

PROFOUND GENTLEMEN (Mecklenburg)

PROGRAM PROFILE

“Profound Gentlemen creates this environment where more male teachers of color have that critical mentor and can, in turn, impact boys of color.” — *Co-founder*

“Profound Gentlemen has given me the tools to be a better leader inside and outside the classroom.” — *Math teacher in a Charlotte-Mecklenburg middle school*

What Is the Profound Gentlemen Program?

Profound Gentlemen (PG) aims to improve the academic performance of students by ensuring a diverse teaching pool. In particular, the organization focuses on retaining the relatively few male educators of color in the sector. Launched in Charlotte in 2014 by two former middle school teachers, the program seeks to accelerate the personal, professional, and leadership development of emerging and current male educators of color.

As the program points out, of the 10,000 educators in Charlotte, fewer than 450 are male teachers of color — and 27 percent of that cohort are projected to leave the profession after the first year. These numbers are particularly troubling, given that research indicates that having an African-American teacher improves the social, emotional, and academic progress of all students, especially of low-income boys of color. Specifically, having at least one African-American teacher in grades 3–5 reduces by 39 percent the probability of a low-income African-American male dropping out before completing high school.

Who Are the Partners and What Are Their Roles?

- **Profound Gentlemen:** Delivers high-impact programming to educators of color.
- **UNC Charlotte’s Urban Educators Program:** Provides research and evaluation support for the PG program.
- **Charlotte Mecklenburg School District:** Hosts PG members at new teacher hiring fairs, invites them to speak at retreats and training events, and includes PG among the opportunities for teachers’ professional development.
- **ShermCo:** A national strategic planning partner helping to develop the expansion blueprint.
- **Social Venture Partners Charlotte:** Part of a global network of strategic philanthropists helping to strengthen high-impact organizations that are attacking social and economic inequality.
- **Programs that recruit teachers to the profession:** Offer PG a pipeline to new teachers.



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How Does the Program Work?

PG has experimented with several models in several states in its short history. At one point, PG had local programming in five cities — Atlanta, Charlotte, Chicago, Memphis, and Washington, D.C. — and a special emphasis on connecting educators in the same feeder school pipelines in each of these cities. These are all cities with strong economies in sectors requiring postsecondary educational attainment. As shown in **Figure 1**, Mecklenburg County residents' post-secondary educational attainment is, on average, 50 percent higher than the state as a whole.

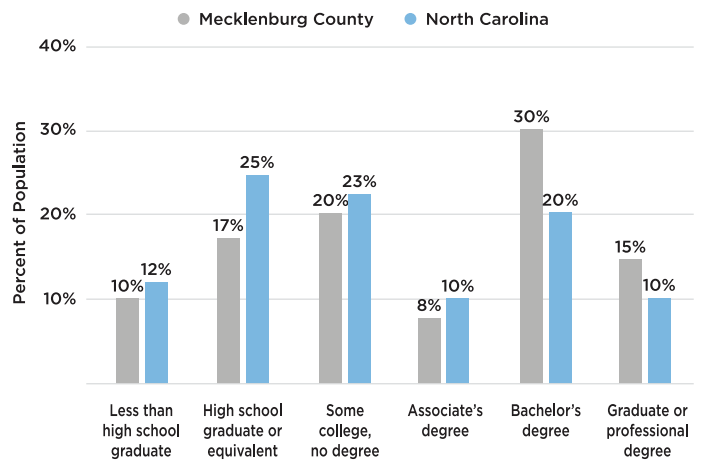
Today, the focus is on expanding the full-time cohort model that was developed in Charlotte. This model responds to research from Dr. Chance Lewis at UNC Charlotte on the four main reasons male educators of color leave the classroom:

1. Barriers to navigating the profession
2. Lack of mentorship
3. Lack of professional development
4. Lack of career opportunities to help them advance

PG focuses on direct peer mentorship, sponsoring professional development activities, and facilitating community-building through participant gatherings. Current and aspiring male educators of color (the “Gentlemen”) join PG primarily through its website. Almost three out of every four Gentlemen are encouraged to join by a current member. Other applicants are recruited during PG events at schools, school district-wide events, and the annual PG conference in March. Applications are accepted in August, January, and March of each academic year. Of the 410 spots available this year, applicants in August secured 360. This level of demand is not unusual; each year there are between 50–60 educators of color placed on a waiting list for the next academic year.

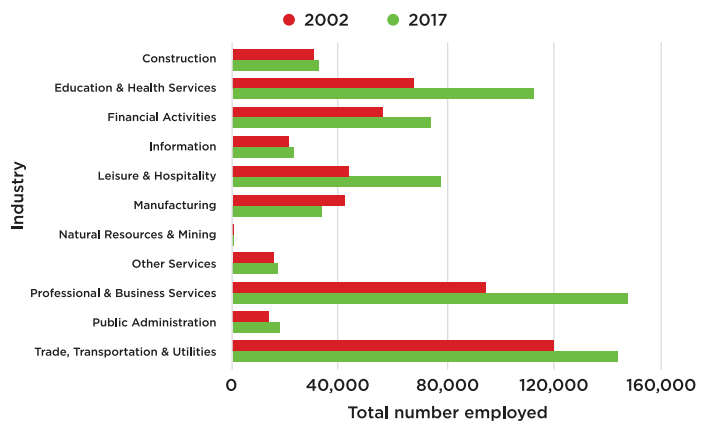
PG places each accepted applicant in a small cohort of 15–20 Gentlemen. Cohorts are led by an Impact Leader who serves as a life/career and instructional coach for the Gentlemen. Each Gentleman receives an Impact Professional Development Plan to document goals and develop an education leadership pathway to further impact his community. Participants are required to have at least 20 hours of contact with their Impact Leader per year. They are also expected to take advantage of PG’s varied and plentiful programming. There are monthly in-person and virtual workshops that are led by Gentlemen to encourage peer learning. There are also content-rich weekend retreats featuring outside speakers and an annual three-day conference held in Charlotte. Finally, there are multiple casual social meet-ups. During many of these programs, participants have the chance to connect their teaching to the goal of preparing young people for the changing labor market in Charlotte, as detailed in **Figure 2**.

FIG. 1: MECKLENBURG COUNTY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT (Ages 25–64)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012–2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

FIG. 2: MECKLENBURG COUNTY EMPLOYMENT (by Industry, 2002 & 2017)



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages.



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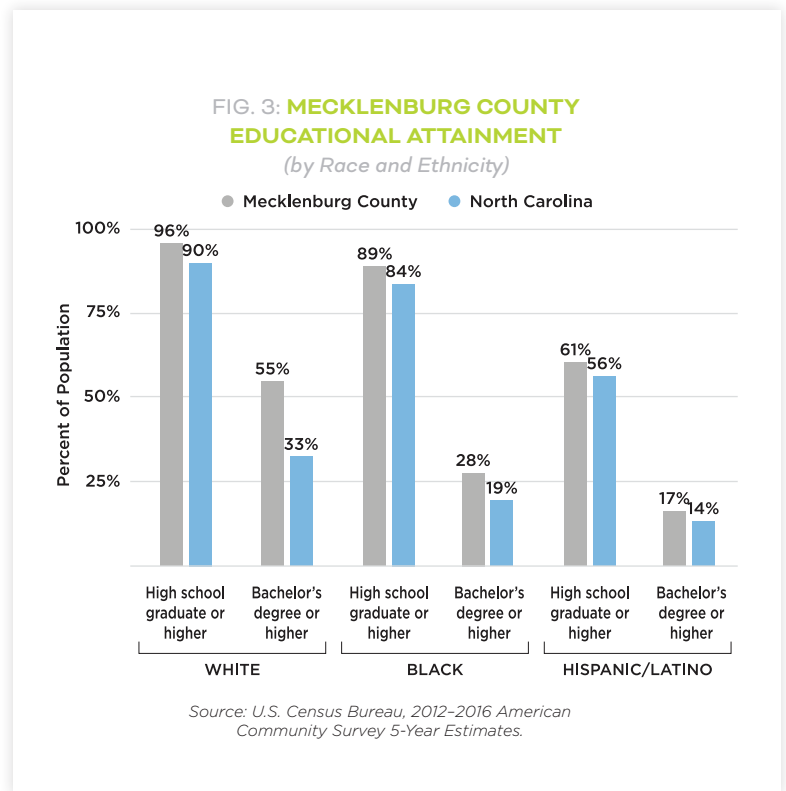
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In addition to providing its own programming, PG sponsors educators to attend relevant conferences hosted by statewide and national organizations. The diversity of programming available to Gentlemen seeks to cater to the diverse needs of these educators. Gentlemen are not expected to participate in all programming, but they must meet the 20-hour minimum with their Impact Leader and attend the three-day conference in order to remain in the cohort.

Is the Program Data Driven?

Profound Gentlemen has an ambitious goal of returning 90 percent of program participants to the educational sector each year better prepared to impact all students. More specifically, they hope to see 70 percent of Gentlemen return to the school site the year after participating in a cohort. It is their belief that these metrics will lead to 90 percent of boys of color matriculating through their K-12 experience, amply prepared for college and career opportunities. This, in turn, would help to close the educational attainment gap for residents of color in Mecklenburg County (**Figure 3**).



What Are the Indicators of Success?

Over the program’s three years, more than 90 percent of Gentlemen participants have returned to the field of education. In the 2017-18 school year, 98 percent of the male educators of color in the network returned to the field, while in the previous school year, 100 percent of participants returned.

Beyond retention, another important early indicator of success is the increase in leadership roles and responsibilities assumed by Gentlemen after participating in PG. The program goal is to have 40 percent of the participants take on a leadership role. In 2018, 80 percent of participants reported engaging in leadership activity in the field.

What Is the Promise of this Strategy for Increasing Educational Attainment in North Carolina?

PG responds to two important areas of research. First, as is true for much of the nation, North Carolina struggles to retain male educators of color in the profession. Only 2 percent of teachers in public schools are men of color. Second, PG’s mission is directly responsive to research indicating that, when students of color have an educator of color during K-12, they are more likely to graduate from high school, experience increased self-esteem, and have a greater chance of pursuing a four-year college degree.

Further, school districts often struggle with retaining male educators of color, who are five times more likely to leave the education profession than other demographic groups.



Although PG's membership likely consists of educators already motivated to stay in the field, it has demonstrated not only an ability to retain males of color but to prepare them for leadership. As noted above, 80 percent of Gentlemen participating in 2016-17 took on leadership roles in their communities in 2018.

PG has developed a strategic plan to expand across North Carolina. The program has already opened a site in Edgecombe County and begun recruitment of cohorts in eastern North Carolina and the Triangle. Interest in the program is as high in other parts of the state as it has been in Charlotte.

As part of the new strategic plan, PG hopes to go as deep as it goes broad. The group now seeks to work with large percentages of males of color within a given school district. For example, PG has plans to work directly with a third of the males of color in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School district by 2019-20. This will allow PG to test whether their participants are making a meaningful difference in the classroom. At present, 87 percent of participants say they are using PG resources and believe they are better teachers because of it. Now, PG has an opportunity to use student surveys of teachers and scores on student growth and proficiency tests to demonstrate the impact of Gentlemen in the classroom.

