



Health Sciences

NEWSLETTER



VGCC SCHOOL OF HEALTH SCIENCES CULTURAL AWARENESS EVENT

On Wednesday, February 25, 2026, students enrolled in School of Health Sciences programs participated in a Cultural Awareness event held in the Civic Center on Main campus. The event not only highlighted the different cultures represented within the School of Health Sciences but also focused on how culture shapes who we are and how we show up, specifically, as it relates to our patients in the healthcare environment. Table-led discussions prompted students to think differently as it relates to using person-first language when interacting with patients. Radiography students completed a one-page reflection after the event, and most noted that their favorite part of the event was interacting with students in other health sciences programs. Suggestions for improvement to next year's event included requiring students to bring in food that represents their culture, having more interactive group discussions, and inviting a student (past or present) to share their experiences. We look forward to incorporating these suggestions next year!

CULTURAL FOOD & FELLOWSHIP

A Taste of Culture



Students gathered around the table sampling cultural foods and drinks

Students also shared foods and beverages that represent their cultural backgrounds, giving participants the opportunity to experience traditions through taste. The table quickly became a place of connection as students sampled dishes, asked questions, and learned about the stories and traditions behind each item. Moments like these reminded everyone that culture is not only something we discuss—it is something we experience, celebrate, and share.

Student Reflections

“The highlight of the event for me was the sense of unity that was present throughout the entire experience. Despite the many different backgrounds represented, there was a strong feeling of respect and curiosity.”

“From the moment I arrived, there was a sense of unity and curiosity in the room.”

Global Perspectives in Health Sciences

Dr. Erica Fleming, PharmD, Program Head for the Pharmacy and Histotechnology programs, shared a meaningful moment with a student representing Jamaica. Originally from Manila, Philippines, Dr. Fleming reflected on the global nature of healthcare and the value of embracing diverse cultural perspectives. Moments like these demonstrate how cultural awareness strengthens relationships between faculty and students while preparing future healthcare professionals to serve diverse communities.



Interactive Learning with Nursing Faculty

Nursing faculty Leslie Parrott, RN, and Rosa Faulkner, RN, facilitated an interactive activity that encouraged students to think critically about healthcare scenarios through guided discussion and problem-solving questions. The activity allowed students from multiple programs to collaborate, reinforcing the importance of teamwork and communication in clinical environments.



TABLE-LED CONVERSATIONS ON CULTURAL AWARENESS



Participants engaged in meaningful table-led discussions facilitated by leaders from across the college. These conversations encouraged students to reflect on how cultural awareness influences patient communication, trust, and healthcare outcomes.

Facilitators included:

Dr. Antonio Jordan, Dean of Students

Dr. Angela M. Thomas, Dean of the School of Health Sciences

Dr. Laurica Yancey, Dean of Corporate Learning & Professional Development

Dr. Nakisha Powell, Director of Nursing

Mr. Jason Snelling, Coordinator of the Academic Success and Tutoring Center

Ms. Cathy Davis, Counselor and Coordinator of Counseling, Accessibility, & Support Services



Walking Toward Understanding

Following lunch, participants took part in an interactive activity titled “Walk to the Middle.” The exercise invited students and faculty to step forward in response to prompts reflecting shared and differing lived experiences. The activity encouraged reflection and conversation about the many ways our backgrounds shape who we are and how we engage with others.

Adding energy to the moment, each participant selected a walk-up song before approaching the activity. Ms. Jamisha Twitty, Radiography Clinical Coordinator confidently walked up to “Diva” by Beyoncé, reminding everyone—with a smile—that she proudly embraces the title.

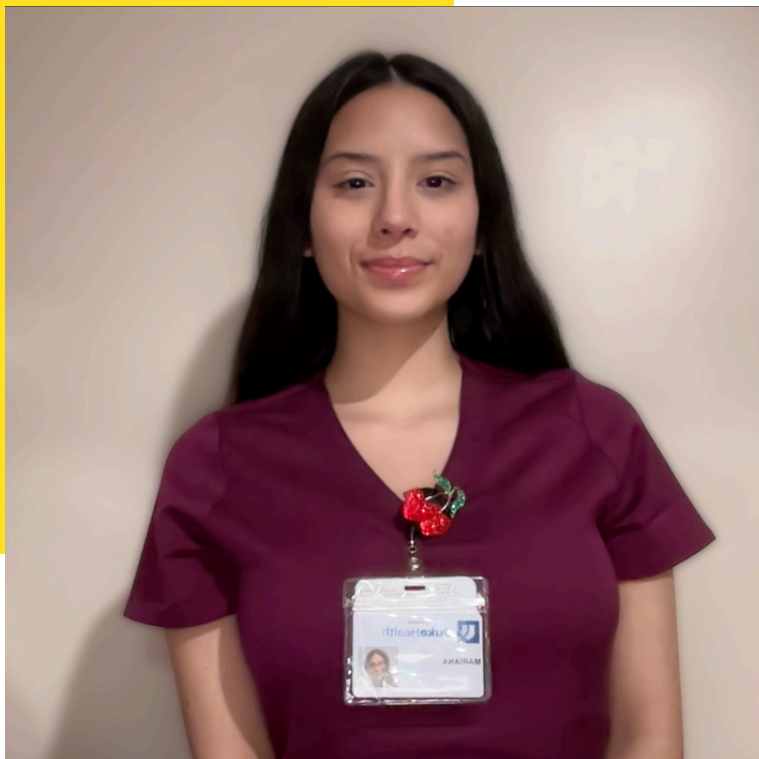
The exercise created a meaningful space for connection, reflection, and appreciation of the diverse experiences represented across the School of Health Sciences.



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

MARIANA FIGUEROA

BONILLA



Mariana Figueroa Bonilla, VGCC Lead Student Ambassador, Radiography Club Class Secretary, and Radiography Peer Tutor, recently accepted an apprenticeship in the Interventional Radiology (IR) department at Duke University Hospital.

Mariana shared that she is excited to begin this opportunity in a field she describes as both fascinating and rewarding. Working in Interventional Radiology allows her to be part of a multidisciplinary team while playing an important role in treating patients through vascular procedures. She expressed deep gratitude to the IR department at Duke University Hospital for the opportunity to expand her skills and contribute to improving patient outcomes.

Wake AHEC



The AHEC program is a two-year program aimed at educating students about the social determinants of health and other factors that limit a patient's ability to receive the appropriate care they deserve. The AHEC program meets once a month and requires 40 hours of didactic and 40 hours of clinical experience annually; this exposes students to other areas of healthcare that they wouldn't normally see in their clinical education in the classroom. The program brought together students from diverse health disciplines across North Carolina to focus on interprofessional education, behavioral health, social determinants of health, cultural competency, practice transformation, telehealth, and emerging health issues all with an emphasis on improving care in rural and underserved communities.

WAKE AHEC CONT.



From Friday, February 20, 2026, through Sunday, February 22, 2026, two Radiography students, Matthew James and Mauren Escheverry, and one Medical Assisting student Delia Escobar Rodriguez, participated in the third annual Wake AHEC Emerging Leaders in Healthcare Conference in Greenville, NC. The conference was filled with seminars that focused on topics such as compassion in healthcare and human trafficking. Breakout sessions encouraged discussion surrounding using art to help patients heal, how an organization is educating mostly immigrant farmers and farm hands about their rights, developing pharmaceuticals to prevent and cure AIDS and other types of HIV related illnesses.

"I recommend the AHEC program to any VGCC student who is interested in working in healthcare or public health related fields. The resources provides to scholars are exceptionally useful to the development of the next generation of rural healthcare workers."

-Matthew James

"AHEC is a wonderful and powerful program for anyone who plans to work in the medical field and is interested in learning more about how to become an advocate for improving healthcare in rural communities. These areas are often in great need and are many times overlooked. Programs like AHEC help prepare and inspire individuals to serve and make a meaningful difference where healthcare support is needed the most."

-Delia Escobar Rodriguez

WAKE AHEC CONT.



One student, Mauren Escheverry, was also incredibly honored to receive a certificate of recognition for outstanding leadership, professionalism, and commitment to improving the future of healthcare during the conference. Being recognized by her peers made the award even more meaningful. It affirmed her dedication to collaboration, service, and positively influencing those around her.

“Overall, the NC AHEC scholars’ program has shown me that healthcare transformation requires more than clinical knowledge, it requires cultural humility, advocacy, leadership, and a deep understanding of the communities we serve. It has strengthened my passion for improving healthcare access in rural and underserved areas and has prepared me to contribute meaningfully to a more equitable healthcare system. I am grateful for the opportunity to have been part of this program and look forward to carrying these lessons with me throughout my career.” -Mauren Escheverry

ADDITIONAL PHOTOS

