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A CALL TO  
**ACTION**

for the State of North Carolina



*A Report by the Steering Committee of the myFutureNC Commission*



# TO OUR FELLOW NORTH CAROLINIANS

*Our state is at a critical crossroad. One path leads us to a North Carolina with empowered individuals, strong communities and a prosperous economy. The other is characterized by large disparities in opportunity, vitality and competitiveness.*

*Right now, the data are stark. If we do not come together to redirect our state, we will fail to realize a future in which all North Carolinians thrive.*

Today, **fewer than half of North Carolinians ages 25-44 hold a postsecondary degree or high-quality credential**, but the vast majority of newly created jobs require education beyond a high school diploma. By next year, 67% of the jobs in our state will demand a postsecondary credential or degree.

Indeed, over the last 30 years, **our state has experienced considerable declines in blue collar jobs and unprecedented surges in skilled service jobs such as finance or healthcare**. But our talent supply is not keeping pace with these changes. Last year, North Carolinian employers cited lack of technical skills and education among applicants as the primary reasons why they struggled to fill job vacancies.

And, importantly, **our educational opportunities are not equitably distributed across the state**: far fewer North Carolina students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds earn postsecondary credentials than do students with greater economic stability.

Recognizing that no one system or organization can tackle this crisis alone, the myFutureNC Commission was created to bring together North Carolina's thought leaders in education, business, philanthropy, faith-based and non-profit communities, and ex-officio representatives from the North Carolina House of Representatives, Senate, and Governor's Office. Over the last year, we have conducted research and collected input from experts across the state to develop a vision—from preschool through postsecondary and the workforce—for a stronger and more competitive North Carolina.

Our vision begins with an ambitious goal: 2 million North Carolinians with a postsecondary credential or degree by the year 2030. This will mean more than doubling our projected attainment growth over the next 10 years. But this is not simply attainment for attainment's sake. We are dedicated to ensuring that the postsecondary credentials and degrees counted in this goal will align with the needs of North Carolina's rapidly changing economy.

Establishing the goal is only the first step. The real work will be to deepen collaboration across the education and workforce continuum in order to eliminate systemic barriers to achievement, prepare students for work, and expand opportunities for skills training in our local communities. Our success will be dependent on both state and local leadership and we ask for the support and engagement of our local communities as we take this next step together.

The myFutureNC Steering Committee is committed to seeing this work through to 2030. In the months ahead, we will focus our efforts to engage local communities, but we will also lay plans to catalyze action and monitor progress toward the goal. Together, we will put North Carolina on a path to a more prosperous future.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*The myFutureNC Commission's Call to Action proposes a Statewide Attainment Goal, along with Benchmark Measurements, Focus Areas, and a comprehensive list of Priorities, to serve as a beacon for better coordination of our state's education sectors over the next 12 years.*

## WHAT MOTIVATES US TO ACT?

North Carolina is growing—not just in size, but also in diversity and in economic activity—and in many cases these changes are happening faster than our education systems are able to match. Employers in some sectors already struggle to fill vacancies, and as many as half of the occupations available today are projected to transform significantly in the coming years, increasing demand for workers with a broader portfolio of higher education experiences. These changes create a host of opportunities for our state, but also a number of challenges, particularly for our ongoing efforts to strengthen the alignment between our education systems and our economy, as well as to project labor market needs to inform that alignment. In response to these challenges, the *myFutureNC Commission* was formed to create a vision for education across North Carolina, from early childhood through postsecondary,



that includes a state-level attainment goal, key benchmarks for measuring progress toward reaching that goal, and priority areas to guide the state as it works collaboratively to turn the vision into reality. The result of the Commission's work is this stakeholder-generated, multi-sector Call to Action.

## **OUR 2030 GOAL:** 2 MILLION 25- TO 44-YEAR-OLDS WILL HAVE A HIGH-QUALITY POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIAL OR DEGREE.

## **WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO?**

### **ATTAINMENT GOAL**

The Commission recommends an overall statewide attainment goal by 2030 of *two million 25- to 44-year-olds* (about two-thirds of the projected state population in that age range) *with a high-quality postsecondary credential or degree*. This goal balances a desire to measure and promote ambitious, near-term improvements with the longer time horizon required to realize systemic change across the education spectrum.





## EDUCATION CONTINUUM INDICATORS

The Commission further recommends tracking a set of performance indicators to ensure that progress across the education continuum will help the state meet the overall attainment goal. Indicators might include:

1. Enrollment in high-quality pre-Kindergarten
2. 4th grade NAEP proficiency
3. 8th grade NAEP proficiency
4. Share of ACT test takers with composite mean score of 17 or above
5. K-12 student chronic absenteeism rate
6. 5-year cohort high school graduation rate
7. Share of qualified high school seniors completing the FAFSA
8. Postsecondary enrollment<sup>1</sup> rate
9. Postsecondary persistence rate
10. Postsecondary completion rates

## LABOR MARKET OUTCOME MEASURES

In addition, the Commission recommends tracking labor market supply and demand outcome measures to ensure that progress toward the goal is having a positive impact on the state's social, educational, and economic well-being.

This might include:

1. Share of young adults enrolled in school or working
2. Overall labor force participation rate
3. Share of mid-career adults with family income at or above a living wage
4. Current workforce demand compared to supply of graduates by market sector category
5. Forecasted workforce demand compared to supply of graduates by market sector category

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1. Enrollment, persistence, and completion in postsecondary degree and high-quality credentialing programs.



## 4 FOCUS AREAS:

EDUCATION & WORKFORCE ALIGNMENT

ACCESS TO LIFELONG EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

PREPARATION FOR EDUCATION, CAREER & LIFE

COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT SYSTEMS

# ATTAINMENT GOAL 2030

## HOW DO WE GET THERE?

To meet the goal, the Commission recommends four *Focus Areas* to guide the state's work, and 16 cross-sector *Priorities*. The Focus Areas and Priorities in this document evolved from the discussions that took place during Commission and Committee meetings held between November 2017 and December 2018, from technical papers commissioned and distributed by myFutureNC, and from feedback and information derived from myFutureNC's statewide Listening Tour (conducted in the spring and summer of 2018).

There are four broad Focus Areas: **Education and Workforce Alignment**; **Access to Lifelong Educational Opportunities**; **Preparation for Education, Career, and Life**; and **Comprehensive Support Systems**.

### 1. **Education and Workforce Alignment**

- » Align Academic Expectations across P-12 and Postsecondary
- » Ensure Seamless Transitions across Education Sectors
- » Develop More Pathways from Education to Meaningful North Carolina Careers

### 2. **Access to Lifelong Educational Opportunities**

- » Ensure Access to a High-Quality Learning Environment for Every Student at Every Level
- » Improve Postsecondary Access and Affordability
- » Strengthen Educational Opportunities in Economically Distressed Communities



### 3. **Preparation for Education, Career, and Life**

- » Recruit, Develop, and Retain Excellent Educators Statewide
- » Adopt Rigorous, Standards-aligned, Culturally Relevant Curricula
- » Prioritize High-Quality Early Learning
- » Strengthen Postsecondary Readiness
- » Accelerate and Expand Pathways to a Postsecondary Credential
- » Expand Work-based Learning Opportunities

### 4. **Comprehensive Support Systems**

- » Coordinate Student Support Systems
- » Raise Postsecondary Aspirations and Improve Access to Information about Postsecondary Opportunities
- » Strengthen and Expand Guidance for Postsecondary Student Success
- » Increase Adult Continuous Learning and Re-entry into the Workforce



## BUILDING & SUSTAINING MOMENTUM

Meeting the challenges posed by these Priorities so that we can reach our ambitious attainment goal will not be easy. In order to do so, North Carolina must leverage all of the important work already underway in the state and support the establishment and growth of the new work necessary to fill in critical gaps. To move this important work forward, the myFutureNC Commission proposes four *Action Areas* for sustaining momentum:

1. **Communications and Advocacy:** Launch a statewide communications and marketing campaign that emphasizes the economic value of industry-aligned postsecondary credentials.
2. **Governance:** Develop and implement a plan for moving the work forward in 2019 and for quickly catalyzing public and private actors to work collectively to achieve the attainment goal.
3. **Data-Driven Execution and Improvement:** Expand North Carolina's longitudinal data system—from P-12 through the business and industry sector—to securely manage data, inform research to develop and revise policies and practices, and develop priority public reports and dashboards aligned with metrics that support the postsecondary attainment goal.



4. **Accountability:** Establish and maintain an accountability structure to ensure delivery on the Priorities outlined in this Call to Action.

These components also will provide guidance to the myFutureNC initiative as its stakeholders work to translate the Commission's *Call to Action* into a *Plan of Action*. The Call describes where we want to go as a state; the Plan, which will be developed beginning in 2019, will outline how to get there.

