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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**PARTICIPATING COMMUNITIES SELECTED for *INNOVATENC*,  
FIRST-IN-NATION ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE**

**Eighteen proposals received from communities across NC**

RALEIGH, NC, Sept. 4, 2015 -- The Institute for Emerging Issues at NC State University today announced that the Asheville, Greensboro, Pembroke, Wilmington/Carolina Coast, and Wilson communities have been selected to participate in *InnovateNC*, an intensive, two-year cross-city learning collaborative. The initiative, led by the Institute of Emerging Issues and nine partners, is a first-in-the-nation effort to spark innovation-centered economic development. The five communities were selected from a group of eighteen proposals submitted from across North Carolina.

“All 18 applicant communities had terrific ideas and vision,” said IEI director Anita Brown-Graham. “The five *InnovateNC* communities were selected because each has the right mix of assets, is fully committed to collective impact and to making major gains in building and sustaining innovation, and is ready to engage in the collaborative. IEI and our partners look forward to working with these communities over the next two years.”

Submissions were evaluated on strength of current efforts, organizational capacity, local partners, and ability to participate in evaluation efforts.

*InnovateNC* has been specifically designed as a learning opportunity for the entire State of North Carolina. Beyond intensive work with the five communities selected, the initiative will broadly disseminate products, processes, and tools to boost innovation statewide.

*InnovateNC* partners include NC State University's Institute for Emerging Issues and College of Design; Forward Impact; the UNC System; Duke University's Sanford School of Public Policy; UNC Chapel Hill's Kenan Institute for Private Enterprise and Department of Public Policy; RTI International; UNC-TV; the Council for Entrepreneurial Development; the Research Triangle Foundation; and the NC Board of Science, Technology & Innovation. The project launch is supported by a generous grant from the Kenan Creative Collaboratory, an initiative of the four Kenan Institutes.

Here are some highlights from the applications of the five selected communities:

Asheville: Application submitted by The Collider in collaboration with the Asheville Hub, Economic Development Coalition (EDC)/Venture Asheville, and the City of Asheville. The team cited innovation and teamwork as the foundation of the city's booming economy. By participating in *InnovateNC*, they will grow the city's emerging environmental and climate science industry sector. (Media contact: Kathi Petersen, The Collider, [kpetersen@thecollider.org](mailto:kpetersen@thecollider.org), 828-712-1286)

Greensboro: Submitted by the Greensboro Partnership, which includes the Greensboro Partnership for Economic Development, Chamber of Commerce, Action Greensboro, and Entrepreneur Connection. Recognizing the relatively untapped innovation potential of Greensboro's diverse population, the team's *InnovateNC* objective is to create a "culture of inclusive innovation" while building upon the city's efforts to become a "Maker City" for the 21<sup>st</sup>-century global economy. (Media contact: Deborah Hooper, Greensboro Partnership, [DHooper@greensboro.org](mailto:DHooper@greensboro.org), 336-387-8320)

Pembroke: Submitted by the University of North Carolina at Pembroke in collaboration with the Town of Pembroke, Lumbee Regional Development Association, Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina, and local business leaders. The team will leverage *InnovateNC* to build upon its entrepreneurial resources while utilizing the diversity and heritage of the region to create a distinct innovation district. (Media contact: Scott Bigelow, University of North Carolina at Pembroke, [scott.bigelow@uncp.edu](mailto:scott.bigelow@uncp.edu), 910-521-6351)

Wilmington and the Carolina Coast: Submitted by the Wilmington City Council in collaboration with New Hanover County, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, Marine Bio-Technologies Center of Innovation, Town of Leland, Brunswick County, NC Biotech Center SE Office, and Brunswick Community College. The team plans to use *InnovateNC* as an opportunity to strengthen the region's emerging innovation ecosystem in the marine and life sciences. (Media contact: Malissa Talbert, City of Wilmington, [Malissa.Talbert@wilmingtonnc.gov](mailto:Malissa.Talbert@wilmingtonnc.gov), 910-342-2736)

Wilson: Submitted by the City and County of Wilson in collaboration with a local leadership network. By participating in *InnovateNC*, the City intends to develop an inclusive entrepreneurial economy while retaining its rich community character. The team will build on local assets including the community-owned Greenlight Gigabit Network. (Media contact: Matt Shaw, City of Wilson, [mshaw@wilsonnc.org](mailto:mshaw@wilsonnc.org), 252-399-2311, 252-299-3078)

**Background on IEI:** NC State University's **Institute for Emerging Issues (IEI)** connects people and resources from all sectors and areas of North Carolina in an effort to ensure our state's future economic competitiveness. For more information on IEI's work, visit [www.emergingissues.org](http://www.emergingissues.org).

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