

PRESS RELEASE



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Local Entrepreneurs Complete Blue Ridge Community College's 2025 Mission Acceleration Program

Featured Photo: Participants of the 2025 Mission Acceleration Business Accelerator stand together at the conclusion of the program in the Henderson County Chamber of Commerce. (Photo by: Rich Keen. [High resolution photos](#) for media use are available on Google Drive.)

HENDERSONVILLE, N.C. - On May 24, 15 local business leaders and entrepreneurs participated in the 2025 Mission Acceleration Business Accelerator program at Blue Ridge Community College, marking the successful completion of the program's sixth year. The program is designed to help for-profit, family-owned, nonprofit, and government organizations grow and thrive through strategic innovation and sustainable business practices.

Led by Blue Ridge Community College in partnership with the Henderson County Chamber of Commerce, this year's program offered a retreat-style experience that encouraged participants to work on critical aspects of their organizations. Through hands-on training and strategic planning sessions, participants gained tools to clarify their vision, improve decision-making, and prioritize high return-on-investment goals.

"This custom retreat program assists participating entrepreneurs in identifying new ways to innovate their businesses for growth and sustainability using industry best practices," said Mission Acceleration Executive Director Gary Heisey.

During the retreat, participants stepped away from daily operations to take part in guided sessions on strategic planning. They left the program with a clearer vision, a renewed focus on innovation, and practical tools to track performance and delegate routine tasks, better positioning their organizations for long-term growth.

The graduates included several standout Western North Carolina entrepreneurs and professionals who demonstrated a strong commitment to advancing their organizations and communities.

"The Mission Acceleration Program with Blue Ridge Community College has been the best investment I have made back into my business since we launched a few years ago," said Andrew Murkens, program participant and owner of 828 Biz Marketing. "Through the group retreat format, I was able to learn what components of my business are working, which areas need improvement, and workshop solutions with my peers. For anyone looking to capture a snapshot of where your business is today, plan for where you want it to go and have guidance on defining the steps necessary to get there; the Mission Acceleration program is for you."

Throughout the program, the participating Western North Carolina entrepreneurs and professionals demonstrated a strong commitment to advancing their organizations and communities. They included:

Aubrey Baptista
Shane Bragg
Cindy Bull
Georgia Case
Rhonda Chislaghi
William King
Christopher Maher
Danielle McCall
Rex McCall
Andrew Murkens
Karen Sanders
Alan Stepp
Rita Stepp
Erin Stevenson
Charles "Cre" Still

Mission Acceleration's upcoming Fall Retreat is scheduled for September 30, 2025. Interested businesses and organizations can learn more by calling (828) 694-1735.

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About Blue Ridge Community College

Blue Ridge Community College is a two-year, post-secondary institution that elevates the educational experience to prepare students for 21st-century success in the workplace or at four-year colleges and universities. Providing real-life, affordable, and accessible education, the College offers more than 200 degrees, diplomas, and certificates; more than 200 online courses; and fast-tracked job training. To learn more about Blue Ridge Community College, visit blueridge.edu.

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