



**UNC-NCCCS Joint Initiative for Teacher Education and Recruitment
Annual Report**

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**University of North Carolina System
Chapel Hill, North Carolina**

A Critical Need

In North Carolina, the opportunity to receive a sound basic education is a fundamental right. In light of that commitment, ensuring a supply of highly-qualified teachers for our public schools is an essential need – one that is central to the mission of the University of North Carolina System.

Unfortunately, we know this critical need is more of a challenge than ever before. From 2011 to 2018, enrollment in education programs within the UNC System charted a thirty percent decline, mirroring a national trend where some states have seen staggering declines of approximately fifty percent.¹ Added to this are the same underlying perennial issues: a shortage of teachers in high-needs subject areas (particularly Special Education and STEM), difficulty recruiting teachers to rural areas, a lack of racial and gender diversity, and, among others, the empirical reality that younger generations are less likely to remain at the same job, or even in the same field, for their entire career.

All of these challenging realities speak to the importance of robust, strategic, and proactive teacher recruitment efforts. While the UNC System remains the state's largest producer of public school educators, it is clear that teacher preparation pathways have changed in significant ways over the last decade. In particular, more students have sought to pursue a teaching credential by starting at a community college before transferring to an institution in the UNC System to complete their bachelor's degree in education. The UNC and North Carolina Community College systems are working in tandem to ensure that there is a clear and accessible talent pipeline for recruiting, preparing, and retaining the teachers of tomorrow's classrooms.

Continuing Efforts

Over the past decade, there have been numerous measures implemented under the larger umbrella effort of the UNC-NCCCS Joint Initiative on Teacher Education and Recruitment. As one of the foundational steps after the initiative was established in 2006, the UNC System contracted with Noel-Levitz to conduct market research to assess the recruitment practices of all fifteen educator preparation programs (EPPs) and used that assessment to identify the most effective campus-based strategies, as well as to identify any potential gaps in their respective recruitment efforts.

Building on that work, the UNC System established a recruitment network, so that each EPP had a designated point of contact to spearhead recruitment efforts for their respective institution, which were informed by the Noel-Levitz findings and formalized by an institution-authored recruitment plan. The other key goals of the recruitment network were to foster a spirit of collaboration among the EPPs and to encourage each to build a relationship with their surrounding communities, especially with surrounding LEAs and area community colleges.

Although the Joint Initiative is no longer funded, the UNC and NC Community College Systems continue to take significant and important steps to create clear, accessible pathways for students to enter the teaching profession – cutting down on the costly duplication of courses and needless confusion of program requirements. With the revision of the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement (CAA) in 2014,

¹ Partelow, Lisette. "What to Make of Declining Enrollment in Teacher Preparation Programs." *Center for American Progress*, 3 Dec. 2019, www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/reports/2019/12/03/477311/make-declining-enrollment-teacher-preparation-programs/.

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transfer pathways into education programs were developed at each UNC System Institution. All education programs have a pathway noted for Associate in Arts and Associate in Science degrees as part of the CAA. In addition, in 2020, the North Carolina Community College System created new pathways with the Associate in Arts (AATP) and Associate in Science (ASTP) in Teacher Education degrees. At present, a uniform articulation agreement for the AATP and ASTP is being crafted by the UNC System in concert with NCCCS. All but 10 of the 58 community colleges are currently offering the new degrees, and it is anticipated that graduates from these community colleges will begin matriculating to UNC System institutions beginning in fall 2021. This new pathway will enhance opportunities for transfer students wishing to pursue a degree in teaching.

As the teacher workforce continues to change in a dynamic 21st century economy, so too must recruitment strategies. For example, when the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program was reestablished by the General Assembly in 2017, the new eligibility framework created an avenue for community college students to apply as a transfer student for a Teaching Fellows award. Additionally, the General Assembly recently granted authorization for the Teaching Fellows program to expand to three additional EPPs, which will increase the program's geographic footprint and outreach to prospective applicants.

The Future Teachers of North Carolina program also provides a unique recruitment opportunity, in being specifically designed for high school juniors and seniors. Following recent legislative changes, the program now functions as a grant for UNC institutions to apply to host a recruitment event that provides an immersive experience for students to get an authentic feel of what it means to enroll in an educator preparation program. The first FTNC recruitment events will be held later this summer – hosted by NC Central/NC State (joint event); UNC Pembroke/UNC Wilmington (joint event); and UNC Charlotte, respectively.

These are the types of policy changes that fully utilize established talent pipelines, especially when community colleges can be a key element in helping to recruit more diverse candidates and may help incentivize candidates to return to their home communities to teach.

Existing Resources

The UNC System receives an annual appropriation of \$750,000 to support teacher recruitment efforts for the 15 EPPs. The funds are disbursed to EPPs on the basis of quantitative and qualitative metrics like student completion, production in high-need licensure areas, successful recruitment of diverse candidates, and the effectiveness of EPP graduates. EPPs are able to utilize recruitment funds in a variety of ways: hosting student campus visits, offering outreach at career fairs, providing targeted student support, increasing outreach to LEA partners, marketing efforts, and supporting program improvements, among others. The funds can also provide staffing support for campus recruiters.

Conclusion

Ensuring that **all** North Carolina's classrooms have a highly effective teacher is critical. Recruiting effective new teachers and retaining them is paramount to the success of our state's students and to ensuring that there is a well-trained workforce to support economic growth. Our success recruiting teachers today will define the success of the public schools in North Carolina tomorrow. Therefore, teacher recruitment must continue to be a foundational goal for educator preparation programs.