**STATE BOARD OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES**
2026-29 NCCC System Strategic Plan
Strategic Goals

**Request:** Approve Strategic Goals for the 2026-29 NCCC System Strategic Plan.

**Background:**

Included in this document are high-level Strategic Goals for the 2026-29 System Strategic Plan, which completes Stage 1 of the strategic planning process. Stage 2 and 3 will elaborate details related to key performance indicators (KPIs) and Tactics for the Strategic Implementation Plan, but these stages will not occur until after the transition of the System President in 2026.

Stage 1 of strategic planning focused on engagement with co-owners of the North Carolina Community College System – representatives of the entities that share direct accountability for defining, implementing, and achieving the goals of the strategic plan. This included the State Board of Community Colleges (SBCC), System Office senior team members, community college presidents, NC Association of Community College Presidents (NCACCP), NC Association of Community College Trustees (NCACCT), and the System Advisory Council, as well as input from the North Carolina Comprehensive Community College Student Government Association (N4CSGA) to develop high-level Strategic Goals for the 2026-29 System Strategic Plan.

Stage 1 employed a recursive process of input-gathering, drafting, feedback-gathering, and revisions to ensure the proposed goals are reflective of key perspectives of co-owners in the North Carolina Community College System. Below are key milestones in the process:

- In September, System Office senior team members provided input in a planning session
- In October, 46 of 58 presidents provided input via regional listening sessions
- In November, nine (9) of 22 SBCC members provided input via survey
- In December, the System Office senior team members feedback on draft goals
- In December, the System Advisory Council provided feedback on draft goals
- In December, the NCACCP and three (3) presidents provided feedback on draft goals
- In December, the NCACCT executive board provided feedback on draft goals
- In January, the N4CSGA provided feedback on draft goals

**Rationale:**

The 2026-29 Strategic Plan will establish the system's direction at the highest level. The plan will have three conceptual layers:

- **Strategic Goals** are broad, long-term aspirations that reflect the System's mission and vision. Goals are relevant and enduring for the life of the plan and provide overall direction without prescribing specific actions.
- **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** will make these Goals measurable. KPIs will be finalized after the new System President is in place in 2026.

- **Tactics** will make these Goals and KPIs actionable. They will be drafted after the new System President is in place in 2026 and will delineate what is owned by the System Office, what is owned by colleges, or what is co-owned. They will be refreshed every 12–18 months of the plan to remain flexible to evolving circumstances.

| Goal 1 | Goal 2 | Goal 3 |
|---|---|---|
| KPIs — Tactics | KPIs — Tactics | KPIs — Tactics |

The recommended Strategic Goals below reflect the System's commitment to serving a broad spectrum of learners—including dually enrolled high school students, recent graduates, university transfer students, adult learners, individuals pursuing degrees or short-term workforce credentials, English language learners, learners building foundational skills, small business owners, and incumbent workers—across all regions of North Carolina. Achieving these goals depends on a coordinated approach in which the System Office strengthens statewide conditions for success while colleges provide locally tailored support that meets the needs of their students, employers, and communities.

**Recommendation:**

**NEW Strategic Goals for 2026-29 System Strategic Plan:**

**The North Carolina Community College System will:**

1. **Build the Best Workforce in the World**

   **Position North Carolina as the premier state for talent by expanding workforce readiness, increasing educational access and attainment for all student types, and growing the number of residents prepared for high-demand jobs across all regions of the state.**

2. **Align our Employers, Students, and Colleges to Future-Ready our State's Economy**

   **Strengthen alignment between the System Office, colleges, employers, state agencies, universities, K12 schools, regional partners, and our students to create seamless pathways to credential and skill attainment and ensure programs meet current and future workforce demands in every community.**

3. **Transform our System to Empower our Colleges and Students for Continuous Success**

   **Transform the North Carolina Community College System by improving statewide coordination and modernizing the tools, policies, and infrastructure that strengthen all 58 colleges to deliver excellent experiences and outcomes for students and employers.**

**Additional Detail and Descriptions:**

**Strategic Goal 1: Build the Best Workforce in the World**

*Goal Statement:* Position North Carolina as the premier state for talent by expanding workforce readiness, increasing educational access and attainment for all student types, and growing the number of residents prepared for high-demand jobs across all regions of the state.

- *KPIs\**: KPIs will be developed in 2026 that measure progress related to improvements in access, enrollment, persistence, completion, and employment outcomes across student types and geographic locations.
- *Tactics\**: Tactics will be developed in 2026 to scale evidence-based practices that improve advising, onboarding, financial stability, and pathway transitions, and will expand routes into high-demand careers that accelerate workforce readiness and access to good-paying jobs.

  *\*Note: KPIs and Tactics will not be finalized until the new System President is in place in 2026.*

**Strategic Goal 2: Align our Employers, Students, and Colleges to Future-Ready our State's Economy**

*Goal Statement*: Strengthen alignment between the System Office, colleges, employers, state agencies, universities, K12 schools, regional partners, and our students to create seamless pathways to credential and skill attainment and ensure programs meet current and future workforce demands in every community.

- *KPIs\**: KPIs will be developed in 2026 that measure progress related to the relevance and labor-market value of programs to employers, the seamlessness of credential pathways, and the System Office's ability to support colleges in adapting programs locally while providing statewide frameworks, labor-market intelligence, and cross-agency alignment (e.g., NCCCS-to-UNC transfer pathways, Workforce Pell strategies). KPIs will reflect the System's role in supporting statewide and regional economic development, including ApprenticeshipNC, NCEdge Customized Training, Access to Achievement, etc.
- *Tactics\**: Tactics will be developed in 2026 to strengthen policy alignment and the continuous improvement of coherent, high-quality programs that respond to regional economic needs, industry and technological trends, and state economic priorities. These tactics will ensure pathways—from high school through postsecondary credentials and into the workforce—lead to good-paying jobs and economic mobility, and will help colleges strengthen local and regional employer partnerships.

  *\*Note: KPIs and Tactics will not be finalized until the new System President is in place in 2026.*

**Strategic Goal 3: Transform our System to Empower our Colleges and Students for Continuous Success**

*Goal Statement*: Transform the North Carolina Community College System by improving statewide coordination and modernizing the tools, policies, and infrastructure that strengthen all 58 colleges to deliver excellent experiences and outcomes for students and employers.

- *KPIs\**: KPIs will be developed in 2026 that measure progress related to greater systemwide coherence and coordination, clearer and more consistent statewide processes, adoption and effective use of modernized technology and data systems, reductions in administrative burden, and evidence that colleges have the support, capacity, and infrastructure they need to deliver excellent experiences for learners, employers, and college employees.
- *Tactics\**: Tactics will be developed in 2026 to strengthen the collective effectiveness of the State Board, System Office, college presidents, trustees, and college employees by clarifying roles and strategically integrating people, processes, and technology to create a future-ready community college system that thrives on innovation, trust, collaboration, and continuous improvement. This work includes streamlining processes; modernizing technology systems; enhancing efficiency, transparency, and consistency in statewide support; reducing burdens on colleges; and preserving each college's unique local identity and engagement so they remain responsive to their students, employers, and communities.

    \*Note: KPIs and Tactics will not be finalized until the new System President is in place in 2026.

**Guiding Principles for 2026-29 System Strategic Plan:**

Guiding Principles: The System Strategic Plan will be anchored by a concise set of guiding principles that articulate shared values and decision-making standards for Strategic Goals, KPIs, and Tactics.

- *Student-Centered*: Every decision is measured by how it improves the student journey from K–12 through career. Students are treated as valued customers.

- *Workforce-Aligned*: Programs, credentials, and short-term training are directly tied to high-demand, high-wage jobs in North Carolina's economy (aligned with Propel NC).

- *Technology-Enabled*: ERP, CRM, LMS, CBAS, workforce platforms, and shared data systems improve access, efficiency, and outcomes across all 58 colleges.

- *Locally Strong, System Stronger*: Preserves local flexibility while maximizing the benefits of shared resources, investments, and statewide innovation.

- *Proactive & Predictive*: Uses real-time data to identify trends, address challenges, and seize opportunities.

- *Access without Barriers*: Ensure every student, regardless of zip code, background, or college, has access to the same opportunities and support.

## How North Carolina Will Assess Whether It Is the Premier State for Talent:

North Carolina's aspiration to be the premier state for talent is grounded in national standards of educational quality, workforce competitiveness, and economic mobility. To assess progress, the System Office will monitor external indicators comparing the state's talent ecosystem—its students, programs, institutions, and workforce pipeline—to leading states nationwide. Below are *potential* sources and indicators that complement the System's KPIs by adding national context and independent validation of educational and workforce excellence.

**External Validation Framework**

| Validation Method | What It Measures | Why It Matters | Target |
|---|---|---|---|
| CNBC 'Top States for Business' – Workforce Ranking | Workforce readiness, worker availability, skill levels, education pipeline | Used by employers selecting expansion or relocation sites | Rank #1 nationally in Workforce Ranking |
| Strada Opportunity Index and Mobility Metrics | Economic mobility, education-to-career connections, regional opportunity | Measures how effectively education accelerates economic advancement | Rank as #1 state in upward mobility for community college learners |
| Educational Attainment Benchmarks (Lumina, myFutureNC) | Share of residents with degrees and credentials of value | Direct measure of statewide talent competitiveness and workforce readiness | Meet or exceed the 2030 attainment goal ahead of schedule and outpace peer states in credential attainment growth |
| Aspen Institute Excellence Benchmarks | Community college performance on completion, earnings, learning outcomes, and equitable access | National gold standard for college quality and workforce outcomes | More colleges recognized in Aspen's Top 200—and ultimately more finalists and winners—than any state of similar size |
| Labor-Market Leadership | Job growth in high-demand sectors, | Captures whether talent supply meets | Lead the Southeast in job placement into |

| Indicators (Lightcast, Burning Glass, Chambers, Brookings) | employer satisfaction, alignment between training and job openings | employer demand across regions | high-demand, good-paying occupations tied to NCCCS programs |
|---|---|---|---|
| Council for Workforce & Apprenticeship Indicators | Participation in apprenticeships, internships, on-the-job training, customized training, and other earn-and-learn models | Demonstrates how effectively the System prepares talent pipelines aligned with economic development priorities | Lead the Southeast in apprenticeship and work-based learning participation and growth |

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