

History of the College

The history of Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC) centers not so much on bricks and mortar, books and computers, or programs and classes, but points more to the many people who have played a role in developing the college and the many students who have found success.

Since its beginning, the college has been a national pacesetter. Standouts on the CPCC student roster include a Pulitzer Prize winner, a Metropolitan Opera star, an Olympic gold medalist, a Congressional Medal of Honor winner, a television actress and a pro football player. Countless others – chefs, healthcare providers, technicians, real estate brokers, paralegals, firefighters, law enforcement officers, trades people and others who serve our community – share the proud tradition of CPCC.

CPCC provided educational opportunities since 1963, the year the North Carolina General Assembly passed the community college bill. Opening as a fully integrated institution, under the direction of Dr. Richard H. Hagemeyer, the founding president, the college combined the programs of the Central Industrial Education Center (CIEC) on Elizabeth Avenue and Mecklenburg College on Beatties Ford Road. The college sold its property on Beatties Ford Road and developed a campus around the old Central High School complex. Starting with 3.94 acres, the college bought surrounding property, demolished buildings and closed streets to build the beautiful, tree shaded, 32-acre Central Campus that students and faculty now enjoy.

From the start, the college was innovative in its teaching methods. CPCC soon garnered national recognition for its individualized instruction and computer-assisted instruction. In 1970, the college was invited to join and help found the prestigious League for Innovation in the Community College, and today it is still an active member and member of the League for Innovation's Board. CPCC has grown from a small college with a dozen programs serving 1,600 students to one with nearly 300 degree, diploma and certificate programs serving 70,000 individuals annually on six campuses, with an array of credit and non-credit offerings.

After Dr. Hagemeyer's retirement in 1986, Dr. Ruth Shaw became the college's second president. Under her leadership, the college added the Advanced Technologies Center and the Center for Automotive Technology and began acquiring land for more campuses.

The college's third president, Dr. Tony Zeiss, led the college from December 1992 to December 2016 with a mission devoted to serving students and the community through customized training and workforce development. In 2002, the National Alliance of Business chose CPCC to receive its Community College of the Year Distinguished Performance Award. Under Dr. Zeiss's direction, CPCC became a multi-campus community college in 1996 with the conversion of the North Area Learning Center to the North Campus which was named Merancas Campus in 2011. Four other campuses subsequently opened: Levine in 1998, Harper in 1999, Harris in 2001, and Cato in 2002. In 2012, CPCC acquired WTVI, the Charlotte region's PBS TV station, located on Commonwealth Ave. In 2013, CPCC renovated and re-purposed its City View Center, located on Alleghany Street, to house the college's cosmetology degree program. In 2015, CPCC opened its new Ballantyne Center in south Mecklenburg County. The center's initial course offerings have been focused on Corporate and Continuing Education classes. Dr. Zeiss also helped lead the Little Sugar Creek Greenway project that connected Central Campus with the public greenway and park that runs along the stream west of the Central Campus.

In 2013, Mecklenburg County voters showed their support for CPCC in dramatic fashion, approving \$210 million in bonds for land purchases, new construction and renovations at the college's six campuses. The referendum, approved by nearly 72 percent of those voting, represents the largest amount of bond funding the college has received. CPCC is using the \$210 million, plus \$70 million in other county funding, to construct 10 new buildings over six years, adding almost one-million square feet of new laboratory, classroom and office space. Several campuses will almost double in size. The first of these new building projects, the Cato III Building at the Cato Campus, opened in late 2015.

Now under the leadership of Dr. Kandi W. Deitemeyer, the college is the county's premier workforce development resource. Currently, CPCC is embarking on expanding to serve the growing region and maintain the college's fundamental commitment to student success. CPCC works to enhance the lives and success of individuals and employers, making Mecklenburg County stronger and more prosperous.

For a more comprehensive review of the history of Central Piedmont Community College, consult the following resources:

Oleson-Briggs, S. (2013). *Central Piedmont Community College: Legacy and Promise 1993-2013*. Charlotte: CPCC Foundation, Inc.

Timblin, C. L. (1995). *Central Piedmont Community College: The First Thirty Years 1963-1993*. Charlotte: CPCC Foundation, Inc.