

# textiles center in transition

*for new era, new outreach*



Modern spinning frames in place at the Center for Applied Textile Technology offers opportunities for development of new concepts.

Representatives of the textiles industry, Gaston County officials, and community college leaders have begun work on a plan to re-energize the structure and outreach of the state's only service agency for the textiles industry – the Center for Applied Textiles Technology.

The initial meeting February 16 in Raleigh was chaired by Kennon Briggs, vice president of the State Community College system. Also on the committee are Dan St. Louis, manager of the Hosiery Technology Center; former N.C. House Speaker Carl Stewart of Gastonia; Gaston Community College President Pat Skinner; Foundation board director Ed Wilburn of Wellman Yarns; trustee board member Steve Dobbins, president of Carolina Mills Inc. and Gwen Perkins, the center's director. Representatives of Gaston Community College trustees and the Gaston County Board of Commissioners also are on the committee.

A special study commissioned by the North Carolina General Assembly and completed in October 2004 concluded the future structure of the textiles center should resemble that of the Hosiery Technology Center.

That model would have the textiles center operating as a division of Gaston Community College. The center would have a managing director that would have authority to recruit, employ and terminate personnel. The center also would operate with separate line-item budget funds from the General Assembly. Income earned by the textile center for testing, research and development also would be controlled by the center management.

Specific details of governance will be developed by the transition committee under the leadership of Briggs.

Recently the leadership of the textile center board determined that updating of a strategies

plan should be pursued. Ongoing changes in the state's textiles community will be considered by the board which is expected to continue in a policy role after fiduciary responsibilities are assumed by Gaston Community College.

Opportunities for the textiles center are vast, according to St. Louis who envisions a partnership to strengthen the hosiery industry supply chain. The textiles center has the capabilities to produce yarn for prototyping new products and deliver that yarn within a short time, he said. Quick response and development of value-driven hosiery products will be the key to the future of the domestic hosiery and textiles industries, he asserts.



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