

Northeast Regional School of Agriscience and Biotechnology

The Northeast Regional School of Agriscience and Biotechnology is a 9-12 early college high school developed as a regional multi-district school model. The proposed school will serve as a dynamic economic and educational transformation model for a region that has suffered drastic economic decline, loss of jobs, declining population and low academic achievement since the early 1990s. The Northeast proposal embraces a series of guiding principles around which the school should be developed and which the partners believe are critical to success for a regional school in Northeast North Carolina. These guiding principles reflect the culture of the region. The primary focus of the Northeast proposal is to provide rigorous academic instruction and to contribute positively to the communities and the economy of the region it serves. The school will be housed at the Vernon G. James Research Center and Tidewater Research Station in Roper, NC. The site is highly accessible to potential regional students since it is in the geographic center of Northeast North Carolina. The Northeast Regional School of Agriscience and Biotechnology will graduate students who are globally competitive, responsible citizens and lifelong learners prepared for success in higher education or in a career of choice. The school will become a critical resource in the region and the state for developing students who are equipped with the skills, knowledge, expertise and content most highly valued by future employers and higher education in biotechnology and agriscience.

The committed partnerships are deep and diversified as evidenced by the resolutions of support in Appendix A. Boards of Education have committed to sending students to the Northeast Regional School of Agriscience and Biotechnology in 2011: Edenton-Chowan, Hyde, Tyrrell and Washington. Six additional school systems have also expressed their full support of the initiative: Bertie, Perquimans, Beaufort, Martin, and Hertford. This partnership extends well beyond local school systems to include: Avoca, Inc (the world's

premier botanical extraction company); North Carolina's Northeast Commission (which promotes economic development and travel and tourism for the sixteen northeastern North Carolina Counties); The Vernon G. James Research Center and Tidewater Research Station; NC State University; The North Carolina Department of Agriculture; a number of local County Board of Commissioners and other governmental groups. The partners embrace and commit to the following model: A governance representative of school systems in the partnership; serving students in the region; community engagement; stakeholder input; transparency; open communication; delivery on expectations/promises; building on local assets and the local economy; strong partnerships with institutions of higher education and strong involvement with regional business partners. The Northeast partners commit to providing an impact on all school systems in the Northeast in a positive way by sharing resources and professional development opportunities where and when applicable. In addition, the JOBS Commission recommendations have been recognized and considered through our partnership, planning and commitments.

Agriculture has long been an economic mainstay of northeastern North Carolina and undoubtedly will be an important part of this region's economy well into the future. Farmers will continue to grow crops such as corn, cotton, tobacco and soybeans. However, with relatively modest changes, we believe agriculture in Northeastern North Carolina can be transformed and become an economic engine that produces related jobs and raises the standard of living throughout this region. Efforts are underway to develop land adjacent to the Vernon James Center as a commercialization campus complete with greenhouses available for lease to companies investing in new crops. Funding for additional faculty at the Vernon James Center is also being pursued. In addition, another important consideration is a pilot extraction facility. This facility will be a crucial tool to be used by private sector biotechnology companies in determining whether the production of various biobased products extracted from plants is commercially feasible. There are only three other similar facilities available in North America. Of the \$2.1 million needed for this project, \$1.65 has been raised to date. An

Agriscience/Biotechnology high school will be a training ground for future agricultural, biotech, food-based technicians and a training resource for agriscience teachers. The school will add a focal point to the multi-faceted economic development approach of building the assets of the entire region toward becoming a center for agricultural biotechnology. At Vernon James, a company will be able to tap into agricultural expertise that will help determine the best way to produce the raw material from which a biobased, value-added product will be extracted. At the nearby pilot extraction facility, they will also be able to test extraction methods to determine whether production is commercially viable. We envision the Vernon James Center and North Carolina's Northeast region becoming a magnet for entrepreneurial companies that wish to produce biobased, value-added products. In the biobased economy, it makes good economic sense to locate processing facilities near the agricultural lands that serve as the source for raw materials. The emergence of a biobased economy will bring many new jobs to Northeastern North Carolina.

We, the partners of the Northeast, believe that the developed proposal reflects local needs, availability of production assets to support the school and alignment with regionally-defined economic development priorities. Key innovations for students in the Northeast Regional School of Agriscience and Biotechnology will emerge following the elements and constructs of NC STEM's design principles. North Carolina is the leader of innovation in STEM research and engineering for the world. Students who attend the Northeast Regional School of Agriscience and Biotechnology will have access to unique 21st Century programs under the leadership of doctoral level professors from NCSU, who will facilitate advanced level courses and experiences in Agricultural & Extension Education, Animal Science, Crop Science, Entomology, Horticultural Science, Soil Science, Soil Fertility, Tillage and Soil Management. The school will provide access to a rigorous technology driven curriculum while affording opportunities to all students, particularly those from minority and low-income communities. All students meeting predefined entrance criteria by the governance board will be considered with a priority focus on

first generation students. Educational innovation and student engagement will accelerate student academic performance, prepare students for post secondary success and dramatically increase student proficiency and graduation rates. This program will graduate students who are college-ready and globally competitive. The concentrated program at the regional school would contribute to overall achievement and graduation rates by focusing on student interest and career goals. Over 80% of CTE students statewide that take 4 or more CTE courses in high school graduate with their cohort graduating class. This compares to just over 30% who graduate within 4 years without a CTE concentration. There are currently over 300 students in the four counties who are in agriculture programs at their current high schools.

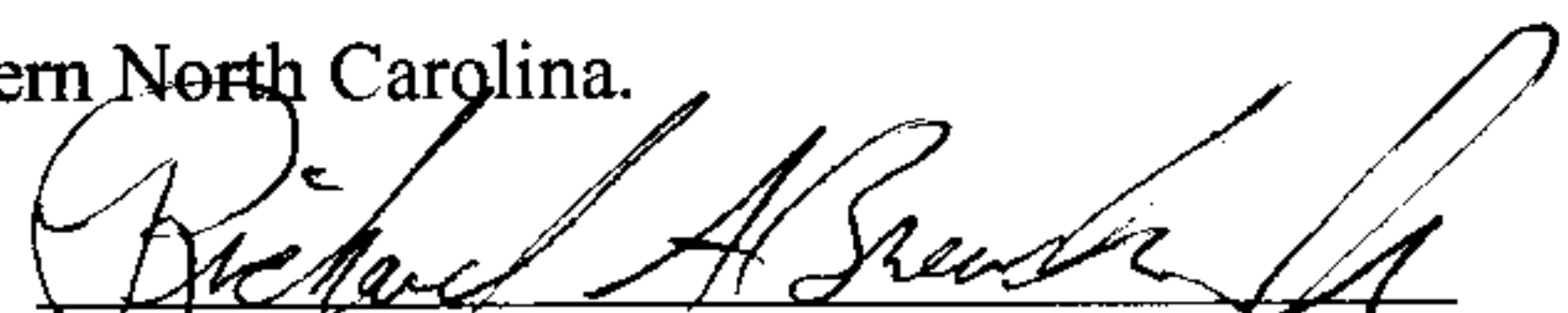
The school facility is student and classroom ready for immediate occupancy at the Vernon G. James Research Center and Tidewater Research Station. This facility is highly accessible to potential regional students since it is in the geographic center of Northeast North Carolina. Since the facilities are jointly administered by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and North Carolina State University, local governmental or educational agencies will not be responsible for any potential capital outlay projects.

Three of the four school systems committing to this initiative are low wealth school districts. Given the state of the local economies, alarming poverty and unemployment rates as well as devastating state, federal and local budget cuts; an alternative funding model is necessary to fund the Northeast Regional School of Agriscience and Biotechnology. The four school systems commit to providing half (50%) of the state allotted ADM funds for each student attending said school from the home school district to support associated costs. All other funding sources for administrative/operational costs will provided through state resources funded by the General Assembly. This is the only funding formula that the economically distressed identified counties

in the Northeast proposal find acceptable and commit to. The partners intend to apply for funding as an early college high school through the new schools project. LEA's will have the individual responsibility to decide whether to provide transportation. Washington County Schools will strive to work collaboratively with LEA's in providing potential transportation assistance from mutually agreed destinations across county lines.

The Northeast partners feel that the leadership provided by community stakeholders is critical to the success of the school. The partners will establish a Board of Directors for the school and agree to follow the predetermined design of identified board members. The Board will determine its own rules of procedure and be permitted to delegate to such committees it may create as it deems appropriate. The board will establish or adopt the NC standard course of study. The Board will design its programs and assessments to at least meet the student performance standards adopted by the State Board of Education and any additional student standards commensurate with providing a rigorous course of study for students bound for an institution of higher education. The Board will provide the opportunity to earn or obtain credit towards degrees from a community college or a constituent institution of The University of North Carolina. The Board will adopt an innovative school calendar that strives to exceed 180days. The host county, Washington, agrees to assume the responsibility of being fiscal agent. Through collaborative partnerships with biotechnology and agriscience-related businesses, local school districts, higher education and an engaging high school curriculum, The Northeast School for Biotechnology and Agriculture will provide an innovative 21st century education, while uplifting the economy of Northeastern North Carolina.


Superintendent of Schools


Board of Education Chair