



New Hanover Healthcare Career Partnership

**Building a Healthier Future for
New Hanover County, Together**

A Public Forum

September 22, 2026



Building a Healthier Future for New Hanover County Together

Sophie Dagenais
President & CEO



**New Hanover Healthcare
Career Partnership**

**CAPE FEAR
COMMUNITY
COLLEGE**



Umar Bowers, MD

Medical Director, Dawson Med
Chair, NC Health Talent Alliance, SEAHEC Region



SEAHEC

PART OF NC AHEC

**Text Questions with your name
and affiliation to:
910-756-5990**

*Questions will be answered
during the Q&A.*

THE PROBLEM

17,500

Projected Nursing Shortage in NC by 2033

CAPE FEAR
COMMUNITY
COLLEGE



UNIVERSITY of
NORTH CAROLINA
WILMINGTON

Laurie Whalin, PharmD, FACHE

Senior Vice President, Novant Health
and President, Coastal Region



Steven Hill, EdD

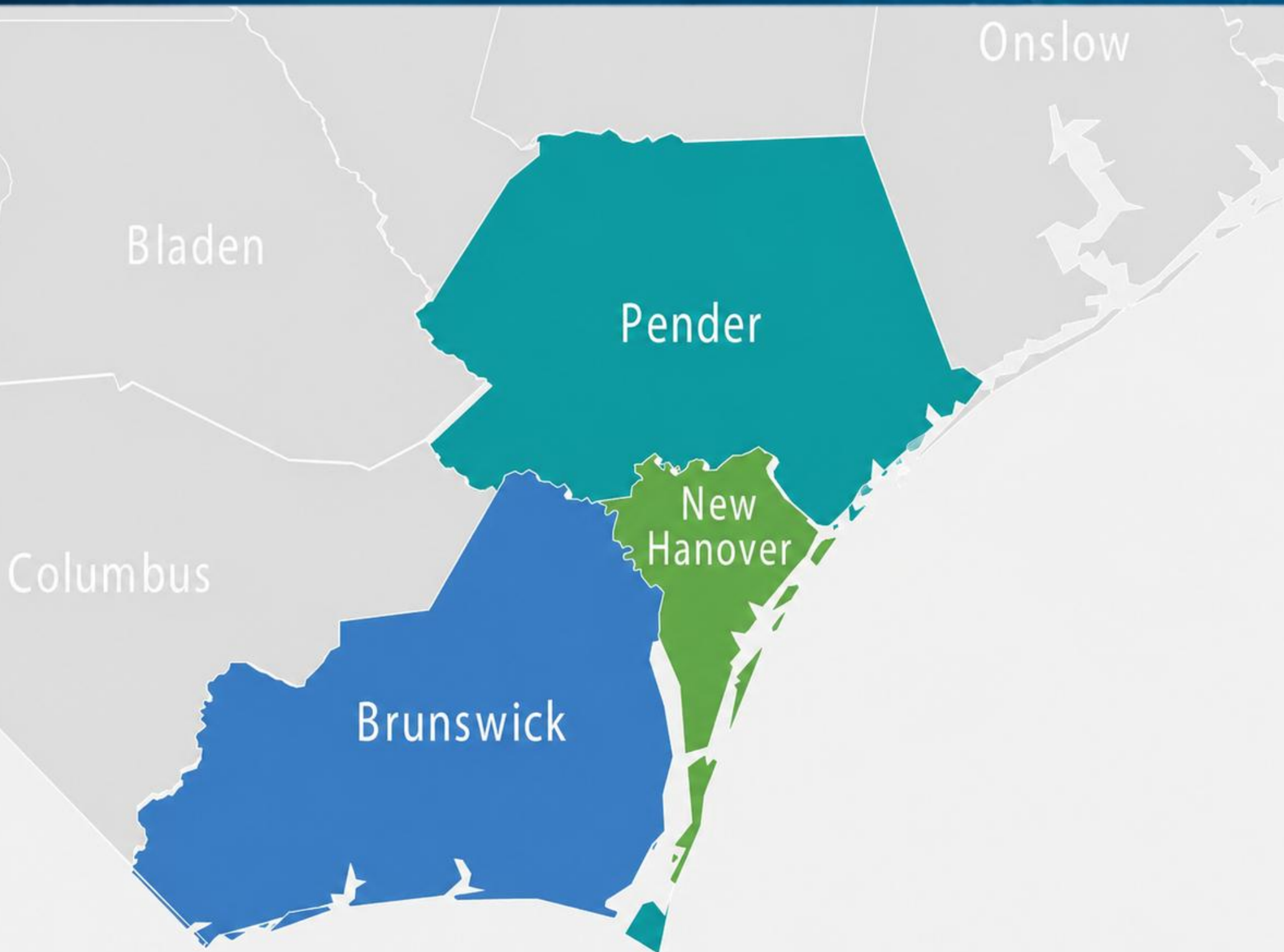
VP of Talent Development, Greater Wilmington Chamber of Commerce
South East Area Health Education Center (SEAHEC)



State of Nursing in New Hanover County

A Provider's Perspective

A GROWING REGION



+70K

Residents added
Three-county
region
2020-2025

+27.8%

Brunswick
#1 N.C. | #9 U.S.

+19.8%

Pender
#2 N.C. | #39 U.S.

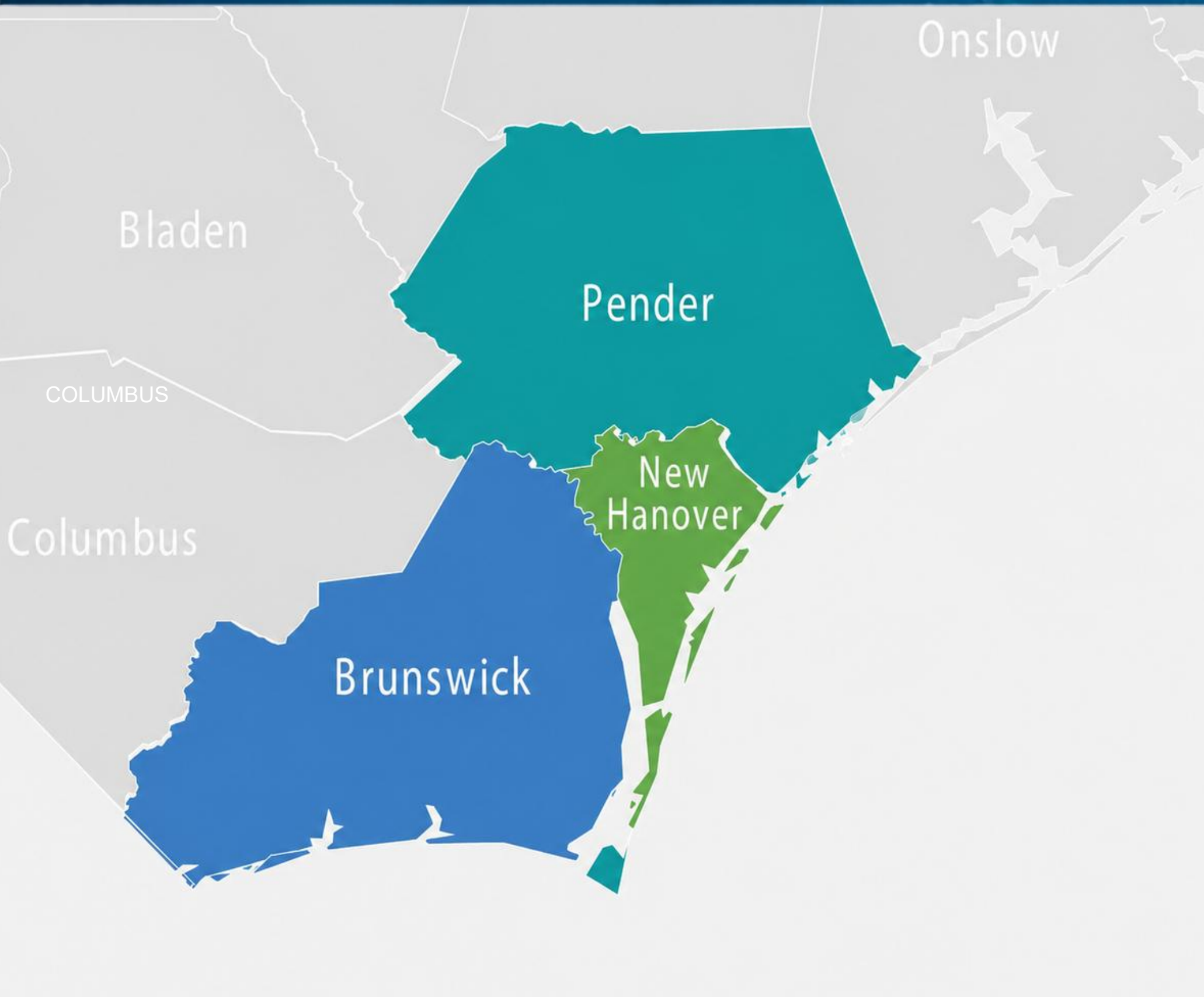
+16.6%

Combined growth
Over 4x N.C.
county median
(3.8%)

+9.0%

New Hanover
+20,255 residents

A GROWING REGION



126K

**Projected
Population
increase across
the Tri-County
Region between
2020-2030**

221K

**Projected
Population
increase across
the Tri-County
Region between
2020-2040**

NURSING SHORTAGE

267K

Projected nursing
shortage in the **United
States** by 2028

NC: 2nd

Highest share of the
nursing shortage,
second only to
California, by 2038

21%

Projected Nursing Job
Growth in **New Hanover
County** by 2030

HEALTHCARE

*Employer Sector in **New
Hanover County***

#1

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

250 *more*
registered nurses in New
Hanover County *in 2026*

...than in 2023.



Average time to fill nurse positions
in New Hanover County.

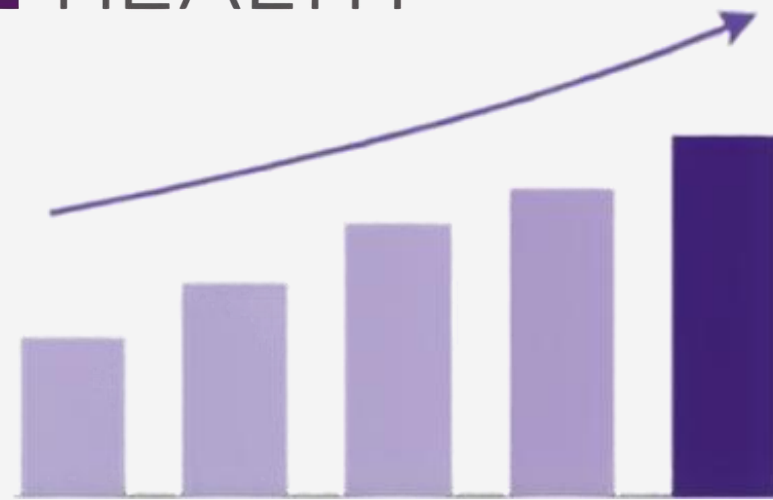
**27
Days**
2023



**24
Days**
2026

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

N ■ **NOVANT**
HEALTH



Between 2021 and 2025

Hired close to

1,200

REGISTERED NURSES

Year-over-year growth in RN
recruitment and workforce
expansion.

Reduced reliance on contract labor from approximately

450 **TRAVEL**
NURSES

at the height of the pandemic to fewer than

100 **TODAY**



representing less than 4%
of the nursing workforce
and below pre-pandemic
utilization levels.

~450



<100

Pandemic
Peak

Today



Novant Health's Coastal Region reported a

95.5%

RETENTION RATE

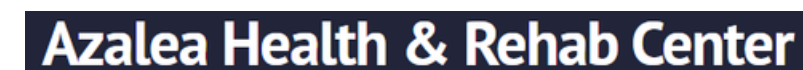
for registered nurses during
the first quarter of 2026.



Health & Human Services



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs





Novant has long
partnered with
UNCW and CFCC.

Today, that
collaboration
operates at a much
higher level.



Over the past two years, the
hiring and retention of nursing
graduates increased by

103%



70%





Susannah McDobens

New Hanover County Schools Student





HOW WE GOT HERE

Building the Future Pipeline



Career and
Leadership
Development
Academy
(entry point)



Health
Science
Academy



Health
Occupations of
America (HOSA)



Interdisciplinary
Health Professions
Summer Summit
(iHPSS)
(Summer camp)



Susannah McDobens
Student, New Hanover County Schools

Thank You

Susannah McDobens and all the students here
tonight from Cape Fear Community College and
UNCW, good luck!

HOW WE GOT HERE

Building the Pipeline

Mandy Mills, MS
Director of Career & Technical Education



1
High School in
2023



All 4 Traditional High
Schools in 2026



Every traditional NHCS high school now has a
certified Nurse Aide skills laboratory



**Nursing Fundamentals
capacity increased in 2026**

25%





HOW WE GOT HERE

Building the Pipeline

Health Science Academy

0

Students in
2023



38

Students in
2026



HOW WE GOT HERE

Building the Pipeline

Jack C. Watson II, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Health and
Human Services (CHHS)



K-12 through College Pathway Programs

1,278

Students Engaged
in 2026

UNCW Accelerated Bachelor's
Degree in Nursing

0

Students in
2023



11

Students in
2026

Try Teal: CFCC → UNCW

0

Students in
2023



43

Students in
2026



Source: The University of North Carolina Wilmington



HOW WE GOT HERE

Building the Pipeline

Coastal Community Healthcare Fellowship

0

Students in
2023



60

Students in 2026

*The 2026 Cohort
is full!*



94%
of the fellows
stayed in NHC



100%
pass rate on
NCLEX exam
within 3 months
of graduation



HOW WE GOT HERE

Growing the Pipeline



MSN

MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN NURSING

260+

STUDENTS ENROLLED



Prepares graduates for nurse educator roles in
healthcare organizations and academic institutions.



DNP

DOCTOR OF NURSING
PRACTICE

280+

STUDENTS ENROLLED



Prepares DNP graduates to provide
patient care across the lifespan.



Source: The University of North Carolina Wilmington



Source: The University of North Carolina Wilmington

HOW WE GOT HERE

Building the Pipeline

Mary Ellen Naylor, EdD, MHA
Dean, Health & Human Services



Wrap Around Supports:

- Housing stipend
- Tuition assistance
- Exam assistance
- Emergency assistance
- Drop-in childcare
- Clinical and Educational Supplies

94%

*of students receiving supports **continue to progress or have graduated from the program.***



Source: Cape Fear Community College



HOW WE GOT HERE

Building the Pipeline



Associate Degree Nursing

103

Students in 2023



200

Students in 2026

Practical Nursing

30

Students in 2023



60

Students in 2026

Nurse Aide

92

Students in 2023



237

Students in 2026

Licensed Nursing Graduates

92

(ADN and PN)
Students in 2023



203

(ADN and PN)
Students in 2026

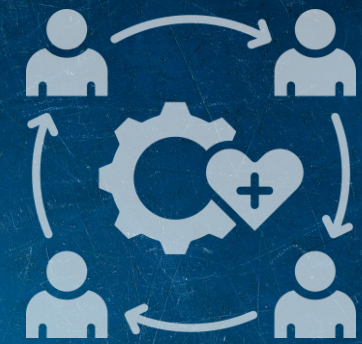


CAPE FEAR
COMMUNITY
COLLEGE



HOW WE GOT HERE

Growing the Pipeline



77.5%
***Increase in
nursing
enrollment***

Academic Years 2023-2028



CAPE FEAR
COMMUNITY
COLLEGE



SIMULATION LABS



Roberto Ramirez, BSN, RN

(Cape Fear Community College, UNCW)

Novant Health, RN
Coastal Horizons, Director



HOW WE GOT HERE

Building the Pipeline

Natalie English, CCE, IOM
President & CEO



Career & Leadership Development Academy

40

Students in
2023



1,724

Students in
2026



994

participants
expressing an
interest in
healthcare





5TH GRADE

A student is introduced to healthcare through career fairs and Future Health Scholars.



MIDDLE SCHOOL

A student can explore healthcare through Career and Leadership Development Academy, Health Science Academy, and healthcare-focused camps.



HIGH SCHOOL

A student explores healthcare and finds their path.
A Student earns a credential.



COLLEGE

A student earns a credential.



GRADUATE

A graduate enters the workforce.



HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

Skilled professionals care for our community.



BETTER PATIENT EXPERIENCE

A healthier community for all.



New Hanover Healthcare
Career Partnership

Building a connected system.

Q&A

**Text Questions with your name
and email to:
910-756-5990**

Thank You



Roberto Ramirez
Community Advisory Council Member
The Endowment