



KANNAPOLIS — Business and government leaders celebrated the groundbreaking of a 63,322-square-foot Rowan-Cabarrus Community College training facility at the North Carolina Research Campus on Friday, calling it an important step for the future of North Carolina's economy.

The \$26 million building will take 14 months to complete and will house classes for individuals seeking the community college's associate degree in biotechnology research and development as well as classes for the associate's degree in agricultural biotechnology.



"We're going to be teaching thousands and thousands of people here over the years," said David Murdock, owner of Castle & Cooke Inc. and Dole Food Company Inc., and the visionary behind the North Carolina Research Campus.

The building will be completed in time to open for RCCC's 2010 fall semester, providing students with opportunities for hands-on biotechnology training, according to the community college.

"The education and hands-on training that will be provided at this cutting-edge facility will lead to jobs in fields that continue to grow, despite the downturn in other job sectors," R. Scott Ralls, president of the N.C. Community College System, said in a statement about the new facility. "This is another example of North Carolina's community colleges responding to the needs of an evolving economy."

Lt. Gov. Walter Dalton spoke at the groundbreaking about how the research campus is a symbol of the future.

"The 21st century economy is a global economy and that's why this campus is so important," Dalton said to the audience gathered for the groundbreaking. "It is setting the state not only for this state, but for the nation and the world."

Dalton said the N.C. Research Campus will turn ideas into prototypes and prototypes into patents, bringing innovation to the field of biotechnology.

"On behalf of the state, I want you to know we're very proud of this campus," Dalton said. "We are committed to putting people back to work with 21st century jobs."

RCCC's associate degree in biotechnology research and development prepares students for jobs in a biotechnology laboratory. Program graduates are trained to pursue jobs as lab technicians, research assistants, and quality control associates. The degree prepares graduates to work with various employers, including small testing labs, large manufacturers, government laboratories and research universities.

The associate degree in agricultural biotechnology will help meet the demand for laboratory technicians in biological, chemical and agricultural technology.