

Eastern Shore Community College

ESCC NEWSLETTER

FOUNDATION

Summer 2026



Arcadia High School Dual Enrollment student Yazmin Gomez and family celebrate her Uniform Certificate of General Studies from ESCC.



Electronics student and PTK Honor Society member Arron Brown with President Daryl Minus



Jacqueline Perez-Vasquez and Areli Gonzalez-Lopez completed ESCC's Nurse Aid Program and are now enrolled in Practical Nursing.

Foundation Board

Jeremy McLean
PRESIDENT

Rachel Kellam
VICE PRESIDENT

Shannon Satterwhite
TREASURER

Dr. Daryl Minus
ESCC PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY

Wayne Bell, Jr.
Ami Butta

Paula Dombek

John Fiege

Jahiem Fisher

Mozella Francis

Dr. Ron May

Roberta Newman

Finale Norton

Marcus Riley

Monique Roske

Javon Smith

Peter Turlington

Marilyn Williams

Butch Williamson

Ray Wood

LIAISON ESCC COLLEGE BOARD

Foundation Staff

Patty Kellam
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dena Lyons
FOUNDATION ASSISTANT

Miriam Cornwell
PROJECT HORIZONS COORDINATOR

(757) 789-1749
es.vccs.edu/about/escc-foundation

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.

Update from President Daryl Minus



Dr. Daryl Minus

The 2025–2026 academic year reflected a period of purposeful progress for Eastern Shore Community College. Guided by my commitment to listen, learn and connect, three strategic themes emerged that now guide our work: **creating a sustainable future, aligning academic and workforce programs with high demand fields, and designing our college to meet the needs of current and future learners.** Together, these themes provide a clear framework for decision-making and investment that will shape the next iteration of ESCC’s strategic plan, developed collaboratively with our college community and stakeholders.



Forward momentum defined my first year as President. The college advanced with intention, aligning strategy with purpose and translating vision into action. Enrollment increased in both Fall 2025 and Spring 2026, and **ESCC served 1,800 students** across academic and workforce programs. Our college realized a **3.2% increase** in annual full time equivalent (FTE) enrollment over the previous academic year, signaling continued growth. ESCC proudly awarded **232 degrees, certificates, and career studies credentials.** Our May Commencement Ceremony welcomed more than 1,000 attendees and featured an inspiring address from Jeannette Edwards, CEO of Eastern Shore Rural Health System, Inc. and a proud ESCC alumna. The college also made meaningful progress on key goals within the Virginia Community College System Strategic Plan, particularly in credential attainment, adult learner enrollment, and FastForward program completion.

ESCC prioritized revenue diversification through more than \$4 million in grant submissions since July 2025. Additionally we secured significant external investments, including a competitive \$788,700 GO Virginia Per Capita Grant to expand unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) initiatives. New and emerging programs in **engineering, healthcare, artificial intelligence, aerospace, and advanced manufacturing** directly respond to regional workforce needs. We continue to expand strategic partnerships with colleges, universities, and industry leaders, reinforcing ESCC’s role as a talent pipeline and economic driver for our region.

ESCC’s Career Services Center exceeded its five year service goals, supporting hundreds of students through career



Dr. Minus congratulates Jean Morrens Geffard for earning his Phlebotomy Technician certification.

guidance, internships, and job placement. (Details on p. 4) We advanced our use of technology and artificial intelligence across teaching, learning, and operations, enhancing student engagement and strengthening institutional readiness for the future.

We continue to engage students in clubs and activities, including Fall club soccer led by championship-winning Coach Chase Baxa.

Throughout all of this work, we remain focused on removing barriers, fostering a culture of care, and ensuring that every student is supported from enrollment to graduation and beyond. Our continued emphasis on organizational excellence and accountability strengthened compliance, enhanced institutional effectiveness practices, and expanded investments in data infrastructure.

Collectively, these achievements reflect a year of shared effort and forward progress. This success belongs to our faculty and staff who lead with excellence, our students who trust us with their aspirations, and our donors, businesses and community partners who invest in our college’s future. With a solid foundation and forward momentum, ESCC is positioned to move confidently into its next chapter, expanding opportunity, strengthening regional impact, and fulfilling its mission for the communities we serve.



President Minus awards Jazyiah Byrd a Career Studies Certificate in Nurse Aid.

Update from Vice President Dr. Ramzi Ockaili



Dr. Ramzi Ockaili

As Eastern Shore Community College looks ahead to the 2026–2027 academic year, we continue to build on the remarkable momentum generated across our academic, workforce, and student success initiatives. Our focus remains clear: expanding educational opportunities, strengthening workforce pathways, and ensuring that students have access to high-quality programs that lead directly to meaningful careers and continued education.

One of the strongest indicators of our progress is **sustained enrollment growth.** ESCC has experienced increases across multiple student populations, reflecting the confidence that students, families, employers, and community partners place in our college. This momentum is a testament to the dedication of our faculty and staff and the growing recognition of ESCC as a vital driver of educational and economic opportunity in the region.



**Hospitality ~ Transparency
Inclusion ~ Accountability**

Our workforce development programs continue to grow as we expand training opportunities in advanced manufacturing, healthcare, transportation, skilled trades, and emerging technologies. A notable example is our **GO Virginia-funded Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) initiative.** Under the leadership of Workforce Director Scott Hall and in partnership with Sentinel Robotic Solutions, this initiative will create new opportunities for students while positioning ESCC as a center of excellence for UAS training and workforce innovation.

Student success remains at the center of everything we do. Through our work with **Achieving the Dream**, and under the leadership of Student Services Director Amy Shockley and her team, ESCC continues to strengthen advising, engagement, and support services that improve retention, completion, and student outcomes.

The future is bright at ESCC. With growing enrollment, expanding programs, strong partnerships, and an unwavering commitment to student success, we are creating new opportunities that will benefit the Eastern Shore and our region for generations to come.

Among our most exciting developments is the launch of the **Associate of Science in Engineering degree in Fall 2026**, made possible through a lead gift of \$1.25 million in 2025. Designed to meet growing demand for engineers and technical professionals, this transformative program will provide students with a strong transfer pathway to four-year institutions while supporting workforce needs in aerospace, advanced manufacturing, and emerging technology sectors.

Additionally, ESCC is helping shape the future aerospace workforce through the **Aerospace Academy of the Eastern Shore (AAES)**, an innovative partnership with Old Dominion University, local school divisions, NASA Wallops, and industry partners. As part of ODU’s Lab School network, AAES provides students with early exposure to aerospace and engineering careers while creating seamless pathways into ESCC’s emerging Aerospace Technician program, Engineering transfer program, and other STEM opportunities.



*Aeorspace Academy of the Eastern Shore
Open House at ESCC*

ESCC will launch a Dental Hygiene program in January 2027 in partnership with Germanna Community College and Eastern Shore Rural HealthSystem, Inc. This collaboration will provide local students access to a high-demand healthcare profession without leaving the Shore while helping address critical workforce shortages across our region. Healthcare workforce development remains a major priority as we continue expanding nursing education opportunities and strengthening pathways into healthcare careers.



*Associate degree graduates Roxana Velazquez and
Verenice Gonzalez with Dr. Minus and Dr. Ockaili*

Alumni Success: Lucas Antunes' Journey Through ESCC to NASA

A native of São Paulo, Brazil, Lucas Antunes developed a passion for technology at an early age. His father, an electrical engineer, encouraged him to build computers from spare parts, explore the Linux operating system, and eventually write his own software.

After moving to Virginia's Eastern Shore in 2016 and enrolling at ESCC as a Ratcliffe Scholar in 2020, Lucas excelled in the college's technical and trades courses. While attending classes, Lucas secured a position as Operations Analyst at New Ravenna in Exmore, evaluating and improving the company's day-to-day systems and procedures.

A chance meeting with Pungoteague resident Joe Betit, a retired professional with extensive experience in global construction, surveying, and international finance, helped Lucas connect his diverse skills and experience. Together, they developed a hydro-drone, an affordable data-collection platform designed to create bathymetric maps, measure water flow, salinity, and temperature in local waterways. Their innovative project earned a \$25,000 award from the Philip E. and Carole R. Ratcliffe Foundation Shore Hatchery Entrepreneurship Competition at Salisbury University.

As Lucas continued his education at ESCC, he received a scholarship from the Virginia Aerospace Business Association and secured a paid internship at NASA Wallops, working with the Goddard Sustainability Manager.

Lucas graduated from ESCC in May 2022 with an Associate Degree in Electronics Technology. Today, he serves as a



L to R: KBR Range Operations Manager Mersha Bailey, ESCC Alum and KBR Radar Technician Lucas Antunes, and KBR Range Program Manager Vince Cassara

Radar Technician with KBR at NASA Wallops Flight Facility supporting Range Operations for sounding rockets, Department of Defense missions, human spaceflight programs, and aircraft operations.

This past April Lucas gave the keynote address at ESCC Foundation's Scholarship Luncheon and shared:

"ESCC has changed so many lives, including mine. I continue to see the impact the college makes and the opportunities it creates. There are always exciting projects, new paths, and possibilities ahead for student in all fields."

Lucas's story demonstrates how education, mentorship, innovation, and perseverance can open doors to opportunities—from Brazil to the forefront of America's space program.

Empowering Futures: Career Services Center Continues to Deliver Impact

Now in its third year, ESCC's Career Services Center continues to play a vital role in shaping student and alumni success. Career Services Mentor Hayleigh Bradbury and Coach Heather Coleman provide career assessment opportunities to help students plan their academic and career paths. Additionally, they work with students and alumni to create and review resumes and cover letters, practice mock interviews, and connect them to mentors, paid internships, and employment opportunities.

Since March 2024, ESCC students have secured at least 94 entry-level jobs, work-based learning experiences, or internships. The Ratcliffe Foundation has funded 18 interns for real-world paid experience with local employers. Twice monthly throughout Fall and Spring semesters, Career Services hosts Lunch & Learns to connect local employers and students to career pathways, internship opportunities, and valuable community resources.

The Career Services Center hosted its third Career Fair on April 22. This event was open to students, alumni and community members and introduced attendees to employment pathways and opportunities with 40 different organizations from across the Eastern Shore of Virginia. A



Career Services Mentor Hayleigh Bradbury teaches resume preparation to Adult Education students.

fall Career Fair will be held October 22 in ESCC's Workforce building.

Expanding its reach further, the Career Services Center recently partnered with Accomack and Northampton County Probation & Parole to provide on-site resume and job search support to formerly incarcerated community members several days each month. The initiative is designed to strengthen educational and economic mobility pathways in an effort to decrease recidivism. This partnership reflects a shared commitment to creating pathways for educational and economic mobility and strengthen our community. Hayleigh explains, "Heather and I are honored to serve individuals in the Shore community in their pursuit of economic mobility through networking opportunities, resume assistance, mock interview practice, career assessments, and more. We see ourselves as career journey partners building long-term relationships towards this continued effort."

From Setback to Success: Lakisha Warner James' Inspiring Journey



Lakisha Warner James celebrates her Associate of Science degree.

ESCC celebrates the remarkable journey of recent graduate Lakisha Warner James, a shining example of resilience, determination, and the impact of community support.

A resident of Exmore, Lakisha grew up with family members who built careers as Certified Nursing Assistants. Their dedication inspired her dream: to become a Registered Nurse and Nurse Practitioner.

But Lakisha's path was far from easy. Earlier mistakes led

to a period of incarceration that interrupted her first attempt at attending ESCC. When she returned home in 2009, she faced the daunting task of rebuilding her confidence and restarting her life. With the encouragement of Michelle Tinner of Love Thy Neighbor, LLC, Lakisha earned her Personal Care Aide certification, allowing her to reenter the healthcare field and care for loved ones while planning her next steps.

In 2018, with the support of ESCC nursing faculty Peggy Bennett, Bonnie Nordstrom, and Felicia Blake, Lakisha returned to ESCC to pursue her CNA. She earned her GED in 2022—which opened the door to enrolling in college prerequisites.

Her journey included balancing family life and transportation hurdles. Lakisha describes the support she received from ESCC as "heaven sent." When she needed to take a remote psychology class in person, her advisors helped her enroll at TCC and made sure credits transferred, while ESCC Foundation assisted with transportation and supportive services.

In May 2026, Lakisha completed a major milestone: she completed her Associate of Science degree. This summer, she is tackling Bio Chem as she continues preparing for ESCC's RN program. Lakisha's story is more than a personal triumph, it is a testament to what is possible when determination meets opportunity. It reflects the mission of ESCC and the generosity of faculty, staff, community members, and donors who help make new beginnings possible so students like Lakisha don't just earn degrees—they transform their lives, their families, and their communities.

LEAVE A LEGACY FOR FUTURE STUDENTS

"College is not just about earning a degree. It's also about building connections that will last a lifetime."
2026 graduate Ma'Lique Gray

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/escc-foundation/



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



Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society Vice President Ma'Lique Gray with faculty sponsor and Success Coach Kentrelle Walker.

Project Horizons/Discovery Opens Pathways



Miriam Cornwell congratulates Rosa Award recipient JaMiah Smith.

Project Horizons/Discovery (PH/D) students enjoyed a busy year of enrichment activities, field trips and events with Coordinator Miriam Cornwell and ESCC staff volunteers. PH/D delivers college and career track mentoring to 55 students in grades 7-12 in Accomack and Northampton Counties. The program provides an extra academic, social, and cultural boost for economically disadvantaged students, most of whom would be first generation college students.

2026 highlights included hands-on outdoor adventures and team building at Camp Occohannock, attending the Virginia Tattoo at Norfolk Scope, college tours to Virginia Wesleyan University and University of Virginia, as well as career exploration at UVA's Long-Term Ecological Research (LTER) Station in Oyster, Va.

The year ended with celebrations for Northampton students at Cape Charles Impact Center, with a tour of the new community center and personal reflections

from community leader Dianne Davis about her experience as a student at Cape Charles Elementary School. Accomack County students enjoyed a fun day at ESCC with hands-on activities and a ceremony recognizing student achievement.

ESCC Foundation's Project Horizons Program established an award to honor Rosa Maria Casteneda, a thirteen-year-old Project Horizons/Discovery student who died in 2003 due to gang violence. Each year the honor is awarded in her memory to a PH/D student who exemplifies growth and leadership. This year, the Rosa Award was presented to JaMiah Smith, a 10th grader at Nandua High School. Coordinator Miriam Cornwell explains: "JaMiah really stepped into a leadership role at Nandua. He was always willing to go the extra mile to befriend new students, encourage students to attend meetings, and he spoke to an assembly of Nandua High School students about the value of our program. I am proud to see how far he has come this year!"

All 11 Project Horizons/Discovery seniors graduated in June. Nine will attend ESCC in the fall, and two will attend University of Virginia, studying pre-law and psychology. This summer one 11th grader from Arcadia High School will assist with marine biology research projects at University of Virginia's LTER Station in Oyster.

In addition to the Project Horizons Scholarship that guarantees two free years of tuition, books, and fees to graduates who attend ESCC, we continue to support our PH/D alumni. Alumna Vannessa Mateo, pre-Med at UVA, spent late spring as an intern assisting with planning and supporting end-of-year events. The Project Horizons/Discovery Program is funded through generous donations to ESCC Foundation and operated in partnership with a grant from Project Discovery of Virginia.

Peter Bale and Sentinel Robotic Solutions: ESCC's 2026 Leader in Philanthropy

ESCC Foundation recognized Peter Bale, founder of Sentinel Robotic Solutions for the 2026 Chancellor's Award for Leadership in Philanthropy. Peter helped establish an Uncrewed Aircraft Systems (UAS) education program at ESCC, and he secured a donation of \$1.8 million in UAS equipment to help ESCC students explore drone-related STEM careers. Additionally, he created a partnership with ESCC for SRS to teach aerial drone flying to clients of the Department of Rehabilitative Services that is being expanded statewide. Having served on the ESCC Foundation Board from 2020-2025, Peter has been a generous donor and a valuable partner in ESCC's effort to deliver high-quality, relevant academic and workforce programs.

ESCC will partner with Peter and SRS, Hampton Roads Executive Roundtable, Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission, Luminary Air Group, Accomack and Northampton Counties, and Accomack County Airport in the implementation of the recently awarded GO Virginia Grant of \$788,700.



L to R: ESCC Foundation Exec. Dir. Patty Kellam; Erika Bale, CEO of Sentinel Robotic Solutions, Honoree Peter Bale; VCCS Chancellor Dr. David Doré; Dr. Daryl Minus; Ray Wood, ESCC Advisory Board Chair; Jeremy McLean, ESCC Foundation Board President

Thank you to our January 2026 Oyster Roast Sponsors

Delicious local seafood and BBQ, live music, a fun silent auction, and many student helpers and volunteers make our Oyster Roast fundraiser a great community event. ESCC Foundation's January Oyster Roast raised nearly \$40,000 for scholarships and services for students. **Special thanks to top sponsors:**

Clearstead Advisory Solutions, Coastline Chemical, PNC Bank

and all who helped make the event a success.



Save the date: January 29, 2027 Oyster Roast

PTK's Clothing Closet Leads to 5 Star Award



L to R: PTK members Abigail Fluhart, Ella Eder, Faculty Sponsor Kentrelle Walker, Olivia Gsell and Naomi Zarate

ESCC's Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society recently created the ESCC Clothing Closet to ensure that all students have access to professional attire for interviews, internships, and job opportunities. The student-led project was developed as a part of the club's "College Project." Inspiration came after a "Dress for Success" campus fashion show in partnership with Virginia Career Works, as well as input from ESCC's Career Services Center.

Understanding how important appearance can be in building confidence and making strong first impressions, PTK members sought donations and created an inviting space in the Neville Student Lounge where students could select items at no charge. Generous donations from community members filled the closet. The success of ESCC's Clothes Closet led to recognition of ESCC's Alpha Pi Chi chapter of PTK as a 5-star chapter, one of the highest honors bestowed.

Comprised of 62 students who maintain a minimum 3.2 GPA and led by ESCC Success Coach and alumnus Kentrelle Walker, ESCC's PTK chapter won 6 awards at the March VA/WV Regional Convention and was selected 4th runner-up out of 52 chapters for most distinguished chapter in the region. Kentrelle serves as Assistant Regional Coordinator for VA/WV, and attended the Honors Institute in Denver in June. He was a member of PTK under the leadership of the late Robin Rich-Coates, a science instructor who founded ESCC's chapter. Alpha Pi Chi thanks ESCC, ESCC Foundation, and community friends and partners for their continued support of this important club that helps students develop leadership and teamwork skills.



Career Services Work-Study student Abigail Fluhart worked with Hayleigh Bradbury and Vanetta Satchell from Virginia Career Works to organize a Professional Clothing Fashion Show. L to R: Abigail Fluhart, student volunteer Keysan Brittingham, Hayleigh Bradbury, and Vanetta Satchell.



**Annual ESCC
Alumni Block Party
Coming Soon!**

With Music, Food Trucks,
Giveaways & more

**Check es.vccs.edu
for details!**

NON PROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT #5
EXMORE, VA
23350

Class of
Congratulations! 2026

