North Carolina Community Colleges

Leading through Change

2022-2026 Strategic Plan

www.nccommunitycolleges.edu\strategic-plan

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[Inside front cover]

Executive Summary

Leading through Change

North Carolina's system of 58 community colleges was initially established to meet the needs of a changing economy, as the state's primary economic base shifted from agriculture to manufacturing. As the economy has continued to shift and education and training approaches have evolved, North Carolina community colleges have demonstrated how they are uniquely positioned to adapt to change and be on the forefront of developing innovative strategies to meet the needs of students, businesses, and individual communities. Remaining the most affordable postsecondary education institutions following decades of rising higher education costs, community colleges are also pioneers in virtual learning, work-based and simulated education and training, and rapid deployment of training for economic development. As a system of education built upon an "open door" philosophy, the North Carolina Community College System is well positioned to welcome students from increasingly diverse backgrounds and provide the supported pathways students need to reach their educational and career goals.

In September 2021, the State Board of Community Colleges launched a strategic planning process that explored the challenges and opportunities facing the state and the North Carolina Community College System. After consideration of research and stakeholder input, the State Board of Community Colleges defined the following as the most pressing priorities for the North Carolina Community College System:

- **Faculty and staff recruitment and retention,** especially following a pandemic that required so much of college faculty and staff, and during a time when the overall economy is experiencing a "Great Resignation" as workers reconsider how and where they work.
- **Enrollment**, following a period of overall decline nationally in community college enrollment and further impacts due to the pandemic, with limited growth since.
- Supporting **student success for all** students, when changes in demographics mean our student body will include more older students and students from more diverse backgrounds, and college leaders cite youth disengagement, pandemic learning losses, student mental health challenges and disabilities, and balancing college with work and family as special challenges to overcome.
- Addressing **economic and workforce development** needs – to meet talent needs for recent unprecedented economic development success, ensure our economy includes all North Carolinians in its prosperity, and brace against economic shocks in an unpredictable economy.
- Ensuring **system funding and effectiveness** by modernizing the Community College System funding formula and IT infrastructure, improving and linking data systems, and incentivizing regional collaboration among the colleges.

With the engagement of community college leaders and experts, community college partners, and students and businesses, the State Board of Community Colleges set aims and developed strategies related to these priorities. The State Board plans an aggressive implementation process that embeds the priorities in its activities as never before, connects with and supports colleges' own strategic directions, and leverages the strength of individual community colleges and leadership networks across community colleges to achieve the goals.

Part of the strength of the North Carolina Community College System is also its collaboration across the education sector and with workforce and economic development, business, community, and local government partners. The Community College System's priorities and strategies intentionally connect to the state's broader economic development and educational goals – such as the economic development community's aims for North Carolina to be "First in Talent" and the educational attainment goal for North Carolina to have two million working-age North Carolinians with postsecondary degrees or credentials by 2030.

The past four years have shown us that we cannot always predict the challenges and opportunities to come. As the North Carolina Community College System works toward the goals in the 2022-2026 strategic plan, it will adjust words in this "living plan" as needed and continue to be the nimble education system that innovates to serve North Carolina's students, businesses, and communities.

Mission

The mission of the North Carolina Community College System is to open the door to high quality, accessible educational opportunities that minimize barriers to postsecondary education, maximize student success, develop a globally and multi-culturally competent workforce, and improve the lives and well-being of individuals by providing:

(a) education, training, and retraining for the workforce, including basic skills and literacy education, occupational and pre-baccalaureate programs;

(b) support for economic development through services to and in partnership with business and industry; and

(c) services to communities and individuals which improve the quality of life.

(Source: State Board of Community Colleges Code, 1A SBCCC 200.1: Mission of the Community College System)

Critical Roles of Community Colleges in North Carolina

The North Carolina Community College System was formally established in 1963, when the state's Industrial Education Centers and junior colleges were brought together under one system. The system grew to 58 colleges that were intended to maximize access to postsecondary education and training, reaching within 30 miles of virtually all North Carolinians. Today, each of the 58 community colleges in the North Carolina Community College System is a "comprehensive community college," offering both academic-focused education and job training. Beyond instruction, the North Carolina Community College System plays an important role in issuing or validating postsecondary credentials.

The primary offerings of community colleges in North Carolina are as follows:

- Curriculum instruction leading to academic credentials (Certificates, Diplomas, or Degrees) and/or transfer to a four-year college or university
- Short-term workforce training ("Workforce Continuing Education") to prepare individuals for jobs and careers
- Instruction for adults to gain literacy skills or learn English
- Instruction to help adults earn a High School Diploma, or (via assessments) a High School Equivalency, formerly known as a "GED"
- Opportunities that bridge K-12 and community college instruction through…
    - linked, seamless academic pathways (Career and Technical Education)
    - dual enrollment of high school students in community college courses, with students based in traditional high schools or Cooperative Innovative High Schools (early colleges or other high schools affiliated with colleges)
- Economic development programs
    - Entrepreneurship training and counseling at Small Business Centers
    - NCEdge Customized Training to prepare or retrain workers for business expansions, relocations, and/or productivity enhancements
    - BioNetwork education/training programs for life sciences companies
- Credential focused programs:
    - Since 2017, oversight of the state's Registered Apprenticeship program, ApprenticeshipNC
    - Since 2021, collaboration with employers, state agency and nonprofit partners to establish industry-validated "NC Workforce Credentials" that can be earned based on short-term training
- Community leadership roles – ranging from sponsoring county Emergency Operations Centers to hosting events/music festivals to convening leaders to solve local challenges

Purpose and Context

The period from March 2020 through today has been one of tremendous change and upheaval. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed how we work, where we want to live, and how and where we interact with one another. The economy and the labor market have experienced tremendous volatility, with an initial contraction followed by a period of rapid economic growth and demand for labor, while millions of workers retired, resigned, changed jobs, or stopped out of the labor market. This growth has been complicated by global supply chain issues, ups and downs in the stock market, inflation, and labor shortages. This has also been a period of social unrest, with particular focus on racial justice concerns and growing income inequality. Even as the economy has grown, many North Carolinians have continued to struggle with housing insecurity, food insecurity, health challenges, and access to the services they need.

North Carolina's community colleges have been right in the middle of these changes. Serving as "economic first responders", colleges have adapted rapidly and worked with community partners to meet the changing needs of students, communities, and businesses. As we look forward to the next four years, we know that change will continue to be constant, and that North Carolina Community College System will continue to innovate, adapt, and provide supports to meet the needs of students, communities, and businesses across all 100 counties.

In order to chart a path through the challenges ahead, the North Carolina Community College System has developed the 2022-26 Strategic Plan, *Leading Through Change*. The plan identifies five key areas of focus:

- *Faculty and Staff Recruitment and Retention*
- *Enrollment*
- *Student Success for All*
- *Economic and Workforce Development*
- *System Funding and Effectiveness*

By focusing our attention and resources on these five interlocking areas, we can further strengthen the ability of the North Carolina Community College System to serve as the gateway to opportunity for all North Carolinians and the state's engine for economic growth. As Dr. W. Dallas Herring, considered the "Father of the Community College System," famously stated, "The doors to the institutions of North Carolina's system of community colleges must never be closed to anyone…we must take people where they are and carry them as far as they can go."[1] That philosophy continues to guide us. By keeping the doors of opportunity open to everyone, we are able to develop <u>all</u> of the state's talent and ensure that this great state continues to grow and prosper.

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[1] Dr. Dallas Herring, 1966 speech to the North Carolina Legislature.

Goal 1: Faculty and Staff Recruitment and Retention

Recruit and retain top talent to enable the North Carolina Community College System to educate and train the State's workforce.

At the regional listening sessions the State Board and System Office held with community college presidents and trustees during winter 2021-22, difficulty with recruitment and retention of community college faculty and staff was the concern cited most frequently by college leaders.

The North Carolina Community College System relies on top-notch faculty and staff to power its education, training, small business development centers, student supports and other services. Beyond providing high-quality, relevant instruction and advising, college employees connect students to the financial assistance and other supports they need, develop and adjust programs to respond quickly to the changing needs of employers and the overall economy, leverage the power of the community college to meet broader community needs, and provide the organizational policies, practices, and IT resources that enable the 58 institutions and System Office to operate effectively and meeting the needs of students and their communities.

In March 2020, Community College System faculty and staff were called upon as never before to immediately shift in-person courses to online courses as COVID-19 descended upon the United States, with no cure or prevention measure in sight at the time. In compliance with public health measures, all 58 colleges moved their courses online, with a small number of specified exceptions for public health, public safety and workforce training that could only be provided face to face. Thanks to the ingenuity and hard work at the colleges and System Office levels, the open doors of the North Carolina Community College System never closed. And when campuses re-opened, faculty and staff once again shifted to meet the needs, adjusting their campus health policies and practices repeatedly as multiple waves of coronavirus came through and dissipated.

As the greatest threats of COVID-19 subsided and employers returned to pre-pandemic production and service levels, they found new challenges in what some economists dubbed a "workerless recovery." Employees across all industries seemed to be rethinking work and their connections to their current employers. Community colleges across the country were in line with other employers, grappling with a "Great Resignation" that meant higher-than-usual job turnover and lower labor force participation. Even while community colleges worked with their communities' employers to fill industry's workforce shortages, the colleges and System Office were also experiencing their own. Stories from the field started to paint a picture of how turnover could directly undermine the capacity of colleges; the training programs or course sections that could not be held or had to be delayed; the marketing that had to be postponed, potentially impacting enrollment growth; the interruption of partnerships when employees took their relationships and institutional knowledge to another employer or into retirement.

Even prior to the pandemic, the Community College System had embraced a legislative priority of increasing faculty and staff pay, recognizing that top-notch education and training required top-notch employees. More recently, the 2022-25 NCCCS Legislative Agenda (partially fulfilled in the 2022 session) called for an 8% increase in employee pay over three years to bring pay for our state's community college faculty and staff in line with pay in the four states neighboring North Carolina. In 2020-21, North Carolina community colleges' full-time staff earned (on average) 84% of what North Carolina public universities' staff did, and their full-time faculty earned (on average) 58% of what North Carolina public universities' faculty did.[2]

Pay is considered the number one challenge to recruitment and retention at community colleges, and this is only becoming more urgent following the rise in pay in certain fields since the pandemic (increasing job alternatives for community college employees) and general inflation undercutting the value of income. Employees are also considering other job factors; flexibility, including the option for employees to work remotely; a desire for career meaning and growth; and a sense of connection and belonging.

The human resources and employee recruiting function of individual community colleges will remain a local function with local autonomy and decision making, but recognizing the scale of the challenge, there is widespread support across the System for higher pay, innovative solutions, and additional System support.

Objective 1.1: Address faculty and staff shortages through higher pay and innovative talent sourcing.

- Strategy 1.1.1: Increase state funding for community college employee pay to recruit and retain top talent.

- Strategy 1.1.2: Across the Community College System, seek additional funding sources for employee pay.

- Strategy 1.1.3: Partner with employers to leverage industry talent for hard-to-fill positions.

Objective 1.2: Attract top talent to the North Carolina Community College System.

- Strategy 1.2.1: Strengthen faculty and staff recruitment efforts across the System.

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[2] Source: IPEDS

- Strategy 1.2.2: Identify and promote effective strategies for colleges to tap diverse and non-traditional pools of talent for recruitment or promotion.

Objective 1.3: Establish North Carolina Community Colleges and the System Office as destinations for talent and employers of choice.

- Strategy 1.3.1: Support professional development, employee career growth, and recognition within the North Carolina Community College System.

- Strategy 1.3.2: Promote flexibility for employees and creativity in meeting college workforce needs.

- Strategy 1.3.3: Retain community college employees through support, engagement in the mission, and fostering a sense of belonging.

Goal 2: Enrollment

Increase access and enrollment at North Carolina community colleges to meet the state's educational attainment goal and expand opportunity for North Carolinians.

Strong student enrollment and expanded access at community colleges are important for prospective students, community colleges, the postsecondary education pipeline, and the state and regional economies. It is worrying to see long-term downward trends in enrollment and the demographic trends that would portend future enrollment and postsecondary attendance declines.

At its most basic level, the wider the initial pipeline of students into the community colleges, the more students the colleges can teach and the greater the outcomes the Community College System can achieve. Access and enrollment are also the necessary first steps to certificate and degree completion that improves students' earnings and drives economic growth. Furthermore, with its enrollment-based funding formula, the System's *capacity* to teach and support students is directly affected by the number of students (full-time equivalents) receiving instruction.

The North Carolina Community College System, long a champion of the underserved and ensuring an "Open Door" to higher education, is more successful in achieving its mission the more it reaches North Carolinians that might not be served in higher education otherwise, such as first-generation college students, students of color, low-income students, adult learners balancing work and college, English language learners, and students with disabilities. As leaders in the System have often said, the North Carolina Community College System proudly serves the top 100% of postsecondary students. For many, community colleges are the best option for personal economic mobility, providing access to good paying jobs and a foundation for further education.

Many students who enter postsecondary education as community college students go on to universities. As of fall 2020, more than one in four undergraduate UNC System students were transfer students, and 61% of transfer students had come from NCCCS institutions.[3] Strong community college enrollment is important for university enrollment and outcomes as well.

Whether through its pre-baccalaureate pathways or its work-focused education and training pathways, student enrollment contributes to the overall educational attainment levels in North Carolina and the economic potential of the state and its regions. As *Site Selection Magazine* says on its website in reference to its 2022 Workforce Guide[4], **"**Workforce has been cited in Site Selection Magazine's annual survey of corporate consultants as the No. 1 factor in site selection decisions for several years in a row." Population loss in rural areas of North Carolina is a threat to

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[3] Source: UNC System Interactive Data Dashboards (Transfer Students Dashboard), accessed 8/5/22.
[4] 2022 Workforce Guide | Site Selection Magazine, accessed 7/30/22.

those areas; strong community college enrollment helps meet those area workforce needs and supports rural economic development.

Enrollment trends

Enrollment in North Carolina community colleges tends to increase when unemployment rates rise, either in direct response to layoffs or as workers and those preparing to enter the workforce see a weakening economy as a sign that they will be better prepared to weather economic storms with education or training under their belt.

In North Carolina and across the nation, following the large worker dislocation and unemployment of the Great Recession, a long period of low unemployment rates was accompanied by a long slide in enrollment in community colleges.

Carolina Demography researchers noted in the February 2019 *Leaky Pipeline* report[5], "Transition to college is the largest loss point in the postsecondary pipeline, and the size of this loss is growing."

North Carolina was just beginning to see enrollment increase when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. The typical relationship between the economy and community college enrollment, where community college enrollment grows during a recession as people reskill and retrain, did not happen in 2020. A short rebound seen in fall 2019 enrollment data was reversed upon the arrival of the pandemic, and only in 2021 did enrollment begin to pick up again.

Figure 1: Trends in Total FTE (Full Time Equivalent) Enrollment
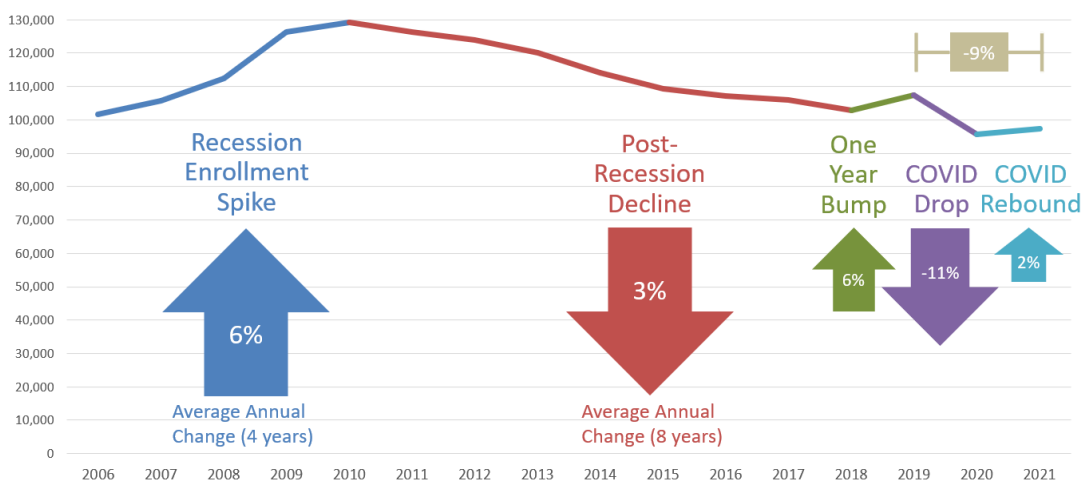
[5] Carolina Demography/UNC Carolina Population Center, *North Carolina's Leaky Pipeline & Pathways to 60% Postsecondary Attainment*, John M. Belk Endowment: February 2019.

Source: North Carolina Community College System, Fall Enrollment Data

While much of the work with outreach, recruitment, and retention of students occurs at the college level, and many factors (particularly the state of economy) drive enrollment trends, the State Board of Community Colleges has determined that a full Community College System effort must be mobilized to increase student access and enrollment.

Objective 2.1: Increase marketing and outreach to prospective students and their influencers.

- Strategy 2.1.1: Develop and utilize marketing strategies to increase enrollment of students. Increase overall enrollment and enrollment of underrepresented and non-traditional students.

- Strategy 2.1.2: Encourage each North Carolina Community College to have and actively use a Strategic Enrollment Management Plan that addresses student recruitment, retention, and completion.

Objective 2.2: Increase enrollment by focusing on career opportunities and the return on investment of community college education and training.

- Strategy 2.2.1: Increase career awareness and develop tools to communicate the personal and statewide return on investment due to community college education and training.

- Strategy 2.2.2: Expand apprenticeships and other paid work-based learning opportunities for community college students to gain work experience and learn-and-earn opportunities.

- Strategy 2.2.3: Bring employers on campus and sponsor opportunities to build relationships among students, career services, entrepreneurship services, and employer hiring managers.

Objective 2.3: Streamline and strengthen the pathways to community colleges and the workforce through enhanced partnerships.

- Strategy 2.3.1: Work more deeply with internal and external educational partners to better understand the student pipeline and to simplify educational pathways for students.

- Strategy 2.3.2: Expand the use of Career Coaches sponsored by NC community colleges in high schools.

- Strategy 2.3.3: Increase dual enrollment and other forms of Career and College Promise (CCP) participation among students who normally do not take advantage of these programs.

Objective 2.4: Increase the recruitment and retention of adult learners.

- Strategy 2.4.1: Partner with business, industry, and community-based organizations to identify and promote short-term, high-demand programs of study for adults to be able to quickly get the instruction and credentials for their careers.

- Strategy 2.4.2: Develop an accelerated course model to decrease the time to completion.

Goal 3: Student Success for All

Provide supports inside and outside of the classroom for all students to successfully get on, stay on, and complete their career pathway.

The ultimate aim of community colleges is student success – helping students reach their intended life and career goals through education and training. Objectives and strategies listed below address the input obtained from stakeholders and the patterns in Community College System data.

In a survey of students conducted by the N4CSGA (North Carolina Comprehensive Community College Student Government Association), cost and balancing college with work were the factors cited as most impactful on students' ability to succeed in community college. Employability after college was also cited frequently, implying that having a clear career goal and sense of hope about one's career could improve motivation and success.

In regional listening sessions, community college presidents and trustees talked about challenges they are increasingly seeing among their students: more students with gaps in their learning as a result of the pandemic, more students with disabilities or mental health challenges, and more students enrolling part-time as they balance school, work, and family responsibilities.

In addition to impacts on learning, the pandemic exacerbated cost and other challenges for students. Federal funding was used to address cost and technology barriers through programs such as the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Scholarship Program, Longleaf Commitment scholarships, and investments in rural broadband. These investments have provided critical supports, but additional investments will be needed to meet the needs of students and communities.

In North Carolina Community College System data, the patterns in student performance and completion have shown chronic gaps in success metrics between white students and students of color, especially minority male students. Recent initiatives are promising, but only move the needle modestly. New approaches are being piloted by colleges and could yield additional solutions.

A wide array of strategies is needed to provide the learning opportunities and comprehensive support students need to succeed, including those listed below and strategies listed under other goals.

Objective 3.1: Adopt a NCCCS framework for inclusive excellence to be embedded in policies and practices to cultivate a culture of belonging across the System.

- Strategy 3.1.1: Create an inclusive excellence taskforce to identify strategies to mitigate barriers to student success and identify professional development and technical assistance needs.

- Strategy 3.1.2: Provide professional development, technical assistance, and other supports to reduce barriers facing students, especially underrepresented students.

- Strategy 3.1.3: Incentivize excellence by disaggregating data about student performance and rewarding colleges that excel in reaching and serving diverse student groups.

Objective 3.2: Promote excellence in teaching and address the academic needs of learners.

- Strategy 3.2.1: Provide research-based teaching strategies that foster academic resilience and address the learning needs of all students.

- Strategy 3.2.2: Promote flexibility in teaching modalities and class scheduling to meet the needs of students.

- Strategy 3.2.3: Provide programming that offers all students the interventions, advising, and support they need to succeed academically.

Objective 3.3: Promote a safe, healthy, and resilient community college student body through access to services including, but not limited to: mental and physical health services, housing, transportation, childcare, and food.

- Strategy 3.3.1: Expand community collaboration with government and educational partners, non-profits, and businesses to connect all students with the non-academic resources to support individual success and completion.

- Strategy 3.3.2: Pursue statewide funding for non-academic support to advance greater student success and completion.

Goal 4: Economic and Workforce Development

Provide education, training, and credentials to develop the most robust and skilled workforce in the nation, meet North Carolina industry's current and future talent needs, and increase the economic mobility of North Carolinians.

North Carolina community colleges are engines for economic development for the state, as well as for individuals' career and entrepreneurship journeys.

The objectives below elaborate on the aims, but in sum, the Community College System will need to…

- Address employer's workforce needs
- Develop talent and validate competencies
- Increase economic mobility and career advancement

A current opportunity, and challenge, for community colleges is keeping up with the training needs of new and current employers. Since 2021, North Carolina has experienced a boom in business relocations and expansions, with thousands of new jobs announced by companies in the life sciences, IT, retail distribution, and manufacturing industries. Existing businesses have also been clamoring for talent; virtually every member of a statewide council of industry associations in February expressed alarm about the worker shortages their industry was facing. Community colleges will need to collaborate regionally, with each other and education and workforce partners, to expand and adjust worker pipelines. And whenever the economy shifts again, community colleges will need to continue to adapt and pivot.

In addition to focusing on scale, it is important for education and training to be high-quality, relevant, and easy to complete. This involves working with employers to define the "right" skills and credentials for their and their workers' benefit, working with partners to meet the statewide attainment goal of 2 million North Carolinians with a postsecondary degree or credential by 2030, and supporting colleges that develop Competency-based Education, which allows students to set the pace of their learning and build on past knowledge.

Benefiting students is the ultimate aim, and community colleges can catapult individuals to a higher standard of living and rewarding career. Colleges can support economic mobility by being intentional about reaching low-income and underserved students and guiding them to promising academic and career pathways.

Objective 4.1: Cultivate a robust pipeline of highly skilled workers that meets the needs of employers and grows the economies of all 100 counties.

- Strategy 4.1.1: Engage with the business community to create a diverse and skilled talent pipeline.

- Strategy 4.1.2: Embed community colleges in the economic development community and collaborate with workforce partners for strategic pipeline development for existing and future jobs, as well as fostering entrepreneurship.

- Strategy 4.1.3: Support key production sectors critical to new and existing businesses in rural areas of North Carolina.

Objective 4.2: Foster high-quality employment opportunities and effective instruction focused on in-demand skills, credential attainment, and competency development.

- Strategy 4.2.1: Cultivate existing talent and develop new partnerships with industry associations and labor to align education and training to the skills required by employers.

- Strategy 4.2.2: Emphasize education and training that provides students with credentials valued by employers and moves North Carolina toward its goal of 2 million North Carolinians with a postsecondary credential of value by 2030.

- Strategy 4.2.3: Support colleges that pilot Competency-based Education (CBE) pathways for students to accelerate their journey from education to a job using the self-paced mastery model of competency-based education.

Objective 4.3: Increase access to the training, education, and guidance needed by students to achieve their career goals and upward mobility.

- Strategy 4.3.1: Take measures to be a national leader in diversity and inclusion and leverage outreach among agency partners to reach low-income, underserved, and excluded populations.

Goal 5: System Funding and Effectiveness

Increase funding levels, modernize the funding formula, and improve the effectiveness of the North Carolina Community College System.

The North Carolina Community College System generates a significant return on investment for the State of North Carolina, in addition to the transformational impact it has on individual community college students' lives. The final goal in the strategic plan addresses how strategic new investments, adjustments to the current funding model, modernizing IT and data systems, and alignment of functional support to colleges' needs can improve the effectiveness and impact of the System.

According to a December 2021 report by Emsi Burning Glass[6] the investment in the 58 colleges generates a return of $19B for the state economy. The economic impact study finds that for every dollar the state invests in North Carolina's Community Colleges, the state gains $7.50 in added incomes and social savings. The colleges generate nearly double the revenue from what they take in from the taxpayers. For every $1 the state invests, taxpayers get $1.90 back in added tax revenues and public sector savings.

Is the investment in the Community College System sufficient to capture the full return on investment possible and power the economy through additional change? As referenced in the section on Faculty and Staff Recruitment and Retention, the current investment in faculty and staff pay has not been sufficient to stem high turnover, and a recent uptick in inflation will require an even greater investment than initially projected to increase college employees' standard of living and make community college compensation competitive. Funding for other priorities, temporarily buoyed by a period of higher-than-expected state revenue and an influx of federal pandemic funding, will need to be sustained. The three-year legislative agenda is a thoughtful and strategic investment strategy with unified System support that remains at the core of our System advocacy.

The community college system funding formula has been updated as needed over the last decades. Community college leaders communicated clearly that the time was right for another round of updates to keep the formula aligned with state and college needs. One recommended update to the funding model is to create financial incentives for regional program collaboration among community colleges. This strategy can improve service and efficiency; expanding access to different programs for students, providing better services for employers by serving the regional labor market, and saving state funding overall by leveraging college program operations hosted by one college to offer programming for two or more colleges.

In a similar way, our IT infrastructure no longer meets the current demands of our colleges, especially in an era of increased virtual learning, use of mobile devices, and threats from cyber

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[6] State and college reports can be found at https://bigroifornc.org/.

attackers. And for the State Board and our colleges to fully understand and address student and employer needs, our data management and integration needs must be factored into IT solutions.

Finally, the Community College System has opportunities to reorient how parts of the System work together for the benefit of students, employers, and communities. We have big challenges to solve, and we have a plan for the resources to do it, but we need better coordination as well. The colleges and the System Office need to work together to identify what services are best offered consistently across the state, where regional solutions make the most sense, and where college/local approaches are best. Colleges know their communities best and that local connection is one of their greatest strengths. Ensuring that students and colleges have access to the best services that we can provide requires us to rethink how the System does things.

Objective 5.1: Continually advocate for investment in the North Carolina Community College System that reflects the value of its employees and the students and businesses it serves.

- Strategy 5.1.1: Pursue full funding for the 2021-2023 NCCCS legislative agenda.

Objective 5.2: Modernize and realign the Community College System's funding formula.

- Strategy 5.2.1: Review and adjust program and course funding levels to reflect the cost of different programs and achieve parity between similar curriculum and continuing education programs.

- Strategy 5.2.2: Pursue a recurring source of funding for High-Cost Workforce Program Startup.

- Strategy 5.2.3: Create incentives for regional collaboration by reimbursing at a higher rate for programs offered by multi-college partnerships.

- Strategy 5.2.4: Realign the definition of a full course load from 16 to 12 contact hours to align with the UNC System and federal financial aid programs.

Objective 5.3: Align System Office functional support to colleges' needs.

- Strategy 5.3.1: Redefine System Office support for colleges by collaboratively developing a service strategy that adjusts services based on college size and on whether the service is most effectively provided statewide, regionally, or based on individual college needs.

- Strategy 5.3.2: Build on existing initiatives and identify and implement new approaches to support rural colleges and students.

- Strategy 5.3.3: Develop new communications and marketing strategies for the North Carolina Community College System.

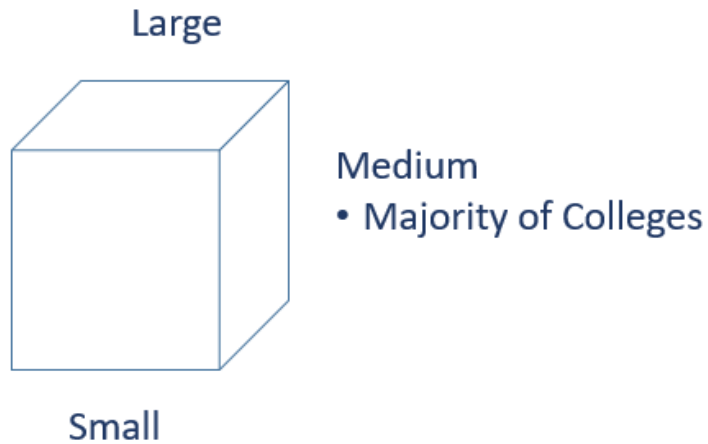Figure 2: College Size (Small, Medium, or Large)
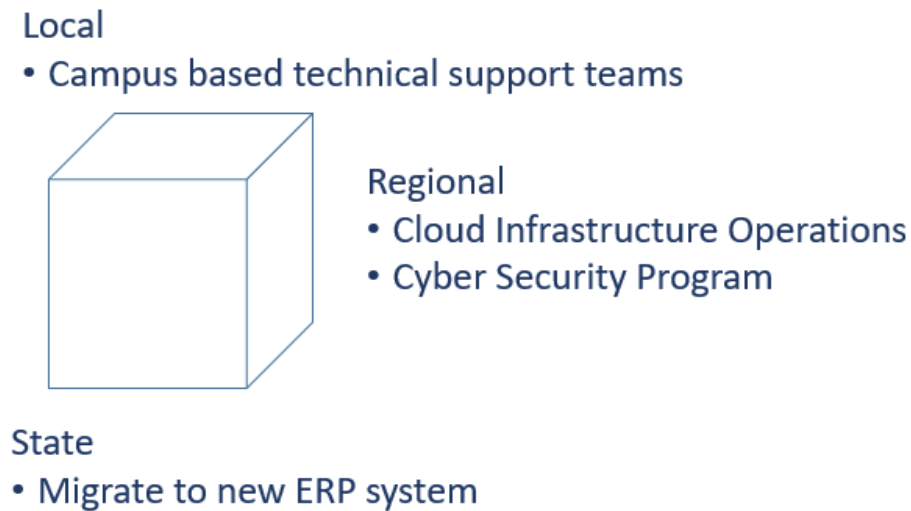
Large

Medium
• Majority of Colleges

Small

Figure 3: Service Level (Local, Regional, or State)

Local
• Campus based technical support teams

Regional
• Cloud Infrastructure Operations
• Cyber Security Program
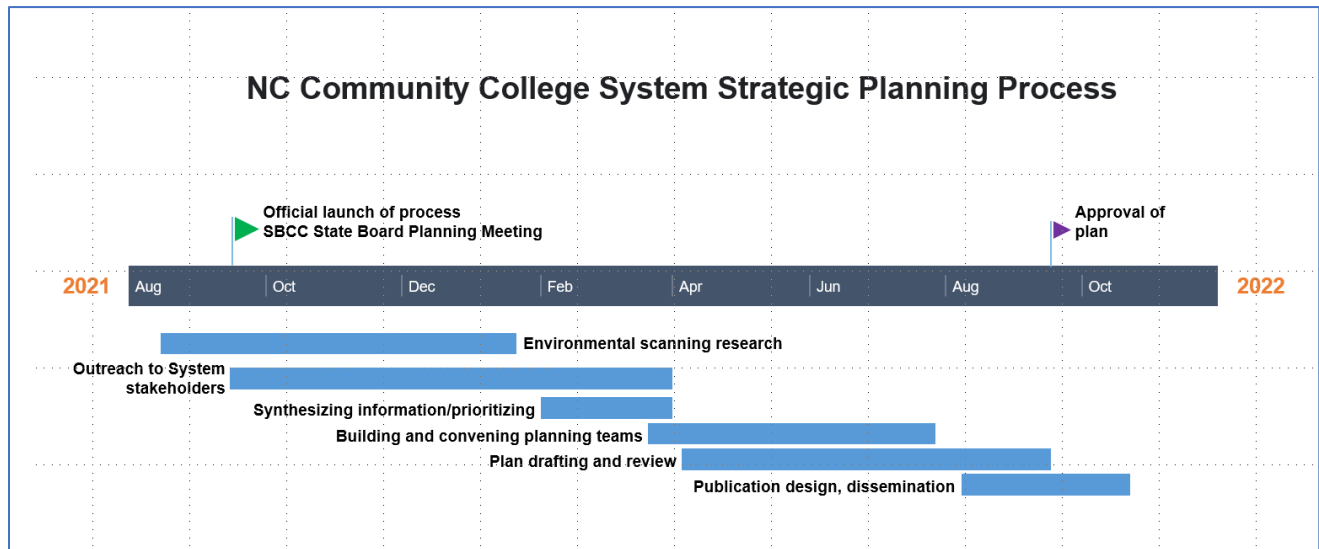
State
• Migrate to new ERP system

Objective 5.4: Provide the North Carolina Community College System with data and technology systems that provide best-in-class support for the core business functions of the colleges and the System Office.

- Strategy 5.4.1: Develop an Enterprise Resource strategy that drives positive student outcomes and meets the different needs of North Carolina's community colleges.

- Strategy 5.4.2: Develop a data management and integration plan for the NC Community College System to enhance research and reporting capacity.

- Strategy 5.4.3: Provide top-quality cybersecurity expertise, leadership, and support for the 58 community colleges and System Office to prevent and respond to any cyberattacks.
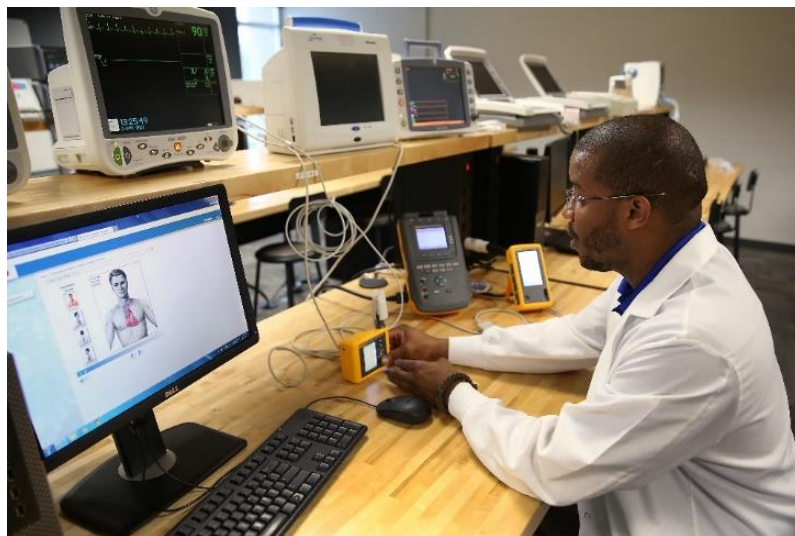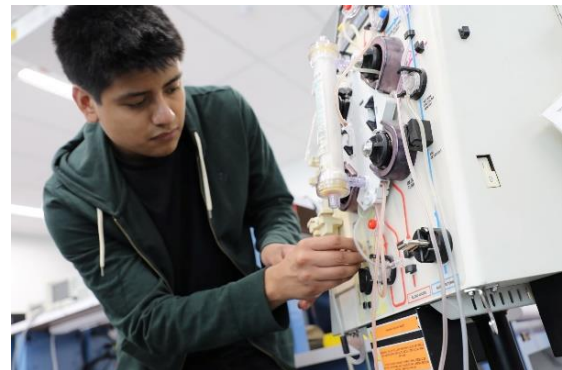
Appendix

Strategic Planning Process

The North Carolina Community College System launched its strategic planning process in September 2021 at the annual State Board Planning Meeting. The planning process is scheduled to wrap up a year later at the September 2022 State Board Planning Meeting, with the final review and adoption of the strategic plan by the State Board of Community Colleges, as well as development of a first-year action plan containing the initial tactics to carry out the strategic plan. Between those points, the State Board of Community Colleges, the System Office, and leaders across the community colleges engaged in comprehensive environmental scanning, prioritizing, and planning.

<u>Environmental Scanning</u>

A major aspect of community college system strategic planning is scanning the community college landscape and the larger environment – demographic, economic, and societal – to understand challenges and opportunities facing community colleges and understand stakeholders' perceptions of system strengths and weaknesses.

Review of research and college plans

To begin the strategic planning process, the State Board and System Office reviewed demographic data and internal System data at the September 2021 State Board Planning Meeting. Dr. Jim Johnson with the Kenan Center of Private Enterprise at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill presented on "Where We Are as a State and an Economy." He spoke to various "gale-force winds of demographic change ahead"[7] that have implications for the

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[7] Johnson, Dr. James H. Jr., et al., *Business Alert! Gale Force Demographic Wind Gusts Ahead* (Kenan Institute White Paper). Kenan Institute for Private Enterprise, University of North Carolina: August 2021.

educational pipeline, supply of labor, diversity of the state, and population flows within North Carolina. Research and Performance Management staff in the System Office presented at the planning meeting on the "State of the System," addressing postsecondary education opportunity, enrollment trends, instruction provided/students served, and curriculum student progression and success.

System Office research staff provided updates to the Strategic Planning Committee of the board and the full State Board of Community Colleges over the past year on topics of related to the developing strategic plan, such as student enrollment trends. Research staff of the Department of Commerce/Labor & Economic Analysis Division also presented to the Strategic Planning Committee in January 2022 on "COVID and North Carolina's Labor Market."

To understand the priorities of the 58 community colleges and ensure that the System strategic plan would be consistent with the directions of the 58, System Office staff collected and briefly summarized the themes of each college's strategic plan and Quality Enhancement Plan, or QEP. The Quality Enhancement Plan outlines the top issue or set of issues the college is tackling for institutional improvement as part of its accreditation process.

Last but not least, the System Office supported a survey of students conducted by the NC Comprehensive Community College Student Government Association (N4CSGA) in February 2022 and incorporated its findings about student needs into the identification of strategic issues to address.

Stakeholder engagement

With strong support from the State Board of Community Colleges, the System Office embarked on a process to cast a wide net to stakeholders to obtain their input. The input process began with the State Board of Community Colleges itself, offering their take on Community College System strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis) and definitions of success in certain issue areas at the September 2021 State Board Planning Meeting.

Other outreach included the following:

- Regional listening sessions with community college presidents, trustees and other college representatives
- Planning exercises and discussions with subject-matter experts across the colleges, through community college association meetings and events
- Planning exercises, focus groups, and discussions with other key audiences, including community college students, businesses, and workforce and community partners

In order for State Board of Community Colleges members and System Office staff to gain a better understanding of community colleges' challenges and solutions, the System Office worked with community colleges to set up eight regional listening sessions between December 8, 2021 and February 14, 2022. Each community college was invited to bring a team of five including the

college president, chair and vice-chair of each college's board of trustees, plus additional trustees, staff, or student representatives. State Board of Community College members, System Office senior staff, and Trustees' Association representatives attended meetings. The meetings were organized by Community College Trustee Region and were configured so they would reach into the state's eight Prosperity Zones. Due to the rapid rise in COVID cases during winter 2021-22, seven meetings were shifted to virtual format.

From fall 2021 to spring 2022, strategic planning staff tapped specific expertise within the Community College System through a variety of meetings and sessions with community college associations. Examples of associations engaged through this process include: Student Development Administrators Association (SDAA), Chief Academic Officers, New Senior Administrators, Adult Educators (Workforce Continuing Education and Basic Skills staff at the Adult Educators conference), and the Community College Planning and Research Organization (CCPRO). A variety of approaches was used with the groups, ranging from SWOT analyses and visioning exercises to general discussions. Internally, the System Office leadership team was convened to discuss System issues as well.

As input was collected from within the Community College System, a similar outreach process was underway with the students and businesses that community colleges serve, as well as community college partners. Following up on its survey of student needs, the N4CSGA (North Carolina Comprehensive Community College Student Government Association) sponsored focus groups at its February 2022 Spring Division Meeting to allow strategic planning staff to hear directly from students about their needs and perspectives. The Council of Associations for Engagement (CAFÉ), a group of statewide industry associations that advises the Community College System, also met in February 2022, where they discussed their challenges, opportunities, and needs from the Community College System. Input sessions were also held with partners such as the NC Workforce Development Directors Council and Hispanic Latino Outreach Coalition.

Prioritizing and Plan Development

Prioritizing by the SBCC Strategic Planning Committee

At its March 2022 meeting, the Strategic Planning Committee of the State Board reviewed issues identified through stakeholder input and carried out an exercise to identify their priorities for the strategic plan. This process resulted in the development of the five themes of the strategic plan:

- Faculty and Staff Recruitment and Retention
- Enrollment
- Student Success for All
- Economic and Workforce Development
- System Funding and Effectiveness

Development of Aims by Planning Teams

Planning teams were formed around the themes of the strategic plan and convened from April through July to develop the plan goals, objectives, and strategies, brainstorm about tactics, and develop ideas for metrics. Each planning team was co-chaired by a community college president and System Office Senior Team leader and included a State Board member, second community college president, community college experts (faculty/staff of the community colleges and System Office), and partners. Depending on the topic, planning teams also included community college students, businesses, and education, workforce development, and community partners

Review by the State Board of Community Colleges

Beginning in July 2022, the State Board of Community Colleges, through its Strategic Planning Committee and full board processes, reviewed the draft goals, objectives, and strategies and then the full draft of the strategic plan. They offered suggestions for the plan publication and actively worked on board governance and structure to support effective implementation of the strategic plan. The State Board is scheduled to review and approve the final draft of the plan at the September 2022 State Board Planning Meeting.

Plan Implementation and Revisions

The State Board of Community Colleges will develop one-year action plans to implement the 2022-2026 strategic plan, drawing on the tactic ideas offered by the planning teams. Annual State Board planning retreats will be used for development of the annual action plans and will, along with quarterly reporting, enable the State Board to review plan progress at both the strategic and tactical levels. Metrics will be used to assess short- to medium-term progress that can be tracked within the plan timeframe.

The State Board will update the plan in 2024 to ensure that the plan aims reflect the priorities needed for the changing environment in which community colleges operate. In addition, the State Board of Community Colleges embraces the concept of this strategic plan as a "living plan" and will update the plan as needed.

Links to Community College Plans, College and Student Input

- Summary Table and Links to the 58 Community College Strategic Plans and Quality Enhancement Plans (QEPs) [link will be added to Strategic Plan page on NCCCS website]

- Summary of Findings from Regional Listening Sessions with Community College Presidents and Trustees

- Presentation on N4CSGA Student Survey and Focus Group Findings

Acknowledgements

The North Carolina Community College System's 2022-2026 Strategic Plan would not have been possible without the engagement and input from so many within the Community College System family, community college partners, and students and business leaders. Below are the lists of the formal planning teams that met several times to offer input for the plan objectives, strategies, tactics, and metrics. In addition to these individuals, we thank the North Carolina Community Colleges Foundation for its support and ideas, the North Carolina Association of Community College Presidents, many community college associations that offered their expertise and input, and multiple System Office staff (such as Technology Services and Distance Learning Division staff) that supported planning meetings and helped assure an inclusive and open planning process.

Strategic Planning Teams

Faculty and Staff Recruitment and Retention

Team Co-chairs: President John Gossett, Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College
Dr. Kimberly Gold, North Carolina Community College System

Team Members: The Honorable Terry Van Duyn, State Board of Community Colleges
President Tracy Mancini, Carteret Community College
Chreatha Alston, Sandhills Community College
John Etheridge, President, NC Community College Faculty Association
Alex Fagg, North Carolina Community College System
Shakeyia Hazell, North Carolina Community College System
Arness Krause, Vice President-External, NC Community College Faculty
  Association
Steve Martin, Carteret Community College

Stephen Matheny, Isothermal Community College
Karen Tikkanen, North Carolina Community College System
Penny Wacaster, McDowell Technical Community College

Team Coordinator: Anne Bacon, North Carolina Community College System

Team Assistant: Kelly Barretto, North Carolina Community College System

Enrollment

Team Co-chairs: President Pamela Senegal, Piedmont Community College
Dr. Levy Brown, North Carolina Community College System

Team Members: Chairman Burr Sullivan, State Board of Community Colleges
President Laura Leatherwood, Blue Ridge Community College
LaTasha Bradford, N4CSGA (North Carolina Comprehensive Community College Student Government Association)
Brenda Burgess, North Carolina Community College System
Sharon Gladwell, North Carolina Community College System
Grant Godwin, North Carolina Community Colleges Foundation
Patrick Holyfield, Stanly Community College
Natasha Lipscomb, Rowan-Cabarrus Community College
Lorena Patterson, Hispanic Latino Action Coalition
Andrea Poole, NCSEAA
Barry Priest, SDAA (Student Development Administrators Association) and Bladen Community College
Abdul Sm Rasheed, Vance-Granville Community College
John Saparilas, Wake Technical Community College
Amy Policastro Schroeder, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

Team Coordinator: Dr. Monty Hickman, North Carolina Community College System

Team Assistant: Alex Doles, North Carolina Community College System

Student Success for All

Team Co-chairs: President Janet Spriggs, Forsyth Technical Community College
Dr. James "JW" Kelley, North Carolina Community College System

Team Members: Dr. Shirley Carraway, State Board of Community Colleges
President Gene Smith, Brunswick Community College

Tawanda Artis, North Carolina Community College System
Dr. Levy Brown, North Carolina Community College System
Scott Byington, Central Carolina Community College
Dr. Lisa Eads, North Carolina Community College System
Dr. John "JJ" Evans, North Carolina Community College System
Eric Fotheringham, University of North Carolina System
Dr. Lane Freeman, North Carolina Community College System
Dr. Heather Hill, Central Piedmont Community College
Michelle Lair, North Carolina Community College System
Jennifer McLean, North Carolina Community College System
Gilda Rubio-Festa, North Carolina Community College System
Sneha Shah-Coltrane, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
Nathan Vasquez, N4CSGA

Team Coordinator: Delores Ali, North Carolina Student Success Center

Team Assistant: Tiffany Howell, North Carolina Community College System

Economic and Workforce Development

Team Co-chairs: President Shelley White, Haywood Community College
                      Dr. Bruce Mack, North Carolina Community College System

Team Members: Sarah West, State Board of Community Colleges
                      President Maria Pharr, South Piedmont Community College
                      Rebecca Axford, Raleigh-Durham JATC
                      Ginger Brick, Workforce Development Board Directors Council
                      Kathryn Castelloes, North Carolina Community College System
                      Cecilia Holden, myFutureNC
                      Nate Humphrey, North Carolina Community College System
                      Dr. Annie Izod, NCWorks
                      John Loyack, EDPNC
                      Chet Mottershead, North Carolina Department of Commerce, Division of
                          Workforce Solutions
                      John Nelms, North Carolina Economic Developers Association
                      Gary Salamido, NC Chamber
                      Kristie VanAuken, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
                      Dr. Robert ("Bob") Witchger, North Carolina Community College System

Team Coordinator: Dr. Matthew Meyer, North Carolina Community College System

Team Assistant: Jerrie Farmer, North Carolina Community College System

<u>System Funding and Effectiveness</u>

Team Co-chairs: President Dale McInnis, Richmond Community College
                      Dr. Patrick Crane, North Carolina Community College System

Team Members: Ann Whitford, State Board of Community Colleges
                      President Lawrence Rouse, Pitt Community College
                      Brandy Andrews, North Carolina Community College System
                      Bruce Cole, Cleveland Community College
                      Alex Fagg, North Carolina Community College System
                      Patrick Fleming, North Carolina Community College System
                      Dorrine Fokes, North Carolina Community College System
                      Judykay Jefferson, North Carolina Community College System
                      Stephanie Lake, NCCORD and Wake Technical Community College
                      Kevin Leonard, North Carolina Association of County Commissioners
                      Carol Ann Lydon, CCPRO and Southeastern Community College
                      Dr. Bill Schneider, North Carolina Community College System

Team Coordinator: Anne Bacon, North Carolina Community College System

Team Assistant: Gracie Davis, North Carolina Community College System

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State Board of Community Colleges Strategic Planning Committee

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Wade Bryan Irwin, Jr., Vice Chair
Dr. Shirley Carraway
Hari Nath
The Honorable Mark Robinson
Ray Trapp
Sarah West

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Dr. Kimberly Gold, Chief of Staff and Executive Vice President
Brandy Andrews, Vice President and Chief Financial Officer
Dr. Levy Brown, Senior Vice President, Academic and Student Services, Chief Academic Officer
Dr. Patrick Crane, Vice President of Strategic Initiatives
Patrick Fleming, Senior Vice President, Technology Solutions & Distance Learning, Chief
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Tawanda Foster Artis, General Counsel
Dr. Bruck Mack, Vice President, Economic Development
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Anne Bacon, Director of Strategic Planning and Policy
Dr. Bill Schneider, Associate Vice President of Research and Performance Management
Kelly Barretto, Executive Assistant to the President and Chief of Staff

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