



Presidential Profile

The Wilkes Community College Board of Trustees invites applications for the position of President of Wilkes Community College.

About the College

In the Fall of 1964, the people of Wilkes County authorized the establishment of Wilkes Community College (WCC) by pledging their financial support for the creation of physical facilities and ongoing operations of the first public, two-year higher education institution in Wilkes County. Approved by the State Board of Education shortly after the enactment of the Community College Act by the North Carolina General Assembly in 1963, WCC has served to meet the education, workforce and economic development, and community enrichment and enhancement needs in the Northwest Region of the State for approximately six decades. The college is a member of the North Carolina Community College System. It was most recently reaccredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) in 2016 to award associate degrees, diplomas, and certificates. Wilkes Community College is deeply proud of its history and heritage of student, business and industry, and community engagement, having offered its first one-year diploma program in the Spring of 1966, and expanding its offerings to Associate in Arts and Associate in Science degree programs to full-time students later the same year. Today the college's service delivery area includes Wilkes, Ashe, and Alleghany County.

The Main Campus of WCC is located in Wilkesboro, where the college offers a full complement of educational programs and workforce training, basic skills, community development services, student engagement and support, and cultural, entertainment and recreational activities. The main campus is also widely recognized for its beauty and aesthetics, multiple public amenities, and an internationally recognized music festival. In addition, WCC delivers to the residents of Ashe and Alleghany counties a rich variety of valuable, affordable, and convenient credit programs, job skills development courses, and personal and community enrichment activities.

The Ashe Campus, located in West Jefferson, delivers a mixture of academic programs, including college transfer, associate degree nursing, engineering technology, and business administration and accounting. Further, the Ashe Campus has multiple economic development partnerships, including The Ashe Workforce Center, individualized work with manufacturing facilities to meet their training needs, tailored and customized training, and a Small Business Center. With regard to workforce continuing education, courses are offered throughout the calendar year in such occupations as health sciences, public safety, and welding. Adult High School and High School Equivalency, Adult Basic Education, and English Language Acquisition courses are offered both on campus and across the community at convenient locations. The Ashe Campus is designated and operates as a full-service, multi-Campus location of WCC.

The Alleghany Center of Wilkes Community College is also deeply connected to its community. Students can access curriculum and workforce continuing education through multiple delivery modes in a variety of settings. Co-located with the Blue Ridge Development Center and County Public Library in Sparta, the WCC Alleghany Center also offers curriculum classes in business and accounting, as well as trades, criminal justice, and information technology programs. The Alleghany Center also provides a Basic Skills program that enhances literacy skills, and prepares individuals for the Adult High School Equivalency exam.

Wilkes Community College is staffed by a compliment of exceptional administrators, gifted faculty and selfless staff professionals, including 240 full-time and an additional 290 part-time faculty, and staff. These individuals served a 2022-23 academic year enrollment of 2,754 FTE, with an unduplicated headcount of 7,847 curriculum, workforce development, community education, and basic skills and college readiness students. The combined population of the three-county service delivery area of Wilkes, Ashe and Alleghany Counties is approximately 104,000.

The mission of Wilkes Community College is to “enhance the quality of life” for residents in both the service delivery area and throughout Northwestern North Carolina. This mission is accomplished through three targeted areas of focus. These focus areas include quality education and workforce development, encompassing basic skills, occupational, technical and pre-baccalaureate programs; economic development services to both public and private businesses and industry; and community development through a variety of services, cultural activities, and recreational opportunities. This comprehensive mission empowers students to improve not only their lives, but the lives of their families. It also facilitates a strong connection and bond between the college and community. The college’s vision, grounded in its mission statement, is clear: WCC aspires to be a learning-centered higher education institution and dynamic organization, preparing all learners for successful outcomes in a rapidly changing region and world. As such, WCC is guided by seven institutional values, including caring, community, education, excellence, innovation, integrity, and responsibility. The consistency between and pursuit toward accomplishing the college’s mission, vision, and values, requires a commitment by all employees to deliver unparalleled education and training programs and college transfer opportunities; intrusive and supportive student engagement and services; skilled, credentialed individuals to meet business and industry requirements; and literacy and employability skills for underserved or underprepared residents. The employees of WCC embrace this work with passion, dedication, and a willingness to serve the best interests of all students.

WCC currently operates under the college’s “Five-Year Strategic Plan: 2018-2023.” This plan has at its core five “Strategic Themes”, each of which has a well-defined goal statement and accompanying objectives. The strategic themes include learning, completion and transfer, labor market outcomes, community enhancement, and equity. The themes tie closely to efforts made throughout the institution and across the service area to prepare students for educational, career and personal success, to increase employment or transfer credentials, to meet regional workforce needs, enhance civic and community engagement, and provide equitable outcomes. The next president of Wilkes Community College will have an opportunity, in concert with the Board of Trustees, college and community, to collaborate in the development and implementation of a new Strategic Plan before the SACSCOC reaffirmation review in 2026.

The offerings of academic programs, college transfer opportunities, workforce development, community education, and collaborative high school partnerships, made possible by WCC’s remarkable faculty and professional staffs, correlate directly with the college’s mission, vision, values, and strategic themes, and reflect the college as an engaged, comprehensive, higher education institution. Academic programs at Wilkes Community College’s three primary locations include programs of study in such high-demand occupations as nursing, dental, respiratory, radiography and related health sciences; associate and applied engineering, electronics, industrial and computer engineering, and robotics and mechatronics; transportation, distribution, and coordination; information technology, and agriculture and natural resources technologies. The evidence of the exceptional quality of instruction and training delivered by WCC is the fact that the institution holds the following individual program accreditations:

- North Carolina Board of Nursing (NCBON)
 - Associate Degree Nursing
- American Dental Association Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA)
 - Dental Assisting Program
- National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation (NATEF)
 - Automotive Systems Technology
- Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (COARC)
 - Respiratory Therapy
- North Carolina Criminal Justice Education and Training Standards Commission
 - Law Enforcement Training
- North Carolina Fire and Rescue Commission
 - Fire and Rescue Training
- North Carolina State Board of Cosmetic Arts Examiners
 - Cosmetology
- Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP)
 - Medical Assisting
- North Carolina Office of Emergency Medical Services
 - Emergency Services

- North Carolina State Bar Board of Paralegal Certification
 - Paralegal Program

- The Joint Review Committee on Education in Radiologic Technology (JRCERT)
 - Radiography

Wilkes Community College has transfer partnerships with eleven-member institutions of the University of North Carolina System. These partnerships include four-year degree plans for community college students at Appalachian State, East Carolina, North Carolina A&T State, North Carolina State, UNC-Asheville, UNC-Chapel Hill, UNC-Charlotte, UNC-Greensboro, UNC-Wilmington, Western Carolina, and Winston-Salem State Universities. In addition to the four-year plans, WCC has special co-admission, promise, pathways, or engineering programs with several UNC System institutions, including “Aspire Appalachian”, the “ECU Pirate Promise”, and UNC-W’s “Pathways to Excellence.” Furthermore, WCC has also established excellent articulation agreements with the following additional institutions – East Tennessee State, Gardner-Webb, Lenoir-Rhyne, and Western Governors Universities. Moreover, the college has successfully secured “2+2” agreements for students to complete their Associate’s degree at WCC, then transfer into specific programs at partner institutions. Examples of 2+2 agreements for Associate in Applied Science graduates include accounting and finance, applied engineering technology, architectural technology, associate degree in nursing, building construction technology, collision and repair technology, criminal justice, early childhood education, and several health science programs. Collectively, these transfer partnerships enable WCC students to complete their baccalaureate degrees, thereby strengthening post-graduate employment opportunities in their chosen field.

WCC is especially proud of its expansive program of workforce development and community education. As one of the items of focus among the strategic themes, the goal of “Labor Market Outcomes” is to “increase student employability in career tracks aligned with local and regional workforce needs that offer growth opportunities and family-sustaining incomes.” Given the importance of this goal, the college has responded to market changes in career and job requirements by delivering services to individuals, businesses, and industries tailored to the requirements of employers in the service area. Courses range from basic skills to accelerated programs and certificates. Classes are offered at each of the college’s locations in Wilkes, Ashe, and Alleghany counties. In addition, WCC offers a robust array of online courses at times convenient for student participation.

A recent publication of a widely respected business journal recognized that among the top private companies valued in excess of \$500 million in the State, three are located within WCC’s service delivery area – two in North Wilkesboro and one in Jefferson. In addition, according to the North Carolina Department of Commerce, the top employment sectors in the three-county area are manufacturing, health care and social assistance, retail trade, transportation and warehousing, education, and public administration. In response to employer needs in these sectors, the college provides education and career training classes that prepare students for employment in both the private and public sectors.

The college enjoys healthy partnerships with area high schools and home schools that encompasses a very successful Career and College Promise (CCP) program and the Wilkes and Ashe Early College High Schools, and the Wilkes Community College Education Promise scholarship for qualified local high school graduates. The CCP program enables qualified high school students to dually enroll in community college courses at WCC. Courses are taught in the high schools, online and at the college's multiple campuses. Most recently, students at Alleghany County, Ashe County, East Wilkes, North Wilkes, Wilkes Central, and West Wilkes High Schools received certificates in information technology, welding technology, automotive systems, applied animal science technology, early childhood education, and numerous other program areas. Several high school students also received Associate in Arts (A.A.) and Associate in Science (A.S.) degrees, and a significant number of Home School High School students received certificates and diplomas. With regard to the Wilkes Early College High School, students are able to complete high school and a two-year degrees. Finally, the WCC Education Promise is a two-year, last dollar scholarship that enables qualified students graduating from high schools in Wilkes, Ashe, and Alleghany counties to get a degree from WCC tuition-free. This results in significant savings for students and their families.

The Role of the President

The President of Wilkes Community College is employed by and responsible to the Board of Trustees. The sixteen-member governing Board includes representation from each of the three counties served by the college. The Board follows the "Principle of Shared Governance" in fulfilling its governance and fiduciary responsibilities, and in its relationship with the President. The President serves as the college's Chief Executive Officer, and is required by the Board to provide leadership for the institution. The President also oversees educational effectiveness in all aspects of institutional operations. The President fulfills these expectations under the supervision of and consistent with policies adopted by the Board, and as may be established by the State Board of Community Colleges, or in compliance with state and federal statutes. In this work, the President provides clear and consistent counsel and analysis to the Board with regard to substantive policy issues, trends in higher education, operational risks and threats to the institution, and opportunities and challenges that require Board deliberation and action. Furthermore, consistent with the shared governance model, the President implements all policies, budgets, and other actions taken by the Board in its governance and fiduciary roles. The President demonstrates a commitment to the mission of the college through active internal and external engagement, and jointly with the Board, college, and community, builds a vision for future enrollment growth and financial sustainability and prosperity. It is also required that the President lead with an ethical, equitable and transparent approach in all manners of service to the Board, college, and greater community.

The President's primary responsibilities include developing, maintaining, and assessing the quality of academic programming, student support, and administrative services. The execution of these responsibilities collectively creates a climate that enhances student learning, growth, and personal development; stimulates innovative and engaging approaches to instruction by faculty; encourages professional staff to explore efficient service delivery models and processes; and maximizes opportunities for student achievement, employment, or transfer. Responsibilities also

include the administration of the institution in such a manner that enables it to fulfill its mission, vision, values, goals and objectives, as articulated in a comprehensive strategic plan. Such work should include both internal and external constituents throughout the service area. Presidential leadership in the recruitment, selection, and professional development of stellar faculty and exceptional professional staff and solicitation of their input in decision-making processes. This is critical to both institutional and student success.

The President also has an advocacy and ambassadorial duty to represent the interests of the college. This is accomplished through active participation with local, regional, state, and national elected and appointed officials. Interactions with these officials fosters trust in the good works of the institution, secures public and private resources to support the development and operation of the college, provides funding required to sustain instructional excellence, comprehensive student engagement and scholarship support, and visibly connects WCC with the communities it serves. To that end, the President engages educational, governmental, corporate economic development, and public service organization officials to explain the college's portfolio of services, and to offer its support. The President also appears before and speaks with community, civic and cultural organizations throughout Wilkes, Ashe, and Alleghany counties. In addition, the President serves as an ex-officio, non-voting member of the Board of Directors of the Wilkes Community College Foundation, promotes one of the premier music festivals in the country – MerleFest, encourages use of The Walker Center by external entities, and invites visitors to explore the beauty of the WCC Gardens. In effect the President is a visible and engaged representative of Wilkes Community College to any audience within and beyond the boundaries of the area it serves.

Opportunities and Challenges

The next President of Wilkes Community College will lead an institution that is proud of the myriad roles it has played in the educational, economic and workforce development, student success and employment, and community and civic well-being in Northwestern North Carolina. The college has historically served, and continues to meet the needs of students, business and industry, large and small communities, and all residents of Wilkes, Ashe, and Alleghany Counties. WCC has earned the respect of its governmental leaders, educational partners, private sector employers, alumni, benefactors, and peer institutions. The College hosts entertainment and cultural venues, a collection of the works of a North Carolina Poet Laureate, magnificent and diverse gardens, and healthy activity spaces and places for people throughout the region. Notwithstanding the accomplishments the college has enjoyed in enhancing the quality of lives of its people for almost six decades, the next President will have opportunities to collaboratively develop a new strategic plan, expand education and training options, explore new service delivery models, participate in the economic growth and development of the region, and attract new investments in the institution.

The Search Committee and Board of Trustees provided four public fora at the three principal locations of the college, and a survey instrument. for employee and community member input. The purpose of the forums and surveys was to enable them to express their views related to the opportunities and challenges that the college faces over a three to five-year period. The following are seen by both employees and community members as a sampling of those opportunities and challenges:

- **Increasing Student Participation Across All Enrollment Sectors In a Post Pandemic, Virtual Education Age** – WCC has a geographically large and primarily rural, multi-county service delivery area. The mission of the institution is to enhance the quality of life for all residents of Wilkes, Ashe, and Alleghany counties and throughout Northwestern North Carolina. Notwithstanding enrollment declines resulting from the pandemic, the college has been able to successfully attract young students through partnerships with area high schools and home schools. However, the college must compete with a robust employment market, strike a balance between virtual and on-campus modes of instruction, and withstand a declining population base. There is universal agreement throughout the college and community that enrollment growth is perhaps the biggest challenge, yet also an important opportunity for WCC. The opportunity lies in the college’s ability to communicate the connection between further education and degree completion; skills training, the attraction of new business and industry, and employability; and provide a gateway for attracting adult learners to return to any of the three principal locations and complete their degree or other credential. The next President must lead collaborative work within the college and across all three counties to increase both credit and non-credit instruction and completion.
- **Delivering Relevant and Rigorous Education and Training Programs** – The institution has worked strenuously to promote academic rigor and specialized training that prepares every student for successful outcomes in rapidly changing employment sectors. This work, highlighted in the college’s vision and values, is evidenced by multiple individual program accreditations. Both the challenge and opportunity for the next President of Wilkes Community College is to partner with faculty, staff, students, and the business community to both continue and bring forth for delivery new and relevant degree and short-term training programs that have transferrable and/or market value for students. It will require diligence in exploring program offerings that students seek, skills that employers and potential employers require, and are in high demand both within the service area and the region. This includes health sciences, trades, and technical programs. The work by the President, college leadership and faculty will require strengthening existing and initiating new education and workforce development partnerships, both locally and beyond the service area. It will also require a shared vision to match career opportunities with new program and training offerings.

- Strengthening Human Capital, Compensation and Professional Development Within the Institution** – The greatest asset of any institution of higher education, and the primary point of interaction and interface with students and the community, is its employees – faculty, staff, and institutional support personnel. Students that have completed their work at WCC, and either moved on to baccalaureate degree completion or employment, have been the beneficiaries of a dedicated faculty and staff that put the student’s and community’s interests at the forefront of their public service careers. Such work is often insufficiently compensated, sometimes gone unrecognized, or usually lacking in professional or personal development. As chief executive officer of Wilkes Community College, the President should have the capacity to advocate on behalf of the enterprise’s primary service-delivery professionals. Advocacy for employees includes equitable and regular compensation adjustments, acknowledgement and appreciation for services rendered, and opportunities to grow in professional skills and internal advancement. The next President of WCC has an opportunity to advocate on behalf of a well-credentialed and dedicated faculty and staff that embrace students with support and wrap-around services at every location of the college.
- Student Recruitment, Retention, Support and Completion** - The student population at the college reflects the region that the institution serves. Responses to opportunities for input by both internal and external constituencies about opportunities and challenges the institution faces over the next several years consistently included reflections about both the college’s culture and the importance of meeting the needs of students. There is a clear link in the minds of employees and community members between the college’s culture and serving students. The link perhaps reflects the fact that many college employees attended, and/or had family members that attended WCC. Employees noted that WCC has a family atmosphere, and as such they strive to serve and meet the needs of students throughout the rural, three-county area. Whether students are challenged by financial, family, transportation, childcare or learning issues, faculty and staff work to meet them where they are, and encourage them to persevere and complete their education and training to better their lives and the lives of their families. The next President will be greeted by a culture that puts students interests at the forefront. It will be important for the President to embrace the roles of student recruitment, retention, support, and completion – roles that drive the culture of Wilkes Community College.

**Ideal Characteristics of the President
Background, Experiences, and Personal Skill Sets**

The Presidential Search Committee and Board of Trustees, with participatory input from college employees, community members and citizens from across the three-county service area, identified and set forth below the ideal characteristics it seeks in the next President. These characteristics include mental faculties, personality traits and acquired skills needed to navigate the opportunities and challenges the college will face over the next several years.

The next President of WCC must be able to establish collegial, effective, and productive partnerships with the Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, students, and business organizations in each of the communities within Wilkes, Ashe, and Alleghany counties. The President will work closely with the Board to develop policies that best serve the interests of students and that enable WCC conduct and fulfill its mission. That important work requires critical-thinking skills and decision-making authority that takes into consideration input from the leadership team, internal and external constituents, advisory groups, and educational and economic development entities. The President should also understand the unique challenges many rural communities within the service area face, and make the institution's education and training, economic development, and cultural resources available to them. Therefore, the ideal characteristics include:

- **Approachable, Visible and Collaborative** - Has a welcoming and engaging personality that invites community leaders, residents, faculty, staff, and students to approach and connect with them. Be visible and have a regular presence at all WCC campuses and communities served by the college. Is a consensus builder that invites and acts upon input from internal and external constituencies. Engages students in multiple venues, including educational and training programs across campus, extra or co-curricular activities, and student recognition programs. Works easily and comfortably with governing bodies, education entities, policy-making authorities, and business enterprises.
- **Is Community-Minded and Develops and Builds External Relationships for the Benefit of the Students** – Understands the uniqueness of each of the counties served by WCC, including their specific needs and resource requirements for serving students in their communities. Is a hands-on leader with a demonstrated history of community involvement. Builds new and strengthens existing relationships with elected and appointed officials, community and civic leaders, service and volunteer organizations, non-profit groups, and public safety entities throughout the service area. Enjoys connecting and working with people and organizations that put the interests of students ahead of other priorities, that provide resources and services that enable the college to serve them, and advocate for student opportunities for further education, apprenticeships, and employment.
- **Provides Strong, Professional and Personal Leadership** – Has the ability and desire to work closely with the Board; jointly with college leadership, faculty, staff, and student organizations; and align with internal and external entities and individuals in policy development, procedure and operational protocols, innovative academic and credential programming, student support and success initiatives, and business and industry recruitment. Is inclusive yet decisive in decision-making, has the courage to make informed but difficult decisions, and is professionally experienced in leading complex organizations. Welcomes input when exploring new opportunities that advance the institution. Understands the complexity, breadth, and importance of higher education, especially community colleges, and the critical role it plays in the life of the communities it serves. Leads with strength, compassion, integrity, honesty, and character.

- **An Innovator With A Shared and Clear Vision of How the College Should Move Forward** – Must work harmoniously with a Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, and community members to develop a strategic plan and shared vision of the priorities, programs, and services the college will deliver, in view of the opportunities and challenges that face the institution. Is willing to incorporate innovative service delivery models and activities that don't add burdens to the institution; rather, that smooth pathways to student success, remove barriers to the college's open doors, and enable employees the freedom to implement best practices in their instruction and support services to the public. Facilitates institutional changes, not for the sake of making them, but agreed upon changes that enable the college to move forward with the development and implementation of new ideas and practices that have worked their way up within WCC, or have been imposed upon the college by external entities.

Qualifications

An earned doctorate from a regionally accredited higher education institution recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and a minimum of ten years of successful senior-level academic or executive administrative experience is preferred. In lieu of an earned doctorate, a candidate must possess a minimal credential of a master's degree from a regionally accredited higher education institution recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and a minimum of ten years of successful executive-level administrative, management, or academic administrative experience. For all candidates, experience in academic instruction and a commitment to student learning, delivery of student support and comprehensive educational services, knowledge of economic and workforce development, possessing financial and fundraising acumen, and public or private sector enterprise experience is preferred. Candidates must have demonstrated administrative or executive experience in a comprehensive, complex educational setting and/or private organization. Other qualifications include excellent oral and written communication skills, demonstrated leadership experiences, and working knowledge of an education accreditation process.