

February 2, 2008

PRESS RELEASE

N.C. Eastern Region Announces Successes and New Initiatives

Kinston, NC —

On January 29, at the TransPark Center in Kinston, North Carolina's Eastern Region Development Commission (NCER) and N.C.'s Eastern Region Chambers of Commerce introduced an aggressive program, designed to create growth and expand capacity. At the 2008 State of the Region event, regional leaders spoke to a crowd of nearly 300 people at a two-hour program detailing progress over the past year, and the region's vision for the future. Topics of discussion were workforce training and education, legislative issues that affect the area, a regional progress report and announcements.

Speakers and comments included:

- Mr. Calvin Anderson, Chair, North Carolina's Eastern Region Development Commission, reviewed the streamlining of the board and the vital partnerships in the region.
- Dr. Scott Ralls, President Craven Community College and President-designate, NC Community College System, discussed the new 3 Rs: Rigor, Relevance and Relationships. "We must compete worldwide against other countries whose students are hungry for education and whom are far more technology-focused than our students. (For instance 50% of Chinese degrees vs. 16% of American degrees are in engineering.) More males, and particularly African-American males, must graduate from college."
- Dr. Steve Ballard, Chancellor East Carolina University said, "ECU has a catalytic role in leading, connecting and transforming education in our state. Key areas are: 1. Workforce development – in conjunction with community colleges; 2. Commitment to health sciences, the fastest growing sector in the country; 3. Business assistance, with the new office of economic development at ECU; 4. Partnerships with the Biotech center, Wachovia and others; 5. Focus on educational programs that keep undergrads in the area; and 6. Medical innovation."
- Dr. Ted Morris, Associate Vice Chancellor, Office of Economic Development ECU stated, "It's about being a place talented people want to come to. Important issues include marketing the region's capacity for creativity and innovation, creating jobs we are educating people for; targeted marketing of regional assets (such as our numerous labs relating to coastal stability); selling the region as a laboratory and production location; and promoting our vibrant, livable communities.
- The Honorable William Wainwright, Speaker Pro Tempore, NC House of Representatives, discussed the military impact on the economy of the region, such as \$5 billion in construction over the next 5 years in military installations, and the need for our state and general assembly to be military-friendly.

- The Honorable Charles Albertson, Member North Carolina Senate and Co-chair Ag. Response Team, emphasized the need for “going green.” “By 2017 we should be able to produce 12% of our liquid fuel needs from farm refuse and animal waste. We must be better stewards of our resources and be a friend to our fellow man.”
- The Honorable Joe Hackney, Speaker, NC House of Representatives reviewed the highlights of last year’s legislative session: •Passing strong ethics laws, •charting a centrist course, •investing in education at all levels – 50% of budget, •grants based on merit to prevent losing kids from 8th grade and up, •heritage tourism focus and •green jobs and recycling. He noted our fiscal stability (AAA bond rating) and the surplus for emergencies. The legislature is doing a transportation study to address the needs of the State and the Eastern Region.
- Mr. Al Delia, President and CEO, North Carolina’s Eastern Region Development Commission spoke on the state of the region and activities over the past year. The new Vision Plan includes: 1. Knowledge capacity, 2. Innovation, 3. Global image and competitive location, 4. The Third Place (quality of life), 5. Connectivity, and 6. Governance. “The keys to our success are partners and unity – critical in making change,” he stated. Grants of \$275,000 were awarded yielding 200 jobs and \$33 million in investments. The Region gave the Military Growth Task Force a \$100,000 grant to assist with 61,000 new marines and related civilians moving to the areas surrounding the USMC at Camp Lejeune in Onslow County, and the Marine Corp Air Station at Cherry Point in Craven County – with a request for additional Federal help. Expanding venture capital avenues is a charge for 2008, along with a related \$300,000 investment from the NCER board.

Mr. Delia also announced the NCER Board’s desire to improve the workforce in the region with a commitment of up to \$750,000 over three years. The funds will be disbursed in response to proposals that will be solicited from throughout the region beginning in February/March 2008.

A new GIS-based website for tourism was announced for late spring, which will be the first in the nation, with a goal of visitors staying longer in the region: visitnceast.com (.org and .net)

“We will be a world leader in Biotech in the future,” Mr. Delia emphasized and described a new BioEast Alliance of 5 counties with strengths in the bio arena. On February 21 a strategic plan will be unveiled.

- Mr. Joel Butler, Chair, North Carolina’s Eastern Region Chambers of Commerce ended the meeting with the need to develop regional legislative priorities and the importance of regional support for chamber initiatives. “We must work together to achieve the goals we have discussed here today,” he urged.

North Carolina’s Eastern Region is a 13-county partnership established by the General Assembly to promote economic development in Nash, Edgecombe, Wilson, Lenoir, Pitt, Wayne, Greene,

Duplin, Jones, Onslow, Craven, Pamlico and Carteret counties. The Region encompasses almost 7,000 square miles and nearly one million residents.

Chambers of Commerce of North Carolina's Eastern Region is a coalition of business persons and General Assembly members from throughout the 13-county Eastern Region of North Carolina, convened and unified through the local Chambers of Commerce in the region.

For more information, visit www.necast.org

Or contact Albert Delia, President and CEO

North Carolina's Eastern Region

3802 Highway 58 N

Kinston, NC 28504

Phone: 800-474-8499

Fax: 252-523-9017

E-mail: delia@nceast.org • www.necast.org