Event promotes ‘Growth’
UNCP hosts Entrepreneurship Summit

The theme of “Growth and Sustainability” was fitting for the fourth annual Entrepreneurship Summit at The University of North Carolina at Pembroke.

The E-Summit is sponsored by the Thomas Family Center for Entrepreneurship, whose growing network in the region was on display. The 5-year-old center supports academic programs in entrepreneurship at UNCP and consults with new and small businesses in the community.

More than 120 people attended the event at the university's Regional Center for Economic, Community and Professional Development in COMTech.

Keynote speaker, state Treasurer Janet Cowell, was making her second appearance at a Thomas Center event.

"We have been touring North Carolina to talk about the Innovation Fund," she said. "We came to Pembroke in 2010 to talk about it because you have such a great entrepreneurship center."

The $232 million fund has already committed $120 million to finance growing and diverse businesses across North Carolina, Cowell said. The fund was started to provide capital funding and jobs following the recession.

"Anybody in elected office is focused on jobs," Cowell said. "We have a long way to go and our theme is ‘Keep Calm and Carry On.’"

Cowell, who has filed for re-election, said that this is a critical time for her office and the state. Besides investing the state’s $8 billion pension fund, the treasurer’s office recently took on management of the state’s health insurance plan.

"The state health plan affects the state’s bond rating, the state

Mark Scott is a partner in the Aberdeen manufacturing company, Thermal Metal Treating, which employs 24 people. When the metalworking company bought the Longleaf Collection, which makes upscale hardware for doors, it turned to UNCP for marketing assistance.

"When we bought the hardware company, we also bought 500 customers," Scott said. "At this phase, we were fortunate enough to get the assistance of the Thomas Family Center and Dr. Carmen Calabrese. A group of MBA students gave us a market analysis that we use to grow and market our product today."

Heidi Dent is co-CEO of Hirease, a 20-year-old service company that provides background information to companies about prospective employees. She earned an MBA from UNCP.

Aaron Thomas, a 2001 UNCP graduate, founded Metcon Construction in Pembroke and has built several signature UNCP buildings. The company, which he founded at age 24, was recently named National Minority Construction Company of the Year by the United States Department of Commerce.

Participating in the summit were the owners of both new and established businesses. Dr. Thomas Maynor, vice president of operations for Robeson Healthcare, and Mary Thomas-Locklear, the company’s vice president of human resources, led a small contingent to the E-Summit. The Thomas Center recently began consulting on a marketing plan with the non-profit health care provider.

For information about the Thomas Family Center for Entrepreneurship, call 910-775-4208 or email tete@uncp.edu.

Scott Bigelow is the associate director of public relations for The University of North Carolina at Pembroke.