



Together, we are making an impact through

Investing in Our Future

Investing in the future of eastern North Carolina

ECU Health created the Investing in Our Future Endowment by committing a **\$10 million challenge match**, an invitation to our philanthropic community to join us in building a healthier, brighter tomorrow for the patients, families and students we serve.

Thanks to donors like you, the Investing in Our Future Endowment is already making a significant and tangible impact. As of February 2026, nearly **\$7 million** has been raised toward the \$10 million goal.

Clinician recruitment remains one of the endowment's top priorities. Because of your support, **eight physician residents** have received the **Investing in Our Future Recruitment Award**. Collectively, these residents will provide 28 years of service as health care providers in eastern North Carolina. These future physicians are preparing to serve our communities with excellence and compassion for years to come.

Because of you, lives are being changed, careers are being shaped and the future of health care in our region is stronger than ever. Thank you for believing in this work and for **Investing in Our Future**.



“Your investment, the investment you make through this endowment, does not simply fund an award. It fuels a pipeline of physicians who are committed not for a year or two, but for decades. It helps us recruit the very best trainees, and just as importantly, it helps us keep them. And it ensures that patients and families in eastern North Carolina will have access to the care they deserve, close to the homes and communities they love.”

- Dr. Maya Cox-Terry, OBGYN Resident, IIOF Recruitment Award Recipient



Investing in Our Future Recruitment Award recipients with Dr. Waldrum.
December 2025

Impact Snapshot



8 physician residents
have committed to remain and practice at ECU Health following graduation.



3 research projects
have been funded to provide transformational research opportunities to directly benefit our patients, students and communities.



13 scholarships
have been awarded to future health care leaders who will make an impact in the future of health care in eastern North Carolina and beyond.

Investing in Research. Investing in Results.

As one of the four pillars of the Investing in Our Future Endowment, research funding plays an essential role in advancing cutting-edge health care initiatives and mission-based research opportunities for ECU Health and East Carolina University. The endowment directly supports the recruitment and retention of researchers leading the charge in developing health care solutions for rural areas.



School of Dental Medicine

Sukyung Moon, DDS, PhD

Dr. Moon developed and conducted pilot testing of **an integrated behavioral model within the Special Care Clinic**.

A key component of the project involved implementing the Health Belief Model through pre-visit teledentistry consultations in which perceived risks, barriers and motivators of caregivers related to oral health were identified with insights reinforced during subsequent dental visits.

The model's effectiveness was assessed by comparing families who did and did not participate in the pre-visit intervention. **By strengthening communication and trust, the model promoted long-term adherence to preventive oral health behaviors** — an especially meaningful outcome for families in eastern North Carolina.

In addition, the study generated essential preliminary data, which is critical for future extramural funding applications.



College of Nursing

Courtney Caiola, PhD, MPH, RN
Chandra Speight, PhD, RN, NP-C

Dr. Caiola, Dr. Speight and their team **developed perinatal substance use disorder (SUD) screening and referral processes** tailored to eastern North Carolina, with the primary goal of addressing regional challenges while supporting the ECU IMPACT (Integrated Model of Perinatal Addiction Care and Treatment) Clinic. A Perinatal SUD Working Group mapped a screening and referral algorithm and surveyed regional health and social service providers to evaluate the algorithm using validated measures of acceptability, appropriateness and feasibility.

They also conducted regional outreach sessions to introduce the algorithm, gather feedback and provide education on perinatal addiction care. **This work supported the development of ECU IMPACT's first contingency management program**, an evidence-based behavioral strategy that reinforces targeted behaviors such as treatment engagement.



College of Allied Health Sciences

Lauren Sastre, PhD, RDN

Dr. Sastre investigated the effectiveness and **impact of the Fresh Start Food as Medicine model to improve access to preventative care and cardiometabolic health** within medically underinsured and underserved communities across 15 rural eastern North Carolina counties.

The Fresh Start Food as Medicine model connects comprehensive care through culinary and lifestyle medicine classes, one-on-one behavioral health coaching and home food delivery of fresh produce.

Investing in Our Future funds allowed the project to collect baseline and endpoint lipid panel measures. **The results and findings offer a model for addressing the unique needs of rural communities.**

"We are truly grateful for the donors to the Investing in Our Future Endowment, whose proceeds are helping us recruit and retain the best clinician-scientists who are leading the way in health care breakthroughs for eastern North Carolina and beyond."

- Herbert G. Garrison, MD, MPH, Senior Officer, ECU Health Foundation

Investing in Scholarships. Investing in Students.

Investing in Our Future Endowment scholarships are divided equally among the Brody School of Medicine, the College of Nursing, the College of Allied Health Sciences, and the School of Dental Medicine to financially support students. Eligibility is limited to students who have been accepted into programs within those colleges, with preference given to students from eastern North Carolina. The endowment directly benefits students enrolled in these health sciences-focused academic units.



I want to sincerely thank you for your investment in my future and let you know how honored I am to have been selected for The ECU Health Investing in Our Future Endowment: ECU Brody School of Medicine Scholarship Fund. I have always tried to live my life by the ECU motto "servire," and even amidst the challenges of medical school, I remain committed to serving my community. This scholarship will help ease the burden of student loans, allowing me to focus more fully on my studies and my calling to serve others.

- Jaaziel Garcia, Brody School of Medicine, Class of 2027



I am truly honored to be one of the recipients of the Investing in Our Future Endowment: ECU College of Allied Health Sciences Scholarship Fund. I am the first in my family to be pursuing a doctorate degree and your generous support will directly help me achieve this goal.

- Sarah Locke, Doctor of Occupational Therapy, 2026



I am currently a rising senior in ECU's nursing program and aspire to work in the NICU/PICU field after graduating in the Fall of 2026. There were moments when pursuing a nursing career felt impossible, but the financial assistance you have provided me will be incredibly helpful and allow me to focus on my studies and excel. Thanks to your donation, I can pursue my dreams and move one step closer to graduating without worry.

- Allison Carpenter, College of Nursing, Class of 2026



This scholarship is more than an aid in my finances - it is a reminder that there are people who want me to achieve my goals and have confidence in my capabilities. Your investment in my education gives me the strength to continue working hard and making the most out of every opportunity. I am extremely thankful for your support and am inspired by your dedication to helping future dental professionals succeed.

- Karmen Heath, School of Dental Medicine, DMD Candidate, Class of 2028

