In 2006, East Carolina alumni James and Connie Maynard made a decision that has already changed the lives of students in the university’s College of Education and communities throughout eastern North Carolina. Through a gift to the College of Education, they established the Maynard Scholarship program, which funds scholarships for 10 students from eastern North Carolina each year and requires that recipients teach in a public, charter, or government school in eastern North Carolina after graduation.

“Both of us really value education for the kids of eastern North Carolina. We feel like ECU does a marvelous job of serving the area where we were both raised, and our way to try to have a small part in the education of children in eastern North Carolina is through creating new teachers,” said James Maynard. “It was our choice to invest our money in kids interested in education. We felt like you couldn’t do anything better for the kids.”

In 2010, they renewed their commitment to the Maynard Scholars program for four more years and committed to funding the Maynard Access Scholars Fund, which will provide scholarship support to 10 students over a five-year period.

James, originally from Jacksonville, North Carolina, and Connie Mizelle Maynard, originally from Plymouth, North Carolina, met at East Carolina, where James majored in psychology and Connie majored in elementary education. Married nearly 50 years, they have two children, Easter and Quinton, and four grandchildren. James is cofounder and chairman of Investors Management Corp., the holding company that owns Golden Corral restaurants. With more than 500 restaurants in 41 states, Maynard has built Golden Corral into a major restaurant chain across the country.

The Maynards fund a number of other scholarships and programs at ECU, including one in the School of Music that honors James’s late brother and one that honors Connie’s late mother, Jeanette, and provide corporate support of the College of Human Ecology by funding the Golden Corral Culinary Center in the hospitality management program. But educating students and training teachers has been their main focus of late.

“Our personal experience with the schools and the economic conditions of eastern North Carolina, we feel like you couldn’t do anything better for the kids than try to improve their education,” James Maynard said. “We can do that through developing really outstanding teachers, and those young people that go into the Maynard Scholars program are people that have expressed a desire and demonstrated their ability to be top performers.”

“I had wonderful teachers in Plymouth growing up, and I was so prepared coming here,” Connie Maynard said. “I had such a good experience because of my teachers being so good. I want to be the same kind of teachers for the children coming up now.”

In 2010, James and Connie Maynard renewed their support of the Maynard Scholars program for ECU’s College of Education. The program named in their honor provides scholarship support to a select group of students from eastern North Carolina, provided they return to teach in eastern North Carolina schools.

“Our vision would be that children in eastern North Carolina are able to have a better education because of the dedicated teachers that will come out of this program and go back into the east.”

—JAMES MAYNARD

Maynard Scholars have up to seven years after graduation to teach in eastern North Carolina.

“We feel like that by targeting students from eastern North Carolina, they are more likely to teach here,” Connie said.

“That’s our homeland,” said James.

With the success of the first four years of the program, both James and Connie Maynard have high hopes for the long-term impact of the Maynard Scholars program.

“Our vision would be that children in eastern North Carolina are able to have a better education because of the dedicated teachers that will come out of this program and go back into the east,” James said.

“Success would be that there are more kids from eastern North Carolina that do go to college and become fully productive citizens.”

And they urge other alumni to follow their lead and contribute to the school, college or program of their choice.

“The satisfaction that comes from making investments in your university is as meaningful to a life’s work as almost anything a person could do,” James said.

“If you are fortunate to get an education at your university, giving back is easy and pleasurable.”

For more information about the Maynard Scholars program, contact Teaching Fellows Director Dionna Manning at 252-328-4126 or manningd@ecu.edu. For more information about contributing to the College of Education, contact Nancy Romney at 252-328-9500 or romany@ecu.edu.