

## BCC one of fastest growing community colleges in the state

By Sam Hickman

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**BOLIVIA** — Brunswick Community College is one of the fastest-growing community colleges in the country, recent data show.



*Photo contributed*  
Brunswick Community College  
President Susanne Adams

Community College Week, an online publication that provided enrollment data in a December 2014 report, placed Brunswick Community College as the 18th-fastest growing community college with an enrollment under 2,500 students in the United States, Sharon Thompson, BCC's vice president of academic affairs, announced at the BCC Board of Trustees regular monthly meeting Thursday, Feb. 19.

Thompson said several factors contribute to the school's rapid growth, but none are more important than focusing on the big picture.

"I think it's really about paying attention to our ecosystem," she said. "It's the engagement that our faculty, staff, college employees have with our students and our prospective students here on campus and in this community."

BCC has experienced record growth under president Dr. Susanne Adams' leadership.

"It uplifts our campus community who have worked so hard to support the growth," Adams said in a follow-up interview. "In a small rural college, individuals wear many hats. Our faculty and staff are always juggling priorities and needs. Our growth reaffirms their hard work. It is an exciting time to be a leader and an exciting time to be part of this campus community. It's not an easy time. We

want to maintain that growth. Maintaining is always the challenge."

BCC was the top school for enrollment growth in the 2013-14 school year among all 58 colleges in the state community college system, Thompson said. The college's 56 percent growth from 2006 to 2013 ranks in the top 10 in the North Carolina Community College system.

Adams said the college's growth allows it to demonstrate three of the five BCC core values: opportunity, excellence and community.

"As we grow, our budget grows," she said. "We're able to offer more opportunities in the form of new programs and course offerings to the citizens of Brunswick County. We're also able to add new equipment to our current programs in order to add that extra margin of excellence to our instruction."

Thompson added, "These numbers are staggering. Looking at these numbers brings us all joy. They know that the more connections they make, the more likely folks are to succeed. Engaging the community and meeting current and prospective students where they are are both factors that contribute to our growth. When it comes to the fundamental issue, it's all about the people."

Thompson expects those numbers to rise in coming months as students register for second eight-week course registration ending Tuesday, March 3. Those students can also register during a late registration period March 5.

"I'm the most optimistic person you'll ever meet, but I do expect our enrollment numbers to rise," she said. "We're growing into our own. Great things are yet to come in terms of enrollment."

Thompson stressed it's important for BCC faculty members to build relationships with students and prospective students.

"I think all of those things are all part of that bigger ecosystem of who we are and what we are," she said. "I think everyone plays a vital role in helping those students succeed. Whether it's the college transfer program, applied sciences or students entering the workforce, we're all about the students. That's why we're here. I get excited about this."

The growth of BCC also means growth in the number of community partnerships that are formed to help sustain the positive trend, Adams said.

"It is this staff that continually goes above and beyond," she said. "I think that it only grows our excitement to do more. It makes us excited. The partnerships that are realized out of growth are just amazing. It's good to grow, the key is to maintain growth. That is always the challenge."

Thompson also said numbers will continue to rise as the school has developed an articulation agreement with North Carolina Wesleyan. The school also plans to sign an agreement with the University of North Carolina at Pembroke on March 12 that involves BCC's Health and Fitness Science programs.

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