

Eastern Shore Community College



ESCC NEWSLETTER

FOUNDATION

Fall 2025/Winter 2026



President Dr. Minus welcomes students at Club Day.



Local 10th graders explore careers that use drone technology with Sentinel Robotic Solutions at Career Day.

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The mission of the ESCC Foundation is to make a positive difference in the lives of all Eastern Shore citizens by helping to provide the best possible learning and teaching environment.

President Dr. Daryl Minus's First 100 Days: Excitement, Optimism, and a Bold Future



Dr. Daryl Minus

I am filled with excitement and optimism upon completing my first 100 days as president of your Eastern Shore Community College. Since starting July 1, my commitment has been to **Listening, Learning, and Connecting**. I have met with school superintendents and leaders; major donors and supporters; industry leaders at Virginia Space Authority, NASA Wallops, Eastern Shore Rural Health, Riverside Shore Memorial Hospital, A&N Electric Cooperative, ESVA Chamber; elected officials; and a host of partners and representatives from businesses and non-profits across the Shore. I have reviewed the college's strategic plan, data trends, Virginia Community College System strategic goals and priorities, and the great work currently underway to reposition the college's student enrollment trajectory. I have also engaged in meaningful conversations with our Advisory and Foundation Boards, dedicated faculty and staff, and our amazing students. Without a doubt, **ESCC is in a strong position**, which is a testament to the tremendous community support we enjoy.

Through this process of listening, learning, and connecting, three overarching themes have emerged. These themes embody the collective insight and aspiration of our community, defining the most significant opportunities to amplify ESCC's impact, advance student success, and secure the college's long-term viability. They represent an initial framework for further dialogue to shape ESCC's strategic priorities.

The three key themes are:

1. **Create a sustainable future.** This involves centering innovation as a core function and optimizing our organizational structure, human capital, and operational efficiencies.
2. **Further calibrate academic and high-demand workforce program alignment.** We will do this by reimagining strategic partnerships and leveraging local/regional collaboration to address talent pipeline shortages, enhance program relevancy, improve educational attainment, and expand opportunities for economic mobility.
3. **Further position the college to meet the needs of our current and future learners.** This includes institutionalizing a culture of care and embracing the evolving role of technology in teaching, learning, and student engagement. It also includes sustaining accessible, flexible pathways for students to learn and earn meaningful credentials.

Our Shared Commitment to Transformation

I am energized about our shared commitment to our YES! culture and the work we will do together to advance the college's mission. Over the next year, ESCC stakeholders will collectively explore ways to "refresh" our current strategic plan and **create a road map for the college's future**.

Our collective belief in ESCC as an anchor of transformation in our community supports a foundation for us to deliver future-focused education and workforce programs that accelerate opportunity and **enhance economic mobility for every learner**. I am honored to work alongside committed stakeholders across our service area and to lead ESCC into the future. Together, our future is bright!



Dr. Minus with ESCC's 2025-2026 Johnsen Presidential Scholars: Dannya Hernandez, Sara Godwin and Damienn Citro. Not pictured: Alyson Bowden. In addition to maintaining a minimum 3.4 GPA as full-time students, Johnsen Scholars serve as student ambassadors, host campus tours and events, and assist with our food pantry.



**Hospitality ~ Transparency
Inclusion ~ Accountability**



Information technology students with instructor Chevelle Mason (fourth from L)

Update from Vice President of Academic Affairs, Workforce, and Student Services: Dr. Ramzi Ockaili



Dr. Ramzi Ockaili

Under President Minus's leadership and with the dedication of our faculty, staff and partners, we're building clear, workforce-aligned pathways that move students from dual enrollment to credentials to degrees and good jobs on the Shore. We're expanding stackable programs in health, trades, IT/cyber, Uncrewed Aircraft Systems, and engineering; embedding paid internships with local employers; and scaling wrap-around supports such as advising, tutoring, on-site credential testing, and targeted aid. Our teams are using real-time data to improve course success and shorten time-to-completion, while Caring

Campus practices ensure every student feels known and supported. In Year 2 of Achieving the Dream, we're executing our Growing Our YES! plan across advising, instruction, and student services. Together, we are transforming opportunity into tangible outcomes – higher completion, stronger transfer, and a skilled talent pipeline that fuels regional growth and brighter futures for Eastern Shore families.

Enrollment, Student Success, and Caring Campus

Under the leadership of Amy Shockley, Director of Student Services, ESCC continues to gain momentum in student engagement and persistence. Fall 2025 enrollment reached 858 students with 515 Full-Time Enrollments, surpassing last year's total and signaling continued growth. To sustain this progress, Advising and Registration Rallies and extended service hours are helping working adults and families stay connected. Faculty outreach and Caring Campus practices – small, student-centered actions – are creating a more welcoming environment that empowers first-generation and adult learners to thrive. Together, these efforts demonstrate ESCC's enduring commitment to student success and community transformation.

Health Sciences: Quality, Capacity, and Access

Our Certified Nursing Assistant program is now aligned under Academic Affairs to streamline quality and expand capacity, and ESCC is an on-site Credentia testing location, reducing travel barriers and speeding time to credential for local employers. Nursing graduates continue to move quickly into Shore healthcare roles, supported by clinical partners and enhanced simulation.

Aerospace & Engineering: From Vision to Launch

A transformative \$1.8M donation of two fixed-wing drones was made possible through the efforts of ESCC's longtime partner Sentinel Robotic Solutions. ESCC, Old Dominion University and other regional partners are also advancing

new pathways in aerospace technology. These collaborations enable the design of high-impact curriculum and applied research experiences that connect students to the rapidly evolving industry needs. The A.S. in Engineering begins Fall 2025, supported by a \$1.25M gift.

Workforce, Adult Education & Career Services:

One Door, Many Pathways

Under the leadership of Scott Hall, Director of Workforce Development, ESCC reached new milestones this year with 1,167 workforce enrollments in short-term training, GED, and ESL programs that lead to high-demand local jobs. The Title III Contact2Career initiative continues to strengthen links between coursework and employment through tutoring, mentoring, and paid work-based learning. Led by Hayleigh Bradbury, Career Services Center manager, the college has served 601 students, facilitated 80 internships, and built a thriving mentor network, surpassing multi-year benchmarks and transforming how students connect learning to career success.

Looking Ahead

Eastern Shore Community College is charting a bold path forward. With record enrollments, expanding workforce programs, and transformative gifts supporting initiatives like Engineering and Uncrewed Aircraft Systems, the future of ESCC has never been brighter. Our donors and regional partners are investing not just in programs, but in people, expanding opportunities for students to learn, earn, and stay on the Shore. Together, we are building pathways that empower today's learners and strengthen our region.



The donation of \$1.8 million in Uncrewed Aircraft Systems (UAS) equipment will help ESCC expand its UAS programs and support business, research and government opportunities on the Eastern Shore.

Career Services Center: Pathways to Opportunity



Students explore careers in healthcare with Riverside Shore Memorial Hospital.



Welding instructor Lloyd Wagar explains how welding can strengthen metal joints.

ESCC's Career Services Center opened in March 2024 to assist students and alumni with resume and cover letter creation, interview practice, and to connect them to mentors, internships, and employment opportunities. Career Services Manager Hayleigh Bradbury and Career Services Coach Heather Coleman provide career assessments to help students plan their academic and career paths. Since its creation, ESCC students have secured at least 80 jobs, work-based learning experiences, or internships. The Ratcliffe Foundation has funded 12 interns through a generous grant. Career Services also hosts Lunch & Learn opportunities to connect local employers with students and to explain career pathways.

On October 17, ESCC's Career Services Center hosted ESCC's 2nd Career Adventure Day. This event introduced over 400 10th graders from Northampton High School, Arcadia High School, Nandua High School, Chincoteague High School, Tangier Combined School, and Broadwater Academy to employment pathways on the Eastern Shore with 20 organizations participating. Students engaged in STEM activities with aerospace partners and explored healthcare fields through hands-on activities with Riverside Shore Memorial Hospital and Eastern Shore Rural Health. Sentinel Robotics Solutions provided drone demonstrations; ANEC Electric Cooperative, local law enforcement and public safety agencies demonstrated use of vehicles and equipment; and students engaged in birdwatching and conservation activities with The Nature Conservancy.

The purpose of this four-hour event was to promote awareness of career pathways and to connect students with resources at the college to help them begin taking steps towards pursuing their interests. This event was generously funded by the DRANREF Foundation and supported by numerous local businesses and agencies.

ESCC Football Club Kicks Off a Promising Future

ESCC is proud to announce that its new soccer club, ESCC Football Club, is making significant strides toward becoming a full-fledged collegiate soccer program.

Launched in Spring 2024 when ESCC FC began recruiting students, the club team has evolved into a competitive outlet for students to continue their soccer careers. The team is competing in the Somerset County Parks and Rec Adult League, facing off against other community college clubs and similarly skilled teams. With more wins than losses, the club is gaining momentum as they head into playoffs.

Weekly practices are held throughout Fall on campus and are open to all students. The team's home field is located at Randy Custis Memorial Park, in partnership with Shore Soccer League, where new lighting installation is underway to support evening matches and future tournaments.

Leading the program is Coach Chase Baxa, a Northampton High School teacher and championship-winning coach. Baxa played at Geneva College and led Northampton High School Boys to state titles in 2023 and 2025. He was named Virginia Coach of the Year for Class 1 in 2023, 2024, and 2025, and currently serves as Academy Director at Rush Academy Peninsula, formerly Shore FC.

"I believe in a few short years ESCC FC will be able to compete with other community college programs in the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA)," said Coach Baxa. "The talent and passion for soccer on the Eastern Shore is incredible, and I'm honored to help showcase it as well as provide pathways for our athletes to pursue higher education and job training in our Shore community."

ESCC FC represents a growing commitment to student recruitment and engagement at Eastern Shore Community College, and the future looks bright for this dynamic new program.



ESCC Football Club finished their inaugural season with a 3-2-1 record under Coach Baxa (top R).

Building Bright Futures in Health Care



Practical Nursing students follow a rigorous full-time program towards licensure as LPNs.

With our aging population, early retirements among healthcare professionals, and the ongoing need for skilled workers in our region, ESCC is committed to preparing students for in-demand careers in health care.

ESCC offers a variety of stackable credentials and flexible pathways tailored to meet the needs of aspiring health professionals. **The Medical Assisting Certificate Program** includes two Career Studies Certificates (CSCs): Medical Billing & Coding and Medical Office Specialist, and the majority of this program is online. Students gain hands-on experience in EKG, phlebotomy, patient preparation, and pharmacology, along with administrative skills like scheduling and insurance billing. Graduates are eligible for NCCT certifications, opening doors to employment in clinics, hospitals, and long-term care facilities.

For those pursuing nursing, ESCC's **Practical Nursing (PN)** and **Registered Nurse (RN)** programs are rigorous and rewarding. The PN program, a competitive full-time track, prepares students to become Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) through the NCLEX-PN exam. The RN program, offered in partnership with Tidewater Community College, leads to NCLEX-RN eligibility and a career as a Registered Nurse.

Additionally, the **Nurse Aide – Extended Care CSC** equips students with foundational skills for Certified Nurse Aide (CNA) roles, while **Workforce Development programs** like Healthcare Fundamentals, Phlebotomy Certification, and EKG Certification offer fast-track options for immediate employment.

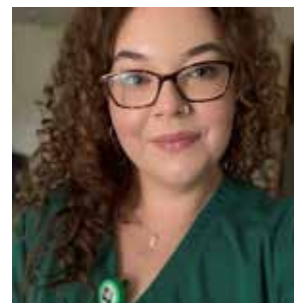
The Caramine Kellam Nursing Classroom simulates a hospital room where students practice on computerized mannequins. ESCC partners with Riverside Shore Memorial Hospital and Eastern Shore Rural Health for students to complete clinical requirements with local providers.

Sydney Parks, a current RN student, describes her transformative journey. “My healthcare journey started with ESCC’s Medical Assisting Program in 2021,” she shares. “After graduating as a Nationally Certified Medical Assistant, I

completed the LPN program and earned my license. Now, I’m in my second semester of the LPN-RN Bridge Program. Each step prepared me to take on greater responsibilities and paved the way for me to become a Registered Nurse.”

With growing demand for skilled healthcare workers—especially in our rural underserved area—ESCC is committed to guiding students toward meaningful careers. Advisors work closely with each student to chart a personalized path, ensuring that every learner has the tools and support to succeed. ESCC Foundation scholarships assist students along their journey.

With multiple entry points and opportunities to advance, ESCC’s health care programs are helping meet the needs of our community and providing well-paying careers in a growing profession.



RN student Sydney Parks got her start in ESCC’s Medical Assisting Program.

Science Under the Surface: Interns Investigate Paint Additives



Biology interns Ethan Galea and Nathan Jones, working with Dr. Alex Foxworthy (center), cut drywall disks for laboratory experiments to investigate an important question: *could antifungal additives commonly used in paints actually make microbe-related problems worse in water-damaged buildings?*

While industry has focused on these additives’ effects on fungi, new research suggests bacterial growth in water-damaged buildings may be equally—or more—detrimental to human health. Ethan, Nathan, and fellow intern Charlotte Lacey (not pictured) are testing whether these widely used additives may have unintended consequences for building safety and human health and whether they may warrant closer scrutiny.

Project Horizons/Discovery: Empowering Students



PH Students use a Secchi disc to measure water turbidity

This fall, *Project Horizons/Discovery* students embarked on inspiring college tours to Virginia Wesleyan University, William & Mary, and ESCC's Back to School Bash, gaining firsthand insight into campus life and academic opportunities. A hands-on field trip to UVA's Coastal Research Center in October further enriched their experience, sparking interest in careers in coastal ecology and environmental science.

With support from Project Discovery of Virginia and individual donors, Project Horizons/Discovery currently serves 55 students in grades 7-12 from across the Eastern Shore, including fifteen seniors. These students—many of whom will be the first in their families to attend college—receive academic, social, and cultural enrichment designed to help them thrive. The program also offers a direct pathway to ESCC, where students are guaranteed two years of free tuition, fees, and books through ESCC Foundation.

One example of the program's impact is Zh'Asia Hester, a Project Horizons student who graduated from ESCC's rigorous twelve-month Practical Nursing Program in May. At the 2025 Pinning Ceremony, Zh'Asia was

honored with the "Best Bedside Nurse/Manner Award" and praised her empathy, compassion, and unwavering dedication to client-centered care. Zh'Asia has since passed the NCLEX examination, earned her Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) credential, and is now employed at a long-term care facility in Maryland.

Program Coordinator Miriam Cornwell reflects, "It is exciting to see how students in our program have matured and learned to advocate for themselves as they explore pathways into higher education and job training. Project Horizons/Discovery will keep opening doors and transforming lives, and it is privilege to be part of their journey."



Zh'Asia Hester with Coordinator Miriam Cornwell at the 2025 LPN Pinning Ceremony where she was honored for "Best Beside Nurse/Manner".

Dr. Minus and his family received a warm welcome from the Eastern Shore community at a September event hosted by ESCC Foundation.



Dr. Daryl and Monica Minus with children Daryl Jr. and Loren.



Attendees greet Dr. Minus.



Ms. Jane Cabarrus and the Community Unity Coalition welcomed Dr. Minus to the Giddens Do Drop Inn in October where he gave a keynote address on the state of the college and his priorities as president.



Melfa Monarchs Chess Club: Where Strategy Builds Community

What started with a simple question after class —“Is there a chess club at ESCC?”—has grown into a vibrant hub of connection and competition. Founded in 2013 by student Sean Thierfeldt and English Instructor Christina Duffman, the Melfa Monarchs Chess Club was born from a desire to help students find community through the timeless game of chess.

Thanks to generous support from the Landsberger Foundation and the Eastern Shore Chess Association, the club is flourishing. It welcomes players of all skill levels—from curious beginners to seasoned competitors—and it continues to help students grow in confidence, camaraderie, and critical thinking.

Weekly meetings in the Neville Student Lounge are filled with laughter, learning, and lively debates—sometimes about pop culture, sometimes about the Sicilian Defense. Under the guidance of Chess Club Coach Dr. Mark Nuckols and Chess advocate Ralph Lopez, students learn notation, tactics, and tournament prep.

“Chess teaches more than strategy,” explains Ms. Duffman, the club’s Faculty Sponsor, “Students are learning sportsmanship and how to anticipate opponents’ moves by thinking three or four steps ahead. Playing chess with people from all walks of life teaches the art of patience and listening.”

On October 11, ESCC hosted the Dr. James Shaeffer Chess Tournament, named in honor of the college’s recently retired president. Eighteen players competed, including guests from Virginia Beach and Pocomoke. Players were grouped into three skill-based quads and a six-player Swiss bracket. Zach Webb took first place overall, while his brother Luke Webb won Quad Three. A special shoutout goes to Abby Fluhart, competing just weeks after learning the game.



From first-time players to seasoned strategists, the Melfa Monarchs are growing in confidence, community and critical thinking, one match at a time.

All Melfa Monarchs can become US Chess Federation-certified at no cost, opening doors to regional competition. The club plans to host USCF-rated tournaments each spring and fall—turning ESCC into a true chess destination on the Shore.

Student Aaron Brown (above far right) shares, “I like the competition around chess because everyone can enjoy the game together and learn how to improve. Chess Club provides some of our most engaging times on campus.”

LEAVE A LEGACY FOR FUTURE STUDENTS

The ESCC Legacy Society encourages all who support the College’s mission to use their financial and estate planning to help us maintain the affordable access and educational excellence that help our students succeed. When you include ESCC Foundation in your long-term planning, you are making a difference for generations to come.

Foundation scholarships are critical in helping students reach their full potential and achieve fulfilling careers.

If you have included ESCC Foundation in your estate planning, or would like details on how to do so, please contact Patty Kellam at (757)789-1749 or pkellam@es.vccs.edu. Info is also posted online at: es.vccs.edu/about/escf-foundation/



Kourtney Broadwater maintains a strong GPA as a working full-time LPN student, pictured with Nursing instructor Tonya Martin. Kourtney’s goal is to complete the bridge to the RN program.



We invite you to show your support by giving online here or in the enclosed envelope to help all students access ESCC programs.



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SAVE THE DATE!

Sat., Feb. 28

10am - 2pm

Indoor

Winter Art Walk

Featuring

Local artists & crafters,

Live music, & food



**COME TO OUR
OYSTER ROAST
FUNDRAISER**

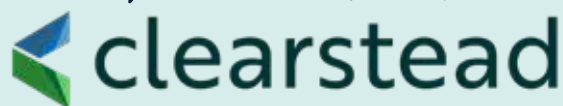


ESCC Foundation will host its annual Oyster Roast with all proceeds funding scholarships and supportive services for students such as tutoring, healthy snacks, and emergency aid.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 30, 2026 FROM 5:30 TO 8:30 PM

Join us on campus for live music, local seafood roasted and steamed on site, chowder, BBQ, sides, craft beer, wine and more, plus a fun silent auction! This is our primary fundraising event, and sponsorships are available.

Thank you to major sponsor:



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