

## First Things First



■ **SYSTEM PLAST EXPANDS ... ONCE AGAIN.** After moving into larger facilities last year, System Plast USA LLC grew substantially in December, when the Sanford-based company marketing conveyor parts announced it would acquire Nolu Plastics Inc. of Aston, Pa. The deal includes Nolu's wholly-owned subsidiary, Solus Industrial Innovations LLC of Rancho Santa Margarita, Calif., and adds manufacturing facilities, a distribution center and two European sales offices. System Plast USA is part of the System Plast S.p.A. group based in Italy.

■ **McCORMICK JOINS EDC BOARD.** James T. McCormick, superintendent of the Lee County Schools, has been appointed to the Lee County Economic Development Corp. board of directors. The move, local officials believe, will not only bring additional expertise to the board, but also strengthen bonds between area industry and schools.

■ **NEW ENTRANCE TO INDUSTRIAL PARK OPENS.** Though the sign is not quite ready and roads still need to be repaved, a much-anticipated entrance to the Lee County Industrial Park is finally open. The approach off Colon Road provides quick and easy access from U.S. 1 and slashes travel time for employees, customers and visitors traveling from Raleigh and Cary.

### Inside this issue

**2** Economy shows growing signs of vitality, according to the annual "Health of Lee County" report.

**3** Lee schools are a concern for industry, says a study used by expanding manufacturing firms.

No. 14 ■ WINTER 2005

# 100 Economic Indicators

## Stoking the Economy

Report views CCCC as an economic force

**F**ew local leaders doubt the value of Central Carolina Community College. Whether it's providing industrial training or helping its 19,000 students achieve more personal goals, the college has long been a driving force in Lee and nearby counties.

But a new report released in mid-January takes a different look at CCCC, viewing the college as an economic force in the region.

"Business sales in the CCCC service area are \$524 million greater, and labor income is \$210 million greater due to the past and present operations of CCCC," write the study authors. "The benefits of a robust local economy translate into job and investment opportunities, increased business revenues, greater availability of public funds, and an eased tax burden."

Among the study findings:

■ In just one year, fiscal 2003, the college spent \$28 million to operate, with \$20 million spent within the college's service area.

■ For every \$1 paid in wages and salaries, an additional 27 cents is generated in the broader local economy.

■ Student and alumni skills increased overall earnings in the college's service area by \$121 million directly and another \$64 million indirectly in fiscal 2003.

■ Taxpayers receive a real money "book" return of 22.2 percent on their annual investments in the college, recovering all investments in just under six years.

■ Students receive a 20.4-percent annual



Photo courtesy of CCCC

return on their educational investment — receiving a cumulative \$3.84 in higher future earnings for every dollar invested.

In addition to the more direct economic benefits, the report says, taxpayers save millions each year due to reduced health, crime and unemployment costs incurred for better-educated, more prosperous students.

The study was conducted as part of a statewide project by CCbenefits, an Idaho-based research firm specializing in the economic impact of community colleges. The analysis employed a comprehensive economic model developed with funding from the Association for Community College Trustees.



## POINTS OF VIEW

### MATT GARRETT CCCC: Good for the entire community

It is simply a fact that Central Carolina Community College makes a significant difference in our community.

A recent economic impact report, developed by an outside consultant based in Idaho and released in mid-January, provides plenty of hard evidence for what we knew already.

CCCC operations pour millions of dollars into the local economy each year, providing economic benefits reaching far beyond the local campus — helping businesses and families throughout the county and region.

Our graduates earn \$180,000 more than they would have without a CCCC education, and they also spend that money in the local economy.

Then there are plenty of less-direct impacts. For one, educated people are taxpayers — rather than social burdens on the welfare, prison and medical systems. And CCCC graduates tend to stay in the area to help build the local community.

So as I read this new report, I say, "CCCC: good for business and industry, good for the economy, good for students, and good for a better community."

Matt Garrett is president of Central Carolina Community College.

## Good news outweighs the bad as economic officials assess the "Health of Lee County"

The local economic outlook improved last year and should continue to gain steam, according to an analysis provided in early December at the second annual "Health of Lee County" luncheon.

About 120 people attended the event sponsored by the Committee of 100. Charles Hayes, president and CEO of the Research Triangle Regional Partnership, and Bob Heuts, director of the Lee County Economic Development Corp., led the session.

Upbeat economic news was welcomed after a mixed review one year ago.

The local unemployment rate, which stood at 8.1 percent two years earlier, tumbled to 4.6 percent in October. But that wasn't all: Retail sales were up more than \$56 million over the previous year and the county enjoyed a higher per capita income.

And there were other good signs. Lower crime, for one. There's been no shortage of local debate about law and order since the 2002 crime rate was posted at 7,201 incidents per 100,000 inhabitants, far more than the Research Triangle region as a whole. Adding fuel to the fire were some violent, highly-publicized cases.

But the latest crime rate was 6,289 — still higher than the region, but significantly



better than before.

Other encouraging news:

- Scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test continued to climb; the average has risen to 1,009 from 967 two years ago.

- The county has enjoyed a net job growth for two years, with a gain of 907 from January through October of last year.

- Sanford was ranked 48th among 573 mid-sized communities in a recent report of economic strength by Policom Corp., an economic research firm based in Florida.

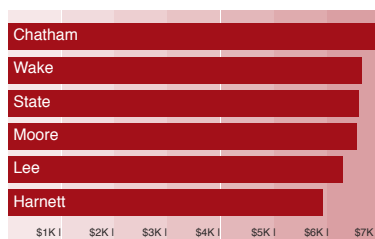
There was one note of caution: a decline in local manufacturing that arrived earlier than expected. Employment in that sector slipped from 40 to 35 percent of all area employment from 2002 to 2003.

A similar trend was felt throughout the Research Triangle region, where manufacturing employment stands at 10 percent.

### THE REGION AT A GLANCE

**K-12 Spending.** Per pupil expenditures on public education for kindergarten through grade 12. *Source: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (2002).*

Chatham County.....	\$6,907
Wake County.....	\$6,657
North Carolina.....	\$6,605
Moore County.....	\$6,574
Lee County.....	\$6,312
Harnett County.....	\$5,931



## 100 Economic Indicators

*Economic Indicators* is a quarterly newsletter of the Lee County Committee of 100, an organization of business men and women committing their time, energy and resources to enhance the economic well-being of Lee County and its citizens.

For information about membership, contact the Lee County Committee of 100 Inc., P.O. Box 4846, Sanford, N.C., 27331-4846. 919-774-8439 (phone). 919-775-5410 (fax). info@lcedc.com (e-mail). News and letters for *Economic Indicators* may be sent to the editor at news@lcedc.com.

Copyright © 2005 by the Lee County Committee of 100. All rights reserved.



**February 2005**

**2** RTRP Regional Advisory Council. Monthly meeting. 10 a.m. RTRP, 1000 Trade Drive, Suite 124, RDU International Airport. Contact Bob Heuts, 919-774-8439 or info@lcedc.com.

**10** Central Carolina Society for Human Resource Management. Monthly meeting. 11:30 a.m. Chef Paul's Café, 610 E. Main Street, Sanford. Contact Jane Haber, 919-774-8439 or info@lcedc.com.

**14** Lee County Economic Development Corp. Meeting. Tour of the new CCCC telecommunications building and a discussion of the college's economic impact study. 8 a.m. North Carolina School of Telecommunications. Contact Jane Haber, 774-8439 or info@lcedc.com.

**March 2005**

**2** RTRP Regional Advisory Council. Monthly meeting. 10 a.m. RTRP, 1000 Trade Drive, Suite 124, RDU International Airport. Contact Bob Heuts, 919-774-8439

or info@lcedc.com.

**10** Central Carolina Society for Human Resource Management. Monthly meeting. 11:30 a.m. Chef Paul's Café, 610 E. Main Street, Sanford. Contact Jane Haber, 919-774-8439 or info@lcedc.com.

**14** Lee County Economic Development Corp. Meeting. Update on local issues and ongoing projects. 8 a.m. Lee County EDC office. Contact Jane Haber, 774-8439 or info@lcedc.com.

**CCCC Business Courses**

■ **Critical Customer Service With Improved Communication.** 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 9. \$6 registration fee includes lunch.

■ **Excel Basics & More.** Mon. and Wed., 6:15 to 8:45 p.m. Mar. 7 to 23. \$55.

■ **Access Basics.** Tues. and Thurs., 4 to 6 p.m. Mar. 8 to 24. \$55.

■ **Excel for Management and Reports.** Mon. and Wed., 4 to 6 p.m. Mar. 9 to Apr. 4. \$55.

**FOCUS on Industrial Sites**

Built for adaptability, the Spec Building on McDonald Drive offers 60,000 square feet on 5.44 acres with plenty of room to grow. U.S. 421 is just one mile away and the coming bypass will be nearby. For other available sites in Lee County, visit [www.lcedc.com](http://www.lcedc.com), click on "Buildings & Sites," and select either buildings or sites.

# 100

## Economic Indicators

Lee County Committee of 100 Inc.  
P.O. Box 4846  
Sanford, NC 27331-4846