



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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Halifax Community College Advocates for Student Success and Workforce Development at 2026 ACCT National Legislative Summit



Larry B. Perkins, Trustee, Dr. Elease Frederick, Trustee, Mary Mebane, Trustee, Dr. Patrena Benton Elliott, President, Halifax Community College, Lillie Pernell, Trustee, Shirley Webb-Owens, Trustee and Barbie Shearin, Trustee, in Senator Thom Tillis' office.

WELDON, NORTH CAROLINA – Halifax Community College (HCC) joined more than 1,200 community college leaders from across the nation at the 2026 Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) National Legislative Summit in Washington, D.C., held February 8-11, 2026, reinforcing its commitment to advancing student success, workforce development, and rural community growth.





Representing HCC at the summit were President Dr. Patrena Benton Elliott and Trustees Dr. Eleese Frederick, Barbie Shearin, Lillie Pernel, Mary Mebane, Shirley Webb-Owens, and Larry B. Perkins. Together, the delegation engaged in discussions with federal lawmakers and national leaders to advocate for policies that directly impact community colleges and the students they serve.

While on Capitol Hill, the HCC delegation met with members of North Carolina's congressional delegation, including Senator Thom Tillis, Senator Ted Budd, and Congressman Don Davis. During these meetings, the group emphasized key priorities essential to strengthening educational pathways and workforce readiness in rural communities.

"Our presence at the ACCT National Legislative Summit underscores Halifax Community College's commitment to being a voice for our students and our region," said Trustee Larry Perkins. "Community colleges play a vital role in preparing the workforce, and it is critical that we continue advocating for the resources and policies that allow our students to succeed."

The College's advocacy efforts focused on several critical areas, including expanding access to Pell Grants, particularly Workforce Pell for short-term, job-aligned training programs; strengthening workforce pathways through apprenticeships and employer partnerships; supporting Adult Education programs that lead to sustainable careers; maintaining and growing Carl Perkins Career and Technical Education programs; and addressing infrastructure needs that impact training capacity and student success.

Community colleges serve as a cornerstone of local economies, preparing individuals for high-demand careers in healthcare, public safety, skilled trades, information technology, and early childhood education. HCC continues to play a vital role in developing a skilled workforce that meets the needs of employers while creating opportunities for students to build meaningful careers close to home.

The delegation also expressed appreciation to Trey Lewis, Regional Representative for Senator Thom Tillis, for providing a comprehensive Capitol experience, including a guided tour and opportunities to engage with key staff members.

"Community colleges are the engine of America's workforce and local economies," added Dr. Patrena Elliott, President of HCC. "Through collaboration and advocacy, we are ensuring that Halifax Community College remains a driving force for opportunity, economic growth, and student success in our region."

To learn more about HCC's programs, visit www.halifaxcc.edu/what-we-offer.

Halifax Community College's Mission

Halifax Community College strives to meet the diverse needs of our community by providing high-quality, accessible and affordable education and services for a rapidly changing and globally competitive marketplace.

Media Contact: If you have any questions, please contact Vanessa Council at 252-536-7214 or e-mail vcouncil512@halifaxcc.edu.





Senator Thom Tillis and Dr. Patrena Benton Elliott, President, Halifax Community College, Meeting in his office on Capitol Hill.



Trustee Mary Mabane, Shirley Owens, Dr. Patrena B. Elliott, Trustee Barbie Shearin, Trustee Lillie Pernell, Trustee Dr. Elease Frederick, and Trustee Larry Perkins together at Capitol Hill.