

myFUTURE NC

2 million by 2030



NORTH CAROLINA'S STATE OF

Educational Attainment Report

August 9, 2022

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

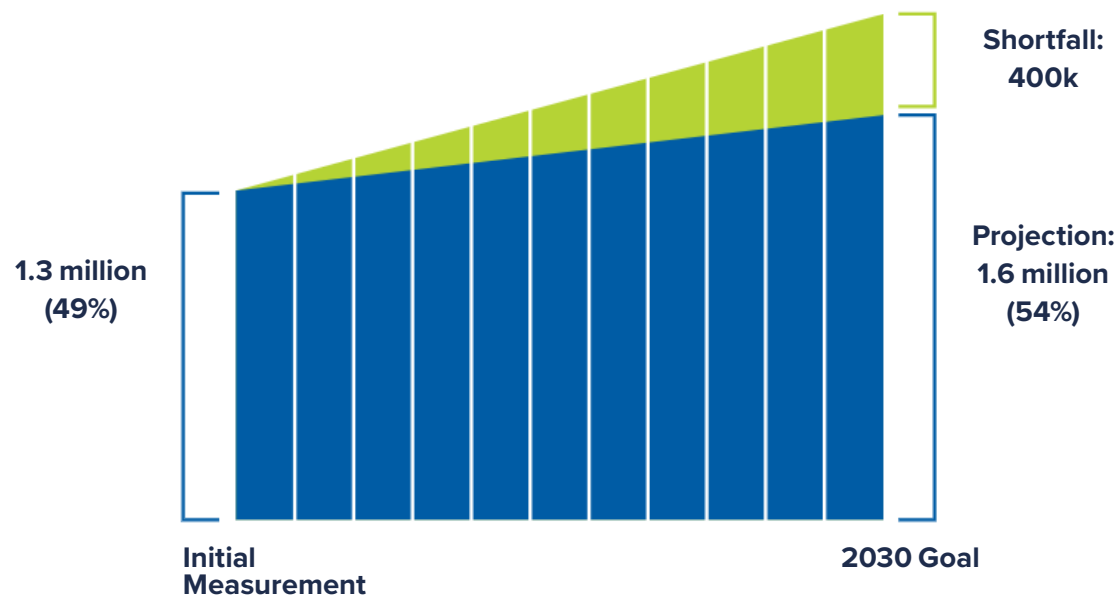
North Carolina's State of Educational Attainment

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

Goal: 66% of North Carolinians with an industry-valued credential and/or postsecondary degree



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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 Areas of Focus

Our work is guided by meeting or exceeding the state's goal of 2 million North Carolinians between the ages of 25-44 to hold valuable, industry-valued credentials and/or postsecondary degrees by 2030 that will lead to a stronger, more competitive North Carolina for all. Moreover, this work will establish the foundation needed for success for future generations.

Accountability Partner

We are an **accountability partner**. We recognize the goal of 2 million by 2030 will not happen without all educators, business leaders, local and state policymakers, and citizens 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.

Data-Research Hub

We serve 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.

Action Accelerator

We recognize the importance of our localities in this work as we strive to elevate promising practices and serve as an **action accelerator**.

Policy Advocate

Ultimately, this brings us to serving as a **policy advocate**. Through our partnerships with education sectors and the business community, ongoing data analysis, and boots-on-the-ground efforts through our regional impact managers, we identify and advocate for effective policies that will meet the education and workforce needs to ensure North Carolina's residents, employers, and communities thrive.



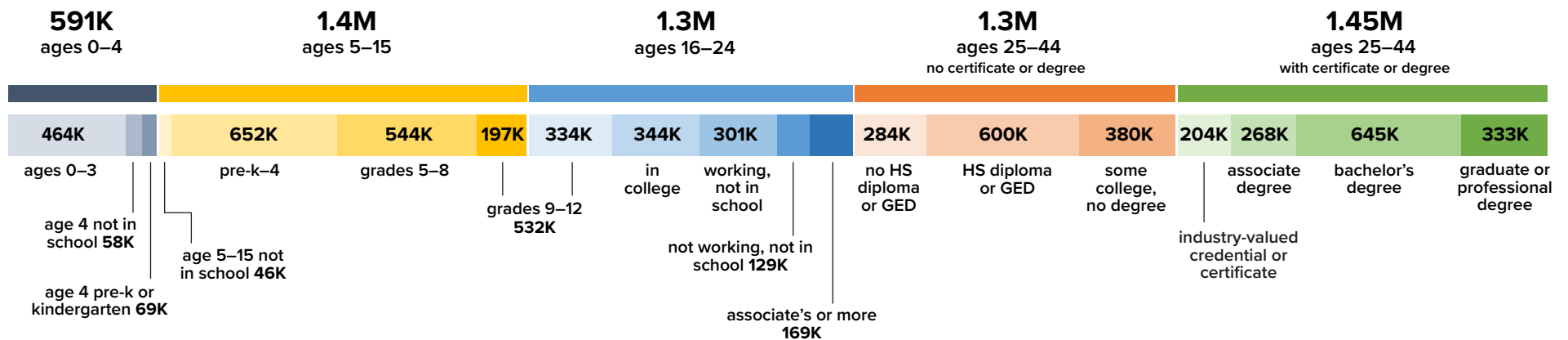
We are an Accountability Partner

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 available data show North Carolina has 44K* fewer individuals with industry-valued credentials or degrees than it needs to be on target to meet the goal.

**Note: Due to COVID impacts on data collection, the data on this page cannot be updated with 2020 values. We anticipate updating in late 2022 when 2021 data are released.*

2019 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**

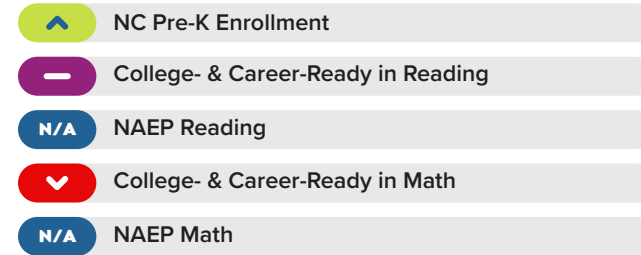
These data are a snapshot of North Carolina's progress as we work collectively to achieve the state's goal of 2 million North Carolinians ages 25-44 to have an industry-valued credential or postsecondary degree by 2030. Some KPIs are trending in the right direction for success, while others are not demonstrating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



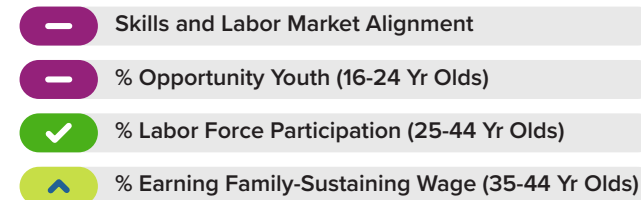
College & Career Access



Postsecondary Completion



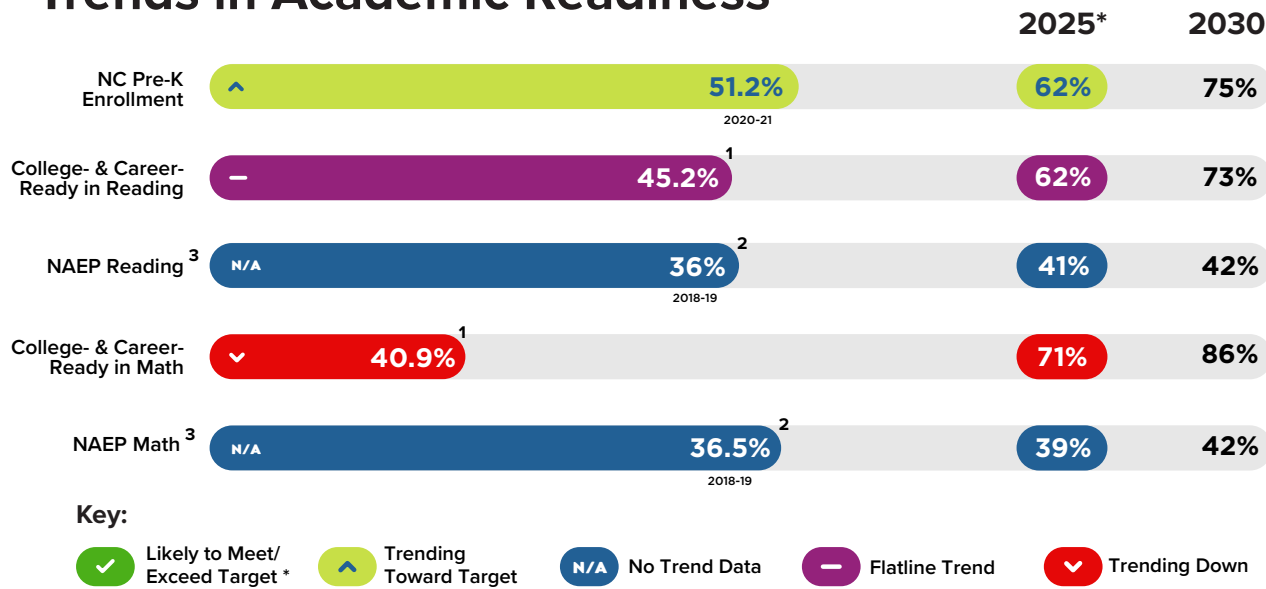
Labor Market Alignment



Key:

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

Trends in Academic Readiness



¹ End-of-grade tests were not administered in 2019-20 due to COVID-19, and assessments were administered across a wider-than-typical time frame in 2020-21. NC DPI recommends not comparing to prior years. Therefore, this is a limited projection (based on 3 values) and does not include 2020-21 results.

² Trend cannot be determined; only two values available.

³ Grades 3-8

* Proposed 2025 Target value = Start value + (((Final Target value [2030] - Start value) / Years between Start and Final) * (Years between Start and 2025)). All trend imputations are based on a rough logarithmic projection (i.e., a projection that assumes that extreme rates of change in early years will level out over time). For these imputations, years with missing values (due to COVID-19 or some other unexpected interruption) are excluded, rather than using imputed values (the average of previous and succeeding value on either side of a gap).

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
EDS	15%	10%	21%	20%
Not EDS	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 43 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:

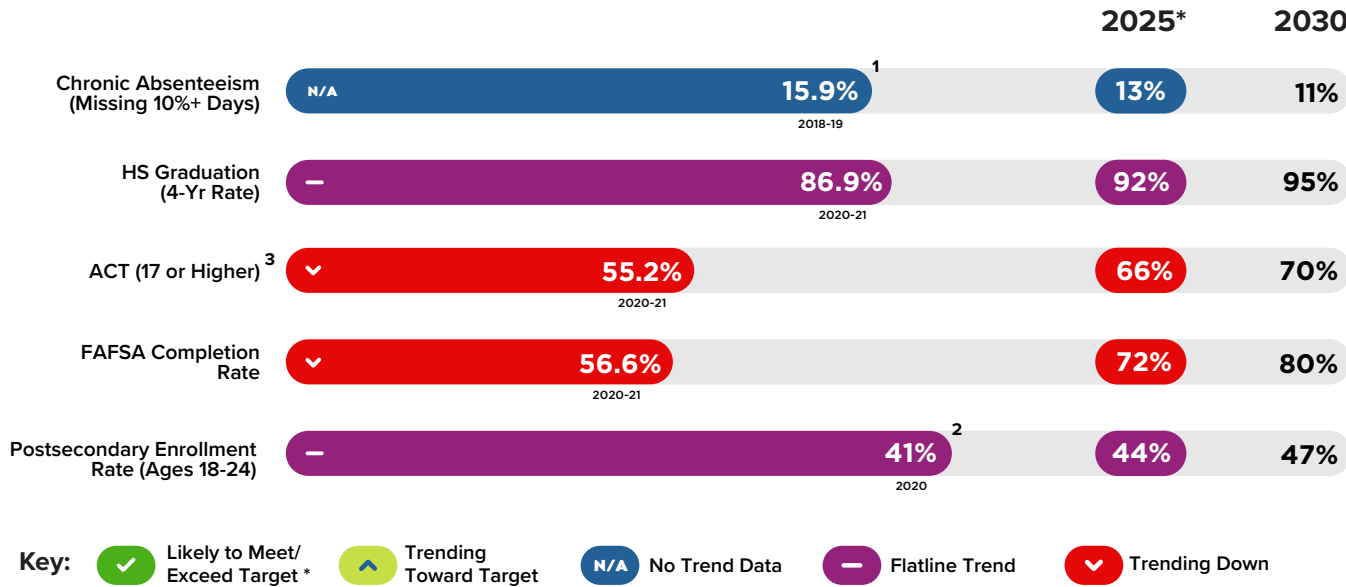
- NC Pre-K to achieve the goal of 75% participation of eligible children
- Implementation of the Science of Reading and the state’s Early Literacy Program
- Trained and effective educators to be available and in every Pre-K-12 classroom

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.



¹ Chronic absenteeism data is artificially low in 2019-20; many schools did not collect attendance data after the onset of COVID-19. Comparisons to prior years are not recommended. Therefore, no accurate projection is possible without post-COVID-19 attendance figures and additional data points.

² 4 US Census American Community Survey (ACS) data were used for 2020 values; because of concerns about ACS data for that year, the related trend projection may be less reliable than other trend projections. The myFutureNC online dashboard was not updated with this year of data due to concerns about reliability; however, it is being used here to show the most current information.

³ In March 2020, the ACT Board of Governors approved a composite score of 19 to be used for ACT reports beginning with the 2021-22 reports.

* Proposed 2025 Target value = Start value + (((Final Target value [2030] - Start value) / Years between Start and Final) * (Years between Start and 2025)). All trend imputations are based on a rough logarithmic projection (i.e., a projection that assumes that extreme rates of change in early years will level out over time). For these imputations, years with missing values (due to COVID-19 or some other unexpected interruption) are excluded, rather than using imputed values (the average of previous and succeeding value on either side of a gap).

Students classified as economically disadvantaged had a high school graduation rate ten percentage points lower than the graduation rate among not economically disadvantaged students (80% v.s. 90%) in 2021. This gap widened from 2020 when it was six percentage points. Economically disadvantaged students were also less likely to score a 17 or higher on the ACT than students who were not economically disadvantaged (34% v.s. 63%).



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



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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.

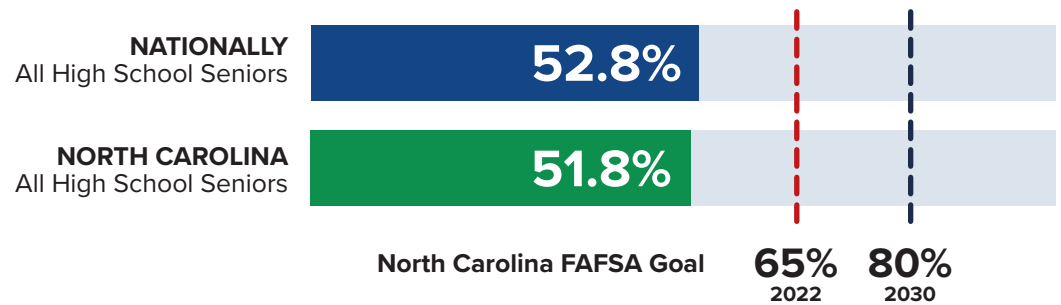
Access to an affordable opportunity is often a barrier to success, yet North Carolina left

\$126 million

in Federal unclaimed dollars.

FAFSA Completion Rate

As of July 1, 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.

To meet 2 million by 2030,
26,638
 more high schoolers complete the FAFSA.

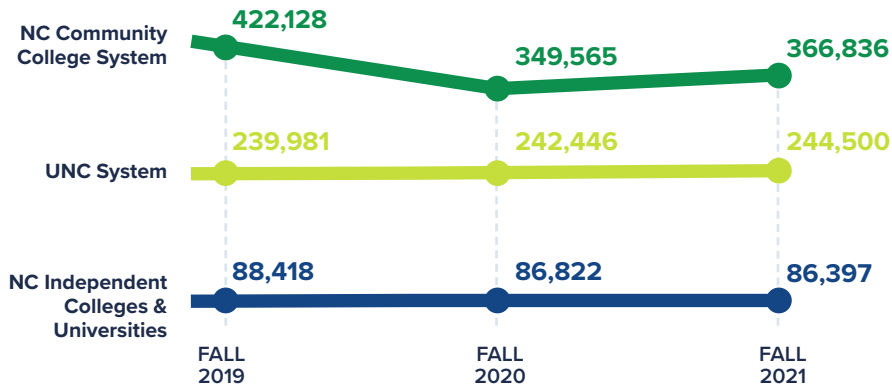


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Reduced College Enrollment

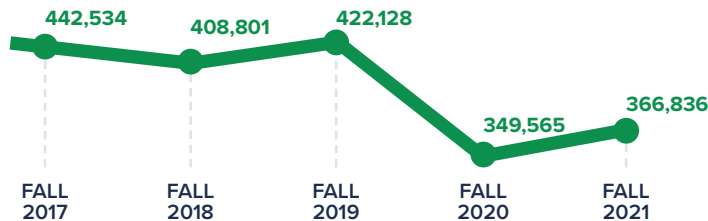
Unfortunately, North Carolina's college enrollments are below pre-pandemic level, driven by declines in our community colleges and private two- and four-year. Ultimately, reduced enrollment will decrease the number of individuals earning a postsecondary degree or industry-valued credential.

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.

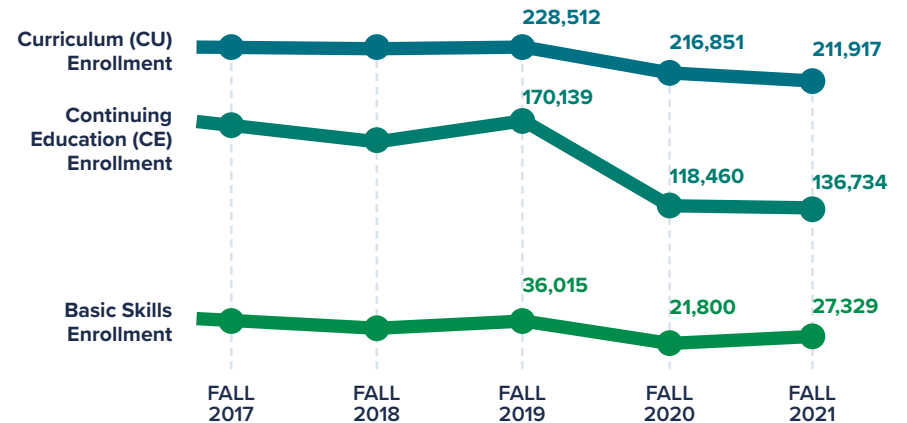
Total Headcount Over Time NC Community College System



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

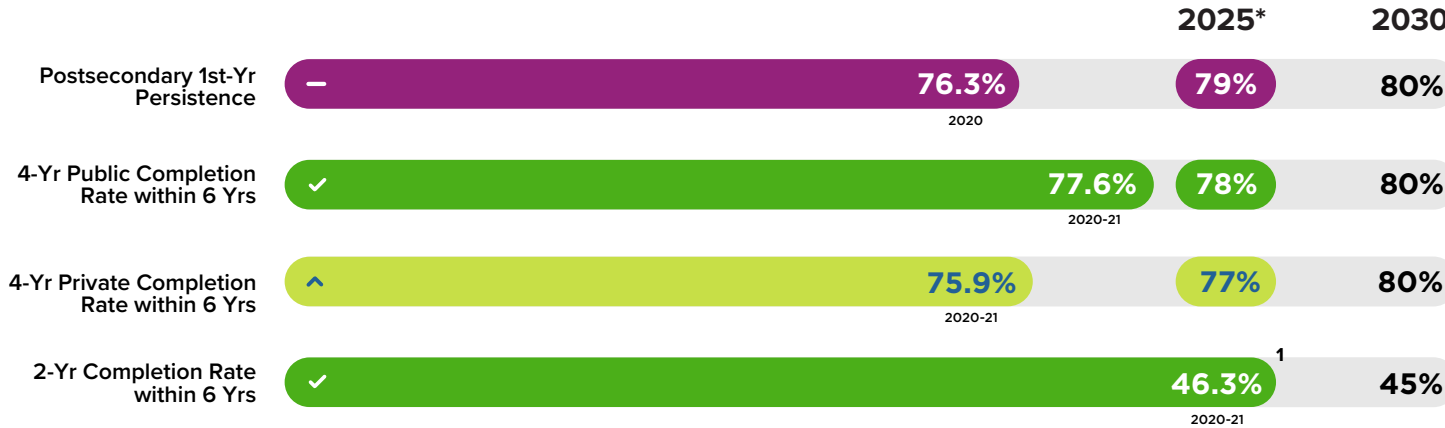
- Curriculum Enrollment - Down 7%
- Continuing Education Enrollment - Down 20%
- Basic Skills Enrollment - Down 24%

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.



Key:

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

¹ Original Final Target met (2021); myFutureNC will be tracking to ensure all demographic groups meet goal.

* Proposed 2025 Target value = Start value + (((Final Target value [2030] - Start value) / Years between Start and Final)*(Years between Start and 2025)). All trend imputations are based on a rough logarithmic projection (i.e., a projection that assumes that extreme rates of change in early years will level out over time). For these imputations, years with missing values (due to COVID-19 or some other unexpected interruption) are excluded, rather than using imputed values (the average of previous and succeeding value on either side of a gap).

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.

We are a Data-Research Hub for NC

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.



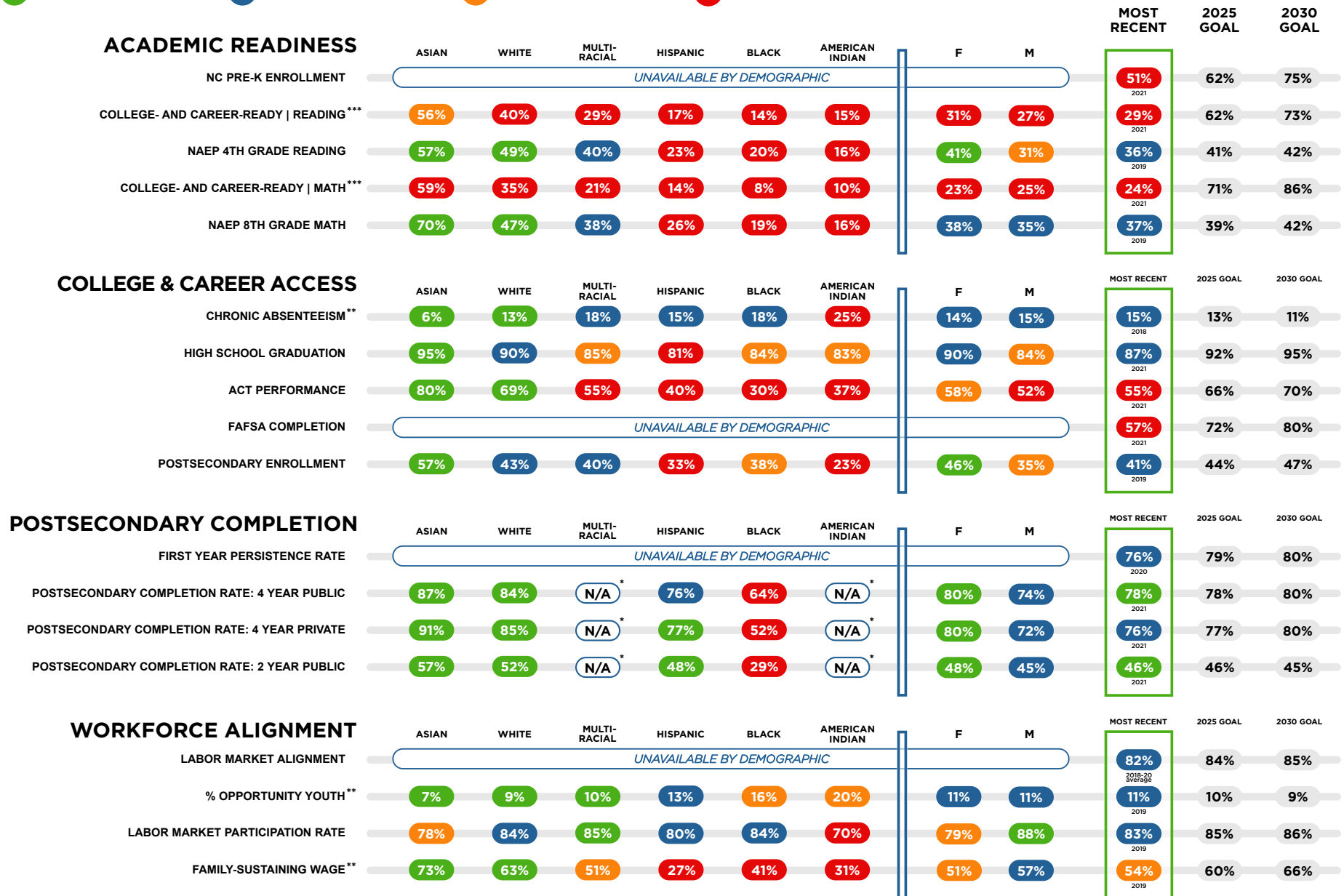
[Recommended County Attainment Goals](#)

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

● Met/Exceeded 2025 Goal
 ● 1%-5% Away from Goal
 ● 6%-10% Away from Goal
 ● 11%+ Away from Goal



*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; however, in cases where it isn't available by race/ethnicity, it is likely due to a small number of students.

**Note: Data varies slightly from Key Performance Indicators (KPI) Progress Report due to timing of data. Footnotes on the KPI Progress Report specify details.

***Note: End-of grade tests were not administered in 2019-20 due to COVID-19 and assessments were administered across a wider-than-typical time frame in 2020-21.

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](#).

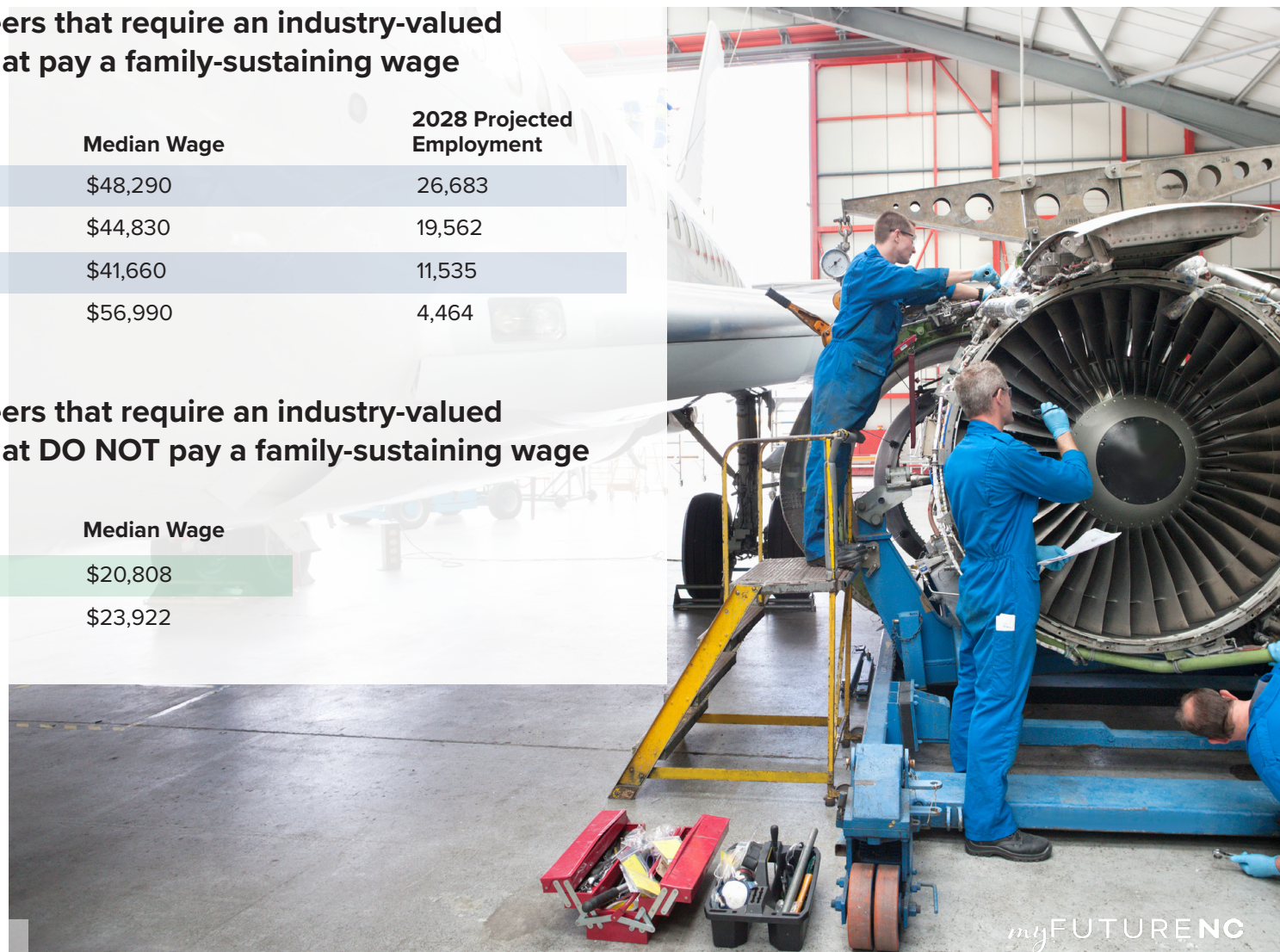
Unfortunately, some North Carolina high-demand jobs require higher levels of training but **do not** pay [a family-sustaining wage](#). This continues to present an immediate and long-term problem for North Carolina, as these jobs are essential to our citizens and a thriving economy.

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

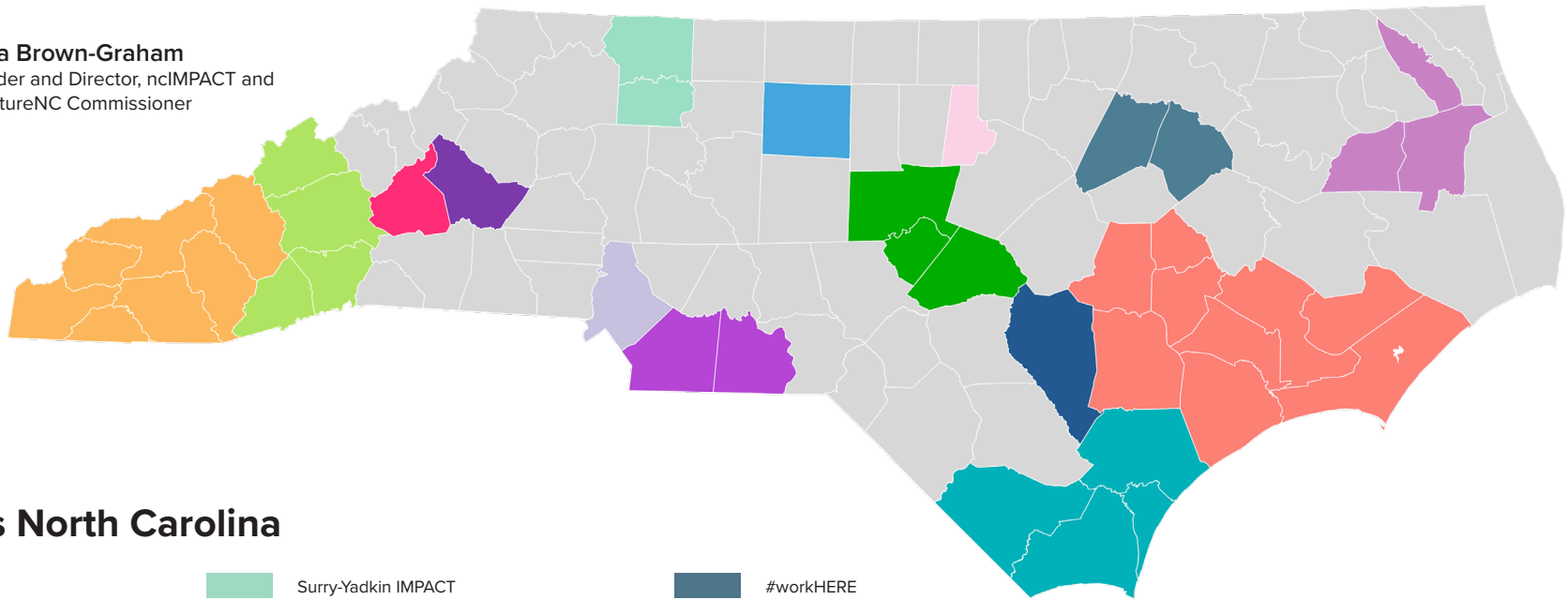
Local Educational Attainment Collaborative (LEACs)

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 | GuilfordJobs2030 | 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.

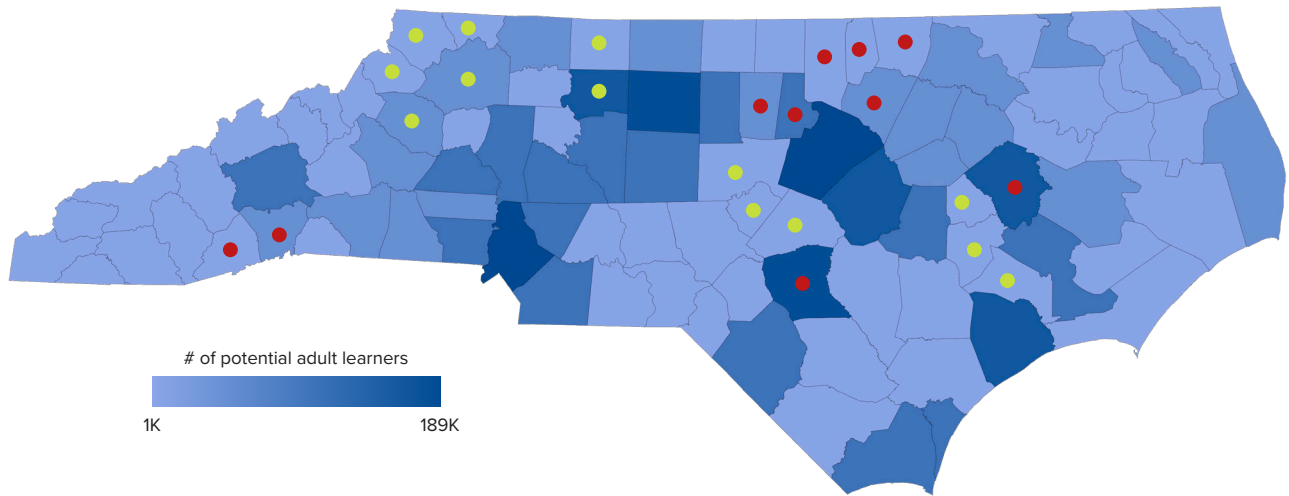
The Belk Center's [Adult Learner Guidebook](#) outlines lessons learned through NC Reconnect and reimagines the experiences of adult learners on our state's community college campuses.



NC Reconnect: Cohorts

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

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>Cohort 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blue Ridge CC Durham Tech Fayetteville Tech Pitt CC Vance-Granville CC | <p>Cohort 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caldwell CC&TI Central Carolina CC Forsyth Tech Lenoir CC Wilkes CC |
|---|--|



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.



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

Raise the Dropout Age from 16 to 18

North Carolina's graduation rate of 87% falls short of the **95% graduation rate required to reach the goal of 2 million by 2030**. Additional focus will be required to meet this goal. Under current state law, students between the ages of 7 and 16 are required to be enrolled in school—the shortest required attendance span in the nation. To **better encourage graduation**, 24 states, including several contiguous to North Carolina, have implemented policies to **require attendance through age 18**. It is time for North Carolina to join them.

Those who do not graduate are more likely to be unemployed and earn significantly less over their lifetime than their peers with a high school diploma or postsecondary degree. **Education is the best investment we can make in our society**. In addition to increased income, attaining higher levels of education has also been linked to higher physical, mental, and cognitive health outcomes. Recognizing long-term benefits of keeping students engaged and on track toward college or a career, it will also be important to have resources to support at-risk students through providing work-based learning opportunities, mental health services, and mentorship programs such as Rutherford County's **McNair Foundation Mentors** and Forsyth County's **Crosby Scholars**, among other supports needed to ensure student success.

NEEDS FORECAST 2

RAISE THE DROPOUT AGE

Our state is **one of only 15** that allows students to drop out at age 16 and has the *shortest* required attendance span in the nation.

Raising the **high school dropout age from age 16 to 18** would be a step towards better encouragement and prioritization of high school graduation.

There is an average of **9,500** high school dropouts each year.

“Great things are happening in a lot of districts, but we can do better as a state by raising the dropout age to 18. We know those who do not graduate are more likely to be unemployed and struggle unnecessarily. We must remain bold enough to believe that we really can make a difference in our community and with our students. All students deserve opportunities to flourish and help shape the future of North Carolina.”



Dr. Valerie Bridges
2021 NC Superintendent of the Year and myFutureNC Commissioner



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-growth fields that pay higher wages**. 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 3

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. In addition, the \$19.3 billion, or 319,763 supported jobs, stemmed from different industry sectors.

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 and provide economic opportunity.

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



Acknowledgements

Corporate/Foundations

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North State Bank
Truist

Individuals

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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.

Citations

For a list of all citations, please go to 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