



THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA SYSTEM

Peter Hans
President
PO Box 2688 | Chapel Hill, NC 27515
(919) 962-6983 | president@northcarolina.edu

October 15, 2021

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Sen. Deanna Ballard
Rep. Hugh Blackwell
Co-Chairs, Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee
North Carolina General Assembly
16 West Jones Street
Raleigh, NC 27601

Dear Chairs:

Educator preparation is a core part of the University of North Carolina System's identity. Many UNC System institutions were founded over the past two centuries for the purpose of teacher preparation. While their missions have expanded since those early days, the focus on educator preparation remains paramount.

The fifteen Educator Preparation Programs in the UNC System are leaders in efforts to prepare teachers and administrators to be successful as they focus on continuous improvement of their programs. UNC System graduates make up 42 percent of new public school teachers in North Carolina, but that number could be a lot higher. To that end, the System's strategic plan, *Higher Expectations*, calls on our institutions to increase the number of high-quality credentials in several critical workforce areas, including K-12 education. UNC System education programs are responding to this goal through several strategic efforts aimed at preparing more—and more effective—teachers and school leaders for the public schools of North Carolina through recruitment, preparation, and educator quality research.

In June 2021, the UNC System Office submitted four [reports](#) to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee highlighting our educator preparation efforts:

- Report on Teacher Education
- Report on the UNC-NCCCS 2+2 E-Learning Initiative
- School Leadership Supply and Demand Report
- UNC-NCCCS Joint Initiative for Teacher Education and Recruitment

Updates on activities since June are provided below.

Literacy Initiative

In fall 2020, the UNC System Literacy Framework was created by faculty to ensure the incorporation of the science of reading into educator preparation programs (EPP) for elementary and special education-general curriculum programs. In addition, a self-assessment to determine alignment with the

competencies/sub-competencies within the framework was designed and is currently being conducted by all 15 EPPs. By fall 2022, all EPPs are expected to incorporate the evidence-based framework into their programs to ensure that graduates have the necessary knowledge and skills to be effective teachers of reading. The UNC System has set benchmarks for expected outcomes of teacher candidates to include first time pass rates on reading licensure exams, student performance, and candidate perception of preparedness.

Through funding provided by the Goodnight and Spangler foundations, the Literacy Innovation Leaders (LIL) Initiative has been launched at five universities to include Appalachian State, Fayetteville State, NC A and T, UNC Charlotte, and UNC Pembroke. Faculty at those sites will redesign curricula and field experiences to align with the literacy framework. Training in Language Essentials for the Teaching of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) will be completed by faculty at these sites along with a sample of educator candidates. The LIL campuses are partnering with school districts also engaging in the LETRS training and will work together to create synergy across organizations around the science of reading and in alignment with the Excellent Public Schools Act of 2021. UNC System Lab School teachers in grades K-3 are also engaged in the LETRS training, as well as a sample of faculty at the other ten EPPs not included within the LIL Initiative.

Teaching Fellows

First established in 1986, the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program is a forgivable-loans-for-service program designed to recruit high-achieving students into the teaching profession. Teaching Fellows provides up to \$4,125 per semester in financial aid that is repayable through teaching service in any North Carolina public school—traditional public, lab school, or charter school.

Reauthorized by the NC General Assembly in 2017, the Teaching Fellows program now focuses specifically on recruiting for the high-need subject areas of STEM and Special Education. In 2020, the General Assembly granted authorization for the program to expand to three additional EPPs, along with a directive to include diversity as a factor for consideration. Fayetteville State University, North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University and University of North Carolina at Pembroke were selected in June 2021 as partner institutions. They join North Carolina State University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Elon University, and Meredith College.

There are currently 284 Teaching Fellows, including the fourth class of candidates that was just selected for the 2020-2021 application cycle. While the primary goal of the Teaching Fellows program is to produce high quality educators in high-need subject areas, there is a particular focus on increasing the diversity of Teaching Fellows in terms of both racial and geographic representation – and the Teaching Fellows Commission is hopeful that the program’s expansion to three additional partner institutions will be a significant step toward creating a larger geographic program footprint and foster greater diversity for prospective Teaching Fellows in the future.

Principal Fellows

A closer look at the supply and demand of educational leaders in North Carolina reveals an issue with both the number of leaders being produced and the lack of racial diversity in the leadership pipeline. In response to the need for greater access to quality preparation for school leaders, the Transforming Principal Preparation Program (TP3) officially consolidated with the North Carolina Principal Fellows

Program (NCPFP) this summer, creating a more strategic and unified funding source for the principal preparation programs in North Carolina. The new NC Principal Fellows Program combines TP3's competitive grants-based model with the Principal Fellows' Commission-based governance to ensure North Carolina's aspiring leaders are well-trained and retained in North Carolina's high-needs schools. The consolidation allows for a competitive model amongst the providers as resources are assigned to recruit high-quality candidates to the most rigorous, evidence-based preparation programs. The consolidated program is currently filling approximately 40 percent of the state's educational leadership demand.

In June 2021, the UNC System announced that six System institutions were selected for the North Carolina Principal Fellows Program (NCPFP). Appalachian State University, East Carolina University, North Carolina State University, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and Western Carolina University will receive six-year principal preparation grants starting in 2022. These institutions will join North Carolina Central University/Central Carolina Regional Education Service Alliance and University of North Carolina at Charlotte, which received grant funds for the 2020-2026 grant cycle.

Uniform Articulation Agreement in Teacher Education and Educator Preparation

With new leadership and a shared goal to improve the teacher pipeline, the UNC System and North Carolina Community College System are collaborating to recruit and retain many more North Carolinians to begin careers in education.

In August 2021, the two systems announced the Uniform Articulation Agreement in Teacher Education/Educator Preparation. This agreement focuses on developing a seamless transfer for students who begin teacher preparation studies in the Associate in Arts in Teacher Preparation (AATP) and the Associate in Science in Teacher Preparation (ASTP) programs at a community college and then transfer to one of the educator preparation programs within the UNC System to complete a bachelor's degree and become a licensed teacher in the K-12 system. All but 6 of the 58 community colleges are currently offering the new degrees, and graduates from these community colleges began matriculating to UNC System institutions in fall 2021.

Future Teachers of North Carolina

The Future Teachers of North Carolina Program (FTNC) was established by the General Assembly in 2017. As originally structured, the purpose of the Future Teachers of North Carolina Program (FTNC) was to encourage high-achieving high school students to consider teaching as a profession by providing opportunity to enroll in college-level, introductory education courses that award up to six credit hours at a partnering UNC System institution. The three UNC System partner institutions are North Carolina A&T State University, the University of North Carolina Wilmington, and Western Carolina University.

Aligned with a request from the BOG, the General Assembly adopted changes expands FTNC's program footprint from three institutions to all System EPPs. Rather than having designated partner institutions, the program revisions now allow each UNC EPP to apply for a grant to host a targeted recruitment event for high school juniors and seniors that is an immersive experience within that institution's education program. For the inaugural 2020-2021 application cycle, three grants were awarded to the following institutions:

- NC Central University and NC State University, hosting a joint event
- UNC Pembroke and UNC Wilmington, hosting a joint event
- UNC Charlotte

Approximately 100 students participated in the FTNC events this June and July, and each fostered enhanced partnership with the surrounding school districts in their respective regions and to strengthen the recruitment pipeline by providing a clearer pathway and easier transition from high school into an EPP.

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We appreciate the opportunity to share our progress with the Joint Committee, and we are deeply grateful for the General Assembly's ongoing support of our public universities and our educator preparation programs.

Sincerely,



Peter Hans
President

cc: UNC Board of Governors
Brittany Eller, Office of the Speaker
Carly Weaver, Office of the President Pro Tem
Bart Goodson, UNC System Office
Andrew Tripp, UNC System Office