



### *Dental School Funding*

The Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce recently made a trip to the Raleigh Legislative Office to present its 2011 Legislative Agenda to our Pitt County delegation. One of the Chamber's support-items includes the need for \$3.5 million of recurring operating funds of (FY 2012) for the East Carolina University of Dentistry. The ECU School of Dental Medicine is developing a national model for dental education that will recruit students from rural, underserved communities, provide students with an innovative curriculum needed to work in those areas and create 8 to 10 dental /oral health delivery centers in dentally underserved communities across the state.

ECU's dental school plans to admit its first students for the fall semester of 2011. About 50 students will enter the program every year. The first four locations announced to serve as centers for dental aid (in underserved communities) are Sylva, Ahoskie, Elizabeth City, and Lillington. Dental school faculty members will be based in the centers, along with advanced dental residents and senior students who will receive enhanced dental education in real practice settings.

The Pitt County legislators filed the dental bill earlier this week so it continues to move through the process, and like all other funding proposals, will be carefully reviewed by members of the leadership. In collaboration with ECU, the Chamber is working every angle possible to help the General Assembly understand that the dental school must progress or ECU's accreditation will be at risk as will the loss of a \$100 million investment already made by the state – not to mention the 50 North Carolina students who have already been admitted to the program. We will continue to offer our support to help meet the critical dental needs in eastern North Carolina.

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