

Educational Attainment as NC's Recovery Strategy

Policy Recommendations

August 24, 2020

Background

Postsecondary education is a critical path forward for post-COVID economic recovery. The pandemic has brought many challenges and highlights the importance of education after high school. The state must capitalize on one of the best education infrastructures in the nation by working during this time to improve delivery of education and support to students to result in better college readiness, and higher college enrollment and completion rates with degrees and credentials that align with business and industry needs.

All people have been affected greatly by the pandemic, but those without postsecondary degrees or high-quality credentials have been hit especially hard economically. Data from Georgetown University shows that in April 2020, 19.2% of workers with a high school education level or less were unemployed as compared to just 8.5% of workers with a bachelor's degree or higher. Education is both a short-term recovery approach and a long-term strategy to ensure our residents have the required skills and education to navigate a fluctuating economy. North Carolina leaders have a deep commitment and history of working collaboratively to support educational opportunities for all.

A SHARED VISION FOR EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



North Carolina's path to short-term recovery and long-term economic stability

Amid crisis, to ensure students have the information, resources, and opportunities they need to enroll and succeed in college and beyond, North Carolina should focus on four areas: Readiness, Access, Completion, and Labor Market Alignment.

The priorities reflected on pages 2 and 3 represent the convergence of thought and agreement across all education sectors facilitated by myFutureNC. Individual sector legislative requests are not reflected here, but rather this represents cross-sector collective priorities under the myFutureNC umbrella.

A SHARED VISION FOR EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

BROADBAND: Access to broadband is the foundation for success for all initiatives and outcomes related to postsecondary readiness, access, completion, and alignment.

- Champion connection between attainment and broadband by supporting and encouraging efforts to expand access, affordability, and adoption throughout North Carolina.

READINESS: Increased commitment to [Career & College Ready Graduates \(S.L. 2015-241\)](#)

- **CCRG Remediation Resources:** Provide necessary supports for staff, professional development, and an annual subscription for the online course platform that allows for student access to remedial math and English/Language Arts courses.

ACCESS: Increase awareness and access to advising on career and college pathways & federal financial aid

- **NC Community College Career Coaches:** Expand access for students to NC Career Coaches, community college employees who are embedded in high schools. Career coaches assist high school students with determining career goals and identifying community college programs that align with those goals.
- **College Advising Corps:** Increase current capacity in existing counties and expand to remaining 17 counties, to focus on college enrollment among low-income, first-generation college, and underrepresented high school students by offering guidance on college admission, financial aid/FAFSA, and enrollment.
- **NCSEAA/CFNC: Staffing funding model:** Ensure adequate staffing capacity for a focus on FAFSA completions.
- **FAFSA communication campaign and tracking tool:** Support awareness campaign, including virtual advising and nudging; and, a tracking tool for real time data on FAFSA submissions, completions, and verifications.
- **FAFSA Incentives:** Provide incentives for schools/districts to increase FAFSA participation rates.

22%

of North Carolina households *do not* have broadband internet in the home.

55%

or ~396,000 North Carolina students in grades 3-8 *did not* earn a college and career ready score on the end-of grade Reading exam.

36%

or ~39,000 North Carolina high school seniors *did not* complete a FAFSA, leaving an estimated **\$89M** in federal Pell grants untapped by North Carolina students in 2019.

A SHARED VISION FOR EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT (continued)

COMPLETION: Reform Public Need-Based Financial Aid Programs

- **Public Student Aid Programs:** Simplify public student aid programs to incentivize student progress and completion, guided by the [UNC-NCCCS task force report](#) and national models.
- **Part-Way Home Student Aid:** Target student aid for “some college, no degree” adult students with eligibility available to North Carolina’s two and four-year public and private, non-profit sectors’ state financial aid programs.
- **College Advisors:** Increase training and capacity of college success coaches and advisors to encourage student retention and on-time graduation.
- **COVID-19 Student Supports:** Identify and support students impacted by COVID-19 who have withdrawn or at risk for withdrawing from school. Prioritize recruitment and retention efforts to help them complete a degree or credential through targeted financial aid and advising.

46%

of students in North Carolina who enroll in a postsecondary institution within 12 months of high school graduation *do not complete* a degree or credential within 6 years.

ALIGNMENT: Define, standardize, and incentivize non-degree NC Workforce Credentials to align with in-demand living wage jobs

- **Workforce Training and Pathways:** Provide resources to providers to support short-term training programs and pathways (e.g., develop new courses, update/modernize existing courses, support instructors, purchase equipment, reserve space) to address identified gaps.
- **Enrollment and Completion Incentives:** Incentivize enrollment and completion of programs and high-value pathways through student supports (e.g., financial aid, exam fees, advising) and other education-related costs.

50%

of North Carolina employers report *difficulty hiring* qualified staff.