



Vance-Granville
Community College

BLUEPRINT

THE APPLIED TECHNOLOGY, ADVANCED MANUFACTURING AND WORKFORCE NEWSLETTER
FOR VANCE-GRANVILLE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

REGIONAL IMPACT

Strengthening collaboration to support economic growth across multiple counties.

ENROLLMENT MOMENTUM

Program growth reflects rising demand for skilled, career-focused education.

BUILDING FUTURES

A dedicated fundraising effort is helping bring two state-of-the-art buildings to life for students and industry partners.

— Introduction

Under Construction: The Future of Workforce and Manufacturing

Welcome to the Spring 2026 Edition of the Blueprint, Vance-Granville Community College's newsletter spotlighting applied technology, advanced manufacturing, and workforce development. As momentum continues into the new year, we're proud to share progress on a dedicated fundraising effort bringing two state-of-the-art buildings to life for our students and industry partners. This regional investment reflects a shared

commitment to economic prosperity and mobility, creating new pathways to opportunity across our communities. In this edition, we also explore enrollment growth, expanding learning pathways, and the partnerships and innovations shaping student success. Whether you're a student, alum, or community partner, we invite you to discover how we're building the future of skilled professions— together.



-Fredesvinda Colindres

Table Of Contents

02

Introduction

Check out what's unfolding this spring as we highlight the major projects fueling a powerful regional movement—and discover the exciting work shaping what's next for our community.

04

Designing NC's Future

See how an AdvanceNC regional convening supported by Education Design Lab brought educators, industry leaders, and partners together to collaborate on micropathways and elevate the student experience.

06

BioWork Interest Soars

Learn more about our BioWork class and what its all-time high interest says about the growing demand for biotechnology and life sciences careers.

08

Transportation Training & Technology Center

Discover how the new Transportation Training and Technology Center—complete with cutting-edge labs and technology—will power workforce development and expand hands-on training opportunities.

10

Major Funding News

Find out how major funding from Golden LEAF is helping VGCC expand Advanced Manufacturing Training and strengthen pathways to high-demand careers.

12

Information About Upcoming Events

Check out what's coming next with our lineup of upcoming events and activities.

DESIGNING FUTURE

NC's

On February 11, 2026, Vance-Granville Community College proudly participated in the Advance NC Regional Convening: Connecting Learning, Work, and Opportunity, held at the SAS Executive Briefing Center. This one-day event brought together education leaders, workforce development professionals, and employer partners from across the region to strengthen a more connected and effective workforce ecosystem.

The convening focused on building stronger bridges between education and employment—ensuring that individuals can move seamlessly from learning to meaningful careers.



Throughout the day, participants reflected on regional progress, examined alignment across education and workforce systems, and engaged in hands-on problem-solving sessions designed to improve how we collectively support learners.

Through collaborative discussions and working sessions, partners began co-designing solutions aimed at:

- Removing access barriers that prevent learners from fully participating in education and training opportunities
- Aligning skills and credentials with evolving employer needs
- Establishing shared metrics to strengthen accountability and measure long-term impact

These conversations reinforced the vital role community colleges play in connecting talent to opportunity and in driving regional economic mobility.

ELEVATING THE LEARNER VOICE

A highlight of the day was the participation of two of our own Mechatronics students and Ontic Electro-Mechanical Technician Apprentices, Joseph Richmond and Omar Ramos Espinoza. Notably, they are the first U.S.-based apprentices for Ontic Aerospace and Engineering, marking the expansion of Ontic's highly successful UK apprenticeship program into its American sites. Both students served on the Opportunity Seeker Panel Discussion, where they shared powerful insights into their journeys through the community college system.

Joseph and Omar spoke candidly about their educational goals, the barriers they have encountered, the support systems that made a difference, and the successes they have achieved along the way. Omar also stands out as the youngest employee at the Creedmoor site, further highlighting the opportunities this program creates for emerging talent. Their stories underscored the importance of accessible pathways, strong employer partnerships, and clear connections between coursework and career outcomes.

As Joseph shared, "I am so proud to have the chance to create an effect within Advance NC, being a part of growing education in exciting ways."



MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

We are proud to stand alongside our regional partners in advancing a more connected and equitable workforce system. A heartfelt thank you to the faculty and staff who have dedicated their time, expertise, and energy to this important work—their commitment makes meaningful progress possible for our students and our community.





“I’m pleased to see that our outreach efforts are translating to real interest in our program and the BioWork course.”

Dr. Andrew Pais – Professor of Biotechnology

BIOWORK INTEREST SOARS

Interest in the BioWork class has reached an all-time high this Spring, marking a major milestone for the program. In Spring 2026, more than 32 students submitted registration forms for the March 23 class—nearly doubling the previous record of 18 students set in Fall 2024.

The surge in interest reflects growing enthusiasm in biotechnology careers and the expanding reputation of the college’s biotechnology program within the community. Increased outreach efforts, stronger community presence, and positive word-of-mouth referrals from past students have all played a significant role in the program’s continued growth. Additionally, an industry-wide uptick in biotechnology and biomanufacturing opportunities has encouraged more individuals to pursue training in this high-demand field.



“The Biotechnology program at VGCC is very fortunate to have state-of-the-art equipment and qualified faculty and staff to enhance its offering of technical education opportunities. One challenge has been to raise community awareness of these opportunities, so I’m pleased to see that our outreach efforts are translating to real interest in our program and the BioWork course,” said Dr. Andrew Pais.

We are excited and ready for even more students—visit our website via the QR code to learn about upcoming BioWork classes and secure your spot in the next session!



ALUMNUS REACHES NEW FRONTIERS

Graduate Unveils New Metric and Spacecraft Design Concept for Interstellar Propulsion

Brian Guarino, an alumnus of Vance-Granville Community College's Mechatronics Engineering program, is making waves in advanced theoretical engineering with the submission of a new research manuscript titled "The Guarino Similarity Metric."

The paper introduces a novel, dimensionless physics standard designed to evaluate interstellar propulsion architectures. Central to the research is a bold "Vascular Hull" concept, in which a spacecraft's fuel supply serves multiple integrated functions — acting simultaneously as coolant, radiation shielding, and structural mass. This systems-level approach challenges traditional aerospace design by rethinking how core spacecraft components interact.

Guarino credits the foundational training received in systems integration and electromechanical control at VGCC as instrumental in shaping the research. The manuscript stands as a testament to how the college's Mechatronics program equips students with practical and theoretical tools that extend far beyond the classroom — even into the frontiers of interstellar exploration.



“

I wanted to share this work with you as a testament to the robust training provided by the Mechatronics program and its direct application to advanced theoretical engineering.

Brian Guarino, A.A.S.
Mechatronics Engineering
Alumnus, VGCC
Student, Dept. of Technology
Systems, ECU
Founder, Guarino Industries LLC

”

Transportation Training and Technology Center



**MICHAEL
GRAVES**

Visit Our Website:
<https://www.vgcc.edu/building-futures/>



Vance-Granville
Community College

Contact Us:
252-738-3264
foundation@vgcc.edu

Strengthening the Local Economy Through Skilled Trades

The Transportation Training and Technology Center at Vance-Granville Community College (VGCC) represents a major investment in workforce development for North Carolina's transportation sector. Designed as part of an innovative regional initiative, the center will serve students and employers throughout Warren, Franklin, Vance, and Granville counties by bringing essential transportation training programs together under one roof.

Envisioned as a state-of-the-art facility, the center will offer practical, hands-on instruction in key areas of the industry, including Commercial Driver's License (CDL) truck driver training, diesel and heavy equipment mechanics, and heavy equipment operations. Its curriculum is tailored to meet current employer needs and prepare students for careers that contribute directly

8 to the movement of goods and the economic growth of the region.

Key Features:

-  11,000 sq ft
-  Training Bays
-  Labs
-  Storage
-  Paved Areas for CDL
-  Classrooms
-  Areas For Future Growth

The planned facility will feature an 11,000-square-foot building with classrooms, training bays, labs, offices, and storage, along with outdoor areas designed for CDL training and heavy equipment operations. Built to meet industry standards, the center is also designed with a strategic phasing plan that allows for future expansion as enrollment and workforce demands grow. This phased approach ensures the facility can adapt over time, adding additional training space, equipment areas, or program offerings as needed, allowing Vance-Granville Community College to scale the center thoughtfully while continuing to meet the evolving needs of the transportation industry.

Building a Legacy Through Giving

The Transportation Training and Technology Center creates a meaningful opportunity for individuals, businesses, and community partners to invest in the future of workforce education in our region. Philanthropic support will help strengthen instructional spaces and enhance training environments, ensuring students have access to the tools and technology required for success in today's transportation industry.

A variety of naming opportunities are available to recognize this leadership and commitment. The minimum gift to name the new building is 30% of the total project cost or \$3.0 million. Additional options include General Classrooms at \$50,000 and Gardens, Courtyards, or Plazas at \$40,000, among other opportunities designed to accommodate a range of giving levels. Each investment offers donors the opportunity to establish a lasting legacy while advancing workforce training at Vance-Granville Community College.



You're invited to make a lasting impact on the future of transportation workforce training in our region. To explore giving opportunities, contact The VGCC Foundation at foundation@vgcc.edu or 252-738-3264 and be part of shaping the future of transportation training in our community!





VGCC Receives Major Funding From Golden LEAF

For Advanced Manufacturing Training

Vance-Granville Community College has received \$750,000 in funding from the Golden LEAF Foundation to support the construction of its new Center for Advanced Manufacturing & Applied Technology (CAMAT). This major investment will strengthen workforce training programs aligned with regional industry needs and expand access to high-wage career pathways.

For over 25 years, the Golden LEAF Foundation has worked to increase economic opportunity in North Carolina's rural and tobacco-dependent communities through leadership in grantmaking, collaboration, innovation, and stewardship. Golden LEAF's Board of Directors announced the award to VGCC in its February 2026 board meeting.

"The Golden LEAF Foundation is pleased to support Vance-Granville Community College's strategy to build a skilled workforce in high-demand fields," said Golden LEAF President, Chief Executive Officer Scott T. Hamilton.

“Workforce preparedness is a priority for Golden LEAF because it is one of the most direct ways to strengthen rural economies. The Center for Advanced Manufacturing & Applied Technology will build a workforce pipeline to help meet the evolving needs of employers across the region.”

The CAMAT is one of two major expansion projects currently underway at Vance–Granville Community College. Now in development at Triangle North

Granville business park, this state-of-the-art facility will provide immersive, real-world learning experiences in areas such as industrial maintenance, electronics, mechatronics, HVAC, welding, and fabrication. Equipped with industry-standard technology and flexible instructional spaces, the Center will strengthen connections between students and employers, expand regional talent pipelines, and position VGCC as a leading driver of workforce readiness and economic growth across the region.

“Vance–Granville Community College is extremely appreciative of Golden LEAF’s investment in our role as workforce developer for our communities,” said VGCC President Dr. Rachel Desmarais. “By aligning training with



About the Golden LEAF Foundation

The Golden LEAF Foundation is a nonprofit organization established in 1999 to receive a portion of North Carolina’s funding from the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement with cigarette manufacturers. Golden LEAF has worked to increase economic opportunity in North Carolina’s rural and tobacco-dependent communities through leadership in grantmaking, collaboration, innovation, and stewardship as an independent and perpetual foundation.

For more than 25 years, the Foundation has provided lasting impact to tobacco-dependent, economically distressed, and rural areas of the state. In fiscal year 2025, Golden LEAF helped create 1,665 jobs, more than \$116 million in new payrolls, and more than 4,722 workers trained or retrained for higher wages.

For more information about Golden LEAF and its programs, please visit [GoldenLEAF.org](https://www.GoldenLEAF.org).

high-demand fields, we are supporting both students and the employers who depend on a skilled workforce.” The VGCC Center for Advanced Manufacturing & Applied Technology is projected to open in early 2028. For additional information, please visit <https://www.vgcc.edu/building-futures/>.



The VGCC Foundation Celebrates 50 Years of Changing Lives

The Vance-Granville Community College Foundation is celebrating a major milestone in 2026: 50 years of supporting students, strengthening communities, and opening doors to opportunity across the College's four-county service region.

Established in 1976 as the College's Endowment Fund, The VGCC Foundation has played a vital role in helping students overcome financial barriers and achieve their educational goals. Over five decades, The Foundation has expanded its impact well beyond scholarships to include emergency assistance, student success initiatives, program support, and strategic investments that enhance learning environments.

The Vance-Granville Community College Foundation is celebrating a major milestone in 2026: 50 years of supporting students, strengthening communities, and opening doors to opportunity across the College's four-county service region.

As part of its 50th anniversary year, The VGCC Foundation is also focused on the future. The Foundation is actively raising funds to support two new buildings: the Center for Advanced Manufacturing & Applied Technology in Granville County and the Transportation Training & Technology Center in Warren County. Both are critical projects that will expand instructional space, modernize learning environments, and better serve students and the region's workforce needs.

"These new facilities represent an investment in our students, our faculty, and the future of our communities," Sheri Jones, VGCCF Associate Director noted. "The support we receive today will help us continue building futures, empowering students, and strengthening communities."

Throughout the year, The Foundation will highlight its legacy, recognize supporters, and share stories of impact while continuing its mission to empower students and strengthen the communities Vance-Granville Community College serves.



A LOOK BACK AT EARLY FOUNDATION SUPPORT

In an undated photo, former VGCC president Dr. Ben Currin (1981-1998) and longtime trustee Donald C. Seifert Sr. accept a donation on behalf of the College's Endowment Fund, now known as The VGCC Foundation.



SCAN FOR MORE
INFORMATION:



BUILDING FUTURES. EMPOWERING STUDENTS. STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES.

Golfers will have the opportunity to hit the green while making a meaningful difference at The Vance-Granville Community College Foundation's 42nd Annual Golf Tournament, to be held May 11 & 12 at Henderson Country Club. This four-member team Super Ball tournament brings together community partners, supporters, and golf enthusiasts for two days of friendly competition in support of student and community success.

The annual golf tournament is one of the Foundation's primary fundraising events. For more than four decades, proceeds from the tournament have helped students afford college and persist through financial hardship. This year, the impact goes even further. Funds raised will help advance the construction of two new facilities: Center for Advanced Manufacturing & Applied Technology and the Transportation Training & Technology Center. These facilities will provide students with access to hands-on, real-world learning environments, modern labs, and workforce training spaces. In addition, they will create new pathways for students to gain in-demand skills that lead directly to good-paying jobs and supply skilled labor to local industry.

By supporting the golf tournament, participants are investing in the long-term economic strength of VGCC's four-county region. This two-day tournament provides vital resources that allow the College to expand educational and career opportunities for students – benefiting families, employers, and the broader community for years to come. This marks the first time in VGCC's history that supporters can leave a lasting footprint in shaping the future of our region through these transformative facilities. Your sponsorship helps build futures, empower students, and strengthen communities...one swing at a time.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Enjoy a Great Night for a Great Cause

The VGCC Foundation invites you to join them at their third wine tasting gala and silent auction on Saturday, April 11, from 6 – 9 p.m. Centered on the theme “Building Futures: Empowering Students and Strengthening Communities,” event proceeds will support students facing unforeseen financial needs.

Unexpected burdens can easily derail some students. Through initiatives like a food pantry, emergency assistance, and transportation vouchers, The VGCC Foundation steps in to meet students’ basic needs when the unexpected gets in the way of their academic progress. Your attendance at this premier event will enable The VGCC Foundation to stand ready when students need help most.

An array of wineries will serve a variety of their signature wines including reds, whites, bubbly, and more. Guests will enjoy a buffet of foods with tea and water and have the opportunity to purchase beer and wine by the glass.

Attendees will receive a souvenir wine glass and have the option to purchase their favorite finds. In addition, a variety of silent auction items will be on display for bidding throughout the evening. A Wine Pull and raffle will also be offered again this year. A short program showcasing students who have benefited from donor contributions will open the evening.

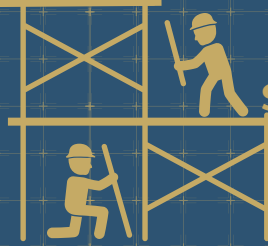
The event will be held at HighRock Farms, which also hosted the first two VGCCF gala events. Owned by Beth and Dave Hollister, HighRock Farms is a breathtakingly beautiful 200-acre property located at 2317 Enon Road in Oxford. The venue is handicap accessible.

Dress for the evening is business attire.

Tickets are \$75 each and may be purchased through The Vance-Granville Community College Foundation office. Only 150 tickets will be sold, so be sure to get yours early!

BUILDING FUTURES

EMPOWERING STUDENTS



STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES

THE VGCC FOUNDATION WINE TASTING GALA & SILENT AUCTION

SATURDAY, APRIL 11, 2026
6:00 PM TO 9:00 PM

TICKETS
\$75

HIGHROCK FARMS
2317 Enon Rd
Oxford, NC 27565

ONLINE SILENT AUCTION,
WINE PULL, RAFFLES

Contact: foundation@vgcc.edu
or 252-738-3264



THE VGCC FOUNDATION

Tanya Weary, Executive Director
(252) 738-3264 * wearyt@vgcc.edu
Sheri Jones, Associate Director
(252) 738-3409 * joness@vgcc.edu
Angela Douglas, Food Pantry
Coordinator/Foundation
Administrative Assistant
(252) 738-3323 * douglasa@vgcc.edu

GRANTS

Fredesvinda Colindres, Grants Administrator
(252) 738-3291 * colindresf@vgcc.edu

WORKFORCE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Jerry Edmonds Ed.D., Vice President
(252) 738-3243 * edmondsj@vgcc.edu

CORPORATE LEARNING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Dr. Laurica R. Yancey, Dean
(252) 738-3633 * yanceyl@vgcc.edu

BUSINESS & INDUSTRY SOLUTIONS

Kyle Burwell, Dean of Business & Industry Solutions
(252) 738-3521 * burwellk@vgcc.edu

Elisa Rodwell, Director of Occupational Extension
(252) 738-3276 * rodwelle@vgcc.edu

James N. Brown Jr., M.B.A., M.Ed. NCEdge Director
(252) 738-3520 * brownj@vgcc.edu

CAREER SERVICES

Dr. Krystal Foxx, Director of Career
Services & Experiential Learning
(252) 738-3466 * foxxk@vgcc.edu
Lorene Allen, Career Development
Specialist
(252) 738-3476 * allenl@vgcc.edu
LaShawn Hawley, Experiential
Learning Coordinator
(252) 738-3336 * hawleyl@vgcc.edu

SMALL BUSINESS CENTER

Carolyn Perry, Director
(252) 738-3240 * perryc@vgcc.edu

INSTRUCTION AND STUDENT SERVICES

Kim Sepich Ed.D., Vice President
(252) 738-3283 * sepichk@vgcc.edu

APPLIED TECHNOLOGY/PUBLIC SERVICE BUSINESS TECHNOLOGIES

Stephanie Buchanan Tolbert MBA, Dean
(252) 738-3226 * tolberts@vgcc.edu



Vance-Granville Community College

P.O. Box 917, Henderson, N.C. 27536
(252) 492-2061
www.vgcc.edu

Vance-Granville Community College is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to award associate degrees. Contact the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097 or call 404-679-4500 for questions about the accreditation of Vance-Granville Community College. Vance-Granville Community College is an equal opportunity institution. The college serves all students regardless of race, creed, color, age, sex, national origin, or disabling conditions. Vance-Granville Community College is a Tobacco-Free College.