

Community-Campus Partnership: A Major Initiative

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I am excited to let you know about a major initiative that has been developing for some time. The Community Campus Partnership (CCP) has been identified by many, including President Bowles, as one of the most exciting responses to UNC Tomorrow from across the entire UNC System.

CCP is a campus-wide project at Carolina to forge effective partnerships with economically distressed communities in North Carolina. We know that those communities face complex and interrelated challenges involving public health, education, economic development, leadership capacity, the environment, and many other issues. Unfortunately, most attempts to help distressed communities fail to address that complexity—projects typically are short-term, fragmented and narrowly defined. One result is that discrete projects may succeed in their narrow silos without leading to sustained progress for the overall community. Another result is that these disconnected projects fail to generate cumulative knowledge or momentum that can be leveraged to place the community on an upward trajectory. CCP will bring together multi-disciplinary teams of Carolina faculty, staff and students, along with community-based organizations, to meet these community challenges in a more comprehensive, holistic way. If you are thinking that this initiative is ridiculously challenging and audacious, I promise that you are not alone. That is one reason it is worth doing.

For the next two years, the School will lead a pilot of the CCP in Caswell and Lenoir Counties. The goal of the pilot is to determine whether colleagues at Carolina can partner effectively with one another, and with leaders and organizations in these two counties and our state and regional partners, to help address the challenges of these two communities in a concerted way. These counties were selected based on a number of factors including level of economic distress, experience working with Carolina, distance from Chapel Hill, and a willingness of local and regional leaders to work with us. Over the summer, several graduate students from schools across campus (including from our MPA program) worked full-time in each county under Will Lambe's supervision. These graduate interns built relationships and goodwill with leaders in each county, and they identified the following general priority areas for ongoing assistance—community and economic development, education and health.





Chancellor Thorp has asked the School of Government to take lead responsibility for the CCP. The original plan was for it to report to me as Vice Chancellor—this assignment to the School reflects Holden's view that we are Carolina's leading engagement unit. Earlier this year I assembled an executive committee of community and campus stakeholders to help design and roll out the CCP. Tyler Mulligan serves on the executive committee. It is clear that our local partners see community and economic development as a major focus of CCP. For that reason I have asked our Community and Economic Development Program to lead this pilot, and Will Lambe is serving as the project director.

I am sharing this project with you for several reasons. First, CCP is more than a technical assistance project. It is an opportunity to learn more about how the School and others at Carolina can work collaboratively—across campus and in communities—to tackle some of the most difficult problems facing North Carolina. Second, this initiative already has attracted nearly \$1 million in external funding to support Carolina faculty, students and staff in research, advising, training that responds to the priorities of the Caswell and Lenoir counties. This new funding has come from Chancellor Thorp, President Bowles, the North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center, and the Golden LEAF Foundation—and we plan to raise more money to support the ongoing work of CCP. These new resources give the School a real opportunity to experiment in how we expand and apply our scholarship and work collaboratively with others on campus. Finally, there will be a number of ways for you to become involved with the project. The CCP website and associated blog will go live next week and will eventually include a description of the process for connecting to specific projects and funding. In the meantime, if you have general reactions to CCP or thoughts about project ideas that may be relevant to the priorities of these two counties, please contact Will Lambe. We will talk about CCP and give a more detailed progress report at Monday's faculty meeting.

