



PREPARED SPRING-SUMMER 2018

# 5-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

## 2018-2023





“...we have everything we  
need right here in our  
community to build a  
better tomorrow.”

-Dr. Jeff Cox



## A MESSAGE FROM DR. COX

### We are Rural America.

Like many communities across the U.S., our region boasts historical feats of entrepreneurial and civic ingenuity. Lowe's Hardware was born in Wilkes County and is now a Fortune 50 company. The Blue Ridge Parkway was born in Alleghany County and is consistently the most visited National Park in the United States. GE Aviation chose Ashe County for one of its most innovative, high-tech manufacturing sites – a testament to the quality workforce we have.

### This is our service area. These are our communities. We are proud of them.

And... like many communities across the U.S., we have faced a slow motion economic disaster over the past two decades. In 2016, it was reported that only one other county in the nation suffered a larger drop in median household income than Wilkes County in the previous decade. Between the loss of manufacturing jobs, the drug epidemic plaguing our families, and the stalled upward economic mobility of our impoverished neighbors, we have significant challenges to resolve.

### Despite these challenges, I believe we have everything we need right here in our community to build a better tomorrow.

Our history and heritage were shaped by strong, smart, determined folks who built their own homes, dug their own mountain wells, and created their own livelihoods - fueled and supported by the tight-knit community around them. That heritage of resilience and community is still with us today, as is the overwhelming scenic beauty of this place we call home.

### I am witness to this heritage as demonstrated in the students and supporters of Wilkes Community College.

This year we mobilized over 200 leaders and reached out to over 3,500 stakeholders in business, education, non-profit, and government from our region to analyze national best practices and benchmarks for ways to strengthen our impact as a community college. We uncovered countless insights that we have woven into the 5-Year Strategic Plan you have in front of you and subsequent Annual Implementation Plans that will evolve from year-to-year as we put our goals, objectives, and strategies into practice.

### Central to it all is empowering more students with credentials that can provide a family-sustaining income while supporting regional workforce needs.

In many ways, Wilkes Community College sits at the crossroads of our community's past and our future. Gone are the days when good-paying jobs are available with only a high school diploma. By 2020, it is estimated that 67% of all new jobs in North Carolina will require some form of post-secondary training. This requires careful alignment and collaboration between industry and education.

### Wilkes Community College embraces its role as a bridge between K-12 schools and the workforce or continued higher education.

We are uniquely positioned to take advantage of strong partnerships with K-12 schools, regional universities, and regional business and industry to the benefit of our students and communities. Over the coming months we will design and implement new evidence-based approaches, such as Guided Pathways to Success, career coaching for high schoolers, diversified scholarships to economically-disadvantaged and first-generation students, embedded tutoring and support in high-risk courses, student feedback systems, and expanded work-based learning.

### Over the next five years, we will significantly impact the economic mobility of our friends and neighbors in this region.

Through implementation of this strategic plan, we will double our completion rates from 25% to 50% and give hundreds more students the skills and credentials they need to earn a living wage in the new economy. We invite you to partner with us to transform this community we all love -- claiming the best of our past and building the brightest possible future! Let's get to work.

Sincerely,



Dr. Jeff Cox  
President  
Wilkes Community College

## MISSION

Wilkes Community College, a member of the North Carolina Community College System, is a public, two-year, open-door institution serving the people of Wilkes, Ashe, and Alleghany counties and beyond.

Wilkes Community College enhances the quality of life through

- quality education and workforce development, including basic skills, occupational, technical, and pre-baccalaureate programs;
- economic development services to business and industry, both public and private; **AND**
- community development through a variety of services, cultural activities, and recreational opportunities.

## VISION

WCC aspires to be an effective learner-centered educational institution and a dynamic learning organization, preparing learners for success in a rapidly changing world.

## VALUES

The college's vision is grounded in the mission statement and is guided by the institutional values of caring, community, education, excellence, innovation, integrity, and responsibility.

# STRATEGIC THEMES

LEARNING

COMPLETION & TRANSFER

LABOR MARKET OUTCOMES

COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT

EQUITY





# LEARNING

**Goal: Enhance the learning experiences of students to prepare them for educational, career, and personal success.**

**Objective 1: WCC Instructor Commitment**

Ensure instructor commitment to the intentional design of relevant, research-supported, engaging instructional strategies adaptable to all learners and learning environments.

**Objective 2: WCC Support of Faculty & Staff**

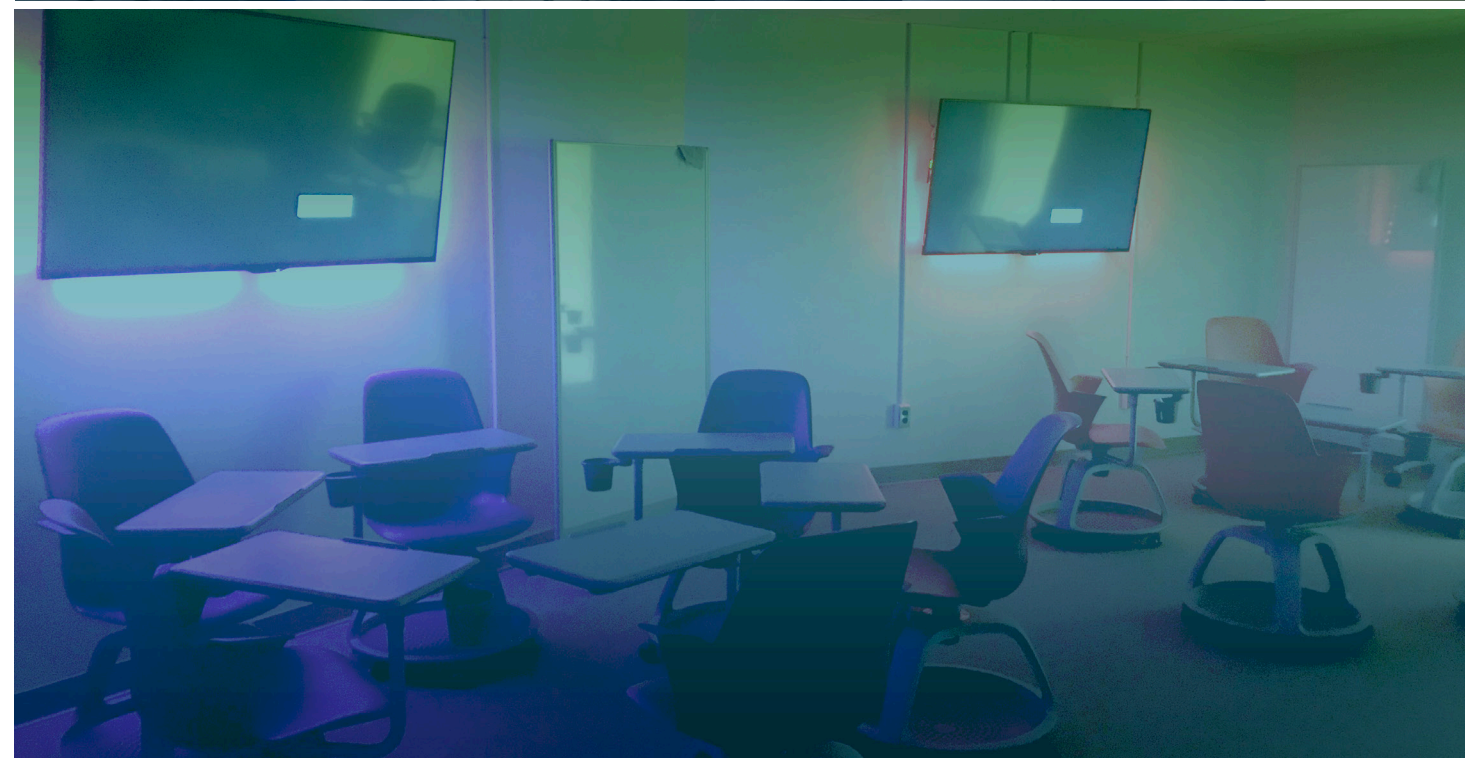
Create and sustain a supportive environment where all employees are consistently engaged in focused professional learning, growth, and development.

**Objective 3: WCC Support of Students**

Provide integrated, targeted, personalized academic support services across the college.

**Objective 4: Other Support for Learning**

Provide facilities, equipment, technology, and personnel aligned to support a learning-centered environment.







# COMPLETION AND TRANSFER

**Goal:** Increase the percentage of students earning credentials that will prepare them for employment and/or transfer.

## **Objective 1: Guided Pathways**

Implement the Guided Pathways Model\* to clarify paths to student end goals; help students choose and enter a pathway; help students stay on path; and ensure students are learning.

## **Objective 2: High Impact Practices & Support Structures**

Enhance targeted, high-impact practices and sustained support for all students.

## **Objective 3: Expanded Options for Credentials**

Design and promote credentials aligned to and valued in the labor market.

## **Objective 4: Partnerships & Transfer Support**

Solidify and expand partnerships that foster seamless connections among K-12 education, WCC, other community colleges, 4-year colleges and universities, and employers.

\*For additional information on Guided Pathways, visit:

<https://www.aacc.nche.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/PathwaysModelDescription1021.pdf>





# LABOR MARKET OUTCOMES

**Goal: Increase student employability in career tracks aligned with local and regional workforce needs that offer growth opportunities and family-sustaining income.**

## **Objective 1: Career Tracks to Earnings & Growth**

Utilize labor market data and assessments to identify regionally-accessible\*, high-demand occupations that pay a family-sustaining wage.

## **Objective 2: Soft Skills Development**

Integrate soft skills systematically across all areas of the college to prepare students for today's work environment.

## **Objective 3: Work-Based Learning**

Increase work-based learning opportunities through expanded programs, streamlined policies, and optimized support structures.

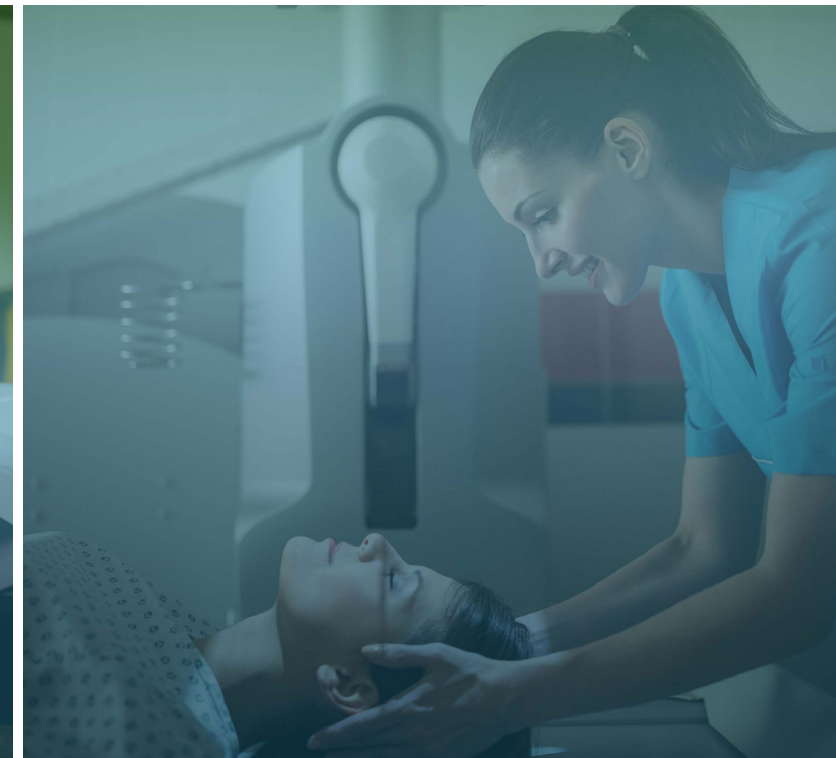
## **Objective 4: Workforce Development**

Develop and implement programs to meet the education, training, and skill development requirements of business and industry while meeting student career and financial needs.

## **Objective 5: Small Business Support & Entrepreneurial Development**

Foster the development and growth of small business and integrate such entrepreneurial skills as innovation, creativity, and initiative across the college curricula.

\* "Regionally-accessible" includes local, commutable, travel-based, or virtual occupations, all of which facilitate residence in the WCC service area.







# COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT

**Goal: Enhance the communities we serve through cultural and enrichment activities, event services and venues, community and civic engagement of students, faculty, and staff, and publicly-available recreational facilities.**

## **Objective 1: Community & Civic Engagement**

Promote and foster community and civic engagement among Wilkes Community College students, faculty, and staff in the communities we serve.

## **Objective 2: Personal Enrichment Courses & Training**

Establish and strengthen community partnerships and funding strategies to provide personal enrichment courses and training to the communities we serve, with a special focus on lifelong learning programs for aging adults and early engagement programs for K-12 youth.

## **Objective 3: Walker Center**

Diversify and enhance Walker Center events and services; expand customer base and student engagement; develop continued staff and volunteer excellence; and preserve and enhance quality facilities.

## **Objective 4: MerleFest**

Preserve and enhance MerleFest as a premier, family-friendly, “traditional plus” music festival, while diversifying and growing its customer base, staff, and volunteers to the benefit of our students, our communities, and the regional economy.

## **Objective 5: Recreational Facilities**

Preserve, enhance, and promote publicly-available gardens, grounds, and facilities for community wellness and recreation.



# EQUITY

**Goal: Increase equitable access and outcomes for all students across program participation and completion, college transfer, labor market outcomes, learning, and community enhancement.**

**Objective 1: Integrated Financial Assistance**

Improve communication, services, and support for student financial assistance, with consideration of the full cost of education, such as tuition, fees, books, transportation, child care, and other related costs.

**Objective 2: Student Engagement**

Expand student engagement through comprehensive and flexible support services offering a welcoming environment to all students and their families.

**Objective 3: Donor Engagement**

Enhance existing and cultivate new donor partnerships by developing strong donor-student connections, diversifying donor programs, and designing targeted communications.

**Objective 4: Outreach & Education**

Educate P-16 partners, students, families, and the public on opportunities and financial assistance available to pursue post-secondary education.





# ABOUT THE PLAN

The intent of this Strategic Plan is to provide an enduring vision for the future that is flexible and adaptable to the unknowns inherent in long-term planning. Additional plan details are captured in separate documents, such as those described below, and are available on the Wilkes Community College website.

## HOW THE PLAN WAS DEVELOPED

The process of developing this Strategic Plan took place over nine months in collaboration with over 200 actively involved leaders from our service area. The five strategic themes and goals herein reflect a blend of research-based pillars of community college excellence identified by The Aspen Institute and other thought-leading institutions, as well as priorities and assets unique to Wilkes Community College. The plan was developed by five Working Groups and one overarching Planning Taskforce made up of key leaders, partners, and implementers from within and outside of the college. The teams met numerous times in early 2018 to consider benchmarks from across the state and nation related to research, best practices, data, and trends from high-performing community colleges. Additionally, local and regional stakeholders from businesses, industries, local governments, 4-year colleges and universities, K-12 school systems, and community-based organizations were engaged through focus groups and surveys to provide input and insight on the needs of Wilkes, Ashe, and Alleghany county residents. The result is this synthesis of 5-Year Goals & Objectives, which will form the foundation for future college planning. For more information about the research and planning process, and those involved, go to [www.wilkescc.edu/strategicplanning](http://www.wilkescc.edu/strategicplanning).

## ANNUAL IMPLEMENTATION PLANS

There will be separate Annual Implementation Plans for each year of the Strategic Plan's five years of execution. Annual Implementation Plans will drill down into specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound (S.M.A.R.T.) strategies, including activities, assignments, budgets, timelines, success metrics, and other critical details. Each year's Implementation Plan will be informed by the prior year's lessons learned, the current year's available resources, and the evolving circumstances of the college and its communities. For more information about Annual Implementation Plans, go to [www.wilkescc.edu/strategicplanning](http://www.wilkescc.edu/strategicplanning).

## SUCCESS METRICS

Success metrics have been defined for each goal contained in this plan. These metrics reflect the critical end points that represent achievement of the college's long-term vision. When possible, metrics were aligned to established state and national performance measures. The college is committed to analyzing progress and challenges related to these metrics, while acknowledging that variables within and outside the control of the college can impact positive and negative fluctuations in the data. For additional information about these metrics, including how they are calculated, go to [www.wilkescc.edu/strategicplanning](http://www.wilkescc.edu/strategicplanning).

## YOUR ROLE

Over the coming years there will be numerous opportunities for you to get involved with supporting our students, such as volunteering as a mentor, funding a scholarship, hosting an intern, or participating in surveys and focus groups. Opportunities will expand and evolve over time. We thank you in advance for your support in helping Wilkes Community College to fully realize its mission and maximize its positive impact on our students and communities!

STAY IN-THE-KNOW.  
SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS.

Learn more at  
[www.wilkescc.edu/strategicplanning](http://www.wilkescc.edu/strategicplanning).

Approved by the Wilkes Community College Board of Trustees on August 9, 2018.



Wilkes Community College provides equal employment opportunities (EEO) to all employees and applicants for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or genetics. In addition to federal law requirements, Wilkes Community College complies with applicable state and local laws governing nondiscrimination in employment in every location in which the company has facilities.

Wilkes Community College prohibits any form of workplace harassment based on race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, genetic information, disability, or veteran status. Improper interference with the ability of Wilkes Community College's employees to perform their job duties may result in discipline up to and including discharge.

