

NORTH CAROLINA: A STATE POLICY PROFILE FOR COMPLETION BY DESIGN

THE NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM: THE COMPLETION BY DESIGN STATE POLICY LEAD ORGANIZATION FOR NORTH CAROLINA

The North Carolina Community College System is the nation's third-largest community college network, with 58 public two-year colleges. Its office serves as a resource agency and an administrative arm of the State Board of Community Colleges.

CONTACT

Sharon Morrissey, Ph.D., Senior Vice President for Academic & Student Services and Chief Academic Officer, morrisseys@nccommunitycolleges.edu



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NORTH CAROLINA'S ENGAGEMENT IN THE COMPLETION AGENDA

North Carolina has launched a scaled focus on student completion and success. An overarching initiative, titled SuccessNC, ensures coherence and maximizes efforts across a number of state and national initiatives that focus on components of the Completion by Design Loss/Momentum Framework, including the Developmental Education Initiative and Accelerating Opportunity. SuccessNC convenes leaders from the State Board of Community Colleges, the North Carolina Association of Community College Presidents, and the North Carolina Association of Community College Trustees. The community college system has developed the attached framework to highlight its completion work: <http://www.successnc.org/initiatives>

Since 2006, Breaking Through's North Carolina network has been developing and implementing innovative strategies to connect low-skilled adults with education and training at six colleges. Three more schools have received BT planning grants to develop career pathways using the initiative's high-leverage strategies, and BT also is working closely with the NCCCS to leverage and align the work of these colleges with the state's efforts to develop integrated pathways for low-skilled adults through its Basic Skills Plus initiative.

RECENT POLICY CHANGES RELEVANT TO THE COMPLETION AGENDA

The North Carolina State Policy Team for the Developmental Education Initiative adopted Math Redesign Principles in October 2010 to lay out a framework for curricular redesign. Of the state's 58 community colleges, 49 schools nominated their representative for a DEI Math Redesign Task Force; 18 representatives were chosen by the state math faculty professional association. The DEI Math Task Force created eight developmental modules that encompass what used to be a three-semester sequence. The structure and content seek to strengthen students' conceptual understanding of math by emphasizing application and increasing acceleration. The modules will be piloted in the 2011-12 academic year and rolled out to all NCCCS colleges in 2012-13. Developmental English Redesign will begin in early 2012.

The NCCCS Office has designated developmental math as an area of focus for the North Carolina Learning Object Repository for the 2011-12 academic year. Stipends will be available for faculty to create or identify online learning objects that support the new developmental math modules.

The North Carolina General Assembly enacted "Career and College Promise" legislation to allow high school juniors and seniors to dually enroll in structured community college pathway programs that provide routes to employment, college transfer, or Associate's degree completion. These pathways replace a previous patchwork quilt of dual enrollment programs and provide more structure and momentum for high school students who take college courses. The NCCCS and the Department of Public Instruction are developing implementation guidelines in 2011-12.

In the 2010-11 state budget, 41 North Carolina community colleges received state funds to support current or new programs geared toward creating success among minority males. Minority Male Mentoring Programs at NC Community Colleges received \$900,000 in recurring funding, which was paired with a \$407,000 College Access Challenge Grant.

The top education priority for North Carolina Governor Beverly Perdue is alignment to reduce the need for college remediation, collaborating on strategies with NCCCS, the Department of Public Instruction, and the University of North Carolina. The centerpiece of this cross-sector collaboration is a plan for using diagnostic assessments that identify students' academic weaknesses in high school and support opportunities for students to catch up and graduate with the skills they need for college and work.

In summer 2011, the NCCCS released a Request for Proposal to select an education testing company to create a custom diagnostic placement test for both math and English/reading. A Community College Research Center study of multiple measures for placement is also underway. Both will help guide future statewide placement policies.

North Carolina has made significant investments in dual enrollment and in early college programs that blend high school and college, exposing high school students to the rigors of college-level work before they actually enroll in higher education. In addition, NCCCS has been an advocate in the legislature for funding developmental education summer courses as a bridge between high school and community college.

POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

A Democrat elected in 2008, Governor Perdue is North Carolina's first female governor. Governor Perdue was a teacher, a member of the state House of Representatives, and the lieutenant governor before her election. She also served on the Board of Community Colleges and has a Master's in community college administration and a doctorate in educational administration. In 2011 she proclaimed the week of April 10-16 as "North Carolina Community College Excellence in Education Week."

In 2010 Republicans took control of North Carolina's General Assembly, both House and Senate, for the first time in decades. In the face of this year's dire budget picture, the General Assembly asked its fiscal research office to investigate cost savings from consolidating some of the state's smallest rural community colleges. The proposal was not enacted in the session that ended in July after considerable protest from colleges and employers in those communities, who were concerned the negatives would outweigh the projected cost savings.

Community college funding was cut in the last session; however, community colleges fared better than the UNC system, which saw even deeper cuts. This was the third year in a row of major education cuts in the state at all levels.

In response to tight budgets, the funding formula for NCCCS institutions was changed in 2011 to a new three-tier system that, while lower overall, provides a greater relative reimbursement rate for high-cost technical and allied health programs. North Carolina provides FTE reimbursement for continuing education. Also some higher-cost continuing education programs will receive a relatively higher reimbursement than those programs that are less expensive to operate. Local sources, typically counties, pay to build and maintain community college facilities.

GOVERNANCE

The State Board of Community Colleges is the governing authority for the NCCCS; 10 of its 21 members are appointed by the governor (one member from each of six trustee regions and four others). Institutions' boards of trustees set local policy. The local board elects and the state board approves selection of each college's president.

The board is empowered by the general statutes to adopt and implement the policies, regulations, and standards necessary for administering and operating the system of community colleges. Five standing committees carry out the bulk of the board's work: accountability and audit; finance and capital needs; personnel; policy; and program services.

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assistance team

TEL 503.517.2457 FAX 503.459.4160 info@completionbydesign.org

239 NW 13th Avenue, Suite 205, Portland, OR 97209

WWW.COMPLETIONBYDESIGN.ORG



JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

TEL 617.728.4446 FAX 617.728.4857 info@jff.org

88 Broad Street, 8th Floor, Boston, MA 02110
2000 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 5300, Washington, DC 20006

WWW.JFF.ORG

For further information, please contact **Michael Lawrence Collins**
at mcollins@jff.org.

