

STATE BOARD OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Report Summary – NC Career Coach Program Annual Report (FY 2025–2026)

Request: For Action

Strategic Plan Reference: Goal 2 – Student Success; Goal 4 – Economic and Workforce Development

Background: Established by G.S. 115D-21.5, the NC Career Coach Program places community college-employed Career Coaches in high schools to help students identify career goals and connect them with educational pathways. Funds are awarded through an application process considering workforce needs, economic activity, and geographic diversity.

FY 2025–2026 Program Activity:

- 94 Career Coaches deployed across 49 community colleges
- Serving 70 Local Education Agencies (LEAs)
- 32,564 students served
- 34,986 individual advising sessions
- 1,729 group sessions and 570 workforce engagement activities

NC Career Coach was recognized as a 2026-2027 myFutureNC Champion of Attainment, highlighting the program's significant contributions to increasing educational attainment and strengthening college and career pathways for North Carolina students. This recognition acknowledges the innovative partnership between community colleges and local school districts that places career coaches directly in high schools to help students explore careers, develop educational plans, connect academic programs to workforce opportunities, and successfully transition into postsecondary education. The award also reinforces the program's alignment with the statewide goal of ensuring that 2 million North Carolinians hold a high-quality credential or postsecondary degree by 2030.

Recommendations from the System Office to strengthen the program include: (1) Continued advocacy to expand the program to ensure at least one Career Coach per LEA (115 statewide); (2) Mitigate rural funding challenges through state or public-private support; (3) Improve data integration; and (4) Implement retention strategies: manageable caseloads, professional development, recognition, and competitive pay.

Statutory Requirement:

This report fulfills G.S. 115D-21.5(d) requirements and is annually submitted to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee.

Contact(s):

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NC Career Coach Program

Annual Report for the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee

Submitted by The State Board of Community Colleges

As Required by GS 115D-21.5(d)

September 1, 2026

North Carolina Career Coach Program

Summary – 2025-2026

Program Overview

The NC Career Coach Program, established in 2015 (G.S. 115D-21.5), places community college-employed Career Coaches in high schools to help students identify career goals and align them with educational pathways. Since inception, funding has grown from \$500,000 (2015) to \$6.4M+ (2026), with additional GEAR UP support. The GEAR UP grant collaboration ended June 30, 2026.

By the Numbers (2025–2026)

Category	Number
Career Coaches	94
Community Colleges	49
Local Education Agencies (LEAs)	70
Students Served	32,564
Individual Advising Sessions	34,986
Group Engagements	1,729
Workforce Engagement Activities	570

Barriers

- Funding Match Requirements: Rural/small colleges struggle with the required local match, particularly counties with a Tier 2 designation.
- Turnover & Workload: Coaches cover multiple schools + workforce partnerships, leading to burnout.
- Data Access: Limited access to Infinite Campus hinders outcome reporting.
- Need for expanded system personnel to support programmatic evaluation and activities.

Impact

The NC Career Coach Program is a proven model bridging education and workforce needs, helping thousands of students discover clear, attainable career pathways while supporting North Carolina's educational attainment and workforce readiness goals.

Strategic Recommendations

1. Expand Coach Capacity – One per LEA (45 new coaches needed).
2. Address Rural Funding Challenges – State-level/public-private support.
3. Strengthen Data Access – Streamline Infinite Campus integration.
4. Retention Strategy – Manageable caseloads, professional development, recognition, and competitive compensation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The North Carolina Community College System administers the Career Coach Program, which places community college Career Coaches in high schools to assist students with determining career goals and identifying educational pathways enabling students to achieve these goals. Since the Program's inception in 2015, the General Assembly has shown a commitment to the Program going from an initial \$500,000 appropriation to a total of \$6,400,000 in 2026 with an additional \$230,000 from a partnership with the University of North Carolina System Office Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP).

North Carolina General Statute 115D-21.5 establishes the NC Career Coach Program. The purpose of the Program is to place Career Coaches employed by community colleges in high schools to assist students with determining career goals and identifying community college programs that align with those goals. The Career Coach Program is a partnership between local boards of education and community colleges. Career Coach funds are awarded through an application process based on the following: 1) consideration of the workforce needs of business and industry in the region; 2) targeting resources to enhance ongoing economic activity within the community college service area and surrounding counties; and 3) geographic diversity of awards.

As of July 1, 2026, the North Carolina Career Coach Program consists of ninety-four (94) Career Coaches strategically placed across forty-nine (49) community colleges. During the 2025-2026 academic year, these coaches provided services to 32,564 students across seventy (70) Local Education Agencies (LEAs), conducting a total of 34,986 individual student engagements. Additionally, Career Coaches facilitated 1,729 group engagements and collaborated on 570 workforce engagement activities, further strengthening the connection between education and local workforce needs.

While the program has experienced significant growth and continues to demonstrate measurable success, persistent barriers hinder its ability to maximize impact. Challenges such as inconsistent access to Infinite Campus for efficient data collection remain ongoing. Moreover, staff turnover has emerged as a critical issue, largely due to the expansive range of responsibilities assigned to Career Coaches. These factors highlight the need for strategic programmatic adjustments, including expanding the number of Career Coaches, to ensure sustainable support structures and maintain high-quality service delivery across the state.

BARRIERS

The NC Career Coach program has received positive responses from both community colleges and employers. However, there are barriers to access for colleges and LEAs.

Match Requirement. Effective July 1, 2019, Senate Bill 61 (Section 3.3) adjusted the matching formula (G.S. 115D21.5(c)(2) b.) based on county tiers. While this was a tremendous show of support from the General Assembly, the dollar-for-dollar matching requirement is still a significant barrier from some colleges, especially small, rural colleges that have limited access to county funds or private funding sources.

Turnover. The program experienced staff turnover this year, primarily attributed to the demanding scope of responsibilities placed on Career Coaches who are assigned to multiple high schools while also managing workforce engagement initiatives. Balancing individualized student support across several campuses, alongside building and maintaining partnerships with local industry and workforce development boards, has led to increased workload and professional burnout.

This dual-focus role, while critical to student success and workforce alignment, underscores the need for a more sustainable staffing model. Expanding the number of Career Coaches would allow for more focused school presentations, deeper student engagement, and strengthened workforce collaborations. Addressing this structural capacity issue is essential to improve staff retention, maintain high levels of service quality, and fully realize the program's impact on student career readiness and regional workforce needs.

OUTCOMES

The North Carolina Career Coach Program continues to demonstrate meaningful impact in guiding high school students toward viable and informed career pathways. Despite operating with a limited cohort of ninety-four (94) Career Coaches statewide, the program's broad deployment across forty-nine (49) community colleges and seventy (70) Local Education Agencies (LEAs) reflects its strategic reach.

The program's dual focus on student pathway development and workforce alignment is evidenced by the increasing number of students enrolling in dual enrollment programs, career and technical education (CTE) pathways, and work-based learning opportunities. These outcomes highlight the critical role Career Coaches play in bridging the gap between secondary education, post-secondary credential attainment, and workforce readiness.

However, persistent challenges continue to affect program sustainability and scalability. Difficulties in meeting the required local funding match, especially among small and rural colleges, present significant barriers to program expansion. Furthermore, staff retention remains a pressing concern. The expansive scope of responsibilities—serving multiple high schools while simultaneously managing workforce engagement initiatives—places considerable demands on Career Coaches, contributing to turnover and limiting long-term relationship building within schools and communities. These challenges underscore the necessity of re-evaluating program capacity and support structures to ensure the continued success and growth of the Career Coach model across North Carolina.

NEXT STEPS & STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure the continued success and scalability of the North Carolina Career Coach Program, strategic investments and structural adjustments are essential. The current staffing model, though effective in demonstrating impact, is not sustainable given the expansive responsibilities placed on the existing ninety-four (94) Career Coaches. As the demand for individualized student engagement, career exploration, and workforce alignment continues to grow, so too must the program's capacity to deliver these services equitably across all regions of the state.

1. Increase Career Coach Capacity

Expanding the number of Career Coaches will allow for a more focused deployment model, reducing the number of high schools each coach serves and enabling deeper, more consistent student engagement. This increase in staffing will also enhance workforce partnerships by providing coaches with the bandwidth to cultivate and maintain meaningful employer relationships, which are critical for aligning educational pathways with regional workforce needs. Currently, our program serves 70 of the 115 LEAs in North Carolina. Increasing our capacity to have at least one coach in each LEA would widen the impact on underserved areas of our state.

2. Strengthen Data Access and Reporting

Reliable access to Infinite Campus remains a challenge, impeding efficient data collection and impact reporting. Collaborating with state education agencies to streamline access protocols and integrate data systems will enhance the program's ability to track student outcomes, measure return on investment, and inform continuous improvement efforts.

3. Develop a Career Coach Retention Strategy

High turnover rates among Career Coaches threaten the program's continuity and long-term success. A comprehensive retention strategy—including manageable caseloads, professional development opportunities, competitive compensation, and recognition initiatives—will be critical in fostering job satisfaction and maintaining a skilled, committed coaching workforce.

By addressing these strategic priorities, the North Carolina Career Coach Program can build on its current successes, ensuring sustained impact on student career readiness and strengthening the talent pipeline for North Carolina's workforce.

STATE FUNDING

State funds for Career Coaches are allocated utilizing the Department of Commerce economic county tier designation. The tier is determined by the location of the local school administrative unit the career coach serves. Tier 1 counties require no local match, Tier 2 counties require one dollar of local funds for every two dollars of state funds, and Tier 3 counties require one dollar of local funds for every dollar of state funds. State funds may be used for salary, benefits, support for the advising process, and all other expenses related to the employment of the career coach.

Year	Total Recurring Funding
2015-16	\$500,000
2016-17	\$1,000,000
2017-18	\$2,100,000
2018-19	\$2,800,000
2019-20	\$ 2,900,000
2020-21	\$ 3,500,000
2021-2022	\$ 5,600,000
2022-2023	\$ 5,600,000
2023-2024	\$ 5,655,000
2024-2025	\$ 5,655,000
2025-2026	\$ 6,400,000

PARTICIPANTS

2023-28 COHORT PARTICIPANTS

Effective July 1, 2023, the General Assembly appropriated \$ 5,655,000 to the NC Career Coach Program for FY 2023-24, FY 2024-25, FY 2025-26, FY 2026-27 and FY 2027-28.

TABLE 2.

2023-28 COHORT APPLICANTS	
COMMUNITY COLLEGE	LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY
Asheville-Buncombe Tech	Madison County Schools
Beaufort County	Hyde and Tyrell County Schools
Bladen	Bladen County Schools
Blue Ridge	Henderson County Public Schools & Transylvania County Schools
Brunswick	Brunswick County Public Schools
Caldwell	Caldwell County Schools
Cape Fear	New Hanover Schools
Carteret	Carteret County Public Schools
Central Carolina	Harnett County Schools & Lee County Schools
Central Piedmont	Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools
Cleveland	Cleveland County Schools
College of The Albemarle	Edenton-Chowan Public Schools and Elizabeth City-Pasquotank Public Schools
Craven	Craven County Schools
Davidson-Davie	Davie County Schools & Davidson County Schools
Durham	Orange County Schools
Edgecombe	Edgecombe County Public Schools and North East Carolina Prep
Fayetteville Tech	Cumberland County Public Schools
Forsyth	Winston-Salem-Forsyth County Schools
Gaston	Gaston County Schools & Lincoln County Schools
Halifax	Roanoke Rapids Graded School District
Haywood	Haywood County School System
Isothermal	Rutherford County Schools & Polk County Schools
James Sprunt	Duplin County Schools
Lenoir	Greene County Schools & Lenoir County Public Schools
Martin	Bertie County Schools & Martin County Schools

2023-28 COHORT APPLICANTS	
COMMUNITY COLLEGE	LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY
McDowell	McDowell County Schools
Mitchell	Iredell-Statesville Public Schools
Piedmont	Caswell County Schools & Person County Schools
Pitt	Pitt County Schools
Randolph	Randolph County School System
Richmond	Richmond County Schools & Scotland County Schools
Robeson	Public Schools of Robeson County
Rockingham	Rockingham County Public Schools
Rowan-Cabarrus	Kannapolis City Schools & Rowan-Salisbury Schools
Sampson	Clinton City Schools & Sampson County Schools
Sandhills	Hoke County Schools
South Piedmont	Anson County Schools & Union County Public Schools
Southeastern	Columbus County & Whiteville City Schools
Southwestern	Jackson County Schools & Swain County Schools
Tri-County	Cherokee County Schools & Graham County Schools
Wake Tech	Wake County Public Schools
Wayne	Wayne County Public Schools
Western Piedmont	Burke County Public Schools
Wilkes	Wilkes County Schools
Wilson	Wilson County Schools
45 Colleges	64 LEAs

2025-28 COHORT APPLICANTS	
COMMUNITY COLLEGE	LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY
Blue Ridge	Henderson County Public Schools
Guilford Tech	Guilford County Schools
Johnston	Johnston County Public Schools
Nash	Nash County Schools
Pitt	Pitt County Schools
Roanoke-Chowan	Hertford County Schools
Rockingham	Rockingham County Schools
South Piedmont	Anson County Schools
Wilkes	Wilkes County Schools
9 colleges	9 LEAs

The NC Career Coach Program's strength lies in its collaborative model, which brings together community colleges and local education agencies to provide students with individualized career exploration, academic planning, and connections to in-demand industries. Through this

coordinated effort, Career Coaches have become a vital resource in bridging the transition from high school to college and career, fostering stronger alignment between education and workforce needs, and supporting the state's broader goal of increasing educational attainment.

TOTAL STATEWIDE CAREER COACHES AS OF JULY 1, 2026

TABLE 5.

COLLEGE (REGION)	TOTAL # OF COACHES AS OF 7/1/26	FY 25-26 AWARD*	MATCHING FUND SOURCE
Asheville-Buncombe Tech (Western)	1	\$ 90,000	Madison County Schools Funds
Beaufort County (Eastern)	2	\$ 190,000	No match required (Tier 1)
Beaufort County Washington Co. (Eastern)	1	\$ 81,935 (GEAR UP)	No match required (Tier 1)
Bladen (Eastern)	2	\$ 161,730	No match required (Tier 1)
Blue Ridge (Western)	3	\$ 197,244	County Funds
Brunswick (Eastern)	2	\$ 77,260	College Institutional Funds
Caldwell (Western)	2	\$ 164,152	County Funds
Cape Fear (Eastern)	1	\$ 42,466	College Institutional Funds
Carteret (Eastern)	2	\$ 87,936	College Institutional Funds
Central Carolina (Central)	2	\$ 88,625	Institutional Funds
Central Piedmont (West)	1	\$ 39,582	Sugar Creek Charter School & College Foundation Funds
Cleveland (Western)	2	\$ 150,372	No match required (Tier 1)
College of The Albemarle (Eastern)	2	\$ 168,944	No match required (Tier 1)
College of The Albemarle (Eastern)	1	\$ 81,935 (GEAR UP)	No match required (Tier 1)
Craven (Eastern)	1	\$ 46,580	College Institutional Funds

COLLEGE (REGION)	TOTAL # OF COACHES AS OF 7/1/26	FY 25-26 AWARD*	MATCHING FUND SOURCE
Davidson-Davie Co. (Western)	3	\$ 126,000	County Funds
Durham (Central)	1	\$ 45,545	Local Funds
Edgecombe (Eastern)	2	\$ 180,160	College Institutional Funds
Fayetteville Technical (Central)	2	\$ 139,812	No match required (Tier 1)
Forsyth (Central)	2	\$ 111,914	College Foundation Funds
Gaston (Western)	2	\$ 148,163	Gaston County & Lincoln County Schools
Guilford Tech (Central)	1	\$ 54,079	College Institutional Funds
Halifax (Eastern)	1	\$ 92,596	College Institutional Funds
Haywood (Western)	2	\$ 114,001	College Foundation Funds
Isothermal (Western)	2	\$ 139,670	College Institutional Funds
James Sprunt (Eastern)	2	\$ 160,452	No match required (Tier 1)
Johnston (Central)	1	\$ 39,075	County Funds
Lenoir (Eastern)	2.5	\$ 168,309	No match required (Tier 1)
Martin (Eastern)	2	\$ 163,546	No match required (Tier 1)
McDowell (Western)	2	\$ 115,000	County Funds
Mitchell (Western)	1	\$ 39,765	College Institutional Funds
Nash (Eastern)	1	\$ 78,758	No match required (Tier 1)
Piedmont (Central)	2	\$ 162,000	County funds
Pitt	3	\$ 155,535	College Institutional Funds

COLLEGE (REGION)	TOTAL # OF COACHES AS OF 7/1/26	FY 25-26 AWARD*	MATCHING FUND SOURCE
(Eastern)			
Randolph (Central)	3.5	\$ 176,000	College Institutional Funds
Richmond (Central)	2	\$ 157,584	No match required (Tier 1)
Roanoke-Chowan (Eastern)	1	\$ 78,500	No match required (Tier 1)
Robeson (Central)	2	\$ 188,854	No match required (Tier 1)
Rockingham (Central)	3	\$ 265,000	College Institutional Funds
Rowan-Cabarrus (Western)	2	\$ 182,458	College Institutional Funds
Sampson (Eastern)	3.5	\$ 172,230	No match required (Tier 1)
Sandhills (Central)	1	\$ 80,920	No match required (Tier 1)
South Piedmont (Central)	3	\$ 233,582	College Institutional Funds
South Piedmont (Central)	1	\$ 81,935 (GEAR UP)	College Institutional Funds
Southeastern (Eastern)	2	\$ 190,000	No match required (Tier 1)
Southwestern (Western)	1	\$ 71,057	No match required (Tier 1)
Southwestern (Western)	1	\$ 81,935 (GEAR UP)	College Institutional Funds
Tri-County (Western)	2	\$ 123,554	No match required (Tier 1)
Wake Technical (Central)	2	\$ 86,298	College Foundation Funds
Wayne (Eastern)	1	\$ 93,000	No match required (Tier 1)
Western Piedmont (Western)	3	\$ 149,058	No match required (Tier 1)
Wilkes (Western)	3.5	\$ 285,000	No match required (Tier 1)
Wilson (Eastern)	1	\$ 88,472	No match required (Tier 1)

* Award amounts indicate the funding level at the time SBCC approved the award.
(See Appendix 1 for grouping by region.)

IMPACT DATA FOR 2025-2026

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Student engagement is a one-on-one session with a Career Coach discussing the student's career interests, identifying opportunities for deeper exploration and immersion, and developing a guided pathway towards appropriate course selection related to the student's career interest. In addition to student engagement, Career Coaches may also hold groups sessions and activities.

Beyond individual and group sessions, Career Coaches actively collaborate with high school counselors, teachers, and community college staff to create seamless connections between secondary and postsecondary education. These partnerships ensure that students have access to timely advising, work-based learning opportunities, and dual enrollment options that align with their career goals. As a result, students are better prepared to make informed decisions about their academic and career pathways, leading to increased enrollment in career-aligned programs.

TABLE 6.

COLLEGE (REGION)	NO. OF COACHES	INDIVIDUAL COACHING SESSIONS	GROUP COACHING SESSIONS*	HIGH SCHOOL
Asheville-Buncombe Tech (Western)	1	98	4	Madison HS & Madison Early College
Beaufort County (Eastern)	3	835	83	Columbia HS, Hyde Academy, Mattamuskeet HS, Washington County HS, Washington County Early College
Bladen (Eastern)	2	266	86	Bladen Early College, East Bladen HS & West Bladen HS
Blue Ridge (Western)	3	424	45	Brevard HS, Davidson River HS, East Henderson HS, Hendersonville HS, North Henderson HS, Rosman HS & West Henderson
Brunswick (Eastern)	2	636	36	North Brunswick HS, South Brunswick HS, West Brunswick HS, & Center for Applied Sciences and Technology
Caldwell (Western)	2	326	25	Caldwell Applied Sciences Academy & West Caldwell HS

COLLEGE (REGION)	NO. OF COACHES	INDIVIDUAL COACHING SESSIONS	GROUP COACHING SESSIONS*	HIGH SCHOOL
Cape Fear (Eastern)	1	473	31	Ashley HS & New Hanover HS
Carteret (Eastern)	2	525	20	Croatan HS, East Carteret HS & West Carteret HS
Central Carolina (Central)	2	598	13	Triton HS & Lee County HS
Central Piedmont (Central)	1	260	26	Sugar Creek Charter School
Cleveland (Western)	2	411	0	Cleveland Innovation, Crest HS, Kings Mountain HS & Shelby HS
College of The Albemarle (Eastern)	3	1001	54	John A. Holmes HS, Northeastern HS & Pasquotank County HS
Craven (Eastern)	1	200	62	New Bern HS
Davidson-Davie (Western)	3	555	76	Davie County HS, Ledford HS, Lexington City HS & Thomasville City HS
Durham Tech (Central)	1	228	8	Cedar Ridge HS, Orange HS & Partnership Academy
Edgecombe (Eastern)	2	7173	73	North Edgecombe HS, Southwest Edgecombe HS, Edgecombe Early College, Northeast Carolina Prep School, Tarboro HS & Edge Academy of Health Sciences
Fayetteville Technical (Central)	2	345	5	Douglas Byrd HS, E.E. Smith HS, Seventy-First HS & Westover HS
Forsyth (Central)	2	116	32	Carver HS, North Forsyth HS, Parkland Magnet HS & Winston Salem Preparatory Academy
Gaston (Western)	2	1734	50	Bessemer City HS, Hunter Huss HS, Lincolnton HS, North Gaston HS & West Lincoln HS
Guilford Tech (Central)	1	**	**	West Guilford HS
Halifax	1	69	13	Roanoke Rapids HS

COLLEGE (REGION)	NO. OF COACHES	INDIVIDUAL COACHING SESSIONS	GROUP COACHING SESSIONS*	HIGH SCHOOL
(Eastern)				
Haywood (Western)	2	737	41	Pisgah HS & Tuscola HS
Isothermal (Western)	2	423	18	Chase HS, East Rutherford HS, Polk HS & R-S Central HS
James Sprunt (Eastern)	2	607	17	East Duplin HS, North Duplin HS, James Kenan HS & Wallace-Rose Hill HS
Johnston (Central)	1	**	**	North Johnston HS, Princeton Middle/HS, Smithfield Selma HS & South Johnston HS
Lenoir (Eastern)	2.5	802	116	Greene Central HS, Kinston HS, North Lenoir HS & South Lenoir HS
Martin (Eastern)	2	455	15	Bertie HS & Martin County HS
McDowell (Western)	2	2162	69	McDowell HS
Mitchell (Western)	1	279	34	Statesville HS & West Iredell HS
Nash (Eastern)	1	**	**	Nash Central HS & Rocky Mount HS
Piedmont (Central)	2	284	47	Barlett-Yancey HS & Person HS
Pitt (Eastern)	3	41	37	Farmville Central HS, J.H. Rose HS, North Pitt HS & South Central HS
Randolph (Central)	3.5	715	31	Asheboro HS, Eastern Randolph HS, Providence Grove HS, Randleman HS, Southwestern Randolph HS, Trinity HS, Uwharrie Ridge & Wheatmore HS
Richmond (Central)	2	716	34	Richmond Senior HS & Scotland HS
Roanoke-Chowan (Eastern)	1	**	**	Hertford County HS
Robeson (Central)	2	19	3	Fairmont HS & Red Springs HS
Rockingham (Central)	3	2310	53	Dalton McMichael HS, Morehead HS, Reidsville HS & Rockingham County HS

COLLEGE (REGION)	NO. OF COACHES	INDIVIDUAL COACHING SESSIONS	GROUP COACHING SESSIONS*	HIGH SCHOOL
Rowan-Cabarrus (Central)	2	224	18	A.L. Brown HS & South Rowan HS
Sampson (Eastern)	3.5	897	39	Clinton HS, Hobbton HS, Lakewood HS, Midway HS & Union HS
Sandhills (Eastern)	1	310	26	Hoke County HS
South Piedmont (Central)	4	1788	56	Anson HS, Cuthbertson HS, Forest Hills HS, Monroe HS, Parkwood HS, Piedmont HS, Porter Ridge HS & Sun Valley HS
Southeastern (Eastern)	2	276	123	East Columbus HS, South Columbus HS, West Columbus HS, & Whiteville HS
Southwestern (Western)	2	717	0	Cherokee HS, Jackson County School of the Alternatives, Smoky Mountain HS, Summit Charter School, Swain County HS & Victory Christian Academy
Tri-County (Western)	2	1	0	Murphy HS & Robbinsville HS
Wake Tech (Central)	2	432	32	Athens Drive HS, Garner HS, Rolesville HS & Sanderson HS
Wayne (Eastern)	1	0	0	Eastern Wayne HS & Goldsboro HS
Western Piedmont (Western)	3	2652	41	East Burke HS, Freedom HS, Patton HS, Draughn HS
Wilkes (Western)	3.5	1812	129	East Wilkes HS, North Wilkes HS, West Wilkes HS & Wilkes Central
Wilson (Eastern)	1	54	8	Beddingfield HS
TOTALS	94	34,986	1,729	156 HS, 70 LEAs

*Students served in a group setting such as classroom presentations, group tours, orientation sessions, etc.

**Reduced college engagements are due to the newest cohort, which was approved in the March 20, 2026 State Board meeting, therefore they were unable to hire a coach before the report deadline.

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

Career Coaches have become a vital resource in bridging the transition from high school to college and career, fostering stronger alignment between education and workforce needs, and supporting the state’s broader goal of increasing educational attainment. Career Coaches also cultivate partnerships with local employers, creating opportunities for students to engage in job shadowing, internships, and other hands-on experiences that connect classroom learning to real-world applications. These employer collaborations help ensure that career pathways are responsive to evolving workforce demands while exposing students to viable career options in their own communities.

By strengthening the link between education and industry, the program not only supports individual student success but also contributes to regional economic growth. Career Coaches served the community by engaging with the local workforce via meetings with local workforce leaders, chambers of commerce, and other business leaders. During the 2025-2026 academic year **570 documented workforce engagement activities** supported the adjustment to available pathways to better meet the state and local workforce need.

PATHWAY ENROLLMENTS

Students enrolled in a variety of high school Career & Technical Education (CTE) pathways and community college Career and College Promise (CCP) CTE pathways. Both high school and community college CTE pathways educate students in a variety of careers such as Advanced Manufacturing, Agriculture, Biotechnology, Health Sciences, Information Technology, Robotics, Welding, and many other career opportunities. The community college CTP pathway serves students in careers requiring a bachelor’s degree such as Engineering.

TABLE 7.

PATHWAY	2025-2026
High School – Career & Technical Education	97,574
Community College – Career & College Promise: Career & Technical Education	14,407
Community College – Career & College Promise: College Transfer Pathways	19,173
TOTALS	131,154



NC Career Coach Program

Annual Report Appendix

APPENDIX 1

Career Coaches by Region

REGION	COLLEGE	TOTAL # OF COACHES AS OF 7/1/25	LEA
Central	Central Carolina	2	Harnett County & Lee County Schools
	Davidson-Davie	3	Davie County & Davidson County Schools
	Durham Technical	1	Orange County Public Schools
	Fayetteville Technical	2	Cumberland County Schools
	Forsyth Technical	2	Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools
	Piedmont	2	Caswell County Schools & Person County Schools
	Randolph	3.5	Asheboro City Schools & Randolph County School System
	Richmond	2	Richmond and Scotland County Schools
	Robeson	2	Public Schools of Robeson County
	Rockingham	2	Rockingham County Public Schools
	Sandhills	1	Hoke County Schools
	South Piedmont	3*	Anson County & Union County Public Schools
	Wake Technical	2	Wake County Public Schools
Eastern	Beaufort County	3*	Hyde County, Tyrell County & Washington County Schools
	Bladen	2	Bladen County Schools
	Brunswick	2	Brunswick County Public Schools
	Cape Fear	1	New Hanover County Schools
	Carteret	2	Carteret County Public Schools
	College of The Albemarle	3*	Edenton-Chowan Public Schools & Elizabeth City- Pasquotank Public Schools
	Craven	1	Craven County Schools
	Edgecombe	2	Edgecombe County Public Schools & North East Prep
	Halifax	1	Roanoke Rapids Graded School District
	James Sprunt	2	Duplin County Schools
	Lenoir	2.5	Lenoir County Public Schools & Greene County Schools
	Martin	2	Bertie County & Martin County Schools
	Pitt	2	Pitt County Schools
	Sampson	3.5	Clinton City Schools & Sampson County Schools
	Southeastern	2	Columbus County Schools & Whiteville City Schools
	Wayne	1	Wayne County Public Schools
	Wilson	1	Wilson County Schools

REGION	COLLEGE	TOTAL # OF COACHES AS OF 7/1/25	LEA
Western	Asheville-Buncombe Technical	1	Madison County Schools
	Blue Ridge	2	Henderson County Schools & Transylvania County Schools
	Caldwell	2	Caldwell County Schools
	Central Piedmont	1	Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools
	Cleveland	2	Cleveland County Schools
	Gaston College	2	Gaston County Schools & Lincoln County Schools
	Haywood	2	Haywood County Schools
	Isothermal	2	Polk County Schools & Rutherford County Schools
	McDowell	2	McDowell County Schools
	Mitchell	1	Iredell-Statesville Schools
	Rowan-Cabarrus	2	Kannapolis City Schools & Rowan-Salisbury School System
	Southwestern	2*	Jackson County Schools & Swain County Schools
	Tri-County	2	Cherokee County Schools & Graham County Schools
	Western Piedmont	2	Burke County Public Schools
	Wilkes	2.5	Wilkes County Schools

APPENDIX 2

Coach Impact

Brunswick Community College

The coach team arranged a tour of various facilities of the Brunswick County EMS/Fire/Sheriff Department for 40 Brunswick County High School students who participated in hands-on activities with employees.

Central Piedmont Community College

Several career-focused field trips were conducted to industry such as the Paul Mitchell Cosmetology School, Goodwill University, and The NASCAR Hall of Fame. These provided students with opportunities to expand their horizons on career pathways. The coach also leads a Wildcat Market, named after the school mascot, that provides students opportunities to practice entrepreneurial skills in a small, welcoming setting.

Lenoir Community College

Students were supported in the ECU Entrepreneurship countywide competition, that invited students from across Kinston High, North Lenoir and South Lenoir to step into the world of innovation and business development. Over several weeks, participants brainstormed original product ideas, refined their pitches, and presented them to a panel of judges made up of entrepreneurs, educators, and business leaders.

Students showcased impressive creativity with ideas such as hand-painted canvas hats, a hairbrush that dispenses dry shampoo, a self-affirmation mirror, and more. Judges evaluated each pitch for originality, feasibility, and market potential - offering real-world feedback to help students grow their entrepreneurial thinking. At the end of the competition, two South Lenoir students, Riley Hughes and Braden Barnett, made history by earning the top spot and taking home \$1,000 to invest in their business.

Mitchell Community College

Students from WIHS met with the Human Resources Director and Coordinator to learn more about career opportunities with NGK Ceramics and to tour the facility. NGK has an internship program that targets graduating high school seniors for 5-8 entry level positions at NGK.

NGK prefer students that have experience in the following pathways: Certified Production Technician, Computer Integrated Machining. They also expressed needs in Accounting, Computer Science, and Information Technology. NGK specializes in catalytic converter filters for automobiles. Their company employs 800 people and are represented around the world in other energy fields. They offer degree reimbursement as an incentive for employees.

Randolph Community College

Coaches hosted students from each county school, city school, charter school, home, and private school in the area to interact and participate in hands-on activities at the college. They helped students connect their career aspirations to the career exploration they were exposed to at the event.

Richmond Community College

The team facilitated tours for high school students to tour the UNC Pembroke Education department, Cascades Tissue Group, Pilkington – NSG, Scotland Health Care Systems, Scotia Village, Laurinburg-Maxton Airbase, and the City of Laurinburg Police Department.

Rockingham Community College

While attending the Western Rockingham Chamber of Commerce's December coffee meeting, the coach was able to speak with various community partners to discuss CTE programs at the high school and college level and provided updates to stakeholders regarding CTE and career development.

Southwestern Community College

Career coaches and CCP liaisons brought 300 high school juniors and seniors to Southwestern Community College for Career Exploration Day.

Wake Technical Community College

In partnership with Paige Harris, Garner Magnet High School's Career Development Coordinator, and Connect for Success, coaches hosted the Tools 2 School: Skilled Trades Exploration Event. The purpose of this event was to expose students to career opportunities within the Skilled Trades and CTE career pathways.

The following organizations were present and shared valuable insight: Natasha Fantasia, Practical by Design – Construction & Design Company; Michael Taylor, Apprenticeship Program Manager, Watson Electrical; and Imagination Fabrication Company.

Approximately 300 students attended the event. Students had the opportunity to speak directly with industry leaders and interact with industry-specific tools. They were highly engaged and gained a broader perspective on career opportunities available within the Skilled Trades.

Wilson Community College

The coach connected with CTE teachers from Public Safety and Health Sciences classes to tour the Wilson County Health Department and the Wilson Police Department to learn information that can be relayed back to our high school students. They also connected with CTE teachers from Drafting, Construction, and Automotive classes and career management to tour 3C Store Fixtures and Stephenson Millwork.