

THE TRANSITION FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO COLLEGE IN NORTH CAROLINA

FACT SHEET

As with any transition point in the educational pipeline, the entrance into college represents a student's transition **FROM** something existing (high school) **TO** something new (college). This means that both sides of the transition have responsibilities. The high school side has responsibility for preparing students to be successful in college. The postsecondary side has responsibility for assisting students in making that transition successfully. This overview of the status of the transition to college in North Carolina includes relevant data points from both side of the transition as well as a summary of existing policy and programmatic initiatives designed to increase the number of students making the transition successfully.



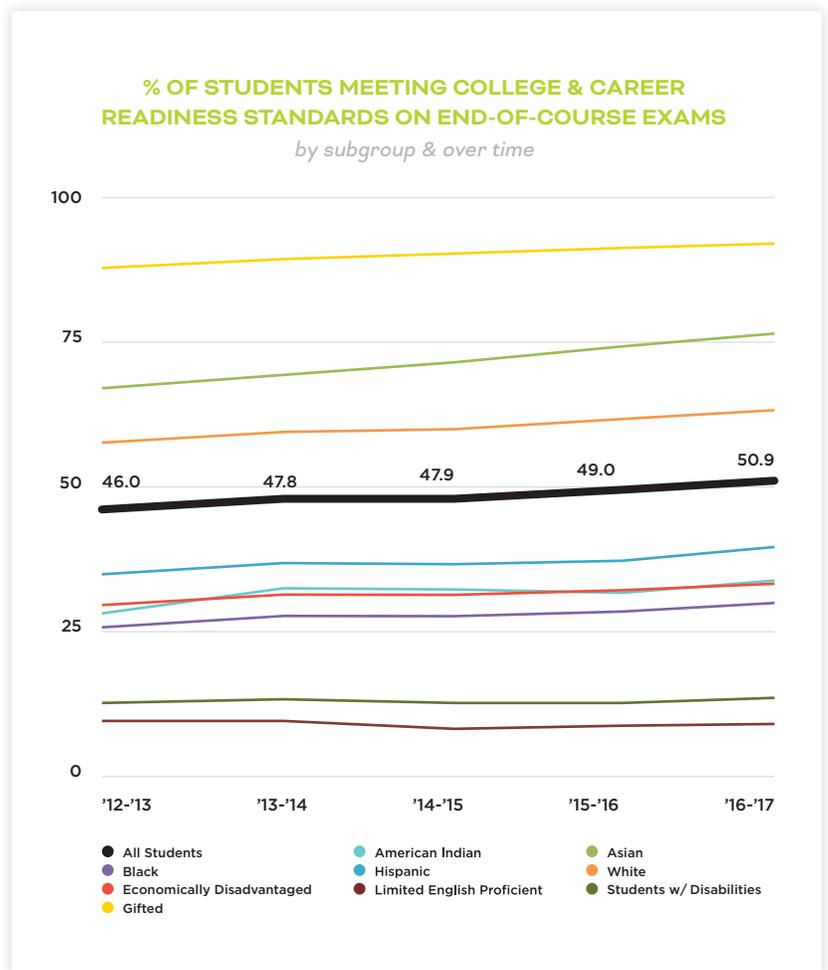
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Transition to college pipeline: Out of every 100 9th grade students, 86 graduate from high school, and 57 enroll in postsecondary education within 16 months of graduation.¹

What are important factors to consider in the transition to college?

- *Academic preparation* — Do students have the academic skills and knowledge necessary for college?
- *“College Knowledge”* — Do students understand the logistical processes of the transition to college, including taking necessary tests, completing college applications, applying for financial aid, and registering for classes?
- *Financial support* — Do students have the financial support for college? (This is particularly important for low-income and first-generation college-goers.)
- *Support and engagement* — When students enroll in college, do they have support? Do they engage in college activities in a way that will allow them to be successful?

Key data points on academic preparation: The percentage of high school students testing at College and Career Readiness levels on end-of-course exams has increased slightly over the past four years but is still at approximately 50%.² Less than half of NC’s high school students are considered college-ready when looking at ACT scores.³



Challenges are greater in math, and for minority students, low-income students, students with disabilities, and those who are limited English proficient.

Key data points on financial support: In 2017, 52 of North Carolina's 115 school districts had fewer than 60% of their students completing the Federal Application for Financial Student Aid (the FAFSA). Polk County was the only county with a FAFSA completion rate of over 80%.⁴

58% of NC college graduates have debt. The average debt is \$25,562, ninth lowest in the country.⁵

Key data points on academic preparation and college knowledge: One way to prepare students is to have them take college-level courses while in high school. The percentage of high school students taking college level courses has almost tripled in the last three years, up from 3.3% in 2014 to 8.9% in 2017. A slight increase occurred in Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate (AP/IB) courses with a slight decline in Career and Technical Education coursetaking.⁶

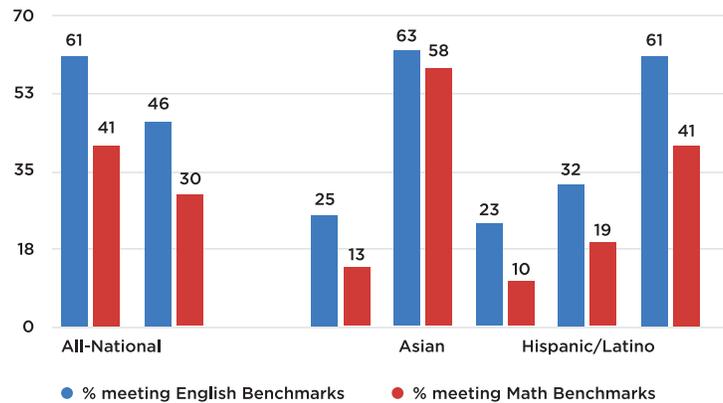
Key data points on enrollment and performance in postsecondary education: Despite an increase in applications from 2009-2015, enrollment in the UNC system slightly declined over the same time period.⁷

In 2015, first year GPA for students in the UNC system was 2.98. GPA has been slowly increasing over time.⁸

In 2016, the overall success rate for community college system students in college-level English was 52%; in college-level math, it was 30%.⁹

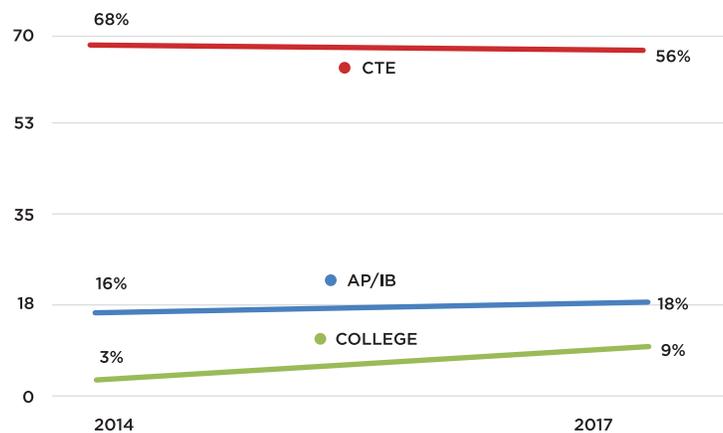
PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS MEETING ACT COLLEGE READINESS BENCHMARKS IN ENGLISH AND MATH

(2017)



PERCENTAGE OF NC HS STUDENTS ENROLLED IN SPECIALIZED COURSES

(2014-2017)



What has North Carolina done to facilitate the transition to college?

Key Policy Initiatives:

- High school graduation requirements were increased (starting with the freshman cohort of 2012-2013) to require a default college preparatory course of study aligned to UNC system requirements.
- Career and College Promise increases students' academic preparation and "College Knowledge" by providing access to college courses while in high school. This includes successful models such as the early college high school where students can earn a high school diploma and associate degree at the same time. Students are also



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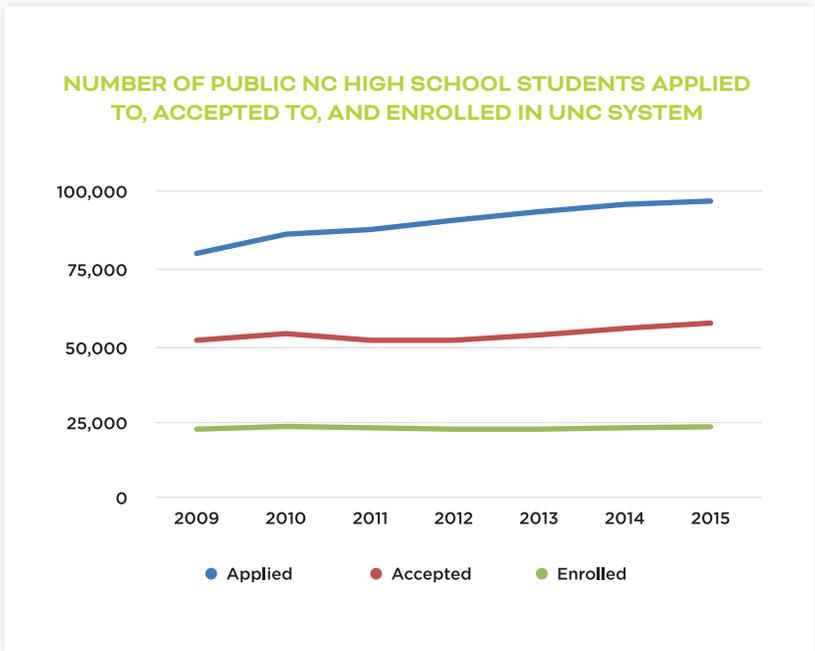
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required to focus their courses on pathways intended to lead to a major or credential.

- New state legislation requires high school seniors who have not met community college readiness standards to take developmental education and remediation courses in high school. In 2016-2017, pilots were being implemented with seven community colleges.

Key Programmatic Efforts:

- The state of North Carolina sponsors a website (CFNC.org) to help students in NC apply to college and for financial aid.
- The NC Community College System implements a legislatively mandated Career Coaching program to help students identify careers aligned to local needs and community college programs that can fill those needs. A total of 28 coaches associated with 15 community colleges were proposed for 2017-2018.
- Many high schools have college access programs, such as AVID or Gear Up, that provide students with college readiness skills.
- Many colleges provide summer bridge programs to get students used to college. More colleges are also providing comprehensive academic/social supports such as “Living and Learning Communities” that allow students to make connections and become more engaged in school.



1. Facts and Figures, Education in North Carolina, 2018. BestNC. <http://www.ncedfacts.org>
2. State, District, and School-level Drill-down Performance Data. <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/reporting/>
3. The ACT Profile Report, North Carolina. Graduating Class 2017. ACT. <https://www.act.org/content/act/en/research/condition-of-college-and-career-readiness-2017.html>
4. FAFSA completion by High School and Public School District. Federal Student Aid, U.S. Department of Education. <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/about/data-center/student/application-volume/fafsa-completion-high-school>
5. Student debt and the class of 2016. The Institute for College Access and Success. https://ticas.org/sites/default/files/pub_files/classof2016.pdf
6. Specialized Course Enrollment Table, 2014-2017. North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/src/researchers/>
7. Applicants, Public NC, Recent High School Graduate. University of North Carolina InfoCenter. <http://www.northcarolina.edu/infocenter#REPORTS>
8. First-Year GPA. University of North Carolina InfoCenter. <http://www.northcarolina.edu/infocenter#REPORTS>
9. 2017 Performance Measures for Student Success, North Carolina Community College System. <http://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/analytics/state-and-federal-performance-measures>