

Northwest Arkansas Community College Foundation quietly launches campaign

By [Dave Perozek](#)

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BENTONVILLE -- Officials recently launched the "quiet phase" of a campaign to raise \$15 million for construction of Northwest Arkansas Community College's first permanent facility in Washington County and \$5 million for the culinary arts program.

"We are doing an umbrella campaign -- the 1A project being Washington County, and then 1B being our culinary program," said Meredith Brunen, executive director of development for the college's foundation.

Enrollment projections

Northwest Arkansas Community College set a budget for this fiscal year on a projection 149,081 credit hours would be taken. Debi Buckley, vice president for finance and administration, said Friday that number is now expected to be 147,069, or 1.3 percent below the original projection. "If the difference stays where it is, we believe we can make it up," Buckley said. "We don't have all the numbers in yet." The credit hours number is the lowest it has been since 2009, according to college figures.

Source: Staff report

Brunen and Steven Hinds, executive director of marketing and public relations, provided the Board of Trustees an update on the campaign during the board's winter retreat meeting Friday.

The campaign's quiet phase, started last month, consists of meetings with foundations, corporations and community members to discuss the building and the endowment they have planned. College officials are holding at least one such meeting per week, Brunen said.

The campaign will transition to a more public one at some point. Brunen estimated that will start in 12-18 months, once the campaign has achieved a certain percentage of its fundraising goal through the quiet phase.

Officials haven't determined what that percentage should be, Brunen said.

The college owns 20 acres next to Arvest Ballpark in Springdale where it plans to build its Washington County Center. The college has developed programming and a master plan for the facility, estimated to be about 50,000 square feet. The "stretch goal" is to begin construction of the facility in late 2017, Brunen said.

The other part of the campaign is to establish an endowment for the college's culinary arts and hospitality management program, which is undergoing a significant transformation. The endowment would provide money for faculty fellowships, professional development, demonstration and lecture series, and maintenance and operations.

The culinary arts program has been renamed "Brightwater: A Center for the Study of Food." It will relocate from the Center for Nonprofits in Rogers to the former Tyson Foods plant on Southeast Eighth Street in Bentonville. That move is expected to happen in late 2016, Brunen said.

Brightwater is named for a variety of apple that used to be grown in Arkansas, Brunen said.

The foundation has developed a 14-page brochure to be distributed to potential campaign donors. The campaign is called "NWA Ripple Effect," with the tagline, "Change the landscape."

"The ripple effect played into it, because not only does (the campaign) have a chance to make an immediate impact, but it will make an impact for generations to come," Hinds said.

The Ripple Effect name -- including a rippling logo -- will be rolled out gradually when the public campaign begins. Billboards and other advertising mechanisms featuring the logo will contain limited information at first to "create an air of mystique" about it, Hinds said.

The foundation also is distributing a card with its brochure containing details of a recent study of the college's economic impact. Society receives an average of \$9.60 in benefits for every dollar invested in the college over the course of the students' working lives, according to the study.

"Getting that information out is key," said Ron Branscum, board member.

Evelyn Jorgenson, college president, agreed.

"I think some people underestimate the value of a community college," Jorgenson said. "So this is a study that's not just a regional or national study, where people can dismiss it because it's not local. This is local. This is the return on investment."