

**STATE BOARD OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES
2024-25 Strategic Plan Annual Report**

Background: In October 2022, the State Board of Community Colleges adopted a four-year strategic plan, [Leading Through Change: 2022-2026](#), designed to guide the decisions and actions of the North Carolina Community College System in support of the state's 58 community colleges and the more than 600,000 students they serve. Developed with broad input from colleges, trustees, and other partners, the plan reflects a collective commitment to ensuring the system remains an engine for economic growth and a gateway to meaningful careers for all North Carolinians.

The plan is anchored by five overarching goals:

- 1) Recruiting and retaining faculty and staff
- 2) Strengthening enrollment
- 3) Supporting student success
- 4) Advancing economic and workforce development
- 5) Improving system funding and effectiveness

Each goal is supported by objectives, strategies, and key performance indicators (KPIs), while annual implementation plans translate the broader vision into actionable priorities and tactics. Together, these frameworks ensure that the system can remain both ambitious in its aspirations and responsive to immediate needs.

Progress to Date: Since adoption of the plan in late 2022, the North Carolina Community College System has made measurable progress across all five goals. [Here is a link](#) to dashboards that provide additional detail about each of the KPIs summarized below.

- **Goal 1 - Faculty and staff, the foundation of the system's success, have seen meaningful salary increases – of 13% and 15%, respectively, since 2020-2021 – thanks to multiple rounds of legislative investment.** Retention rates remain strong, and new initiatives such as the statewide Human Resources Officers Association are fostering cross-college collaboration and innovation in employee recruitment and retention.
- **Goal 2 - Enrollment has also rebounded significantly, helping to reverse pandemic-era declines.** Headcount enrollment grew by more than 39,000 students, an increase of nearly 11% since fall 2021, while full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment rose by nearly 14,000 students (14%) over the same period. Systemwide enrollment efforts have been bolstered by comprehensive Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) support and modernized marketing and outreach tools offered to all 58 colleges, while initiatives like the North Carolina Career Coach Program and NC College Connect are strengthening the system's engagement with prospective students still in high school.
- **Goal 3 - The system also advanced student success outcomes, even as students face persistent challenges like pandemic learning losses, mental health needs, and competing work and family obligations.** College-level English completion rates rose from 54% to 56% over the last three years, and first-year progression/persistence rates increased from 67% to 70% during this same period. Curriculum completion rates rose

from 56% to 59% over the last three years for which data are available, and credential completion – an essential measure of workforce readiness – grew by 14% in the last three years. Resources offered via the system’s Virtual Learning Community and Distance Learning Technologies Team and collaborations like the statewide Teaching and Learning Hubs have strengthened instructional quality and expanded professional learning opportunities for faculty, while emerging work on artificial intelligence is preparing colleges to integrate new technologies into classrooms and curricula.

- **Goal 4 - When it comes to economic and workforce development, the system continues to solidify its role as North Carolina’s workforce engine.** Annual Career and Technical Education (CTE) completion increased by 18% since 2021-2022, and CTE exit median quarterly earnings saw modest gains over the last three years. The number of individuals, businesses, and programs served by the system’s economic development initiatives – including ApprenticeshipNC (ANC), NC Edge Customized Training, and the Small Business Center Network – also increased significantly in the last two years. In 2023-2024 alone, ANC’s rapid growth and success resulted in the enrollment of nearly 5,000 new apprentices and 1,800 new pre-apprentices and the addition of more than 160 new apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs across the state.
- **Goal 5 - At the same time, the system has pursued and advocated for vital resources to fuel and sustain this work.** The system has taken significant steps to expand funding capacity alongside the North Carolina Community Colleges Foundation, highlighted by the largest single gift in the system’s history: a \$35.6 million investment from Arnold Ventures to launch the Boost initiative. Legislative funding, adjusted for inflation, per FTE has declined by more than 11% since 2021, with student services expenditures per FTE seeing declines of nearly 8% over the same period. In the face of these challenges, the system made important strides in modernizing its information technology and data infrastructure and launched Propel NC, a labor market-driven business and funding model designed to better align programs with workforce demand.

Annual Implementation Updates: Each year, the system develops a comprehensive implementation plan focused on advancing the broader goals, objectives, and strategies outlined in the strategic plan. Priorities for 2024-2025 included modernizing technology systems, operationalizing a labor market-driven model, operating with excellence and efficiency, executing a comprehensive marketing and enrollment strategy, and expanding resources and supports.

These priorities have been brought to life throughout the last year via 17 specific tactics, among them: transitioning critical infrastructure from Ellucian Colleague to Ellucian Banner SaaS, developing new labor market and outcomes data tools and other systems aligned with Propel NC, and bolstering support for the system’s approximately 50 rural-serving colleges. Details on each tactic are provided in the full report.

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NC COMMUNITY COLLEGES

CREATING SUCCESS

2024-2025 STRATEGIC PLAN ANNUAL REPORT



Executive Summary

About the Strategic Plan

In October 2022, the State Board of Community Colleges adopted a four-year strategic plan, [*Leading Through Change: 2022-2026*](#), designed to guide the decisions and actions of the North Carolina Community College System in support of the state's 58 community colleges and the more than 600,000 students they serve. Developed with broad input from colleges, trustees, and other partners, the plan reflects a collective commitment to ensuring the system remains an engine for economic growth and a gateway to meaningful careers for all North Carolinians.

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Annual Implementation Updates

Each year, the system develops a comprehensive implementation plan focused on advancing the broader goals, objectives, and strategies outlined in the strategic plan. Priorities for 2024-2025 included modernizing technology systems, operationalizing a labor market-driven model, operating with excellence and efficiency, executing a comprehensive marketing and enrollment strategy, and expanding resources and supports.

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Introduction

About the Strategic Plan

In October 2022, the State Board of Community Colleges adopted a four-year strategic plan, [*Leading Through Change: 2022-2026*](#), for the North Carolina Community College System.

Developed with broad input from colleges, trustees, partners, and other stakeholders across the state, the plan is intended to guide the decisions and actions of the System Office and State Board in support of North Carolina's 58 community colleges and the more than 600,000 students they serve.

Plan Structure and Implementation

Through a comprehensive planning process that included examining the challenges and opportunities facing our state and system, reviewing data, and soliciting stakeholder input, the State Board identified **five overarching goals** focused on ensuring the system remains an engine for economic growth and a gateway to meaningful careers for all who call North Carolina home. These goals are summarized on the following page.

Leading Through Change: 2022-2026 Strategic Plan Goals

1

Goal 1: Recruit and retain top talent to enable the North Carolina Community College System to educate and prepare the State's workforce. Faculty and staff provide the education and direct services that students and communities need. Recruiting and retaining top talent require investment, partnership, and workplace innovation.

2

Goal 2: Increase access and enrollment at North Carolina community colleges to meet the state's educational attainment goal and expand postsecondary opportunities. For North Carolina to meet its educational and economic goals, two million North Carolinians will need education and training beyond high school by 2030.

3

Goal 3: Provide resources inside and outside the classroom for all students to successfully enroll, persist, and complete a career program of study. College leaders cite youth disengagement, pandemic learning losses, student mental health challenges, and balancing college with work and family among a long list of significant challenges. Colleges need resources and strong partners to support their students.

4

Goal 4: Provide education, training, and credentials to develop the most competitive workforce in the nation. Community colleges must provide solutions to the talent needs caused by recent economic development success, ensure the economy includes all North Carolinians in its prosperity, and brace against future market disruptions.

5

Goal 5: Increase state funding, streamline the allocation formula, and implement practices to improve system effectiveness. The NCCCS will work with policy leaders to modernize the Community College System funding formula, improve IT infrastructure, and expand information sharing by linking educational data systems. Colleges should be incentivized to provide regional delivery of programs and services and avoid unnecessary duplication.

For each goal, the system defines clear measures of success known as **key performance indicators (KPIs)** to track progress over time. Each goal is further broken down into a set of **objectives** that describe what success will look like, and the system also identifies specific **strategies** – practical approaches and actions – to move each objective forward.

Strategic Planning Framework: Translating Goals into Action



The work outlined in the four-year strategic plan is brought to life via a series of **annual implementation plans**, which focus the system’s efforts on a set of **annual priorities** and **tactics** that can be adapted to meet evolving needs and opportunities. When identifying annual priorities and tactics, the system focuses on work that is:

- Aligned with the goals of the System Office and the current strategic plan;
- Attainable in one year;
- Measurable in impact or progress;
- Transformative in nature, not status quo or routine; and
- Within the control of the System Office.

A comprehensive overview of the system’s most recent annual priorities and tactics, including tactic-specific accomplishments and updates, is provided in the [*Annual Implementation Updates*](#) section of this report.

The responsibility of executing each year’s implementation plan is shared across the system in collaboration with numerous internal and external partners. Annual plans align the work of implementation with the efforts of specific **State Board Committees** and **colleges’ strategic**

directions, leveraging the strength and innovation of individual community colleges to achieve the system's broader goals.

Specific System Office leaders are tasked with coordinating the implementation of each annual priority, and **tactical teams** – bolstered by the support of System Office divisions and community college staff and faculty – formulate project plans for each tactic. Tactical leads meet regularly with representatives from the system's **Strategic Initiatives Unit** to report on project milestones and strategize about challenges encountered along the way. These tactical updates are then communicated to the **State Board's Strategic Planning Committee** throughout the year.

Progress to Date

Goal-Specific Accomplishments

Since the current strategic plan was adopted in late 2022, North Carolina's community colleges have continued to achieve remarkable milestones, positioning the system as a leader in education and the driver of workforce development in North Carolina. With a focus on innovation and responsiveness, the system is building the capacity needed to meet the evolving demands of students, employers, and communities.

The following updates highlight the collective progress and achievements of the system related to each of the five goals outlined in the current strategic plan. For each goal, this report briefly summarizes the need driving the system's efforts, the proposed response outlined in the strategic plan, and the quantitative results and qualitative accomplishments realized across the system thus far. Collectively, these updates demonstrate how the system is both building momentum toward its longer-term goals and delivering meaningful results in the present.



Goal 1: Faculty and Staff Recruitment and Retention

The Need: Faculty and staff are the driving force behind the North Carolina Community College System, delivering instruction, workforce training, small business support, advising, and other services to help students and colleges thrive. During the strategic planning process, college presidents and trustees shared specific challenges they faced in their efforts to recruit and retain talented faculty and staff. In addition to budget constraints that limit their ability to offer competitive salaries, leaders noted higher rates of turnover and lower rates of workforce participation in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. As employers across the state turned to community colleges for help addressing workforce shortages in critical industries, unfilled positions and increased turnover at colleges threatened their ability to respond.

Proposed Response: In the strategic plan, the system identified several opportunities to support colleges in attracting and retaining top talent, including:

- **Advocating for salary increases** to bring faculty and staff compensation in line with the projected average of North Carolina's neighboring states (*Objective 1.1*), and
- **Pursuing innovative recruitment and retention strategies** in partnership with college Human Resources departments to promote North Carolina's community colleges and the System Office as top destinations for talented professionals (*Objectives 1.2 and 1.3*).

Results and Impact: Key performance indicators associated with Goal 1 include faculty and staff salary and retention data. Weighted 9-month salaries for full-time curriculum faculty have increased steadily, growing by \$6,290 (13%) since the 2020-2021 academic year. Similarly, average salaries for full-time non-instructional staff grew by \$7,828 (15%) during the same period. While these increases have narrowed the gap between North Carolina and neighboring

states, faculty and staff salaries still lag the national average for public two-year institutions. Faculty and staff retention rates (the percentage of fall full-time curriculum faculty and full-time staff that return to the same institution the following fall) have held relatively steady, with faculty retention rates hovering at 90-91% between fall 2021 and fall 2024. Staff retention rates rebounded to 87% in fall 2024 – matching the fall 2021 rate – following a dip to 83% in fall 2022.

Figure 1.1: NC Community College System Full-Time Curriculum Faculty Weighted 9-Month Salaries and Full-Time Non-Instructional Staff Average Salaries

	2023-24	3-Year Trend (2020-21 – 2023-24)	1-Year Trend (2022-23 – 2023-24)
Full-Time Curriculum Faculty Weighted 9-Month Salaries: <i>Total salary outlays for instructional staff (salaries equated to 9-month contracts) divided by instructional staff counts (includes those on 9-, 10-, 11- and 12-month contracts)</i>	\$56,542	↑	↑
Full-Time Non-Instructional Staff Average Salaries: <i>Total salary outlays for non-instructional staff divided by non-instructional staff counts</i>	\$58,596	↑	↑

Source: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)

Trend Legend: Trend arrow direction and color are based on percent change



Trend Calculation: $[(\text{Current Result} - \text{Previous Result}) / \text{Previous Result}] \times 100$

Figure 1.2: Comparison of Full-Time Curriculum Faculty Weighted 9-Month Salaries Across the NC Community College System Over Time

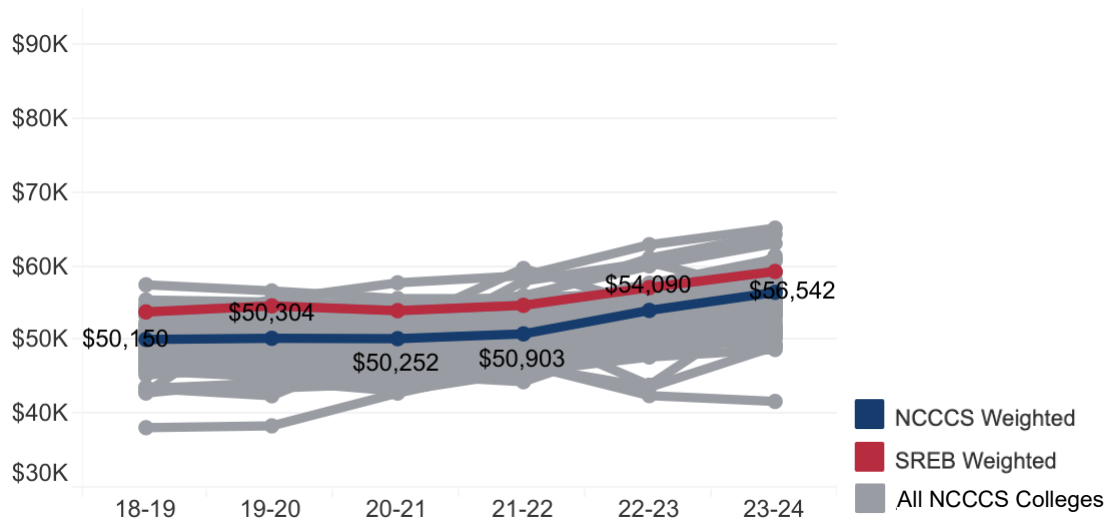
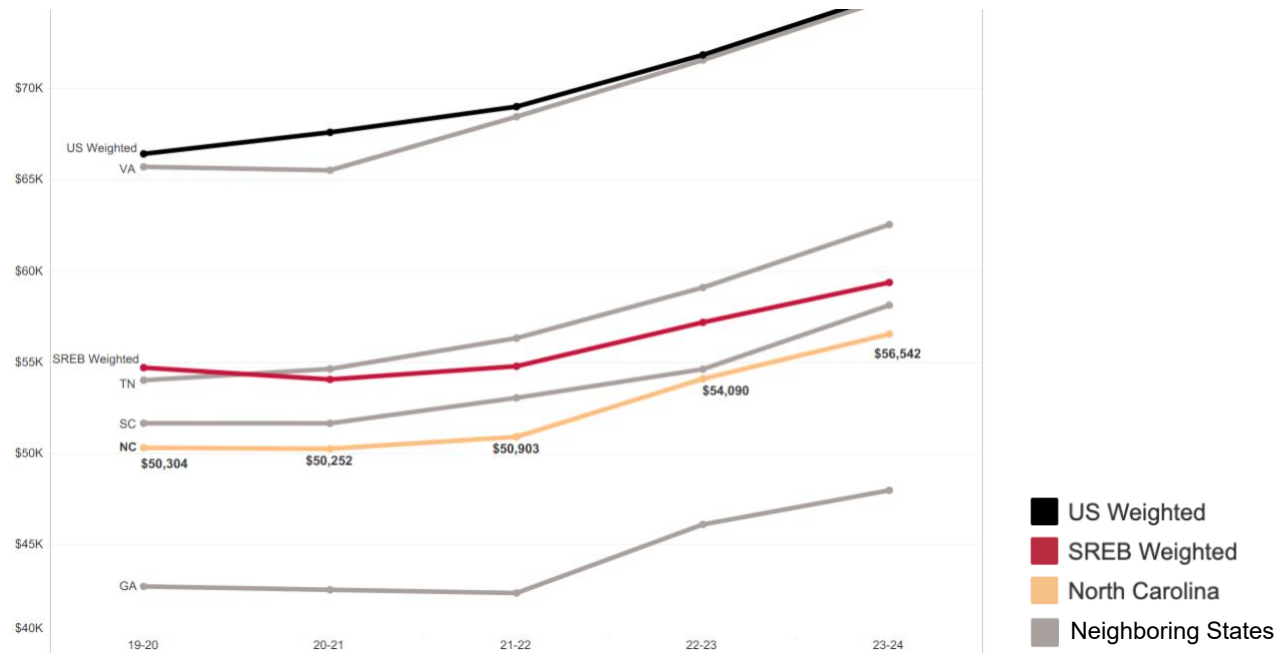


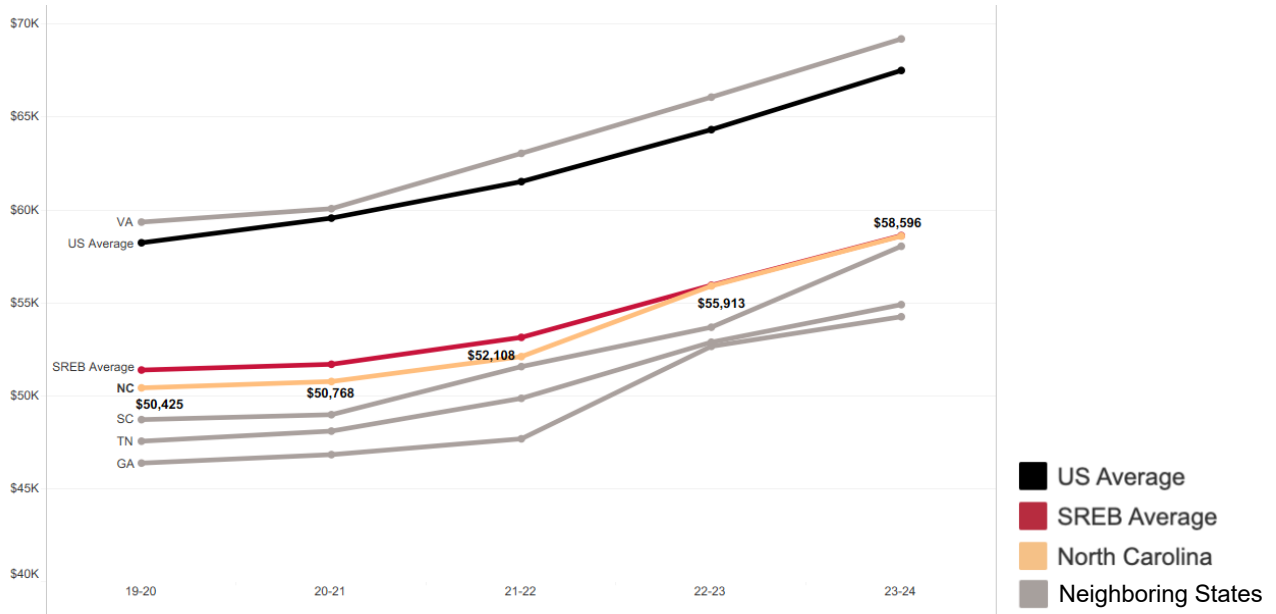
Figure 1.3: Comparison of Full-Time Curriculum Faculty Weighted 9-Month Salaries at National Public Two-Year Institutions Over Time



Source for Figures 1.2 and 1.3: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)

Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) states: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia

Figure 1.4: Comparison of Full-Time Non-Instructional Staff Average Salaries at National Public Two-Year Institutions Over Time



Source: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)

Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) states: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia

Figure 1.5: NC Community College System Faculty and Staff Retention Rates

	2023 to 2024	3-Year Trend (2020 to 2021 – 2023 to 2024)	1-Year Trend (2022 to 2023 – 2023 to 2024)
Faculty Retention Rate: <i>The percentage of fall full-time curriculum faculty employed at the same college the subsequent fall</i>	91%	→	→
Staff Retention Rate: <i>The percentage of fall full-time staff employed at the same college the subsequent fall</i>	87%	→	↗

Source: Institutional Staff Information Report

Figure 1.6: NCCCS Faculty Retention Rates Over Time

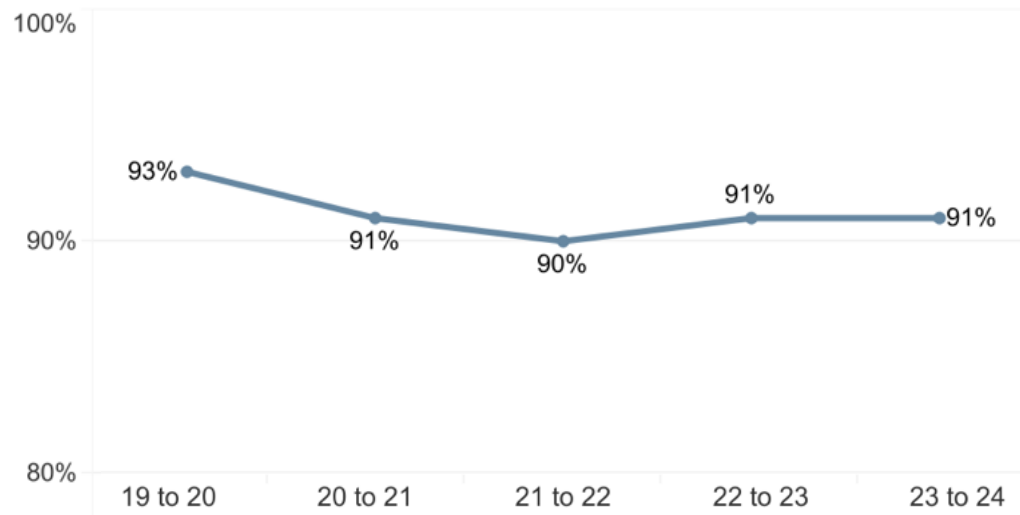
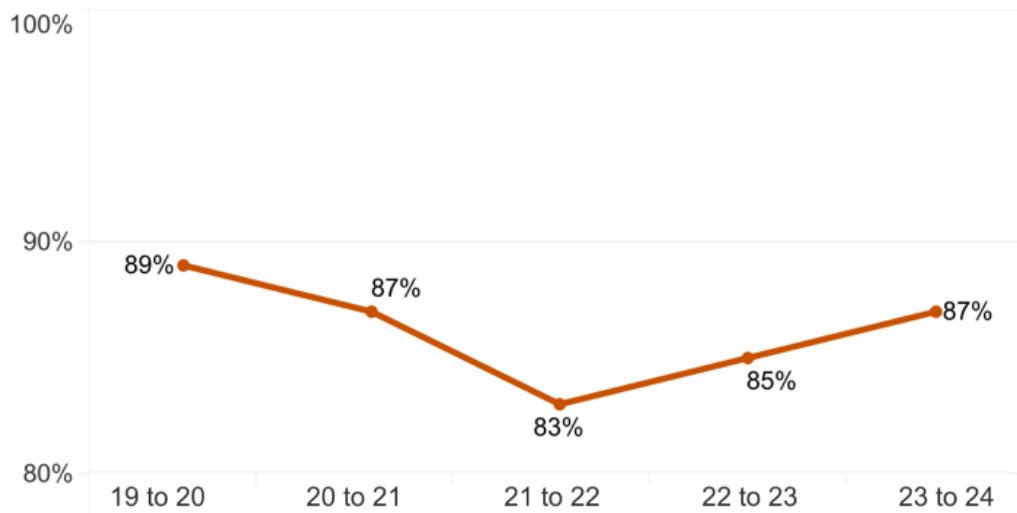


Figure 1.7: NCCCS Staff Retention Rates Over Time



Source for Figures 1.6 and 1.7: Institutional Staff Information Report

Key milestones and accomplishments related to Goal 1 (Faculty and Staff Recruitment and Retention) that have been achieved to date include:

- **Successfully advocating for multiple investments from the North Carolina General Assembly to increase faculty and staff salaries, among them:**
 - A three percent salary increase approved for 2023-2024 and a four percent increase approved for 2024-2025, representing a legislative investment of \$91 million.
 - An additional \$19 million in recurring funding for the Faculty Recruitment and Retention Fund, adding to the \$12 million previously appropriated for the Fund in the 2021-2023 legislative budget.
 - Additional targeted salary adjustments for nursing faculty, representing \$7 million in recurring funding.
- **Developing Propel NC**, a data-driven approach to advocating for funding for programs and faculty/staff salaries. See [Tactic 2.1](#) for more information about the system's progress related to Propel NC.
- **Deploying a survey to colleges to capture promising practices related to supplementing faculty and staff salaries**, the findings of which were shared with colleges and the State Board's Strategic Planning Committee.
- **Launching a statewide Human Resources Officers Association in 2024 to support college human resources departments in sharing best practices related to faculty and staff recruitment and retention.** The association, which meets monthly, is designed to promote collaboration, innovation, and knowledge sharing among human resources leaders from colleges across the system. The System Office invested \$10,000 in start-up funds to help the association incorporate as a 501c3, develop a website, and begin delivering professional development.



Goal 2: Enrollment

The Need: Community colleges are North Carolina's largest workforce training engine, and enrollment in career pathways, along with work-based education and related training, contributes significantly to statewide educational attainment and economic potential. An enrollment-based funding formula directly impacts the system's capacity to educate and support students, with declines in enrollment resulting in less money for colleges to hire faculty and staff, maintain facilities, and provide student services. Analysis of statewide demographic trends during the strategic planning process indicated several threats to enrollment, including a projected long-term decline in the number of high school graduates and ongoing population loss in many of North Carolina's rural counties and communities.

Proposed Response: In the strategic plan, the system identified several opportunities to bolster community college enrollment, among them:

- **Doubling down on marketing and outreach** to prospective students and their influencers, with a special emphasis on career opportunities and the value proposition of a community college education and occupational training (*Objectives 2.1 and 2.2*),
- **Streamlining and strengthening community college and career pathways** (*Objective 2.3*), and
- **Increasing the recruitment and retention of adult learners** (*Objective 2.4*).

Results and Impact: Key performance indicators associated with Goal 2 include student headcount enrollment and full-time equivalent (FTE) student enrollment. Both measures have seen steady growth since 2021, with headcount enrollment increasing by 39,768 (11%) and FTE student enrollment increasing by 13,919 (14%) during the same period.

Figure 2.1: Student Enrollment Across the NC Community College System

	2024	3-Year Trend (2021 – 2024)	1-Year Trend (2023 – 2024)
Student Headcount Enrollment: <i>Unduplicated count of students enrolling in any academic levels during the fall semester</i>	406,914	↑	↗
Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Student Enrollment: <i>Total instructional activity FTE generated across all academic levels during the fall semester</i>	111,349	↑	↑

Figure 2.2: 2020-2024 NCCCS Student Headcount Enrollment

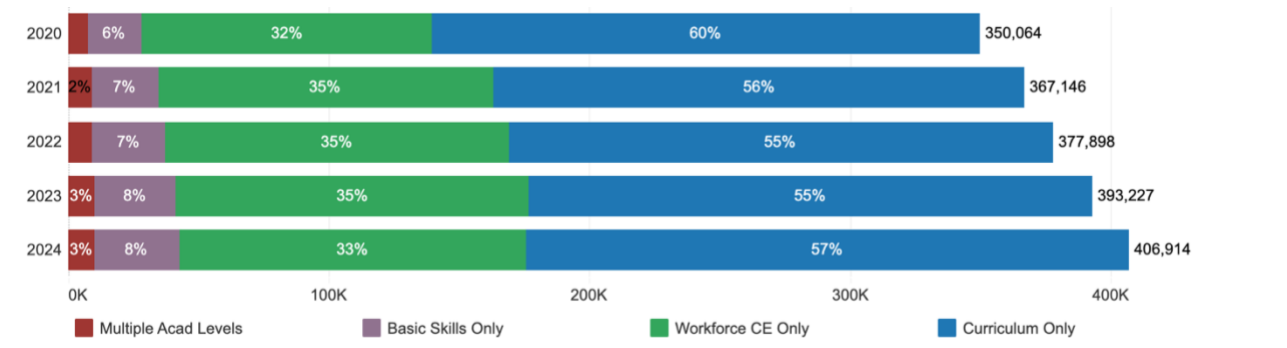
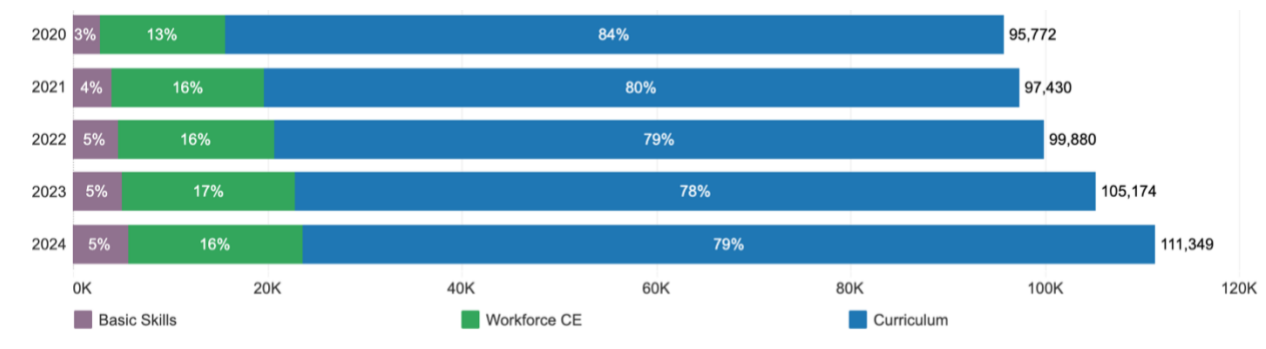


Figure 2.3: 2020-2024 NCCCS Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Student Enrollment



Sources for Figures 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3: Comprehensive Curriculum Student Report (CCSR), Continuing Education Registration Report (CE Reg), Curriculum Institutional Class Report (CU ICR), Continuing Education Institutional Class Report (CE ICR)

Key milestones and accomplishments related to Goal 2 (Enrollment) that have been achieved to date include:

- **Offering comprehensive Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) support to all 58 colleges**, including professional development sessions, special task forces focused on college admissions and financial aid communication, and written resources and toolkits. See [*Tactic 4.2*](#) to learn more about the system's SEM efforts, including NC College Connect, highlighted briefly below.
- **Launching NC College Connect** in partnership with North Carolina's K-12 schools and selected public and private colleges and universities to create a more seamless college admissions process for eligible high school students. This fall, more than 62,000 public high school seniors across the state will be offered direct admission to participating institutions (including all 58 community colleges) via NC College Connect.
- **Developing statewide marketing and enrollment efforts**, ensuring that all 58 colleges have access to high-quality branding, targeted communications, and advanced tools to support their recruitment of students. As part of this effort, the system launched a new CRM platform at 10 pilot colleges (six in Western NC) for targeted enrollment outreach and lead tracking. See [*Tactic 4.1*](#) for more details.
- **Expanding the North Carolina Career Coach Program**, which placed 92 coaches serving 45 community colleges in 64 Local Education Agencies across the state during the 2024-2025 academic year. Coaches assisted more than 31,000 high school students with determining their career goals and identifying educational pathways – including aligned community college courses and programs – to help them reach their goals. In the last year alone, coaches documented more than 39,000 individual engagements and 2,000 group engagements with students while also collaborating on more than 700 workforce engagement activities, further strengthening the connection between education and local workforce needs.



(REVISED 09/12/2025)
Attachment PLAN 02A

Goal 3: Student Success

The Need: Supporting students in achieving their education and career goals also means recognizing and addressing the barriers that might stand in their way. During the strategic planning process, college leaders cited youth disengagement, pandemic learning losses, student mental health challenges, and balancing college with work and family obligations among a long list of significant challenges facing students. To address these barriers, colleges must adapt their support services and classroom practices to help all students succeed through degree or credential completion.

Proposed Response: In the strategic plan, the system offered several recommendations for strengthening the support it provides to students, including:

- **Focusing system policies and practices on inclusive excellence** to reduce attainment gaps and cultivate a culture of belonging (*Objective 3.1*),
- **Promoting excellence in teaching and addressing learners' academic needs** (*Objective 3.2*), and
- **Creating a safe, healthy, and resilient learning environment** (*Objective 3.3*).

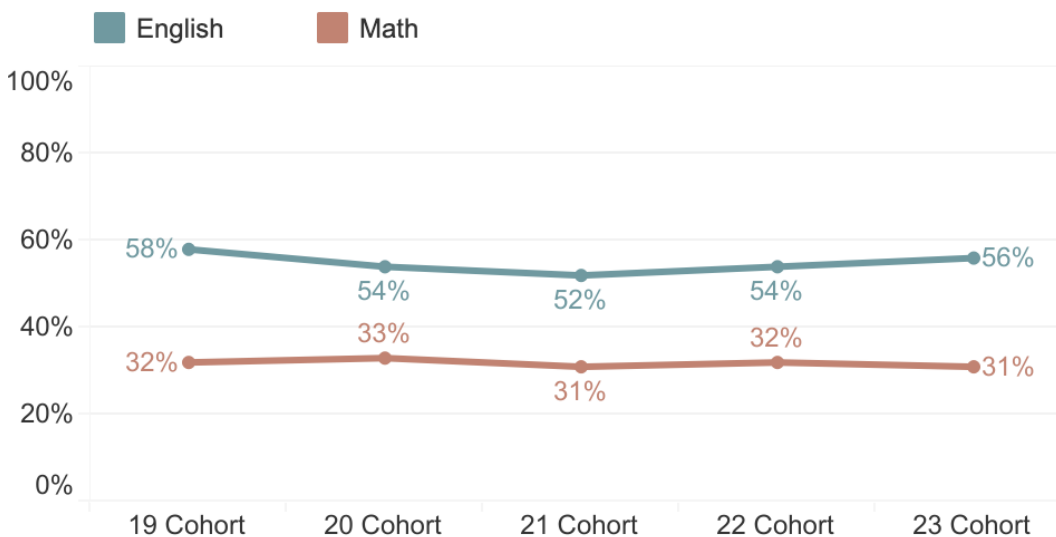
Results and Impact: Key performance indicators associated with Goal 3 include college-level English and Math course completion, first-year progression/persistence, and curriculum and credential completion. College-level English course completion rates rose from 54% among the 2020 student cohort to 56% among the 2023 cohort, while math course completion rates decreased from 33% to 31% during the same period. First-year progression/persistence rates increased by three percentage points across these same cohorts, rising from 67% to 70%. Dually enrolled and not dually enrolled students also experienced increases in progression/persistence during this same period. Curriculum completion rates increased for cohorts beginning their studies in 2017-2020, rising from 56% to 59% over the period, and comparable increases

extended to both dually enrolled and not dually enrolled students. Finally, notable gains in annual credential completion have been realized by the system in recent years, growing by 14% from 70,246 in 2021-2022 to 80,280 in 2024-2025.

Figure 3.1: College-Level English and Math Completion Rates Across the North Carolina Community College System

	2023 Cohort	3-Year Trend (2020 Cohort – 2023 Cohort)	1-Year Trend (2022 Cohort – 2023 Cohort)
College-Level English Completion: <i>Percentage of fall full-time associate degree seeking non-CCP first-time students successfully completing college-level English by the end of the following spring semester</i>	56%	↗	↗
College-Level Math Completion: <i>Percentage of fall full-time associate degree seeking non-CCP first-time students successfully completing college-level Math by the end of the following spring semester</i>	31%	↘	↘

Figure 3.2: NCCCS College-Level English and Math Completion Rates Over Time

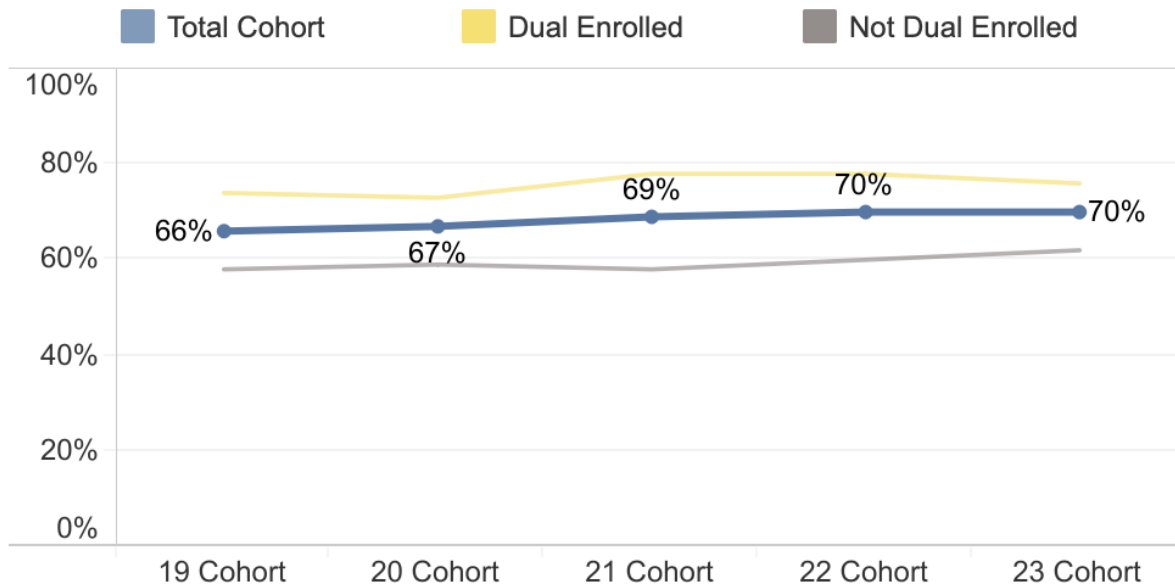


Source for Figures 3.1 and 3.2: Comprehensive Curriculum Student Report (CCSR)

Figure 3.3: First-Year Progression/Persistence Rates Across the North Carolina Community College System

	2023 Cohort	3-Year Trend (2020 Cohort – 2023 Cohort)	1-Year Trend (2022 Cohort – 2023 Cohort)
First-Year Progression/Persistence: <i>Percentage of fall first-time credential-seeking curriculum students graduated prior to or enrolled in postsecondary education the subsequent fall semester</i>	70% (Total Cohort)	↑	→
First-Year Progression/Persistence for Dual Enrolled Students	76% (Dual Enrolled)	↗	↘
First-Year Progression/Persistence for Not Dual Enrolled Students	62% (Not Dual Enrolled)	↑	↗

Figure 3.4: NCCCS First-Year Progression/Persistence Rates Over Time

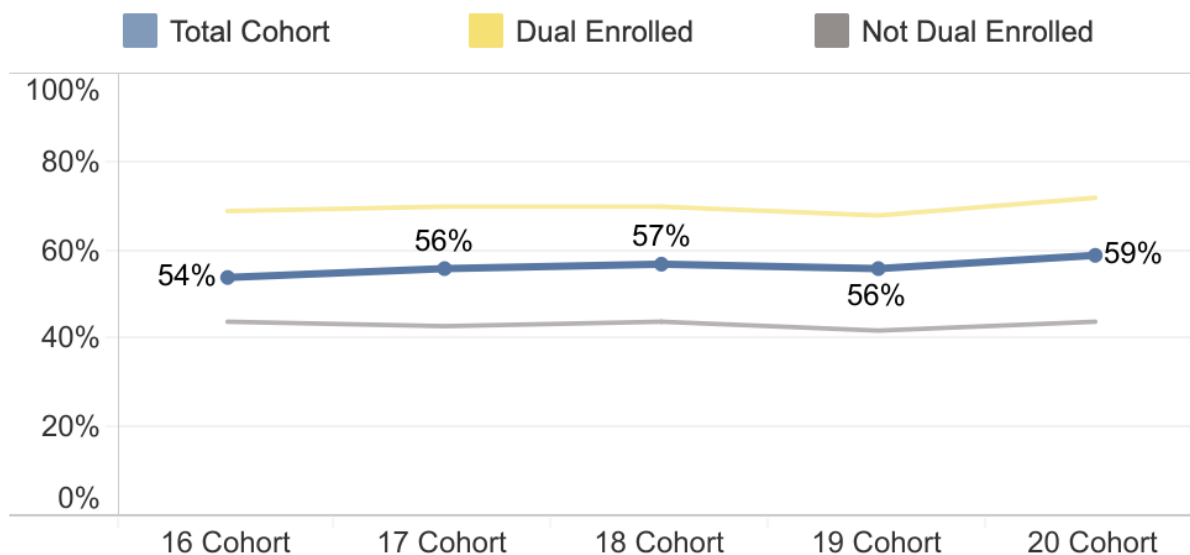


Sources for Figures 3.3 and 3.4: Comprehensive Curriculum Student Report (CCSR), Graduation Data Extract, National Student Clearinghouse (NSC)

Figure 3.5: Curriculum Completion Rates Across the NC Community College System

	2020 Cohort	3-Year Trend (2017 Cohort – 2020 Cohort)	1-Year Trend (2019 Cohort – 2020 Cohort)
Curriculum Completion Rate: <i>Percentage of first-time fall credential-seeking curriculum students who, after four years, graduate, transfer, or are enrolled during the fourth academic year with 42 successfully completed non-developmental hours</i>	59% (Total Cohort)	↑	↑
Curriculum Completion Rate for Dual Enrolled Students	72% (Dual Enrolled)	↗	↑
Curriculum Completion Rate for Not Dual Enrolled Students	44% (Not Dual Enrolled)	↗	↑

Figure 3.6: NCCCS Curriculum Completion Rates Over Time

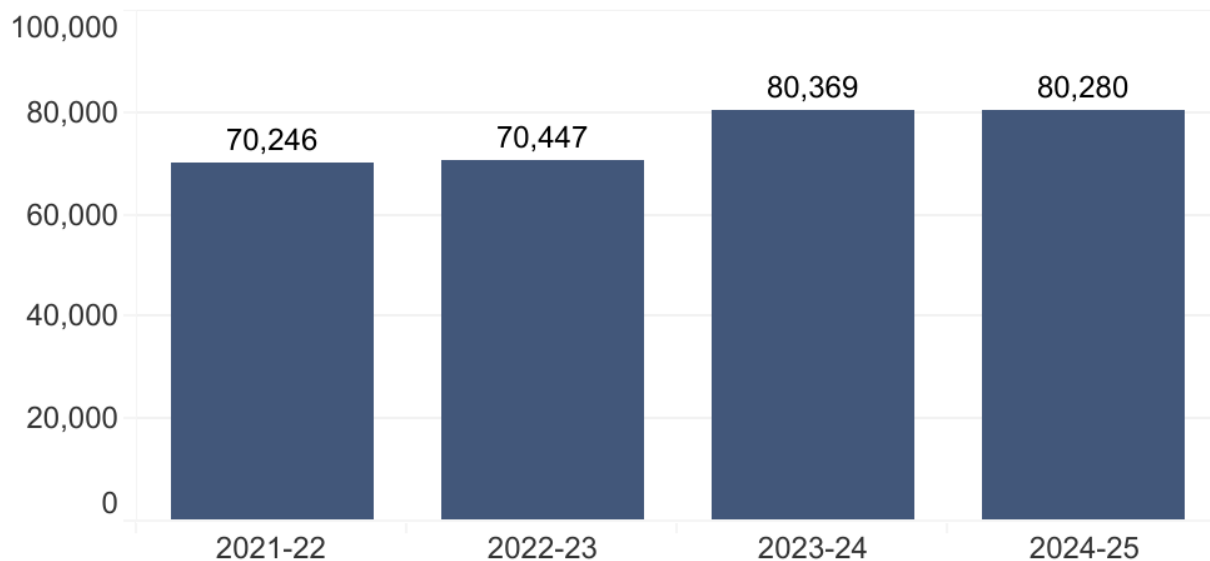


Sources for Figures 3.5 and 3.6: Comprehensive Curriculum Student Report (CCSR), Graduation Data Extract, National Student Clearinghouse (NSC)

Figure 3.7: Credential Completion Across the NC Community College System

	2024-25	3-Year Trend (2021-22 – 2024-25)	1-Year Trend (2023-24 – 2024-25)
Credential Completion: <i>Annual unduplicated count of individuals successfully completing a curriculum program, a Workforce CE course that is credential aligned with 148+ hours of instruction, or apprenticeship program</i>	80,280	↑	→

Figure 3.8: NCCCS Credential Completion Over Time



Sources for Figures 3.7 and 3.8: Comprehensive Curriculum Student Report (CCSR), Graduation Data Extract, Continuing Education Registration Report (CE Reg), ApprenticeshipNC data

Key milestones and accomplishments related to Goal 3 (Student Success) that have been achieved to date include:

- **Establishing an Inclusive Excellence Task Force** focused on developing and delivering professional development, toolkits, written resources, and dashboards that leverage new and existing datasets to help colleges identify gaps in student success in partnership with the System Office's System Effectiveness team. This initiative was supported through funding from the REACH grant. Grant objectives were accomplished. However, the task force was discontinued due to concerns related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion legislation.
- **Providing training and professional development for college faculty and staff and System Office team members via the Virtual Learning Community (VLC).** In 2024-2025, the VLC Quality and Assessment Center presented 64 webinars to 1,703 NCCCS faculty and staff. Average webinar attendance is on the rise, and all webinars are recorded, captioned, and posted as an on-demand resource. The VLC Professional Development Center provides customized webinars, workshops, and face-to-face events at colleges at no cost, and the most requested topic is accessibility.
- **Delivering support via the Distance Learning Technologies Team,** which offers training each month in distance learning community meetings and workshops on learning management systems, the integrated library system, distance learning technologies, and tools and resources licensed by the system and colleges. Professional development on the openNCCC Open Educational Resource (OER) platform has resulted in 66 collaborative groups, a new Student Success Center Hub, and over 10,000 content items, many generated by NCCCS users.
- **Collaboratively launching North Carolina's Teaching and Learning Hubs and connecting college faculty and staff with Hub-sponsored professional learning opportunities.** The Hubs, developed and offered in collaboration with the Belk Center for Community College Leadership and Research, are designed to complement the efforts of individual colleges' teaching and learning centers. Between fall 2021 and spring 2024, the Hubs hosted nearly 200 professional learning sessions, engaging more than 3,000 educators from all 58 community colleges. This training ultimately impacted more than 167,000 students enrolled in courses taught by Hub-trained instructors, and these same students were 7% more likely to persist term-to-term.
- **Supporting colleges in navigating the rise of generative artificial intelligence (AI) and effectively integrating AI in teaching and learning** via a series of written resources, conferences, and other trainings for college faculty. An AI-focused task force has also been developed in partnership with the North Carolina Association of Community

College Presidents to guide disruption strategies and innovation in education delivery. See [***Tactic 5.3***](#) for more information.

- **Exploring telehealth services for students via a pilot program in partnership with telehealth provider TimelyCare.** In addition to analyzing existing state and national research on telehealth and student mental health needs, System Office staff interviewed higher education officers in California and Virginia to gather information in preparation for a four-college telehealth pilot. The pilot program resulted in nearly 550 students registering for TimelyCare and making 400+ appointments to utilize telehealth services. Participating colleges reported high student satisfaction and retention for those who participated. However, the conclusion of this pilot was that statewide expansion not be pursued at this time given low overall student utilization.



Goal 4: Economic and Workforce Development

The Need: Every day, community colleges across the state equip students with the skills needed to drive local economies and enhance North Carolina's economic competitiveness. Colleges are called upon to strengthen employers' talent pipelines, advance economic prosperity for all North Carolinians, and help the state remain resilient in the face of market shifts. This requires working closely with employers to align credentials with in-demand skills and adopting strategies to help students earn credentials quickly.

Proposed Response: In the strategic plan, several approaches were identified to meeting the needs of North Carolina's evolving workforce, including:

- **Cultivating robust, highly skilled talent pipelines** that promote economic growth in all regions of the state (*Objective 4.1*),
- **Focusing instruction on relevant skills, credential attainment, and competency development** (*Objective 4.2*), and
- **Increasing access to training, education, and wraparound services** to support students in advancing their careers and achieving upward economic mobility (*Objective 4.3*).

Results and Impact: Key performance indicators associated with Goal 4 include Career and Technical Education (CTE) completion and exiter quarterly earnings, along with measures of the individuals, businesses, and programs served through the system's economic development programs. Annual CTE completion increased by 18% since the 2021-2022 academic year, with 9,415 more completers in 2024-2025 than in 2021-2022. Median CTE exiter quarterly earnings grew by 3% during the same period, increasing from \$12,140 for 2017-2018 exiters to \$12,507 for 2020-2021 exiters. Exiters earning associate degrees saw even higher gains (growth of 4%

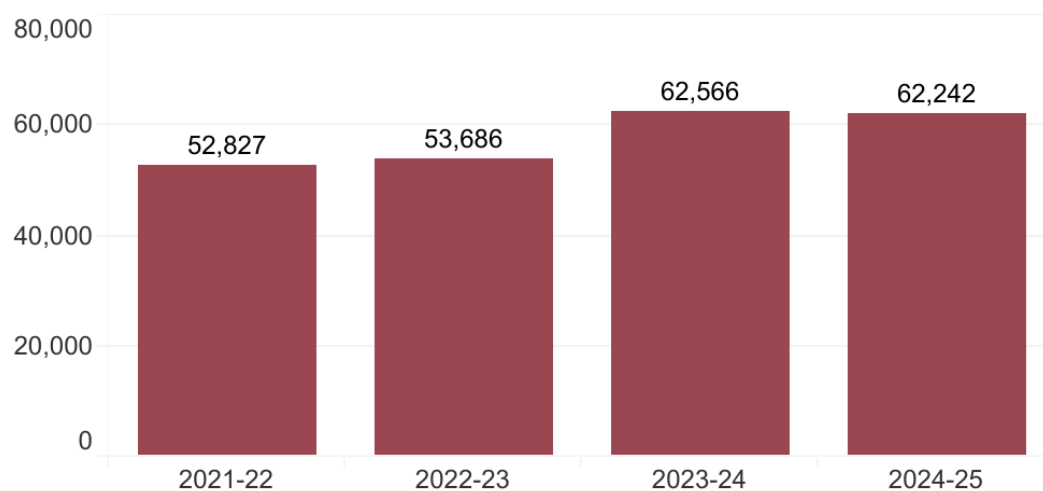
during the same period), and modest gains were also realized by exiters who earned diplomas/certificates and by those not earning a credential (growth of 3% and 2%, respectively).

The number of individuals, businesses, and programs served by the system’s economic development programs has also steadily increased. 51,370 students and clients were served through ApprenticeshipNC, NCEdge Customized Training, and the Small Business Center Network in 2023-2024, an increase of 22% compared to 2021-2022 and just shy of pre-pandemic levels (53,418 students and clients served in 2019-2020). In 2023-2024, ApprenticeshipNC and NCEdge Customized Training served 4,378 businesses and programs, a 26% increase compared to 2021-2022 and a remarkable 164% increase over pre-/early-pandemic levels (1,660 businesses and programs served in 2019-2020).

Figure 4.1: Career and Technical Education Completion Across the NC Community College System

	2024-25	3-Year Trend (2021-22 – 2024-25)	1-Year Trend (2023-24 – 2024-25)
Career and Technical Education Completion: <i>Annual unduplicated count of curriculum CTE graduates and those successfully completing a Workforce CE course that is credential aligned with 148+ hours of instruction</i>	62,242	↑	→

Figure 4.2: NCCCS Career and Technical Education Completion Over Time

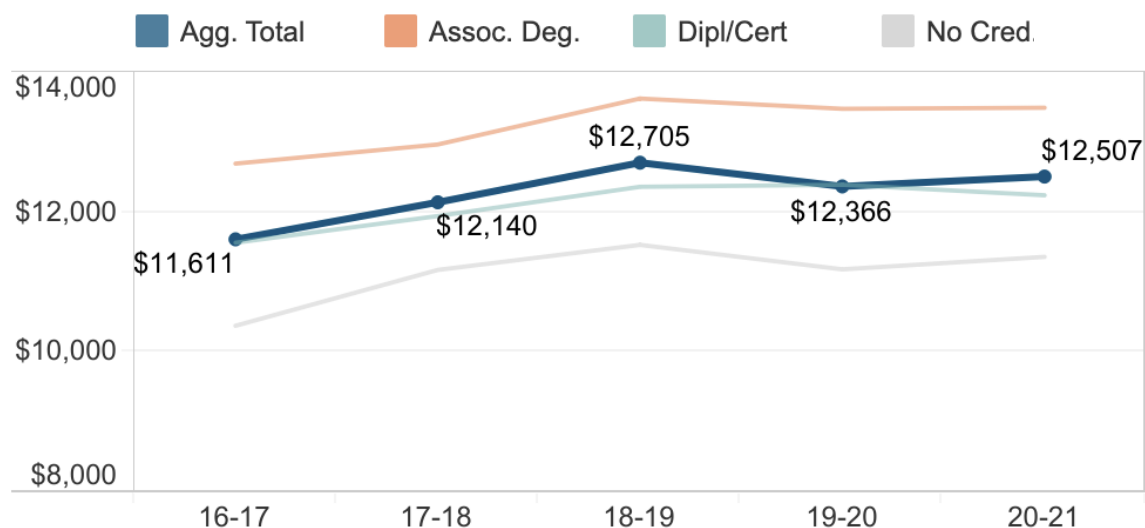


Sources for Figures 4.1 and 4.2: Comprehensive Curriculum Student Report (CCSR), Continuing Education Registration Report (CE Reg), Graduation Data Extract

Figure 4.3: NCCCS Career and Technical Education Exiter Median Quarterly Earnings

	2020-21 Exiters	3-Year Trend (2017-18 – 2020-21)	1-Year Trend (2019-20 – 2020-21)
CTE Exiter Quarterly Earnings: <i>Adjusted median quarterly earnings of curriculum (CU) CTE exiters who successfully completed at least 9 CU credit hours in at least one CTE prefix and did not enroll in further postsecondary education for three years after exit. Measures earnings in third year after exit. Budget adjustment based on South Region CPI-U change.</i>	\$12,507 (Aggregated Total)	↗	→
CTE Exiter Quarterly Earnings: Associate Degree	\$13,489 (Associate Degree)	↗	→
CTE Exiter Quarterly Earnings: Diploma/Certificate	\$12,240 (Diploma/Certificate)	↗	→
CTE Exiter Quarterly Earnings: No Credential Earned	\$11,361 (No Credential Earned)	↗	↗

Figure 4.4: 2016-2021 NCCCS Career and Technical Education Exiter Median Quarterly Earnings

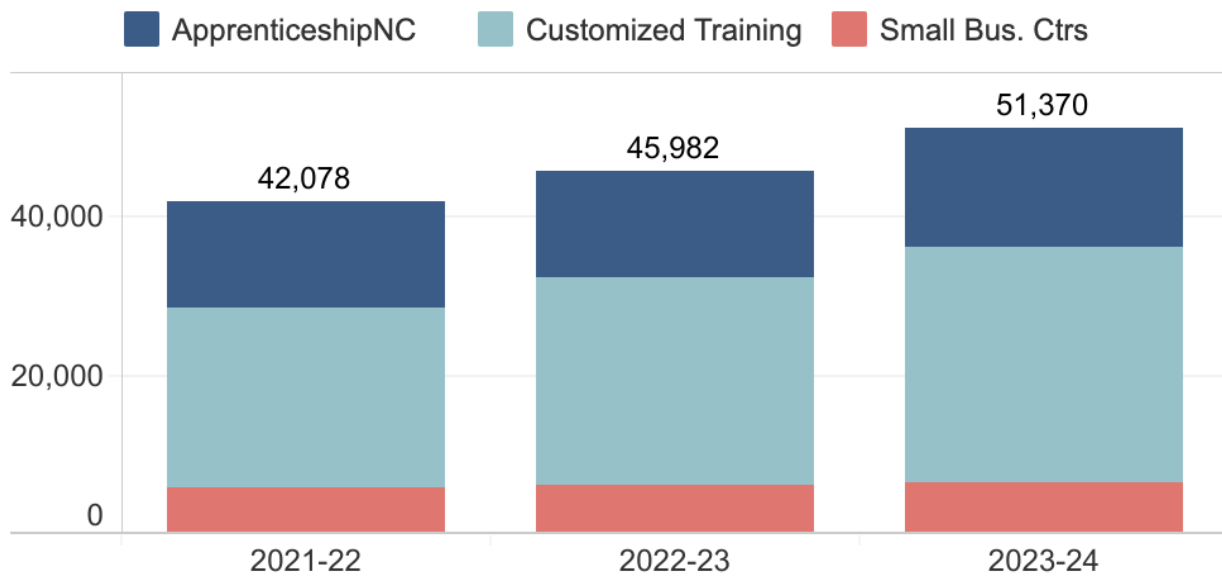


Sources for Figures 4.3 and 4.4: Comprehensive Curriculum Student Report (CCSR), Continuing Education Registration Report (CE Reg), Graduation Data Extract, National Student Clearinghouse (NSC), NC Department of Commerce, US Bureau of Labor Statistics

Figure 4.5: Individuals, Businesses, and Programs Served Through NCCCS Economic Development Programs

	2023-24	2-Year Trend (2021-22 – 2023-24)	1-Year Trend (2022-23 – 2023-24)
Individuals Served Through Economic Development Programs: <i>Count of students and clients served through ApprenticeshipNC, Customized Training, and Small Business Centers</i>	51,370	↑	↑
Businesses and Programs Served Through Economic Development Programs: <i>Count of businesses and programs served through ApprenticeshipNC and Customized Training</i>	4,378	↑	↑

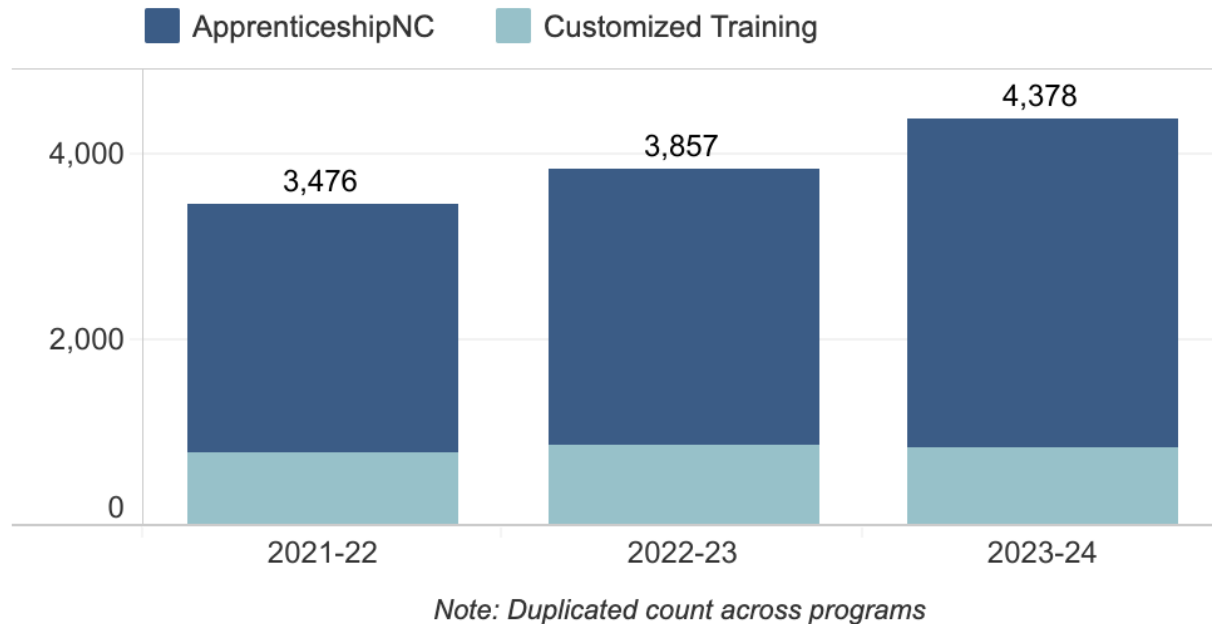
Figure 4.6: Individuals Served Through NCCCS Economic Development Programs Over Time



Note: Duplicated count across programs

Source for Figures 4.5 and 4.6: NCCCS Economic Development

Figure 4.7: Businesses and Programs Served Through NCCCS Economic Development Programs Over Time



Source: NCCCS Economic Development

Key milestones and accomplishments related to Goal 4 (Economic and Workforce Development) that have been achieved to date include:

- **Expanding ApprenticeshipNC (ANC)**, a division of the North Carolina Community College System, which realized more than 45% growth in Registered Apprenticeship and 50% growth in Registered Pre-Apprenticeship between FY23 and FY24. During that same period, ANC enrolled 4,990 new apprentices and 1,774 new pre-apprentices while welcoming 147 new apprenticeship programs and 19 new pre-apprenticeship programs in fields like healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and information technology. In total, ANC served 15,090 apprentices, 3,525 employers, and 1,399 sponsors during the 2023-2024 fiscal year. In the past three years (since 2021-2022), ANC has grown the number of individuals and businesses it serves by approximately 13% and 30%, respectively. Additional updates and achievements related to ANC are outlined in [Tactic 5.2](#).
- **Growing the reach of the Small Business Center Network (SBCN)**, which served 6,356 individuals across the state during 2023-2024, representing a 10% increase in reach since 2021-2022. In 2025, the system announced a partnership with Goldman Sachs to engage the SBCN in launching 10,000 small businesses across the state and approved funding for the Accelerate and Innovate McDowell (AIM) program, which will launch at McDowell Technical Community College before being offered to Small Business Centers

at each of the 58 colleges. AIM leverages a curriculum developed by the University of Notre Dame providing guidance to local entrepreneurs and cultivating sustainable economic development by connecting them to a variety of resources, including mentors, lenders and other small business owners.

- **Advancing the NCEdge Customized Training Program**, which supported 848 companies across the state during the 2024-2025 fiscal year. Over the course of the last year, NCEdge delivered training to 30,883 individuals through 319 projects in industries including the life sciences, advanced manufacturing, cloud computing, and textiles. NCEdge has experienced significant growth since 2021-2022, increasing both the number of individuals served (by nearly 35%) and businesses engaged (by nearly 10%).



Goal 5: System Funding and Effectiveness

The Need: To successfully advance the priorities outlined in the current strategic plan and continue serving constituent colleges, students, and the state of North Carolina effectively, the System Office must continually adjust and innovate. Critical resource needs elevated by system and college leaders include updating the system's funding formula, modernizing its information technology infrastructure and data systems, and enhancing marketing and communications efforts.

Proposed Response: In the strategic plan, several opportunities to increase investment in and strengthen the overall effectiveness of the system are proposed, including:

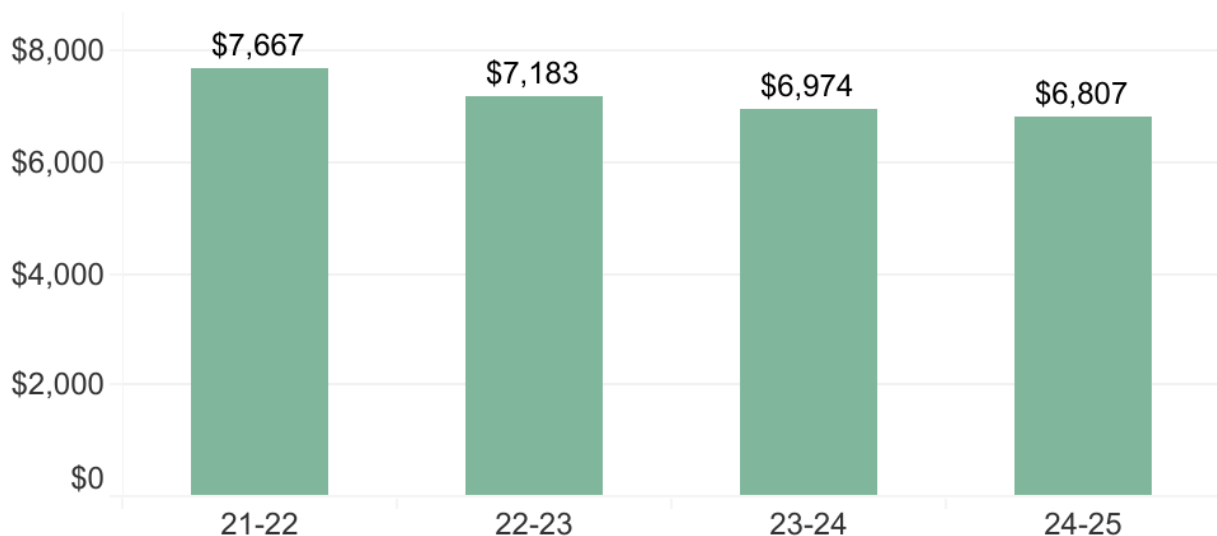
- **Advocating for legislative investment** reflective of the value the system provides to its employees and the students and businesses it serves (*Objective 5.1*),
- **Modernizing and realigning the system's funding formula** (*Objective 5.2*),
- **Aligning System Office support to colleges' needs** (*Objective 5.3*), and
- **Equipping the system with the data and technology systems needed to provide best-in-class support for core business functions** (*Objective 5.4*).

Results and Impact: Key performance indicators associated with Goal 5 include legislative funding and student support investment per full-time equivalent (FTE). Legislative funding per FTE (the ratio of adjusted annual community college budget funding compared to annual FTE student enrollment generated) decreased year over year from \$7,667 in 2021-2022 to \$6,807 in 2024-2025, a decline of 11%. Similarly, student services expenditures per FTE decreased incrementally from \$683 in 2021-2022 to \$629 in 2024-2025, a decline of 8%.

Figure 5.1: Funding and Student Services Expenditures per FTE

	2024-25	3-Year Trend (2021-22 – 2024-25)	1-Year Trend (2023-24 – 2024-25)
Funding per FTE: <i>Ratio of adjusted annual community college budget funding compared to annual full-time equivalent student enrollment generated. Budget adjustment based on South Region CPI-U change.</i>	\$6,807	↓	↘
Student Services Expenditures per FTE: <i>Ratio of adjusted annual community college student services expenditures compared to annual full-time equivalent student enrollment generated. Budget adjustment based on South Region CPI-U change.</i>	\$629	↓	→

Figure 5.2: Funding per FTE



Sources for Figures 5.1 and 5.2: NCCCS Business and Finance, US Bureau of Labor Statistics

Figure 5.3: Funding and FTE

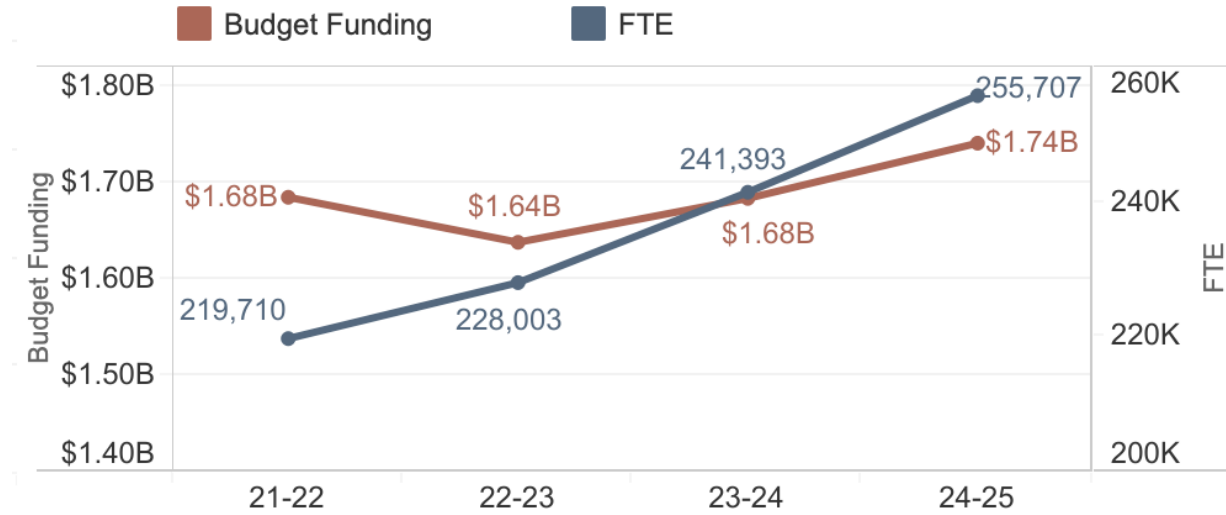
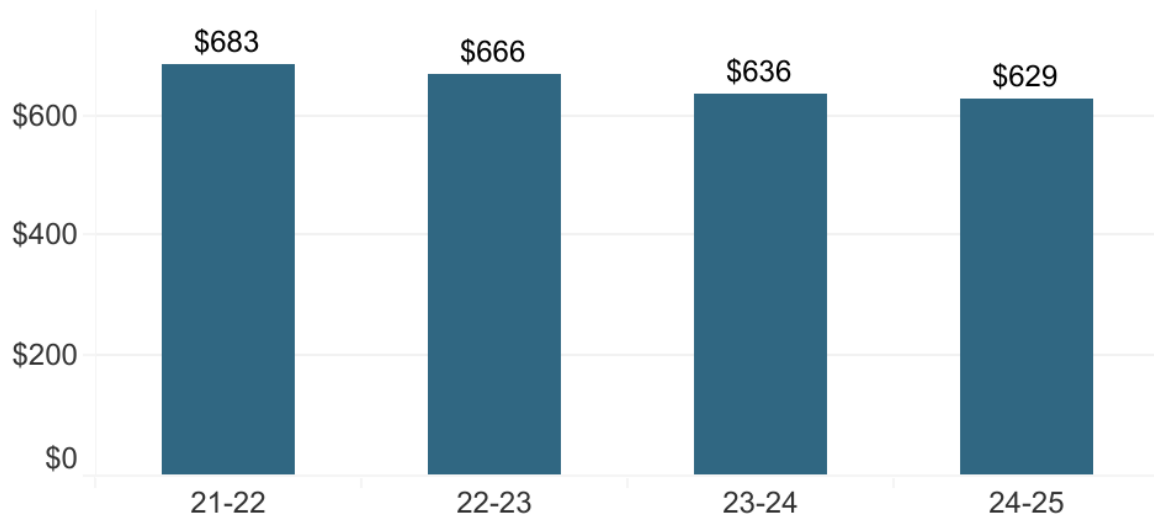
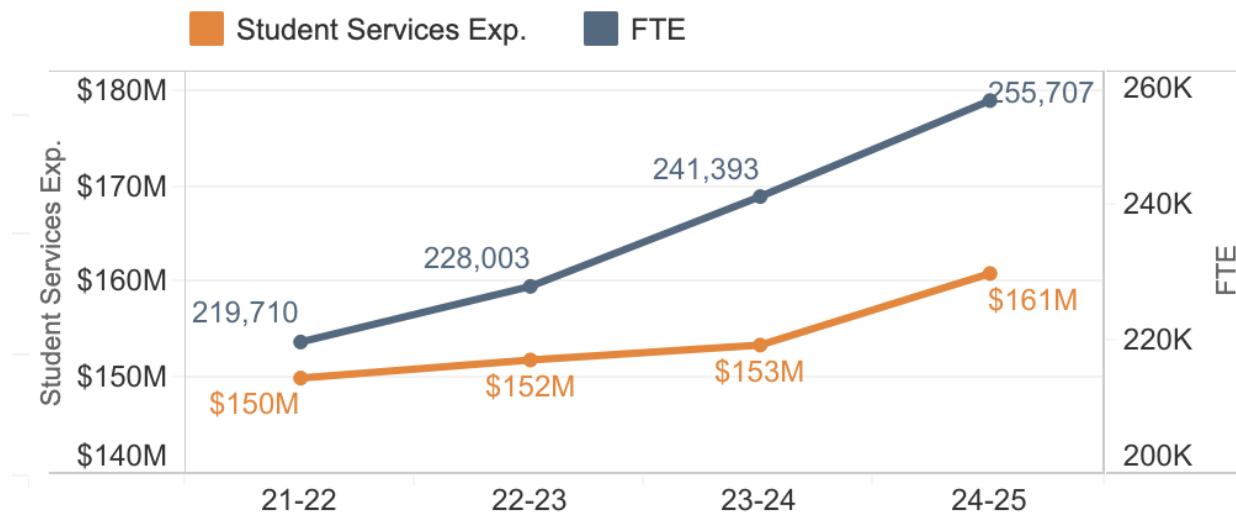


Figure 5.4: Student Services Expenditures per FTE



Sources for Figures 5.3 and 5.4: NCCCS Business and Finance, US Bureau of Labor Statistics

Figure 5.5: Student Services Expenditures and FTE



Source: NCCCS Business and Finance, US Bureau of Labor Statistics

Key milestones and accomplishments related to Goal 5 (System Funding and Effectiveness) that have been achieved to date include:

- **Making significant strides towards modernizing the system’s information technology and data infrastructure**, including transitioning the Common Course Library, College Budgeting and Accounting System, Customized Training, and the system’s Data Warehouse to Ellucian Banner SaaS. See [Tactics 1.1](#), [1.2](#), [1.3](#), and [1.4](#) for more information about these projects. This transition also facilitated the development of **near-time reporting tools**, described in more detail in [Tactic 4.3](#), which provide colleges and the System Office access to timely and relevant data about enrollment and FTE and other tools to support successful data reporting.
- **Developing and proposing a transformative business and funding model – Propel NC –** to strengthen alignment between educational programs and North Carolina’s evolving labor market. See [Tactic 2.1](#) for more information about the system’s progress related to Propel NC.
- **Developing and equipping colleges and the System Office with comprehensive labor market and outcomes data** to inform Propel NC and encourage data-driven decision-making about academic programs that are and may be offered. [Tactic 2.2](#) provides additional updates about these tools and insights.
- **Modernizing and streamlining numerous system processes**, eliminating redundancies and improving accuracy and efficiency in service delivery. Related efforts – including the Course Request Portal launch, State Board Code updates, and financial aid process

improvements – support colleges in launching programs quickly, aligning their offerings with workforce needs, and enhancing student access and success. See [Tactic 2.3](#) for more information about this work.

- **Taking significant steps to expand funding capacity alongside the North Carolina Community Colleges Foundation**, highlighted by the largest single gift in the system’s history: a \$35.6 million investment from Arnold Ventures to launch the Boost initiative. Building on this momentum, the System Office strengthened its professional capacity by hiring its inaugural Director of Grants and undertaking a comprehensive analysis of internal processes (see [Tactic 5.1](#) for more information). In parallel, the Foundation expanded its advancement capacity by hiring both an executive director and a chief advancement officer, creating a dedicated statewide office to oversee sponsorships, annual and major gifts, and in-kind contributions. The Foundation also launched a national fundraising campaign and developed a strong pipeline of potential future philanthropic investments. Together, these accomplishments reflect a new era of professional staffing, strategic fundraising, and multi-million-dollar partnerships that will fuel systemwide innovation and rural workforce advancement.
- **Elevating the support provided to the system’s approximately 50 rural-serving institutions**, including providing comprehensive strategic planning services to colleges, engaging rural-serving presidents for input on challenges and promising practices of rural colleges, and recommending aligned System Office priorities and support. More information about the system’s efforts to support the long-term success and sustainability of rural-serving colleges is outlined in [Tactic 5.4](#).
- **Creating and rolling out new branding for NCEdge, Boost, and Access to Achievement**, with refreshed branding of College and Career Readiness and the Small Business Center Network in development. More details about additional marketing and branding efforts are outlined in [Tactic 4.1](#).
- **Mobilizing Hurricane Helene relief efforts** in support of the 14 community colleges, nearly 74,000 students, and more than 6,000 faculty and staff across Western North Carolina that were severely impacted. The North Carolina Community Colleges Foundation collaborated with the system to launch the Hurricane Helene Community College Response and Recovery Fund to aggregate donations and quickly distribute them to affected campuses, ultimately distributing \$560,000 across four funding rounds to support student aid, campus operations, and rebuilding efforts. Beyond its investment in the Fund, the John M. Belk Endowment committed an additional \$2 million, including \$20,000 in direct support to each affected college plus flexible funds for wrap-around services and long-term resilience planning.

Annual Implementation Updates

2024-2025 Priorities and Tactics

To support the successful implementation of the goals, objectives, and strategies outlined in the strategic plan, the system focuses its efforts by developing comprehensive annual implementation plans. This year's implementation plan identified the following five priorities:

- 1. Modernizing Technology Systems** - This priority aims to upgrade the NC Community College System's core IT infrastructure to support streamlined operations, data security, and accessibility. This includes integrating key systems – including the Combined Course Library and financial workflows – into a unified platform, which will enhance research, reporting, and overall system efficiency. Additionally, modernizing these systems supports workforce development initiatives and ensures the system can adapt to evolving educational and industry needs.
- 2. Operationalizing a Labor Market-Driven Business Model** - This priority focuses on aligning NC Community College System programs with labor market needs and high-demand sectors. This includes modernizing funding, integrating labor market data, and developing accelerated programs that emphasize industry-recognized competencies. Operationalizing Propel NC will also involve updating policies, improving data management, and streamlining processes to ensure college offerings are responsive to workforce demands and support small business development.
- 3. Operating with Excellence and Efficiency** - This priority centers on ensuring the NC Community College System Office provides effective support through streamlined policies and attracts top talent. This includes establishing a system for regular policy reviews and using Service Now for accountability and reminders. Additionally, by enhancing professional development and promoting the System Office as an attractive workplace, the system aims to deliver excellent leadership and customer service across the community colleges.
- 4. Execute a Marketing and Enrollment Strategy** - This priority aims to enhance outreach and enrollment efforts across the NC Community College System through a newly approved five-year Integrated Marketing Plan. This plan includes rebranding, aligning

internal communications, and implementing a comprehensive marketing funnel to support high-demand workforce sectors. Additionally, investing in Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) tools will help community colleges remain competitive and boost enrollment amid increasing competition from four-year institutions.

- 5. Expand Resources and Supports** - This priority seeks to diversify funding sources, such as federal grants, to enhance access and completion in high-demand workforce sectors. It also focuses on increasing apprenticeships and paid work-based learning opportunities to improve student job prospects. Additionally, this priority supports professional development, innovative teaching, and flexible modalities, while emphasizing the importance of bolstering rural colleges to drive economic growth in under-resourced regions of North Carolina.

These five priorities are brought to life via the following 17 tactics, each tied to the broader goals, objectives and strategies outlined in the strategic plan.

Priority 1: Modernizing technology systems by...

- Tactic 1.1: Transitioning the Combined Course Library from Ellucian Colleague to Ellucian Banner SaaS.
- Tactic 1.2: Transitioning Customized Training from Ellucian Colleague to Ellucian Banner SaaS.
- Tactic 1.3: Transitioning the Data Warehouse from a System Office-operated and maintained MS SQL Server to Ellucian Banner SaaS.
- Tactic 1.4: Modernizing the College Budget and Accounting System.

Priority 2: Operationalizing a labor market-driven business model by...

- Tactic 2.1: Developing foundational systems for executing Propel NC.
- Tactic 2.2: Developing labor market and outcomes data tools for the System Office and colleges.
- Tactic 2.3: Creating an updated system for program approval, termination, and alignment with labor market demand.

Priority 3: Operating with excellence and efficiency by:

- Tactic 3.1: Reviewing and updating outdated State Board Code items and establishing a system of periodic review.

- Tactic 3.2: Implementing improvements to policy, procedure, and processes related to System Office human resource management.
- Tactic 3.3: Establishing agency policies and providing professional development related to customer service and leadership excellence for System Office employees.

Priority 4: Executing a marketing and enrollment strategy by...

- Tactic 4.1: Executing Year 1 of the System Integrated Marketing Plan.
- Tactic 4.2: Enhancing community college enrollment through Strategic Enrollment Management tools, strategic outreach and engagement, and training and development.
- Tactic 4.3: Expanding existing near-time reporting capabilities and collecting reporting requirements associated with college migration to Ellucian Insights.

Priority 5: Expanding resources and supports by...

- Tactic 5.1: Establishing and implementing a System Office strategy to expand grant acquisitions.
- Tactic 5.2: Expanding the use of pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships statewide.
- Tactic 5.3: Delivering guidance and resources to community colleges for talent development and educational strategy that accounts for disruptive technologies and the future of work.
- Tactic 5.4: Developing and delivering planning services, toolkits, and recommendations related to bolstering rural colleges.

Tactic-Specific Accomplishments

Over the past year, the System Office has worked diligently to implement the priorities and tactics outlined in the most recent implementation plan. Each tactic was selected based on its alignment with long-term outcomes and potential to create measurable impact in the short-term. The following updates provide additional context about the system's 2024-2025 tactics, highlight related milestones and accomplishments, and summarize next steps and the anticipated impact of each tactic.

Tactic 1.1: Combined Course Library Transition

Tactic Leads:

Dr. Lisa Eads (Associate Vice President of Academic Programs) and Sonya Atkinson Bartley (IT Enterprise Planning Analyst)

Description and Need:

Transitioning the Combined Course Library (CCL) from Ellucian Colleague to Ellucian Banner SaaS will modernize and optimize this critical tool, making centralized, searchable, and continuously updated course information accessible to colleges and allowing anyone to search all curriculum and continuing education courses offered by the NC Community College System. The CCL is the statewide repository for curriculum, continuing education, and CCR courses dating back to 1997. The current platform, WebAdvisor, is obsolete and unsupported, creating significant operational risks. If it fails, course data would need to be managed manually, resulting in inefficiency, data inaccuracy, and disruptions to curriculum management, legislative requests, and policy planning. Modernization ensures a stable, integrated, and sustainable system.

Key Accomplishments in the Last Year:

- Integrated the current CCL into the Course Dog platform, establishing the foundation for Phase 2 (integration with Banner and DegreeWorks).
- Identified and began resolving 10 missing data elements critical to full system functionality and merged CCL modernization into the larger Banner transition, aligning efforts and resources.
- Conducted daily coordination with Course Dog and Ellucian, weekly progress check-ins with leadership, and comprehensive documentation of workflows and functionalities.

Next Steps:

The following are tentative next steps, with updated timelines in development as of the writing of this report.

- Complete integration of missing data elements to ensure full CCL functionality in Course Dog and begin Phase 2 integration with Banner and DegreeWorks.
- Implement updated workflows and policy alignments to support long-term sustainability.
- Continue board advocacy for funding, resources, and policy adjustments to support modernization.

Anticipated Impacts:

- Eliminating manual course data processing, which should reduce processing time for course approvals and revisions by an estimated 50-70%.
- Increasing data accuracy, ensuring 100% capture of required course elements across Curriculum, CE, and CCR.
- Improving system uptime and reliability, reducing downtime risk from current high-vulnerability levels to near zero.
- Expediting turnaround for colleges in building syllabi and programs of study, enabling quicker program launches and revisions aligned to workforce needs.

Tactic 1.2: Customized Training Transition

Tactic Leads:

Betty Silver (Associate Vice President of NCEdge Customized Training) and Anita Gonsiorowski (Customized Training Research Specialist)

Description and Need:

Transitioning the system's NCEdge Customized Training program from Ellucian Colleague to Ellucian Banner SaaS will modernize and optimize this critical system, which provides education, training, and support services for new, expanding, and existing business and industry across the state. The program has been operating on a legacy system originally built for Curriculum and later adapted to accommodate Continuing Education. Customized Training was added into the system many years ago, but it was never a true fit. The system lacked reporting capabilities, forcing staff to rely on multiple Excel spreadsheets. This not only created an environment prone to errors but also consumed significant staff time and resources.

Key Accomplishments in the Last Year:

- Successfully transitioned Customized Training from Ellucian Colleague to Ellucian Banner SaaS.

Next Steps:

- Finalize reporting needs with Ellucian and move to maintenance mode.

Anticipated Impacts:

- Making accurate NCEdge Customized Training data available on demand, which will promote data-driven decision-making and enhance the system's ability to analyze college performance, understand pain points, and support future legislative funding requests and associated reporting.

Tactic 1.3: Data Warehouse Transition

Tactic Leads:

Michelle Blake (Director of Applications Development) and Travis Noble (Director of State Data Warehousing)

Description and Need:

Transitioning the NC Community College System's Data Warehouse from a System Office-operated and maintained MS SQL Server to Ellucian Banner SaaS will modernize and optimize the systems that provide a centralized repository for college data, enhancing the system's ability to create reports, track performance data, and provide data extracts. This modernization initiative improves operational efficiency and data accessibility through the implementation of a unified data lake. Establishing a centralized and scalable data infrastructure will enhance the system's capacity to manage, integrate, and analyze college information.

Key Accomplishments in the Last Year:

- Transitioned 3TB of data from legacy to the new platform.
- Began migrating automated processes and testing them extensively to ensure proper functionality and performance. To date, 2 of the 17 processes have been successfully tested.

Next Steps:

The following are tentative next steps, with updated timelines in development as of the writing of this report.

- Engage with the vendor to rigorously test and implement data pipelines necessary for ingestion of data in support of the Annual Reporting Plan.
- Advocate for performance optimizations to minimize latency and ensure the development of resilient and efficient reporting and analytics infrastructure.
- Test and implement the automated processes within acceptable limits of functionality and performance.
- Test SAS functionality for reporting and dashboard creation.

Anticipated Impacts:

- Empowering stakeholders throughout the system to make timely, data-informed decisions through advanced reporting and analytic capabilities.
- Pulling data from Insights into SAS and generating the reporting that is required for partners.

Tactic 1.4: College Budget and Accounting System Modernization

Tactic Leads:

Stephanie Fisher (Associate Vice President of Finance and Operations) and Ann Anderson (Associate Vice President of State Level Accounting and Operations)

Description and Need:

Modernizing the system's College Budget and Accounting System (CBAS), which is used to gather financial information from all 58 colleges, will significantly improve its functionality. The current CBAS, implemented in 2009, was developed and maintained by staff to replace the manual workflows that were in use at that time. The system receives revenue, expenditure, and budget data on either a daily or monthly basis and uses this data for a variety of critical purposes, including: (1) reconciling college cash ledger balances to accounts with the NC Department of State Treasurer's office, (2) confirming that state funds budgets recorded by colleges agree with NC Community College System allocation records, (3) reporting to NC Department of State Treasurer the amount of daily deposits to colleges so those funds can be swept into the treasury, (4) receiving monthly requests from colleges specifying the anticipated cash need and depositing funds to the college disbursing account, and (5) ensuring funds allocated to colleges for specific purposes are not overspent.

Key Accomplishments in the Last Year:

- Began parallel processing of daily activities within the modernized CBAS system.
- Conducted user acceptance tests of monthly reconciliation processing in the modernized CBAS system and identified several issues during these tests.

Next Steps:

The following are tentative next steps, with updated timelines in development as of the writing of this report.

- Transition to parallel processing within the modernized CBAS system beginning with July monthly reconciliations and working through tests to eliminate any issues found.
- Go live with the new system after working solutions are identified.

Anticipated Impacts:

- Enabling new reports to be created and supporting the generation of data and reports in formats like Microsoft Excel. This is a critical need, as new reporting cannot be provided at this time because the current system is no longer supported. For example, a comprehensive budget vs. expenditures report will be available in the future; currently, there is no report that includes budget and expenditure data, and a user must run a separate report for each dataset and manually combine/compare them.
- Increasing and enhancing process validations based on experience with the current system.
- Generating automated emails that include attachments of necessary information rather than receiving email and then taking another step to retrieve the information.
- Generating archived reports at the same speed as open period reports.

Tactic 2.1: Propel NC Policies and Procedures

Tactic Leads:

Alex Fagg (Director of Government Relations), Dr. Brian Merritt (Senior Vice President and Chief Academic Officer), Dr. Phillip Price (Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer), and Dr. Bill Schneider (Vice President of System Effectiveness)

Description and Need:

Developing foundational systems for Propel NC, the system's proposed transformative business model to strengthen alignment between educational programs and North Carolina's evolving labor market, will support the system in implementing this promising new model that consistently funds Curriculum and Workforce Continuing Education programs based on workforce needs.

Key Accomplishments in the Last Year:

- Developed a Propel NC Implementation Guidebook that was shared with senior leaders across the system.
- Created a [resources webpage](#) and conducted numerous professional development sessions to help prepare colleges for Propel NC implementation.
- Developed several Code revisions to maximize colleges' ability to offer Career & College Promise (CCP) to 9th and 10th graders and offer continuing education CCP pathways, College & Career Readiness CCP pathways, and expansion of curriculum and continuing education focused in high-wage, high-demand sectors as defined by the Propel NC model, all of which were developed in collaboration with the NC Association of Community College Presidents and the Chief Academic Officer working group. A change in law also opened up all disciplines for 9th and 10th grade dual enrollment pathways.
- Released subject-driven Labor Market Outcomes dashboards by college and prosperity zone sub-region, made data views by Propel NC workforce sector available in the Instructional Activity FTE dashboards, and made workforce sector views in the Headcount Enrollment dashboards available.

Next Steps:

- By Fall 2025, create various scenarios for implementation of Propel NC sans funding, which will be presented to the system president, college presidents, and the State Board for consideration and continued advocacy.

Anticipated Impacts:

- Incentivizing colleges to offer high-demand, high-wage programs and creating pathways to economic mobility for students across the state.

Tactic 2.2: Labor Market and Outcomes Data Insights and Tools

Tactic Leads:

Dr. Bill Schneider (Vice President of System Effectiveness) and Elizabeth Stoddard (Director of Analytics and Reporting)

Description and Need:

Developing and sharing labor market and outcomes data tools that are aligned with the goals of Propel NC will ensure colleges and the System Office have access to necessary data to inform important decisions related to academic programs that are and may be offered. Associated data will also be leveraged to inform the Propel NC model.

Key Accomplishments in the Last Year:

- Developed and released [sixteen Regional Labor Market Analysis Reports and datasets](#).
- Developed and released the following subject-driven Labor Market Outcomes Dashboards:
 - [Median Quarterly Earnings of CTE Exiters by College](#), and
 - [Median Quarterly Earnings of CTE Exiters by Student Prosperity Zone Sub-Region](#).

Next Steps:

- By Spring 2026, establish a system providing college access to individual student wage records (dependent upon obtaining Department of Commerce legal approval).
- By Summer 2026, build dashboards to allow for point and click access to regularly updated information contained in the Labor Market Analysis Reports.
- By Fall 2026, showcase colleges leveraging the data and incorporate their work into professional development for all colleges.

Anticipated Impacts:

- Informing important decisions about academic program offerings made by colleges.
- Supporting colleges in identifying opportunities to collaborate with other colleges in their region.
- Leveraging the data associated with the subject-driven Labor Market Outcomes Dashboards to enhance the Propel NC model.

Tactic 2.3: Course and Program Approval, Termination, and Labor Market Alignment

Tactic Lead:

Dr. Lisa Eads (Associate Vice President of Academic Programs)

Description and Need:

Creating an updated system for course and program approval, termination, and alignment with labor market demand will modernize and streamline system processes, eliminate redundancies, and improve accuracy and efficiency in service delivery. Efforts such as the Course Request Portal and State Board Code updates directly impact colleges' ability to launch programs quickly, align offerings with workforce needs, and enhance student access and success.

Key Accomplishments in the Last Year:

- *Course Request Portal:* Developed and tested; consolidates course requests for curriculum and continuing education into one platform.
- *State Board Code Updates:* Completed recommendations, presentations, public comment, approval, and legal publication. On August 1, 2025, the approved State Board Code changes were implemented systemwide following the approval of the Code revisions by the State Board at the July meeting.
- *Program Implementation:*
 - CU: New CCP College and Career Ready Pathway approved by February 2025.
 - WCE: New pathway approved May 1, 2025, after NC Workforce Advisory Council collaboration; communicated to all colleges.
- *CCR Initiatives:* Pilot colleges identified, baseline data reviewed, IET technical assistance provided, transition course development underway, and marketing strategies created.
- *Student Services:* Conducted needs assessment, launched SEM training, held bi-monthly calls, and presented advanced strategies at SDAA Annual Conference.

Next Steps:

- *Launch Course Request Portal:* By the end of Fall term 2025, the Course Request Portal will be fully launched, including completion of training for System Office staff and college staff. Completion of this tactic will allow electronic submissions for all curriculum and continuing education courses via Service Now.
- *Develop and Launch Termination Request Portal:* By the end of Spring term 2026, the Termination Request Portal will be developed and fully launched, including completion of training for System Office staff and college staff. Completion of this tactic will allow electronic submissions for all curriculum program terminations via Service Now.
- *Launch Streamlined Admissions Application and Train Admissions Staff:* By June 30, 2026, the CRM consultants complete work with 18 colleges to onboard/optimize their use of Element 451. The deliverables include:
 - Defining key enrollment and communication decisions that the CRM will help automate.
 - Building self-service resources, guides, and FAQs for staff and students.

- Creating task automations to ensure consistent follow-ups and campaign execution.
 - Providing training to campus users and supporting go-live.
- *Continue SEM Calls and Financial Aid Efficiency Improvements:* By January 2026, preliminary Fall 2026 financial aid awards will be ready for students enrolled at pilot schools.
- *Implement CCR Marketing/Enrollment Strategies + Develop Marketing and Enrollment Strategies through the Strategic Enrollment Taskforce:* By Spring 2026, the four selected adult education representatives will actively participate in the full Strategic Enrollment Taskforce to develop effective marketing and enrollment strategies for adult education programs. This includes attending at least 80% of scheduled meetings, providing feedback, and co-creating targeted materials to increase awareness and enrollment among adult learners. Starting in Spring 2026, these representatives will also disseminate updates and information quarterly during state calls to ensure consistent communication and collaboration across colleges. This collaborative effort will ensure strategies align with system goals and address the specific needs of adult education populations.
- *Continue Transition Course Development with VLC for CCR + BSP 4012 Student Success Course Implementation:* By Spring 2026, fully develop and package the BSP 4012 Student Success Course as a downloadable, ready-to-use 4-module curriculum compatible with Blackboard and Moodle. This course is designed to support students in overcoming common barriers while building essential academic, personal, and professional skills for college success. By Fall 2026, at least 25% of North Carolina's 58 community colleges will begin full implementation of the BSP 4012 modules using the free, system-developed curriculum. This initiative will promote consistency in student success programming across the state and provide a scalable strategy to improve retention and engagement among new and returning adult learners.
- *Integrated Education and Training (IET) Project:* By Spring 2026, develop and finalize the North Carolina Community College System's state-level IET Playbook to support the implementation of comprehensive IET programs. This playbook will provide a clear, step-by-step guide that can be replicated across all 58 community colleges, helping institutions design IET models that align with in-demand careers in their local service areas. The playbook will include practical tools, best practices, and implementation strategies to ensure consistent quality and alignment with workforce needs. By Fall 2026, colleges will be equipped to use the playbook to build or enhance IET programming that improves access, accelerates student progress, and supports stronger outcomes for adult learners.

Anticipated Impacts:

- Generating efficiency gains by reducing course request processing time by ~50% through automation.
- Ensuring complete and accurate submissions via centralized data entry.
- Strengthening workforce alignment via CCP pathways and CCR transition courses aligned with high-demand sectors, contributing to increased statewide credential attainment.

Tactic 3.1: System Office Policy Review and Updates

Tactic Lead:

Jonnell Carpenter (General Counsel)

Description and Need:

Reviewing and updating outdated State Board Code items and establishing a system of periodic review helps to streamline and modernize agency policies. Having up-to-date policies and procedures also provides a foundation for establishing expectations and processes for system employees to perform their duties.

Key Accomplishments in the Last Year:

- Reviewed and updated 17 temporary or outdated sections within Chapter D of the State Board Code. All temporary code sections and sections within Chapter D that had not been amended for at least 10 years have been reviewed and updated.
- Reviewed and updated internal System Office policies and procedures to include a numbering system, common formatting, and revision history. Policies are now located in a central location with an easy to access table of contents. 67 policies and procedures have been updated; 16 received a complete review and significant content updates, and 2 new policies were added to the manual based on request and need.

Next Steps:

- By Q1 2026, implement mandated policy review and signoff for select agencywide policies, including Telework, Code of Conduct, and Work Schedule policies and forms in addition to other forms to be identified based on role and function.
- By End of Year 2025, notify policy owners to review policies and provide updates to ensure all policies remain current. The new system will produce automatic reminders for each policy on an annual basis. 26 current policies have been returned to their owner for additional review during upcoming year.

Anticipated Impacts:

- Maintaining policies that are compliant to law, current, accessible, and responsive to colleges' needs.

Tactic 3.2: Human Resources Policies and Procedures Update

Tactic Leads:

Dr. Kimberly Gold (Chief of Staff) and Kelli Reale (Vice President of Human Resources)

Description and Need:

Updating the system's human resources policies and procedures ensures legal compliance, reflects current organizational needs, reduces risk, and keeps guidance relevant for employees, supporting both operational efficiency and organizational integrity.

Key Accomplishments in the Last Year:

- Policies were updated, reformatted, and rebranded, with a special focus on streamlining hiring policies and procedures and reducing the turnaround time between posting positions and making offers to qualified applicants.
- Policies have been loaded into Service Now to better manage updates, solicit feedback from key stakeholders, and ensure appropriate approvals are obtained.
- David King (Internal Auditor) conducted a follow-up engagement regarding the time to hire employees from Request to Post until the position is filled. Between 2023 and 2025, the number of days dropped from 80 to 52, a 35% reduction in time.

Next Steps:

- Annually by the end of fiscal year, Human Resources will review and update HR policies and procedures. Even if no changes are made, the policy will be marked with the date of review to ensure employees are viewing the most current version. If updates are required before the scheduled annual review, HR will revise the policies promptly to reflect those changes accurately.

Anticipated Impacts:

- Reducing hiring delays and enhancing the System Office's effectiveness and appeal as an employer.
- Protecting the agency and strengthening employee trust and engagement.

Tactic 3.3: Culture of Excellence and Customer Service

Tactic Lead:

Kelli Reale (Vice President of Human Resources)

Description and Need:

Establishing agency policies and providing professional development related to customer service and leadership excellence for System Office employees will support the System Office in being an effective partner to colleges and other key stakeholders.

Key Accomplishments in the Last Year:

- Created a customer service policy that was reviewed by senior leaders and announced to System Office employees at the All-Hands Meeting.
- Incorporated customer service expectations into NCVIP for all staff at midyear review, ensuring that all agency employees will have a customer service-related goal in their Performance Plan.

Next Steps:

- By December 2025, the System Office Human Resources Team will conduct training sessions to reinforce the Culture of Excellence and Customer Service Expectations. A virtual recording will be made available for staff who are unable to participate in scheduled training dates.

Anticipated Impacts:

- Promoting ethical culture and shared values across the agency.
- Reducing legal and reputational risks by preventing misconduct.
- Improving decision-making and accountability.
- Enhancing workplace behavior, reducing conflicts and fostering respect.
- Strengthening brand reputation and employee pride.
- Ensuring consistency in expectations and onboarding.

Tactic 4.1: System Integrated Marketing Plan

Tactic Lead:

Nathan Hardin (Executive Director of Communications)

Description and Need:

This tactic modernizes and unifies statewide marketing and enrollment efforts, ensuring that all 58 colleges have access to high-quality branding, targeted communications, and advanced CRM tools. This supports consistent outreach to prospective students, enhances employer engagement, and addresses enrollment declines by leveraging centralized data, statewide campaigns, and workforce-aligned messaging. It positions the System Office to drive measurable increases in student recruitment, retention, and completion.

Key Accomplishments in the Last Year:

- Launched a modern, statewide Marketing & Communications Plan.
- Created and rolled out new branding for *NCEdge*, *Boost*, and *Access to Achievement*.
- Launched a new CRM platform at 10 pilot colleges (six in Western NC) for targeted outreach and lead tracking.
- Conducted a pilot workforce needs assessment to guide local programming.
- Began rebranding efforts for College and Career Readiness and the Small Business Center Network.

Next Steps:

- By Fall 2025, the System Office will establish a centralized CRM analytics dashboard for pilot cohorts, enabling better trend recognition and systemic support for colleges.
- By Spring 2026, the System Office will expand CRM pilot implementation to additional colleges in Western North Carolina.
- By Spring 2026, the System Office will launch targeted advertising campaigns in cohort service areas, guided by workforce sector data.
- By Summer 2026, the System Office will complete brand rollouts for College and Career Readiness and the Small Business Center Network.

Anticipated Impacts:

- Increasing prospective student engagement through CRM-driven communications at pilot colleges (tracking click-throughs, form completions, and application starts).
- Realizing growth in enrollment inquiries and applications from targeted marketing campaigns.
- Achieving statewide brand recognition and messaging consistency across all 58 colleges.
- Improving enrollment conversion rates due to data-informed outreach.
- Promoting stronger alignment between marketing efforts and high-demand workforce programs, leading to more credential completions in priority sectors.

Tactic 4.2: Strategic Enrollment Management

Tactic Leads:

Dr. Torry L. Reynolds (Associate Vice President of Student Services) and Dr. Monty Hickman (Executive Director for Strategic Enrollment Management)

Description and Need:

Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) is a comprehensive approach that connects recruitment, retention, and student success. By coordinating efforts across departments and using data to guide decisions, SEM ensures the right students are in the right programs with the right support to reach graduation. This approach strengthens institutional stability, enhances the student experience, and positions colleges for long-term success.

Key Accomplishments in the Last Year:

- Established the Financial Aid Communication Task Force to strengthen compliance, improve operational efficiency, and enhance student communication. The Task Force is working to:
 - Develop standardized messaging and outreach strategies to ensure students receive timely, accurate financial aid information.
 - Improve cross-departmental collaboration, resulting in a more seamless and supportive financial aid experience.
 - Strengthen enrollment and retention by reducing financial aid barriers and increasing students' access to critical resources.
- Hosted targeted training sessions examining how policy, practice, and personnel influence SEM outcomes and provided campus leaders with professional development focused on data-driven strategies to enhance recruitment, retention, and completion.
- Fostered collaboration between college admissions, financial aid, and academic advising professionals to strengthen the student pipeline.
- Conducted a comprehensive review of the admissions application process across the system via the Admissions Task Force, with the goal of reducing application complexity and making it easier for prospective students to apply and enroll.
- Launched [NC College Connect](#), a collaborative initiative in partnership with the NC Department of Public Instruction and selected NC Independent Colleges and Universities and UNC System schools to create a more seamless admissions process for eligible high school students. Participating students can transition into community college programs more efficiently through pre-verified admissions pathways. The initiative will also increase students' awareness of North Carolina's community colleges by integrating outreach into existing high school and university advising systems and strengthen the system's role in statewide college access efforts by connecting more students to local and regional educational opportunities.

Next Steps:

- By Fall 2025, convene the Financial Aid Communication Committee to design and implement a statewide financial aid communication strategy to ensure consistent messaging and outreach timelines.

- By Fall 2025, develop a SEM Data Dashboard to support colleges in using data to identify at-risk student groups and deploy targeted interventions.
- By Spring 2026, launch a systemwide review of admissions, advising, and financial aid policies to ensure alignment with SEM best practices and provide training for college teams on integrating policy changes into day-to-day operations.
- By Fall 2025, explore the use of AI-driven application support tools to assist students in completing their applications faster and more accurately.
- By Fall 2025, provide CRM consultants to assist colleges in implementing and operationalizing CRM platforms.

Anticipated Impacts:

- Strengthening the compliance of financial aid offices with federal and state regulations.
- Reducing barriers for prospective and current students via simplified application and financial aid communication processes.
- Centering students in the system's approach by aligning operations with the needs of today's learners.

Tactic 4.3: Near-Time Reporting Tools

Tactic Lead:

Elizabeth Stoddard (Director of Analytics and Reporting)

Description and Need:

This tactic is intended to expand existing near-time reporting capabilities and facilitate the colleges' reporting transition to Ellucian Insights, ensuring that colleges and System Office stakeholders have access to more near-time data about enrollment and FTE. Additionally, this work provides colleges with the tools required to be successful with their reporting needs as they prepare for a potential transition to Ellucian Insights.

Key Accomplishments in the Last Year:

- Developed and released Estimated FTE and Enrollment dashboard in the NCCCS Power BI Portal.
- Helped facilitate the ERP Modernization Reporting Workstream, which is intended to lead colleges through the reporting transition to Ellucian Insights. As part of this workstream, the system:
 - Developed an NCCCS Ellucian Insights User Group, composed of 140+ college and System Office stakeholders.
 - Developed a reporting inventory consisting of 300+ frequently used reports from Colleague/Informer.
 - Facilitated technical training for college and System Office Insights users.

Next Steps:

- Throughout 2025-2026, continue to build out interactive dashboards utilizing near-time data displaying student progress and success.
- Throughout 2025-2026, continue to work with System Office stakeholders and Ellucian developers to recreate Colleague/Informer reports in the Ellucian Insights environment.

Anticipated Impacts:

- Equipping college and System Office stakeholders with timely data via a dashboard that shows daily changes to estimated enrollment and FTE. Users can benchmark the data against prior terms and against other colleges in the system. This will be especially beneficial to college enrollment management efforts.
- Facilitating colleges' transition to Ellucian Insights reporting by pre-building several required reports in their new reporting environment. Additionally, the colleges in Cohort 0 have already received training on how to work in the new reporting environment, which will ease their transition when they move.

Tactic 5.1: Grant Writing and Funding

Tactic Lead:

Dr. Chanell Butler (Director of Grants)

Description and Need:

Financial investment is essential to advancing the mission of the NC Community College System. Across the system, colleges are designing and implementing many innovative projects and initiatives that demonstrate exceptional value and impact. Many of these efforts require additional grant funding to reach their full potential and to continue delivering meaningful benefits to students, employees, and the communities we serve.

Key Accomplishments in the Last Year:

- Hired an inaugural Director of Grants, Dr. Chanell Butler.
- Initiated a systemwide analysis in collaboration with David King (Internal Auditor) and Alex Doles (Strategic Analyst), with a focus on reviewing internal processes to ensure that each aspect of the grant application pipeline is aligned, streamlined, current, and accurate.
- Developed an updated “Grant Management Policies and Procedures” manual and the centralized grant tracking system referenced below as a next step.
- In August 2025, the system was awarded a \$1 million grant from the Golden LEAF Foundation for the first Strategic Projects Advancing Rural Communities (SPARC) Initiative project. SPARC funds are designed to support bold, collaborative efforts that address critical needs and create transformative opportunities in rural North Carolina.

Next Steps:

- By Spring 2026, launch the new centralized grant-tracking system, which will be leveraged to expand funding streams and enhance grant-related communication and collaboration across the system.
- By Spring 2026, develop a proposal in partnership with John Loyack, Vice President of Economic Development, for the Economic Development Administration (EDA) Disaster Supplemental Grant Program. This funding request is anticipated to range between \$20 million and \$50 million and will involve close collaboration with several colleges in the western region to identify specific programmatic needs that will inform and strengthen the request.
- By Fall 2026, submit a minimum of \$15 million in new grant requests, with an estimated minimum success rate of 50% for proposals actively considered.

Anticipated Impacts:

- An influx of significant new funding for the system – a minimum of \$7.5 million.

Tactic 5.2: ApprenticeshipNC Expansion

Tactic Lead:

Dr. Chris Harrington (Director of ApprenticeshipNC)

Description and Need:

Registered Apprenticeship programs play a vital role in the economy, supporting career advancement and fostering a skilled workforce. Expanding the use of Pre-Apprenticeships and Registered Apprenticeships statewide will improve labor force participation and reduce the skills gap to meet employer needs in North Carolina.

Key Accomplishments in the Last Year:

- Communicated funding risk along with funding proposal with clear return on investment.
- Launched an updated ApprenticeshipNC website.
- Realigned team to better match workforce in regions.
- Completed all SOPs, policies, and guides related to Registered Apprenticeship, which are now available on the ApprenticeshipNC website.
- Developed and launched a county-specific ecosystem support page on the website to collect information about initiatives underway. A best practices white paper will be published in Q1 of FY 2026.
- Developed and launched a public-facing dashboard.

Next Steps:

- By Fall 2025, prepare and share scenario plans related to funding obstacles and strategies to achieve similar program and participant registration as in the previous year.

Anticipated Impacts:

- Funding gaps will significantly impact ApprenticeshipNC, with staffing reductions limiting capacity to register new apprentices, support existing sponsors, and manage employer partnerships across the state.
- Reduced staffing and resources would also impact the number of new apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs that can be created, slowing momentum in key industries like healthcare, information technology, early childhood education, and the skilled trades.
- Because apprenticeships are a proven way to prepare workers for high-demand jobs, funding cuts would shrink the state's talent pipeline and ultimately reduce North Carolina's ability to respond to industry needs, potentially undermining the state's economic competitiveness.

Tactic 5.3: Artificial Intelligence in North Carolina (AI.iNC)

Tactic Leads:

Dr. Andrea Crowley (Executive Director of the NC Student Success Center) and Dr. Lane Freeman (Director of Online Learning)

Description and Need:

Generative AI is reshaping every industry, and colleges are looking for clear guidance, training, and exemplary practices related to cultivating an AI-literate workforce. To meet this moment, institutions must balance innovation with responsibility, ensuring AI adoption enhances teaching, learning, and workforce readiness.

Key Accomplishments in the Last Year:

- Drafted an AI Guidance Handbook and circulated it to select colleges for review and feedback.
- Hosted the inaugural two-day “AI in the CTE Classroom” Conference as a pilot for future statewide events and scheduled two fall 2025 Technology Disruption & Workforce Readiness Conferences to serve the state geographically and convene education, workforce, and industry partners.
- Embedded dedicated AI learning modules within the 2025 Master Instructor Program (NC3MI) to prepare faculty in multiple disciplines to integrate AI into teaching and learning.
- Began ecosystem alignment work with the NC Department of Information Technology, NC Department of Commerce, NC Department of Public Instruction, and NC State University to design a statewide AI skilling strategy.
- Designed a Durable Skills Crosswalk connecting NC’s Portrait of a Graduate competencies to AI-era workforce readiness expectations.
- Created the AI.iNC Task Force in partnership with the NC Association of Community College Presidents to guide disruption strategies and education delivery innovation.

Next Steps:

- By September 2025, create and send an AI Strategies FA25 newsletter for continuous learning and resource connections.
- By October 2025, publish and offer professional development for the AI Guidance Handbook to all 58 community colleges.
- By October 2025, deploy the AI Innovators in Residence program to assist with agent-based AI implementation.
- By November 2025, convene the Statewide AI Task Force to guide disruption strategies, ethical frameworks, and implementation support.
- By January 2026, expand AI learning modules into additional professional development offerings, including sector-specific applications.
- By February 2026 (tentative), maintain the OER Collection on AI strategies.
- By March 2026, grow the AI Community of Practice to support colleges with implementation, peer mentoring, and best-practice sharing.
- By March 2026, roll out new faculty and instructional innovation initiatives.

- By March 2026, facilitate AI-Resistant Assignment Design workshops, including hands-on labs for creating instructional AI chatbots.

Anticipated Impacts:

- Providing all 58 community colleges with a common AI policy and implementation framework, ensuring consistency and clarity across the system and that all students have consistent and comprehensive access to AI upskilling.
- Equipping hundreds of faculty through conferences, NC3MI, professional development programs, third party credentialing partners, and the Innovators in Residence program with the skills to integrate AI tools and strategies into instruction and student support.
- Ensuring students graduate with both durable skills (aligned to the Portrait of a Graduate) and technical AI fluency, improving career readiness and adaptability.
- Positioning North Carolina as a national leader in AI-enabled education, building workforce competitiveness, fostering innovation, and supporting lifelong learning.
- Strengthening partnerships between education, industry, and government agencies to align policy, investment, and curriculum with future workforce needs.

Tactic 5.4: Rural Colleges Support

Tactic Lead:

Dr. Zach Barricklow (Interim Vice President of Strategic Initiatives, Associate Vice President for Strategy and Rural Innovation)

Description and Need:

This tactic directly supports the long-term success and sustainability of rural colleges, which often face unique challenges. The NC Community College System is made up of the largest network of rural-serving colleges in the nation, corresponding with North Carolina having the second largest rural population in the country. This equates to around 50 of the 58 colleges considered rural-serving institutions – with a broad range of sizes, geographies, economies, and demographics. More than 80% of these rural colleges have strategic plans expiring in the next few years. By focusing on providing strategic planning support to rural colleges and documenting promising practices, this work helps rural-serving institutions set goals and strategies that align local needs with promising practices and system-level objectives, fostering both economic mobility and regional collaboration statewide.

Key Accomplishments in the Last Year:

- Provided strategic planning services to eight rural colleges, including five that received comprehensive, year-long strategic planning support. Activities included six strategic planning retreats, more than 60 planning sessions, 85 stakeholder focus groups, and five stakeholder surveys, conducted in collaboration with the Belk Center for Community College Leadership and Research.
- Engaged 45+ rural-serving presidents for input on challenges and promising practices of rural colleges and developed a set of aligned recommendations for System Office priorities and support.
- Developed seven college strategic plans and one Board of Trustee plan, in addition to 17 reports and presentations on rural college issues.
- Synthesized 100+ rural partnerships in healthcare and advanced manufacturing and offered related recommendations for System Office priorities.

Next Steps:

- By Fall 2026, scale strategic planning support through 1) a strategic planning toolkit for all 58 community colleges (including templates, planning guides, and best practices that colleges can use independently) and 2) launch of a strategic planning academy in collaboration with the Belk Center to build local and regional capacity for strategic planning across the state.

Anticipated Impacts:

- Strengthening student outcomes, supporting economic development, and enhancing institutional sustainability at scale across North Carolina's 78 rural counties.

STATE BOARD OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES
2022-26 Strategic Plan Tactic-to-State Board Committee Alignment

Background:

In anticipation of aligning future strategic plan tactics with State Board Committees, the following is a crosswalk of past and current tactics aligned with current State Board Committees, for discussion and analysis.

Tactic-Committee Alignment

Tactic	Year	Tactic Lead(s)	State Board Committee
Increase Staff and Faculty Salaries	23-24	Alex Fagg	Finance
Build HR Capacity for Recruitment and Retention	23-24	Tawanda Artis	Personnel
Strategic Enrollment Management	23-24	Dr. Monty Hickman	Programs
Expand Career Coaches	23-24	Dr. Jennifer McLean	Programs
Inclusive Excellence	23-24	Dr. John "JJ" Evans	Programs
Excellence in Teaching and Learning	23-24	Dr. Andrea Crowley	Programs
Holistic Student Needs	23-24	Dr. James "JW" Kelley	Programs
Apprenticeships	23-24	John Loyack	Programs
Funding Tiers	23-24	Dr. Philip Price, Dr. Brian Merritt	Finance/ Programs
Statewide Marketing Strategy	23-24	Nathan Hardin	Planning/ Transformation
Combined Course Library (CCL) Transition	24-25	Dr. Lisa Eads, Sonya Atkinson Bartley	Programs/ Transformation
Customized Training Transition	24-25	Betty Silver, Anita Gonsiorowski	Transformation
Data Warehouse Transition	24-25	Michelle Blake, Travis Nobles	Transformation
CBAS Modernization and NCFS Workflows	24-25	Stephanie Fisher/Ann Anderson	Transformation
Propel NC Policies and Procedures	24-25	Dr. Bill Schneider, Alex Fagg, Dr. Brian Merritt, Dr. Phillip Price	Finance
Labor Market Insights & Outcomes Data Insights and Tools	24-25	Dr. Bill Schneider, Elizabeth Stoddard	Planning/ Transformation
Program Approvals/ Terminations	24-25	Dr. Lisa Eads	Programs

(REVISED 09/12/2025)

Attachment PLAN 02B

System Office Policy Review and Updates	24-25	Dr. Kim Gold, Jonnell Carpenter	Policy and Governance
Human Resources Policy and Procedures	24-25	Dr. Kim Gold, Kelli Reale	Personnel
Culture of Excellence & Customer Learning	24-25	Kelli Reale	Planning/ Transformation/ Personnel
System Integrated Marketing Plan	24-25	Nathan Hardin	Planning/ Transformation
Strategic Enrollment Management	24-25	Dr. Monty Hickman	Programs
Near-Time Reporting Tools	24-25	Elizabeth Stoddard	Planning/ Transformation
Grant Writing and Funding	24-25	Dr. Chanell Butler	Planning/ Finance
Apprenticeship Expansion	24-25	Dr. Chris Harrington	Programs
Artificial Intelligence in North Carolina (AI.iNC)/Future of Work	24-25	Dr. Andrea Crowley	Planning/ Transformation
Rural Colleges Support	24-25	Dr. Zach Barricklow	Planning

Contact(s):

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