

# myFUTURE NC

*2 million by 2030*



NORTH CAROLINA'S STATE OF

## **Educational Attainment Report**

August 9, 2022 - *Original Report*  
December 20, 2022 - *Updated Report*

*See Page 2 for More Details*

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Report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee  
of the North Carolina General Assembly pursuant to Session Law  
2019-55 House Bill 664 Section 1.(c) as provided by G.S. 120-29.5

# North Carolina's State of Educational Attainment

To ensure North Carolina remains economically competitive now and into the future, in 2019, with bipartisan support in the General Assembly and a signature from the Governor, the state of North Carolina adopted one of the most ambitious goals in the nation—to have 2 million North Carolinians ages 25-44 to hold an industry-valued credential or postsecondary degree by 2030.

This report outlines North Carolina's progress towards the goal. The data shows that while some metrics are trending in the right direction, the majority are flatlined or lagging. North Carolina's talent pipeline is in a state of emergency. The good news is... there is a path forward. This report highlights success stories that are already happening across our great state. It also forecasts needs and clear solutions. We are writing a new chapter in our State's history, and we are acting now!

## 2 million by 2030



North Carolina's educational attainment goal of 2 million degrees or industry-valued credentials by 2030 among North Carolinians ages 25-44.

## Report Updates

Since this report was issued to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on August 9, 2022, some data in this report has been updated. Data updates are noted with a red asterisk (\*) on pages 7-10, 13, 15, and 17.

Based on dialogue and feedback from our partners, some text within our Need Forecasts was also updated on pages 25-26. The myFutureNC Strategic Priorities (page 6) were updated and approved by the Board of Directors on November 10, 2022.

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myFutureNC's mission is to prepare North Carolina for the future by empowering individuals, strengthening communities, and ensuring our economic viability in a global economy. myFutureNC is working across sectors and in communities throughout the state to:

- Close gaps in postsecondary attainment.
- Promote alignment between educational programming and business/industry needs.
- Ultimately improve the quality of educational opportunities for all North Carolinians.





## From the Mountains to the Sea: A Stronger, More Competitive North Carolina

**myFutureNC**, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, aligns and coordinates local, regional, and state actions to dramatically increase the attainment of valuable credentials and postsecondary degrees.

We are committed to the development and sustainability of deep, collaborative relationships to advance the state's educational attainment goal. Our shared measures for **academic readiness, college and career access, postsecondary completion, and labor market alignment** are critical transition points needed to guide North Carolina toward a new economic landscape.

While we are **state-led**, the work must be **locally owned and driven**. Therefore, myFutureNC is proud to be within arm's reach of our communities from the mountains to the sea and everywhere in between.





## This is an Opportunity for All

**North Carolina is blessed with an economy that continues to boom.** We were recently recognized as [America's Top State for Business in 2022](#) and we have one of the **most robust education infrastructures in the nation.** Yet we still have **individuals without the training and skills needed for good-paying jobs our employers are struggling to fill.** Bridging our growing economy and our excellent education providers with employer needs and North Carolinians in need of upward mobility is more urgent than ever.

While the pandemic is not completely in the rearview mirror, we remain **forward focused and filled with hope.** We have successes to celebrate, while acknowledging much of the data tells a compelling story that North Carolina is facing a state of emergency around workforce talent and the education pipeline. We have an average of **9,500 students drop out of school each year, and 1 of every 9 individuals ages 16-24 is not in school and not working - predominantly low-income and persons of color.** Also, almost half of North Carolinians do not **earn a family-sustaining wage.** While our community colleges are showing signs of a rebound, **they experienced a significant 17% drop in enrollment in 2020** that will negatively impact completions in the years ahead.

The good news is... there is a path forward. **A path to prosperity exists for every North Carolinian.** This report will highlight success stories that are already happening across our great state. It will also forecast needs and clear solutions to get us to 2 million by 2030 and to lay the foundation that will transcend generations to come. We are writing a new chapter in our State's history, and **to fill jobs with skilled workers and provide opportunities for our citizens, the time to act is now.**

We are grateful for the broad-based support from our Board of Directors, private foundations, the corporate community, state and local leaders, practitioners, and policymakers that are working to ensure the realization of this shared vision for attainment.

Thank you for joining [myFutureNC](#) on our State's journey to reach **2 million by 2030!**



**Cecilia K. Holden**  
President/CEO  
myFutureNC



**Dale Jenkins**  
Board Chair  
myFutureNC





## Ensuring Opportunities for All North Carolinians

The demand for more workforce talent presents a significant opportunity to improve postsecondary readiness, access, and completion in North Carolina. This also comes with increased urgency for the state to drive alignment between our education systems and the needs of our businesses and industries.

Through cross-sector collaboration, our **Board of Directors** uniquely represents the full education-to-workforce continuum, bringing together leaders from our education sectors, the business community, philanthropy, and policy. Together, we are charting the path forward toward the state's shared vision for educational attainment: **2 million by 2030.**

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# Strategic Priorities

## Monitor & Report Progress

*Monitor and report progress on the 2 million by 2030 goal. Identify attainment trends and gaps through the curation and distribution of data.*

We track 18 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that represent the continuum of educational attainment of readiness, access, completion, and labor market alignment. These KPIs are leading indicators for success and are critical to tracking progress of both the local and statewide attainment goals.

In partnership with education, business, and government officials, we identify key attainment trends, potential gaps in services and programs, and solutions that can improve outcomes as measured by the KPIs. Data and research resources are curated and made publicly available.

## Accelerate Action

*Connect and convene partner stakeholders to communicate and advance promising practices. Propose solutions through the curation and distribution of data and research.*

We supplement and promote the work of education sectors to advance educational access and attainment. Increased postsecondary attainment will be achieved through local efforts that are aligned with employer's workforce needs. Our regional impact managers (RIMs) coordinate directly with local business, government, and education leaders to support local collaborative efforts.

We also identify and share promising attainment practices from around the state and nation, and work with both state and local leaders to turn promising practices into sustainable programs.

## Identify & Advocate for Policy Solutions

*Collaborate with sector leaders and partner stakeholders to identify and advocate for effective policies.*

We connect business leaders, education leaders, and the state's workforce development sectors. We support policies and programs across these entities that are making a positive impact on the overall attainment goal.

We use research and data, in collaboration with education and workforce sectors and other partner stakeholders, to identify potential policy and program gaps that are impeding progress towards local and statewide attainment goals. The myFutureNC board strives to achieve consensus wherever possible, on proposed policy solutions for which the myFutureNC organization and board advocate.



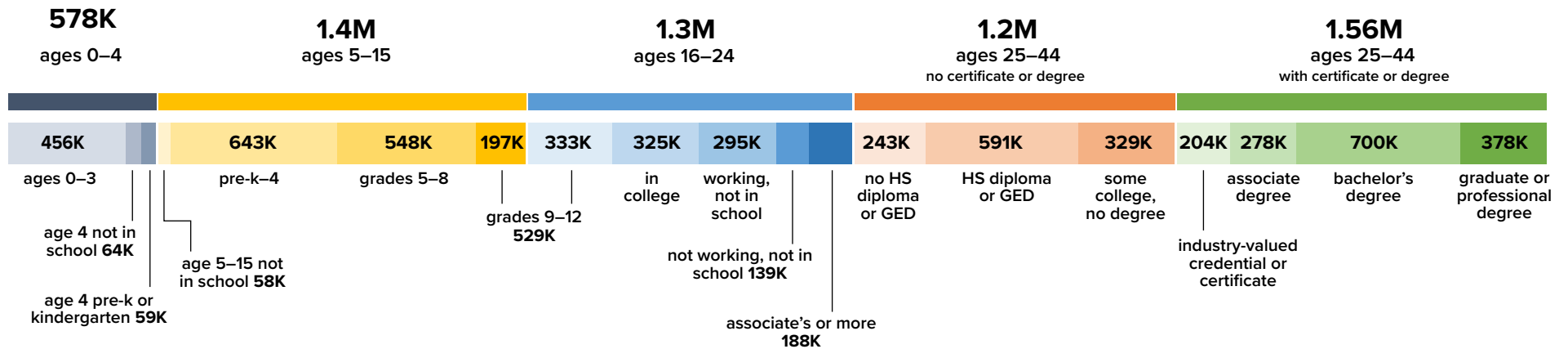


# Monitor and Report Progress

We recognize the goal of 2 million by 2030 will not happen without all stakeholders coming together. We must hold one another accountable by tracking and measuring progress of key metrics and the state's goal of 2 million by 2030. The most recent (2021 Census) data show North Carolina has 31K\* fewer individuals with industry-valued credentials or degrees than it needs to be on target to meet the goal.

## 2021 North Carolina Population by Educational Attainment\*

[ages 0-44]



# As a Partner, We Track 18 Key Performance Indicators

The myFutureNC Commission identified and prioritized **18 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** in four key transition areas:

- Academic Readiness
- College & Career Access
- Postsecondary Completion
- Labor-Market Alignment

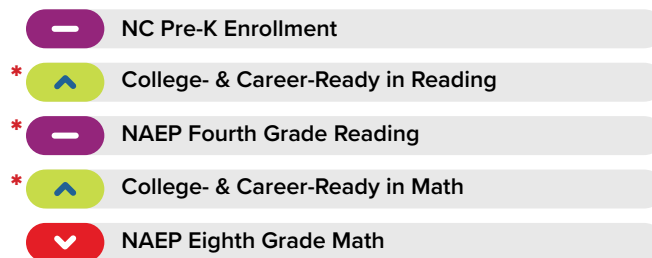
These data are a snapshot of North Carolina’s progress as we work collectively to achieve the state’s goal of 2 million North Carolinians ages 25-44 to have an industry-valued credential or postsecondary degree by 2030. Some KPIs are trending in the right direction for success, while others are not demonstrating the progress needed.

The data in myFutureNC’s Educational Attainment Report highlights some of our state’s successes, yet also demonstrate an urgent need to address three key areas for our state’s future: high school graduation rate, college enrollment, and opportunity youth.

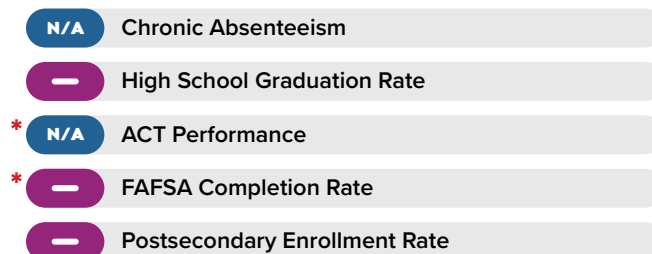
## The COVID Impact

*In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, starting in March of the 2019-2020 school year and continuing through the 2020-2021 school year, public school units across the state employed unprecedented methods to ensure continued student learning by utilizing various modes of instruction and student outreach. As such, caution should be taken when comparing data reported for the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years to data reported for prior and subsequent years.*

## Academic Readiness



## College & Career Access



## Postsecondary Completion



## Workforce Alignment



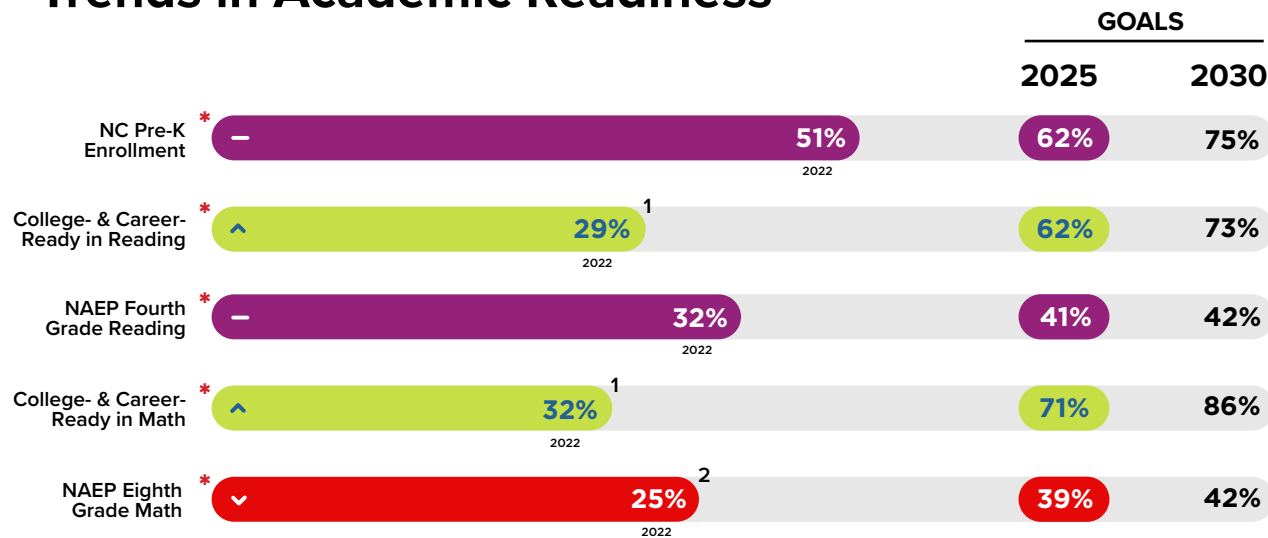
### Key:

- Likely to Meet/ Exceed Target
- Trending Toward Target
- No Trend Data
- Flatline Trend
- Trending Down

*Trends toward 2030 targeted values are logarithmic forecasts using the first year of available data and the last year of available data forecasting into 2030.\**



# Trends in Academic Readiness



**Key:**

- ✔ Likely to Meet/ Exceed Target
- ▲ Trending Toward Target
- N/A No Trend Data
- Flatline Trend
- ▼ Trending Down

<sup>1</sup> Note that these percentages were smaller than pre-Covid. There was a big drop in 2021 but there is a mild upward trend again in 2022, leading to an overall positive trend.

<sup>2</sup> Note that the large drop during the pandemic in combination with significant fluctuations prior to it makes the projection unclear and loosely fits into a downward trend.

Economically disadvantaged students (EDS)—meaning students receiving free or reduced price meals—were less than half as likely as not economically disadvantaged students to earn college-and-career-ready (CCR) scores in math/reading or to score at or above proficient on the NAEP 4th grade math/reading exam.

percentage of students	CCR Reading	CCR Math	NAEP Reading	NAEP Math
<b>EDS</b>	15%*	10%*	21%*	20%*
<b>Not EDS</b>	38%*	33%*	50%*	49%*

## NC Pre-K Enrollment

North Carolina has one of the nation’s highest quality pre-kindergarten systems of education. Unfortunately, many families in the state are unable to or have not enrolled their children. In fact, [Pre-K enrollment](#) is the top “Opportunity for Growth” to increase attainment of future generations for 35\* of 100 counties in North Carolina as noted on [100 County Attainment Profiles](#).

**To provide a quality learning opportunity for children that also better positions parents to seek higher levels of education and to work, myFutureNC supports the goal of enrolling 75% of NC Pre-K-eligible children in every county statewide.**

To help reach this goal and to improve overall reading and math proficiency among early grade students, myFutureNC supports continued funding for:

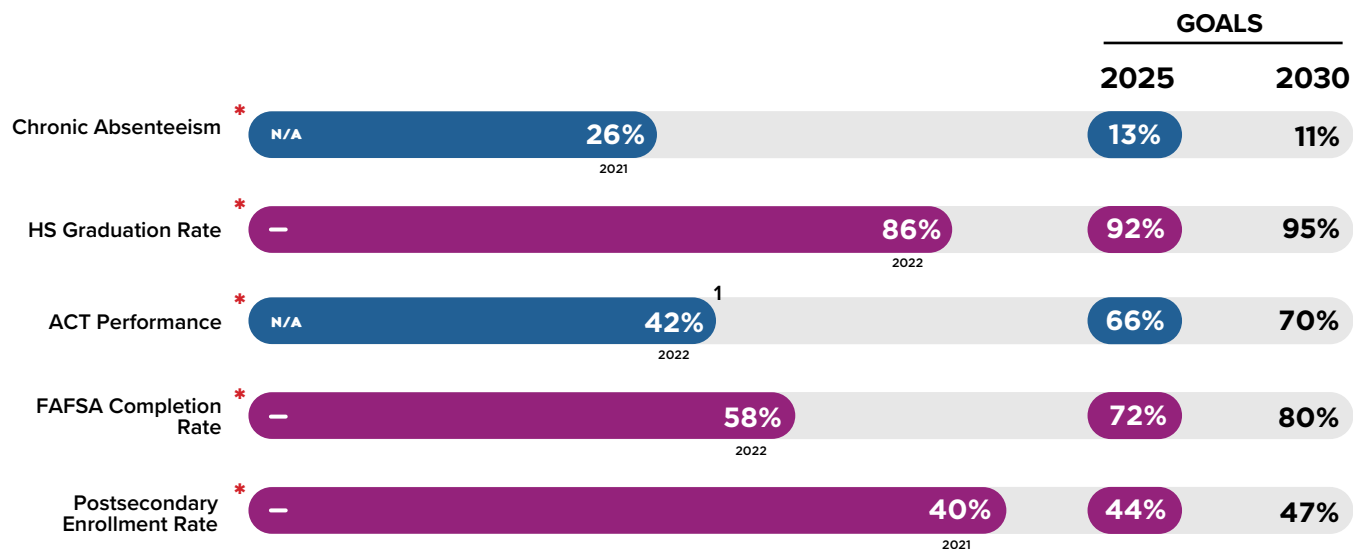
- NC Pre-K to achieve the goal of 75% participation of eligible children
- Implementation of the Science of Reading and the state’s Early Literacy Program
- Trained and effective educators to be available and in every Pre-K-12 classroom

These three targets are essential for laying the foundation to increase 3rd grade reading and math proficiency which will ultimately improve educational attainment of future generations to come.



# Trends in College & Career Access: Focus Required

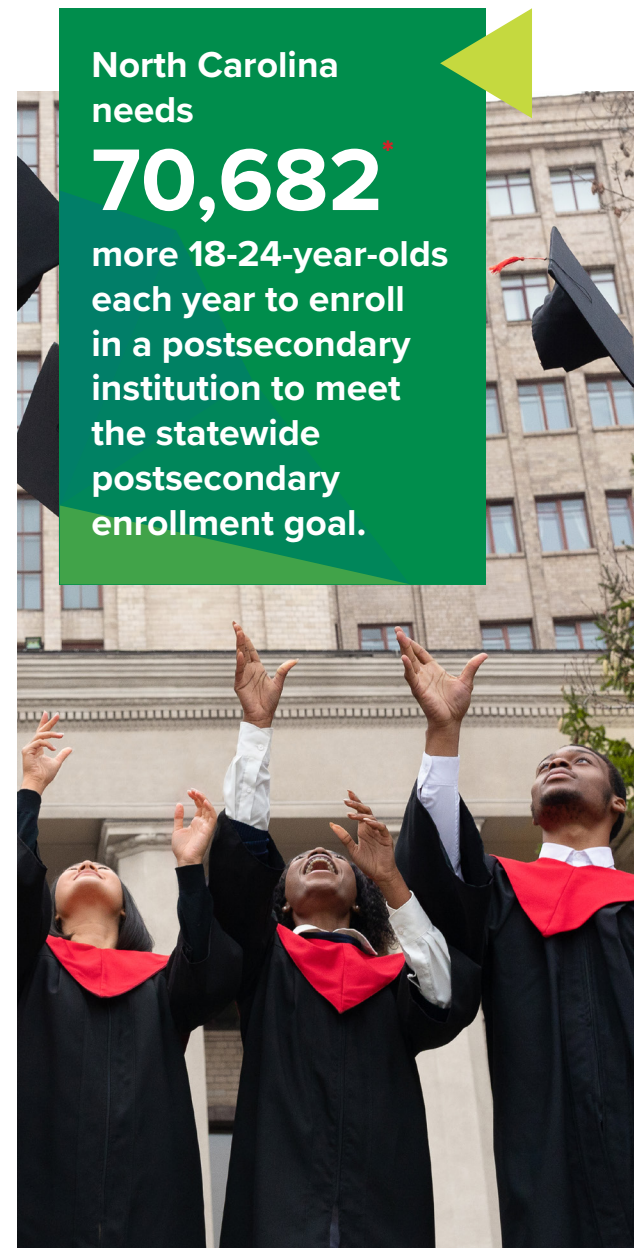
To meet our enrollment goal, students have to first graduate from high school. We must do our part and close the door that allows students to drop out at age 16, and instead provide an education experience that keeps them engaged. This may be accomplished by increasing connections between students, educators, and employers through work-based learning opportunities starting from the middle school years, and by providing affordable, easy-to-navigate opportunities. Resources like [NCcareers.org](https://www.nccareers.org) and the work-based learning [Navigator](#) are available to help students and job seekers identify high-demand fields, wage estimates, and other data to assist in making informed decisions about their education and career paths and find available opportunities.



**Key:** Likely to Meet/ Exceed Target Trending Toward Target No Trend Data Flatline Trend Trending Down

<sup>1</sup> Note that the lack of trend this year is due to the change in the ACT threshold. Previously it was trending down.

Students classified as economically disadvantaged had a high school graduation rate ten percentage points lower than the graduation rate among not economically disadvantaged students (79%\* v.s. 89%\*) in 2022\*. This gap widened from 2020 when it was six percentage points. Economically disadvantaged students were also less likely to score a 19 or higher on the ACT than students who were not economically disadvantaged (21%\* v.s. 49%\*).



North Carolina needs **70,682\*** more 18-24-year-olds each year to enroll in a postsecondary institution to meet the statewide postsecondary enrollment goal.



## Too Many Students Are Not Finishing School within 4 Years

While North Carolina has made significant progress increasing the high school graduation rate, moving from 78% in 2011 to 87% in 2021, the education leaky pipeline still shows 13% of 9th grade students (15,655 students) didn't graduate high school on time. Based on the last five-year average on high school dropout number, approximately 100,000 students are anticipated to drop out between 2020-2030.

To reach 2 million by 2030 will require the state to achieve a high school graduation rate of 95%. North Carolina's graduation rate is 87% in 2021, and state data show a flatline trend on this key performance indicator. More focus will be required to meet this goal by 2030.

Approximately **16,000** students did not graduate high school on time in 2021.

An average of **9,500** students drop out of high school each year.

Only **31%** of 9th graders will earn a college degree or industry-valued credential within 6 years after graduation.

## Over Half of NC's 9,500 High School Dropouts Each Year are Persons of Color

Many students become frustrated in middle school because they do not see the link between their coursework and goals for the future, including the ability to earn a family-sustaining wage. These students often drop out of high school and become opportunity youth. Opportunity youth are teens and young adults between the ages of 16 and 24 who are not enrolled in school or working.

Of the 9,147 dropouts reported in the [2020-2021 DPI data](#), 53% of the dropouts were Black and Hispanic combined.

These two subgroups represent 44% of the total public high school population.

### Who are NC's Opportunity Youth?

#### BY RACE/ETHNICITY

American Indian youth (20%) ages 16-24 had the highest rates of disconnection, meaning they were least likely to be in school or working. Hispanic (12.5%) and Black (15.6%) youth both had disconnection rates above the state's average. White (8.8%), Asian (7.1%) and Multiracial (10%) teens ages 16-24 were the only groups with results better than the statewide average (11%).

#### BY SEX

11.4% of females as compared to 10.7% of males ages 16-24 are disconnected.

**1 in every 9**  
16 to 24-year-olds is not in school or working.

"We must remain committed to maintaining a clear focus on what is most important to all of us - our students. This means we demonstrate a willingness to do whatever is necessary to ensure success for all students which includes building relevant relationships and creating student-focused learning environments with opportunities for personalized instruction to meet the diverse needs of all learners. Our schools must expose students to real-world opportunities to empower and inspire them as they prepare for their bright and prosperous futures."



**Superintendent Dr. Tony Jackson**  
2020 NC Superintendent of the Year, Chatham County Public Schools, myFutureNC Commissioner





## FAFSA Rates Continue to Decline

Unfortunately, we are not on target to meet the FAFSA completion rate needed to meet the goal by 2030 which will significantly impact college enrollment for low-income individuals and persons of color.

NC has trended downward on FAFSA completions the last three consecutive years, a decline that has persisted throughout an intensive, three-year campaign during the pandemic. While enrollment has seen some rebounding, our community colleges and private colleges remain down from pre-pandemic levels.

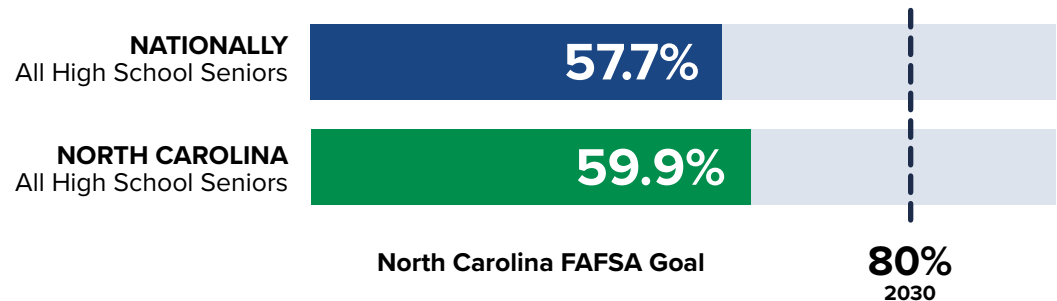
Access to an affordable opportunity is often a barrier to success, yet North Carolina left

# \$126 million

in Federal unclaimed dollars.

### FAFSA Completion Rate of High School Class of 2022

As of September 30, 2022



## Why is it important for every high school senior to complete the FAFSA?

Completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is required for students to be eligible for Federal Pell grants, state need-based grants, and scholarships. Increasing FAFSA completion rates continues to be a statewide focus, as research indicates that students who complete the FAFSA are more likely to attend college and persist in their studies.

**20,839\***  
more high schoolers need to complete the FAFSA in 2022 to meet the state goal of 80%.

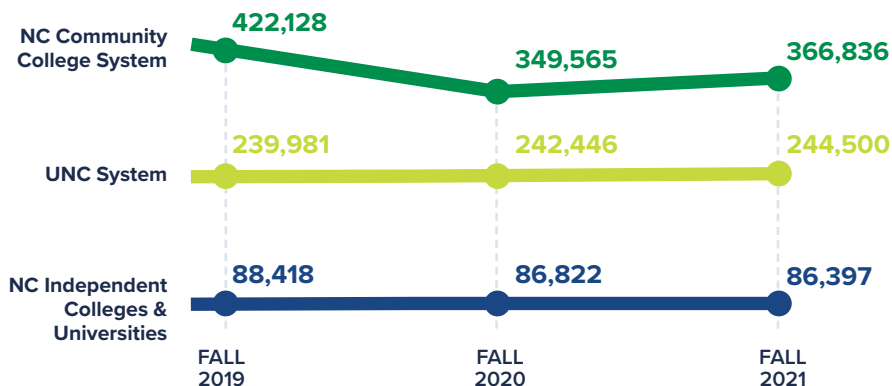




# Reduced College Enrollment

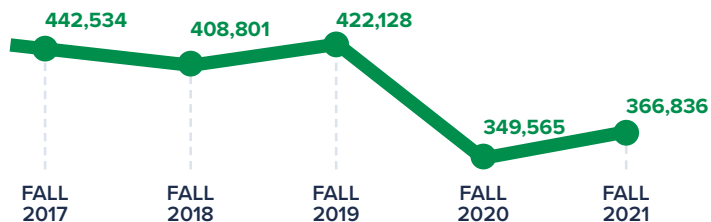
Unfortunately, North Carolina's college enrollments are below pre-pandemic level, driven by declines in our community colleges and private two- and four-year. Ultimately, reduced enrollment will decrease the number of individuals earning a postsecondary degree or industry-valued credential.

## North Carolina College Enrollment By Institution Sector



In Fall 2021, there were 366,836 students enrolled in the North Carolina Community College System, a 5% increase from Fall 2020 enrollment, but a 13% decrease compared to Fall 2019 enrollment.

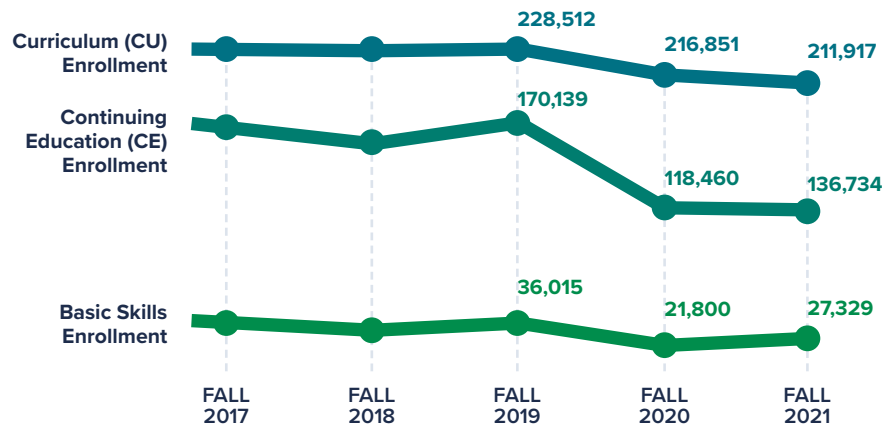
## Total Headcount Over Time NC Community College System



Community College enrollments show signs of a rebound, but still a significant drop from pre-pandemic levels:

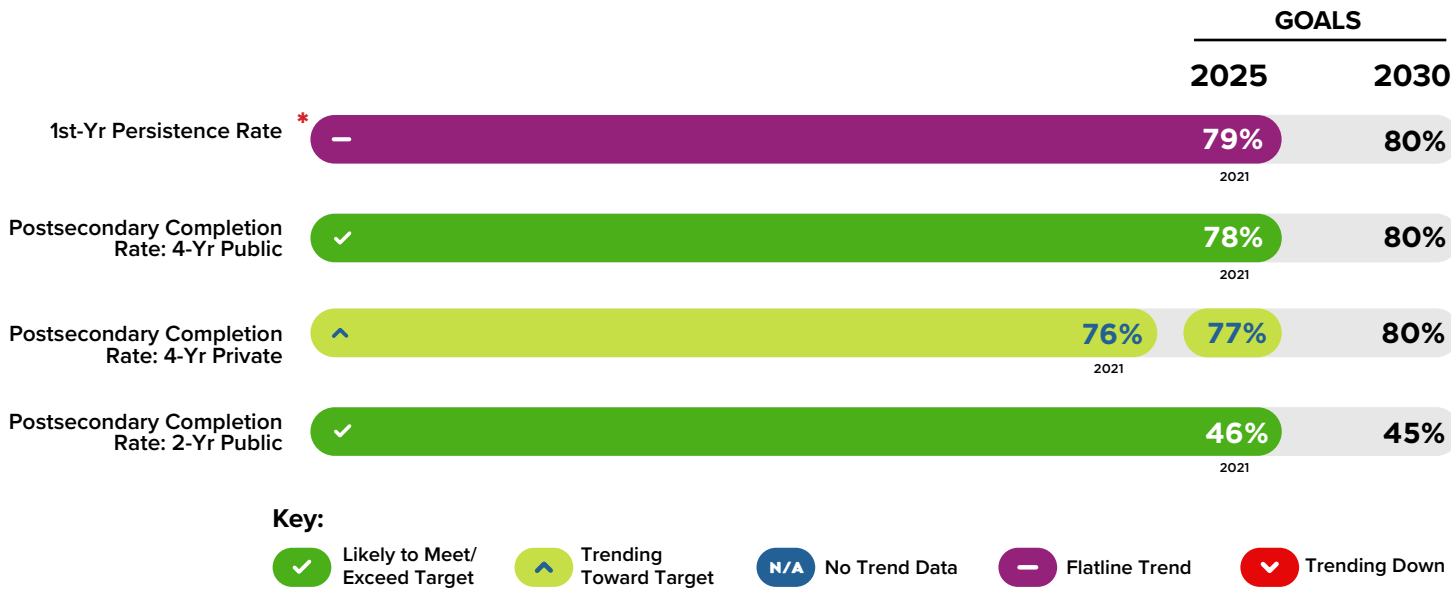
- Curriculum Enrollment - Down 7%
- Continuing Education Enrollment - Down 20%
- Basic Skills Enrollment - Down 24%

## Total Headcount by Academic Level NC Community College System



# Supports Matter When it Comes to Completing College

Completion rates of our public and private colleges and universities, as well as community colleges, are trending in the right direction and the number of students who go to college and persist remains near statewide goals. However, given the number of traditional public high school students is [projected to decline between now and 2030](#), we must ensure the percentage of students graduating high school and enrolling and completing postsecondary education are at or above our goal.



## Completion Rates

### BY RACE/ETHNICITY

The only subgroup (for those we have data) that is 11% or more away from our completion rates are our Black students ([2-year public](#), [4-year public](#), [4-year private](#)).

### BY SEX

College completion rates for females meet and exceed our goals; however completion rates for males are 1-5% away from our goal for community college, public, and private.

- **Data show that Hispanic students who enroll are completing at or above statewide percentages.** Based on current trends, of the 275,000 Hispanic students enrolled in NC Public Schools, 200,000 will not go on to receive a postsecondary degree or industry-valued credential. Hispanic students have accounted for 59% of growth in NC Public Schools in the past 29 years, 80% of the growth in the past 20 years, and 87% of growth in the past 9 years.

- [Cooperative Innovative High Schools](#) target students who are at risk of dropping out of high school, first-generation college students, and/or students who would benefit from accelerated learning opportunities, including students traditionally underrepresented in higher education.

There are 132 Cooperative Innovative High Schools (CIHS) in North Carolina.

- 116 partner with community colleges
- 11 partner with UNC institutions
- 5 partner with independent colleges

- While gaps for Black students in attainment persist, North Carolina's 10 **Historically Black Colleges and Universities** (HBCUs) have a strong history of preparing students to obtain in-demand degrees. In fact, 44% of North Carolina's Black 4-year graduates graduated from a HBCU. While enrollment in higher education nationally has declined in recent years, enrollment at HBCUs is increasing. This is one of many reasons we partner with [The Hunt Institute](#), [EdNC](#), and the [Center for Racial Equity in Education](#) (CREED) to learn from North Carolina's 10 HBCUs and identify best practices in supporting students through degree completion.

**In 2021, 46% of CIHS graduates earned a 2-year associate's degree while in high school.**

To increase enrollments, we continue to recommend increased outreach to students and families in rural areas, from low-income backgrounds, and persons of color who may need more supports and encouragement in the college-going process.

Programs like the [Longleaf Commitment Grant](#), [GROW](#) (Getting Ready for Opportunities in the Workforce), [Finish Line Grants](#), [Federal Pell Grants](#), and other [state need-based grants and scholarships in NC](#) help make college more affordable.

# Important Data Products and Tools

We must meet the talent pipeline needs and create opportunities for all North Carolinians. It is critical that we identify attainment trends, gaps, and most importantly, develop solutions with our partners in order to equip leaders and policymakers to prioritize resources and drive change. Leveraging our data and research, myFutureNC partners with [Carolina Demography at UNC](#), education sectors, and commerce to produce and share these data products widely.



## [Degree Ticker\\* and Progress Toward 2 Million by 2030](#)

The predominant myFutureNC tracking tool, with updated counts of the state's progress toward the 2M/2030 goal, as well as annual counts of 2-year and 4-year degrees earned.



## [Key Performance Indicators](#)

Progress tracker for North Carolina's 18 myFutureNC-established performance indicators. Each indicator includes a North Carolina goal and, when available, the neighboring state with the highest performance on that indicator and outcomes for demographic groups. Each indicator page contains information on why the indicator matters for education and employment, detailed information on outcomes over time and across groups, and links to resources and additional information.



## [County Profiles](#)

An individualized profile of every North Carolina county, with data for myFutureNC's four Pathways to 2M/2030, as well as data-defined opportunities for growth uniquely identified for each county.



## [County Explorer Tool](#)

An interactive companion to the County Profiles, this allows individuals to see each indicator on the profiles across all counties and to evaluate group-level data for measures when available.

\*Inputs for this Data Tool were *not* impacted by COVID-19



## [Data Trends Workbook](#)

A longitudinal data profile of every North Carolina county, with up to five years of overall (and, in some cases, group-level) trend data for three attainment-relevant areas: Academic Readiness, College & Career Access, and Labor Market.



## [FAFSA Tracker\\*](#)

A weekly-updated tool helping schools, researchers, and other education stakeholders monitor the number of seniors at North Carolina's 600+ public and private high schools who have completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).



## [Promising Attainment Practices Database\\*](#)

A curated, searchable, and filterable collection of about 250 county-, region-, and state-level initiatives and programs that directly address various components of the state's attainment challenge.



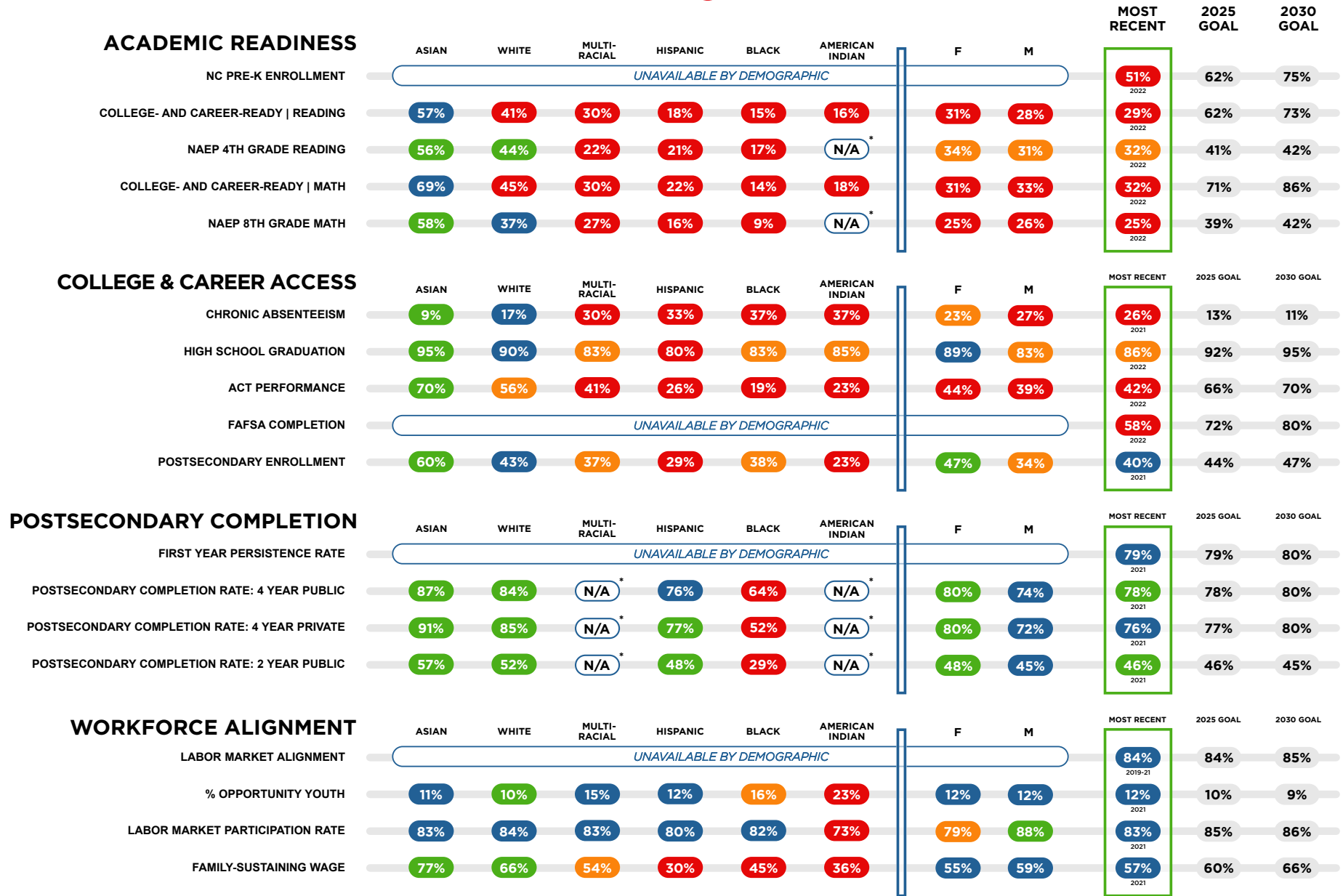
## [Recommended County Attainment Goals](#)

In partnership with Carolina Demography, [local attainment goals](#) have been recommended for every county to consider, and these cross-sector partnerships have either adopted those local goals or set their own to feed into the statewide 2 million by 2030 goal.

These data products and tools are available on our website. Visit <https://dashboard.myfuturenc.org/>



# Key Performance Indicators: Progress by Demographics\*



\*N/A indicates the data isn't available at the state level. These data are from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center and the total includes all demographic groups.

# Almost Half of Working North Carolinians are Not Earning a Family-Sustaining Wage

A [family-sustaining or “living wage”](#) is defined as earning enough to cover necessary expenses—such as food, medical care, childcare, housing, and transportation—without having to rely on financial assistance from other sources.

Family-sustaining wages in North Carolina range from \$17.14 per hour for one working adult living alone to \$55.59 per hour for one working adult supporting three children.

In 2019, 46% of North Carolina adults ages 35-44 did not earn a family-sustaining wage.

Only about

# 1 in 2

working North  
Carolinians ages  
35-44 earn a family-  
sustaining wage.

Only about 1 in 4  
Hispanics, 1 in 3  
American Indians,  
and 2 in 5 Blacks in  
this age range earn  
enough income to  
cover necessary  
expenses.

## Family-Sustaining Wages in NC

### BY RACE/ETHNICITY

Among North Carolina residents, only 41% of Blacks, 31% American Indians, and 27% Hispanics, earned a family-sustaining wage in 2019, as compared to 73% Asians and 63% Whites.

### BY SEX

57% of males, as compared to 51% of females have a family-sustaining wage.

### BY GEOGRAPHY

60% of urban, 54% suburban, 46% rural-metropolitan, and only 40% of non-metropolitan rural county residents earn a family-sustaining wage.



# We Need to Help Individuals Attain Family-Sustaining Credentials and Careers

North Carolina has a number of high-growth, high-demand jobs that pay a family-sustaining wage and require training, an industry-valued credential or certificate, but no degree. It is critical that we increase educational attainment statewide for [these industry-valued credentials](#).

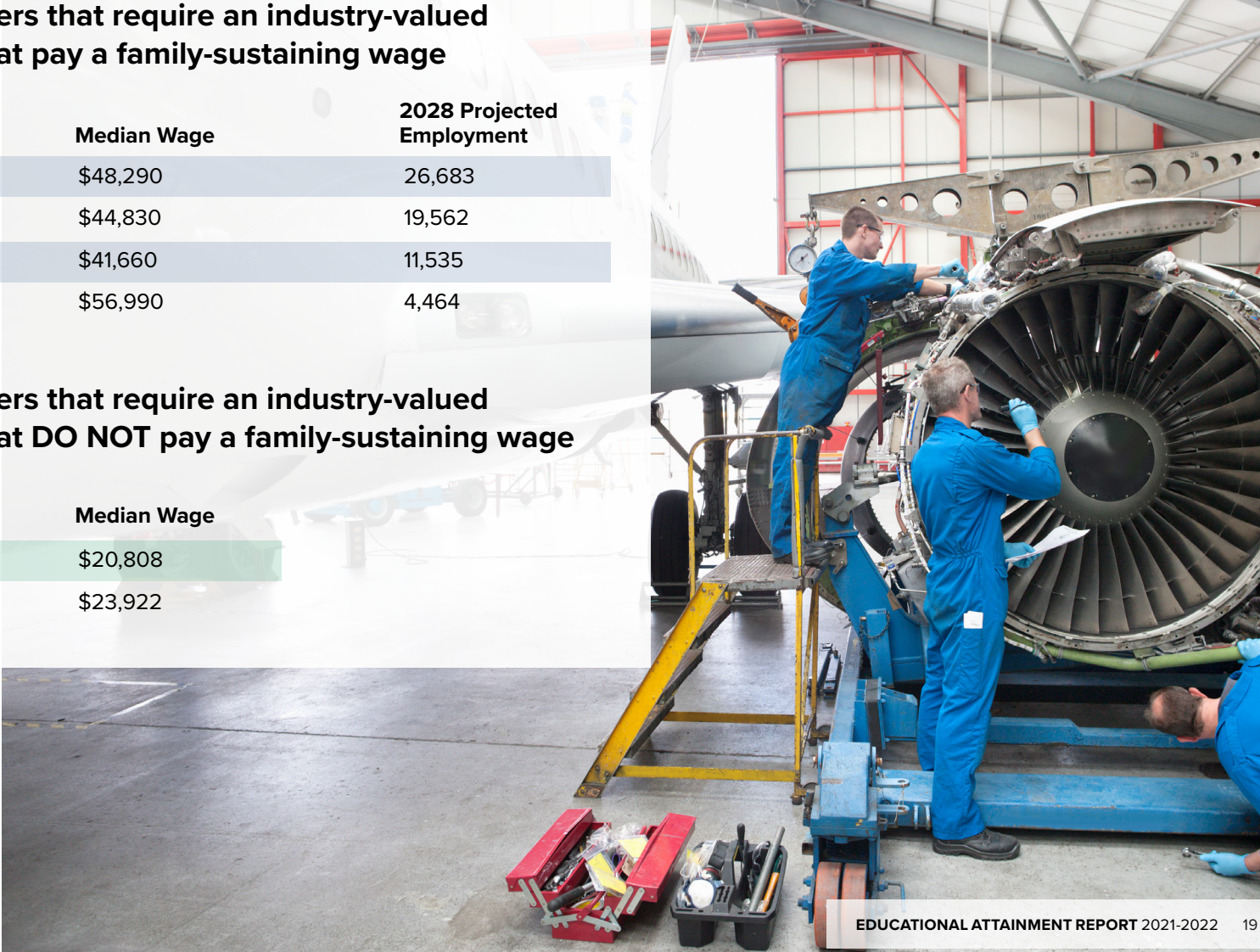
Unfortunately, some North Carolina high-demand jobs require higher levels of training but **do not** pay [a family-sustaining wage](#). This continues to present an immediate and long-term problem for North Carolina, as these jobs are essential to our citizens and a thriving economy.

## Examples of in-demand careers that require an industry-valued credential, but no degree, that pay a family-sustaining wage

Job	Median Wage	2028 Projected Employment
Computer User Support Specialists	\$48,290	26,683
Licensed Practical and Voc Nurses	\$44,830	19,562
Dental Assistants	\$41,660	11,535
Aircraft Mech and Serv Technicians	\$56,990	4,464

## Examples of in-demand careers that require an industry-valued credential, but no degree, that DO NOT pay a family-sustaining wage

Job	Median Wage
Early Childhood Educator	\$20,808
Nursing Assistant	\$23,922

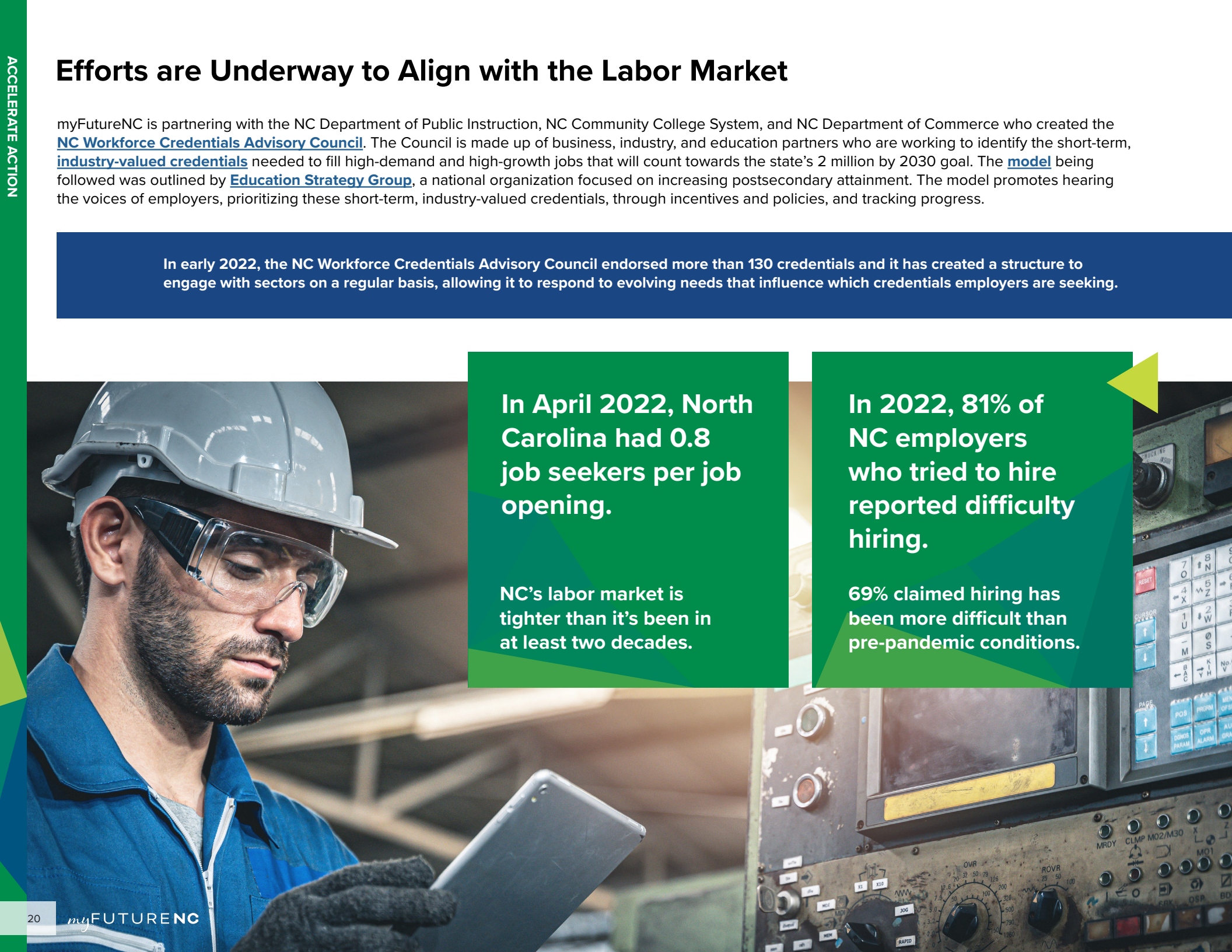




## Efforts are Underway to Align with the Labor Market

myFutureNC is partnering with the NC Department of Public Instruction, NC Community College System, and NC Department of Commerce who created the [NC Workforce Credentials Advisory Council](#). The Council is made up of business, industry, and education partners who are working to identify the short-term, [industry-valued credentials](#) needed to fill high-demand and high-growth jobs that will count towards the state's 2 million by 2030 goal. The [model](#) being followed was outlined by [Education Strategy Group](#), a national organization focused on increasing postsecondary attainment. The model promotes hearing the voices of employers, prioritizing these short-term, industry-valued credentials, through incentives and policies, and tracking progress.

In early 2022, the NC Workforce Credentials Advisory Council endorsed more than 130 credentials and it has created a structure to engage with sectors on a regular basis, allowing it to respond to evolving needs that influence which credentials employers are seeking.



In April 2022, North Carolina had 0.8 job seekers per job opening.

NC's labor market is tighter than it's been in at least two decades.

In 2022, 81% of NC employers who tried to hire reported difficulty hiring.

69% claimed hiring has been more difficult than pre-pandemic conditions.

# State-Led But Locally Owned and Driven

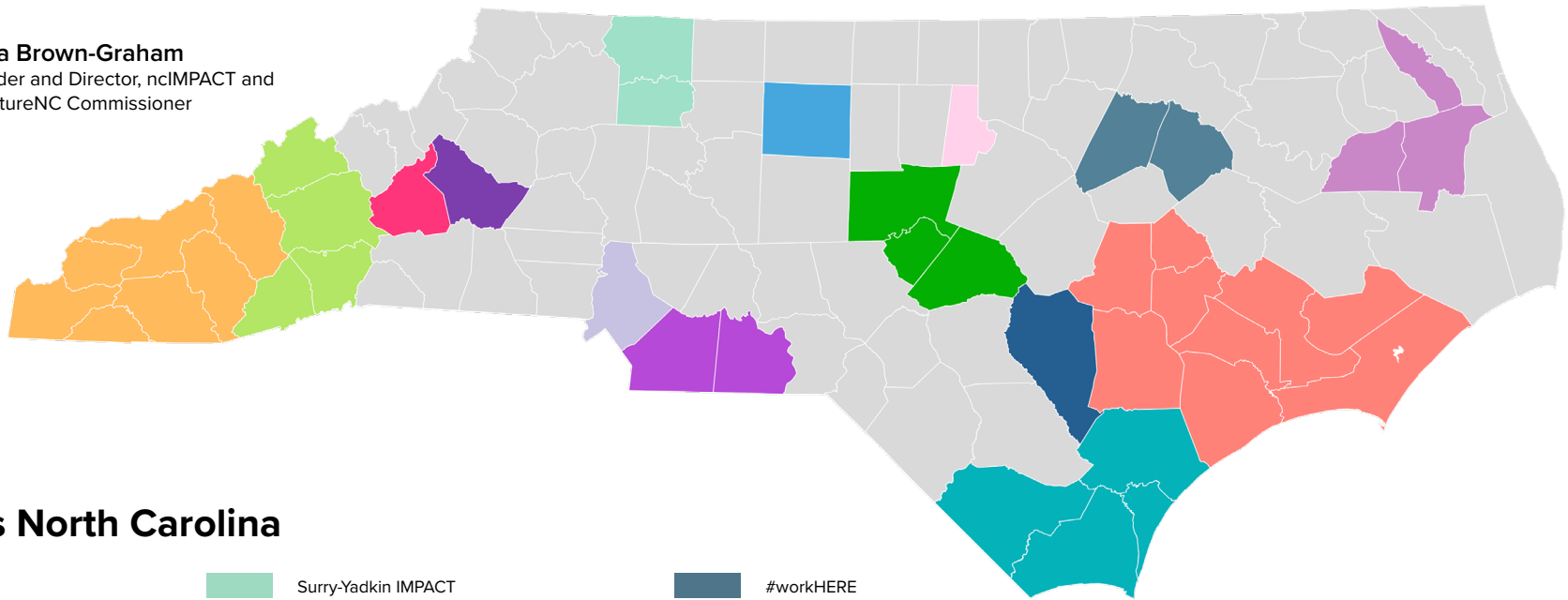
## Local Educational Attainment Collaborative (LEACs)

myFutureNC partnered with the [UNC School of Government's nclIMPACT](#) Initiative to establish 15 [Local Educational Attainment Collaboratives](#) representing 42 counties throughout NC. In partnership with Carolina Demography, [local attainment goals](#) have been recommended for every county to consider, and these cross-sector partnerships have either adopted those local goals or set their own to feed into the statewide 2 million by 2030 goal. The teams have also identified and begun implementing strategies to increase attainment. They are tackling complex issues at the local level. myFutureNC is supporting the work through our regional impact managers who help teams and other emerging collaborations develop best practices for implementation.

“It has been inspiring to partner with myFutureNC. Their attention to both a bottom up and top down approach offers a winning formula for increasing educational attainment in the state.”



**Anita Brown-Graham**  
 Founder and Director, nclIMPACT and  
 myFutureNC Commissioner



### LEACs Across North Carolina

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| AchieveHIGHTS!                                  | Surry-Yadkin IMPACT  | #workHERE   |
| Land of Sky Education & Workforce Collaborative | GuildfordJobs2030  | OurFutureENC: Educate. Equip. Excel.                  |
| McDowell Pipeline: Growing Our Own              | Our Future in UNISON   | Sampson Connect                                       |
| Work in Burke                                   | Central Carolina Connections: Chatham, Harnett, Lee County Collaborative | Our Future Cape Fear: A Roadmap to Meaningful Careers |
| Queen City Collaborative                        | Durham's Opportunity Collaborative                                       | Empower NE NC: An Educational Collaborative           |



# NC Reconnect

## Increasing Attainment Through Local Adult Learner Pilots

To increase enrollment in our great 58 community colleges and to meet 2 million by 2030 there must be an intentional focus on adult learners. Ten community colleges participated in NC Reconnect, a pilot program sponsored by the John M. Belk Endowment, in partnership with myFutureNC, NC Community College System, and the Belk Center for Community College Leadership and Research. The innovative project identified and provided outreach to more than 20,000 students from the previous five years who had completed more than half of a program of study and then dropped out.

NC Reconnect has demonstrated success at community colleges across North Carolina, resulting in nearly 1,300 previously stopped-out adult learners returning to higher education during Fall 2021. These efforts were greatly aided by a \$2,000,000 appropriation by the General Assembly to support adult learner initiatives. This was a resounding success, including Blue Ridge Community College (BRCC) who offered free community college that ultimately led to a 41% increase in adult learners compared to Fall 2020 and an overall enrollment increase of 9%. Furthermore, BRCC went on to experience the highest enrollment and largest graduating class in the College's history in Spring of 2022, including significant increases in the diversity of the student population.

The Belk Center's [Adult Learner Guidebook](#) outlines lessons learned through NC Reconnect and reimagines the experiences of adult learners on our state's community college campuses.



"NC Reconnect has been the single most impactful initiative our college has undertaken. This work has the ability to change the lives of so many people and provide the high quality workforce so desperately needed in our state."



**Laura Leatherwood**  
BRCC President, myFutureNC  
Commissioner, Community  
College President of the Year

## NC Reconnect: Cohorts

NC Reconnect aims to increase enrollment and completion among adult learners through partnerships.

### Cohort 1

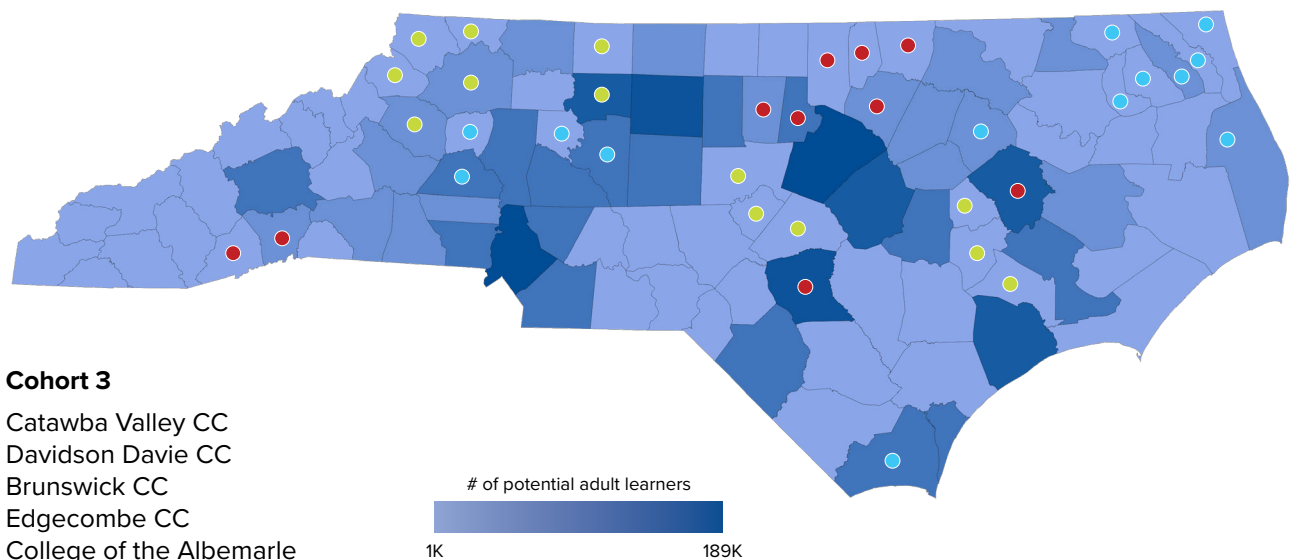
Blue Ridge CC  
Durham Tech  
Fayetteville Tech  
Pitt CC  
Vance-Granville CC

### Cohort 2

Caldwell CC&TI  
Central Carolina CC  
Forsyth Tech  
Lenoir CC  
Wilkes CC

### Cohort 3

Catawba Valley CC  
Davidson Davie CC  
Brunswick CC  
Edgecombe CC  
College of the Albemarle





# We Advocate for Effective Policies

The budget for the fiscal year, approved on July 11, 2022, continues to move myFutureNC's priorities forward including:

## Academic Readiness

- Reimbursement rates for **NC Pre-K** providers were **increased by \$9 million**.
- The budget included **\$14.6 million** in funding for **124 literacy coaches and early learning specialists**, in line with the statewide push for the **Science of Reading** which aligns with myFutureNC's priorities.

## College & Career Access

- **\$55,000** was provided to the NC State Education Assistance Authority to support the **FAFSA Tracker Tool**.

## Postsecondary Completion

- A **\$500,000** grant was directed to myFutureNC to **study creation of an interconnected, real-time data system** to facilitate communication and transition of students between public schools, community colleges, and universities.
- Included recurring funding totaling **\$160,000** for the purchase of **National Student Clearinghouse** attainment data. This data is essential to myFutureNC's **100 county profiles** and **statewide dashboard**.



“A quality education for all students is an essential component of our state’s economic development plan. myFutureNC serves as a data-research hub for North Carolina to identify attainment trends, gaps, and most importantly, develop solutions and equip leaders and policymakers to prioritize resources and drive change. The ongoing review and sharing of data helps to ensure we make the investments necessary so that all North Carolina students have access to a high-quality public education.”



**Representative  
Donny C. Lambeth**

“Thoughtfully spending our tax dollars on education must be a priority to chart a path to attracting more businesses, creating more jobs, and growing the state’s economy. myFutureNC is committed to convening the right partners to provide accessible and affordable learning opportunities for young people after high school and adult learners. The State of North Carolina’s supplemental budget for FY 2022-23 continues to move myFutureNC’s priorities in the right direction including recurring funding to support the FAFSA Tracker Tool, National Student Clearinghouse Data to measure progress towards our goal, and other supports that will help to achieve 2 million by 2030.”



**Senator Deanna Ballard**

“It is important for all North Carolina children to get off to a strong start in safe and nurturing families and communities, with access to high-quality opportunities to learn and thrive. When we give children a fair chance for a strong foundation in their first years of life, we give them a better future and create healthier and more vibrant communities for all of us. myFutureNC advocates for policies that work to strengthen our education system from early childhood through postsecondary education in order to ensure high-quality opportunities for all students regardless of where they live in the state.”



**Geoff Coltrane**  
Office of the NC Governor, Senior  
Education Advisor



# Keep K-12 Students Engaged in School

A high school diploma is an essential step toward upward mobility, but in today's economy, **students require additional educational attainment to earn a family-sustaining wage.** Research shows that students are more motivated and self-directed when they understand the relationship between academics and a fulfilling career. In alignment with Superintendent Truitt's "Year of the Workforce" goals, **all students could benefit from a personalized learning plan to guide them through graduation and to prepare them for and help them persist toward their preferred postsecondary path.** Knowledge of credentials, degree opportunities, college options, entrance requirements, application processes, and financial aid is also vital for students and families to navigate the college-going process. It will also be important to have support personnel to partner with students to create and align these personalized plans with coursework throughout students' education-to-workforce journey.

Today, North Carolina relies on academic output and growth to measure student performance. The **NC Portrait of a Graduate** will connect the most important durable skills with academic rigor to create a more balanced and engaging educational experience for students, translating into increased postsecondary attainment.

## NEEDS FORECAST 1

### CAREER PLANNING

Our state's education systems must deliver learning experiences that meet students' interests and provide pathways to success. We know that students are *most* engaged when they can see firsthand the **real-world application of their knowledge and skills.** All North Carolina middle and high school students deserve the opportunity to engage in **well-guided career planning** to ensure that every student has necessary resources to envision their future.

Development of an online portal within NCCareers.org to serve as a hub for career planning activity is vital to the success of this initiative. Enhancing the functionality of NCCareers.org by building out a career planning portal allows for a streamlined approach to connecting students with the support they need and ensuring that every student meets the requirements to graduate prepared for postsecondary success.



1 in every 9

16 to 24-year-olds are not in school or working.

"Every student is on a career journey, and although their paths may vary, the Department of Public Instruction is focused on helping students understand their options, experience the world of work, and create their post-secondary plan with confidence."



Catherine Truitt  
NC Superintendent of  
Public Instruction



## Equip Working Adults to Fill High-Demand Jobs and Earn a Family-Sustaining Wage

To reach 2 million by 2030 will require the state to achieve a **postsecondary enrollment rate of 47%** or an additional 66,000 18–24-year-olds enrolled in college each year. To meet employer demands will also require **85% of short-term credentials and degrees earned to align with labor market needs**. North Carolina's current enrollment rate is 41%, and labor market alignment is 82%. State data show a flatline trend on both key performance indicators, so additional focus will be required to meet these goals.

In alignment with Secretary Sanders and the Department of Commerce Strategic Economic Development Plan—**The First in Talent Plan**—preparing our workforce for success requires increasing access to postsecondary education and supports that enable more students to graduate on time with valuable short-term credentials and/or degrees. Scholarships that create **no-cost pathways to priority short-term credentials** will encourage more North Carolinians to enroll in programs that **connect them to career opportunities in high-demand, high-growth fields that pay a family-sustaining wage**. Quality faculty for these required courses is essential at our community colleges, so it is important that the North Carolina Community College System's three-year plan be fulfilled to ensure market-value wages to incentivize recruitment for these high-demand field courses.

### NEEDS FORECAST 2

## SCHOLARSHIPS FOR SHORT-TERM TRAINING & HIGHER-WAGE CAREERS

In North Carolina, jobs requiring a short-term credential or some college will **increase by 8.1% by 2028**, yet community college enrollment remains down from pre-pandemic levels. Additionally, the [2021 Collective Economic Value of North Carolina Community Colleges report](#) shows that 1 out of every 19 jobs in North Carolina is supported by the activities of the colleges and their students.

Those in our state who need it most *cannot afford required training*; Federal **Pell grants and state need-based grants do not cover required training** for many trades and other short-term credentials of value.

Providing **last-dollar scholarships** for people pursuing these short-term credentials will encourage enrollment, fulfill employers' needs for more skilled labor, and provide economic opportunity.

Community college enrollments are **down 13%** from pre-pandemic numbers.



# Acknowledgements

## Corporate/Foundations

Annie E. Casey Foundation  
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Goodnight Educational Foundation  
John M. Belk Endowment  
John William Pope Foundation

L. David Mounts Foundation  
Lumina Foundation  
Microsoft Philanthropies  
NC GlaxoSmithKline Foundation  
North State Bank  
Truist

## Individuals

Richard Adelman, M.D.  
Greg Alcorn  
Craig DeLucia  
Mark Kingsmore  
myFutureNC Board of Directors  
myFutureNC Staff

## Advisory Board of Commissioners

myFutureNC is grateful for the advocacy and advisement of a diverse group of **Commissioners**. These individuals represent a breadth of stakeholders and from across the state who are uniquely positioned to support the broader myFutureNC mission.

## Endorsements

myFutureNC is proud to have **250 organizations** endorse the 2 million by 2030 statewide attainment goal. Achieving this goal will only be possible with deep, cross-sector support from state and local leaders and groups in business, education, and government.

## To Endorse, Partner, or Donate

If your organization would like to consider **endorsing** the state's goal, partnering, or **donating** towards this important work, contact us at **[office@myFutureNC.org](mailto:office@myFutureNC.org)**.

## Citations

For a list of all citations, please go to **[www.myfuturenc.org](http://www.myfuturenc.org)** to access the online version of the North Carolina State of Educational Attainment Report which includes all citation hyperlinks.





*my*FUTURENC  
*2 million by 2030*