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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Foundations Team to Support IEI Community-Building Initiatives**

RALEIGH—The Institute for Emerging Issues (IEI) announced today new support for three community-based teams participating in its ReCONNECT NC initiative.

The investment, by the Anonymous Trust and the State Employees Credit Union (SECU) Foundation focuses support on teams working to strengthen community dialogue across lines of divide to improve capacity to address critical issues facing communities. Participating teams are part of a three year, statewide effort.

The Anonymous Trust will provide a total of four \$30,000 grants to teams participating in the broader IEI ReCONNECT NC series. The \$30,000 grant announced today will support one of the teams working to “reconnect rural and urban.”

STEM SENC (Science Technology, Engineering and Math in Southeastern North Carolina) is a workforce development effort between The University of North Carolina – Wilmington, and public school systems, community colleges and universities in Bladen, Brunswick, Columbus, Cumberland, Duplin, Harnett, Hoke, New Hanover, Onslow, Pender, Robeson, Sampson, and Scotland Counties that provides access to STEM opportunities for all students. The team’s commitment is to strengthen the region’s ability to compete economically by equipping students in all counties with critical skills that will need to serve the needs of the business community.

"While Eastern North Carolina has many assets, accessible workforce education in high demand STEM skills has been a challenge," said Debbie Aiken, Executive Director of the Anonymous Trust. "The STEM SENC initiative is a great example of how the region as a whole can work together to build critical STEM skills, across rural and urban communities."

Support from the Anonymous Trust for three other community groups from the ReCONNECT NC series will be announced later this year and in 2020.

SECU Foundation is providing two grants in the amount of \$30,000 each.

- “One Team. One Goal. One Community” is a community partnership between Elizabeth City State University, City of Elizabeth City, Pasquotank County, Albemarle Family YMCA, Elizabeth City Police Department, Small Business Technology Development Center at ECSU, College of the Albemarle Small Business Center, Albemarle Commission, Sentara Albemarle Medical Center, River City Community Development Corporation aimed at increasing participation by students, faculty and staff at Elizabeth City State in addressing key challenges facing the Elizabeth City community.

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Jack F.A.V. Cecil, *National Advisory Board Chair* | Leslie Boney, *Director*

- In Edgecombe County, the Rural Opportunity Institute has formed a coalition that includes the Edgecombe County School District, Edgecombe County Sheriff's Department, Mental Health America, Community Enrichment Organization, Eastern Star Baptist Church, Vidant Hospital & Rural Health Network, Boys & Girls Club of Tar River Region, Michael's Angels Girls Club. Their focus is to rally community, government and business support to address adverse childhood experiences.

Both teams are part of a statewide effort led by IEI highlighting new strategies to improve collaboration among groups that have not traditionally collaborated to address community challenges.

"The Institute of Emerging Issues has been working collaboratively with top leaders and organizations since 2002 to bring social and economic issues affecting North Carolina's future to the forefront," said Bob Brinson, SECU Foundation Board Chair. "We are no strangers to their pioneering work, having also partnered with them for several years to expand their Prize for Innovation competition for college students throughout the state. We are proud to offer our support for ReCONNECT NC – this program is a wonderful example of what can be accomplished when civic and business leaders come together with the local community to address major issues facing our state."

"If we are going to face down the biggest challenges our communities face, we need all hands on deck," said Leslie Boney, director of IEI. "The teams participating in ReCONNECT NC are showing us how to do that. Thanks to this generous support, they can make their own efforts stronger and spread what they are learning to others across the state."

More information can be obtained by visiting [ReCONNECTNC.org](http://ReCONNECTNC.org).

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### **About the Institute for Emerging Issues**

The Institute for Emerging Issues (IEI) at North Carolina State University is a nonpartisan public policy organization focused on the state's vibrancy and economic competitiveness. Since 1986, the Emerging Issues Forum has attracted leaders in business, education and public policy to discuss issues with profound implications for North Carolina's future prosperity. For more than three decades, the Forum has helped catalyze the policy reforms, public investments and other proactive responses required to build an enduring capacity for progress in North Carolina.

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