

Item Title: Approve Memorandum of Understanding with East Carolina University

Specific Action Requested:

That the Board of Commissioners authorizes the County Manager to execute a Memorandum of Understanding with East Carolina University (ECU) to provide an Executive Masters in Public Administration Program, subject to terms and conditions acceptable to the County Attorney.

Item Summary:

Purpose: The Board of Commissioners must approve multi-year contracts.

Background: Leadership development and effective succession planning are key components for any thriving organization. Wake County leadership is committed to supporting developing leaders, building internal capacity, and sustaining a talent pipeline within the County. The County is launching a partnership with East Carolina University (ECU) to build that leadership capacity. The County's goal is to cultivate future leaders within Wake County and build career-long connections with emerging local government leaders. The Wake Leadership Fellows Program will provide employees a cohort-based experience that culminates with participating employees receiving an Executive Masters of Public Administration (eMPA) degree.

Strategic Plan: This action directly supports Foundations for Service Goal 2: Increase overall employee satisfaction to 90% by 2029.

Fiscal Impact: This action will cost approximately \$40,000 for the 2-year program (4 students at approximately \$10,000 per student). No additional appropriation for FY26 is required. Ongoing expenditures will be included as part of the annual budget process.

Additional Information:

ECU's Executive Masters of Public Administration (eMPA) mission is to develop principled and skilled public service professionals who fulfill leadership roles within governmental and nonprofit organizations. The graduate degree will address the professional development needs of emerging Wake County municipal and county employee leaders. The Executive MPA program is a 2-year experience for a cohort of employees from Wake County and surrounding municipalities. The eMPA program is completely online, with periodic in-person cohort meetings and learning experiences. Centered on local government and leans on experiences of actual local practitioners.

The County's MOU with ECU will cover the cost of tuition and fees, anticipated at \$10,000 per participant for the entire two-year program. The County will pay ECU per semester. The County will work with each participating employee to cover books, materials or other class fees.

The MOU also will cover participating Wake County municipality employees also participating in the program. The County will have reimbursement agreements with each participating municipality that ensures each municipality reimburses the County for their participant's enrollment by the start of each semester.

The County Manager's Office will lead the application-based process for Wake County employees. Employees must have continuous service for at least three years, with a "successful" performance rating or better for each of the last three performance evaluation cycles. Additionally, applicants must have a resume' that demonstrates five years of professional experience and at least three years of managing people or processes. Applicants will need to provide their college transcript, along with reference letters from their supervisor and a co-worker.

Attachments:

None.