‘Pathways to Prosperity’ project focuses on Ag

By Cathy Heffler
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ASHEBoro — Asheboro City Schools, Randolph Community College and the Randolph County School System unveiled a third pathway focusing on agriculture in their partnership project, Pathways to Prosperity, at a joint press conference Tuesday in RCC’s R. Alton Cox Learning Resources Center Auditorium on the Asheboro Campus.

The project will include the development of a new associate degree in Agribusiness Technology at RCC, said Suzanne Rehrbaugh, vice president for instruction at RCC.

The community college will be working with local employers, high schools and regional universities to develop associate career pathways to ensure the greatest articulation, according to the plan. The goal is to have the curriculum developed by the end of the 2017-18 school year so that an application can be submitted to the N.C. Community College System for approval.

The earliest date for launching the new curriculum would be fall 2019.

Personnel from all three school systems, industry partners and intermediary agencies have been working on the Agricultural Pathways to Prosperity Plan for months.

According to the Pathways to Prosperity Leadership

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IT’S AN EVER-CHANGING THING — Dr. Robert Shackelford talks about the ever-expanding Pathways to Prosperity program administered through Asheboro City Schools, Randolph County Schools and Randolph Community College.

Program

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Team, a strong agricultural climate in Randolph County, a demand for skilled workers, partnered with the increased interest in agriculture-related middle and high school classes and clubs led them to select agriculture as their next pathway.

Dr. Terry Worrell, superintendent of Asheboro City Schools, said the agriculture industry has a $659 million impact in Randolph County.

“We believe this pathway will accomplish three things,” she said, “strengthen the economy, address the goals of the Randolph County Strategic Plan, and provide a seamless route for students interested in agriculture careers to obtain certifications and an associate degree to achieve career and life readiness.”

Dr. Stephen Gayney, superintendent of the Randolph County School System, said this new partnership will address “the ever-changing and very competitive field of agriculture,” and he praised the ability of the three school systems to work together.

“Today is a great day for our community,” Dr. Julie Pack, director of secondary education for Asheboro City

Graduate School of Education, in which school systems are “called to align Career & Technical Education (CTE) courses with area and state labor market demands and create a system of career-focused pathways that span the last years of high school and at least one year of postsecondary education or training that leads to an industry-recognized certification or credential.”

The school systems debuted the project in 2015 with four pathways for advanced manufacturing jobs. The second initiative in 2016 focused on creating health care pathways.

To read the April 2018 report, “Central North Carolina Pathways to Prosperity: Agriculture,” and the earlier reports on advanced manufacturing and health sciences careers, go to www.randolph.edu/pathways-to-prosperity.html.