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You Decide:

What Are the Key Challenges for N.C.'s Future?

Long ago, my father told me it was always good to look ahead. Why? Because problems may appear that take a while to solve. Without advance planning, there may not be enough time to find a solution and avert possible disappointment, or even worse. In over seven decades of living I've tried to follow my father's advice, and I am thankful for doing so. Yet the idea of looking ahead applies to more than just individuals. The advice could help North Carolina identify some of the key challenges for the state's future.

In no particular order, my top six challenges in North Carolina's future are energy, skill training, spreading economic prosperity, housing, transportation and staying competitive. I'll comment on each and let you decide if my look ahead makes sense.

Like all states and many nations, North Carolina is adjusting its energy production and usage to be friendly to the climate. All key participants in the energy market - including those in both the private and public sectors - appear to agree with this goal. But disagreements occur in two ways. First, which components - such as fossil fuels, renewables and nuclear power - should be part of our future energy production? Second, how fast can we move to a more climate-friendly environment and still support the energy needs of North Carolina? These energy challenges are

actually more difficult for North Carolina for one reason: We are a fast-growing state, and more growth means more energy use. North Carolina's population is expected to increase almost twice as fast as the nation's (32% versus 17%) from 2020 to 2050. According to some forecasters, this growth could result in a 50% increase in electricity usage by 2050. The growth could be larger if new technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) take hold.

A strong economy obviously relies on a workforce trained for the skills needed in that economy. But the skills needed constantly change over time, and many experts think these changes will accelerate in upcoming decades. One big game-changer will be artificial intelligence. One study predicts 30% of all hours worked today could be eliminated by AI as soon as 2030. Unlike the past, when job losses from new technology were concentrated in blue collar fields, such as manufacturing, AI has the potential to substitute for workers in many white collar jobs, with many of the displaced workers having college degrees.

We can hope new jobs will be created in other fields, but the question is where? The North Carolina Community College System has already recognized this challenge by committing to follow job growth and align programs with that growth. Four-year universities and colleges will need to do the same. Some also predict a big increase in on-the-job training. A new study reports that almost half of college graduates are not working in the field related to their degree.

It has become more expensive to purchase or rent shelter in North Carolina. For example, since 2000, home prices in the state have more than doubled, far outpacing household income gains. Importantly, this number is after adjusting for changes in the size and amenities of shelter. The increase in shelter costs is most prominent in metropolitan regions, like the Triangle and Charlotte areas. These regions have experienced rapid population growth, resulting in more people competing for the limited housing and apartments located close to jobs, schools, entertainment and other amenities.

One solution to the high housing costs is to build more structures by increasing density in cities. But even this approach is limited. A second idea is for individuals who can work remotely to live in more moderately priced housing in non-metropolitan regions. And for those who don't work remotely, a third idea is to encourage developers to construct residences in outer areas of the metro regions where land is more affordable, and then have rapid bus systems transport workers to and from jobs in the big cities.

There are two challenges with transportation. One is to move to commuting methods that are friendlier to the climate. This has already started with the push for drivers to switch from gasoline powered vehicles to electric vehicles (EVs). The second challenge is financing transportation projects. With large population gains predicted, North Carolina will likely need additional highways. But how will the roads be financed if gas tax revenues drop as more drivers use EVs? One solution is a mileage fee, which is independent of the fuel used by a vehicle. Another is to finance road and possibly rail projects with general revenues, such as from the state income tax or sales tax.

A final challenge for North Carolina is staying competitive. By this I mean continuing to attract both in-state and out-of-state investments that will create good-paying jobs, particularly in parts of the state that have lagged in economic development. All states have this goal, so North Carolina must constantly reassess its policies and programs against those of other states.

I have a simple answer for maintaining North Carolina's competitiveness. It is to keep our collective eye on the challenges identified above, and to constantly work to confront and succeed in surmounting those challenges.

In the almost 50 years I've called North Carolina my home, I've watched the state totally transform its economy and move to the top of the rankings for many economic measures. But there will always be challenges - some old and others new - and I've identified many I think will be important in the coming decades. However, you may decide to create your own list of future challenges and solutions. Whichever you choose - mine or yours - you will be following the advice of my father to look ahead.

Mike Walden is a William Neal Reynolds Distinguished Professor Emeritus at North Carolina State University.

Discovery Place Kids – Rockingham Reopening to the Public Following Extensive Renovations

Discovery Place Kids – Rockingham will reopen its doors to the public on Saturday, April 13 following extensive renovations that began in January of this year. The renovated space features new and expanded exhibits that highlight local industry in and around Rockingham, NC.

"After 11 years as part of the Rockingham community and serving more than 300,000 guests, we are thrilled to start the next chapter for Discovery Place Kids – Rockingham," said Catherine Wilson Horne, President & CEO of Discovery Place. "We look forward to welcoming the next generation of young learners with these significant improvements with excitement for visitors to the Rockingham area."

"One of the things we're most excited to share following these renovations is that we were able to "age up" the Museum experience with exhibits designed for older elementary and young middle school students," said Discovery Place Chief Learning Officer Dr. Nikole (Nikki) L. Hill. "Our Members and repeat guests will also discover spaces offering new hands-on learning opportunities on a rotating basis."

New exhibits at Discovery Place Kids – Rockingham include a climbing structure spanning two levels and four new science research stations:

- Nature – activities include building a bug and using binoculars to find animals in a forest
 - Astronomy – featuring satellite communications, a telescope and rocket launcher
 - Weather – complete with rain clouds and a lightning pole
 - Underground – exploration includes a dirt dig, matching animals with their correct underground home and a soil magnification
- In addition to new exhibits, some of the Museum's "greatest hits" have been upgraded, including the Gizmotron, which is now set in a quarry, a new racetrack in Speed Shop and the canoe at the tree house has been replaced with an interactive kayak rowing experience.

As a sign of support and thanks to its community, Discovery Place Kids – Rockingham is also pleased to announce new ticket pricing for Richmond County residents as part of the Museum's reopening.

Pricing information is as follows: \$8 General Admission; \$6 Richmond County residents; \$3 Welcome Admission; Free for Members and children under one.

Museum hours: Closed Monday. Tuesday – Saturday, 10:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Sunday, 1:00 – 5:00 p.m. Funding for the renovations was provided by The Community Foundation of Rockingham, The Cole Foundation, Richmond County Tourism Development Authority, the City of Rockingham and Richmond County. Discovery Place Kids – Rockingham values its partnership with these foundations and municipalities, which have been avid supporters of the Museum since its opening in 2013.

About Discovery Place Discovery Place brings science, nature, and design together to create transformative experiences that enable the community to understand, enjoy and apply science to their lives. Discovery Place is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and leader in STEM education to the Carolinas through four distinct museum experiences - Discovery Place Science, Discovery Place Nature, Discovery Place Kids Huntersville and Discovery Place Kids Rockingham. Discovery Place serves over 750,000 people a year - through Museum visitations, interactive educational programming, professional development training and community outreach initiatives - shaping a future where people embrace science to create opportunities, build hope, solve problems and bring positive change for our world. In 2017, Discovery Place was named as a finalist for the National Medal by the Institute for Museum and Library Science. Discovery Place is supported, in part, by the Infusion Fund and its generous donors.

Town of Lilesville Easter Egg Hunt

Everyone is invited to come out to Hatcher Park in Lilesville for the Town of Lilesville's Easter Egg Hunt event. It will be fun for the entire family...but especially for kids ages 0-12 years old as they enjoy the Easter egg hunt. Food trucks will be set up at 5:00 p.m., including Burger Brothers, Taco Factory and Monica's Italian Ice. The Easter egg hunt begins promptly at 6:00 p.m. so don't be late! See you there!

BBB Scam Alert: Betting on a big game? Don't fall for a sports betting scam.

Thanks to new legal changes, the popularity of sports betting has exploded. If you think scammers haven't noticed, think again. The Better Business Bureau (BBB) advises that you check before downloading a sports betting app or placing a bet before the big game.

How the scam works You want to place a bet on an upcoming game, so you search online for a sports betting service. You find a website or app that looks trustworthy. It may even offer an enticing introductory bonus, so you can make an initial bet "risk free."

You place a bet, and, at first, everything seems normal. But as soon as you try to cash out your winnings, you find you can't withdraw a cent. Scammers will make up various excuses. For example, they may claim technical issues or insist on additional identity verification. In other cases, they may require you to deposit even more money before you can withdraw your winnings! Whatever you do, you'll never be able to get your money off the site. And any personal information you shared is now in the hands of scam artists.

One victim reported to BBB Scam Tracker (bbb.org/scamtracker): "I deposited money to put a wager for a sports game. I won the bet [and] attempted 3 times to cash out and 3 times it was declined. Spoke to their representative, and they needed a picture of my driver's license, a photo of myself holding my ID, and a blank check from my bank. With all the run around I've been given, it prompted me to read their reviews. All horrible reviews of a scam. Called my credit card company to file a fraud report."

How to avoid sports betting scams

- Look for an established, approved service. Look for "white-listed" sports books that have been approved by your area's gaming commission. In the United States, ESPN has a list of where sports betting is legal.
- Don't fall for tempting ads. Ignore gambling-related pop-up ads, email spam, or text messages.
- Read the fine print on incentives. Gambling sites and apps often offer incentives or bonuses to new users and around major games. But like any sales pitch, these can be deceptive. Be sure to read the fine print carefully.
- Even legitimate sports betting sites have the right to freeze your winnings. Gambling companies can restrict user's activity for "seeming to have an 'unfair advantage' or 'irregular playing patterns,'" reports Lifehacker. Be sure to check the terms of service.



The family of **James Aaron Huneycutt** would like to express their appreciation for all of the cards, calls, food, hugs, flowers, words of comfort and love shown to them during this time of loss.

Please continue to keep us in your prayers as we navigate life without our beloved Husband, Daddy, Papa and friend.

The Huneycutt Family

IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE SUPERIOR COURT DIVISION BEFORE THE CLERK FILE NO. 19-E-142



NORTH CAROLINA ANSON COUNTY

Having qualified as ADMINISTRATOR of the estate of DIMPLE LOU TREADAWAY, deceased, of Anson County, North Carolina, this is to notify all persons having claims against the Estate of said DIMPLE LOU TREADAWAY to present them to the undersigned on or before JUNE 24, 2024, or the same will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate please make immediate payment.

This the 13th day of March, 2024.

Administrator:
Kaitly Matthews
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Summerville, SC 29483

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