PCC Student Ambassador receives Academic Excellence Award

Piedmont Community College (PCC) student Jonitta Davis of Roxboro was one of more than 65 students statewide honored by NC Community Colleges during its 2011 Excellence Event, “The Great Within the 58,” on April 14 at the Jane S. McKimmon Conference and Training Center on NC State University’s campus. Davis received an Academic Excellence Award in recognition of her academic achievements at PCC. Before an audience of more than 600 people, Davis walked across the stage to receive a plaque and a medallion from NC Community Colleges President Dr. Scott Ralls and State Board of Community Colleges chair Hilda Pinnix-Ragland.

Davis will graduate from PCC next month, earning an associate degree in computer programming with an almost perfect 3.96 grade point average. Like many community college students, her road to a degree did not follow a straight path. She completed three years at a North Carolina university working towards an engineering degree before dissatisfaction with her education made her decide to drop out. As a wife and mother, she moved to another state and put her education on the back burner—until her life took some dramatic changes.

Following the loss of her mother to a drunk driver, Davis’ felt her life began to unravel. She would soon find herself a single mother as well, moving herself and her three daughters to her dad’s home in North Carolina. After being a stay at home mom for more than six years, she found herself at crossroads.

“At a time when I was dealing with personal life-changing experiences, Piedmont Community College became my stepping stone for a new beginning,” said Davis. “I felt helpless. When I received the PCC class schedule in the mail, I realized that going back to
school was an opportunity that was going to give me a chance to eventually provide for my girls.”

At PCC, she found what she needed—both in education and student support. “I never would have imagined that PCC would also become an extended family. PCC’s great staff, faculty and diverse enrollment made me feel welcomed, appreciated, and unique. PCC helped me realize that my potential is endless, and I appreciate that.”

As an Academic Excellence Award recipient, Davis was also invited to the North Carolina Governor’s Mansion for a reception prior to the awards luncheon.

“Excellence occurs every day at each of our 58 community colleges,” said Dr. Scott Ralls, NC Community College System President. “While we continue to serve more students with fewer resources, the people we recognized today are shining examples of how community college staff, faculty and administration continue to pull together and offer hope to the students who enter our doors looking for new opportunities and new beginnings.”

The luncheon event included the presentation of the I.E. Ready Award to Dr. Bob H. Greene, former president of Forsyth Technical Community College and former State Board Member. The I.E. Ready Award, the highest honor bestowed by the State Board of Community Colleges, was created in 1983 to recognize individuals who have made significant, statewide contributions to the establishment, development or enhancement of the N.C. Community College System. The award is named for the late Isaac Epps Ready, the first state director of the System.

Dr. Patricia Skinner, President of Gaston College, was named the System’s tenth Wells Fargo President of the Year. Marian Dillahunt-Andrews, Developmental Studies Instructor of English and Reading at Vance-Granville Community College (VGCC), was named this year’s R.J. Reynolds Excellence in Teaching Award. Mark W. Best, Director of Workforce Readiness and Special Programs at Craven Community College (CCC), was the recipient of the BB&T Staff Person of the Year.

Jackson & Sons Heating and Air Conditioning, owned by David and Danny Jackson of Dudley, N.C., and Wayne Community College (WCC) in Goldsboro, were named Distinguished Partners in Excellence.