

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

College of Education
Belk Center for Community College
Leadership and Research

Advancing Adult Learner Success: Insights and Action

Steps from NC Reconnect and Reengage Nebraska

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SPEAKERS



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SESSION GUIDE

Share findings from two statewide adult learner reengagement efforts and the development of pathways in and through the college.

ABOUT THE BELK CENTER

CONTEXTUALIZING ADULT LEARNER REENGAGEMENT

North Carolina and Nebraska

EXAMPLES OF CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING (CPL)

PROMISING PRACTICES FOR ADULT LEARNER PATHWAYS

AUDIENCE Q & A

CLOSING



ABOUT THE BELK CENTER



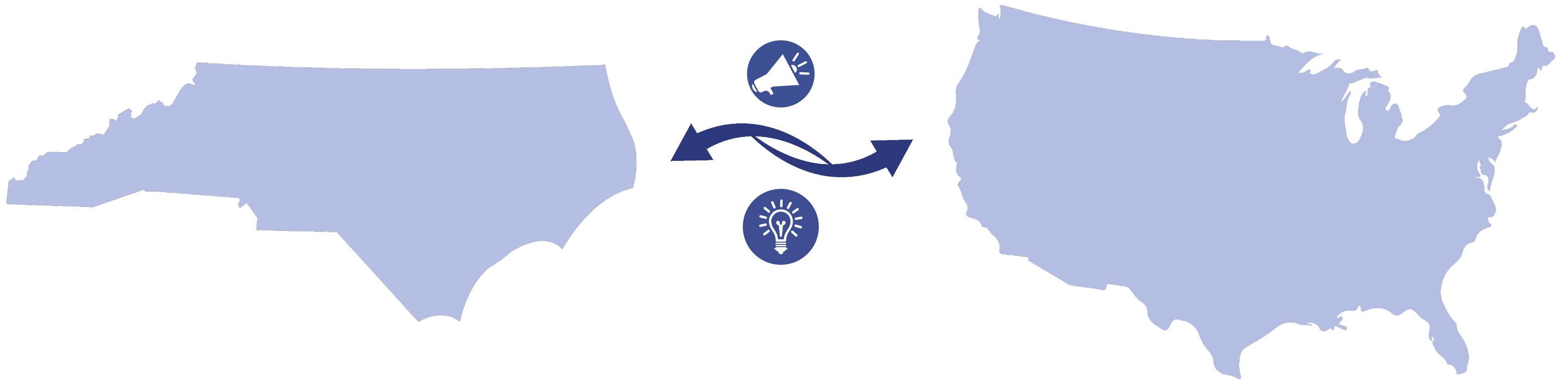
As a trusted resource for North Carolina's community college leaders, the Belk Center delivers actionable research and tailored leadership programming to advance college and student success. We support leaders at every stage of their careers, equipping them with timely insights and practical tools focused on improving the experiences and outcomes of their students. Our efforts are North Carolina-focused and nationally informed.

The Belk Center was launched in 2019 as a research center within the College of Education at NC State, a land-grant university that shares our commitment to community colleges and the critical role these institutions play in creating and expanding opportunities for all North Carolinians.

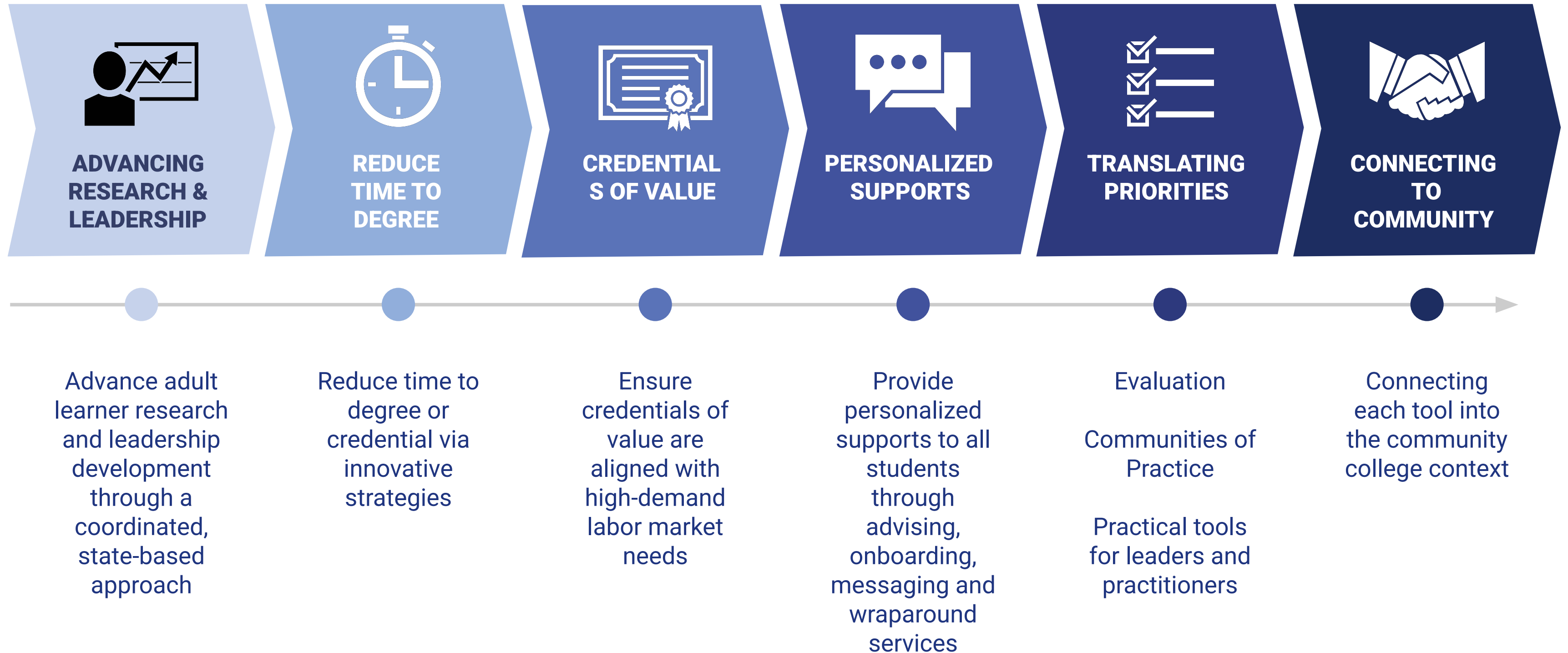
Our work is made possible by the generous investments of philanthropic partners including the John M. Belk Endowment, Arnold Ventures, Ascendium Education Group, the Institute of Education Sciences and the William R. Kenan Jr. Charitable Trust.

WHERE WE WORK

Our efforts are **North Carolina-focused** and **nationally informed**.



WHAT THE ALL IS DESIGNED TO DO



How the ALL Supports Its Partners



**Evaluation
services**



**Re-entry effort
planning**



**Communities of
practice**



**Leadership
development and
professional learning**



**Storytelling and
dissemination**

ADULT LEARNER REENGAGEMENT

NC RECONNECT

- Launched 2021; 29 community colleges
- College Leads
- InsideTrack and paid/unpaid marketing campaigns
- Over 465 individuals interviewed



REENGAGE NEBRASKA

- System Office facilitation
- Launched 2026; three four-year colleges
- College Navigators
- InsideTrack/targeted marketing to adult learners who stopped out

THE FIVE PS

1

PUBLIC MESSAGING MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Community colleges are creating personalized marketing and communications to adult learners that highlight specific programs, align with institutional priorities, and emphasize the value of a free or low-cost community college education.

2

PARTNERSHIPS COLLABORATION

Community colleges intentionally collaborate with external partners — including employers, faith-based organizations, government agencies and funders — to expand resources and support for adult learners. College departments and units also partner internally to refer students to resources offered at the college, like scholarships, food pantries, counseling and transportation tokens.

3

PROCESSES SHIFTING THE APPROACH

Community colleges are streamlining and revising processes and policies to reduce barriers (i.e., financial, caregiving, transportation, housing, etc.) to enrollment and retention for adult learners, enhancing efficiency across the entire student experience — from application to advising to graduation.

4

PATHWAYS ACADEMIC AND CAREER ADVISING

Community colleges are designing clear, structured academic and career pathways — especially between continuing education and curriculum programs — that align with labor market needs, helping adult learners navigate their educational journeys more efficiently, reducing time to degree and connecting their programs to high-wage career opportunities.

5

PROXIMITY TO ACCESS AND COMPLETION

Community colleges are strengthening support for adult learners by creating dedicated campus spaces, clearly mapping out the time and steps needed to earn a degree or credential, and fostering meaningful connections between adult learners, faculty and staff. These efforts help adult learners feel more connected, supported and in closer proximity to reaching their educational goals.

PUBLIC MESSAGING



Make adults aware that learning gained through work, military service, industry credentials and life experience may count toward a credential.

PUBLIC MESSAGING



Make adults aware that learning gained through work, military service, industry credentials and life experience may count toward a credential.

- Marketing explicitly says, “You may already have college credit.”
- Incorporating Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) awards automatically into the onboarding process
- Talking about CPL courses that exist
- CPL calculators
- Stories from adult learners who earned credit

PUBLIC MESSAGING

How does your institution/organization use **public messaging** to share CPL opportunities?

PARTNERSHIPS



Build relationships with employers, workforce organizations, military, community organizations and credentialing bodies that can help colleges recognize learning adults have already done.

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Build relationships with employers, workforce organizations, military, community organizations and credentialing bodies that can help colleges recognize learning adults have already done.

- Develop articulation agreements with employers or industry credential providers
- Partner with workforce agencies to identify credentials that could translate to college credit

PARTNERSHIPS

What is one new **partnership** you could cultivate to advance CPL on your campus/organization?

PROCESSES



Remove administrative barriers and make CPL easy to understand, request, document and receive.

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Remove administrative barriers and make CPL easy to understand, request, document and receive.

- Include CPL screening during inquiry/admissions
- Train advisors and faculty to recognize CPL
- Create clear documentation and assessment processes
- Integrate CPL into CRM/advising systems
- Reduce fees, red tape and unnecessary steps

PROCESSES

What is one **process** you could simplify, strengthen or create to make CPL more accessible to adult learners?

PATHWAYS



Use CPL strategically to help adults move more efficiently through a credential pathway or degree program.

PATHWAYS



Use CPL strategically to help adults move more efficiently through a credential pathway or degree program.

- Identify credit for current learning opportunities within the college between CE and CU programs
- Map industry credentials, military training, certifications and prior coursework to specific degree/credential requirements
- Advisors can show students exactly how CPL changes their time-to-completion.

PATHWAYS

What is one way you could better connect CPL opportunities to adult learners' credential and curricular **pathways**?

PROXIMITY



Bring CPL information and services to adults where they already are, before they even identify themselves as college students.

PROXIMITY



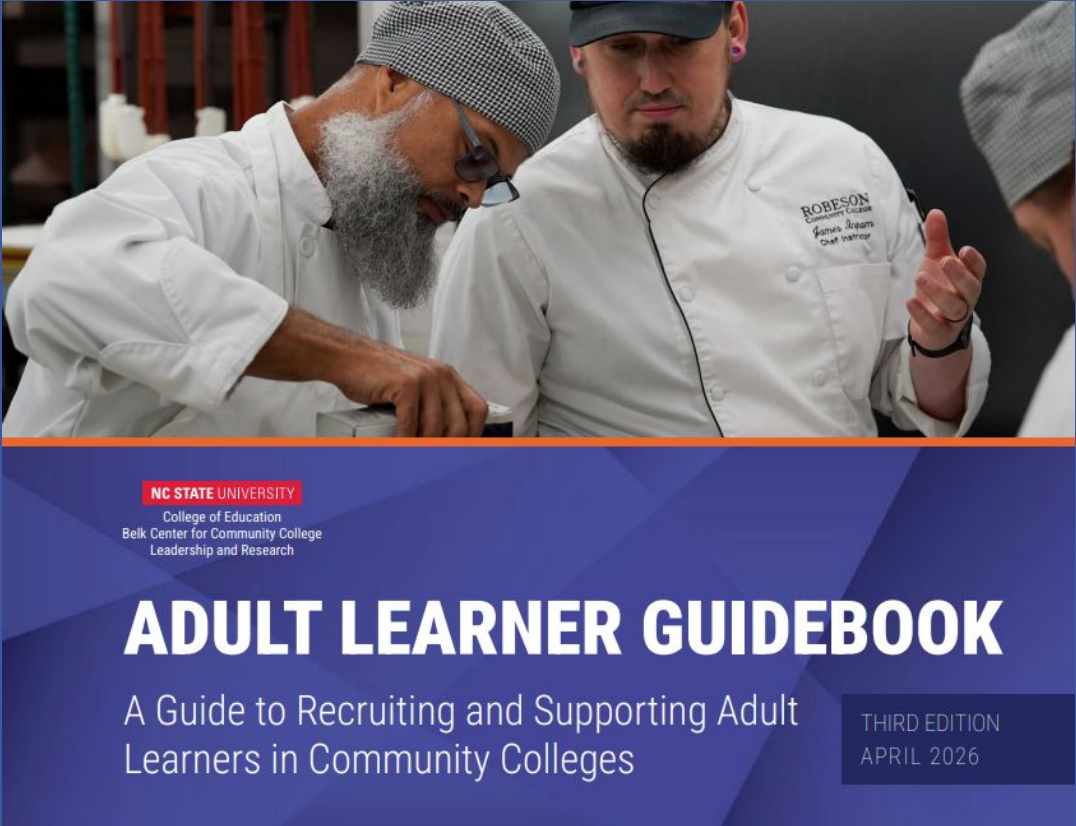
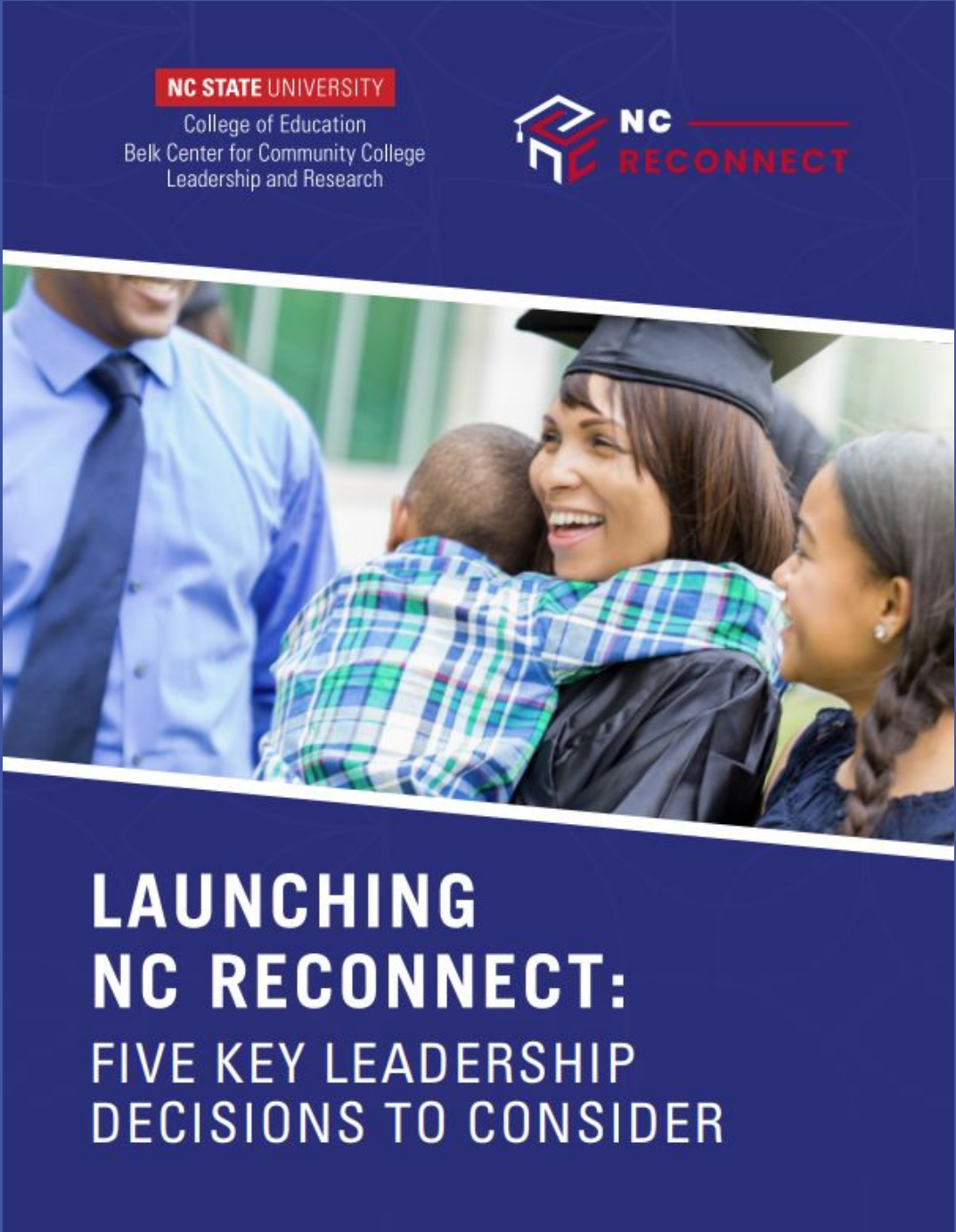
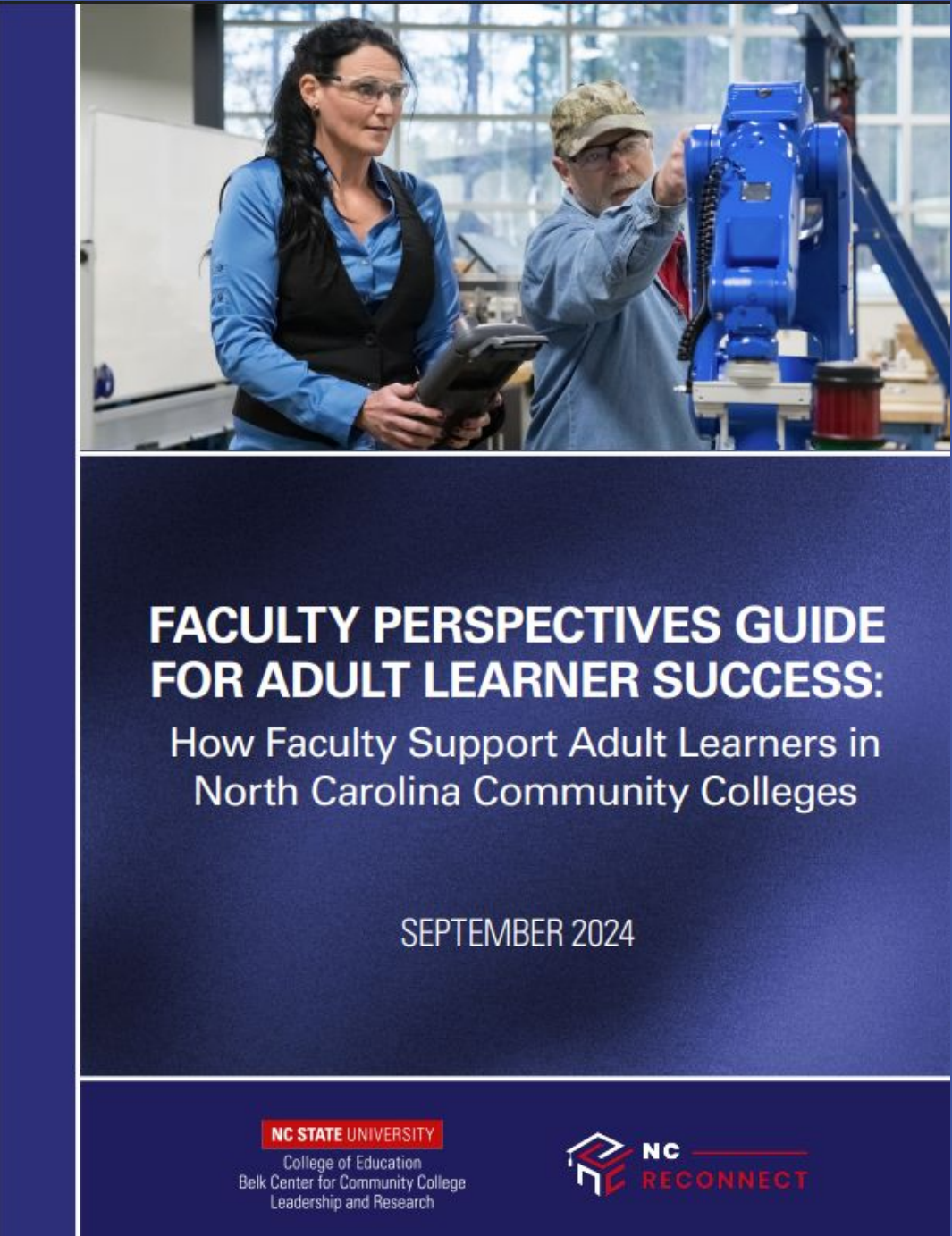
Bring CPL information and services to adults where they already are, before they even identify themselves as college students.

- Offer CPL information through employers, workforce centers, community organizations, continuing education programs and online services
- Meet adults where they are in their work and life

PROXIMITY

What is one place, setting or point in the adult learner journey where you could bring CPL information or opportunities closer to adult learners?

EVIDENCE OF PAST WORK



**SCAN THE QR
CODE TO
VIEW OUR
ADULT
LEARNER
REPORTS
AND
GUIDEBOOKS**



DALLAS HERRING LECTURE



2026

NOV. 17 • 10 A.M. ET



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DR. VICKI KAROLEWICS

PRESIDENT OF WALLACE STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**“THE VALUE AGENDA: A SYSTEMS
APPROACH TO STUDENT SUCCESS”**

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