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My favorite tree is a Ginkgo. A life form of uncommon beauty - its leaf a curved fan of striking geometry.

It is presumptuous and grandiose to compare our program to the longevity of the ginkgo, but in the span of leadership development we are an old tree. The visionaries of the Richardson Foundation, nearly six decades ago, set about embedding a cohort-based program for exceptional students in four NC universities when leadership development, particularly with young adults, had yet to sprout. That was our original seed. That seed landed in the rich soil of NC State and took root, thanks to the favorable conditions of dedicated leaders (Banks Talley and Gerald Hawkins) and the advocacy of the Alumni Association who under the leadership of Bryce Younts garnered the resources from countless NC State alumni to support that young sapling. Like the ginkgo, we have weathered environmental challenges and the rockiness of our own learning journey along the way.

"Today, ginkgos line the streets of countless cities and rustle in parks all over the world. ... Six ginkgos were among the handful of organisms that survived the bombing of Hiroshima. ...the ginkgos are still alive, rising from the ruins of our capacity for destruction by hate as an emblem of our capacity...for love." - Maria Popova

Talking about love in the context of a university leadership development program may sound out of place. For servant-leadership, however, it is a core value and the nutrient we need to survive and thrive through the challenges and unknowns of living and leading in an ever-changing world.

"Ginkgophytes were, in their evolutionary heyday, the foremost innovators of the plant kingdom. They could shed leaves in winter, go dormant in low-light seasons, switch between stub growth and branch growth depending on conditions, and resprout from lignotubers — energy-storing roots — after disturbances. On a prior planet with relatively few tall plants and no fast-growing angiosperms, ginkgophytes achieved dominance as generalists." - Jared Farmer

Indeed, one must be a generalist and innovator when it comes to the world of leadership, drawing from the knowledge and energy of other life forms, intertwining our roots for growth and resilience. As our alumni, like ginkgos, you are across the globe, lining the streets of countless cities and country sides. May the rich roots of this program continue to ground us all as we journey our aspirational mission of leadership for the greater good.

~Janice

Alumni Involvement

State of the Program Meeting

Wednesday, October 22

7:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Virtual

Join us for an update of the Fellows work in leadership development. We continue to learn and evolve in the ambition of providing an impactful program.

You'll hear about our continuing evolution in experiential learning, stories of growth and impact from current Fellows and recent graduates, an update on our program's financial health and sustainability, and our thoughtful plans for deepening this work in the years ahead.

Alumni engagement is a key factor to the critical work in developing leaders of moral clarity, resilience, and courage. Providing a State of the Program session each semester is a new undertaking of the Caldwell staff. We look forward to your questions and input.

Register via the zoom link below.

Register for State of the Program

Red & White Week

Wednesday, October 22

7:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Virtual

Caldwell Fellows alumni are distinctly generous with their contributions of time and talent to the program. The Alumni Association (AEAG) is hosting a volunteer appreciation lunch during Red & White week, Friday, Oct. 31, 11:30 - 1:30 and has extended invitations to those who have served across the past year as selection volunteers, coaches, mentors, wilderness leaders, committee members and speakers for the Fellows. (If you missed this invitation and would like to join us to celebrate your contributions, please contact Anne Powers at aspowers@ncsu.edu.)

Selection Season is Upon Us!

On October 1, the online application for the Caldwell Fellows Class of 2029 opens for first-year students at NC State. On January 13, 2026, the application portal closes, and we turn to you for the formidable task of reviewing applications. Last year there were a record-breaking 360 applicants to the program! Key to the effectiveness of our selection process is the participation of alumni and friends whose experience and belief in our mission help identify those best suited to the program. This is where you come in.

Now is the time to let us know of your interest in any of the three stages of selection

- **Online reviews (January 16 - 22)** - this consists of reviewing and ranking a set of applications on your own following our criteria rubric.
- **Semi-finalist day (Saturday, February 7, on Main Campus)** - this is a full day of small group interactions with applicants. This continues to be a fruitful vetting stage in our selection process.
- **Selection day/finalist interviews (Saturday, February 21, on Centennial Campus)** - this is the main event in which each of the 60 remaining candidates are interviewed multiple times and ranked. (A full menu of selection weekend events is forthcoming.)

The brief interest form linked below details the stages and timelines. Express your interest by December 16; we will contact you that week to confirm your role.

[Volunteer for Selection](#)

Mentoring

Want to receive mentoring?

As a service to the program, our recently-trained Caldwell Fellows mentors are offering mentoring opportunities to any interested Caldwell Fellows alumni. **Complete the form linked below by Sunday, October 19** to be paired with an alumni mentor.

Keep in mind that mentoring differs from coaching. Mentoring and coaching serve different but complementary purposes:

- **Mentoring** draws on wisdom and experience, with mentors providing guidance and advice based on their knowledge and expertise in specific areas
- **Coaching** partners with you in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires you to maximize your personal and professional potential, focusing on visioning, success, and moving toward your future goals

Mentoring sessions will be offered virtually. Mentoring is provided at no charge, but we encourage alumni to make a contribution to the Caldwell Fellows Fund, which supports mentor training through the Center for Creative Leadership. The mentee sets the agendas for sessions, and all sessions are confidential.

If you have any questions, please contact Chester at ckbrewe2@ncsu.edu.

Sign up

More ways to get involved...

Caldwell Dinner Seminars

Monthly dinner seminars are made richer by those around the table. This year, we are inviting alumni to the table. Dinner seminars are on Sunday evenings, 5 - 7 pm. RSVP below to select a date you'd like to attend for the Fall semester. Our remaining Fall 2025 date is November 16. We will launch sign up for our Spring dinners, January 11, and March 8, later in the year.

Register for dinner

Selection & Alumni Weekend: February 20 - 22, 2026.

Save the date for a full weekend of events:

- Friday, February 20:
 1. A day-long Alumni-only Conference
 2. An evening meet and greet at the StateView Hotel bar
- Saturday, February 21
 1. Finalist Interviews at the Hunt Library
 2. Caldwell Conversations
 3. Our annual Gala returns to the NC Museum of Art

We particularly look forward to acknowledging decade anniversaries for the classes of: 1976 – *Golden Graduates*, along with 1986, 1996, 2006, and 2016!

A room block at The State View hotel is now available for the February weekend. Contact the State View Hotel directly to make your reservation. Our room block last year filled quickly...!

For more details visit <https://caldwellfellows.ncsu.edu/the-alumni-experience/>

Alumni Spotlight

From Tailgate Trash to Climate Solutions: One Fellow's Game-Changing Idea

What started as a simple proposal to bring recycling to NC State football tailgates became a career-defining experience for Paul Mobley. The Caldwell Fellow turned his "Chuck It" initiative into a campus-wide sustainability program—despite setbacks that nearly derailed the project. Today, he's a senior research engineer at RTI International leading carbon capture work, and he credits those early lessons in persistence and problem-solving for shaping his approach to environmental innovation. His advice to students? "Find what you're passionate about, and don't stop. Just follow through, even if the road gets bumpy."

[Read more](#)



Caldwell Fellows Program

<https://caldwellfellows.ncsu.edu/>

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