



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A YEAR IN REVIEW 2019-2020

Report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee of the North Carolina General Assembly pursuant to Session Law 2019-55 House Bill 664 Section 1.(c) as provided by G.S. 120-29.5

September 1, 2020

INTRODUCTION

Over the past 30 years, our state has experienced unprecedented surges in skilled service jobs such as finance or healthcare that require a credential or postsecondary degree. This trend is projected to continue, yet North Carolina's talent supply is not keeping pace. In response to the State's workforce requirements and the need for all North Carolinians to earn family-supporting wages, in February 2019 the myFutureNC Commission established a goal to have **2 million North Carolinians between the ages of 25-44 to hold a high-quality credential or postsecondary degree by the year 2030**, representing one of the highest educational attainment targets in the nation.

THE GOAL

Increasing statewide postsecondary educational attainment to 2 million high-quality credentials or degrees by 2030

The most recent pre-COVID-19 estimates available project the state will **fall short by 300,000 individuals** with the skills necessary to meet the workforce demands by the year 2030, and the ongoing coronavirus pandemic only heightens the importance of meeting this goal. The reckoning of the pandemic has cemented the importance of alleviating challenges on economic mobility for underrepresented groups in our population.

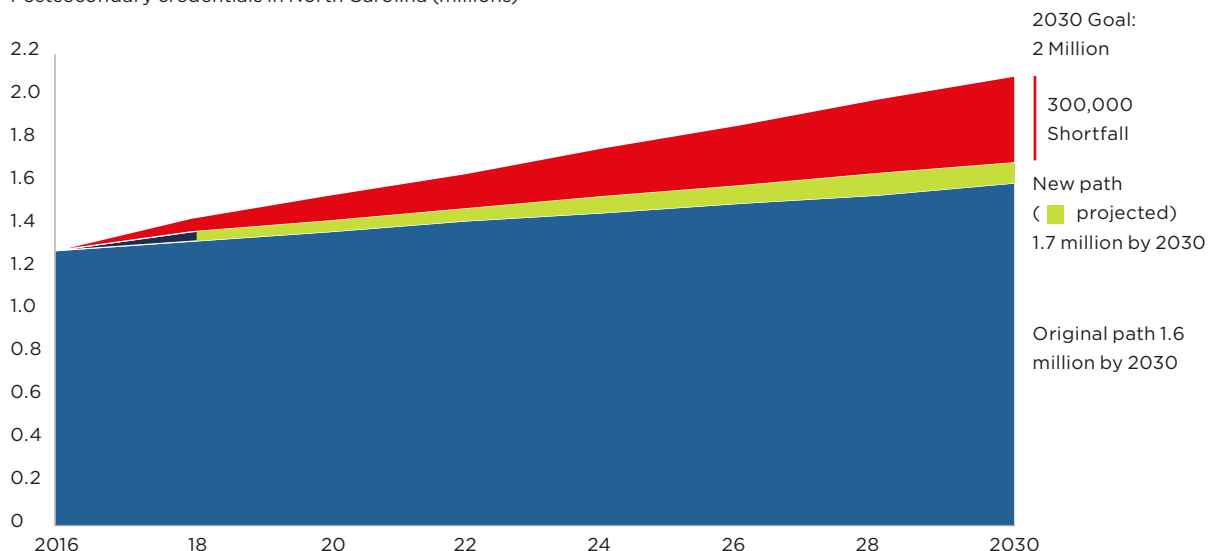
Educational attainment is the key to the short-term recovery and long-term resiliency of North Carolina's economy. It is the **path to upward mobility** for our underserved and underrepresented citizens. Yet, people who have proven to be most vulnerable in this pandemic are those with lower levels of education and low-income populations wherein racial minorities are disproportionately represented. This mirrors longstanding trends on income based on educational levels in North Carolina and unemployment rates from the Great Recession, where at its peak, North Carolinians ages 25-44 without any college education were 3.5x more likely to be unemployed than those with a college degree.

Exhibit 1

Updated projections indicate that North Carolina's new projected path puts the state 300,000 short of the 2 million by 2030 target

Progress Against the Deficit of Postsecondary Credentials in North Carolina

Postsecondary credentials in North Carolina (millions)



North Carolina's Opportunity

To ensure the State remains economically competitive now and into the future, increasing the levels of education after high school of all individuals, but especially first-generation, low-income, and minority populations, is essential. The rapidly changing demographic makeup of North Carolina will further elevate this need by the year 2030.

The gap in workforce talent presents a significant opportunity to improve postsecondary readiness, access, and completions in North Carolina. This gap also increases the urgency for the State to drive alignment between our education systems and the needs of our businesses and industries. The General Assembly, executive branch, and local leaders have made significant investments in North Carolina's education infrastructure, one of the most robust in the nation. However, our K-12 schools, community colleges, 4-year colleges and universities, and our workforce boards all operate under separate umbrellas, without a shared vision for attainment. **myFutureNC is the only organization focused across the entire education and workforce continuum** – from preschool through to a credential or postsecondary degree that aligns with workforce needs. Many strategic partner organizations are working to advance the State within specific channels and while they may all be doing good work separately - collectively and through alignment - the outcomes can be so much stronger. myFutureNC's work to advance North Carolina's attainment in postsecondary education through a system-wide approach will be required to build resiliency coming out of the crisis.

ABOUT MYFUTURENC

myFutureNC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, working effectively across the business, education, and workforce sectors to support the realization of the ambitious statewide goal of 2 million high-quality credentials or postsecondary degrees to be held by individuals ages 25-44 by 2030. This goal was codified into law on June 26, 2019 ([HB664/SL 2019-55](#)). myFutureNC originated as a Commission and was conceived in 2017 when MC Belk Pilon, President and Board Chair of the John M. Belk Endowment, and Margaret Spellings, then-President of the North Carolina University System, realized their common goals around educational access and attainment in North Carolina. Their focus also included increased education for the underserved and underrepresented populations, providing opportunity for upward mobility and making for a stronger and more competitive North Carolina.

The myFutureNC [Board of Directors](#) is a distinctive cross-sector Board consisting of the heads of all education sectors, including the Presidents of the Community College System, UNC System, and NC Independent Colleges and Universities, and the Chair of the State Board of Education and State Superintendent. In addition, the President of the NC Chamber, other business leaders and philanthropists also serve on the Board, as well as a designee from the Governor and North Carolina General Assembly Senate Pro Tempore and Speaker of the House. The make-up of this Board uniquely positions myFutureNC as a unified cross-sector collaborative ranging from early childhood to the workforce continuum, to create and implement a “shared vision for attainment” for the State of North Carolina.

“To achieve this ambitious goal, we must make higher education more affordable and accessible for more North Carolinians, recognizing that there are many paths to success. We cannot succeed unless we extend opportunity to all”

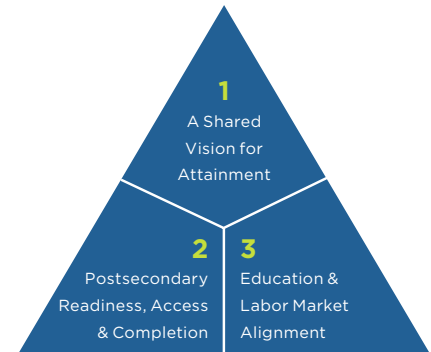
Peter Hans

UNC System president and former president of the North Carolina Community College System

SUPPORTING NORTH CAROLINA'S ATTAINMENT GOAL

In service of 2 million by 2030, myFutureNC has established three organizational goals in its [Strategic Plan](#) to guide its work and to provide opportunity for economic prosperity for all North Carolinians. All three serve the purpose of advancing North Carolina's progress towards the postsecondary attainment goal .

1. **A Shared Vision for Attainment:** All stakeholders share a vision for collective ownership of, and accountability for, education across North Carolina – from early childhood through adulthood.
2. **Postsecondary Readiness, Access & Completion:** There is alignment across local, regional, and state actions that will dramatically increase attainment of valuable credentials and postsecondary degrees.
3. **Education & Labor Market Alignment:** North Carolina's educational attainment efforts align directly with North Carolina's talent needs and industry trends.



To further support delivery on the state attainment goal and to remain true to the organizational vision and values, myFutureNC's three-year Strategic Plan centers around five strategic responsibilities and provides details on actions, specific steps, measures, and strategic partners.

EFFORTS TO DATE

This section highlights myFutureNC's critical role as convener for the broader North Carolina education continuum and its efforts to date such as State & County Attainment profiles, a FAFSA campaign and NC Workforce Credentials.

Cross-Sector Engagement

North Carolina will not reach this goal without the help of partners at the state and local levels. The ability to convene and coordinate across multiple stakeholders- including all education and workforce sectors- is crucial to advancing the conversation and enabling progress for North Carolina. myFutureNC is at the center of a **vast network of cross-sector stakeholders**, driving collaboration statewide in support of achieving North Carolina's attainment goal. This position was clearly demonstrated by the myFutureNC **Inaugural Celebration** in February 2020, which **brought together over 800 stakeholders** both in-person and virtually to help set the path forward for North Carolina's education system. Attendees included education leaders, representatives from the business community, and policymakers.



Members of the North Carolina A&T State University drumline assist myFutureNC with a drumbeat for the state's educational attainment goal. On Feb. 10, 2020, hundreds of stakeholders from business, workforce and education convened in Greensboro for an update on the attainment goal and a discussion of how to increase postsecondary attainment at the local level.

State Attainment Dashboard & County Attainment Profiles

myFutureNC has partnered with Carolina Demography to set the baseline against which progress will be measured. The result is an 18-indicator [State Attainment Dashboard](#) and an accompanying set of 100 [County Attainment Profiles](#) with data unique to each county to **empower and support** educational attainment efforts at the local level. Research demonstrates that if improved, these indicators will ultimately lead to increases in postsecondary attainment.

Detailed descriptions for each indicator can be found [on our website](#). As this is the first year myFutureNC is reporting on these indicators, this year's JLEOC report contextualizes them relative to the 2030 individual indicator goals – and highlights the states in the South that are doing exceptionally well that may inspire action in North Carolina. While each County Attainment Profile includes the three largest opportunities for growth for that county, myFutureNC has also identified the three largest opportunities for growth in North Carolina that will accelerate progress towards the 2030 attainment goal. These are:

Exhibit 2



NC Pre-K Enrollment

Increasing the number of 4-year olds enrolled in NC Pre-K is one of the three biggest opportunity areas for 45 counties.



Low-Performing Schools

Decreasing the number of low performing schools is one of the three biggest opportunity areas for 33 counties.



FAFSA Completion

Increasing the number of high school seniors completing the FAFSA is one of the three biggest opportunity areas for 27 counties.

FAFSA Campaign

In alignment with the organizational goal of Postsecondary Readiness, Access, and Completion, myFutureNC launched a successful campaign in June 2020 to increase completion rates for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). This **statewide FAFSA Frenzy campaign** was in response to COVID when FAFSA completion levels dropped 3% below 2019 completion levels. During the month of June 2020, 67 districts and 25 charter schools increased their FAFSA completion rates between 1-14 percentage points overall. This campaign was supported by legislators across North Carolina and laid the groundwork for future campaigns that myFutureNC will continue to lead in partnership with the College Foundation of North Carolina and other strategic partners. FAFSA completion, highlighted as one of the state's three important growth opportunities above, is a key part of postsecondary attainment because it helps make college affordable and therefore accessible to students.

NC Workforce Credentials

NC workforce credentials are high-quality, non-degree credentials recognized by employers that help workers in North Carolina obtain in-demand living wage jobs. North Carolina leaders have participated in a cross-sector initiative to more reliably determine the non-degree credentials that lead to high-growth, high-demand occupations that pay a living wage. This effort is being led out of the NC Community College System, in partnership with myFutureNC, NC Business Committee for Education, NC Department of Commerce, NC Works Commission, NC Department of Public Instruction, and the local NC Workforce Development Boards, all working to define the list of credentials and to identify work-based learning models to support employer needs and employee development across the state.

MOVING FORWARD

Strands of Work for 2020-2021

The organization's Strategic Plan builds upon existing efforts to accelerate progress towards the goal of 2 million by 2030. myFutureNC has identified strands of work for the coming year in support of the Plan and ultimately the State's goal, including state and local-level efforts which are detailed in the full JLEOC report. Those efforts will include a long-term [FAFSA campaign](#), finalizing list and aligning training for high-quality [non-degree credentials](#), and partnering with K-12 and the community colleges on the implementation of their [College and Career Ready Graduates](#) initiative. Also, while this work is state-led, it must be locally driven. To make progress towards the bigger goal, myFutureNC will catalyze and support strategic partnerships and local cross-sector collaboratives that are critical to ensuring students are getting to and through college, and into jobs that align with the workforce needs and pay a living wage. Finally, myFutureNC and Carolina Demography will continue to collaborate to expand the [state-level data dashboard](#) to make it more interactive and to optimize user experience and understanding.

Policy Recommendations

myFutureNC has identified a set of [policy recommendations](#) across their organizational pillars: A Shared Vision for Attainment, Postsecondary Readiness, Access, & Completion, and Education & Labor Market Alignment. Additional detail is available in the full Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee report.

Exhibit 3

Policy Recommendations. There are several ways that legislators can support progress towards postsecondary educational attainment in NC

A Shared Vision for Educational Attainment: myFutureNC champions the connection between postsecondary attainment and broadband by supporting and encouraging efforts to expand access, affordability, and adoption throughout North Carolina.

Postsecondary Readiness, Access, and Completion	Education & Labor Market Alignment
• Increase commitment and support for CCRG - community college/K12 partnership that provides access to high quality competency-based online remedial courses while still in high school • Improve student participation in federal financial aid through shifts in staffing, communications, data, and incentives • Expand capacity of NC Career Coaches and College Advising Corps statewide	• Define, standardize, and incentivize non-degree NC Workforce Credentials to align with in-demand living wage jobs for providers and students

Interested in learning more about our policy recommendations?
Additional detail is available on our [website](#) at myfuturenc.org

The educational community in North Carolina is making great strides towards the 2030 goal and transforming North Carolina into a leader in the nation around postsecondary attainment. Even in the most challenging times, there are **reasons for hope**. The extra work underway and the many lessons being learned during the pandemic can also serve as an inspiration that **the post-COVID school experience for our students can be made better** as a result. Recognizing significant work remains to be done, myFutureNC will continue to support the State's progress towards 2 million high-quality credentials or postsecondary degrees by 2030 and thereby, positioning our State with a foundation for **a sustainable future for all North Carolinians**.

2 million by 2030

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