



**College Advising Corps**  
**Interim Report (October 1, 2022)**  
**UNC Award # 2000052688**

During this grant period (July 1, 2022 – September 30, 2022), CAC established an internal North Carolina task force that is responsible for planning, implementation, and fundraising for our growth across the state. This task force includes representatives from CAC's Programs, Impact & Evaluation, Advancement, and Executive teams. Together, task force members developed an expansion plan rooted in strategic program growth and sustainable fundraising.

## Strategic Planning

### Program Growth Strategy

**Academic Year 2022-23:** CAC is working with five university partners to place approximately 120 advisers in 72 counties. Together, these advisers will serve 143 high schools and over 20,000 senior students. Our in-school advising work is augmented by our innovation with our artificial intelligence-powered chatbot.

A breakdown of the number of advisers, schools, and counties served by our university partners is provided below.

University Partner	# Advisers	# High Schools	# Counties	Tiers Represented
UNC Wilmington	5	5	4	Tier 1 & Tier 2
UNC Chapel Hill	62	79	32	Tier 1, Tier 2, & Tier 3
NC State University	20	21	11	Tier 1, Tier 2, & Tier 3
Appalachian State University	20	22	20	Tier 1, Tier 2, & Tier 3
Duke University	16	16	8	Tier 1, Tier 2, & Tier 3

Our framework for expansion is based on the capacity of our current university partners, the opportunity to incorporate our hybrid advising model throughout the state, and ongoing discussions with new potential university partners. By the end of the 2022-23 academic year, CAC will evaluate the expansion of both hybrid and in-school models with our partners and finalize our impact plan for the 2023-24 academic year.

The timeline below summarizes key milestones in our plan to maintain momentum and guide growth during the 2022-23 school year.

Timeline: 2022-2023	
October 1, 2022	Determine the number of new placements available via GEAR UP NC
November 1, 2022	Re-visit expansion plans with current partners to determine additional expansion interest for in-school or hybrid advising.
January 1, 2023	Assess new potential university partnerships for in-school service.
January 1, 2023	Establish final in school/hybrid advising implementation plan for the 2023-24 academic year

**Academic Year 2023-24:** CAC can confirm plans to expand to serve a minimum of 79 counties with our in-school model, continuing collaboration with our current five university partners and emphasizing Tier 1 and Tier 2 schools. The innovation and development of our hybrid model, possible expansion of current university partners, and potential onboarding of new university partners will enable us to reach the remaining 21 counties by 2024. Tobi Kinsell, CAC's Senior Executive Director-National Projects & Business Development, is actively developing CAC's hybrid advising model, supported by our use of artificial intelligence. Our hybrid model increases the access that students have to career counseling and advising services by supplementing our standard in-person advising through virtual meetings, text messaging, and chatbot engagement. Through our hybrid and in-school models, by the end of the 2023-24 academic year, CAC will have a clear, sustainable road map for offering advising services in every county on an ongoing basis.

### **Fundraising Strategy**

During the initial grant period, CAC developed a framework for fundraising to support work in North Carolina in collaboration with our board and university partners. The plan forecasts prospective and current donors that will enable us to reach our goal of \$10M in philanthropy giving by June 30, 2024. CAC's Advancement team has already identified over 300 new prospects and 75 prospects already familiar with CAC's work. Many of these prospects are regional foundations and/or corporations with a strong footprint in North Carolina.

Fundraising for North Carolina is overseen by Laurie Reinhardt, CAC's Chief Advancement Officer, and Maggie Rudd, CAC's Grants Manager, both on the CAC national team. Under their leadership, CAC is holding weekly meetings with prospective donors and qualified new opportunities. The team is strategically networking with corporations in the Research Triangle Park to highlight the innovation within our advising models. New proposals totaling nearly \$400K have already been submitted since August 2022. Equally notable, CAC's national fundraising team is working closely and on a regular basis with CAC's university program directors and Advancement colleagues at their respective universities to coordinate and expand amplify statewide fundraising efforts, with progress reflected in subsequent interim reports.

## **COVID-19 Supports, Strategies, Research, and Evaluation**

***What are the major project strategies to address the associated learning loss and recovery efforts related to COVID-19? Who are your target participants (i.e., student groups, educations, schools, districts)?***

As early as the spring of 2020, it was clear that the COVID-19 pandemic would have a disproportionate impact on low-income communities and communities of color, including the very students that CAC supports. The pandemic impacted both the students we serve and shifted the structure of CAC's services, with 97% of advisers reporting serving students virtually either exclusively or partially throughout 2020.

CAC's project response to the pandemic's impact requires innovation. Advisers are trained to embrace new and expanded advising outreach and engagement techniques to accommodate

shifting learning environments. These strategies included standardizing avenues to connect with students and families through text messaging, chatbot, email, video, and phone. For example, CAC partnered with Common App and AdmitHub to offer an artificial-intelligence driven chatbot to nearly 500,000 students across the country. This chatbot technology allowed advisers to answer questions the chatbot could not and provide personalized advising support to students as needed. Based on the success of the chatbot pilot, CAC expanded this service to 33 schools in North Carolina.

CAC must continue to innovate to address the learning loss of the pandemic. Access to quality postsecondary advising regardless of learning environment is more important than ever. We are holding strategy meetings with our university partners to gauge interest in hybrid advising and program expansion. Integrating virtual advising strategies in both our in-person and hybrid models will increase adviser access for students, reaching more students at times most convenient for them. During the grant period, CAC will continue to develop and revise our tools and resources to ensure that no matter the circumstances, CAC advisers are committed to ensuring that the students they serve can access the education they need beyond high school to reach their full potential.

***Who are the target participants (i.e., student groups, educators, schools, districts)? How will this program support students disproportionately impacted by COVID-19?***

In North Carolina, too many low-income students and students from underrepresented and underserved communities are not accessing postsecondary education. CAC is shifting this paradigm by supporting the graduation and postsecondary enrollment of first-generation college, low-income, and underrepresented students. Every aspect of our work is fueled by our desire to address educational inequities in postsecondary enrollment.

Our partner high schools are strategically selected, reflecting student populations where most students are eligible to receive Free and Reduced-Price Lunches. For all North Carolina counties we serve, approximately 64% of students identify as a person of color, with 34% identifying as African American or Black, and 22% identifying as Hispanic or Latinx. On average, 53% of the high schools we serve are rural, with the remaining 47% being urban or suburban. Over 82% qualified for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch during the 2021-22 academic year.

CAC advisers serve as full-time “near-peer” advisers in under resourced high schools, minority-serving high schools, and schools with historically low graduation rates. CAC advisers provide a range of group and individualized services to students and families throughout the year, including workshops on college-going topics, 1:1 “best match/best fit” counseling, application and FAFSA completion support, scholarship and financial aid support, and campus visit assistance. Often our advising entails designing a personalized road map and helping each student to take the right first steps toward a longer-term goal—be it a certification program, community college, four-year degree program, or the military.

Our work transforms the lives of senior high school students, and it also has a multi-generational impact on schools and communities. High school students serve as role models for fellow students, younger siblings, and even older family members, demonstrating that college and postsecondary education are indeed within reach. Schools embrace activities that foster and support a college-going culture.

***What are the intended near, mid, and long-term (1 year, 2 year, 3 year) outcomes for participants?***

Communities will be different from this work in a variety of meaningful ways. Nationally, we have now helped over 680,000 students enroll in 2- and 4-year postsecondary education programs. To date, CAC has helped these students secure \$2 billion in postsecondary financial aid, including scholarships. The result of this student success is almost \$4 billion in lifetime earnings from U.S. college graduates advised by CAC.

The student-to-counselor ratio recommended by the American School Counselor Association is 250-to-1. In North Carolina, this ratio is 326-to-1. CAC's work helps to narrow this gap and level the education playing field for the students who need college and career counseling support the most. As a result of our work, more than 20,000 seniors across the state will graduate from high school each year with greater confidence as they embark on their journeys toward lucrative careers. And over 100,000 younger students each year will see role models who inspire them towards their postsecondary goals. During the 2021-22 school year, advisers in North Carolina achieved the following outcomes to drive senior postsecondary success.

- Met at least once 1:1 with 88% of senior students to discuss postsecondary options
- Helped 63% of senior students submit 1+ college applications
- Helped 31% of senior students submit 3+ college applications
- Engaged 39% of families in the college application and enrollment process
- Assisted 54% of students complete the FAFSA

Roughly 80% of the seniors CAC serves graduate from high school. On average, 50% of these students will enroll in a 4-year baccalaureate program, a 2-year associate's program, or a trade certification program by the fall immediately after graduation. Others will join the military or enroll in a community college or university in the months or years ahead. Research shows that most community colleges and state school graduates remain in-state, with almost 2 in 3 living within 50 miles of their degree-granting institution (Emsi/Wall Street Journal, 2018). As a result, area employers will have access to a broader, deeper pool of more highly educated applicants who are well-prepared for today's workforce and understand the needs of their communities.

Beyond facilitating educational access and workforce development, CAC advisers serve as mentors, teaching students how to define and achieve goals, manage their time, prioritize responsibilities, and recognize when to ask for help and where to turn for assistance.

Testimonials from current and former high school students regularly identify life skills as among the most valuable lessons learned from their CAC advising experience. Advisees remain engaged with their advisers beyond high school, reaching out for support and advice and sharing successes on their educational journeys.

***Explain how the planned activities address needs related to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.***

Schools continue to face serious difficulties attributed to the pandemic. Student attendance remains inconsistent, as many students are not attending class regularly due to health or other family concerns. Continued learning loss has impacted students' preparation for postsecondary opportunities. For students attending classes in person, many schools have seen an increase in student behavioral issues causing disruption in the overall learning environment, shifting the focus of school administrators to more immediate concerns.

Postsecondary planning including navigating the complexities of applying to and enrolling in college only compound these challenges. For students who are the first in their families to consider college, all of this can be unfamiliar and daunting. According to a report from the National Student Clearinghouse, for the 2020-21 academic year:

- Low-income students suffered a 11.4% decline in first-time enrollment, and underrepresented students of color suffered a 9% decline nationwide. CAC's work helped to contravene this negative impact, registering a first-time fall college enrollment decline nationwide of just 7%.
- FAFSA, completion rates for students of color decreased by 8%, and low-income students saw a 6.3% decline nationwide. Students served by CAC (overwhelmingly in these demographic groups) saw just a 5% decline year over in FAFSA completion nationwide.

When navigating the transition from high school to college takes a backseat to family and financial needs, many students are left without hope that education after high school is possible. It's at this moment that the availability of a CAC adviser is key. Advisers provide student guidance through the step in the postsecondary enrollment process, including taking requisite courses, registering for and taking standardized tests, completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), identifying and applying to a balanced list of educational options, and securing scholarships and other financial aid.

CAC's advising models mitigate potential declines in enrollment rates for underrepresented students across the country. For example, CAC saw a 7% year over year decline in first-time fall college enrollment among students we serve in the Class of 2020; however, without a CAC adviser, nationally, low-income students suffered an 11.4% decline in enrollment and underrepresented students of color suffered a 9.4% enrollment decline.

***Lists the measurable participant outputs and outcomes.***

CAC uses KPIs to drive impacts and measure success at the school, program, and national levels. Our KPIs are based on national educational access metrics chosen in consultation with Bain & Company and our research partner, Evaluation and Assessment Solutions for Education, LLC (EASE), based at Stanford University. CAC sets KPI goals each summer for the upcoming academic year based on a review of the previous 3-years' results. Factors such as the maturity of an advising program, school system changes, rezoning, and a major event like COVID-19 can influence program goals.

CAC KPIs track one-to-one meetings with advisers, college application submissions, students with family engagement, students with financial aid assistance, students with FAFSA completion. Other data collected and outcomes evaluated include # students served; # seniors served, # advisers, high schools and university partners; # college applications submitted; scholarship dollars and institutional aid awarded; and 2/4-year college enrollment.

Additionally, CAC benchmarks against results reported by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center and the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics, among others. Our research is facilitated by an in-house Impact & Evaluation Team and our ongoing relationship with EASE. CAC uses bi-weekly progress-to-goals updates, short-

cycle implementation evaluation, and longitudinal research on program outcomes for continuous improvement. National and regional program leaders evaluate data findings with advisers during regular monitoring check-ins.