



Strategic Enrollment Management Plan

2025–2030

Year One Annual Report

(July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026)

and

Year Two Implementation Plan

(July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027)

Foreword by The President: *A Strong Foundation for Student Success*

At Wilkes Community College (WCC), we know that enrollment is about far more than numbers. It is about people—the students who choose to begin a new journey, the families who support them, the faculty and staff who invest in their success, and the communities and employers who depend on WCC to prepare a skilled and capable workforce.

Our Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) Plan provides a framework for bringing these responsibilities together in a thoughtful, coordinated, and data-informed way. Launched in July 2025, the five-year plan reflects our commitment to strengthening enrollment, persistence, retention, and credential completion while remaining firmly grounded in our mission, our culture of care, and our commitment to learner-centered excellence.

As we conclude the first year of implementation, I am encouraged by the progress reflected in this annual report. Year One was intentionally focused on building the foundation necessary for long-term success. We strengthened our enrollment infrastructure through the implementation of Element 451 (student engagement online platform), realigned our recruitment calendar, developed early data dashboards, and began more targeted outreach to prospective and current students. At the same time, we saw improvement in four primary Key Performance Indicators—FTE, persistence, retention, and credential completion (terms defined on p. 12)—while maintaining our total enrollment. These results provide important evidence that our collective efforts are moving WCC in the right direction.

Just as important, Year One demonstrated that SEM is not the responsibility of a single department or division. It is a college-wide commitment. Our plan calls for faculty and staff across the institution to work together, informed by data and strengthened by collaboration with K–12 partners, employers, community organizations, and other stakeholders. This shared responsibility is essential because every interaction we have with a learner—from recruitment and admissions to advising, instruction, support services, and completion—can influence that student's decision to persist and achieve a credential.

Of the 46 activities identified across our four SEM goals, six were fully operationalized during Year One, nine are actively progressing toward implementation, seven are planned for launch in Fall 2027, and the remaining activities will advance according to the five-year implementation timeline. This progress reflects both the ambition of our plan and the deliberate approach we are taking to implement it well.

As we enter Year Two, our focus will sharpen. We will complete the college-wide expansion of Element 451, develop targeted marketing campaigns for programs with lower enrollment, launch a college-wide Open House, strengthen early-alert processes to support persistence and retention, and address barriers affecting programs with lower completion rates. These efforts are designed not simply to attract more students, but to help more students find the right pathway, remain engaged, and reach their educational and career goals.

The SEM Plan is intentionally a living document. Our commitment is not to implement a plan and move on, but to continually examine what the data and, most importantly, our students are telling us. Monthly project leadership meetings, quarterly progress updates, and biannual reviews by the SEM Leadership Team will help us maintain accountability while giving us the flexibility to adjust strategies as circumstances and student needs evolve.

I am grateful to the faculty and staff who have embraced this work and to the many partners who contribute to the success of our learners. The progress documented in this report belongs to all of us. Together, we are building an enrollment culture that is proactive, collaborative, responsive, and centered on student success. More importantly, we are strengthening Wilkes Community College's ability to open doors, remove barriers, and help every learner move forward on a path of possibility and growth.



Dr. Mike Rodgers

President

Wilkes Community College

Year One Progress: *Primary KPI Dashboard*

Goal	Primary KPI	Baseline	Year One Result	Target
1. Increase total enrollment and FTE 10%.	Enrollment FTE	8,792 3,051 (2023-2024)	▼ 8,745 (-0.5%) ▲ 3,155 (3.4%) (2025-2026)	9,671 3,356 (2030)
2. Raise overall curriculum persistence to 85%.	Persistence Rate (%)	80.4% (Fall 2024 - Spring 2025)	▲ 0.2% to 80.6% (Fall 2025 - Spring 2026)	85% (2028)
3. Raise overall curriculum retention to 75%.	Retention Rate (%)	70.6% (Fall 2023 – Fall 2024)	▲ 1.2% to 71.8% (Fall 2024 – Fall 2025)	75% (2028)
4. Grow the credential completion rate 5%.	150% Completion Rate (%)	49.6% (2021-2024)	▲ 7.7% to 57.3% (2022-2025)	55% (2030)

Note: Calculated using NCCCS Data Dashboards and internal reporting for given years. All metric definitions, key terms, and acronyms are defined in the Glossary which can be found at the end of this document.

Year One Progress: *Secondary KPI Overview*

Applicant Conversion: Percent of applicants who enroll in the term for which they applied

68%

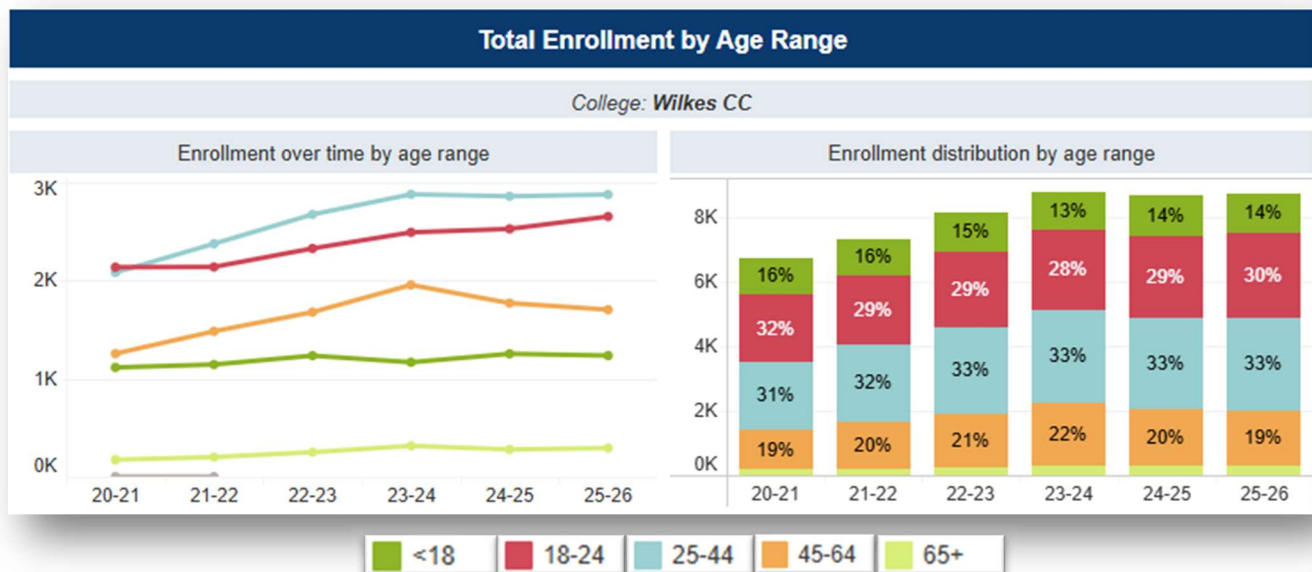
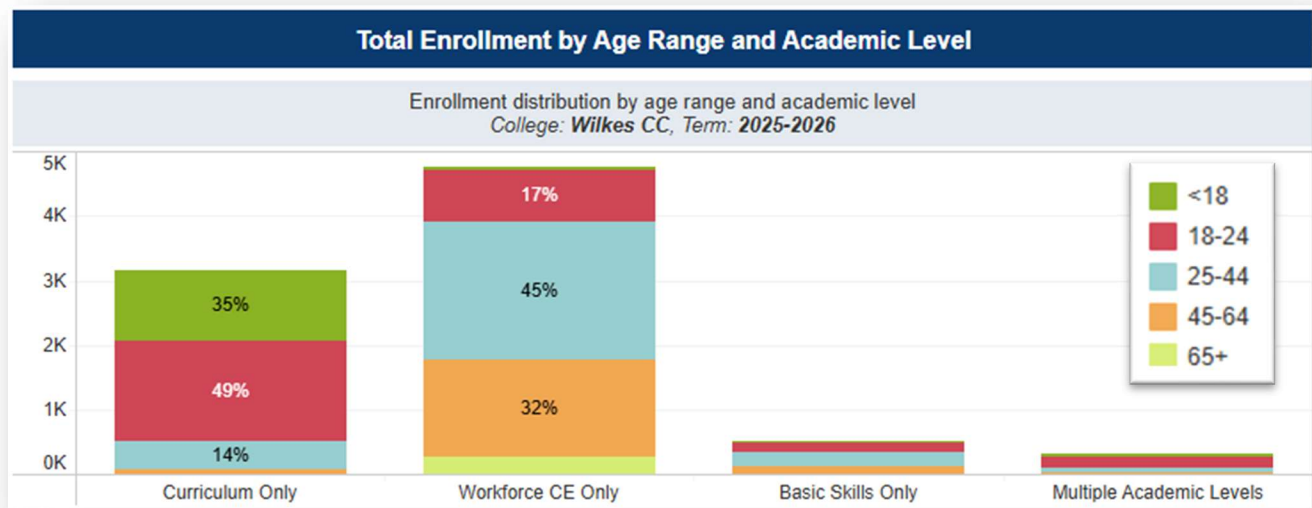
Fall 2025



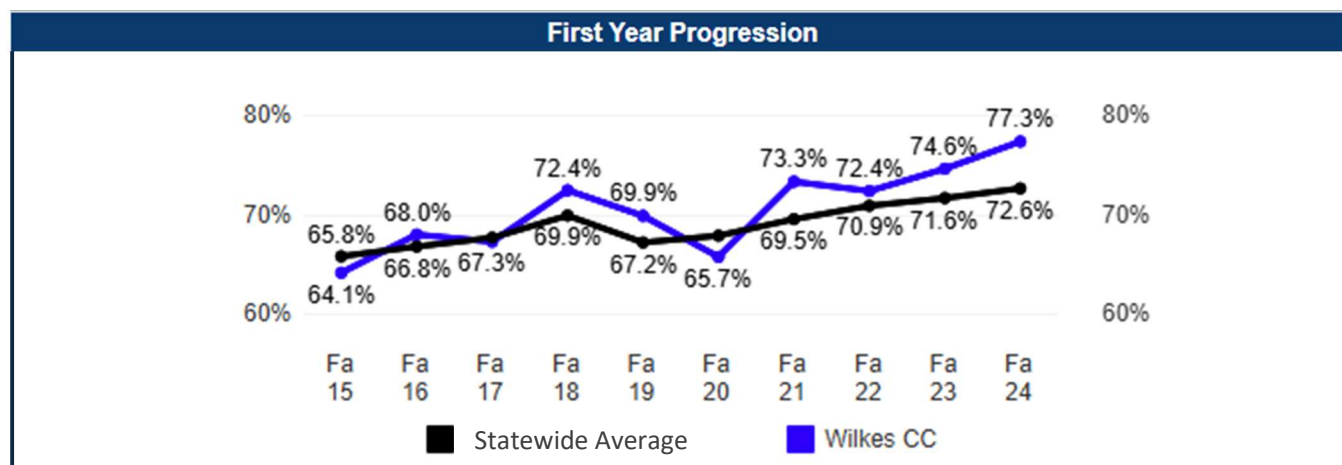
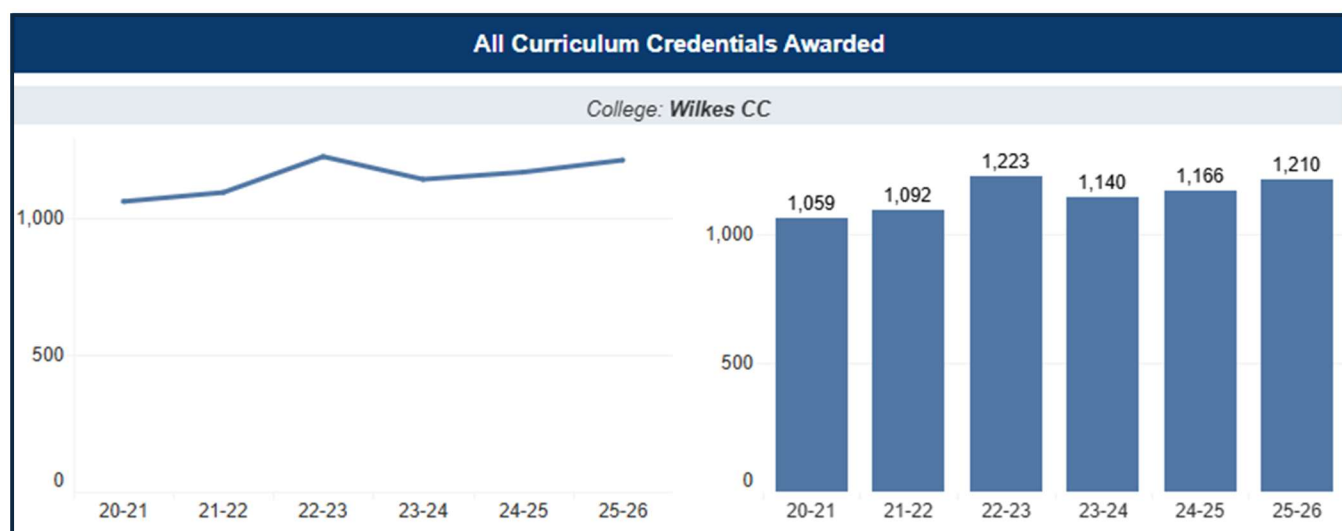
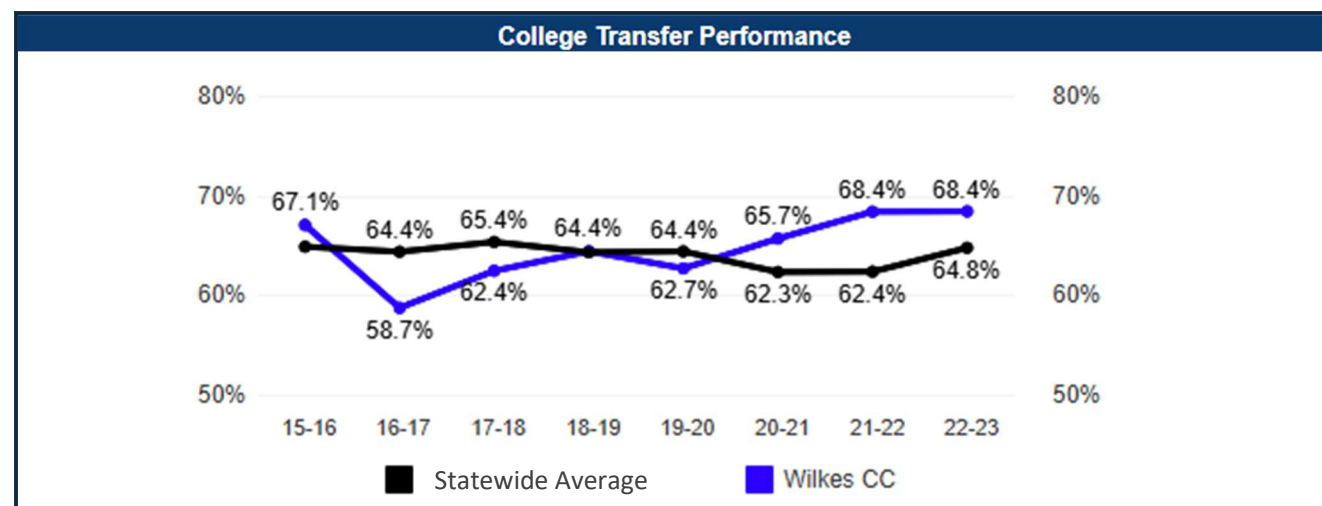
69%

Spring 2026

Enrollment by Age Range and Division



Source: NCCCS Data Dashboards

First Year Success: Percent first-time students who graduate or continue by subsequent fall**Curriculum Completion:** Sum of all awarded certificates, diplomas, and associate degrees**Transfer Success:** Percent of graduating exiters with an AA/AS/AFA/AE degree and non-graduating transfer program exiters completing 30 or more articulated transfer credits who enroll at a four-year university or college within two academic years following community college exit

Source: NCCCS Data Dashboards

Year One Activity Status Overview

The table below summarizes implementation status across all 46 activities as of the close of Year One (June 2026). Detailed status by goal, strategy, and activities follows in the next section.

Status	Number of Activities by Status
Operationalized in Year One (2025-2026)	6
In Progress – Continuing into Year Two (2026-2027)	9
Planned – Launching Year Two (Fall 2026)	7
Future (Spring 2027-Spring 2030)	24

The tables below detail each activity under the SEM Plan's four goals, along with its status entering Year Two. Activities marked “In Progress” and “Planned” represent the College's near-term implementation priorities; activities marked “Future” remain on the five-year roadmap and will be sequenced in future planning cycles as capacity allows.

GOAL 1: Increase Enrollment and FTE 10% by June 30, 2030

Primary KPI: Total Student Enrollment / FTE

Strategy 1.1 — Increase number of applications

Code	Activity	Year One / Year Two Status
1.1.a	Identify and tailor marketing messages to specific applicant demographic segments with low rates of post-secondary educational attainment	In Progress
1.1.b	Determine programs with low enrollment over the past 3 years to prioritize marketing efforts for those with available capacity	In Progress
1.1.c	Evaluate recruitment events calendar for target demographic segments and low enrollment programs	Operationalized in Year One
1.1.d	Utilize Element451's CRM capabilities to capture prospective student information, track engagement, and deliver timely, personalized communications	Operationalized in Year One

Strategy 1.2 — Convert a larger number of applicants to enrolled students

Code	Activity	Year One / Year Two Status
1.2.a	Operationalize viewing data from the Applicants Report Power BI Dashboard with clearinghouse data to identify conversion trends	Future
1.2.b	Evaluate application and enrollment process across divisions to streamline the learner experience (Curriculum, WDCE, CCR, CCP)	In Progress
1.2.c	Implement and expand Element451 to enhance tracking of student interest and enrollment across Curriculum, WDCE, CCR, and CCP	Planned

Strategy 1.3 — Increase % of high school students who enroll in CCP Pathways prior to graduation

Code	Activity	Year One / Year Two Status
1.3.a	Develop and market pathway cohorts related to student career goals	In Progress
1.3.b	Offer strategically aligned CCP courses in high schools to support WCC campus transition as soon as able	Operationalized in Year One
1.3.c	Expand CCP opportunities to eligible students	Future
1.3.d	Explore rotating select certificate offerings fall/spring, every other year, to promote student participation and onboarding options	Operationalized in Year One

Strategy 1.4 — Increase the number of high school graduates enrolling at WCC

Code	Activity	Year One / Year Two Status
1.4.a	Create a target campaign for early high school graduates	Future
1.4.b	Host fall College Connections event(s) to connect early high school graduates to admissions and WCC resources	Operationalized in Year One
1.4.c	Identify the ~40% of high school students who are not attending any post-secondary programs to implement outreach while promoting curriculum and WDCE options with scholarships	Planned

Strategy 1.5 — Increase the number of adult students enrolling at WCC

Code	Activity	Year One / Year Two Status
1.5.a	Develop a family-friendly, college-wide open house event	Planned
1.5.b	Incorporate bi-annual NC Reconnect marketing campaign into recruiting calendar	Planned
1.5.c	Implement Work and Learn tailored scheduling beginning with the Advanced Manufacturing Technician program by Fall 2026	In Progress
1.5.d	Investigate opportunities to enroll parents of CCP students	Future

GOAL 2: Raise Overall Curriculum Persistence to 85% by June 30, 2028**Primary KPI: Persistence Rate (%)****Strategy 2.1 — Determine persistence by program to inform best practices and intervention**

Code	Activity	Year One / Year Two Status
2.1.a	Review data to determine the highest 15% and lowest 15% persistence programs	In Progress
2.1.b	Consult faculty from both high and low persistence programs to understand unique challenges/solutions	In Progress
2.1.c	Review data to determine if certain characteristics consistently yield high/low persistence	Future
2.1.d	Implement best practices and intervention in low persistence programs	Future

Code	Activity	Year One / Year Two Status
2.1.e	Interview students from both high and low persistence programs to understand unique challenges/solutions	Future

Strategy 2.2 — Data-informed policy and learner-centered process improvements

Code	Activity	Year One / Year Two Status
2.2.a	Analyze stop-out data to identify possible WCC policy barrier amendments (e.g., cost, rigid policies, course delivery)	Future
2.2.b	Evaluate early alert workflows for academic and attendance issues to supply targeted student supports	Planned
2.2.c	Determine feasibility of constant contact or an assigned peer mentor to high-risk students	Future
2.2.d	Evaluate and identify resources to contact and assist learners with financial holds/barriers before and after purge	Future

GOAL 3: Raise Overall Curriculum Retention to 75% by June 30, 2028

Primary KPI: Retention Rate (%)

Strategy 3.1 — Determine retention by program to inform best practices and intervention

Code	Activity	Year One / Year Two Status
3.1.a	Review data to determine highest 10% and lowest 10% retention programs	In Progress
3.1.b	Consult faculty from both high and low retention programs to understand unique challenges/solutions	Future
3.1.c	Review data to determine if certain characteristics consistently yield high/low retention	Future
3.1.d	Implement best practices and intervention in low retention programs	Future
3.1.e	Interview students from both high and low retention programs to understand unique challenges/solutions	Future

Strategy 3.2 — Flexible, accessible, and easy to re-engage on-ramps

Code	Activity	Year One / Year Two Status
3.2.a	Determine how to increase flexible modalities (online, hybrid, in-person, CBE), 8-week courses, and year-round on-ramps to develop momentum by program	In Progress
3.2.b	Use Element451 to communicate and promote earlier and more flexible registration opportunities	Future
3.2.c	Determine feasibility of constant contact or an assigned peer mentor to high-risk students	Future
3.2.d	Provide retention training for select staff who directly support learners	Future

GOAL 4: Grow the Credential Completion Rate 5% by June 30, 2030

Primary KPI: 150% Completion Rate (%)

Strategy 4.1 — Leverage data tools to identify and support near-completers

Code	Activity	Year One / Year Two Status
4.1.a	Develop dashboard to track Certificates, Diplomas, and Associate degrees by program, CCR, CCP, and WDCE	Operationalized in Year One
4.1.b	Identify low completion programs (lower 10%) to evaluate barriers to completion using student and faculty surveys	Planned
4.1.c	Develop career and transfer exit planning for near-completers to enhance focus on goals after completion	Future
4.1.d	Identify near-completers using cohort tracking for targeted wrap-around services	Future

Strategy 4.2 — Accelerate and streamline credential pathways

Code	Activity	Year One / Year Two Status
4.2.a	Develop and promote stackable credentials and embedded certifications within low-completion programs to incentivize momentum	Future
4.2.b	Review Credit for Prior Learning process to ensure every learner receives credit for their transcripts and experience	Future
4.2.c	Review Labor Market data to determine available high-mobility careers for future Learn and Earn partnerships	Planned

Strategy 4.3 — Create measurements of success for WDCE offerings

Code	Activity	Year One / Year Two Status
4.3.a	Define enrollment, attrition, and course completion KPIs of success	Future
4.3.b	Operationalize review of KPIs to evaluate program success	Future
4.3.c	Process refinement of program review for WDCE	Future

Year Two Implementation Plan (July 2026 – July 2027)

Year Two implementation is organized around three tracks: (1) new activities launching in Fall 2026 or Spring 2027, (2) Year One activities continuing through Year Two, and (3) ongoing project governance. Lead areas below are suggested starting points and will expand into cross-departmental collaboration where needed.

Continuing Year One Activities

Activity	Description	Lead Area
1.1.a / 1.1.b	Continue tailoring marketing messages and prioritizing low-enrollment programs for Year Two	Marketing and Recruitment
1.2.b	Continue streamlining application/enrollment process across Curriculum, WDCE, CCR, CCP	Enrollment Management / WDCE
1.3.a / 1.3.b	Continue developing pathway cohorts and aligned CCP course offerings	CCP / Curriculum
1.5.c	Continue Work and Learn scheduling rollout for Advanced Manufacturing Technician program	Curriculum
2.1.a / 2.1.b	Continue persistence data review and faculty consults	Institutional Effectiveness
3.1.a	Continue retention data review by program	Institutional Effectiveness
3.2.a	Continue evaluation of flexible modalities and 8-week/on-ramp scheduling	Curriculum

Fall 2026 Launches

Activity	Description	Lead Area
1.2.c	Implement Element451 to enhance tracking across Curriculum, WDCE, CCR, and CCP	Enrollment Management / IT/ WDCE
1.4.c	Launch outreach to the ~40% of high school students not attending any post-secondary program	Marketing and Recruitment
1.5.a	Host the first college-wide, family-friendly open house event	Admissions and Student Activities
2.2.b	Begin evaluating early alert workflows for academic and attendance issues	Student Services / Instructional Support
4.1.b	Begin identifying low-completion programs (lower 10%) and distribute student/faculty surveys	Institutional Effectiveness

Spring 2027 Launches

Activity	Description	Lead Area
1.5.b	Incorporate NC Reconnect marketing campaign into spring recruiting calendar	Marketing and Recruitment
4.2.c	Complete Labor Market data review for high-mobility Work and Learn partnerships	Curriculum and Workforce Development

Governance and Review Cadence for Year Two

- Project Leadership and activity group leads will continue to meet monthly to schedule and implement activities with minimal disruption to operations, while also remaining aware of low-enrollment trends by program.
- Progress updates will be shared with department leads each quarter (October 2026, January 2027, May 2027, July 2027).
- The SEM Leadership Team will conduct biannual reviews (fall and spring) to assess progress.
- This report will be revisited at the close of Year Two (July 2027) to produce the Year Two Annual Report and Year Three Implementation Plan, continuing the plan's five-year continuous-improvement cycle.

Recommendations for Year Two

- Adding a monthly touch base meeting with current activity leads to assess current situation using data, track tasks toward activity completion, and provide support where needed to move forward.
- Continue to monitor and establish processes for Element451 adoption across Curriculum, WDCE, CCR, and CCP as a cross-departmental enabler for enrollment and persistence.
- Leverage braided funding sources to develop and refine programs to expand capacity in high-mobility pathways.
- Create a culture of connection and collaboration in supporting SEM efforts college-wide.

Conclusion

The first year of the Strategic Enrollment Management Plan established a strong foundation for long-term success. Positive movement in key performance indicators, the implementation of critical enrollment infrastructure, and the advancement of several strategic initiatives demonstrate that Wilkes Community College is making meaningful progress toward its enrollment, persistence, retention, and completion goals. These accomplishments reflect the collective efforts of faculty, staff, and community partners who are committed to supporting student success.

At the same time, the College must navigate a rapidly changing enrollment landscape. Across North Carolina and much of the nation, declining birth rates, shifting demographics, increased competition for learners, and a smaller pipeline of traditional-age high school graduates are expected to create ongoing enrollment challenges over the coming decade. Workforce demands, evolving learner expectations, and changing economic conditions will continue to influence how, when, and why students pursue postsecondary education. These trends reinforce the importance of a strategic, data-informed approach that expands outreach to adult learners, strengthens seamless pathways from secondary education, and creates flexible opportunities for students to access and complete credentials.

As the College enters Year Two, the focus will shift from foundation-building to expanded implementation, deeper use of data-informed decision making, and continued collaboration across departments. While significant work remains, the progress achieved during Year One provides confidence that the strategies outlined in this plan are moving the institution in the right direction. By remaining responsive to student needs, measuring outcomes, and sustaining a culture of shared responsibility, Wilkes Community College is well positioned to strengthen enrollment and create more opportunities for learners to achieve their educational and career goals.

Data Methodology

Baseline and Reporting Periods. Baseline and Year One periods in this report were selected based on most recent complete periods available when the Plan launched, rather than on a single common calendar. Persistence, retention, and completion are measured across multi-term or multi-year cycles, and complete figures are not available until each cycle closes. Baselines therefore reflect the most recent complete periods available when the SEM Plan launched in July 2025, and each indicator is compared only with its own baseline. As a result, baseline and Year One periods differ by indicator (see the Primary KPI Dashboard), and Year One results for retention and completion include cohorts that began before the Plan launched. These results are best read as leading indicators of trend.

Data Sources. Two sources informed this report. The first is the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) Data Dashboards, which provide standardized measures for enrollment, FTE, persistence, retention, completion, first-year progression, and transfer success, along with statewide comparisons. The second is internal reporting developed by the College in Power BI, using data drawn from Colleague, the College's student information system, and Informer, its reporting tool. Internal reporting supplements the NCCCS dashboards with more current, program-level, and applicant-level detail, such as applicant conversion.

Glossary

AA/AS/AFA/AE: Associate in Arts, Associate in Science, Associate in Fine Arts, Associate in Engineering.

Career and College Promise (CCP): A North Carolina dual enrollment program that allows eligible high school students to earn college credits while completing high school.

Certificate: A credential awarded for completing a short-term program focused on specific skills or workforce training.

College and Career Readiness (CCR): Programs that help adults improve basic academic skills, complete a high school equivalency credential, improve English language proficiency, and prepare for college or employment.

Competency-Based Education (CBE): A learning model in which students advance by demonstrating mastery of defined skills and knowledge rather than completing a set amount of classroom time.

150% Completion Rate: The percentage of students who complete their credential within 150% of the normal program length. For example, a student completing a two-year degree within three years would be counted as completing.

Curriculum program: A state-approved academic, transfer, or career-technical education program leading to a certificate, diploma, or degree.

Diploma: A credential awarded for completing a program of study that is typically longer and more comprehensive than a certificate program, but with less credits needed for an associate degree.

Element451: A Customer Relationship Management (CRM) online relational database platform used to support recruitment, communication, enrollment, and student engagement initiatives across the college.

First-Year Progression: The percentage of first-time, fall credential-seeking students who either complete a credential or remain enrolled in postsecondary education by the following fall term.

Full-Time Equivalent (FTE): A measure that converts student course hours into the equivalent number of full-time students and is used by the state to help determine college funding.

Key Performance Indicator (KPI): A measurable value used to track progress toward a strategic goal or objective. Examples in this SEM Plan include enrollment, FTE, persistence, retention, and credential completion.

North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS): The statewide system of 58 public community colleges that establishes performance metrics, reporting standards, and accountability measures used by community colleges.

NC Reconnect: A North Carolina state effort that helps eligible adults return to college or workforce training programs to complete a credential or degree tuition and fee free.

Persistence: The percentage of students enrolled in the fall term who continue enrollment into the spring term.

Post-Secondary Education: Any education pursued after high school, including certificates, diplomas, and college degrees.

Retention: The percentage of students enrolled in one fall term who are still enrolled in the subsequent fall term.

Transfer Success Rate: The percentage of community college graduates with an associate degree and non-graduating transfer program exiters completing 30 or more articulated transfer credits who enroll at a four-year university or college within two academic years following community college exit.

WDCE (Workforce Development and Continuing Education): Programs that provide short-term workforce training, occupational credentials, industry certifications, personal enrichment courses, and customized training opportunities.