health-care issues. Some colleges partner more directly with local institutions such as Edgecombe Community College's work with Eastpointe, a local mental-health nonprofit, and Western Piedmont Community College's relationship with Morganton's Good Samaritan Clinic, to make sure students who may not be able to afford health care are able to be treated in the event of an illness.

Some colleges have made an effort to reach out to the larger community through the provision of physical activity facilities on campus, and all the colleges that have built or are in the process of building fitness trails plan to make these open to the public. None of the colleges, however, currently open their indoor fitness facilities to the community at-large, not a surprise given the limited space available and limited staffing at the college available to monitor their use.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES SEE IMPROVING HEALTH OUTCOMES AMONG THEIR STUDENTS AND IN THEIR COMMUNITIES AS PART OF THEIR OVERALL MISSION

The community colleges serving the six HPNC counties each see their mission extending beyond the direct education of their students. These community colleges see their role as reaching outside campus borders to influencing the overall development of the community. All interviewed saw a valuable place for their institution in improving health outcomes in the counties they served. And all were searching for innovative ways to meet these needs even given the strapped financial situation in which these institutions must operate.

Just as importantly, all the colleges understood that the most effective way to meet community needs will be to work in partnership with existing or expanded programs in the community. Administration and faculty interviewed are experienced in working with community groups to connect to the larger community and take advantage of expertise that may not be directly employed by the college.

Recommendations for Enhancing Community Colleges' Impact on Rural Communities' Health Outcomes

Community colleges reach thousands of North Carolinians on an annual basis either through direct educational services or through indirectly contributing to the regional economies they serve through the provision of economic and workforce development services. And they manage to do this with a limited budget, one that is increasingly under pressure as state government enters a period of funding contraction.

The following section offers some ideas on how community colleges can expand their efforts to serve their communities—both on campus and throughout the counties they serve. These findings generally shy away from arguing for large capital investments. This is not to say that increasing support for items such as increased physical activity space would not be useful, but much of that investment would need to come through state or local initiatives on a scale that is most likely out of the reach of the HPNC initiative.

The recommendations included may require investment but more importantly may require administrators and Boards of Trustees to place a greater priority on enhancing community health as part of their larger mission. Fortunately, it was clear in talking to college leaders that improving a community's health is well within the purview of each of these dynamic institutions.

1. COLLEGES SHOULD EMBED HEALTHY LIVING COMPONENTS INTO THEIR CURRICULUM, PARTICULARLY IN STUDENT SUCCESS CLASSES

All six colleges require the majority of their students to take what is termed a student success class. These classes prepare students for college life generally focusing on techniques such as time management and general study skills. But there is also an established tradition of using student success classes in the community college setting to deliver “life lessons” to students beyond the traditional academic offerings. For instance, some colleges devote several weeks to the concept of financial literacy in their student success classes, understanding that finances present some of the greatest barriers to college completion. Though some of the colleges offered stress management and other wellness instruction as part of their student success courses, none profiled in this report offered a comprehensive program for health instruction.

Colleges should consider developing more focused curricula on healthy living and embed them in these student success courses or in other types of instruction. The state system allows colleges much leeway in designing these classes, so there is freedom to focus on health-related issues. Colleges should look to institutions around the country to see if there are appropriate course modules that could be included in these types of classes. The advantage of providing this information through this type of instruction is the reach of these classes—as mentioned, most students, at least on the curricular side, take these classes in pursuit of their associates' degrees.

2. COMMUNITY COLLEGES SHOULD SERVE AS A MODEL FOR HEALTHY LIVING ON THEIR OWN CAMPUS THROUGH THE PROVISION OF MORE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND HEALTHY EATING OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS

While the provision of educational information is absolutely critical to promoting healthy behaviors, colleges can also model healthy living through the provision of activities and facilities that allow students to experience healthy activity in their day-to-day lives. Colleges are clearly cognizant of the need to do this through the move toward expanding resources like walking trails on almost all the campuses visited. Additionally, colleges would like to provide more physical education facilities such as exercise rooms and gyms although many of these would require substantial capital expense to implement. Some schools desperately need new exercise facilities. For instance, McDowell Technical Community College students, as well as early college attendees, must use a small gravel quad to do almost all physical activity associated with classes. On the other hand, Beaufort County Community College has recently opened a new fitness center, but does not have the resources to pay for staff time to make the facility available to the larger community.

Colleges also have made some limited efforts to expand their healthy eating options by improving the quality of food provided on campus. Colleges may want to investigate other ways to bring healthy eating options to campus, however. For instance, some colleges around the country have encouraged farmers' markets to operate on campus, helping students get easy access to local produce. For example, the College of the Canyons, a community college in Valencia, Calif., hosts a bi-weekly farmers' market in the parking lot of their campus, attracting visitors from around the community and encouraging students and faculty to take advantage of healthy eating options on campus. Western Piedmont Community College is uniquely positioned to partner with local farmers markets to sell the meat, vegetables, and eggs raised on its farm at local farmers markets or potentially host a periodic market on its own campus.

Colleges also may want to ramp up their efforts aimed at getting faculty to participate in exercise programs. Rockingham Community College, for instance, allows staff to take time off from their working day to use campus facilities and Beaufort County Community College has created a running club for faculty, staff, and students. In addition to providing exercise options for faculty, there is the added benefit of the entire college seeing individuals exercise on a regular basis, building the culture of pursuing physical activity as a worthy enterprise.

3. COMMUNITY COLLEGES SHOULD PROVIDE EXPANDED DIRECT-HEALTH SERVICES

None of the colleges profiled provide more than emergency medical services to their students. As mentioned, this lack of service is fairly typical for community colleges around the country. However, in rural communities where access to care can be limited, a community college-based health-care provider could reach a large number of individuals and help promote preventive care among a population of students who often put off seeking health care, unless it is a serious event, due to limited finances. For instance, colleges might consider providing either a full-time campus nurse or partnering with a local health-care provider to provide some on-site medical services during school hours.

Where colleges could certainly consider ramping up their services is in the area of mental-health care. Colleges do not provide any real mental-health counseling or care, and services that do exist are usually aimed at identifying students whose mental-health condition could pose a danger to those on campus. Helping students and faculty cope with mental-health issues through the provision of counseling services could be a valuable intervention for these institutions and could, in some cases, remove some of the stigma associated with mental-health care in the wider community.

4. HEALTH WORKFORCE PROGRAMS SHOULD ENGAGE MORE DIRECTLY WITH LOCAL INDUSTRY TO UNDERSTAND INDUSTRY TRENDS

The recent task force on Rural Health offered a series of recommendations aimed at improving health-care and health outcomes in rural communities. Of particular relevance to community colleges was the emphasis on enhancing the health-care workforce in serving rural communities.

Where colleges can undoubtedly do a better job is making sure they have the best information about industry needs in terms of workforce demand. Community colleges need to be offering the training and curricular offerings that can best prepare students to fill positions that exist currently as well as those that are projected to be needed in the future.

Certainly health care, through its emphasis on clinical experience, is better suited than most industries in engaging with employers. Colleges need to make sure that they communicate with their employers in a structured and consistent way through advisory panels and other mechanisms that allow for meaningful dialogue between the colleges and the health-care industry.

The onus, however, is not completely on the colleges. Employers must provide staff, particularly at the CEO level, to meet with colleges to develop curriculum to best meet their growing needs. Similarly, they should provide regular updates on what positions are most likely to grow or contract in the coming years to ensure that qualified graduates enter the workforce with the necessary skills to find appropriate local employment.

5. COMMUNITY COLLEGES SHOULD TAKE A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN PROVIDING ACCESS TO HEALTH INSURANCE

The Affordable Care Act offers opportunities to bring health insurance to thousands of North Carolinians who lacked coverage previously. And with a captive audience of eligible potential insures, community colleges represent an important way to serve these students. Accordingly, community colleges should work more aggressively to inform their students of their options and help those who are eligible to enroll in subsidized health insurance under the new law. Currently, none of the six colleges profiled have a program aimed at encouraging students to get covered under the law.

Community colleges should work to pursue the following strategies to educate and ultimately enroll many students in coverage, including:

1. Conducting outreach and marketing activities

- Sponsor outreach and education events to encourage enrollment in health insurance; for example, through webinars, workshops, presentations, tabling events, creation of fact sheets, etc.
- Arrange physical space for Health Care Navigators and other in-person counselors to conduct enrollment sessions on campus
- Utilize various forms of marketing and social media to broadcast information and services

2. Incorporating outreach into existing programming

Embed resources and information about health coverage into existing processes:

- Admission and enrollment
- Student orientation
- College success classes and other courses (e.g., small business classes and Small Business Centers)
- Financial aid
- Advising/career services

6. COLLEGES SHOULD CREATE AN ESTABLISHED PROCESS FOR STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND STAFF TO ENGAGE COLLABORATIVELY ON EFFORTS TO ENHANCE HEALTH PROMOTION

No college profiled had an established process that empowered people on campus to think proactively about strategies to promote a culture of healthy living on campus. All the individuals interviewed during the college visits stressed the importance of nutrition, exercise, and preventative care. However, colleges lacked the appropriate outlets for people to express their concerns, brainstorm solutions, plan implementation, and take appropriate action. When such teams existed on a smaller scale, such as in McDowell Tech, the committees tended not to be inclusive of all relevant stakeholders on campus especially students

The community colleges should consider creating an established and inclusive conduit (such as a wellness committee) for college-specific ideas that will spur behavior change and cultural shifts on the campus. These programs should strive to include both employee and student involvement in program development as this can enhance participation and program uptake among different populations, not just those who would most likely take part in such a program. An inclusive process will also garner the support of a broader base in the college, further enhancing the credibility of the program.

7. MORE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SHOULD BE GIVEN TO ALLOW THE COLLEGES TO DEVELOP NEW PROGRAMS AND SCALE UP EXISTING PROGRAMS AIMED AT IMPROVING HEALTH OUTCOMES

The six colleges serving the HPNC counties are staffed by faculty and administrators who are committed and knowledgeable in their subject areas. Colleges, for instance, have a great track record in providing the local health-care industry with a quality workforce that helps meet the medical needs of local residents. However, if the colleges are to be more innovative about serving the dynamic needs of their communities, they will need substantial technical assistance to allow them to reach beyond what they are doing now.

For instance, Edgecombe Community College is interested in becoming more active in training health coaches for its community. However, it will need substantial support to develop a curriculum needed to train and then place these individuals in the community. Other colleges are interested in expanding cooperation with communities to promote such activities as healthy eating through bringing farmers' markets to campuses.

In all these efforts, community colleges will need guided technical assistance on how best to implement the programs and, just as importantly, how to scale existing programs. Implementing programs aimed at health improvement is substantially more complicated than simply signing up more participants; it is a part of continuous improvement processes and systems change. And there is no one "best way" to scale. Local context, available resources, target recipients, delivery method, and time constraints all drive unique approaches. Colleges will need help in building their health outcomes strategies and this assistance must be cognizant of institutional culture and constraints, institutional objectives, and the potential or desire for change within existing systems.

Colleges also will need technical assistance to allow them to understand that issues related to scaling are not always associated with securing additional funding support. If any of the examined community colleges are to truly improve health outcomes in their community, they will need to more formally align their missions toward connecting students and their communities to better health outcomes.

MDC, based on its experience working with community colleges in the past on other scaling efforts, recommends the following for colleges looking to reach more individuals without necessarily securing substantial amounts of new funding.²

- Change the culture of the institution so that all faculty and staff buy in to the goal of improving the health of the campus and regional community
- Reorganize existing staff time so that more people play a role in supporting students in improving health behaviors and addressing health-care needs
- Making better use of technology to provide services to students so that face-to-face time with staff is reserved for difficult, individualized counseling and problem-solving

² Note: some of the content of this section has been adapted from *More to Most, MDC's guidebook on Scaling Up Effective Practices at Community Colleges*.

- Strengthen community partnerships to become part of a web of services that helps address the myriad of health issues facing the communities the colleges serve
- Whether or not programs were started from scratch or were scaled, the question of how programs will be sustained needs to be addressed, as well. Community colleges are funded through the numbers of students served, meaning that colleges can find it difficult to initiate or expand innovative projects without some seed capital.

8. COLLEGES SHOULD FORM A FACILITATED LEARNING NETWORK

This engagement began by bringing together college presidents and other key officials from the six colleges to a meeting to discuss the critical roles each of the colleges play in enhancing their community's health. Without exception, attendees expressed a desire to continue these conversations and said there were substantial benefits in coming together to share best practices on meeting challenges.

MDC has participated in and led learning networks among colleges on a variety of issues including workforce training and financial empowerment. In each case, regular learning events had an extremely positive impact in helping colleges start or scale their programs. A key to these learning events was regular, face-to-face meetings and an outside facilitator who could structure the meetings and promote an effective exchange of information. The outside facilitator also can provide examples of best practices from outside the network.

Another extremely effective approach is to rotate meetings of the networks to encourage on-site learning at each institution. Seeing firsthand how colleagues are addressing particular issues can be critical to ensuring the success of the endeavor.

Demographic Information for HPNC Community Colleges

Category	Beaufort	Edgecombe	Halifax	McDowell	Rockingham	WPCC
Number of curriculum students	2,023	2,869	1,380	1,191	2,164	2,421
Number of continuing education students	2,021	2,557	2,782	2,135	3,108	3,939
First to second year retention rates of first-time degree-seeking undergraduates	45%	42%	58%	48%	48%	61%
Graduation rates of full-time, first-time, degree/certificate-seeking undergraduates within 150% of normal time to program completion	18%	12%	26%	27%	28%	24%
Racial makeup of student body	59% White 23% Af-Am 3% Latino	62% Af-Am 27% White	54% Af-am 34% White	88% White 4% Af-Am 4% Latino	74% White 19% Af-Am 4% Latino	77% White 9% Af-Am 9% Asian 4% Latino
Percent of students receiving Pell Grants	53%	88%	69%	51%	47%	77%

Source: Economic Modeling Specialist, Inc. 2014.3, IPEDS and the North Carolina Community College System

Percentage of BCC Health Science Graduates Employed in North Carolina, 1 Year Post Graduation, 2013

Category	Beaufort	Edgecombe	Halifax	McDowell	Rockingham	WPCC
Associates	97%	90%	94%	93%	97%	90%
Diploma	92%	95%	86%	86%	94%	90%
Certificate	NA	92%	91%	*	85%	NA

Source: NC Tower – Accessed November 19, 2014

Health-related program completions, 2013

Program	Beaufort	Edgecombe	Halifax	McDowell	Rockingham	WPCC
Allied Health Diagnostic, Intervention, and Treatment Professions, Other	NA	22	NA	NA	NA	NA
Clinical/Medical Laboratory Science	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	9
Clinical/Medical Laboratory Science and Allied Professions, Other	NA	NA	0	NA	NA	NA
Clinical/Medical Laboratory Technician	7	NA	5	NA	NA	NA
Clinical/Medical Social Work	NA	NA	0	NA	NA	NA
Dental Assisting/Assistant	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	9
Dental Hygiene/Hygienist	NA	NA	17	NA	NA	0
Emergency Medical Technology/Technician (EMT Paramedic)	NA	NA	NA	NA	0	NA
Health Aide	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	2
Health Information/Medical Records Technology/Technician	NA	53	NA	28	NA	NA
Health Professions and Related Clinical Sciences, Other	NA	NA	11	NA	NA	NA
Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse Training	14	12	12	68	27	NA
Medical Administrative/Executive Assistant and Medical Secretary	0	NA	0	NA	0	10
Medical Office Management/Administration	24	27	48	NA	23	NA
Medical Radiologic Technology/Science - Radiation Therapist	NA	0	NA	NA	NA	NA
Medical Transcription/Transcriptionist	NA	3	NA	NA	NA	NA
Medical/Clinical Assistant	NA	6	NA	NA	NA	34
Mental and Social Health Services and Allied Professions, Other	11	NA	0	NA	NA	NA
Occupational Therapist Assistant	NA	NA	NA	NA	0	NA

Program	Beaufort	Edgecombe	Halifax	McDowell	Rockingham	WPCC
Phlebotomy Technician/Phlebotomist	NA	NA	8	NA	22	NA
Psychiatric/Mental Health Services Technician	NA	0	NA	NA	NA	19
Radiologic Technology/Science - Radiographer	NA	17	NA	NA	NA	NA
Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse	39	31	23	14	18	32
Renal/Dialysis Technologist/Technician	NA	NA	NA	5	NA	NA
Respiratory Care Therapy/Therapist	NA	12	NA	NA	15	NA
Substance Abuse/Addiction Counseling	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	8
Surgical Technology/Technologist	NA	6	NA	7	11	NA

Source: Economic Modeling Specialist, Inc. 2014.3 and IPEDS

College Profiles

Beaufort County Community College

Introduction

No other community college in the state has a bigger geographical footprint than Beaufort County Community College (BCCC). Located in Washington, in Beaufort County, BCCC is the fifth largest employer in the county. The college also serves residents of Hyde County, its eastern neighbor, and Tyrell County, even farther away and to the northeast of Hyde. It is a wide swath of land to cover for an institution of modest size and means.

Hyde and Tyrell are also two of the most rural and poorest counties in the state, and both ranked at the bottom in terms of total county population. Tyrell, Hyde, and Beaufort Counties all have poverty rates over 19 percent. BCCC's nursing program also draws residents from Martin and Washington counties, where the local community colleges do not offer associate degree programs in nursing. These two counties are also extremely poor, with poverty rates of 24 and 29 percent. The geographic spread of BCCC's coverage area and the economic hardships of its student population were persistent themes throughout the interviews.

Demographic Information for Beaufort County Community College

Category	Beaufort Co. CC
Number of curriculum students	2,023
Number of continuing education students	2,021
First to second year retention rates of first-time degree-seeking undergraduates	45%
Graduation rates of full-time, first-time, degree/certificate-seeking undergraduates within 150% of normal time to program completion	18%
Racial makeup of student body	59% White 23% Af-Am 3% Latino
Percent of students receiving Pell Grants	53%

Training the Local Workforce

As the only postsecondary institution in a three-county region, BCCC plays a critical role in meeting the training needs of local employers. This is especially true in the health science field. For instance, Beaufort County Community College's nursing programs are in high demand and admission is competitive. The associate's in nursing degree program typically receives about 250 applications. Of that 250, only 180 are qualified for admission; and of that 180, only 60 are eventually admitted. Acceptance into the associate degree program is a life-changing opportunity for some students. Many are over the age of 25, are pursuing a second career, and are struggling financially. Students

applying for scholarship and financial aid in BCCC’s Allied Health Department have an average income of \$10,000 per year, are either unemployed or underemployed, and are characterized by one staff member as being “very poor.” For many of these students, transportation is a big issue, in part due to the wide geographical footprint of the college’s service area.

Health-related Programs Completions, 2013

Program	Completions (2013)
Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse	39
Medical Office Management/Administration	24
Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse Training	14
Mental and Social Health Services and Allied Professions, Other	11
Clinical/Medical Laboratory Technician	7
Medical Administrative/Executive Assistant and Medical Secretary	0
Clinical/Medical Social Work	0
Health Professions and Related Clinical Sciences, Other	0

Source: *Economic Modeling Specialist, Inc. 2014.3 and IPEDS*

The school’s nursing program is in regular conversation with local employers, including Vidant Medical Center, Martin General Hospital, and local health departments and area nursing homes. Local demand has been moving away from hiring for hospital care and more toward in-home and nursing-home care and training. In part, the shift is due to more demand from an aging demographic and hospitals freezing hiring during the recession, but also to a large local employer, Vidant Medical Center, obtaining “Magnet Status.” The Magnet Recognition Program is administered by the American Nurses Credentialing Center and in part is recognition that an employer is committed to realigning its ratio of associate degree (ADN) in nursing to bachelor degree in nursing (BN) staff. Vidant has started the process of shifting the ratio of its nursing staff to 80 percent BN degree and 20 percent ADN. As it stands now, the average statewide ratio is 60 percent ADN and 40 percent BN.

Since Vidant is one of BCCC’s largest employers of its nursing graduates—approximately 60-75 percent of graduates stay local and a significant portion of those find employment with Vidant—the shift toward more BN hires is forcing the program to explore partnerships with local four-year universities to create pathways from an associate’s to a bachelor’s in nursing. BCCC is now part of East Carolina University’s Regionally Increasing Baccalaureate Nurses (RIBN) program. The program allows students to be dually enrolled at ECU and one of five local community colleges in their associate degree in nursing programs. From the ADN programs at local community colleges, RIBN students have a pathway to receiving a BN degree from ECU.

BCCC is listening to employers in other ways, as well. The college recently approved a new associate in health and fitness science program with the first class expected to graduate in 2015.

The impetus was an environmental scan of local industry and the identification of a growing regional demand for personal trainers and health instructors.

Percentage of BCCC Health Science Graduates Employed in North Carolina, 1 Year Post-Graduation

Degree Type	Academic Years		
	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010
Associate	97%	100%	93%
Diploma	92%	95%	95%
Certificate	NA	NA	NA

Source: NC Tower – Accessed November 19, 2014

Creating a Culture of Healthy Living

Beaufort County Community College understands the importance of creating a culture of healthy living on campus and in the wider community. As part of the college’s new associate’s in health and fitness science program, BCCC renovated a large garage previously used for its now defunct agricultural equipment maintenance program into a new fitness center. The relocation from the old center has resulted in more space for exercise and instruction. However, when we spoke with students in the college’s Health and Wellness class, only four out of 25 students had used the facility in the past month. Most indicated it was because they just did not have time due to work or the travel time required to get to campus. Others, however, stated they did not know about the new facility and that they do not always receive information about health events and services on campus.

In addition to the new fitness center, BCCC is actively promoting healthy living to its students in other ways. The Health and Wellness class that was visited is a requirement for students in transfer programs. BCCC is also looking to add volleyball and badminton courts as well as a disc golf course. There is a running club on campus and the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust-funded walking trail is near completion with only the exercise stations needing to be installed. Stress management is also a component of the college’s student success class and the college’s counselors and student services dean have designed a behavior intervention program that is a repository for faculty, staff, and students to identify anyone on campus whose behaviors might indicate harm to themselves or others. The team performs a threat assessment and, based upon that assessment, link that person to outside services for mental-health care.

Despite those proactive measures on the part of the college, there are still barriers to creating a healthier environment on campus. The on-campus cafeteria has a limited number of healthy options and many of the students we spoke to found the prices to be too high. One student said, “Most of us just get fries, because it’s the cheapest.” Faculty and students alike expressed frustration with the limited amount of healthy options in campus vending machines, which was

particularly true in the nursing program, where students have a tight schedule and little time to stray from the college's new Allied Health building. The campus also does not have an infirmary. Most students indicated that if they got sick, they would visit the local emergency room or urgent care.

Community Outreach

Despite its wide geographical service area, the college actively tries to engage the local community and attract residents to campus. BCCC regularly sponsors a Senior Expo on campus that provides health screenings for community members, including vital services such as free breast exams. There are also stress management courses for faculty and staff. A representative of the college is part of the Healthy Eating, Active Living Collaborative in Beaufort County, a committee funded by the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust that promotes healthy living in Beaufort County. The college sees the role of the college expanding while acknowledging some challenges. One staff member noted:

“[Beaufort County Community College] could serve a role in promoting health in the community as part of its primary purpose as an institution of education—to educate people on how to live healthy— but the biggest obstacle is resources to provide the services to offer those programs. The public would engage us if they knew we had the resources and programs for them to take part in.”

The college used to have a swimming pool on campus, and offered community swim lessons, but the college was unable to sustain the annual cost to maintain the facility.

College faculty and administration are aware of, and sympathetic to, the challenges many of their students face on a day-to-day basis. When one staff member was asked why they thought students on campus weren't aware of the ACA open enrollment, he paused and responded, “They are on Medicaid.”

The college faces significant challenges with a student population that is geographically scattered and often saddled with competing responsibilities and financial challenges, which, depending upon the circumstances, can trump education, whether it be the demands of a job, unexpected car troubles, or finding adequate child care.

However, BCCC faculty and staff offered creative and imaginative ideas about how to model healthy behavior, both on campus and off. One faculty member suggested incentivizing faculty and staff to model healthy behaviors by awarding professional development hours to faculty who exercised and encouraged their students to do the same. Plans are under way to encourage more community use of the campus' new walking trail and to find ways to attract more people to campus through health fairs and perhaps a farmer's market.

Key Takeaways

- BCCC serves a student body that is geographically dispersed and predominantly poor, creating scenarios where students often have to postpone or end their education entirely due to an economic hardship.
- The college's Allied Health programs are competitive and demanding, but also an avenue of second chances for many in the community who are trying to obtain living-wage work.
- Though the college has started to improve health promotion and modeling on campus through such things as the new fitness center, running club, and walking trail, there are still needs to be addressed, such as the menu at the campus café and the lack of healthy options in vending machines.
- Beaufort County Community College is responsive to employers' needs and is agile in adapting to workforce trends in the region.
- Like many community colleges across the state, Beaufort is struggling with ways to reach students beyond email and inform them about health events and services on campus.

Edgecombe Community College

Introduction

In 2013, Edgecombe Community College (ECC), a multi-campus institution with campuses in Tarboro and Rocky Mount, helped meet the educational and training needs of about 9,500 individuals in the community, of whom approximately 50 percent were full-time students and the other 50 percent part-time students. Approximately 25 percent of the population in Edgecombe County lives in poverty and nearly 60 percent of ECC’s enrolling students are over the age of 25. Many see ECC as a second-chance institution capable of helping them restart their lives and take control of their economic future.

Demographic Information for Edgecombe Community Colleges

Category	Edgecombe CC
Number of curriculum students	2,869
Number of continuing education students	2,557
First to second year retention rates of first-time degree-seeking undergraduates	42%
Graduation rates of full-time, first-time, degree/certificate-seeking undergraduates within 150% of normal time to program completion	12%
Racial makeup of student body	62% Af-Am 27% White
Percent of students receiving Pell Grants	88%

Source: Economic Modeling Specialist, Inc. 2014.3, IPEDS and the North Carolina Community College System

Training the Local Workforce

Edgecombe County Community College has a robust health science curriculum with more than 20 academic programs ranging from Computed Tomography to Healthcare Management Technology to Radiography. In addition to its varied course offerings, ECC relies on industry involvement to shape curriculum, provide work-based learning opportunities, and evaluate programs. ECC has a 13-member Health Occupations Advisory Council; a 17-member Medical Assistant Advisory Council; a 32-member Health Information Technology Advisory Council, comprising Vidant Medical Center and medical centers across the county and state, including Halifax Regional, Durham Veterans Affairs Medical Center, and Duke Medical Center; and a 33-member Nursing (ADN/PN) Advisory Council, representing more than 15 health providers across the county. They also have comparable advisory councils for Surgical Technology, Respiratory Therapy, and Radiography.

Members of the business advisory councils form Program Advisory Committees that meet periodically with the deans and faculty members from academic programs to review instructional material and ensure curriculum alignment and proper skill development of ECC students.

In addition to its program advisory committees, ECC works closely with the North Carolina East Workforce Development Board, measuring its progress through ECC’s Institutional Effectiveness

Department. The relationship between the college and industry professionals is created from mutual, shared interest. In the words of one college representative, the college and industry “need each other.” The college provides a conduit for trained and skilled labor, and the industry professionals “keep their finger on the pulse of industry,” encouraging the college to train their students with the most up-to-date skills and competencies.

More than 50 percent of the fastest growing jobs in the county are in the medical field, and Edgecombe Community College has positioned itself to capture this growing demand with the construction of a new Biotechnology and Medical Simulation Center. This 45,000-square-foot building, slated for completion in 2015, will enable ECC to simulate a hospital environment with rooms for emergency treatment, surgeries, ICU training, and ambulance care.

With the new facility, ECC plans to expand its course offerings to include asthma education certification, breastfeeding/lactation therapy, geriatric aide, health coach, home-care aide, and mammography. Through these courses, ECC plans to address pent-up demand for enrollment in health-related academic programs.

Health-related Programs Completions, 2013

Program	Completions (2013)
Health Information/Medical Records Technology/Technician	53
Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse	31
Medical Office Management/Administration	27
Allied Health Diagnostic, Intervention, and Treatment Professions, Other	22
Radiologic Technology/Science - Radiographer	17
Respiratory Care Therapy/Therapist	12
Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse Training	12
Medical/Clinical Assistant	6
Surgical Technology/Technologist	6
Medical Transcription/Transcriptionist	3
Medical Radiologic Technology/Science - Radiation Therapist	0
Psychiatric/Mental Health Services Technician	0

Percentage of ECC Health Science Graduates Employed in North Carolina, 1 Year Post-Graduation

Degree Type	Academic Years		
	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010
Associate	90%	95%	100%
Diploma	95%	92%	100%
Certificate	92%	NA	NA

Source: NC Tower – Accessed November 30, 2014

The faculty and staff at ECC are aware of the emerging opportunities to serve county residents and described plans to meet community needs through innovation. College representatives spoke enthusiastically about the potential of increasing the number of nurse-led clinics throughout the county with nurses trained through their ADN program. They discussed the opportunity of becoming the first community college in the state to offer health coaches to the broader community. The role of a health coach would be to help patients change their lifestyles, take their medications, and stick to care plans. ECC's proposed new health coach program is an 88-hour course of study that prepares students to work with patients who have heart disease or diabetes or have suffered from a stroke. These health coaches would bridge the gap between care at a doctor orders and the patient's willingness to comply.

Creating a Culture of Healthy Living

Edgecombe Community College has expressed an interest in creating a culture where faculty, students, and staff are empowered to live healthy and productive lives. Although ECC expressed a willingness to create this culture, there are some significant barriers that impede their progress.

Food: ECC's café was formerly college-run. However, in recent years ECC has contracted its food services with a local restaurant, On the Square. Although this transition provided a more diversified menu, access to affordable, healthy foods still poses a significant problem for students on campus.

Instruction: ECC offers 15 Physical Education Department (PED) courses that vary in their level of intensity, enabling students of all backgrounds to take part in some sort of exercise experience. However, there are several hurdles that impede ECC from maximizing these opportunities. For one, as of today, there is no physical education requirement in order to graduate from various degree programs offered by the college. Without an incentive, students may decide to forego PED courses in order to focus on course offerings that better align with their interests.

Secondly, ECC lacks a fitness center of any kind for either of its campuses. Without an affordable, easily accessible exercise facility, students, faculty members, and staff struggle to meet their most basic workout needs. For example, ECC will be offering Basic Law Enforcement Training (BLET) to its first cohort of participants. However, without a fitness center, the college must contract the weight-training component with an outside organization in order to meet the BLET requirements.

In addition to ECC's physical education courses, the college requires students from academic degree programs to take a College Transfer Success course. The course includes components on stress management as well as some limited information on health and wellness. The college also offers an array of electives focused on health and human development, such as Health-Adult Sexuality course, Substance Abuse Counseling, and Death and Dying. However, despite the varied course offerings focused on healthy living, it's not clear that the availability of these courses is changing student behavior and promoting more active, healthier lives.

Mental Health: Mental health is a pressing issue in Edgecombe County. Representatives from ECC spoke of the need to address mental-health challenges swiftly, proactively, and preemptively to ensure successful outcomes for all members of the college—students, faculty, and staff.

Currently, ECC, in partnership with outside community-based organizations, has forged together a patchwork of mental-health programs that are available to the student body. The college's mental-health services rely on a referral system, either through a staff member or through self-referral. The first step for a student in the referral process is to go to the student services office. After this, the college leverages an informal network of care providers to whom students are then referred.

Many students are referred to Eastpointe, a local nonprofit that focuses on substance abuse issues in the county. Eastpointe services both the Rocky Mount and Tarboro campuses. They have a call center that is staffed 24/7 and can assess students and refer them to a health provider. Eastpointe has also worked collaboratively with the college to address the stigma associated with mental health and substance abuse, as the stigma presents one of the largest barriers to seeking care. Additionally, each year the college works with Eastpointe to host "Life Fests" and "Recovery Socials" where they conduct depression screenings and provide information on services available to students.

Despite this progress, Edgecombe Community College still faces multiple barriers to mental-health access on campus. As previously noted, the college uses a referral system in which most referrals come from faculty and staff. However, there seems to be little formal counseling on common indicators (signs and symptoms) used to assess mental health and wellbeing. Additionally, there is a modest track record of students self-referring to on-campus and off-campus counseling or other mental-health services.

Another major barrier stifling access to mental-health services as well as other health services is cost of care. Many students do not have access to adequate affordable health care, and ECC did not have a formal program designed to make students aware of insurance coverage available through the Affordable Care Act.

Lastly, the college lacks mental-health services for faculty and staff members. College representatives spoke emphatically about the need for such services on campus to assist employees of the college.

Community Outreach

Although ECC does not have an on-site health clinic, the college partners with faith-based institutions and Vidant Medical Center to offer a variety of health programs for the campus community. ECC holds health fairs where nursing students earn clinical hours for performing screenings for diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke, and high cholesterol. The college further partners with community health committees, which are housed in local churches, serving as an advisor.

ECC also engages the broader Edgecombe community beyond the scope of health. The college works with community-based organizations such as My Sister's House, a nonprofit focused on domestic violence. They offer computer literacy workshops that are free and open to the public.

The college also opens up its facilities to the public for community events throughout the year. Over the years the college has worked to become, in the words of one faculty member, “all things to all people. It is a hub for the community.”

ECC takes pride in the partnerships it has fostered over the years, whether with the K-12 school system, homeless shelter, or employers. It was clear that ECC hopes to broaden its impact across the county. Faculty and staff members expressed a sincere confidence in their ability to “lead the county” as it grapples with the challenge of poor health outcomes.

Key Takeaways

- Edgecombe County Community College has the opportunity to become the first community college in the state to offer health coaches to the broader community.
- ECC’s new Biotechnology and Medical Simulation Center will help the college capture future demand for a workforce trained to serve an aging population.
- The college does not have an exercise facility of any kind.
- ECC engages deeply with employers to drive instruction and provide work-based learning opportunities for their students throughout health-related fields. The relationships between the college and industry professionals can be capitalized upon to spur more collaboration.
- ECC showed a propensity to be creative with limited resources, even when confronted with tough systemic challenges.
- ECC’s does not have a wide array of affordable, healthy food options.
- ECC has fostered strong community partnerships with organizations and institutions such as Eastpointe, My Sister’s House, church houses, and Vidant Veterans Center.

Halifax Community College

Introduction

In the 2012–2013 academic year, Halifax Community College (HCC) served nearly 7,000 students living in Halifax County and the northwest corner of Northampton County. Both counties rank in the lowest decile for their health outcomes and health factors among North Carolina counties according to the *2013 County Health Rankings and Roadmaps Report*. Most HCC students come from impoverished households and have come to HCC for a pathway to expand their educational and economic opportunities. The faculty and staff members interviewed during the site visit were keenly aware of the structural challenges facing their community and were thoughtful about ways the college could work to promote healthier outcomes across their service area.

Demographic Information for Halifax Community College

Category	Halifax CC
Number of curriculum students	1,380
Number of continuing education students	2,782
First to second year retention rates of first-time degree-seeking undergraduates	58%
Graduation rates of full-time, first-time, degree/certificate-seeking undergraduates within 150% of normal time to program completion	26%
Racial makeup of student body	54% Af-am 34% White
Percent of students receiving Pell Grants	69%

Source: Economic Modeling Specialist, Inc. 2014.3, IPEDS and the North Carolina Community College System

Training the Local Workforce

Halifax Community College's School of Health Sciences has five programs that provide a conduit to health-related careers across the county: Associates Degree Nursing (RN), Associate Degree in Dental Hygiene, Associate Degree in Medical Laboratory Technology (MLT), Diploma in Practicing Nursing Education (PN), and Certificate in Phlebotomy. Graduates from these programs may find career opportunities at health centers, health clinics, and hospitals in the region. In fact, Halifax Regional Medical Center receives more than 55 nursing and nursing assistant students from Halifax Community College each year.

Health-related Programs Completions, 2013

Program	Completions (2013)
Medical Office Management/Administration	48
Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse	23
Dental Hygiene/Hygienist	17
Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse Training	12
Health Professions and Related Clinical Sciences, Other	11
Phlebotomy Technician/Phlebotomist	8
Clinical/Medical Laboratory Technician	5
Medical Administrative/Executive Assistant and Medical Secretary	0
Clinical/Medical Laboratory Science and Allied Professions, Other	0
Clinical/Medical Social Work	0
Mental and Social Health Services and Allied Professions, Other	0

Source: Economic Modeling Specialist, Inc. 2014.3 and IPEDS

Percentage of HCC Health Science Graduates Employed in North Carolina, 1 Year Post-Graduation

Degree Type	Academic Years		
	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010
Associate	94%	83%	90%
Diploma	86%	100%	100%
Certificate	91%	*	*

Source: NC Tower – Accessed November 30, 2014. Note: Cells containing an asterisk (*) represent suppressed data.

Representatives from the college spoke about the need for employers to take a more active role in local postsecondary education. There was general agreement that employers should begin their engagement with the school system earlier in the process, helping to shape the career choices of students before they ever enroll in HCC. Some college representatives described a common perception within the K-12 school system that there are few employment opportunities in the health-care industry. To mitigate this, HCC spokespeople discussed the importance of working alongside the business community to provide work-based learning opportunities to high school students. Currently, health-related institutions in Halifax do not offer many formal internship or apprenticeship opportunities for high school students in the field.

Once students are enrolled in the college, some will have access to work-based learning opportunities through the hospital, home health agencies, clinics, and the health department. However, representatives from Halifax Community College expressed a need for more working opportunities. Healthcare groups across the county are pressed financially and are using fewer doctors and more specialized nursing to meet their patients' health-care needs. So although HCC has a competitive ADN/RN degree program—the college only accepts about 35 students out of the nearly 140 applicants each year—there are limited opportunities for students to find employment opportunities, either paid or unpaid, after they graduate. One college representative

described what he called an “exodus” of students leaving the county for better employment opportunities elsewhere.

In addition, HCC lacks an industry advisory group for the health sciences to review its curriculum and ensure skills alignment between the classroom and the workspace.

Creating a Culture of Healthy Living

HCC has two student success courses: one of which is for applied science students and the other is for college transfers. In both courses, there is a limited focus on healthy living. Historically, nursing students were required to take a nutrition course but it is no longer available. The college decided that the nutrition course should be an elective because the technical courses offered in the health-related programs provided adequate opportunities for students to learn about their own personal health while learning technical skills. One faculty member on campus stated that it was “impossible to divorce the content from the wellness piece” in most courses within the nursing program.

Although the college has a small fitness facility and multiple Physical Education Department (PED) course offerings, the college does not require a physical education credit in its associate’s degree programs.

Halifax Community College cafeteria serves mostly unhealthy items that are high in fat and sugar. One college representative described how students attending Roanoke Valley Early College, a public high school on HCC’s campus that aims to graduate students with a high school diploma and transferable college credits, would actually skip the somewhat healthier high school lunch in order to buy the unhealthy food items at the college café. Members of the college described how there was a need for healthier food options on campus.

One bright spot noted by college representatives was the continuing education culinary class offered by the college. HCC believes the course can serve as a connection to the community and a possible way to promote healthy eating in the community.

HCC has a small fitness center that is available to students, faculty, and staff. Membership and use of the fitness center is limited, however. The gym is only open two to three hours a day, but the operating hours change by the day and by the semester, making it difficult for students to plan visits to the gym. Few members of the faculty and staff expressed a willingness to use the fitness center, citing transportation, a lack of space, and accessible operation hours as the major inhibitors to gym use. It became clear over the course of the interviews that many students did not even know that there was a fitness center available.

Some college representatives acknowledged there were few affordable exercise facilities available in the county. HCC does not open its gym services to the broader Halifax community.

Halifax Community College does not have a regularly scheduled set of health workshops designed to share on- and off-campus resources available to students, faculty, and staff. Currently, students

from the college's nursing program take part in flu shot clinics that are open to faculty and staff, as well as the broader community. Representatives from the college spoke about the need for a "wellness day" or "wellness fair" that would not only expose students, faculty, and staff to the resources currently available, but also provide unique programming that will begin to set a culture of healthy living on campus.

According to a college representative, two of the biggest challenges confronting students at HCC are a lack of health insurance and an unclear path to health-care services for those who get sick. During the course of the interviews, faculty and staff spoke repeatedly about how students forego receiving preventive services because either the costs are too high or because they are unsure of where to go. Unless the issue is "catastrophic," students will allow health issues to linger unaddressed. If the issue worsens, students will eventually go to the hospital or the urgent care, which are both costly methods of care.

Currently, there are no preparations for the next Affordable Care Act open enrollment period. Since 2013, however, the college began leveraging services offered through The Benefit Bank® of North Carolina, an MDC-managed network of community and faith-based organizations that provide free, counselor-assisted help completing taxes and benefits applications using an online service.

As with many community colleges, in addition to the physical health concerns of students, faculty, and staff, HCC must also deal with substantial mental-health issues. Halifax has a Behavioral Assessment Team that provides mental-health services to staff, faculty, and students. However, these services are focused on students exhibiting the most severe health signs. Representatives expressed a need to identify subtle signs of unhealthy behavior in both students and faculty. Currently, there is limited training for faculty and staff to identify minor signs in students. One college representative was blunt about the state of affairs, stating that the "mental-health system in Halifax County is broken."

Capacity for Community Outreach

Halifax Community College collaborates with multiple local churches to provide various continuing education courses such as culinary arts, literacy, and GED preparation. Representatives at HCC expressed a desire to bring health-care services to people in the community. They have experimented with various programs—a dental hygiene clinic, health-care trailers, and a peer medicine program—with different levels of success. Outside of the health space, HCC has periodically brought organizations from inside and outside the state to provide cultural enrichment to the community.

Representatives from the college were keenly aware of the social and economic factors that confront them on the county level. They spoke at length about the need for a conversation about structural inequities that perpetuate poor health outcomes for county residents. Some college representatives spoke about the importance of "educating the community" on nutrition and wellness—acknowledging that most residents of their county have not been exposed to areas 10 miles away from their homes, not to mention the exposure needed to encourage students to

change behavior and live active, productive lives. Other HCC representatives spoke to the college's role of being a convener on challenging community issues, most notably an annual summit focusing on young men of color in the community. This college representative spoke to HCC's ability to lead a community-wide conversation on health and wellness.

Halifax County has many social and economic challenges that influence the health and life outcomes of county residents. Despite these challenges, Halifax Community College has attempted to leverage its limited resources to provide excellent educational services to the students and families it touches. The faculty and staff at the college voiced a commitment to meeting community health challenges. They spoke about the need to "face up" to the tough behavioral, economic, and social challenges that cause Halifax to rank as one of the worst counties in the state in health outcomes. The staff believes that with the right set of investments, they are well positioned to lead the county in an effort to promote healthy outcomes.

Key Takeaways

- Faculty and staff at Halifax Community College are keenly aware of the structural inequities that promote poor health outcomes throughout the county.
- Halifax Community College has limited connection to health industry professionals, who can provide feedback on curriculum, ensure alignment of content and skills, invest resources, and help evaluate programs.
- There is an exercise facility on campus but utilization of the gym is greatly inhibited by inaccessible gym hours and limited resources to operate the gym safely.
- The faculty and staff at HCC feel strongly about their ability to help lead a community conversation on health and wellness. They have assumed this role on other major issues affecting the community.
- HCC has a College Transfer Success course with a limited focus on healthy living and wellness. There is no required course on campus that focuses explicitly on healthy living.

McDowell Technical Community College

Introduction

McDowell Technical Community College (MTCC) is one of the smaller community colleges in North Carolina. Located in Marion, North Carolina, in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, the service area for the college is McDowell County.

Demographic Information for McDowell Technical Community College

Category	McDowell TCC
Number of curriculum students	1,191
Number of continuing education students	2,135
First to second year retention rates of first-time degree-seeking undergraduates	48%
Graduation rates of full-time, first-time, degree/certificate-seeking undergraduates within 150% of normal time to program completion	27%
Racial makeup of student body	88% White 4% Af-Am 4% Latino
Percent of students receiving Pell Grants	51%

Source: Economic Modeling Specialist, Inc. 2014.3, IPEDS and the North Carolina Community College System

Workforce Training

While McDowell Tech may be a smaller college than many of the other 58 colleges in the North Carolina Community College System, many of its credit-focus areas are in support of the local health-care sector. Two of the top-six most popular areas of study for the college are licensed practical/vocational nurse training, and health information/medical records technology/technician. The college produces 19 percent of all the practical nurses that come out of the North Carolina Community College System.

Health-related Programs Completions, 2013

Program	Completions (2013)
Health Information/Medical Records Technology/Technician	28
Surgical Technology/Technologist	7
Renal/Dialysis Technologist/Technician	5
Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse	14
Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse Training	68

Source: IPEDS and Economic Modeling Specialists, Inc. - data run 2014.3 - accessed November 20, 2014

The table below provides a brief look at how students in health sciences programs fare after graduation. Students in the health sciences programs are more likely to be employed in the state

one year after graduation than the average graduate from McDowell, which suggests the area’s workforce demand can absorb the supply of graduates from the college. Moreover, until recently, those students with a health science associate’s degree were more likely to find employment in North Carolina than students who had taken short-term training. In 2011-12, however, the reverse was true. Either way, the job placement rate for health science degree students is 86-90 percent one year after graduation compared to 60-84 percent for all students.³

Percentage of Health Science Graduates Employed in North Carolina, 1 Year Post-Graduation

Degree Type	Academic Years		
	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010
Associate	91%	93%	93%
Diploma	98%	89%	86%
Certificate	*	*	*

Source: NC Tower – Accessed November 30, 2014. Note: Cells containing an asterisk (*) represent suppressed data.

McDowell Tech conducts training for all the Emergency Medical Respondents in the area, including all levels of EMT, paramedics, and firefighters. McDowell County EMS workers also use the college’s facilities to test their employees on agility and how they respond to stress. The college provides ongoing training throughout the careers of these first responders. The college also provides 41 hours of wellness training to correctional officers as part of their in-service training program. Wellness training includes information about nutrition and exercise.

During interviews with staff and continuing education faculty, it was mentioned that McDowell Tech has received inquiries from local companies to provide on-site occupational safety workshops, but the college does not have a formal training program in place to do such training at this time.

Because one of the focus areas of the college is health information technology, the college is working with local health-care employers to understand the skills needed for these workers. As a result, many of the larger health-care industries sit on the college’s curriculum advisory committee.

Community College as a Healthy Place

McDowell Tech understands the need to help students, faculty, and staff identify and adopt healthy behaviors. The college put together a survey to learn about the healthy changes students would like to see in terms of cafeteria options and wellness classes. Overwhelmingly, students identified more salad and fresh vegetable options on the menu, followed by grilled chicken and more fresh fruit. The fitness classes students said they were most interested in were tennis, yoga, and Zumba, followed by swimming, weight training, and dance. The college is making plans to implement the suggestions from the survey by adding a salad bar when the cafeteria is expanded in a few months. McDowell Tech is also preparing to host a yoga night for students and faculty next semester.

³ Data from North Carolina's Tool for Online Workforce and Education Reporting (NC Tower), a product of the Common Follow-up System.

Nutrition and active living programs also are a focus of the Child Development Center on campus, which received funding from the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust to implement the Rainbow in My Tummy program—a nutrition program that provides childcare centers the tools to improve their food culture. The Rainbow in My Tummy program is a good complement to the grant the college received from BlueCross BlueShield to increase the activity level of the daycare children.

McDowell Tech has a wellness committee for faculty and staff that encourages healthy behaviors for employees, including providing opportunities to attend smoking cessation classes. The McDowell Hospital leads this initiative, providing smoking cessation classes at McDowell High School and for Early College students at McDowell Technical Community College. McDowell's campus isn't completely tobacco free yet, but college leadership has felt intense pressure from the community and many of the students to ban all smoking on campus grounds. The college is also currently working on a trail to connect the main campus to the new Universal Advanced Manufacturing Center, which will allow faculty and staff to walk safely between the two sites. College leadership hopes the new trail will also encourage more employees to get out and become more active during the work day.

The college has found ways to cross-pollinate wellness and physical education into classes. Physical education is still a local mandate for transfer programs. A few of the instructors also have begun to invite the physical education instructor to lecture about nutrition in their classes. Student success courses also now have wellness and stress reduction as embedded session topics. So far, the physical education instructor has visited the aesthetics and a few of the nursing courses.

Mental-health services are almost non-existent on campus. Staff do not receive training on identifying a student in crisis or experiencing a mental-health issue. Interviewees mentioned that one staff member, who has training as a counselor, is often called upon to deal with any immediate issues with students in crisis. If students self-identify themselves as needing counseling or more extensive mental-health services, staff and faculty have been provided a list of organizations in the local community to which they can refer students.

Similarly, the college relies on nursing instructors and a security guard with EMS training to stabilize students facing a medical crisis on campus until the paramedics arrive on-site. The college does not have a clinic on campus to handle health issues.

Capacity for Community Outreach

The college sees itself as driving change in the community, especially as it relates to encouraging physical activity and healthy nutrition to faculty, staff, early college students, and children enrolled in day care on campus. Many of the faculty and staff stated they want to take the lead in being a model for the broader community.

Faculty, staff, and students participate in the Great American Smokeout each year. The nursing students work with local hospitals to provide blood pressure screenings to the community. Nursing students also are encouraged to participate in community health fairs if their schedule permits.

Recently, the college began to develop external partnerships with national organizations and health initiatives to extend their reach into the community. Through a partnership with the Collaboration for Homecare Advances in Management and Practice (CHAMPS) Program, the college will provide programmatic advice and medication counseling to older populations in the community. One of the goals of CHAMPS is to make the latest evidence-based tools, e-learning, and expert advice easily accessible to home-care clinicians. Also, two members of the faculty have been asked by the president of McDowell Tech to serve on the Health Coalition, which looks at the social determinants of health and how education can shift health outcomes in the community.

The college recognizes that numerous healthy initiatives and resources exist in the community and, instead of duplicating efforts, the college would like to connect to these resources in a way that makes the most sense for the college and the broader community. For example, the college is interested in exploring ways to connect its trails and campus to some of the many greenways in the region. Another wish is to partner with community gardens and early-childhood providers to see what healthy eating options exist in the county and how to get healthy foods to children in the community.

As with many community colleges in the state, a lack of funding has made maintenance and repairs to existing facilities a lesser priority. The college, when financial resources permit, would like to repair its intramural fields and build a fitness center. The idea is to create spaces on campus where students and the community can enjoy and increase their activity levels. Through the child development center and the Partnership for Children of the Foothills, the college would also like to explore ways to improve the nutrition of community mothers and promote breastfeeding in the region.

Overall, the college sees itself as having ties to every population in the community and is looking for ways to extend its reach beyond students, faculty and staff.

Key Takeaways

- Community partnerships allow the college to have an effect on more populations in the county, from early childhood to the geriatric population.
- Through the partnership with the Child Development Center, located on campus, the college has had an opportunity to influence children at an early age to be more physically active and eat more nutritious meals.
- While many of the efforts currently in place to include wellness and health-related topics into curricula are ad hoc and not formalized, the drive to do so seems to be ingrained in the college leadership.
- McDowell Technical College does not have a formal protocol in place for dealing with students in crisis or experiencing mental-health events.

Rockingham Community College

Introduction

Rockingham Community College (RCC) is nestled in Wentworth, North Carolina. The sprawling campus sits on 266 acres of land that includes three miles of hiking trails that stretch from the campus to the local county offices. The service area for the college is Rockingham County.

RCC has a wide reach within its surrounding community. Beyond the curriculum and the continuing education students, the college also serves high school students enrolled in the Early College program and is one of the few North Carolina community colleges to offer four-year bachelor’s degree options on campus through partnerships with Greensboro College and Winston-Salem State University.

Demographic Information for Rockingham Community College

Category	Rockingham CC
Number of curriculum students	2,164
Number of continuing education students	3,108
First to second year retention rates of first-time degree-seeking undergraduates	48%
Graduation rates of full-time, first-time, degree/certificate-seeking undergraduates within 150% of normal time to program completion	28%
Racial makeup of student body	74% White 19% Af-Am 4% Latino
Percent of students receiving Pell Grants	47%

Source: Economic Modeling Specialist, Inc. 2014.3, IPEDS and the North Carolina Community College System

The college offers two associate’s degree nursing programs and several certificate programs. Students in nursing and respiratory therapy programs can transfer into the four-year bachelor’s degree option through Winston-Salem State University.

Health-related Programs Completions, 2013

Program	Completions (2013)
Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse Training	27
Medical Office Management/Administration	23
Phlebotomy Technician/Phlebotomist	22
Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse	18
Respiratory Care Therapy/Therapist	15
Surgical Technology/Technologist	11
Medical Administrative/Executive Assistant and Medical Secretary	0
Occupational Therapist Assistant	0
Emergency Medical Technology/Technician (EMT Paramedic)	0
Clinical/Medical Laboratory Science and Allied Professions, Other	0

Source: Economic Modeling Specialist, Inc. 2014.3 and IPEDS – accessed November 20, 2014

Health science majors have better placement outcomes in jobs within the state than the average RCC graduate. On average, those who complete an associate's degree program at RCC have a job placement rate just below 80 percent, while those who graduate with an associate's degree in a health science program of study have a job placement rate above 90 percent.

Percentage of Health Science Graduates Employed in North Carolina, 1 Year Post-Graduation

Degree Type	Academic Years		
	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010
Associate	97%	92%	100%
Diploma	94%	80%	93%
Certificate	85%	71%	83%

Source: NC Tower – Accessed November 19, 2014

Workforce Training

Beyond training for the different levels of nurses and therapists to supply hospitals, clinics, and skilled nursing facilities, much of the health-related workforce training requested by area employers has been related to OSHA training and helping to reduce work-related health issues that arise in an office or factory. The college has not developed a formal program related to this type of training, but it holds workshops on-site at companies to improve posture and reduce the number of workplace injuries that can occur during the routine business day.

In RCC's conversations with local employers, the need for employees to learn soft skills and problem-solving skills was a frequently cited need. As a result, the college has made a concerted effort to embed soft skills training and problem solving activities in most of its courses. Another issue raised by employers is how to handle the rise in substance abuse among the local workforce. Unfortunately, the college does not currently have the capacity or a formalized process to address substance abuse awareness and prevention issues.

Two occupations, sonography and cardiovascular technicians, have seen increased demand in the area in recent years. RCC does not train for careers in these disciplines. With the aging of the local population and increases in cardiovascular disease in the state, staff and faculty would like to see a cardiovascular technician program added to the curriculum in the near future.

Community College as a Healthy Place

Rockingham has taken strides in the last few years to influence students, faculty, and staff to make healthier lifestyle choices. RCC is now a tobacco-free campus. The college transitioned to a tobacco-free campus around the time North Carolina state government agencies banned all smoking inside and in close proximity to government buildings.

The college also provides faculty and staff with information and opportunities to improve their physical health through fitness activities provided by the Employee Wellness Committee, whose goal is to provide education and awareness to college employees to help adopt a healthy lifestyle, increase productivity, and model healthy behaviors to the student body. The college encourages employees to take advantage of the gym, weight rooms, and hiking trails by allowing staff to spend 30 minutes a day for use of the fitness facility on campus. In addition, both staff and students are encouraged to participate in the annual health fair—a convening of local health-care providers offering free health screenings and flu shots.

Faculty and staff are working to incorporate fitness and nutrition into academic courses at the college. College representatives interviewed during the site visit have taken it upon themselves to develop workshops and embed nutrition and stress reduction into nursing and psychology courses. The college is also looking to embed wellness and nutrition into all student success courses, which acquaints students with services at the college. Adding a fitness component to programs, however, has proved challenging given the recent changes by the state regarding transfers between community colleges and four-year universities. The physical education requirement for students in the transfer program at RCC has been eliminated.

Nutrition has been on the minds of faculty and staff at the college. In recent years, the college has explored ways it can affect change in students beyond the classroom and help them make healthier choices. One of the changes that occurred was to contract with Subway to locate on campus in the RCC student center in lieu of the previous institutional contract with a food service provider whose selections were deemed less healthy. The college has also taken steps to offer healthier options in vending machines on campus.

RCC has several facilities and trails on campus for use by students and the general community. The college has three miles of hiking trails, which are open to the public, and would like to cultivate additional space for an equestrian trail and a biology/nature trail.

One of the challenges facing the college is how to maintain and preserve the facilities, trails, and fields currently on campus. The tennis courts are old and dilapidated to the point that the college avoids having semester-long tennis classes for students. Equipment for sports are plentiful due to increased purchasing in the late '90s, when the college was flush with funds, however, spending on new equipment and fitness machines has been greatly affected by the lack of funds.

While RCC offers several options for faculty, staff, and students to participate in healthy fitness behaviors, the college lacks campus services to deal with minor medical issues. The college does not have a coordinated way of offering services to students with mental-health issues and helping students who are in crisis. Students in crisis are referred out to local facilities and hospitals, depending on the level of care needed. Several faculty and staff interviewed as part of this work were not aware of a process in place to connect students to mental-health services in the community.

Similarly, the college does not currently have a clinic on campus to provide basic health services to students, staff, and faculty. Interviews with staff and faculty revealed that the campus used to be home to a clinic, but several years of budget cuts resulted in RCC no longer being able to sustain the clinic.

Capacity for Community Outreach

Rockingham Community College has a physical location in almost every town it serves and representatives from each community sit on the RCC Foundation. Residents of the county think of the college as a neutral party and, oftentimes, a unifying force in the community.

Partly due to funding gaps and partly due to stewardship, the college and its employees have developed relationships with community partners to expand services to RCC students and to raise awareness/alleviate health issues in the county. As a way to expand services to students, the college has partnered with Goodwill Industries to prepare students to work as certified nursing aides as well as for their GED/Adult Basics Education programs.

The college has just signed an agreement with the Nurse Family Partnership Program—a nationally recognized, evidence-based nurse home visitation program for first-time, low-income mothers. The nurses providing the home visits and working to improve pregnancy outcomes will be trained at RCC.

RCC has been investigating ways to expand some of its existing wellness and health programs into the community. For example, the college would like to expand its annual health fair and open it up to the community to offer free cholesterol and diabetes screenings. The college would also like to embed stress-reduction, nutrition, and wellness programs in all student success classes and first-year orientation courses to provide students with a foundational understanding of how stress affects the body and ways to mitigate the harmful effects of prolonged stress through diet and exercise.

The college is also considering cost-efficient ways to engage the local senior population. The elimination of the waiver that allowed seniors to take community colleges classes at no cost has effectively reduced the number of seniors participating in continuing education and lifestyle enrichment classes. One strategy is to offer seniors weekend guided walks through the trails on campus, much like the running group started by one of the physical fitness instructors.

Key Takeaways

- The college is very concerned with ways to improve the health behaviors of its students by providing them with information on healthy nutrition and stress management.
- Rockingham Community College is responsive to employer demands for highly skilled nurses. The college has partnered with Winston-Salem State University to allow students to take classes on campus to increase the number of BSN's in the community.
- Students graduating with a degree in Health Sciences have a greater likelihood of being placed in employment within 12 months of graduation.
- RCC is creating strategic partnerships, like the Nurse Family Partnership Program, to extend its reach into the community and increase its work with disadvantaged populations like teen mothers.

Western Piedmont Community College

Introduction

Located in Morganton, North Carolina, Western Piedmont Community College sits in close proximity to one of North Carolina's four state-supported psychiatric hospitals and one of the state's two schools for the deaf. The State of North Carolina is the county's largest employer and Blueridge Healthcare Hospitals is its third largest, trailing the Burke County Public Schools. Though Western Piedmont Community College is only the county's ninth largest employer, its function and service as the county's only postsecondary institution means it has an influence in the county far beyond its current faculty, staff, and students.

Demographic Information on Western Piedmont Community College

Category	WPCC
Number of curriculum students	2,421
Number of continuing education students	3,939
First to second year retention rates of first-time degree-seeking undergraduates	61%
Graduation rates of full-time, first-time, degree/certificate-seeking undergraduates within 150% of normal time to program completion	24%
Racial makeup of student body	77% White 9% Af-Am 9% Asian 4% Latino
Percent of students receiving Pell Grants	77%

Source: Economic Modeling Specialist, Inc. 2014.3, IPEDS and the North Carolina Community College System

Training the Local Workforce

As part of its associate's degree in nursing program, students are required to take 10 hours of service learning, which gives the students an opportunity to build a strong sense of community through teaching and service in the local area. Students are required to do community outreach to a vulnerable population, which could include working with pregnant teenagers, setting up hand-washing booths, or volunteering at the local domestic-abuse center.

Health-related Programs Completions, 2013

Program	Completions (2013)
Medical/Clinical Assistant	34
Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse	32
Psychiatric/Mental Health Services Technician	19
Medical Administrative/Executive Assistant and Medical Secretary	10
Clinical/Medical Laboratory Science	9
Dental Assisting/Assistant	9
Substance Abuse/Addiction Counseling	8
Health Aide	2
Dental Hygiene/Hygienist	0

Source: Economic Modeling Specialist, Inc. 2014.3 and IPEDS

The nursing program also engages employers in the county and region to adjust curriculum and training to meet the changing needs of the local health-care industry. Nursing students complete a clinical mental-health rotation at Broughton Psychiatric Hospital, and the college has approved a Nursing Aide degree program with a concentration in phlebotomy as a response to the increased demand for such skills by local employers.

Other local workforce training includes annual continuing education for local firefighters, emergency medical technicians, correctional officers, and public safety personnel. In response to an increase in the county's elderly population and a greater need for training in medical transportation, the college has begun preparing workers to serve the needs of an aging population. Occasionally, WPCC receives requests from local employers to do on-site training related to ergonomics, CPR, and first aid.

Percentage of Health Science Graduates Employed in North Carolina, 1 Year Post-Graduation

Academic Years

Degree Type	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010
Associate	90%	88%	88%
Diploma	90%	89%	97%
Certificate	NA	100%	100%

Source: NC Tower – Accessed November 19, 2014

Community College as a Healthy Place

Internally, the college is focused on creating a healthy environment for students and staff through curriculum design and service delivery. Though there is no on-campus health nurse or infirmary, the college has a relationship with Morganton's Good Samaritan Clinic, which helps students who cannot afford costly health care. The college also has an emergency fund to help students in need and provides a counselor to assist students with mental-health issues.

Although the state does not require students to take a physical education course for transfer programs, WPCC still has a local requirement for its transfer students. Students enrolled in an associate's degree transfer program must take two physical education courses. Though it is encouraged in other non-transfer associate's degree programs, due to the more restrictive nature of those curricula, it is not a requirement.

In addition to the on-campus fishing pond, tennis courts, and walking trail, WPCC also has a weight room, climbing wall, dance studio, and community garden, all of which, due to liability issues, are not open to the larger Burke County community.

The college has identified a need for healthier options at its on-campus cafeteria and is currently exploring farm-to-table sources to expand menu options. One potential healthy food source is the college's fully functioning farm managed by students in its new sustainable agriculture program. In the mid-2000s, Broughton Psychiatric Hospital donated its farm land and buildings to the college, making it the largest community college in the state in terms of continuous land. In 2008, WPCC decided to launch a new degree program and continuing education courses focused on sustainable farming practices. Because the program is still in its infancy, the college donates its produce to local soup kitchens. College leadership, however, is in the process of obtaining all the necessary permits to begin selling the program's produce, meat, and eggs at local farmers' markets and perhaps using it as a direct supplier for the campus cafeteria.

For its faculty and staff, WPCC has an active Wellness Committee that partners with the local Carolina's Health Care to host an annual employee health fair with free wellness checks, blood screening, and lipid checks, which are performed by the college's nursing students. The committee also organizes events like walking competitions and provides discounted gym memberships. WPCC also lets employees take one free physical education class per semester.

There are also financial barriers to modeling a healthy living environment on campus. Financial aid will not pay for non-curriculum courses and the college's weight room is only available to students enrolled in a physical education course. The college's study skills class used to contain a health and wellness component, but when the class was reduced from 16 to eight weeks, the health component was cut.

Faculty and staff also noted the difficulty in communicating with students about the college's health programs and initiatives. While student services offer a free learning session on nutrition and healthy eating, they are generally poorly attended. Likewise, communication with students about

any event can be difficult as students are becoming less likely respond to email. WPCC is increasingly using social media and using monitors in hallways to promote events.

Community Outreach

The college also serves the community in other ways. As part of its Early Childhood Development program, the college has built an outdoor living environment and promoted its use to other childcare programs in the community. The initiative is called “Get Unplugged and Get Outside.”

The CHAMPS program (Community Health Activity Model Program for Seniors) is another initiative directed at the local community. The program focuses on strategies and resources for fall prevention, and works with students in the college’s physical therapy program to do screenings for the local elderly population.

Faculty and staff said the college used to have specific programs to engage local senior citizens— noting that physical education courses were some of the most popular— but when the state took away grant funding and got rid of the tuition waiver, forcing seniors to pay out of pocket for continuing education courses, participation waned.

The college annually hosts the Hoops for Hospice fundraising basketball game at a local gymnasium, an event to raise money for Burke Hospice & Palliative Care. And though there is no official institutional policy regarding community use, faculty and staff noted that many community members frequently make use of the campus hiking trails, pond, and tennis courts.

The college continues to be proactive in finding ways to better engage the local community and create a healthy environment for its staff and students. The college recently applied for a Healthy Places for All grant from Virginia Tech. The grant would create a master plan to develop the college’s large green spaces to better promote healthy living. Working with a graduate student in Virginia Tech’s planning department, the college would develop a plan that would connect campus walking trails to the county’s trails and parks system to create a recreational corridor with miles of trails, all for community use. Once the plan is finalized, the college would seek external funding to pay for its development and construction.

One staff member identified mental health as a “huge” issue in the local county and did not feel there are enough mental-health providers in the area to serve the mental-health needs of the community. While there was some concern about the campus being physically isolated from the larger community, the overall impression was that WPCC was seen as a trustworthy institution with a very good reputation among community members. Faculty and staff felt strongly that the institution could be a standard bearer for promoting a healthier Burke County. One staff member stated:

“Most people in the county, probably 70 to 95 percent, have been impacted in some way by Western Piedmont Community College—be it that they were a student or they have a relative who is a student or they received some job training from the college.”

Key Takeaways

- The college is thinking strategically about how to be a positive health model for the local community by exploring ways to bring its farm produce to the local market and by reimagining its campus to be a recreational destination for its students and the local community through the *Healthy Places for All* grant.
- WPCC appears to have a very positive reputation in the local community, positioning it to be an active change agent in the county for improved health outcomes.
- In a county with a major state psychiatric hospital, a school for the deaf, and a large health system, Western Piedmont Community College is active in building relationships with employers and forecasting workforce trends in the region.
- Like many community colleges across the state, WPCC is struggling with ways to reach students beyond email and inform them about health events and other services on campus.