

KEY TAKEAWAYS

POLICY DISCUSSION: MYFUTURENC AND THE ATTAINMENT IMPERATIVE

Resource experts discussed the economic and moral imperative behind efforts to raise higher education attainment rates in North Carolina and gave an overview of how they are working to implement strategies that boost attainment while narrowing equity gaps.

RESOURCE EXPERTS

- ✉ **Cecilia Holden**, President and CEO, myFutureNC
- ✉ **Cris Charbonneau**, Director of Advocacy and Engagement, myFutureNC

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- We know that **67 percent** of good jobs require some sort of higher education credential, but only **49 percent** of adults (age 25 - 44) currently have one – and only **one half** of employers report having applicants with the skills they need.
- The myFutureNC Commission was created to research the issue of postsecondary attainment and build consensus around a statewide attainment goal: **2 million adults will have a higher education credential or degree by 2030.**
 - Currently, there is a projected shortage of 300,000 adults with credentials or degrees – we must work together to change that trajectory and close that gap.
- myFutureNC, now a statewide nonprofit organization, works with networks of policymakers and partners to drive progress on attainment using a number of strategies.
 - The [Data Dashboard](#), created in collaboration with Carolina Demography, shows statewide progress on a number of key indicators, allowing stakeholders and other members of the public to review progress and identify areas of need.
 - myFutureNC also released [County Attainment Profiles](#) that provide information on a number of key priorities, including pre-K enrollment, low-performing schools, and completion rates for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
 - Another initiative was the [FAFSA Frenzy NC](#) campaign, which uses innovative methods and partnerships to help students take the crucial step of completing the FAFSA.
 - North Carolina's FAFSA completion rate is currently 63 percent – the goal is to raise it to **80 percent by 2030.**
- It is especially important for stakeholders across the state to mitigate the disruptions caused by the pandemic so that the state can maintain momentum in making progress toward the goal.
 - Closing the digital divide, innovating to meet students where they are, and taking initiative are all key strategies during this time.
- Another important aspect of this work for cohort members to consider is the need to tailor engagement messages about postsecondary attainment based on the audience you're speaking with.
 - A unified message and story about the importance of attainment can bring together disparate stakeholders, who may value different aspects of the issue such as job creation or the human benefits of social and economic mobility.

RESOURCES

- [ElevateNC Slide Deck](#) – myFutureNC
- [Official myFutureNC Attainment Goal Endorsement Form](#) – myFutureNC
- [List of Official myFutureNC Attainment Goal Endorsements](#) – myFutureNC
- [Educational Attainment as NC's Recovery Strategy: Policy Recommendations](#) - myFutureNC

POLICY DISCUSSION: NORTH CAROLINA'S HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Resource experts gave an overview of the types of institutions of higher education (IHEs) in North Carolina, the students they serve, and the role that different IHEs play in the effort to raise statewide attainment rates.

MODERATOR

✉ **Maurice "Mo" Green**, Executive Director, the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation

RESOURCE EXPERTS

Peter Hans, President, University of North Carolina System

Dr. Bill Carver, Interim President, North Carolina Community College System

Dr. Hope Williams, President, North Carolina Independent Colleges & Universities

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- North Carolina has a robust landscape of higher education institutions that provide a variety of options and pathways for students.
- Affordability has always been a hallmark of North Carolina's higher education sector, and the UNC System has carried that legacy forward with tuition freezes and the [North Carolina Promise](#) program.
- Partnership is another value shared by institution leaders across the board in North Carolina. Building trust and sharing best practices are key factors in developing coordinated policy initiatives.
- Transfer students are sometimes overlooked in higher education conversations, but institution leaders in North Carolina have focused specifically on making sure students don't lose credits, money, or time when they transfer.
 - 🕒 The UNC System and the Community College System are in the process of working on a shared common course numbering system that would benefit transfer students.
 - 🕒 NCICU has also been working on an initiative to help students who may be eligible for reverse transfer – where they are awarded an associate degree after earning the required credits across multiple institutions.
- Institutions had to pivot quickly to support students as the COVID-19 pandemic caused campus closures across the state.
 - 🕒 The community colleges in particular have adapted to help people seeking to re- or up-skill as a result of the pandemic, but their efforts are constrained by social distancing requirements – especially when it comes to hands-on coursework.
- Institution leaders in North Carolina understand the importance of lifelong learning across the entire education continuum and how investments in things such as early childhood education provide benefits to the state's higher education sector.

RESOURCES

- [Comprehensive Articulation Agreement](#) – NC Community College System / UNC System
- [Independent Comprehensive Articulation Agreement](#) – NC Community College System / NCICU
- [Community College to University Transfer](#) – myFutureNC
- [Attainment for All: Postsecondary Pathways: Reverse Transfer](#) – The Hunt Institute

POLICY DISCUSSION: EQUITY OF ACCESS FOR ALL STUDENTS

Speakers discussed the characteristics of specific student populations – such as Black and Latino students – and ways that policymakers can meet their higher education access needs.

RESOURCE EXPERTS

- ✉ **The Honorable John B. King, Jr.**, President and CEO, The Education Trust; Former U.S. Secretary of Education (2016-17)
- ✉ **Deborah Santiago**, Chief Executive Officer, Excelencia in Education

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- There are significant equity gaps between Black and Latino students and their white counterparts on a number of higher education metrics including access, affordability, persistence, and completion.
- Policymakers and institution leaders should consider addressing these inequities head-on by crafting policies that explicitly address equity gaps and focus solutions on providing specific support to Black and Latino students.
- In some of the most selective public higher education institutions in the country, the share of Black and Latino students is much lower than the overall share of those groups in the state's population.
- It is important to lift up innovative programs and practices that are serving Black and Latino students well by helping them overcome barriers to succeed in higher education.

RESOURCES

- [“Segregation Forever?” The Continued Underrepresentation of Black and Latino Undergraduates at the Nation’s 101 Most Selective Public Colleges and Universities](#) – The Education Trust
- [Growing What Works Database](#) – Excelencia in Education
- [Seal of Excelencia](#) – Excelencia in Education
- [The 20% Solution: Selective Colleges Can Afford to Admit More Pell Grant Recipients](#) – Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce
- [Recommendations for Providing Community Colleges with the Resources They Need](#) – The Century Foundation
- [Supporting Migrant Farmworkers to and through College](#) – EducateNC
- [Student Centered Funding Formula](#) – California Community Colleges
- [Getting Tutoring Right to Reverse COVID-19 Learning Loss](#) – The Brookings Institution
- [The College Lift Initiative](#) – Piedmont Renewal Network
- [The Power of Fully Supporting Community College Students](#) – MDRC

POLICY DISCUSSION: HIGHER EDUCATION AFFORDABILITY AND EMERGENCY GRANT AID

Resource experts highlighted how the full range of higher education costs faced by students – including child care, health care, housing, food, and transportation costs – can serve as barriers to access. They also talked about building momentum for emergency grant aid programs – including Finish Line Grants.

RESOURCE EXPERTS

- ✉ **Nicole Lynn Lewis**, Founder & CEO, Generation Hope
- ✉ **Carrie Welton**, Director of Policy, The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice at Temple University
- ✉ **Sa'Metria Jones**, Policy Advisor, Office of Governor Roy Cooper

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Today's higher education students face a range of unique challenges that may prevent them from successfully completing their higher education journeys, and it is important for policymakers to have an understanding of the full scope of higher education students' needs.
- Pregnant and parenting students can face a number of compounding barriers that lead to low completion rates: less than two percent of teen mothers attain a college degree before the age of 30.
- Many students may also need assistance with legal aid, mental health support (for them or their dependents), or support with immigration processes.
- Surveys have shown that two-thirds of the students who were employed before the pandemic had experienced job insecurity because of the pandemic, and the other third had lost their jobs entirely.
- At the state level, Governor Cooper implemented the Finish Line Grants program using federal funding from the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) – the program is a partnership between community colleges and local workforce development boards.
- Students can use funding through this program to cover costs beyond tuition and fees.
- To date nearly 5,000 grants have been provided for a total of approximately \$3 million in emergency grant aid.
- When thinking about engaging with students to support their needs, it is important to approach them as humans first and students second. A culture of care goes a long way.
- It's also important for policymakers to create mechanisms that allow student voices to be at the table when decisions are being made about policies and programs – their lived experiences should inform policy responses.

RESOURCES

- [OPINION: Why Black Student Parents are at the Epicenter of the Student Debt Crisis – and What We Can Do About It](#) – Nicole Lynn Lewis
- [College and University Basic Needs Insecurity: A National #RealCollege Survey Report](#) – The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice at Temple University
- [Finish Line Grants: Lessons Learned Over the Past Year](#) – EducationNC
- [Meet the Awake58 Fellows](#) – EducationNC
- [Titan Link](#) – Guilford Technical Community College
- [Skills Training and Employment Program](#) – AB Tech Community College