A FOCUS ON NON-COMPLETERS:
ONE STRATEGY FOR UPSKILLING THE EXISTING WORKFORCE IN NC

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Efforts to develop North Carolina's talent pipeline must include strategies for reaching people of all ages and experiences. This paper explores opportunities for upskilling our existing workforce — that is, developing workers' skills to improve performance, allow for advancement to higher positions, and fill unmet employer needs — and developing the talents of people who should be but are not currently in the workforce. In particular, we sought to explore the opportunity created by the hundreds of thousands of people in North Carolina's workforce who are non-completers. These residents have some postsecondary experience but no credentials.

Upskilling refers to the skills development and training of existing workers, with the purposes of:

- enhancing skill sets to provide better performance in workers' current positions,

- equipping employees with the skills and opportunities required to advance to higher-paying positions, and

- meeting the increasing need for higher-level skills to support higher value-added activities in the economy.

North Carolina's employers say they are challenged to find enough workers with the skills they need to remain competitive. In addition, many workers today find themselves unable to climb the ladder of employment-based economic mobility. Some of these employees have attended college, but they failed to complete a degree or high-quality certificate. There are 905,000 non-completers in North Carolina. This group offers special opportunities to get many North Carolinians to the finish line with quality credentials and/or degrees.

Getting non-completers to the finish line may require connecting them to services that address non-academic barriers faced. Many of those services exist in North Carolina's workforce system, which is an interconnected set of solutions to meet employment needs. Services are provided by 19 different programs across multiple state agencies, some of which serve all people and others that focus on special populations with barriers to completing education or gaining employment. Many of these programs also work with businesses to understand their workforce needs and to help find the qualified talent they need to succeed.

Four clear opportunities for alignment include:

NCWorks Certified Career Pathways

The NCWorks Certified Career Pathways program is already one of the NCWorks Commission's primary initiatives for developing sustainable pipelines of talent for high-demand occupations. The commission established, in conjunction with education and workforce agency partners, eight best practices criteria for creating comprehensive career pathways to help individuals get from where they are today in their jobs to where they want to see their careers go in the future. Local teams, including employers, develop these comprehensive pathways and apply to the commission for certification. As of May 2018, there were thirty certified pathways in fields such as advanced manufacturing, information technology, health care, construction and hospitality and tourism.

Work-Based Learning Programs

Work-based learning initiatives help students gain both the technical and the employment skills needed to succeed in careers. These programs can help students at all levels who want to learn more about, explore, and get experience in a job. Programs also exist to help workers who are changing careers or simply seeking to improve skills to obtain higher-level jobs in the same field.

Part-way Home Programs

Part-way Home Programs, as the name implies, reaches individuals who have at some point in the past attended a college or university but failed to earn a degree. Several higher education campuses in North Carolina are actively recruiting former students to finish their degrees and have programs in place that exclusively or primarily serve Part-way Home students. However, North Carolina does not have a coordinated campaign across community colleges and universities that is focused on these students.

Credentials for Military Experience and Training

Many colleges across the nation are seeking out creative ways to reward veterans for postsecondary learning and skills gained during service. Institutions of higher education are offering: Credit for Military Experience, Credit Hours through Prior Learning Portfolio, Test-based Course Challenges and Workplace Learning opportunities. Working together, the workforce system and institutions of higher education have an opportunity to make North Carolina a national leader in transitioning residents from active service to the civilian workforce.

*my*FUTURE**NC**

A FOCUS ON NON-COMPLETERS:
ONE STRATEGY FOR UPSKILLING THE EXISTING WORKFORCE IN NC

Introduction

Given the rapid pace of change in today's workplace, upskilling is a continuous effort that helps people stay current with the requirements of their careers and involves the development of a variety of skills. *Upskilling* refers to the skills development and training of existing workers, with the purposes of:

- enhancing skill sets to provide better performance in workers' current positions,

- equipping employees with the skills and opportunities required to advance to higher-paying positions, and

- meeting the increasing need for higher-level skills to support higher value-added activities in the economy.

The need to upskill North Carolina's workforce is clear and compelling. According to the North Carolina Economic Report, published by the N.C. Department of Commerce in June 2017,

- North Carolina is projected to add more than 550,000 jobs by 2024;

- the fastest growing job categories will require some form of postsecondary educational attainment;

- jobs requiring education beyond high school are projected to show the greatest percentage increase among all job categories; and

- jobs with low educational requirements (occupations requiring no postsecondary or college experience) will have the slowest rate of growth, although they are projected to produce the most job openings, as there are more of these positions existing today. These openings will be due mostly to the replacement of current workers rather than to new growth (See Fig. 1).

Far too many North Carolinians lack the skills, work experiences, and education to fill the jobs that exist today, never mind those projected to exist in the not too distant future. The state Commerce Department's 2018 Employer Needs Survey, which polled employers from all 100 counties in North Carolina, found that a large percentage of those employers that were hiring had trouble filling at least one position. Close to 80 percent of the employers had attempted to hire one or more workers during 2017, and half had experienced difficulty. Employers faced fairly consistent challenges in finding talent, although companies in Charlotte and the Research Triangle, which are global talent magnets, experienced slightly fewer recruitment problems than companies in smaller metro areas with lower in-migration rates, such as Greensboro, Asheville, and Wilmington (See Fig. 2). A lack of technical skills and education were cited by 49 and 43 percent of employers, respectively (See Fig. 3). The relative challenges for employers hiring in high-demand career clusters is reflected in Figure 4.

On the other side of employer woes, in March 2018, 4.3 percent of North Carolinians (more than 200,000 people) were unemployed and looking for work. Some counties experience significantly higher employment rates than others (See Fig. 5).

AUTHOR
Anita R. Brown-Graham
ncIMPACT Director and Professor of Public Law and Government

AUTHOR
Catherine Moga Bryant
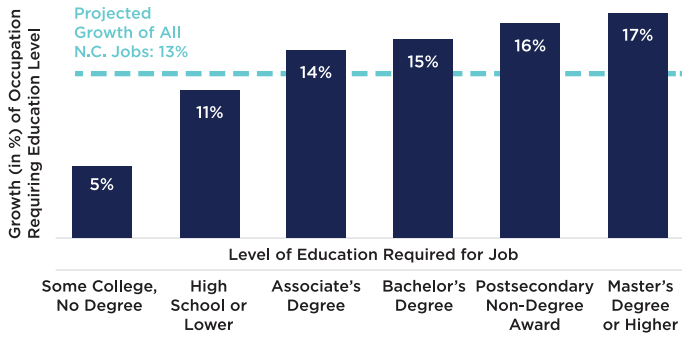*Executive Director, NC Works Commission*

Design by www.AdrialDesigns.com

FIG. 1: PROJECTED GROWTH IN OCCUPATIONS IN NORTH CAROLINA, BY EDUCATION LEVEL REQUIRED (2014-2024)

Growth (in %) of Occupation Requiring Education Level

Projected Growth of All N.C. Jobs: 13%

Level of Education Required for Job	Growth
Some College, No Degree	5%
High School or Lower	11%
Associate's Degree	14%
Bachelor's Degree	15%
Postsecondary Non-Degree Award	16%
Master's Degree or Higher	17%

Source: Carolina Demography, My Future NC, 2018, Slide 4.

FIG. 2: NORTH CAROLINA EMPLOYERS FACING HIRING DIFFICULTIES BY LOCATION AND SECTOR

Employers (in %) Encountering Hiring Problems

Location/Sector	%
All Employers	50%
Charlotte & Research Triangle	40%
Medium-Sized Metro Areas	61%
Micro-politan Areas	49%
Rural Areas	46%
Manufacturing Employers	59%
STEM Employers	57%
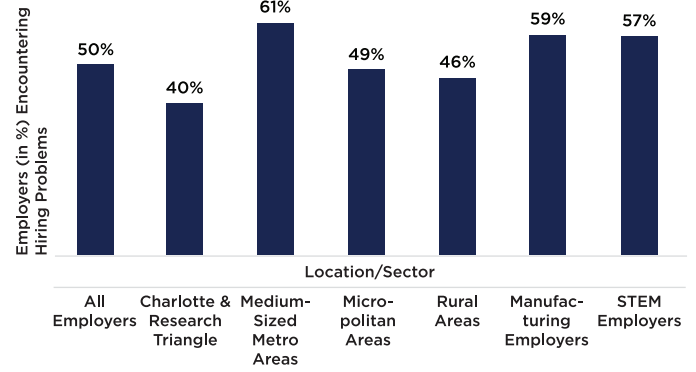
Source: NC Department of Commerce, Labor & Economic Analysis Division (2018), Employer Needs Survey

FIG. 3: REASONS CITED BY EMPLOYERS FOR HIRING DIFFICULTIES (OVERALL SAMPLE, ACROSS ALL POSITIONS)

Reason Given for Employer Hiring Problems

Reason	Employers (in %) Listing Reason
Employability	65%
Low Number of Applicants	55%
Work Experience	51%
Technical Skills	49%
Soft Skills	49%
Education	43%
Pay/Compensation	33%
Commuting Distance	25%
Criminal Records	23%
Drug Screening	20%
Other	15%

Source: NC Department of Commerce, Labor and Economic Data and Analysis, 2018 Employer Needs Survey

FIG. 4: THE CHALLENGE IS GREATER FOR HIGH-DEMAND CAREER CLUSTERS

● Labor Needed   ● Completers (Public)   ● Completers (Private)

Career Cluster	Labor Needed	Completers (Public)	Completers (Private)
Health Science	37,999	7,772	2,930
Business Mgmt & Admin.	10,583	7,294	3,617
Information Tech.	10,226	2,012	632
Finance	10,149	1,452	533
Science, Tech., Engineering, Math	4,815	5,101	1,614

Source: NC LEAD (Labor and Economic Data and Analysis), 2018, based on an analysis of data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau, the Conference Board, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the National Center for Educational Statistics (IPEDS); Note: The figures above represent multi-year averages. Labor supply/demand data are an average of the years 2014 through 2016. Educational program completers data are an average of the 2010 through 2015 program years.

FIG. 5: UNEMPLOYMENT RATES (BY %) IN NORTH CAROLINA COUNTIES (March 2018, Based on Preliminary Data)

Source: N.C. Department of Commerce, Labor and Economic Division (2018).

Rate of Unemployment
- 3.3–4.1%
- 4.2–4.9%
- 5.0–6.1%
- 6.2–8.7%
- 8.8–12.7%

P-12 — POST-SECONDARY — WORKFORCE

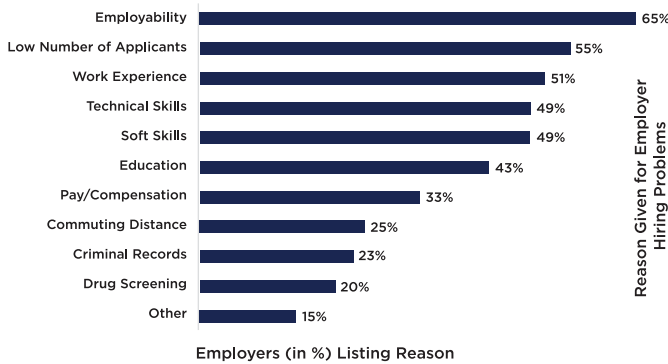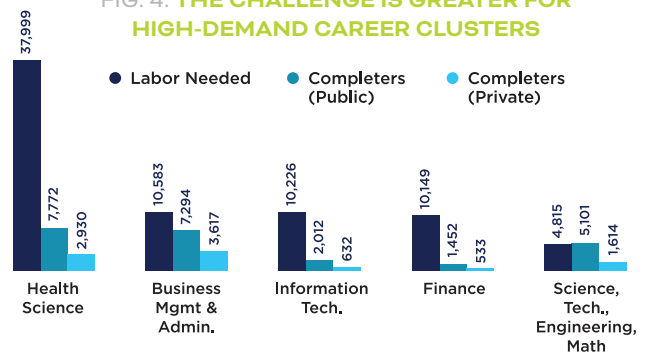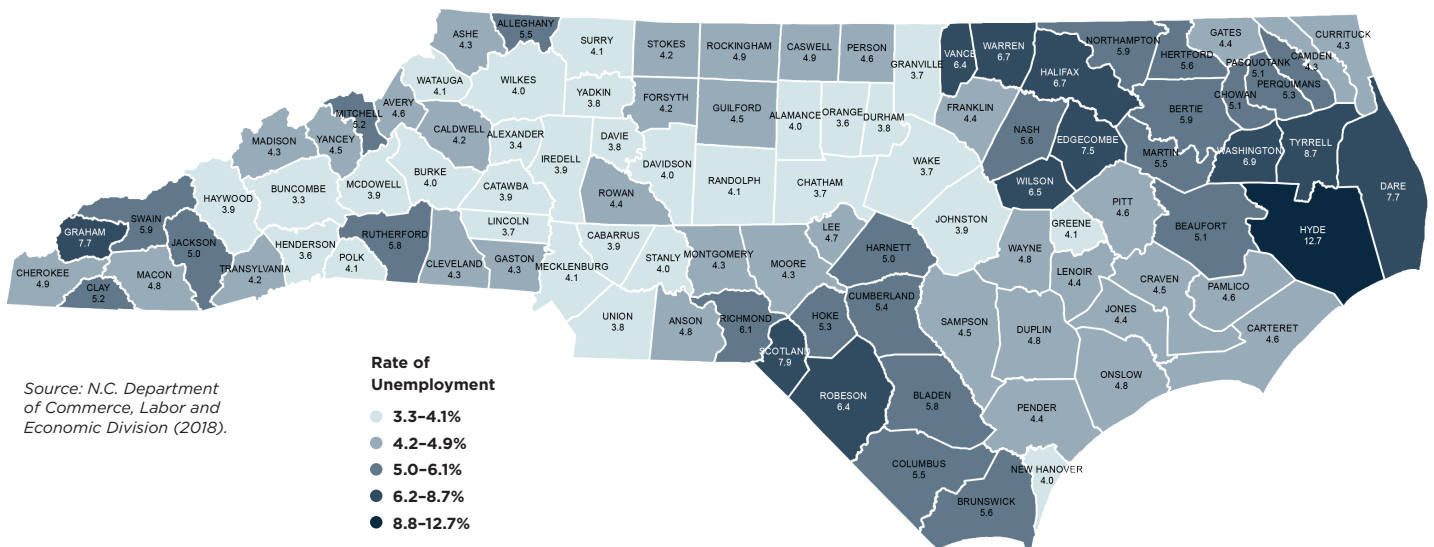**A FOCUS ON NON-COMPLETERS: ONE STRATEGY FOR UPSKILLING THE EXISTING WORKFORCE IN NC**

my FUTURE NC

It is important to note that unemployment rates do not fully capture the true employment status of North Carolinians, as the statistic does not include those who are discouraged and have given up looking for jobs or are underemployed — working part-time but wanting full-time positions. Almost 8 percent of the state labor force was found to be discouraged, underemployed, or otherwise disconnected from work in March 2018. *(Alternative Measures of Labor Underutilization, United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018.)*

Without Successful Interventions, We Will Not Close the Skills Gap

While a sizeable gap has been noted nationwide between the levels of educational attainment and skills of current workers and the education and skills projected to be in demand in the future, our state confronts a slightly deeper deficit than the national average. Research from Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce (CEW) predicts that by 2020, fully 65 percent of job openings in the country will require education and training beyond high school. However, CEW predicts that a higher number — 67 percent — of North Carolina jobs will require postsecondary education by that date.

In 2016, just under 47 percent of North Carolina's prime working-age (25–64) population had some form of postsecondary education (degree plus certificate estimate). This is on par with the national rate. The total number of North Carolina workers with some college, no degree, or an associate's degree is higher than the national rates for these categories, but the state's workforce reflects slightly lower rates of attainment for graduate and professional degrees. And overall attainment rates vary by race/ethnicity, gender, and age (See Figs. 6 & 7).

Our younger working adults (age 25–34) have higher levels of educational attainment

Highlights from Employer Needs Survey (2018)

- 50 percent of North Carolina employers wishing to fill at least one position in the past year faced hiring challenges.
- Employers in Charlotte and the Research Triangle had less difficulty than employers in smaller metro areas.
- Employers in manufacturing and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) sectors had more difficulty than employers in other sectors.
- A lack of employability skills (e.g., critical thinking, organizational ability) was the top reason cited by employers for hiring difficulties.
- Given North Carolina's current low unemployment rate, not surprisingly, another issue cited was the low number of applicants.
- A lack of work experience, technical skills, or education was also frequently reported.

The Growing Importance of Education and Training

Several measures have been developed to predict states' workforce-related educational needs. Some of the most prominent come from Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce (CEW) and the Lumina Foundation. CEW predicts that within two years, 67 percent of jobs in North Carolina will require education and training beyond high school, while Lumina estimates that 60 percent of people in the state will require postsecondary education, which includes high-quality credentials and/or degrees, to secure employment. This percentage differential is explained by the fact that there is no comprehensive and reliable source for measuring third-party credentials awarded to individuals (industry-created certifications that confirm an individual has mastered critical job skills), so the two organizations have taken different approaches in estimating this number: CEW uses data from the Census Bureau on the number of people with "some college, but no degree," while Lumina has conducted a survey of Americans to estimate the percentage of individuals with high-value certificates.

While there are differences in the two numbers, the compelling underlying message of each is that more people need education and/or training beyond high school to be prepared for the jobs of today and of tomorrow. In the past, a person could complete high school and find a good job with benefits, especially in the manufacturing industry. But, as technology has changed, so have the skills required to obtain jobs with good wages. Today's jobs require more and higher-level skills.

than their older colleagues. In the absence of any specific policy interventions, North Carolina will move closer to CEW's 67 percent (or Lumina's 60 percent) estimate of percentage of jobs demanding postsecondary education due solely to demographic changes. However, we will not close the gap between current workforce education/skills and needed education/skills unless we target persistent deficiencies in educational attainment across gender and racial/ethnic groups, as well as work to improve educational outcomes across ages.

North Carolina's Educational Institutions & Non-Completers

North Carolina is home to 53 public and private colleges and universities, as well as 58 community colleges (See Fig. 8). Building on an influx of well-educated residents in the past three decades, our institutions of higher learning have helped the state go from being significantly behind national averages for postsecondary attainment for working-age adults to being slightly above these averages. However, substantial room remains for improvements in postsecondary education attainment.

While many enroll, too few North Carolina students who attend two- or four-year institutions complete their programs. In the UNC System 68.2 percent of students complete a degree or certificate within five years according to The State of the University Snapshot 2018. According to the N.C. Community Colleges' 2017 Progress and Persistence Report, of all the curriculum students who were enrolled in a North Carolina community college in the fall of 2015, only 27 percent had graduated or transferred by the subsequent fall semester. These rates indicate high numbers of non-completers in North Carolina (See Fig. 9).

In fact, as indicated by Figure 9, there are currently 905,000 residents in our state who have some postsecondary attendance but no degree. Of that number some are still pursuing completion, but many have given up on their postsecondary pursuits. Another 260,000 residents have a high-quality certificate, but no degree. Figure 6 offers insight into varying attainment for demographic groups. Black adults represent the highest percentage of individuals reporting some college with no degree completed (21 percent), followed by American Indians (18 percent), whites (17 percent), Hispanics (8 percent), and Asians (7 percent) (See Fig. 6).

North Carolina has an opportunity to micro target for upskilling individuals who have some college experience but no credential or degree. This population may be particularly suited to fill projected needs for jobs requiring third-party credentials, associate's degrees, and bachelor's degrees.

Some of this work has already begun. For example, the University of North Carolina's current Strategic Plan calls for programs that target "part-way home" students who

- Have earned more than 72 credit hours,
- Are in good academic standing (at least a 2.0 GPA), and
- Have been away from the university for at least two semesters.

Although they may not all have come through a formal program operating at the institution, during the 2016-17 academic year 1,803 students re-enrolled at a UNC institution who met the general criteria for being considered a "part-way home" student.
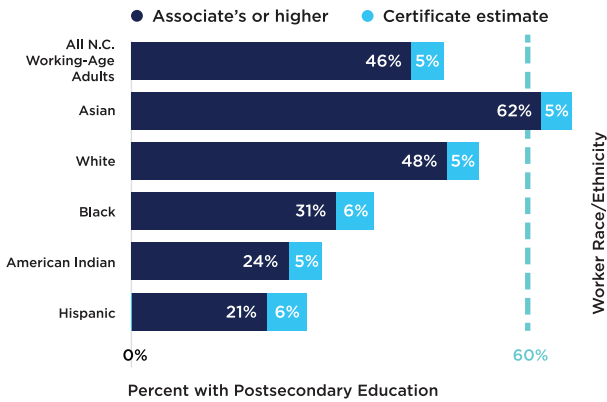
Many of the state's community college campuses are also engaging non-completers through reverse transfer and other programs. Some programs offer associate degrees to students who have met the requirements, often through classes taken elsewhere but with no degree completed. Sometimes those classes were taken at a four-year institution. Additionally, the North Carolina Community College System's Strategic Plan, 2018-2022, calls for increasing completion through "effectively incorporating multiple on and off ramps" and reconnecting "former community college students to education and training opportunities that foster continued educational and career growth."
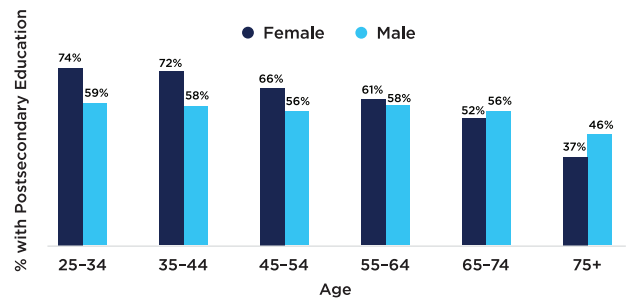
FIG. 6: SHARE OF NORTH CAROLINA PRIME WORKING-AGE ADULTS (25–64) WITH POSTSECONDARY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, BY RACE/ETHNICITY (2016)

Associate's or higher ● **Certificate estimate**

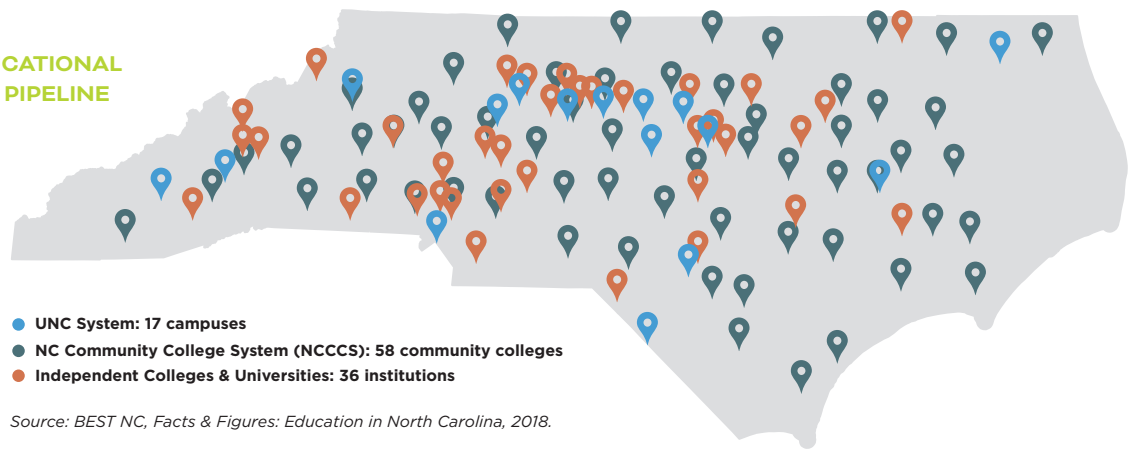| Worker Race/Ethnicity	Associate's or higher	Certificate estimate
All N.C. Working-Age Adults	46%	5%
Asian	62%	5%
White	48%	5%
Black	31%	6%
American Indian	24%	5%
Hispanic	21%	6%

Percent with Postsecondary Education (0% – 60%)

Source: Carolina Demography, My Future NC, 2018, Slide 13.

FIG. 7: SHARE OF NORTH CAROLINA PRIME WORKING-AGE ADULTS (25–64) WITH ANY POSTSECONDARY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, BY GENDER AND AGE (2016)
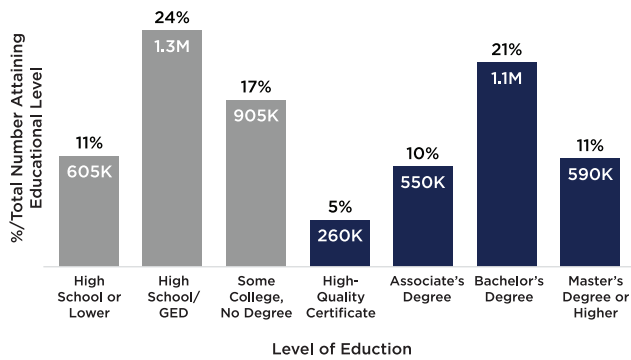

% with Postsecondary Education

● **Female** ● **Male**

Age	Female	Male
25–34	74%	59%
35–44	72%	58%
45–54	66%	56%
55–64	61%	58%
65–74	52%	56%
75+	37%	46%

Source: Carolina Demography, Developing a Talent Pipeline for North Carolina (August 2016).

FIG. 8: THE EDUCATIONAL PIECES OF THE PIPELINE

● **UNC System: 17 campuses**
● **NC Community College System (NCCCS): 58 community colleges**
● **Independent Colleges & Universities: 36 institutions**

Source: BEST NC, Facts & Figures: Education in North Carolina, 2018.

FIG. 9: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AMONG NORTH CAROLINA ADULTS AGED 25–64 (2016)

%/Total Number Attaining Educational Level

Level of Education	%	Number
High School or Lower	11%	605K
High School/GED	24%	1.3M
Some College, No Degree	17%	905K
High-Quality Certificate	5%	260K
Associate's Degree	10%	550K
Bachelor's Degree	21%	1.1M
Master's Degree or Higher	11%	590K

Source: Carolina Demography, My Future NC, 2018, Slide 10

P-12 → POST-SECONDARY → WORKFORCE

A FOCUS ON NON-COMPLETERS: ONE STRATEGY FOR UPSKILLING THE EXISTING WORKFORCE IN NC

my FUTURE NC

Working with Educational Institutions: Resources for Supporting Non-Completers

There are two primary reasons why students fail to complete their postsecondary education programs: inadequate preparation and difficulty navigating the higher education system. *(See Michael Lawrence Collins & Joel Vargas, "Why Millions of Americans Never Finish College," CityLab, Feb. 27, 2017, https://www.citylab.com/life/2017/02/why-millions-of-americans-never-finish-college/517713.)* North Carolina's workforce system exists to help people prepare for rewarding careers and to assist businesses in acquiring the talent they need for successful operations. Many students who fail to complete degrees would benefit from the workforce development system's supportive resources for building the state's talent pipeline. Indeed, the Community College System's current strategic plan explicitly calls for increasing student success by connecting students to transportation, health, and other comprehensive services to address non-academic barriers.

An interconnected set of solutions to help people prepare for jobs and business to acquire talent, services are provided by nineteen different programs across multiple state agencies, some of which serve all people and others that focus on special populations with barriers to completing education or gaining employment. Many of these programs also work with businesses to understand their workforce needs and to help find the qualified talent they need to succeed. More detailed program and service information is provided below.

Services to Individuals

Education and Training

Services in this category include career and technical education programs, which are offered in middle and high schools as well as in community colleges. These programs provide students the opportunity to take courses aligned to career pathways. They also prepare students for further education and offer the advanced training needed to be successful in careers. In addition to classroom and lab instruction, students may participate in work-based learning experiences and student organization activities. These programs are offered in a wide variety of fields, including agriculture, health sciences, information technology, and engineering.

Work-based learning may begin as early as elementary school, with career awareness activities that help students learn about careers available in North Carolina. This information is often seen as important for young students who are selecting coursework, but it is also critical for adults who are looking for a first job or who are interested in changing careers. Work-based learning also includes career exposure and real-world work experience programs.

Career exposure programs include activities that help students and adults try out new careers before making commitments. They also feature career competitions, science fairs, service learning, and teacher externships where teachers engage in the work of a business to learn how classroom content is applied in the workplace.

Real-world work experiences include internships, apprenticeships, cooperatives, practicums, clinicals, on-the-job training, and other programs that provide education, skills development, and work experience for students and adults. These programs also help individuals learn what are often referred to as "soft," or employability, skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, and time management. Work-experience programs also reach incumbent workers who need to learn new skills as technology changes, as well as adults who have work experience but want to change careers due to a decline in employment options in their current industries.

Job Search and Placement

Services in this category help working-age individuals learn how to look for a job, develop a resume, apply for a job, and prepare for an interview. These types of programs have career advisors and job coaches for adults and for students enrolled in school. The advisor or coach may start by administering assessments and interest evaluations that help identify the individual's skills, work experiences, and interests. The advisor or coach will then work one-on-one with the individual to help determine career options, identify needed education and training, and, ultimately, obtain and retain a job.

Supportive Services

Often it is not the cost of education but, rather, competing priorities and obligations that hinder people from completing their education, getting a job, or keeping a job. North Carolina's workforce system offers supports that include assistance in paying for childcare, transportation, housing, and food. Programs in this category also help students cover the cost of books, uniforms, tools, and other items needed in an education or training program or in order to begin a job.

The state also provides assistive technology that helps individuals with disabilities obtain or maintain employment. This technology includes any item, piece of equipment, or product that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of an individual with a disability. Examples include aids for alternative and augmentative communication, sensory aids, and many more.

Services for Employers

Recruiting and Screening

The workforce system helps connect employers to qualified, work-ready employees through posting jobs, screening candidates, validating skills of potential employees, developing job profiles, coordinating job fairs, and providing space for interviewing and training. These services are especially valuable to small- and medium-sized businesses.

The workforce system also provides accommodations to assist workers with disabilities, including workplace modifications, assistive technology, and job coaches. There are also financial incentives available to employers who hire qualified individuals facing barriers to employment, including people who are or who have been justice-system involved, individuals receiving food stamps and other social supports, the long-term unemployed, veterans, and people with disabilities.

Training for Employers

North Carolina has several programs that provide training for new hires and existing employees through classroom, online, and on-the-job training solutions and support services. These programs include customized training designed for current and future employees in new and expanding companies to assist with job growth, technology investment, and/or productivity enhancements.

Programs are also available to help businesses establish apprenticeships and other work-based learning programs to train current and future employees. These programs include classroom training, on-the-job training, or a combination of the two to help individuals learn the specific technical and employment skills needed for careers in a given industry.

There are also programs to help incumbent, or current, workers gain new skills needed by their employers. These programs are especially helpful when an employer is upgrading technology or introducing a new work flow.

Talent Pipeline Development

The workforce system helps businesses develop career pathways, which are purposeful plans for education and training. Pathways include information on the courses, credentials, and experience needed for different levels of careers that require different levels of education, from high school to graduate and professional degrees. (See below for more information on NCWorks Certified Career Pathways.)

Outplacement Services

Programs are available to help businesses that are at risk for downsizing or closure. The workforce system provides the supports necessary to stabilize and/or identify new opportunities for growth or for outplacement and transition. Regional career opportunities will be identified for employees facing layoffs, and assistance will be provided to help them improve or learn new skills, receive support during the transition, and gain employment.

Individual Services	Examples
Education & Training	Career and technical education programs available in middle and high schools, as well as in community colleges Work-based learning that includes career awareness, career exploration, and real-world career experience
Job Search & Placement	Services to support people looking for work
Supportive Services	Assistance with issues that hinder individuals from completing their educations, getting jobs, or keeping jobs
Business Services	
Recruiting & Screening	Connecting employers to qualified, work-ready employees
Training	Programs to train new hires and existing employees through classroom, online, and work-based learning
Talent Pipeline Development	Developing sustainable programs to help develop future employees
Outplacement Services	Assistance to businesses at risk for downsizing or closure

Four Opportunities to Focus Workforce Supports on Non-Completers

The important data to remember from the preceding sections are:

- North Carolina's current residents do not have sufficient educational attainment to meet the needs of current job openings, much less those of the near future.
- NC has 905,000 individuals who have some college experience but no degrees (the non-completers).

- North Carolina has a workforce system, which includes engaged employers, that could support non-completers in getting postsecondary credentials.

In focusing on this population, North Carolina could choose to also focus on high-demand occupations in specific sectors.

NCWorks Certified Career Pathways

The NCWorks Certified Career Pathways program is already one of the NCWorks Commission's primary initiatives for developing sustainable pipelines of talent for high-demand occupations. The commission established, in conjunction with education and workforce agency partners, eight best practices criteria for creating comprehensive career pathways to help individuals get from where they are today in their jobs to where they want to see their careers go in the future. Local teams develop these comprehensive pathways and apply to the commission for certification. As of May 2018, there were 30 certified pathways in fields such as advanced manufacturing, information technology, health care, and hospitality and tourism.

The development of pathways begins with an engaged group of employers in a high-demand sector. These employers share their workforce needs as well as the knowledge, skill, and experience requirements for employees at each level of an occupation within their industry. The employers also agree to provide work-based learning to be a part of the pipeline development and to consider candidates who successfully complete the pathway.

After employers have shared their workforce needs and specifications, education and workforce professionals meet to develop and update the courses, credentials, and work-based learning activities offered through each institution to ensure that the programs provide the instruction and learning needed for individuals to be successful in their selected careers. This group then develops a seamless pathway, including key information on requirements for different careers and associated wages.

Pathways promote stackable credentials so that a person is not only gaining education and skills, but also earning employer-valued credentials along the way that will help him or her qualify for employment in his or her chosen career if he/she needs to work while going to school or must take a break to earn some income. Non-completers may be particularly well-suited for stackable credentials in career pathways for high-demand fields.

Work-Based Learning Programs

Work-based learning initiatives help students gain both the technical and the employment skills needed to succeed in careers. These programs can help students at all levels who want to learn more about, explore, and get experience in a job. Programs also exist to help workers who are changing careers or simply seeking to improve skills to obtain higher-level jobs in the same field. These individuals generally have solid employment skills, but they may need some additional training in the skills specific to their industries. Finally, upskilling programs help employees currently in the workforce improve their skills to obtain higher-level jobs. (See chart on following page.)

P-12   POST-SECONDARY   WORKFORCE

Key Work-Based Learning Models

Program Model	Overview
Internships	• Provide participants with an opportunity to learn about a career or industry by working for an employer in the field of interest for a limited period of time. • A form of experiential learning, often tied to a secondary or postsecondary program of study, that enables participants to gain applied experience, build professional and technical skills, and make connections in a field of interest.
Co-ops	• Link academic programs with structured work experiences through which participants acquire professional and technical skills. • Participants earn academic credit for work carried out over a limited period of time under the supervision of a professional mentor. • Numerous states have in place policies and guidelines that define co-ops and provide guidelines for them
On-the-job training	• Workplace-based opportunity for participants to develop career-track skills needed for entry to a particular industry or advancement along a career track • Can support rapid re-employment of individuals following mass layoffs • Can be used to retrain incumbent workers if technological or other changes within a workplace demand the development of new skills • The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) contains provisions for funding OJT programs that meet established federal requirements, but employers and other organizations may also establish independent OJT programs
Transitional jobs	• Designed to address challenges faced by individuals with barriers to employment • Time-limited employment, through which participants gain professional skills and establish a successful work history, is combined with a range of supportive services, including employment services • WIOA contains provisions for funding transitional jobs programs that meet established federal requirements, but workforce and community-based organizations may also establish independent transitional jobs programs • Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) funds may be used to implement transitional jobs programs and to subsidize wages, and local workforce development boards can use WIOA formula funds for transitional jobs
Apprenticeships	• Intensive work-based learning experiences that generally last from one to six years and provide a combination of on-the-job training and formal classroom instruction • Intended to support progressive skill acquisition and lead to postsecondary credentials and, in some cases, degrees • The U.S. Department of Labor and some states administer registered apprenticeship programs, though unregistered apprenticeships that incorporate the key features of the model are also operated successfully by a range of organizations, including employers, industry associations, labor-management organizations, and workforce agencies

(https://jfforg-prod-prime.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/WBL_Principles_Paper_062416.pdf)

Part-way Home Programs

Part-way Home Programs, as the name implies, reaches individuals who have at some point in the past attended a college or university but failed to earn a degree. Several higher education campuses, including community colleges, in North Carolina are actively recruiting former students to finish their degrees and have programs in place that exclusively or primarily serve Part-way Home students. However, North Carolina does not have a coordinated, single campaign across community colleges and universities that is focused on these students.

Mississippi's Complete 2 Compete (C2C) program, for example, is a statewide initiative designed to help adults in that state who have earned college credit but who do not have a degree to better their lives by completing a degree program. Created by the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning and the Mississippi Community College Board, the C2C program combines the resources of the state's fifteen community colleges and eight public universities. The program also utilizes workforce development supports.

C2C makes it easy for adults to review prior credits earned and matches each participant with an institution that provides the best pathway for obtaining a degree. C2C links each adult in the program to a C2C coach who works to maximize the application of earned credits toward a degree. For adults who have enough credits for an associate's or bachelor's degree, that degree is awarded. For those just short of a degree, C2C coaches work to identify the best pathways for meeting degree goals.

Understanding that finances are a huge barrier for adult learners, Complete 2 Compete offers C2C grants to those who qualify. These grants can be used to pay past debts at any Mississippi public institutions or to assist with the expenses involved in re-enrolling at such schools. C2C grants are one-time, $500 awards given to C2C students during their first semesters in the program.

Military Experience and Training

Many colleges across the nation are seeking out creative ways to reward veterans for postsecondary learning and skills gained during service. Fayetteville Tech, for example, is a leader in granting credit for prior learning experiences. The college specializes in identifying and providing credit for military training to members of the military and to veterans. The school has simple online tools that individuals can use to find college courses that correspond to their military training and experience. Representatives at the school then help veterans obtain the credits connected with such courses and apply them to programs of study, shortening the time it takes to obtain educational goals and qualify for careers.

Involving Employers in Upskilling the Existing Workforce

Employer engagement is critical to successfully developing North Carolina's workforce. The opportunities for engagement involve:

- **Deepening ties through oversight.** Workforce programs often engage employers in advisory boards. The public workforce system uses workforce development boards as a primary strategy for engaging employers, and university and community college academic departments often seek the participation of relevant employer representatives.

- **Designing programs to meet needs.** Employers provide information on industry trends and the skills needed for targeted occupations and help workforce and educational organizations identify and map career pathways. Employers also give feedback on program content.

- **Delivering programs that work.** A major way that employers provide program delivery services is through work experience opportunities. Work experience opportunities can consist of paid or unpaid internships or externships, clinical experiences required for licensure, transitional jobs, or apprenticeships where paid training at the worksite is part of the training program.

- **Determining recruitment and hiring strategies.** On the low end of engagement, employers may notify organizations about job openings and agree to interview program participants. On the higher end of engagement, employers may pre-determine to hire participants who successfully complete specific programs.

- **Directing financial or in-kind resources for support.** Besides providing knowledge and advice and making hiring commitments, employers may donate equipment for students to practice, or they may fund programs when they anticipate a need for a particular type of talent. In some instances, employers will enter into contracts with workforce programs to train a certain number of current or future employees.

University College (UMUC) is also a national leader in working with the military. The campus offers the following rewards:

- **Credit for Military Experience.** UMUC will review the experiences set out in military transcripts to determine transfer credit based on recommendations from the American Council on Education.

- **Prior Learning Portfolio.** Veterans can receive as many as 30 credits for military experience by identifying and documenting the college-level learning gained from various types of experience. Veterans enroll in a 3-credit course and create a portfolio describing and documenting their learning experiences. The portfolio is then evaluated by faculty members, who determine the amount of credit that should be awarded.

- **Course Challenge.** Through course challenge, veterans can earn credit for a wide range of undergraduate courses at UMUC simply by passing the equivalent of a final exam for a given course.

- **Workplace Learning.** Active service members can also earn credit for taking on a new project or for learning a new skill in the service or on the job. To participate in the program, service members enter into a learning agreement with the military and a faculty mentor. They then submit academic assignments about the workplace learning experience and earn up to 6 credits each semester, for up to 15 credits total.

North Carolina's workforce system has programs that focus on veterans who may have some college attainment or may qualify for credits based on the options provided by campuses. This system could play a more expanded role on behalf of military personnel as translator and broker with higher education institutions, thereby making North Carolina the national leader in providing routes toward greater numbers of high-quality credentials and degrees to those serving or who have served in the military in the workforce system and higher education.

Conclusion

As we look to increase educational attainment in the state, existing workers who have some college but no degree pose a significant opportunity for meeting short-term employer needs. But, if they are to be successful, some of these non-completers will likely need additional supports — from helping them complete degrees to providing ongoing training, from connections to community supports for housing and childcare to leveraging resources for transportation, and from "soft skills" education to information on new technological advances. North Carolina's greater workforce development system is well-positioned to leverage its many resources to help North Carolina meet its educational attainment goals.