North Carolina Community College System

Strategic Plan

2021 – 2023
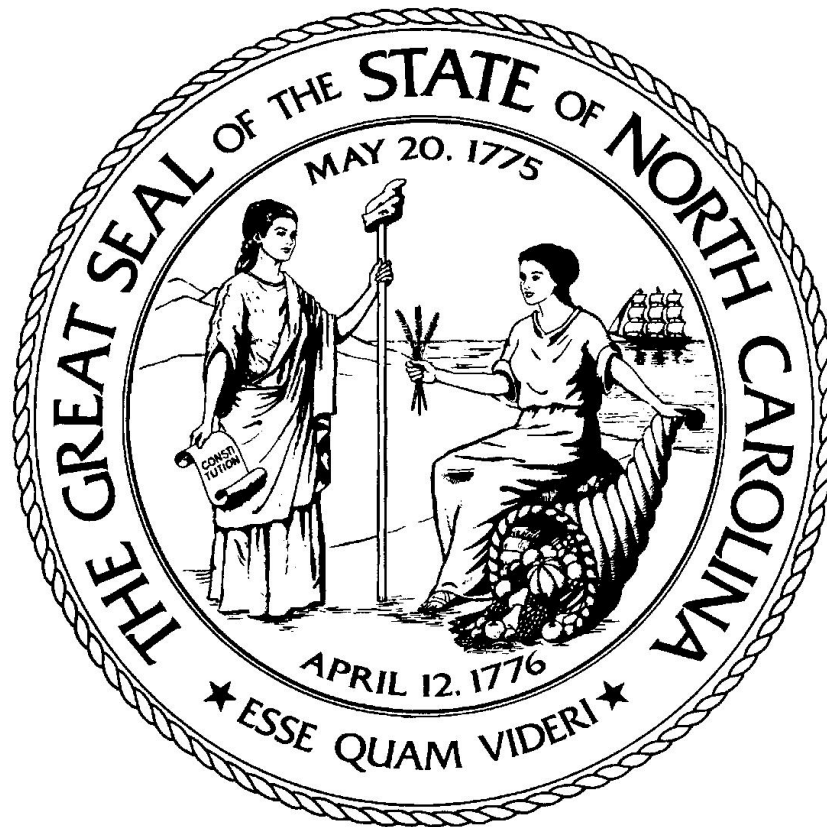
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Contents

North Carolina Community College System

1. Strategic Plan Executive Summary

(Adapted from the North Carolina Community College System 2018-22 Strategic Plan, "Putting Education to Work" – www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/strategic-plan. Also reflects modifications to the strategic plan adopted by the State Board of Community Colleges at its February 2021 meeting.)

Around the time the North Carolina Community College System began its strategic planning process in 2017, the State was reviewing research that estimated that less than half of working-age adults in the state had a postsecondary credential, but within about five years, 2/3 of the state's jobs would require a postsecondary credential. In response to this urgent need to significantly increase educational attainment, the State Board of Community Colleges initiated in February 2017 a planning process aimed at improving how community colleges provide high-quality, accessible educational opportunities to North Carolinians.

Throughout this planning process, our System focused on four themes related to comprehensively improving the educational pipeline provided by community colleges:
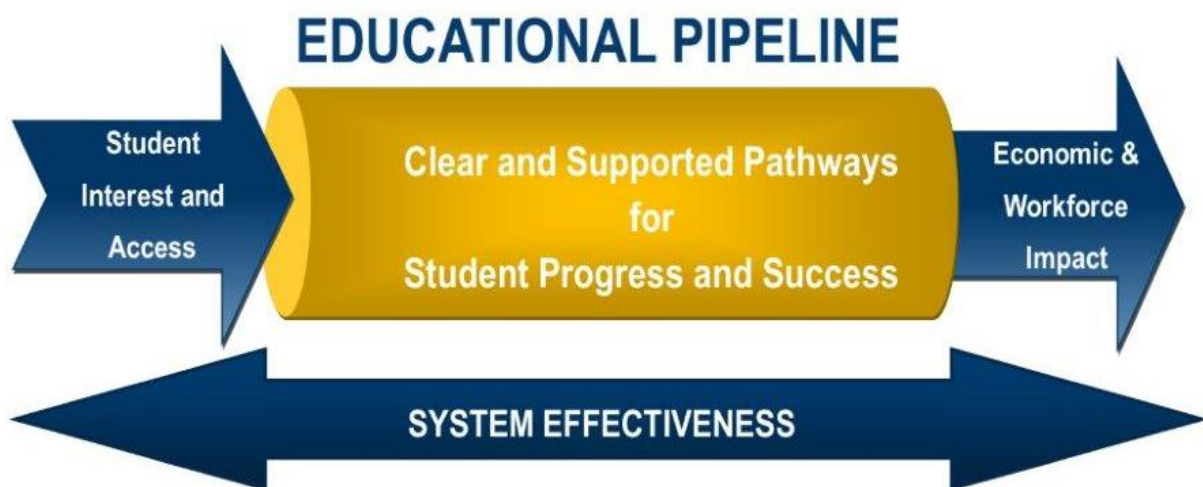
- **Student Interest and Access:** How do we overcome lack of interest and barriers to higher education access to increase the percentage of North Carolinians pursuing postsecondary education?
- **Clear and Supported Pathways for Student Progress and Success:** How do we better provide students the instruction and support needed to successfully attain a degree/credential and enter the workforce or transfer to a four-year institution in a timely manner?
- **Economic and Workforce Impact:** How do we ensure that our students have the knowledge skills, and abilities to meet the state's economic and workforce needs?
- **System Effectiveness:** How do we support a cohesive system of nimble, community-driven colleges and empowered faculty and staff? How do we improve institutional capacity to support the System's mission and reduce operational risk?

President Thomas Stith, who began his new post in early 2021, supports the 2018-22 strategic plan and emphasizes the following aims:

- Serve as the first choice for affordable education for all North Carolinians;
- Lead North Carolina's economic recovery and sustained growth;
- Become a national model for diversity and inclusion.

Plan Uses

As laid out in the development of the current strategic plan, the uses of the plan are as follows:

- Promote a clear and consistent message about North Carolina's Community Colleges.
- Guide development of NC Community College System's budget and legislative priorities.
- Promote accountability.
- Aid in making decisions and focusing on prioritizing.
- Inspire our community college "family" and promote System cohesion.

Strategic Planning Process

Environmental Scan	
March-April 2017	Review of the 58 community colleges' strategic plans to understand what is important to our System
March-June 2017	Research of demographic and economic trends affecting community colleges
April-July 2017	Initial stakeholder engagement, including students, businesses, legislative leaders, and community college presidents and professional associations
Plan Development July-October 2017	Teams co-chaired by System Office and community college leaders developed draft goal statements, objectives and strategies - Included participation of community college leaders and experts, partners (esp. education and workforce/economic development) and customers (students and businesses)
October 2017-February 2018	Plan reviewed and revised by the State Board of Community Colleges and its Strategic Planning Committee
Plan Implementation and Adjustments	February 2018: approval by the State Board of Community Colleges of the 2018-22 NCCCS Strategic Plan, "Putting Education to Work"
Spring 2018	Inclusion of strategic plan reference in board item template
February 2018-October 2018	Development of SBCC Strategic Plan tool to track tactics supporting strategic plan aims - introduced to full board along with plan Key Performance Indicators at 10/2018 State Board Planning Meeting
Quarterly (beginning 10/2018)	Updates and discussion about progress of key tactics
February 2021	SBCC adoption of changes to strategic plan
Ongoing	Adjustments to strategic plan or key tactics as needed

2. Mission, Vision, and Values

Agency Mission Statement

The mission of the North Carolina Community College System is to open the door to high-quality, accessible educational opportunities that minimize barriers to post-secondary education, maximize student success, develop a globally and multi-culturally competent workforce, and improve the lives and well-being of individuals by providing:

- Education, training and retraining for the workforce including basic skills and literacy education, occupational and pre-baccalaureate programs.
- Support for economic development through services to and in partnership with business and industry and in collaboration with the University of North Carolina System and private colleges and universities.
- Services to communities and individuals which improve the quality of life.

Agency Vision Statement

One Team with One Voice… Serving 58.

Agency Values

Accountability – Taking responsibility to deliver excellent service while maintaining transparency.

Collaboration – Exhibiting a sense of community by encouraging teamwork, support and open communication.

Integrity – Demonstrating professional ethics in a fair and honest manner.

Service – Being responsive, dedicated and committed to the people we serve.

3. Goals, Objectives, and Performance Measures

See Appendices for tactics/initiatives and KPI descriptions.

Goal 1 – <u>Student Interest and Access</u>: Increase the percentage of North Carolinians, particularly within underserved populations, pursuing and easily accessing education or training through North Carolina community colleges.	

Key Performance Indicators:

1-a. High School Dual Enrollment

1-b. High School Graduate Subsequent Enrollment

1-c. Adult Enrollment (Curriculum/Continuing Education; Basic Skills)

1-d. Stop-Out Student Re-Entry

1-e. High School Equivalency Transitions

Objective 1.1 – Improve the understanding and perceived value of educational opportunities, including lifelong learning, offered by North Carolina community colleges.

Strategy	1.1.1. Implement a comprehensive, system-wide marketing and communications plan that focuses on the value of community colleges and promotes the image of the System and our institutions.
Strategy	1.1.2. Strengthen collaboration with education, community, business, and workforce partners for outreach and to support students as they transition through a seamless system of education in North Carolina.
Strategy	1.1.3. Reconnect former community college students to education and training opportunities that foster continued educational and career growth.

Activities to accomplish Objective 1.1:

- Marketing and Communications Plan
- Articulation of Credit and Alignment of Pathways
- Career Coach Expansion/Implementation
- DHHS Education Navigator Partnership
- Hispanic/Latino Outreach Initiative
- Workforce Collaboration
- Work-based Learning
- Finish First Credential Audit
- Prior Learning Sources and Assessments (Credit for Prior Learning)

See appendix for description of activities.

Objective 1.2 – Increase student interest and success in industries experiencing skills gaps.

Strategy	1.2.1. Market the value of technical education and workforce training for jobs/careers.

Activities to accomplish Objective 1.2:

- Construction and Contractor Careers Rebranding*
- Proactive Industry Engagement/Economic Recovery*
- Apprenticeship Expansion*
- Work-based Learning* (in collaboration with the team involved in the NGA Work-based Learning Academy, led by the NC Business Committee for Education)
- State Sector Strategies Council and collaboration with NC Chamber

Objective 1.3 – Identify and reduce access barriers for all prospective students, particularly among underserved populations.

Strategy	1.3.1. Improve and augment existing financial assistance programs and services to better assist students with educational costs, particularly costs beyond tuition and fees (e.g., books, transportation, child care, etc.).
Strategy	1.3.2. Promote more flexible scheduling and instructional delivery formats, including more robust and inclusive online learning.

Activities to accomplish Objective 1.3:

- NC Student Aid Study Group
- Advising and Student Support Redesign
- Collaboration to support the Governor's Finish Line Grants program
- Basic Needs Initiative
- Scholarships for Short-term Training
- Study of Programs for Students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
- Online Learning Innovation

Objective 1.4 -- Improve the student experience and increase enrollment by simplifying enrollment policies, processes, and communications.

Strategy	1.4.1. Re-envision the application and enrollment process for community colleges.
Strategy	1.4.2. Improve initial advising to include career exploration and improve navigation of the enrollment process.

Activities to accomplish Objective 1.4:

- Advising and Student Support Redesign
- Career Coach Expansion/Implementation
- Modifications to Residency Determination Service computer system and related state policy

Goal 2 – <u>Clear and Supported Pathways for Student Progress and Success</u>: Provide a continuum of education, training, advising, and support to help learners make informed decisions that lead to credentials and careers.

Key Performance Indicators:

2-a. Basic Skills Student Progress*

2-b. Student Success Rate in College-Level English Courses*

2-c. Student Success Rate in College-Level Math Courses*

2-d. First Year Progression*

2-e. Curriculum Completion*

2-f. College Transfer Performance*

2-g. Program Cluster Retention

2-h. Licensure and Certification Passing Rate*

*Asterisked items are State Performance Measures, which are calculated for each community college (influencing performance funding) and the state as a whole. For further information, see https://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/analytics/state-and-federal-performance-measures.

Objective 2.1 – **Provide timely and accurate career exploration and academic planning opportunities.**	
Strategy	2.1.1. Integrate career exploration and employer outreach for all audiences from the moment they engage.
Strategy	2.1.2. Develop and support effective career planning practices for faculty and staff.

Activities to accomplish Objective 2.1:

- Advising and Student Support Redesign
- Career Coach Expansion/Implementation
- nccareers.org (career portal) and career awareness activities

Objective 2.2 – **Provide integrated, targeted support services that promote student success.**	
Strategy	2.2.1. Provide support for student academic concerns, including early alerts to increase retention.
Strategy	2.2.2. Connect students to transportation, health, and other comprehensive services, drawing on both college and community resources to address non-academic barriers faced by students.

Activities to accomplish Objective 2.2:

- Minority Male Success Initiative
- Guided Pathways
- Basic Needs Initiative
- Collaboration to support the Governor's Finish Line Grants program
- DHHS Education Navigator Partnership
- Advising and Student Support Redesign

Objective 2.3 – **Increase completion of credentials for successful transition to careers and/or further education.**	
Strategy	2.3.1. Simplify and streamline processes from entry through completion/transfer, effectively incorporating multiple on and off ramps.

Strategy	2.3.2. Refine foundational and developmental education strategies to accelerate student readiness for college-level instruction.
Strategy	2.3.3. Validate students' prior learning and experience to minimize student costs and the time it takes to complete their educational goals.
Strategy	2.3.4. Support effective advising and coaching to help students determine, pursue, and achieve their educational and career goals.
Strategy	2.3.5. Promote guided educational pathways within broader career pathways.

Activities to accomplish Objective 2.3:

- DHHS Education Navigator Partnership
- Accelerating Student Readiness - Career and College Ready Graduates program (CCRG) and Reinforced Instruction for Student Success (RISE)
- Advising and Student Support Redesign
- Articulation of Credit and Alignment of Pathways
- Basic Skills Plus and Integrated Education and Training
- Prior Learning Sources and Assessments
- Courage to Credits (credit for prior military learning)
- Finish First Credential Audit
- NC Workforce Credentials
- Guided Pathways

Objective 2.4 -- Reduce opportunity gaps for underserved students.

Strategy	2.4.1. Help college employees understand and employ effective teaching/coaching strategies for all students, including those who are dealing with the impacts of poverty, trauma, addiction, mental illness, disabilities, and other challenges.
Strategy	2.4.2. Identify and remove systemic challenges to students of color and offer them targeted supports.

Activities to accomplish Objective 2.4:

- Guided Pathways
- Study of Programs for Students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD)
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee
- Equity-focused data and professional development

Goal 3 – Economic and Workforce Impact: Ensure the educational pipeline prepares a workforce possessing the interest, knowledge, skills, and abilities to meet the needs of employers, now and into the future.

Key Performance Indicators:

3-a. Graduate Employment

3-b. Graduate Income

3-c. Business Partnerships

3-d. Work-Based Training Opportunities

3-e. Enrollment to Unemployment Ratio

Objective 3.1 – **Collaborate with stakeholders to promote a workforce system that fosters innovation and establishes seamless connections among community colleges, K-12 education, universities, workforce and economic development partners, and business and industry.**

Strategy	3.1.1. Identify and engage employers and relevant sources of data to determine high-demand occupations, program demand within the current labor market, and expected occupational earnings.
Strategy	3.1.2. Partner with high schools, universities, and workforce development entities and engage with employers and industry associations at the regional/local levels to identify workforce needs and establish educational and training programs collaboratively and comprehensively.
Strategy	3.1.3. Collaborate with workforce partners to benchmark successful state and national workforce systems.

Activities to accomplish Objective 3.1:

- Proactive Industry Engagement/Economic Recovery
- Workforce System Collaboration
- NC Workforce Credentials
- Construction & Contractor Careers Rebranding
- Articulation of Credit and Alignment of Pathways
- Work-based Learning

Objective 3.2 – **Offer relevant, high-quality instructional programs that meet the needs of business and industry for existing and future jobs.**

Strategy	3.2.1. Provide accessible, affordable, and high-quality professional development to faculty and staff to stay informed about labor market and student support trends.
Strategy	3.2.2. Articulate pathways for educational and professional growth within key industries through employer engagement.
Strategy	3.2.3. Develop faculty capacity to conduct program review and learning outcomes assessment to promote continuous improvement of programs.
Strategy	3.2.4 Integrate critical employability skills into all programs of study to better prepare students for today's work environment.

Strategy	3.2.5. Modify the instructional funding model to ensure colleges have necessary resources to offer workforce training needed by their communities.

Activities to accomplish Objective 3.2:

- Employability Skills Alignment Project
- Short-term Workforce Training Funding
- Workforce System Cost Study
- Articulation of Credit and Alignment of Pathways
- Basic Skills Plus and Integrated Education and Training

Objective 3.3 – **Increase student access to work-based learning.**

Strategy	3.3.1. Leverage partnerships to connect students with expanded work-based learning opportunities.
Strategy	3.3.2. Modify policies and eliminate the barriers that impede access to apprenticeships and other work-based learning opportunities.

Activities to accomplish Objective 3.3:

- Apprenticeship Expansion
- Work-Based Learning
- Workforce Development Focused IT

Objective 3.4 – **Increase business counseling for small business owners.**

Strategy	3.4.1. Adjust the Small Business Center performance funding model to prioritize business counseling activities.

Activities to accomplish Objective 3.4:

- Change to Small Business Center performance funding model

Objective 3.5 – Develop a workforce pipeline for emergency response, pandemic-proof, and high-demand industries.

Strategy	3.5.1. Implement the NC Workforce Credentials framework.
Strategy	3.5.2. Expand the teacher preparation pipeline through articulation agreements with universities for teacher prep and lateral entry/residency pathways.
Strategy	3.5.3. Provide enhanced training for law enforcement officers to ensure safe and fair enforcement of laws.

Activities to accomplish Objective 3.5:

- NC Workforce Credentials
- Short-term Workforce Training Funding
- Apprenticeship Expansion

- Articulation of Credit and Alignment of Pathways
- Law Enforcement Officer Training

Goal 4 – <u>System Effectiveness</u>: Advance organizational effectiveness, operations, and decision-making to support a cohesive system of nimble, empowered, and community-driven colleges.

Key Performance Indicators:

4-a. Faculty Retention

4-b. Staff Retention

4-c. Salary Comparisons

4-d. Institutional Expenses

4-e. Full-time Faculty Instruction

4-f. Faculty FTE Generation

4-g. Online Instruction

Objective 4.1 – Ensure colleges and the System have access to technology and related infrastructure to meet student and institutional needs.

Strategy	4.1.1.	Implement a sustainable, system-wide enterprise resources planning (ERP) solution that enables more consistent and efficient operations.
Strategy	4.1.2.	Sustain the current ERP infrastructure to prepare for transition to a modernized ERP.
Strategy	4.1.3.	Expand broadband access at North Carolina community colleges.

Activities to accomplish Objective 4.1:

- IT Infrastructure Transformation and Cybersecurity
- Workforce Development Focused IT
- Rural Broadband Initiative

Objective 4.2 – Improve decision-making through increased access to comprehensive, timely, and quality data.

Strategy	4.2.1.	Ensure that core data needs are identified, defined, governed, and accurately reported.

Activities to accomplish Objective 4.2:

- Business Intelligence (Data Warehouse)
- NCCCS Dashboards

	• Strategic Plan Implementation and Oversight • Transform IT Service Management

Objective 4.3 – **Enhance and support workplace environments that value and engage employees and provide opportunities for growth and development.**

Strategy	4.3.1. Assess and address the professional development needs across the System.
Strategy	4.3.2. Advocate for competitive salaries and benefits for community college faculty and employees.

Activities to accomplish Objective 4.3:

- Financial Aid Leadership Academy
- Student Services Leadership Academies
- Accelerating Student Readiness
- Guided Pathways
- Research and advocacy for higher salaries for community college faculty/staff

Objective 4.4 -- **Ensure policies, procedures, and processes facilitate System effectiveness and compliance.**

Strategy	4.4.2. Facilitate collaboration between System Office and the NC Association of Community College Presidents on the establishment of standard policies and procedures required to meet System requirements and align with best practices.
Strategy	4.4.3. Identify and apply lessons learned from the pandemic based on best practices, System needs, and gaps in strategies.

Activities to accomplish Objective 4.4:

- Establishment of the System Advisory Council
- President's COVID-19 Response Committee
- IT Infrastructure Transformation and Cybersecurity
- Workforce Development-Focused IT
- Strategic Plan Implementation and Oversight
- Transform IT Service Management

Objective 4.5 – **Leverage partnerships and agreements to create efficiencies for the System as a whole.**

Strategy	4.5.1. Advocate for regional or system-wide procurement mechanisms to simplify processes.
Strategy	4.5.2. Foster regional and system-wide collaborations among colleges.

Activities to accomplish Objective 4.5:

- IT Infrastructure Transformation and Cybersecurity
- Guided Pathways
- Finish First Credential Audit
- Employability Skills Alignment Project

Objective 4.6 – **Improve cohesiveness among colleges, professional associations, System Office, and partners.**

Strategy	4.6.1.	Improve communication among all System entities and key partners.
Strategy	4.6.2.	Leverage community college professional associations to increase communication and problem-solving across our System.

Activities to accomplish Objective 4.6:

- Establishment of System Advisory Council/ongoing collaboration
- President's COVID-19 Response Committee

4. Highlights and Opportunities

Agency Highlights and Best Practices

The following are examples of tactics/initiatives that are moving the Community College System toward the goals it laid out in the 2018-2022 strategic plan, "Putting Education to Work."

Apprenticeship Expansion – Recent research indicates a strong return on investment for employers that sponsor apprentices, and in the first three years the Community College System managed North Carolina's apprenticeship program (fall 2017- fall 2020), the program almost doubled in size. ApprenticeshipNC has actively promoted apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships, including expanding to new industries that have not previously relied on apprentices and working to serve more youth apprentices and students of color. State legislation has also enabled ApprenticeshipNC to incentivize a pathway from high school to community college by waiving college training costs for apprentices that start on an apprenticeship pathway in high school and continue at a community college.

Articulation of Credits and Alignment of Pathways – The North Carolina Community College System is actively expanding program pathways and articulation agreements with the state's public and private university systems to ensure that community college credits are fully honored in four-year institutions in North Carolina, high school Perkins or dual enrollment courses are honored at community colleges, and career pathways are clear for students. Some of the most recent articulation agreements include multiple teacher preparation pathways from community colleges to public and private four-year colleges, as well as social sciences pathways from community colleges to private four-year colleges.

Credit for Prior Learning – The Community College System has worked with the other education sectors and the military to make it easier for students to obtain community college credit for prior learning experiences. The State Board of Community Colleges adopted a new section of State Board Code (1D SBCCC 800.1) at its March 2021 board meeting to establish statewide policy on credit for prior learning. There are multiple forms of credit for prior learning; one initiative that NCCCS and the UNC System have collaborated on is credit for prior military learning, via a project called Courage to Credits.

Data Dashboards – The System Office has published more than 50 interactive data dashboards to date to enable staff and governance bodies to make data-informed decisions about programs and policies. Major topics include Overviews (including State Performance Measures and Perkins program overviews), Access, Student Enrollment, FTE, Student Progress, Student Success, Programs and Instruction, and Faculty and Staff.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee – In July 2020, community college Presidents Thomas Walker and Don Tomas were named to lead a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee to review State Board Code and sample college policies for elements that may negatively impact students of color and make recommendations. With support from Jobs for the Future and the Belk Center at NC State University, this work is underway, with initial findings expected in summer 2021.

Finish First Credential Audit – the "Finish First" credential audit involves computer programming by Wake Tech to identify students that have already (unknowingly) earned postsecondary credentials or are within a semester of earning one. Wake Tech has used this information to reach out to students to help them claim credentials or explore if students that have "stopped out" would want to re-enroll to quickly finish a credential. With support from the System Office and programming by Wake Tech, this strategy is being replicated across the state. As of April 2021, 49 colleges are using the tool, and all 58 colleges are expected to be using the tool in some way by August 2021. Sessions conducted with 39 of the 47 NCCCS colleges using FFNC from January to December 2020, the project team recorded a total of 28,391 unclaimed credentials for

which students had already completed requirements (new completion credentials) and 102,653 credentials that students could obtain within one semester (near completion credentials).

Marketing – The aims of the System's overall marketing plan and campaign are to increase awareness of the Community College System and its offerings, change the perception of community colleges, and increase enrollment. The Community College System, using private funds managed by its Foundation, contracted with APCO Worldwide to develop an award-winning "Your Hire Education" marketing campaign focused on prospective adult community college students. This includes a website, social media advertising, traditional advertising, and periodic online events. "Their Hire Education" (a Facebook page for parents of high school students) is a related resource that highlights Career and College Promise offerings.

The Community College System has also undertaken marketing for specific programming. A construction-focused re-branding initiative was completed in 2018-2019, the System has done marketing to fuel interest in its growing apprenticeship program, and there are plans to do marketing for the Governor's GEER (Governor's Emergency Education Relief) scholarships for short-term workforce training.

Minority Male Success Initiative – MMSI involves deliberate efforts at a subset of 11 North Carolina community colleges to address opportunity gaps in college access, persistence, and completion. With support from the NC Community College System Office, this set of colleges tests strategies to aid its minority male students. The three primary strategies currently used are early alert strategies (to identify students whose academic performance or attendance may be slipping), success coaching, and other programmatic activities. An initial evaluation shows some improvements for minority male students under MMSI interventions. Further research is planned.

Potential Initiatives

The primary resource needs of the North Carolina Community College System relate to budget stabilization, increasing the salaries of community college faculty and staff, and modernizing the IT system. The Community College System appreciates the Governor's proposed budget for 2021-2023, which provides strong support for these major priorities. Other major budget and legislative priorities are also listed below.

Budget Stabilization – One-time funds are needed to ensure budget stability for colleges across the System that have experienced enrollment declines due to COVID-19. In line with national community college enrollment declines, total enrollment at North Carolina community colleges declined by 11% between fall 2019 and fall 2020. With a budget based on past enrollment, taking budget stability measures is critical to maintaining the Community College System's capacity to educate and train.

Local Community College Faculty and Staff Salaries - Attracting and retaining faculty and staff to prepare North Carolina's future workforce continues to be a significant challenge, especially in high-demand, high-skilled areas such as nursing and the trades. This situation was further exacerbated during the last biennium when community college faculty and staff did not receive the 5% raise provided to State employees. For 2018-19, the NC Community College System ranks 40th in the nation for public two-year college faculty salaries. A recent study by George Mason University comparing select North Carolina community college faculty and staff positions to local labor market salaries consistently found community college positions to be under market:

"Overall, the lack of competitive salaries in key occupational areas, that correspond with the state's biggest future economic development opportunities, calls into question North Carolina's ability to develop the talent pipelines required for 21st Century economic competitiveness."

Modern College Workforce IT System - The Community College System currently relies on an outdated ERP system, which is a frequent topic of discussion of the State Board of Community Colleges. The Community College System has been using funding it has been able to procure to move toward greater capability and efficiency, but this approach requires continued improvements.

Additional opportunities include the following:

Expanding NCCC Cybersecurity Staffing and Resources - As part of its legislative agenda, NCCCS is requesting nine regional cybersecurity staff. It is also seeking funds for professional expertise for a security engineering and technical assistance plan and Systemwide plan implementation. Multiple community colleges have experienced cyber incidents over the past couple of years, and NCCCS is expanding both its response capacity and its prevention efforts.

Funding Surry CC-Yadkin Multi-campus Center – A multi-campus center is a convenience location in the community college service area to provide appropriate population and geographic access for community outreach, testing, faculty and staff offices, and/or literacy, continuing education, and curriculum instruction. As part of its legislative agenda, the NCCCS seeks funding for a SBCC multi-campus center housing the Yadkin Early College.

Including Community Colleges in Capital Funding Proposals – Another request in the current legislative agenda is for inclusion of community colleges in any capital funding proposals. Community colleges continue to have over $2.2B in unmet capital and equipment needs.

Scholarships for Short-term Workforce Training – As part of a larger set of investments, Governor Cooper directed $15M of GEER funding for a pilot program offering scholarships in one of 10 programs of study for short-term workforce training through the community colleges. As of March 2021, $3.88M in scholarships had been awarded for approximately 2,600 scholarships covering needs ranging from registration costs and books to credential assessment fees. Financial assistance for short-term training and related credentials is currently the primary gap in educational financial assistance; meanwhile, short-term training is the primary workforce education need of employers that need workers. The pilot initiative is funded through September 2022, but recurring funds will be needed toward the end of the biennium to sustain this form of financial assistance.

Support of "CC/In-State Tuition" (S421) – Another form of access is needed when students apply for residency to be able to obtain in-state tuition. For a small group of students that have declared themselves independent when they apply for in-state residency, previous time living with their parents can't under current law be considered as part of the time needed to qualify for in-state residency. S421 is broadly supported by the Community College System and would enable students (who otherwise lack evidence of residency) qualify for in-state tuition if they complete a full year in a public high school in North Carolina, graduate from high school in North Carolina, and plan to attend a NC community college the following school year.

Collaborative Opportunities

Much of what the NC Community College System accomplishes is through collaboration. Below are some examples of current initiatives that could be expanded in order to achieve large positive impacts.

Career and College Ready Graduates (CCRG) – As mandated by SL 2015-241, CCRG requires the state's high schools and community colleges to collaborate on a remediation program to help high school seniors gain the skills in English and math needed to succeed at the college level. After extensive planning by community college and public school faculty, most of the state's 650+ high schools began teaching CCRG English and math courses in January 2021. Continued collaboration will be especially important following disruptions to in-person instruction over the past year due to the COVID-19 pandemic and concerns about pandemic learning loss. Further collaborative IT work is needed to ensure robust program reporting.

Expanded role of community colleges in teacher preparation – Building on multiple recent articulation agreements, community colleges could play an expanded role in teacher preparation efforts as the State works to expand and diversify its teaching workforce and meet the mandates of the latest *Leandro* decision. NCCCS is currently working on a uniform articulation agreement on Teacher Education and applying to the Department of Public Instruction to be a systemwide Educator Preparation Program. In addition, NCCCS is developing a system-wide literacy training model for community college faculty in the coming year to support the Science of Reading approach to literacy instruction.

Medicaid support for students with I/DD at community colleges – in initial research conducted by the Cansler Consulting Group, CCG informed NCCCS that Medicaid could potentially be used to support students with intellectual and developmental disabilities in their pursuit of employment-focused education or training. Further work is planned with CCG to explore this possibility with NC Medicaid.

NC Workforce Credentials – NC Workforce Credentials are high-quality, non-degree credentials recognized by employers that enable individuals to obtain in-demand, living-wage jobs. The NC Workforce Credentials initiative is carried out in partnership with myFutureNC, the Governor's Office, Department of Commerce, Department of Public Instruction, and the NC Association of Workforce Development Boards to help the state achieve its educational attainment goal (two million North Carolinians with a high-quality credential or post-secondary degree by 2030). As of spring 2021, the NC Workforce Credentials team is finishing its validation of credentials with employers.

NCCCS has an inherently broad mission, so there is never a shortage of opportunities. Our aim is to remain focused in the final year of the 2018-22 strategic framework ("Putting Education to Work") for maximum impact in key areas, but we will consider other collaboration opportunities that arise if they align directly with the aims set forth in our strategic plan and its recent update.

Links and Appendices:

North Carolina Community College System
Strategic Plan, KPIs and Tactics as of April 2021

- Link to the 2018-22 NCCCS Strategic Plan: "Putting Education to Work" (adopted by the State Board of Community Colleges in February 2018): www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/strategic-plan

- Link to the February 2021 update of the strategic plan: https://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/sites/default/files/state-board/planning/plan_01_-_recommended_changes_to_the_2018-22_strategic_plan_0.pdf

- Appendix A: Strategic Plan Key Performance Indicators and Definitions

- Appendix B: Plan-related Initiatives (as of April 2021)

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Appendix A:

Strategic Plan Key Performance Indicators and Definitions (8/2019)

Student Interest and Access

High School Dual Enrollment - Percentage of public and charter high school students concurrently enrolled at a community college during the academic year.

High School Graduate Subsequent Enrollment - Percentage of annual public and charter high school graduates subsequently enrolled in a community college within the first two falls following graduation.

Adult Enrollment
- Curriculum/Continuing Education: Percentage of adult (18-64) high school graduates without an associate degree or higher enrolled in a curriculum or continuing ed. program.
- Basic Skills: Percentage of adults (18-64) without a high school degree or higher enrolled in a basic skills program.

Stop-Out Student Re-Entry - Percentage of exiting non-transfer students re-enrolled during the academic year after their absence.

High School Equivalency Transitions - Percentage of those who completed a high school equivalency who are enrolled in continuing education or curriculum coursework the same academic year or the year following completion.

Clear & Supported Pathways

Basic Skills Student Progress - Percentage of Basic Skills participant periods of participation (POP) with a measurable skill gain.

Student Success Rate in College-Level English Courses - Percentage of first-time fall Associate Degree seeking and transfer pathway students passing a credit-bearing English course with a "C" or better within three years of their first term of enrollment.

Student Success Rate in College-Level Math - Percentage of first-time fall Associate Degree seeking and transfer pathway students passing a credit-bearing Math course with a "C" or better within three years of their first term of enrollment.

First Year Progression - Percentage of first-time fall credential seeking students enrolled in postsecondary the subsequent fall semester or graduating prior to subsequent fall semester.

Curriculum Completion - Percentage of first-time fall credential seeking students who graduate, transfer, or are enrolled during the fourth academic year with 42 successfully completed non-developmental hours.

College Transfer Performance - Among community college students with 30 or more credit hours who transfer to a four-year university or college, the percentage graduating with a bachelor's degree or higher within four years.

Program Cluster Retention - Of first-time fall credential seeking students returning the subsequent fall, the percentage enrolled in the same division/program area.

Licensure and Certification Passing Rate - Aggregate institutional passing rate of first-time test-takers on licensure and certification exams. Exams included in this measure are state mandated exams which candidates must pass before becoming active practitioners.

Economic and Workforce Impact

Graduate Employment – Percentage of community college graduates employed 1-10 years after graduation.

Graduate Income – Median wages of community college graduates 1- 10 years after graduation.

Business Partnerships – Number of businesses served or started through Apprenticeship, Customized Training, and Small Business Center.

Work-Based Training Opportunities – Number of individuals served through Apprenticeship, Work-Based Learning Course, and Customized Training.

Enrollment to Unemployment Ratio – Annual change in enrollment over the annual change in unemployment for 25-34-year-olds.

System Effectiveness

Faculty Retention – Percentage of October faculty still employed within the system one year later.

Staff Retention – Percentage of October staff still employed within the system one year later.

Salary comparisons – Average salary of full-time instructional staff at North Carolina Community Colleges compared to state averages and national averages.

Institutional Expenses – Percentage of institutional expenses by function.

Full-Time Faculty Instruction – Percentage of scheduled hours taught by full-time faculty.

Faculty FTE Generation – Full Time Equivalent enrollment per faculty member.

Online Instruction – Percentage of instruction occurring online.

Appendix B:

Plan-related Initiatives

The initiatives that the NC Community College System employs to carry out its strategic plan evolve to be responsive to changing economic circumstances, changing priorities of stakeholders, and opportunities and challenges that emerge. Currently tracked initiatives are listed in the table below:

Tactic/Initiative	Description
Accelerating Student Readiness	Accelerating Student Readiness is composed of two initiatives, CCRG and RISE. The overarching goals of each initiative are intertwined and lead to accelerated student readiness. --*Career and College Ready Graduates (CCRG)* is a response to a legislative mandate for the Community College System to work with NC Public Schools to establish a program to offer high school students remediation (college developmental education) in key subject areas before completing high school. --*Reinforced Instruction for Student Excellence (RISE)* is a co-requisite model for increasing enrollment and first year momentum in gateway math and English courses as fundamental components of a student's structured educational experience.
Advising and Student Support Redesign	The aim of this initiative is development of established best practice strategies and professional development to ensure students are empowered to make informed decisions regarding educational pathways in support of individual career goals. The redesign effort involves collaboration among the System Office, NC community college professional networks, and the NC Student Success Center.
Articulation of Credit and Alignment of Pathways	The NC Community College System continues to develop and revise articulation agreements to ensure that students can seamlessly transfer credits and move toward their career and academic goals. It also encourages alignment of educational pathways so that, across levels of education, students can achieve their goals most quickly, without unnecessary detours. These strategies enable students, their families, and the State to save money and achieve educational goals most efficiently.

Tactic/Initiative	Description
Career Coach Expansion/ Implementation	The Career Coach program places community college career coaches in high schools to help students set career goals and identify postsecondary education or training programs to achieve those goals. The program complements other strategies to reach students early in the educational pipeline. Community college-supported Career Coaches work in partnership with high school counseling and career development coordinator staff to reach all students.
Courage to Credits	Courage to Credits is a credit for prior military learning initiative that involved extensive collaboration among community colleges, universities, and military experts to map military competencies gained from military training or experience to the civilian equivalents. The crosswalks have been developed, the information is now in advisors' hands, and the final stage of the project is computer programming to make the search for equivalents virtually instantaneous.
Business Intelligence (Data Warehouse)	The Business Intelligence initiative provides a comprehensive and accessible repository of data and business intelligence that supports the timely reporting of student and institutional outcomes.
DHHS Education Navigator Partnership	The Food and Nutrition Services Employment & Training (FNS E&T) program in North Carolina provides employment and training assistance to individuals who receive food and nutrition assistance (formerly known as "food stamps") in participating counties. Through this SNAP E&T partnership, community colleges work with county Departments of Social Services to fund Education Navigators, who are FNS participants' first and primary connection to the community college. Education Navigators provide educational assessments and help participants determine appropriate educational pathways, develop educational/ employability action plans, and access community college and DSS services.
Finish First Credential Audit	The aim of this tactic is to implement the Finish First technology tool (developed by Wake Tech and piloted initially at Lenoir Community College) system-wide to facilitate colleges' ability to help students identify credentials they have earned or for which they are close to completion.
Finish Line Grants	On July 12, 2018, Governor Roy Cooper announced the *Finish Line Grants* program to help community college students complete their training when facing unforeseen challenges. Too often, financial emergencies like unexpected healthcare costs, childcare expenses, or car breakdowns prevent community college students who are on the cusp of completion from reaching that milestone. More than 5,000 grants have been made via a partnership between community colleges and Workforce

Tactic/Initiative	Description
	Development Boards/NCWorks staff to help students complete the second half of their education and enter the workforce. At the state level, this involves a collaboration among the Governor's Office, Department of Commerce/Division of Workforce Solutions, and the NC Community College System.
Guided Pathways	The NC Student Success Center supports adoption of Guided Pathways practices to help community colleges implement integrated, holistic supports and interventions to improve student learning, increase persistence in college, and help students complete credentials. It focuses on clarifying career and academic pathways, helping students get on/stay on a path, and ensure that students are making real learning gains relevant to their future academic/career goals.
Hispanic/Latino Outreach Initiative	To better understand the needs of the Hispanic/Latinx student, the System Office and several community colleges have worked to identify and address barriers to access for prospective Hispanic/Latino students

Undergrad research project on challenges the population encounters during access, entry, and progression at a community college
Immersion into the Hispanic/Latinx culture and participation in UNC System's Go Global Hispanic/Latino Initiative
Multiple professional development opportunities for community college leaders, faculty, and staff aiming to serve the Hispanic/ Latino population more effectively. |
| **IT Infrastructure Transformation and Cybersecurity** | The initial purpose of this initiative was to leverage Cloud infrastructure to improve student and College services, migrating our College Information System (CIS) from on-premises to the Cloud.

A secondary purpose of this initiative is the protection of computer systems through better cybersecurity protections, both physical and via staff defenses (professional development to guard against cyber incidents). |
| **Marketing & Communications Plan** | The original purpose of this initiative was to develop and implement a marketing and communications plan to increase interest/enrollment in NC Community Colleges and the public's understanding of what community colleges offer. Addresses the "interest gap." The initial plan has been developed, with the marketing campaign known as "Your Hire Education"; additional marketing often builds off this theme. |

Tactic/Initiative	Description
Minority Male Success Initiative	The Minority Male Success Initiative addresses and increases minority male students' progression and completion rates, which (in Performance Measures and new strategic plan KPIs) tend to be lower than other student groups. The NCCCS has redesigned what was previously the Minority Male Mentoring Program to more closely align with the research-based student success practices being introduced throughout the System.
NC Workforce Credentials	NC Workforce Credentials are high-quality, non-degree credentials recognized by employers that enable individuals to obtain in-demand, living-wage jobs. The NC Workforce Credentials initiative is carried out in partnership with myFutureNC, the Governor's Office, Department of Commerce, Department of Public Instruction, and the NC Association of Workforce Development Boards to help the state achieve its educational attainment goal (two million North Carolinians with a high-quality credential or post-secondary degree by 2030).
Online Learning Innovation	The importance of quality online learning has become increasingly important. This was most dramatically shown during the coronavirus pandemic and the rapid shift to online learning for NC Community Colleges and higher education in general. The Community College System has reviewed its Virtual Learning Community and is rethinking how it supports online learning going forward. It created a new position of Director of Online Learning in 2021 to address this pressing need.
Prior Learning Sources and Assessments	Nineteen 'buckets' of prior learning have been identified that community colleges experience. To award credit where or when credit is due, and to help students progress at an accelerated and simplified manner, students need credit for prior learning policy and procedures that are standardized across the System. Examples include credit for prior military experience/credentials and competency-based education. The State Board of Community Colleges approved a new section to State Board Code in 2021 to address Credit for Prior Learning, and the Community College System continues to explore how to use credit for prior learning for the benefit of students.
Proactive Industry Engagement/ Economic Recovery	Proactive Industry Engagement is composed of two primary strategies: 1) the Council of Associations for Engagement (CAFÉ) 2) direct industry roundtable meetings

Tactic/Initiative	Description
	-The Council of Associations for Engagement (CAFÉ) is a group of statewide industry associations convened by NCCCSO twice a year to obtain feedback from the business community about their needs, including workforce needs. The Council helps the Community College System keep its finger on the pulse of different industry sectors and provides a way for industry associations to have a voice with leadership at the System Office. *-Direct industry roundtable meetings* are meetings held by community colleges and regional partners (with support from the System Office) with a specific industry, often in a region where the workforce need is strong. The Community College System is also engaged in the State Sector Strategies Council, which promotes industry engagement across agencies. As the State of North Carolina recovers from the negative economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, it will develop new industry-driven initiatives to benefit students and business.
Scholarships for Short-term Workforce Credentials	Financial assistance for short-term training and related credentials is currently the primary gap in educational financial assistance; meanwhile, short-term training is the primary workforce education need of employers that need workers. This initiative, using $15M of GEER Scholarship funding made available by Governor Cooper, is a pilot program to demonstrate the value of scholarships for short-term workforce training that leads to credentials.
Work-Based Learning	Seize upon various opportunities to promote and expand Work-based Learning for community college students, including… • Work-based Learning courses offered by community colleges (formerly known as Cooperative education) • Apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships (also see the Apprenticeship Expansion tactic) • Internships, other work/experiential learning, and work exploration experiences
Workforce Development Focused IT	There are multiple sections of the NC Community College System's ERP system that have needed upgrades. One of the most antiquated sections of the ERP system was in the workforce development area, so special attention has been placed there as funding comes available to meet IT needs.

As of April 2021, the following initiatives developed for the 2018-22 strategic plan have already been "implemented" (aims accomplished):

- Apprenticeship Expansion
- Basic Skills Plus & Integrated Education and Training
- Construction & Contractor Careers Rebranding
- Employability Skills Alignment Project
- Establishment of System Advisory Council
- Financial Aid Leadership Academy
- Implementation and Oversight of Strategic Plan
- NC Student Aid Study Group
- Short-term Workforce Training Funding
- Student Services Leadership Academies
- Study of Programs for Students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
- Transform IT Services Management (ServiceNow)
- Workforce Program Cost Study