

# Local community college builds on ties to university in new agreement

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Edgecombe Community College and East Carolina University leaders strengthened ties between the two institutions and improved educational opportunities for Twin Counties residents with a new bilateral agreement.

During a signing ceremony Monday in Tarboro, officials with both institutions touted the agreement that will enable ECC students to finish an associate degree in geospatial technology-geographic information and then seamlessly transition to ECU where they can earn bachelor degrees in either geographic information science and technology or in geography.

ECC President Greg McLeod and two ECU officials signed the agreement at the community college's Barnhill-Jenkins Center for Innovation.

"Anytime you can come together and either establish or grow a relationship with great partners like ECU, that's a wonderful thing to do," McLeod said.

McLeod noted that this is not the community college's first partnership with ECU.

The Pirate Promise Program provides a seamless transition for ECC students who complete an associate degree to transfer to ECU.

The information technology studies department also has an existing agreement that allows graduates with associate degrees in information technology-networking and security to transfer to

ECU as well.

Of this latest agreement between the two colleges, Trey Cherry, department chair for information technology studies at ECC, said geospatial technology encompasses digital maps, geographic information systems and satellite imagery.

At ECC, students have several options for earning credentials in the program, including attaining a college certificate, diploma or a two-year degree.

Certificates are also offered to high school students who are dually enrolled in the program.

"The program is unique in that it is the only two-year geospatial technology program in the state of North Carolina," Cherry said, adding that the program is offered 100 percent online.

Jeff Popke, chair for ECU's Department of Geography, Planning, and Environment, said students who hone their abilities in a particular field of geographic information systems will be equipped with the knowledge for a beneficial career.

"Skills in geospatial analysis and the ability to use and apply geospatial technology are in high demand across a high range of careers," said Popke.

"We know that the knowledge and skills students are acquiring in the program here are setting them up for long-term career success," he said.

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