



## LEADERSHIP PROFILE

# President & Chief Executive Officer New Hanover Community Endowment Wilmington, NC

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*“A transformative opportunity for the region”*

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In February 2021, a major endowment was funded for the benefit of the people of New Hanover County, North Carolina. A principal beneficiary of the sale of the county-owned New Hanover Regional Medical Center to Novant Health, the New Hanover Community Endowment (NHCE) begins its life with an endowment of \$1.25 billion and by-laws that delineate the broadest of purposes, “supporting the public health needs and certain social welfare projects in New Hanover County.”

Described by the Port City Daily as “the most consequential decision in the region’s recent history,”<sup>1</sup> the vote by the New Hanover County Board of Commissioners to sell the regional medical center followed several years of exploration, study and debate to ascertain the best approach to meeting the long-term health needs of a rapidly growing region.

The October 2020 vote followed a year-long review of strategic options led by the 21-member [Partnership Advisory Group](#). Regulatory review by the North Carolina Attorney General was completed in January 2021, and the sale was

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<sup>1</sup> [“It’s a high-tension moment...”](#) October 1, 2020

consummated and funds transferred to the Endowment's account in February 2021.

Designed to operate in perpetuity, NHCE is governed by a 13-person Board of Directors. Six members of the board are appointed by the local, newly constituted (post-sale) board of New Hanover Regional Medical Center, five by the New Hanover County Board of Commissioners, and two by NHCE's eleven board members as a group.

Collectively, the initial board reflects an extraordinary diversity of life and leadership experiences. Some board members were born in New Hanover County, others moved there as children or adults, and all are proven leaders in their respective fields. Their professional and personal focus includes healthcare, business, education, racial justice and equity, communications, technology, public health, community and social service, youth development, livable cities, entrepreneurship, arts and culture, public safety, service to underserved communities and more. While their paths to the NHCE boardroom were decidedly varied, the board members share a deep commitment to improving the lives and possibilities of all New Hanover County residents.



*The boardwalk along Cape Fear River*

Given the magnitude of the task ahead, the board has met as often as every week in its first few months, alternating start-up business discussions with educational sessions focused on topics relevant to the Endowment's mandate. The board has purposefully tapped a range of voices locally and elsewhere to deepen its collective understanding of the county's most pressing issues and to learn from the experiences of other communities and other foundations.

Each board member knew from the start that NHCE's work would be of central importance to the region. Collectively, the board is determined for the Endowment to be a unique catalyst for the county and its residents, an engine for improving the health, education, safety, and economic opportunity of every person in the community.

## THE MANDATE

The Chief Executive Officer of the New Hanover Community Endowment will have an awe-inspiring challenge: Embrace the legacy of service long characteristic of the New Hanover Regional Medical Center and capitalize on the unique opportunity for impact inherent in the foundation made possible by its sale.



*New Hanover County Arboretum*

## THE ORGANIZATION

At its launch, NHCE became one of the largest foundations in North Carolina. On a per-capita basis it may be the largest health legacy foundation in the country.<sup>2</sup> At present, the Endowment is essentially a paper foundation, with just one full-time employee. Designing and building an organization worthy of the Endowment's mandate will be among the CEO's early priorities.

In the Endowment's staffing and operations, the board intends to model best practices for the community it serves, reinforcing at every turn the core values of integrity, transparency, inclusivity, courage, collaboration and accountability in the quest for lasting impact.

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*This city gave my family a life—literally. I owe it to my community and my children to support this effort.*  
*--A grateful community leader*

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While the Endowment's programmatic focus has yet to be defined in detail, several themes of interest have emerged from board deliberations to date. Informed by preliminary analytics and input from a variety of neighborhood and community leaders, the board expects grantmaking to fall into four broad categories:

- ▀ Health resources, access and equity
- ▀ Community development and economic mobility

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<sup>2</sup> For example, NHCE's per-capita funding is about \$5200 per resident, more than three times that of the Asheville-based Dogwood Health Trust.

- Public education and youth development
- Public safety.

## THE LOCATION

New Hanover Community Endowment is based in Wilmington, the seat of New Hanover County (shown in red on the nearby map), in North Carolina's coastal southeast. Although the second-smallest of the state's 100 counties, New Hanover County has enjoyed robust growth, doubling in population since 1990 to about 240,000 residents.



Wilmington and New Hanover County offer a modern-day version of the tale of two cities. On the one hand, the area boasts a thriving downtown that would be the envy of any mid-sized city, a sizeable seaport, a booming real estate market (especially near the Atlantic coast), a reasonably diverse economy conducive to entrepreneurial ventures, vibrant institutions of higher learning, numerous cultural and recreational venues, and an engaged group of community leaders who share the Endowment's vision of an inclusive and equitable future to the benefit of all.

On the other hand,

- Nine in ten children in several of the county's census tracts live in poverty, up 30% in the last decade
- The county's economic mobility is among the worst in the country
- The prevalence of cancer is tied for 5<sup>th</sup>-worst among all counties in the United States
- Nearly half the county's Black residents and over a quarter of its Hispanic residents live in a food desert<sup>3</sup>
- Affordable housing is scarce or worse, with 30% of Wilmington residents spending more than half their income on rent
- Fourth-grade reading proficiency has declined in recent years, especially for non-White students—down two percentage points for White fourth-



*Downtown Wilmington*

<sup>3</sup> <https://capefearcollective.org/collective-voice/collective-voice/food-deserts/>

graders, almost six percentage points for Blacks and over 16 points for Hispanics

- 41% of Latino and Hispanic males working full time live below 200% of the federal poverty line, vs. 13% of Black men and 8% of White men.<sup>4</sup>

Like many communities, New Hanover County has a complex racial past that continues to influence the area’s social fabric today. Of particular note is the insurrection of 1898, when, through intimidation and violence, a group of White supremacists overthrew Wilmington’s duly elected multiracial government, forcing city officials to resign at gunpoint and banishing prominent Blacks and sympathetic Whites from the town.

The painful story is detailed elsewhere,<sup>5</sup> but an article from the History Channel hints at the aftermath:



*1898 Memorial Park*

When the carnage ended, more than 100 Black government officials—city councilmen, the city clerk, the treasurer, the city attorney and others—had been forced from their elected roles. Somewhere between 60 and 250 Black citizens were murdered. After the coup, ... no one was ever prosecuted or punished, [and] no Black citizen would again serve in public office for three-quarters of a century.<sup>6</sup>

The *Washington Post* noted last fall that “Wilmington’s African American community, a shining post-Civil War model of Black upward mobility, has never recovered.”<sup>7</sup>

While the Endowment’s board cannot correct every injustice or disparity resulting from the region’s past, it is committed to embracing the pursuit of equity in all its work. The region’s future should be informed by its history but

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<sup>4</sup> Observations extracted from a summary by MDC, with data sourced from Cape Fear Collective, the National Equity Atlas, PolicyLink, the US Census and the New York Times

<sup>5</sup> Notably in *Wilmington’s Lie: The Murderous Coup of 1898 and the Rise of White Supremacy*, by Pulitzer Prize-winning author David Zucchino; and *Wilmington on Fire*, a 2015 documentary by Christopher Everett

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.history.com/news/wilmington-massacre-1898-coup>. Zucchino notes elsewhere the number of registered Black voters in NC declined from 126,000 in 1896 to about 6000 by 1902.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2020/10/29/wilmington-coup-massacre-election-trump/>

not constrained by it. The Endowment’s board deeply respects the opportunity it has to promote both collaboration with and access for those faced with long-time structural impediments.

In short, Wilmington and New Hanover County define a highly attractive region with entrenched social issues and a major new philanthropic force determined to develop creative, even transformative solutions in active partnership with the community.

## THE RELATIONSHIPS

<b><i>The CEO reports to</i></b>	New Hanover Community Endowment Board of Directors
<b><i>And works closely with</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committees of the Board</li> <li>• A cross-section of leaders and organizations with a vested interest in a sustainable, equitable future, including those from academia; the business sector; the faith community; local, regional and state government; public health; and the nonprofit community</li> </ul>
<b><i>And directs</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A staff the size and profile of which have yet to be determined</li> </ul>
<b><i>While stewarding other key relationships, such as:</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major philanthropies in North Carolina and elsewhere</li> <li>• Program partners, co-funders and collaborators</li> <li>• Regional and national thought leaders on issues relevant to NHCE’s programming</li> <li>• Local leaders and neighborhoods not accustomed to having a voice</li> <li>• NHCE’s consultants, program advisors, legal and investment counsel and auditors</li> </ul>

## THE MANDATE

NHCE’s Board of Directors intends for the Endowment to be a catalyst for transformation throughout its service area. Accordingly, the first CEO can expect to inherit an evolving mandate along the following lines:

🚩 **Organization:** Build and lead a team with aspirations and qualifications commensurate with those of the Endowment itself, while modeling NHCE’s core values of integrity, transparency, inclusivity, courage, collaboration and accountability.

🚩 **Protocols.** Adapting best practices of other foundations and communities, develop for the board’s endorsement a protocol for grant development, analysis, recommendation, funding and evaluation.

🚩 **Program of work.** In concert with the board and with appropriate input from the community and relevant thought-leaders elsewhere, develop an initial approach and framework to uncover, develop and support opportunities for sustainable impact within the Endowment’s four broad focus areas.

🚩 **Governance.** Consistent with the board’s stated aspirations for bold initiatives, big ideas and transformative investments in the community, support the board’s strategic role with information and recommendations rooted in meticulous research and rigorous analysis while remaining open to creative opportunities that may warrant quicker action.

🚩 **Relationships.** The ultimate success of the Endowment will depend less on the size of its grants and more on the trust it establishes with the community it has been created to serve. While not every relationship needs to reside with the CEO personally, the CEO must embody NHCE’s ethos, setting the tone for all the Endowment’s relationships, whether institutional or personal, especially those with historically underserved communities



*Brooklyn Arts Center,  
“where community and creativity flourish”*

Even though the work has barely begun, the founding board already envisions some markers of progress towards its long-term vision. Examples from recent discussions, with details yet to be determined:

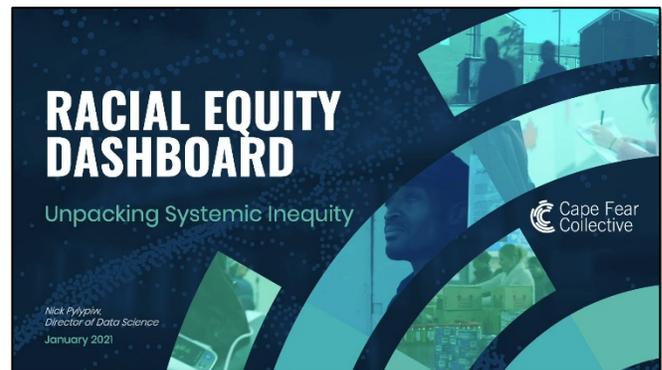
- 🚩 A narrowing of the economic gap, resulting from improved opportunities for all and improved access to those opportunities
- 🚩 Improved access to healthcare, including behavioral health
- 🚩 Improved educational opportunities and outcomes for the area’s students, especially those beset with low expectations

- A sharp decline in gang violence and drug abuse, with a corresponding rise in the belief that ours is a safe community
- An increase in affordable housing and a decline in concentrated poverty
- A staff and leadership that has earned the community's trust, one that is rightly viewed as intentionally collaborative and personally invested in the community's success.

## THE CANDIDATE

The opportunity to lead NHCE from start-up to impact deserves a special combination of empathy, energy, humility and confidence. The CEO must be both student and teacher, manager and mentor, an active listener who embraces iterative learning.

The Board of Directors seeks an impactful leader comfortable with complexity, ambitious for the community and accustomed to accountability. Assets of interest include a demonstrated commitment to racial equity and a record of successful, innovative collaboration.



Candidates of greatest appeal are likely to offer a compelling mix of the following experiences and characteristics:

### **Expertise: The ideal candidate will offer...**

- A record of impactful leadership in a significant community-based context, preferably encompassing endowments and grantmaking
- The benefit of having been tested in publicly visible environments, delivering progress against bold ambitions with a minimum of drama
- A respectful and empowering executive with the confidence to build a formidable team and the humility to give them rein in tackling complex challenges
- A balance of strategic and tactical leadership, informed by the mutual trust established with strong colleagues
- Financial savviness and respect for the power of data
- Experience working with strong boards made up of independent thinkers with diverse life experiences
- Respect for the impact of a community's history on current events and circumstances

- Effective management of competing priorities and expectations
- A record of effective collaboration across various constituencies
- Evidence of commitment to racial equity, born out of lived experience or professional engagement
- An informed perspective on transformative, place-based giving
- The skills of a general manager, the passion of a community activist, and the commitment of an engaged resident who knows “This is my community too.”

**Culture: NHCE seeks a CEO who is...**

- Courageous, resilient and tenacious in pursuit of progress on a community’s most intractable issues
- A positive disrupter; a change agent willing to take large, bold steps
- An artful relationship-builder who also knows how to say “No” gracefully
- Focused on the long view, prepared to forego short-term comfort or easy choices for long-term gains
- Culturally adept, meeting all people where they are
- Personable and inspiring, inviting participation and ownership
- Grounded in values the Endowment holds dear—integrity, transparency, inclusivity, courage, collaboration and accountability
- Invested in the larger community, not simply as the CEO of a grantmaker, but as an engaged citizen.



*The Cape Fear River, Wilmington, NC*

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**For potential consideration or to recommend a prospect,  
please email appropriate materials to**

**[NHCE@BoardWalkConsulting.com](mailto:NHCE@BoardWalkConsulting.com)**

**or call**

**Sam Pettway, Crystal Stephens or Patti Kish at  
(404) BoardWalk (404-262-7392).**

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