

Educational Attainment as NC's Recovery Strategy

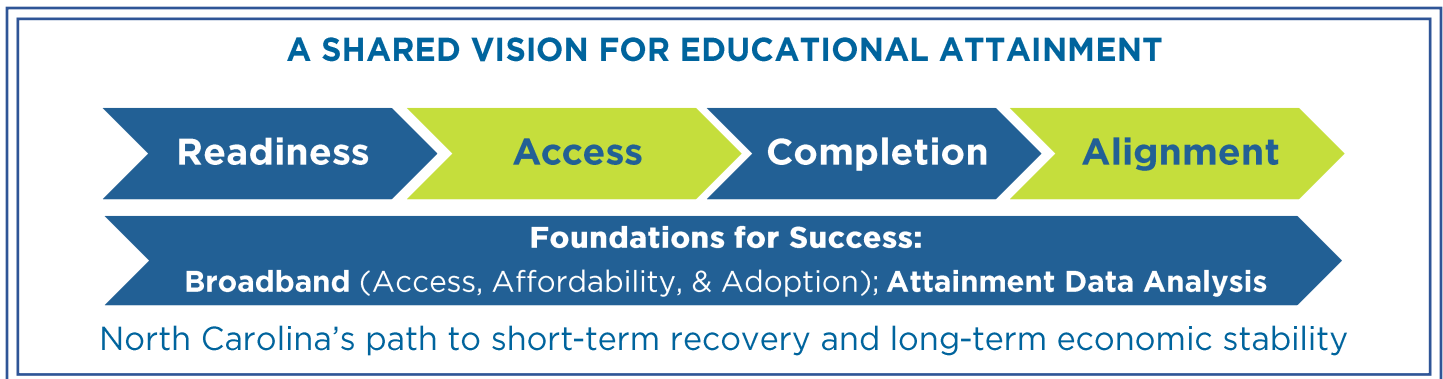
Updated Policy Recommendations

February 2021

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 resiliency 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.



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—as well as Foundations for Success across those four areas (broadband access, affordability and adoption, along with data analyses critical to educational attainment).

The priorities reflected on pages 2 and 3, as well as myFutureNC's commitments and advocacy plans for later years (page 4), 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

RECOMMENDED LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS

READINESS: Increase commitment to the [Career & College Ready Graduates](#) (CCRG) program ([SL 2015-241](#))

- **Resources:** Ensure access to developmental resources for all qualifying students by fully funding subscriptions for the online developmental course platform that provides remedial math and English/Language Arts support.
- **Instructor Support:** Provide funding for a CCRG Effectiveness Coordinator

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

- **Postsecondary and Career Advising:**
 - Expand the availability of [NC Community College Career Coaches](#)—community college employees embedded in high schools who help students set career goals and identify community college programs that align with those goals.
 - Expand the presence of the [College Advising Corps](#)—which focuses on college enrollment among low-income, first-generation college, and underrepresented high school students—by increasing program capacity to serve all counties.
- **Postsecondary Financial Aid:** Increase support for FAFSA completion by ensuring adequate staffing capacity at [NCSEAA/CFNC](#).

COMPLETION: Improve need-based student supports

- **Public Student Aid:** Consolidate and simplify public student need-based aid programs to incentivize student progress and completion, guided by the [UNC-NCCCS task force report](#) and national models.
- **COVID-19-Related Supports:** Identify and expand support across all North Carolina higher education sectors for students impacted by COVID-19 who have withdrawn or are 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.

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

- **Support for Credentialing Students:** Expand enrollment and completion supports for students in high-value secondary and postsecondary credential programs and pathways by paralleling the supports (e.g., financial aid, exam fees, advising) already available to degree-seeking students.

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 (2019).

42%

or ~48,000 North Carolina high school seniors *did not complete* a FAFSA, leaving an estimated **\$107M** in federal Pell grants untapped by North Carolina students (2020).

41%

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 (2018).

56%

of North Carolina employers report *difficulty hiring* qualified staff (2019).

FOUNDATIONS FOR SUCCESS: Expand broadband access, affordability, and adoption across North Carolina; Consistently collect and analyze cross-sector attainment data

- **Broadband Access:** Expand broadband access—a key foundation for the success of all initiatives and outcomes related to postsecondary readiness, access, completion, and alignment—by:
 - Accelerating support for longer-term infrastructure solutions;
 - Continuing to provide short-term, bridging connectivity efforts; and
 - Addressing localized online learning challenges stemming from lack of connectivity.
- **Attainment Data:** [*Note: mFNC is still in the process of developing and vetting recommendations for this category; recommendations under consideration include endorsement of: 1) the Government Data Analytics Center’s recommendations for formalizing the North Carolina Longitudinal Data System; 2) the Informed Decision-Making Collaborative’s proposed longitudinal data research agenda; and 3) sector plans for modernization of data platforms.*]

35%

of North Carolina households *do not* have broadband internet in the home (2018).

myFutureNC's COMMITMENTS FOR 2021

North Carolina cannot rely on state actions alone; we must all contribute if we are to reach our goal by 2030. To that end, myFutureNC commits to moving our work forward in the following ways. We plan to:

- **Readiness:** Work with NCDPI and NCCCS to improve uniform collection and analysis of CCRG data.
- **Access:** Maintain our focus on policies that increase FAFSA completion (e.g., make our *First in FAFSA* event annual, seek options for providing schools targeted FAFSA completion data, explore ways to leverage the state personal finance course), investigate options for providing funding for last-dollar tuition coverage, and begin identifying ways to streamline and coordinate college and career advising efforts.
- **Completion:** Work with NCCCS to identify ways to provide more College Success Advisors, and convene sector Partners to generate options for expanding credit opportunities.
- **Alignment:** Encourage sector leaders to formally establish an NC Workforce Credentials Council, and support sector efforts to develop more high-demand training pathways.
- **Foundations:** Work with Partners to explore ways to improve broadband access, affordability, and adoption for lower-income households, and support development of the state's longitudinal data system.

LOOKING AHEAD: ACTIONS TO CONSIDER FOR 2022-23

In 2022 and 2023, myFutureNC will push for more activity in each critical pathway:

- **Readiness:** Provide support for statewide developmental instruction training.
- **Access:** Partner to better coordinate college and career advising efforts.
- **Completion:** Expand need-based aid (including aid for Partway Home adult students) and develop strategies for engaging more adult learners.
- **Alignment:** Identify barriers to development of high-demand training programs.
- **Foundations:** Embrace public-private solutions for expanding broadband access, affordability, and adoption, and fully leverage a robust longitudinal data system.