



**THE  
UNIVERSITY OF  
NORTH CAROLINA  
SYSTEM**

**Annual Educator Preparation Report**

**Report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee**

June 15, 2021

**The University of North Carolina System**

**Chapel Hill, North Carolina**

## Annual Educator Preparation Report

Pursuant to GS 116-11 (12d), the Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina shall provide a comprehensive annual report on teacher education efforts at The University of North Carolina each year to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the State Board of Education.

### Introduction

Teacher 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 (EPPs) in the UNC System are leaders in efforts to prepare teachers 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 teacher 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 teacher quality research.

### UNC Educator Preparation Trends

The table below demonstrates the decline in overall enrollment in UNC System colleges of education since 2016, with the exception of the 2019 academic year.<sup>1</sup> Despite these enrollment declines, the UNC System remains the largest producer of public school teachers in North Carolina. Thirty-three percent of all public school teachers in North Carolina’s public schools are UNC System graduates.<sup>2</sup> Research indicates that, overall, teachers prepared at UNC System institutions generally have higher value-added estimates, earn higher evaluation ratings, and stay in the classroom longer than teachers prepared through most other routes.<sup>3</sup> Student growth data was unavailable for 2019-2020 due to the global pandemic.

EPP Enrollment	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
UNC System	3,303	3,011	2,904	3,242	2,955
Private	887	745	718	691	744
Non-IHE Based	197	328	421	711	600
<b>Totals by Year/EPP Type</b>	<b>4,387</b>	<b>4,084</b>	<b>4,043</b>	<b>4,644</b>	<b>4,299</b>

<sup>1</sup> [NC Department of Public Instruction EPP Dashboard](#)

<sup>2</sup> [NC Department of Public Instruction EPP Dashboard](#)

<sup>3</sup> Research suggests that teachers who enter through Teach for America perform better than UNC-trained teachers, as do visiting international teachers in some subjects. See Bastian, Kevin and Qi W. Xing. “Staffing North Carolina’s Classrooms: Evidence Connecting Teacher Preparation to Teacher Outcomes.” Education Policy Initiative at Carolina (EPIC) (2015): [https://publicpolicy.UNC.edu/files/2015/07/Staffing\\_North-Carolinas\\_Classrooms\\_Evidence-Connecting\\_Teacher-Preparation\\_to\\_Teacher-Outcomes\\_April-2016.pdf](https://publicpolicy.UNC.edu/files/2015/07/Staffing_North-Carolinas_Classrooms_Evidence-Connecting_Teacher-Preparation_to_Teacher-Outcomes_April-2016.pdf).

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### **Educator Preparation & P12 Partnership Efforts**

The UNC System established the Division of University & P12 (Preschool through 12th Grade) Partnerships in 1998. The division was created to acknowledge the University's priority of strengthening North Carolina's public schools and educator preparation programs. This work continues to be one of the University's highest priorities. Now structured within the Strategy and Policy Division, the P12 Partnerships team is the primary liaison with the fifteen UNC System schools of education, inter-institutional programs related to P12 education, the NC Department of Public Instruction, the NC General Assembly, and all other programs and organizations related to the University's support for public schools, students, and teachers. The division is primarily focused on the UNC System's goal of preparing effective teachers and school leaders for North Carolina's public schools. The division staff works toward this mission by supporting evidence-based programs, initiatives, and strategic research to improve P12 practices and educator preparation.

In 2015, the UNC Board of Governors Subcommittee on Teacher and School Leader Quality adopted a set of recommendations designed to strengthen, focus, and, where necessary, redesign UNC System educator preparation programs to produce a world-class educator workforce for North Carolina. These recommendations guided the work of the P12 Division for several years, and significant progress has been made in accomplishing these overarching goals. The state has re-launched the Teaching Fellows program, providing recruitment incentives for teacher candidates at three UNC System institutions to serve in high-need fields and schools in North Carolina; all educator preparation programs in the UNC System now use edTPA, a validated performance tool enabling data-driven improvements in candidates' preparation and teacher education programs; and the Educator Quality Dashboard has served as a national model for ensuring public accountability for the state's public EPPs enabling more data-driven policymaking for educator preparation across the state. The division has worked diligently to ensure greater public accountability, implement research-based approaches to teacher and principal preparation, increase collaboration and partnerships, expand and enhance high quality clinical practice, strengthen recruitment and selection of prospective candidates into educator preparation programs, and improve support for early career educators.

### **Educator Preparation & Recruitment**

Even amidst this progress, the UNC System knows there is more work to be done, especially in light of new policies, higher expectations, and increasing demands upon P12 schools. In addition, System Office leaders recognize the benefit of multiple approaches to meaningful improvement and sustainable change and therefore, have endeavored to build on state-level policy reforms and system-wide efforts by working with EPP leaders, practicing teachers, and other stakeholders on key initiatives. The P12 Division administers and provides support for the following initiatives:

#### *North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program*

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.

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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. There are currently five EPP partners -- two private and three UNC System institutions: North Carolina State University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Elon University, and Meredith College. 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. Accordingly, the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Commission amended the original EPP application process to include metrics to capture both geographic and demographic diversity. The Teaching Fellows Commission will be selecting the three new partner institutions later this summer.

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.

### *North Carolina Principal Fellows Program/Transforming Principal Preparation Program (TP3)*

The Principal Fellows Program, created in 1993, was originally designed to provide state funded forgivable loans to principal candidates attending UNC System institutions. In 2015, the [Transforming Principal Preparation Program \(TP3\)](#), a competitive grants-based program for high-quality principal preparation, was established in North Carolina. In 2019, the General Assembly acted to reform principal preparation by enacting Senate Bill 227: [TP3/Principal Fellows Consolidation](#). The legislation consolidates the traditional Principal Fellows Program with the [Transforming Principal Preparation Program \(TP3\)](#), revolutionizing the way North Carolina recruits and prepares school leaders. The consolidated program retains the competitive grants-based model of TP3 and the state-appointed Commission governance structure of the Principal Fellows Program. In the first full year of the merger (2021-22), there are 170 candidates on track to graduate.

### *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

These FTNC events will be held later this summer, and each has great potential to foster enhanced partnership with the surrounding school districts in their respective regions and to strengthen the

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recruitment pipeline by providing a clearer pathway and easier transition from high school into an EPP. Per statute, the UNC System Office will submit a 2020-2021 report on FTNC to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee this October.

### *Teacher Recruitment Fund*

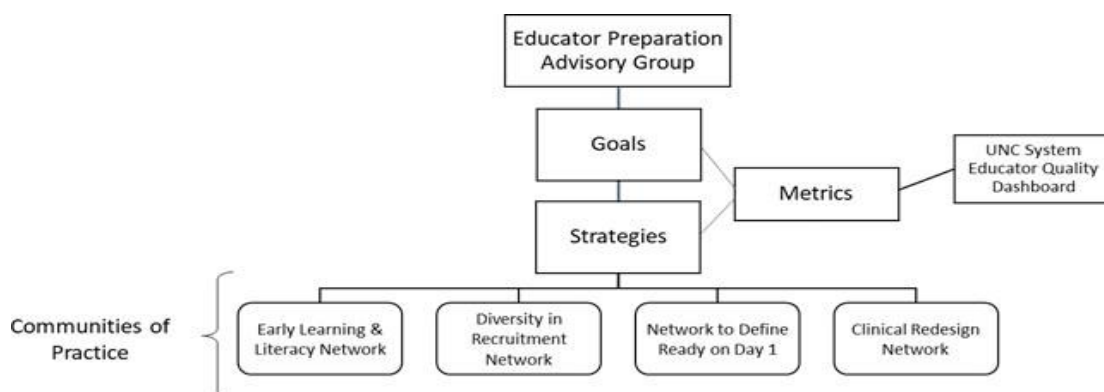
The UNC System receives an annual appropriation from the NC General Assembly of \$750,000 to support teacher recruitment efforts for the 15 EPPs. The funds are disbursed to EPPs on the basis of quantitative and qualitative metrics like student completion, production in high-need licensure areas, successful recruitment of diverse candidates, and the effectiveness of EPP graduates. EPPs are able to utilize recruitment funds in a variety of ways: hosting student campus visits, offering outreach at career fairs, providing targeted student support, increasing outreach to LEA partners, marketing efforts, and supporting program improvements, among others. The funds can also provide staffing support for campus recruiters. For the 2020-2021 Academic Year, the funding disbursement formula was not readjusted because of concerns of unreliable data due to COVID's impact.

### *Educator Preparation Advisory Group*

In 2018, the UNC System Office commissioned a report, [Leading on Literacy](#), to examine undergraduate teacher preparation programs within its constituent institutions. The study identified several opportunities for improvement in teacher preparation, particularly in effective literacy instruction. It also identified several possible ways for the UNC System Office to better support faculty and leaders in teacher recruitment and preparation more broadly. In response to these findings, the System Office convened an Educator Preparation Advisory Group in 2018, comprised of education experts across P12 and higher education, with the mission to support and accelerate improvement of teacher preparation across the UNC System.

Over the course of 18 months, the advisory group developed a set of goals, strategies, and actions to accelerate improvement in educator preparation and the advisory group created associated “communities of practice” to *catalyze action* among a group of EPPs within the UNC System to accelerate their progress toward one or more of the Advisory Group's goals (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Relationship between the Advisory Group's Goals, Metrics, Strategies, and Communities of Practice**



Currently, the Advisory group has launched one “community of practice” on early literacy, and in spring of 2021 began work on the examination of clinical experiences within EPPs.

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### Literacy Impact Coalition and UNC System Literacy Framework: Board of Governors Resolution

The Educator Preparation Advisory Group formulated the Early Learning and Literacy Impact Coalition as the first of the communities of practice. Teams from five diverse educator preparation programs (three UNC System institutions and two private institutions) developed a set of recommendations over the course of year. The working group, facilitated by Deans for Impact, a national non-profit, based its recommendations upon the belief that educator preparation programs must set clear expectations for early childhood and elementary candidates such that they understand and organize their teaching around effective principles and practices.

In February 2020, the co-chairs of the Educator Preparation Advisory Group presented to the Board of Governors the recommendations set forth by the Early Learning and Literacy Coalition, in addition to a progress report of the advisory group's efforts. In April 2020, the Board of Governors passed a [Resolution on Teacher Preparation](#) which charged UNC System educator preparation programs to develop a unified literacy framework to be adopted and implemented by all institutions.

Beginning in August 2020, the UNC System Office selected eight System faculty to serve as Literacy Fellows within the UNC System Literacy Framework Initiative, per the requirements of the resolution. The Literacy Fellows were chosen from a robust pool of applicants that included many strong candidates from across the UNC System representing a wealth of experience, research, and knowledge of evidence-based literacy practice.

Literacy Fellows collaborated with other literacy experts from within and outside the state, as well as UNC System Office staff, to develop a [comprehensive literacy framework](#) that reflects rigorous research on the essential components of reading and aligns with statutory requirements and other statewide literacy initiatives. The UNC System Literacy Framework incorporates the competencies and sub-competencies for what teacher candidates need to know and be able to do as future teachers of reading. In addition, extensive implementation guidance providing EPP faculty with strategies, learning activities, field experience suggestions, resources, and information on teaching diverse learners is included with the framework. The Literacy Fellows developed a self-study tool for educator preparation programs based on the developed framework.

The framework was shared with all EPPs who provided feedback and suggested edits. This information was incorporated within the final version and offered to the EPPs in March 2021. Each EPP will complete the self-study to ascertain the alignment of institutional level curriculum to the competencies and sub-competencies with the framework. The EPPs will complete the analysis of their programs in three phases from spring 2021 to culminate in fall 2021. An action plan for each EPP for full implementation of the framework competencies will also be completed by fall 2021.

### Other Initiatives

#### *Laboratory Schools*

In 2016, the North Carolina General Assembly passed legislation requiring the UNC Board of Governors to establish eight lab schools aimed at improving student performance in low-performing schools. The legislation was modified in 2017 to require the creation of nine lab schools rather than eight. These laboratory schools are considered K-12 public schools of choice, operated by a UNC System institution rather than by a local school district. Six laboratory schools are currently open and operating: East Carolina University's Community School, Western Carolina University's The Catamount School, Appalachian State

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University's Appalachian Academy at Middle Fork, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro's Moss Street Partnership School, the University of North Carolina Wilmington's D.C. Virgo Preparatory Academy and most recently The University of North Carolina at Charlotte's Niner University Elementary. Per legislation, three additional lab schools shall open three additional laboratory schools in fall of 2022.

The establishment of the UNC laboratory schools provides the opportunity to redefine and strengthen university partnerships with public schools, improve student outcomes, and provide high quality teacher and principal training. The Lab Schools directly partner with local school districts to promote evidence-based teaching and school leadership, while offering real-world experience to the next generation of teachers and principals. UNC Lab Schools serve every part of the University of North Carolina System mission — teaching, research, and public service.

### *GEAR UP*

In 2019, the University of North Carolina System Office was awarded a new, seven-year, \$25.7 million Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) grant. This is the fourth statewide GEAR UP grant that the UNC System has secured since 2000.

GEAR UP is a national college access initiative funded by the U.S. Department of Education, aimed at increasing the number of low-income students enrolled and succeeding in postsecondary education. As a state grantee, GEAR UP North Carolina collaborates on initiatives with state college access partners and disseminates college-going information statewide. In target school districts, located in financially-disadvantaged areas, GEAR UP reaches students to get them motivated and on track to pursue postsecondary education. The program's work with 12th graders is designed to help students and their families think about college and complete college enrollment steps.

GEAR UP NC uses a two-part strategy to serve students in nineteen schools across multiple school districts. During the 2020-21 academic year, services were provided to a cohort of 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students and their families, as well as educators, in four middle schools. Services include customized instruction and support to improve math and science preparation and afterschool and summer academic enrichment. These students will continue to receive support, including access to apprenticeship opportunities, as they complete high school and their first year of postsecondary education. Fifteen high schools across multiple school districts will receive GEAR UP priority services. Special consideration is given to high schools with low rates of college enrollment. In the priority model, twelfth graders and their families receive just-in-time support, such as financial aid counseling, college advising, and college match and fit counseling. Students also receive coaching during their first year of postsecondary education to increase postsecondary persistence. By 2026, GEAR UP North Carolina will provide academicpreparation and college access services to nearly 35,000 students and their families.

### *Digital Learning*

The UNC System and the North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities (NCICU) are working collaboratively under a contract with the North Carolina State Board of Education to create professional development modules related to the Digital Learning Competencies for faculty at educator preparation programs. As part of this effort, a joint working group comprised of representatives from the UNC System and NCICU was established. During the 2020-2021 academic year, the working group has jointly completed the following deliverables:

- Conducted a second assessment and analysis of current digital learning practices within North Carolina Educator EPPs utilizing the streamlined Digital Learning Progress Rubric.
- Created four professional development modules to serve as examples for the library of professional



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- development to represent each of the four Digital Learning Competencies (DLCs): Leadership in Digital Learning; Digital Citizenship; Digital Content and Instruction; and Data and Assessment.
- Submitted a final report of its work including the results of the analysis of the Digital Learning Progress Rubric for EPPS and a thorough description of the four professional development modules or courses developed by the Workgroup.

### Strategic Research Initiatives

Established in 2007, the UNC Educator Quality Research Initiative is an ongoing strategic research partnership among UNC System subject matter experts focused on the development and implementation of an annual agenda of research on educator preparation and effectiveness. This initiative provides educator preparation programs in the UNC System with research evidence to inform program improvement efforts, enhances state-wide understanding of critical workforce needs, and supports evidence-based education reform efforts. This collaborative partnership has investigated numerous topics, including: the value-added effectiveness of teachers entering the profession through varied pathways; on-the-job performance and retention of graduates of UNC System educator preparation programs; beginning teacher and employer perceptions of preparation quality; the predictive validity of teacher performance assessments; the effectiveness of teachers with graduate degrees; and beginning teachers expertise in evidence-based early literacy instruction. In addition, the annual research agenda includes the rigorous evaluation of the efficacy and efficiency of several P12 programs and initiatives, such as Laboratory Schools, Principal Fellows, and the North Carolina New Teacher Support Program.

In 2015, the UNC Educator Quality Dashboard was developed to share and disseminate key findings from the strategic research agenda. The dashboard was a public, interactive, web-based tool designed to ensure greater public accountability, increase transparency, and facilitate data for all education stakeholders. Built with SAS® data visualization software, the dashboard provided an interface that enabled users, including educators, administrators, policymakers, parents, and students, to analyze and display data on educator quality within selected populations, geographic regions, or subject areas. With the creation of the new Educator Preparation Dashboard by the Department of Public Instruction, much of the information included within the UNC Educator Quality Dashboard is now housed within the new DPI platform necessitating revisions to the EQ Dashboard. Utilizing the goals and metrics established by the Educator Preparation Advisory Group, the System Office has engaged with HelioCampus to create an updated version of the dashboard that will incorporate new information about the progress of the UNC System EPPs. Focus groups from EPPs were established to gain campus-level input on the elements to include within the new platform.

In 2020-2021 as a part of the strategic research agenda, investigations into specific metrics associated with the Educator Preparation Advisory Group goals were conducted to set system level goals for improvement. Analyses of teacher candidates in the area of literacy to include passage rates on licensure exams, impact on student achievement by graduates, and teacher evaluation ratings were completed in collaboration with researchers within the Education Policy Initiative at Carolina (EPIC) and provided to EPPs to use within their self-study for adoption of the UNC System Literacy Framework.

### Conclusion

Preparing more high-quality teachers and school leaders for North Carolina's P12 students is one of the University of North Carolina System's highest priorities. This goal is central to the UNC System's mission and Strategic Plan. While no single solution will transform North Carolina's educator workforce alone, the work of the Division of University & P12 Partnerships makes an important contribution in fostering the



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success of North Carolina students.

The goals, strategies, programs, and initiatives outlined in this report reflect the UNC System's long-standing contribution and renewed commitment to the long-term success of P12 education in North Carolina. It is worth noting that a global economy and an ever-changing policy landscape both underscore the vital need to continually expand and reexamine the System Office's efforts to make meaningful reforms to educator preparation the linchpin of transformative change for P12 education.