

MARITIME ADMINISTRATION
U.S. Department of Transportation
Center of Excellence (CoE) for Domestic Workforce Training and Education

Cape Fear Community College – Wilmington, North Carolina

The Secretary of Transportation redesignates Cape Fear Community College (CFCC) as a Center of Excellence for Domestic Maritime Workforce Training and Education (CoE) for its 58-year history of experiential oceanographic instruction, specialized boatbuilding tracks, and robust coastal fleet assets. Operating from its waterfront campus on the Cape Fear River in Wilmington, North Carolina, CFCC delivers comprehensive afloat and ashore vocational training directly aligned with marine scientific research, hydrographic surveying, and regional boat manufacturing.

Operational Footprint & Assets

Instructional framework integrates hands-on underway training aboard working research vessels with composite manufacturing and traditional woodworking labs.

- **Afloat Marine Technology Track:** Conducts a 2-year Associate in Applied Science (AAS) in Marine Technology focused on oceanographic support. Students log 32 days underway at sea operating specialized seismic and hydrographic instrumentation, including multibeam echo sounders, side-scan sonar, sub-bottom profilers, and biological sampling gear.
- **Training Fleet Infrastructure:** Owns and operates the 135-ft flagship oceanographic research vessel *R/V CAPE HATTERAS*, the 53-ft coastal research vessel *R/V MARTECH*, and a fleet of six small boats under 30 ft for inshore navigation and seamanship instruction.
- **Stackable Ashore Boatbuilding Diplomas:** Delivers two 1-year stackable diploma programs in Wooden Boat Building and Boat Manufacture & Service, providing hands-on instruction in lofting, composite/fiberglass lamination, marine spray finishing, and boat electrical, plumbing, and mechanical system installation.

Workforce & Regional Impact

Serves as a primary talent pipeline for scientific, commercial, and defense sectors across the Atlantic seaboard and national maritime industries.

- **High Graduate Placement:** Achieves a 94% job placement rate for Marine Technology graduates, placing alumni into key roles with employers including Geodynamics LLC, TI Coastal Services, Weeks Marine, McKim & Creed, Fugro, US Army Corps of Engineers, and the NC Division of Marine Fisheries.
- **Enrollment & Completion Throughput:** Enrolled over 280 students across its maritime pathways between Fall 2021 and Fall 2022, generating over 40 graduates annually in Marine Technology, Boat Building, and Boat Manufacture.
- **Research & Fleet Operations Support:** Provided critical vessel charter support to the U.S. Navy for environmental mitigation during the shock trial of the aircraft carrier *USS Gerald R. Ford*, and regularly supports research projects for the University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW) and regional weather buoy maintenance.

- **K-12 STEM Partnerships:** Partnered with New Hanover County's Ashley High School Marine Science Academy through the College and Career Promise program, hosting annual hands-on training cruises and enabling high school seniors to complete up to a third of their college degree coursework before graduation.

Strategic Outlook

To meet emerging economic drivers such as the growth of the Atlantic Offshore Wind sector and coastal infrastructure expansion, CFCC continues to modernize its hydrographic survey suites and marine electronics labs. By combining high-level marine science, advanced data acquisition, and specialized boat construction, Cape Fear Community College maintains a vital pipeline of technically proficient professionals essential to sustaining America's blue economy and oceanographic research capabilities.