

# NEWS RELEASE

Media Contact: Dr. Stephen B. Jones, 919/513-0388 or  
stephen\_jones@ncsu.edu  
Dr. J. Ted Morris, 919/513-0388 or ted\_morris@ncsu.edu  
Benny Benton, News Services, 919/515-3470 or  
benny\_benton@ncsu.edu

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## NC State Partnership Aims to Boost Economic Development

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Addressing a top priority of leaders around the state, North Carolina State University has created a new program to directly facilitate economic development relationships.

The NC State University Economic Development Partnership was forged to build alliances, both within the university and externally, resulting in funded relationships that expand the university's economic development capacities.

"Establishing this economic development partnership allows the university to develop a more comprehensive and systematic approach to bringing all kinds of intellectual and knowledge capacities to bear on this state's No. 1 issue right now," says Dr. Stephen B. Jones, vice chancellor for extension and engagement, whose office will oversee the program.

While NC State has been committed to economic development efforts for years, the needs around the state in economic development have reached a critical point, according to Jones, so a decision to provide special emphasis was made.

In fact, the issue has taken on such importance that six different NC State units – and grant dollars through the Office of the President of the University of North Carolina system – contributed to fund the program. Those contributions helped the university hire Dr. J. Ted Morris, who holds bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees from NC State, as director of the partnership.

Morris has worked actively with many segments of the university community on issues such as incubation, technology transfer, commercialization, agricultural and industrial extension in addition to economic development.

"What Ted brings to the table is, first of all, he's part of the NC State family with his degrees," Jones said. "But most important, he's been working in the economic development

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arena, with different hats on, for nearly a decade. He's got a passion for this. He knows it, both from a practical sense and also from a scholarly perspective."

Morris has been charged with helping NC State achieve six goals related to economic development:

- Developing alliances that improve deployment and utilization of university resources
- Pursuing grant and contract acquisitions
- Coordinating university resources to pursue internal and external partnership opportunities
- Establishing mechanisms to demonstrate returns on public investment and funded research at NC State
- Raising public awareness of NC State's economic development impacts
- Capitalizing on existing relationships with funding agencies such as the National Science Foundation and NASA to address mutual objectives related to economic development.

"The university has a tremendous economic and social impact, but there are a lot more opportunities to make good things happen if we are able to facilitate and help bring some of the various players together," Morris said. "We have such a wealth of resources here that often, even if you are inside the university, you don't know what they are. And that's certainly the case when you think about the public at large ... There are opportunities on the table that we're missing because we don't have the manpower to go around and plug people together. So this position really came about as a partnership about partnerships."

One key priority for Morris will be to help develop what are being termed "rapid response teams" that can respond quickly to provide assistance to sector-specific businesses. Morris said the idea came about through Jones' work with the North Carolina Department of Commerce.

"Commerce really needs easier access to the university to help facilitate its work, be it recruitment, retention or facilitation of existing industries," he said. "The challenge is largely related to time, trying to interface corporate time with government time and then academic time. So we're looking at how we can best identify people on campus who can participate and how, so when a call comes in, we can respond as quickly as possible and keep expectations high. This model of engagement can then be applied to organizations as well as communities throughout the state."

Another priority will be to develop ways of measuring the success of any partnerships that are developed and tracking the local economic and social impacts whenever possible.

"Once we have people engaged, how do we measure and track what the benefits are?" Morris asks. "Historically, universities do a very poor job of keeping track of who they've helped, how they've been helped, what might be the impact of that assistance and so forth. We want to effectively help a variety of stakeholders understand why things are being done the way they are and what good is coming out of it, with an end goal to make NC State more competitive in the grants acquisition process."

Morris said two areas of economic development in which the university could have large impacts are in bioprocessing and value-added agriculture. Two examples, he said, might be helping farmers learn to grow tobacco for alternative uses instead of cigarettes, and helping to develop aquatic media that express enzymes for both industrial use and hog waste management.

“If we (as a state) hope to transition our rural economies, we obviously have to find new opportunities for them,” Morris said. “We need to triangulate the marketing capabilities of the Department of Agriculture, the recruitment capabilities of (the Department of) Commerce, and the scientific and new-product development capabilities of NC State to bring about opportunities.”

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