

GRADUATING THE SUCCESSFUL STUDENT TASK FORCE REPORT

PART 1: INTRODUCTION, VISION & THEMES

INTRODUCTION

‘Pathway to the Future, NC State’s Strategic Plan 2011-2020’ declared a vision of NC State “graduates ready to enter productively into society with solid skills, an inquiring habit of mind, global awareness, and a sense of social responsibility.” In 2020, we gratefully acknowledge significant progress made in service to our students, guided by the markers of ‘Pathway to the Future.’ Charged with articulating our next decade’s vision for Graduating the Successful Student, our work has been impacted by the world’s seismic shift across the short months since this team’s inception. Our future is suddenly more ambiguous and challenging. Yet, meeting challenges with resilience, creativity, insight, and care is inherent to this University. Passing this capacity to our students is strategic to our shared futures and crystalizes the meaning of student ‘success.’

American higher education is distinctive for its variety and choice. The diversity of America’s higher education system feeds the possibility of innovation. While some argue for greater homogenization across campuses, other leaders urge for deeper clarity and commitment to our distinctions (Gavazzi & Gee, [Land Grant Universities of the Future](#)). NC State is a land-grant university. Our founding mission is to the creation and application of knowledge that ‘transforms lives and provides leadership of social, economic, and technological development across North Carolina and around the world.’ The distinctiveness of our mission spares NC State the question of **why** faced by many institutions. Our questions are those of **how** we graduate the student equipped to carry forth our mission of service. The **how** rests in a proud and bold embracement of our mission and in the vigilance of its presence throughout the intersecting dimensions of campus culture, the student experience and the curriculum.

The Campus: *An empowering culture* that ensures all students have their basic needs met for sustenance, safety, security, active engagement, and belonging

The Student Experience: *Dynamic engagement* through high-impact practice in every undergraduate’s development and a breadth of application for every graduate student

The Curriculum - *Developing Habits of Mind & Dispositions* for life-long learning, as curious and skillful problem-solvers, ethical and engaged global citizens

The Graduate - *Professionally prepared, partners in service:* NC State equips graduates who are professionally prepared and committed to meet the ever-changing needs of the world

This report sets forth recommendations that meet our **VISION of the Successful Graduate.**

The successful NC State graduate has been shaped by an educational environment of support and challenge, unburdened by concern of basic needs or future debt, supported by authentic relationships, grounded and challenged by a lively, diverse, inclusive, and healthy campus culture.

The successful NC State graduate embodies maturity, respect, curiosity, breadth and depth of knowledge and experience.

The successful NC State graduate is professionally prepared, financially astute, and personally resilient.

The successful NC State graduate is globally aware, culturally respectful and civically engaged.

PART 2: CONTEXT

A number of challenges and opportunities are present on the higher education landscape. Among those we found most critical to framing the work of our task force are:

- Graduates at all levels face rapidly changing economic and workforce demands. They need qualifications to get their first job—and have the dispositions, values, and deep knowledge to sustain them to create and assume new careers throughout their lives.
- Public universities must ensure their graduates have the competencies and commitment to engage in a civil, democratic and diverse society and discourse throughout their lives.
- Graduates must have the competence, comfort, and commitment to work with and lead diverse individuals and groups in their work and their communities.
- Universities must provide graduates with the specific technical skills, experiences, and qualifications employers need today—while also ensuring graduates read, listen, and think critically; write, speak, and express ideas clearly; consider issues and arguments from multiple perspectives; and provide creative and practical solutions to the challenges they face now and in the future.
- Graduates must be ready to engage as global citizens in their work and communities.
- Masters and doctoral graduates must have the depth of knowledge and expertise expected for traditional academic roles (e.g., university teaching, research) while also being ready to contribute to non-academic contexts (e.g., business, government).

In addition to the broad challenges of educating and preparing graduates for the world of today and tomorrow, we face a number of additional challenges, some of which other universities share, and some of which are unique to NC State:

- How do we sustain the numbers and qualifications of enrolled students as demographic trends change towards a smaller and more diverse pool of high school graduates?
- How do we ensure we are affordable and accessible to all students?

- How do we differentiate NC State from other universities globally, nationally, and within the UNC System so that applicants at all levels see us as their first choice?

Many of these challenges are enduring, and others have taken on new meaning as we experience climactic, social, and pandemic shocks to society. Fortunately, NC State approaches this juncture in its history with pride in our recent successes—and humility as we consider how we can ensure our graduates are prepared to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow.

How has NC State responded to these challenges and opportunities?

NC State has done well meeting the challenges of the past decade. Using *The Pathway to the Future: NC State's 2011-2020 Strategic Plan* as a guide, NC State undertook a number of initiatives aimed at enhancing student outcomes, including:

- Enhancing first year and transfer student experiences including adding academic emphases in summer orientation and welcome week, expanding access to Summer START, and providing onboarding and programming for Spring Connection students.
- Removing administrative barriers to success, including simplifying internal transfers, streamlining withdrawal processes, creating one-stop portals for student services, and initiating the Student Services Center and the Academic Success Center.
- Improving the classroom experience with the TH!NK Program (which infuses critical and creative thinking into first-year courses) and large-class redesign efforts focused on gateway courses.
- Improving advising by creating campus-wide advising committees, implementing the Navigate advising and analytical support platform, and expanding walk-in advising.
- Improving access to health and well-being resources, including expansion of the Student Health Center and Counseling Center staff and locations, the Wellness and Recreation unit, renovating the Carmichael Complex, and instituting postvention protocols for campus crises.
- Investing in high impact enhancement programs, including expanded Living and Learning Communities, undergraduate research, entrepreneurship, leadership programs, co-operative education experiences, and creating the Provost's Professional Experience Program.
- Enhancing the residential campus experience, including requiring first-year students to live on campus, centralizing programming and services, and upgrading the residential curriculum to bring diversity and inclusion into sharper focus.
- Improving services for underrepresented students, including expansion of TRIO Student Support Services, the Ronald E. McNair Program, Military and Veterans Services, and increasing the emphasis and scope of multicultural programming.
- Recognizing and responding to the financial needs of our students by creating the Pack Essentials portal, Student Emergency Fund, Meal Share program, and expanding the Feed the Pack Food Pantry.
- Expanding pathways to success for prospective NC State students, including the Community College Collaboration (C3), Spring Connections, and multiple college programs (e.g., STEAM in CALS).
- Improving the graduate student experience through dissertation completion grants, summer graduate fellowships, reinstatement of graduate writing support services, expanded professional development opportunities, teaching assistant training, and increased conference travel, workshop, and short-courses funding.

Our efforts have produced substantial improvements in the success of our students. Under our last strategic plan, we have increased retention, reduced time to degree, and increased graduation rates for our undergraduates. Moreover, we have doubled the number of applicants for undergraduate admission, increased transfers from community colleges, and seen steady annual improvement in the metrics attesting to the quality of admitted students (e.g., SAT/ACT scores, high school GPA and class rank). At the graduate level, we have expanded applications and enrollments, created and awarded Professional Science Masters degrees, and increased completion rates and reduced time to degree in doctoral programs. We can and should feel proud of our accomplishments—but we also realize we have more to do to ensure our graduates are prepared for the challenges that lie before us and our graduates.

We believe the following critical strategies will help to guide our next strategic plan to ensure our graduates are successful. We seek to create a university where **all** students will:

- Have greater access to our degree programs offered within a culture of inclusive excellence, where diversity and inclusion are givens and equity is deemed critical to the well-being of our students, faculty and staff..
- Have experiences that will help them connect their academic studies to contexts outside the classroom at the undergraduate and graduate degree levels.
- Serve, engage, and participate in campus and community life.
- Have basic needs for food, shelter, and security met so they can focus on learning.
- Collaborate with or lead diverse individuals and groups.
- Acquire specific skills, experiences, and competencies of value to employers as they also acquire the values, dispositions, and commitment to engagement in a democratic and civil society.
- Develop a global mindset that is reflected in their goals, actions and pursuits
- For graduate students, to acquire the depth of knowledge and expertise to fulfill traditional academic roles or apply their talents and education in a wide range of non-academic settings. as well as understanding and appreciating how their talents can meet needs in non-academic settings.

PART 3: RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Students' **basic needs** for shelter, security and belonging will be assessed and met.
2. **Habits of mind and dispositions** will be introduced through **a common interdisciplinary experience** and developed across the undergraduate and graduate curricula. Graduate education is broadened by more applications beyond the academy
3. All undergraduates will leave NC State with a **seminal, high-impact experience** outside of the classroom.
4. Provide structure and resources that support development and implementation of student-driven strategic plans that ensure our graduates are financially stable, independent and inclusive thinkers and professionally prepared to contribute impactfully in a global society.

Recommendation 1: Students' basic needs for shelter, security and belonging will be assessed and met.

BASIC NEEDS

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs provides the psychological model for why at its foundation, student success depends on the meeting of basic needs. It is freedom from the time and worry for food, shelter and security that allows energy and opportunity for intellectual pursuits. NC State's land grant commitment means a commitment to affordability and accessibility for all capable students, whatever their socioeconomic status. With anticipated reduction of revenues and increased student need, meeting student needs is a heightened priority. Meeting needs extends across the student experience from undergraduate to graduate students.

The Campus is distinctively *an empowering culture* that ensures all students have met their basic needs for sustenance, safety, security and belonging.

1. Reducing cost
2. Increasing student access to resources and work
3. Tiers of support for graduate students
4. Course availability (equalize registration process, lower barriers to enrollment)

Reducing cost: As college tuition costs continue to increase, student loans are becoming a necessity to provide access to higher education. Studies suggest nearly 45 million Americans are now carrying more student loan debt than the total US credit card debt. Student loan debt estimates are as high as \$1.64 trillion. This number includes 66% of American university graduates, with an average debt of \$25,550 per person.

Meeting the basic needs of our students will include loan and financial counseling, classes, workshops for all students prior to applying for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and other student loan packages. Students should work on financial plans that include an understanding of median projected salaries in their direct and associated fields of study. Students should develop an understanding of personal and professional budgeting and sound financial investing. While this strategy does not work to lower student tuition and the debt students will carry through graduation, it will help develop a holistic strategy for students to better anticipate the cost of their own education and strategies for dealing with the debt as they emerge into their careers.

Increasing student access to resources and work: Students' dependence on financial loans for academic expenses and may be reduced by increased opportunities for scholarships and employment opportunities on campus. Work study, internships, part time externships, experiential learning opportunities, and assistantships for graduate students provide opportunities for enhanced student engagements that develop professional training and skills and build relationships with faculty and experts within the field of study. In lieu of off-campus

work, shown to undermine satisfactory academic progress, these opportunities enable a closer association with the campus and with the students' academic programs. On campus work has a positive impact on time to degree completion which further contributes to lowering student debt.

Tiers of support for graduate students: Graduate students represent an energetic level of innovation that is predominately rooted in our broad diversity of research activities at the university and across the world. These activities depend on the stewardship, training, and mentoring of graduate students as a necessary means for current and future success of our research programs. In order for graduate students to engage in research as effective partners, their cost of living needs must be met. Graduate students must be paid a living wage as a component of meeting basic needs. Health care and child care costs should be provided for all fully-enrolled graduate students. Graduate students' program of study should be seen as a progressive appointment with levels of support adjusted as the cost of living increases. Graduate students should be mentored and coached in pursuing progressive funding opportunities that promote the timely completion of their programs of study and in applying for national and university scholarships and fellowships. Graduate student mentoring should address professional development credentials and opportunities for future recognition, employment, and scholarship. The graduate experience should broaden the applicability of graduate education beyond the academic institution. Increasing the professional development of graduate students will develop their skills and understanding for garnering resources and building and leading teams aimed at solving the grand challenges of education, society, and the environment.

Course availability (equalize registration process, lower barriers to enrollment): Students finding themselves unable to register for courses required by their majors or programs of study may be delayed in their progress to degree completion. This delay may lead to additional time and tuition costs, and further increases the academic course load that the student will need to complete in subsequent semesters, as well as increased student debt for some of the most vulnerable students. A more equitable registration process should be implemented, including the elimination of priority registration, except in cases deemed necessary for meeting students' assessed learning needs. (See recommendation #4 for further discussion of this action item.)

To accomplish these goals, we recommend the following actions:

- The Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration will work with three representatives appointed by the provost, a representative from Student Body Government, a representative from the Graduate Student Association to review expenses and, where possible, recommend reductions in tuition and fees.
- The provost shall appoint a committee to review and recommend ways to increase on-campus work options for students to help students meet their financial need and develop professional and academic competencies and skills (e.g., using the PREP program to fund undergraduate research).

- The Senior Vice Provost for Enrollment Management and Services (SRP-EMAS) shall work with representatives of University Advancement and Finance and Administration to review and recommend options to fully fund financial need for all NC State students.
- The Dean of the Graduate School shall work with college deans and the provost's office to apply methodology developed in consultation with the College of Humanities and Social Sciences to provide a comprehensive report of current stipends and the amounts needed for the campus to provide competitive or living wage stipends, whichever is greater.
- The provost shall charge the SRP-EMAS to review and revise registration priorities to ensure students who are most vulnerable to academic challenges have the highest opportunity to gain access to courses.

Recommendation 2: Habits of mind and dispositions will be cultivated through a foundational common intellectual experience and developed across the undergraduate career.

Foundational Academic Experience - A rigorous and engaging interdisciplinary intellectual experience will become a common, grounding experience for NC State undergraduate education.

Habits of Mind are dispositions toward behaving intelligently when confronted with problems, the answers to which are not immediately known. It is the work of higher education to prepare leaders capable of reasoned and ethical problem-solving. The successful NC State Graduate will be able to perform under challenging conditions that demand strategic reasoning, perseverance, thinking and communicating with clarity and precision, ethical reasoning, creativity, listening with understanding and empathy, curiosity and openness to continuous learning. Habits of mind are developed through experience and practice. A common foundational academic experience over successive semesters/courses will be built on the pedagogy that contributes to this development.

Assessment of our current curriculum notes there are more ways for students to meet general education program (GEP) requirements than there are students. Because the GEP requires students take one or more courses from a broad domain (e.g., mathematical sciences, humanities), and some domains list hundreds of courses that can meet the requirement, there are more than one million different pathways for students to meet their GEP requirements. It is conceivable that every graduating senior would meet their GEP by taking entirely different courses. When coupled with the fact that faculty design and deliver GEP courses with no intent to coordinate with courses or faculty in other disciplines, the GEP for most students is atomized, discrete, and uncoordinated with little or nothing in common with their fellow students. In this context, there is no common intellectual foundation for students to share with other students, or on which to build their subsequent study and develop the habits of mind needed to meet the challenges of the future and cultivate life-long learning. We feel the benefits of the current GEP (e.g., flexibility for students in content and course scheduling) are outweighed by the deficits

(i.e., the lack of a common foundation and the inability to create a common intellectual identity and community).

The Foundational Academic Experience, or ‘common core’ as referred to on other campuses (e.g., Columbia University, UNC-Asheville) will become the cornerstone of students’ entry to NC State and will span the first year or more of students’ experience. Foundational Academic Experiences (usually in the first year) typically span two or more consecutive semesters in which all students read the same reading list at the same time, and complete assignments (usually a writing-intensive mix of individual and group work) in response to the shared curricular core. Often, the readings and assignments address a common theme (e.g., diversity) through different disciplines (e.g., historical, biological, economic, social). The common core approach allows students in any field of study to have the same intellectual foundation and identity, which encourages conversations and collaboration among students outside of classes (e.g., dormitories, organizations). Moreover, engaging with texts and problems across multiple courses and semesters promotes the coherent and coordinated development of the habits of mind necessary for students to thrive in a diverse, democratic, and ever-changing society.

Moreover, common intellectual experiences create a community in which all students and faculty participate. Research shows that universities and colleges requiring a common core have higher levels of student engagement, retention, and graduation than those that do not (AAC&U, 2008; described in the next section on High Impact Practices). The challenges to creating a common core are real and substantial; it is no trivial thing for faculty to come to consensus on the reading list, and instituting a two- or three-course required sequence would require substantial changes to the GEP, teaching assignments, and more. However, we believe the benefits outweigh the challenges, primarily because the challenges are to faculty and the institution—whereas the benefits belong primarily to the students. It is not enough to teach students the compartmentalized skills needed for analysis, synthesis, and more: Students must practice those skills repeatedly, across disciplines and texts, until they become habits guiding how they approach the world. Re-imagining the GEP around a two- or three-course common core (with additional requirements) would help NC State prepare and graduate successful students ready to become employees, citizens, and life-long learners.

The **Foundational Academic Experience** will be:

- Credit bearing and included in the general education curriculum.
- Taught by faculty familiar with interdisciplinary inquiry, trained and skillful in pedagogy to develop Habits of Mind.
- Centered around a central theme/problem with common readings, engagement and development of writing and discussion skills. We strongly recommend that the theme include an exploration of diversity from multiple disciplinary perspectives (e.g., biological, sociological, cultural, racial, linguistic, mathematical, ecological).
- Multidisciplinary, introducing students to perspectives across the various disciplines of the University and creating collaborative learning experiences and conversations across disciplines.

- A vehicle for common intellectual foundation and identity to students' NC State experience
- A dynamic experience designed to inspire student engagement and curiosity for learning

The Foundational Academic Experience will provide the context for:

- Students' common understanding of the mission and values of NC State
- Practicing the **civic conversations** that should characterize our diverse campus community and that are integral skills for a diverse, democratic and ever-changing society. The **NC State Campus Conversations Project**, created by a team of students faculty and staff across 2019-20, should be the structure for these conversations. The Conversation Agreements inherent to the project are a significant tool for creating the respectful, diverse campus culture we envision. They should be taught and modeled by administration, faculty, staff and student leadership and implemented in the myriad aspects of campus life for students, faculty and staff.

To accomplish these goals, we recommend the following actions:

- The provost will convene the faculty to initiate a process to renew, refresh, and update the GEP in advance of our next SACS review (in 2025).
- The faculty committee charged with renewing the GEP will invite members of the task force (and others) to share information, research, and scholarship regarding common core GEPs. Ultimately, neither the task force nor university leadership can declare changes to the GEP; that responsibility rests solely with the faculty. Therefore, members of the task force (and others) must make the case to the faculty in support of the change so the faculty may make an informed decision regarding GEP renewal and revision.
- The provost shall provide support for faculty delegations to visit colleges and universities that provide a common intellectual experience, and to bring representatives of those universities to meet with our faculty to understand better the benefits and challenges of a common core GEP.
- If the faculty adopt GEP revisions with a common intellectual experience at its core, we recommend that the program be proposed as the Quality Enhancement Program (QEP) in our SACS self-study and reaffirmation process.
- The Campus Conversations Project be embraced as a model for campus culture and civic engagement.

Recommendation 3: All undergraduates will leave NC State with a seminal experience outside of the classroom. (high-impact practices)

High Impact Practices (HIPs) are experiences that increase student engagement and retention, reduce time to degree, and increase graduation rates (AAC&U, 2008). The eleven experiences supported by research in achieving these outcomes are briefly described below:

- *First-Year Seminars and Experiences* are small-enrollment courses taught by experienced faculty, and address topics where the faculty hold deep expertise. Course

activities emphasize critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other characteristics that help first year (often first semester) students develop foundations for subsequent study.

- *Common Intellectual Experiences* require a common set of courses (sometimes with additional co-curricular experiences) for all students (i.e., across all colleges and majors). Sometimes called the “common core,” these experiences create a learning community where every member of the community explores common content, questions, and themes.
- *Community-Engaged Learning (Service-Learning)* are experiences that link what students are learning in classrooms to non-academic settings, offering practice and application of academic concepts to real-world issues and needs and engages the community as partners in the work of education.
- *Learning Communities* link two or more courses in which cohorts of students enroll concurrently. Instructors in the courses work together and with students to integrate readings and subjects from different disciplines Community-engaged learning is a powerful addition to the learning community experience.
- *Writing-Intensive Courses* require students to write at all levels of instruction (i.e., repeatedly from their first to their final year) addressing different topics (i.e., writing across the curriculum) and different audiences (e.g., academic, professional).
- *Collaborative Assignments and Projects* require teams of students to work together to solve problems. Study groups, collaborative writing assignments, and cooperative projects and research are examples of these experiences.
- *Undergraduate Research* engages students in the research and scholarly enterprise by working with faculty to create new knowledge within a discipline (e.g., scientific experimentation, archival research).
- *Diversity/Global Learning* courses and programs require students to explore cultures, life experiences, and worldviews that differ from their own, and often include experiential learning in a community or country (i.e., study abroad) which the student has not previously experienced. Within NC State, sharing cultural experiences from and among our own diverse campus members provides a wealth of diversity / global learning within our own campus.
- *ePortfolios* provide students the opportunity to build a body of work throughout their undergraduate experience including exemplary projects, reflections, papers, and other media that they can share with professors, advisors, and potential employers.

- *Internships* provide students with experience in a work setting, typically related to their career interests. Host settings provide professional experiences and coaching; if offered for academic credit, faculty typically supervise and require a project or paper.
- *Capstone Courses and Projects* provide a culminating experience where students integrate and apply what they have learned across their years of study. Examples of experiences include research papers, performances, portfolios, or exhibitions presented to an audience.

Students with one HIP have better outcomes than students who lack one HIP; students with two or more HIPs have better outcomes than students with only one. However, research also shows that access to HIPs is not equally distributed across all undergraduates; students who are first-generation or from under-represented minorities are less likely to have access to one or more HIPs. Therefore, ensuring equity of access must be part of any university plan to provide HIPs to their students.

Given the importance of HIPs to student engagement and outcomes, NC State should require all undergraduate students to have at least one High Impact Practice before graduation, and will encourage students to have two or more HIPs. To accomplish this goal, we recommend the following actions:

- A coordinator of HIPs should be appointed/hired to help the university survey, establish, and monitor activities to ensure all students have one or more HIPs. This work would include helping faculty, programs, and colleges distinguish between HIPs and seemingly similar practices. For example, FYI courses are not first-year seminars, as faculty usually teach introductory courses rather than courses specifically addressing deep faculty expertise; living-learning villages are not learning communities, as they do not intentionally link concurrently enrolled cohorts in two or more courses.
- The HIP coordinator will work with Associate Deans of Academic Affairs to survey degree programs in their colleges to identify, for every degree program in their colleges, whether the program requires one or more HIPs as a condition of graduation. Additionally, colleges will identify practices already underway (e.g., linked courses that create learning communities, formal undergraduate research programs) to provide a sense of what is already being done and how much more would need to occur to meet the goal.
- Based on the results of the survey, the HIP Coordinator and Associate Deans will work with university leadership so that each college has a plan to ensure every graduate completes at least one HIP. The HIP coordinator will also develop and implement programs to track and monitor HIP completion as part of the university's advising software suite.

· The HIP coordinator will also work with University Advancement and Development to make the case for the value of funding HIPs, particularly for those who lack the financial resources required to obtain an HIP. For example, study abroad or a congressional internship can be profoundly meaningful experiences, but both require funds often beyond the reach of students and their families. Close collaboration between the HIP coordinator and development personnel at university and college levels is necessary to ensure that all students, regardless of financial need or parental educational levels, have access to HIPs.

Community-engaged Learning (Service-learning) are complex teaching and learning environments that should be supported with adequate resources to enable exemplary community-engaged practices, and that honors our land-grant mission to connect classroom learning to the social issues of our communities and our state. Built on the standards of the Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement, NC State should build structures that weave community engagement through the fabric of the institution, creating a bridge between the curricular experience and the community. An office connecting NC State academics with University Outreach and Engagement should support the HIP of Community Engaged Learning. Our land-grant work through University Extension and Engagement provides an enviable network for engaged learning that is woefully untapped. The academic and extension missions of our campus are distinctly separate. An office for community-engaged learning should coordinate community connections to the curriculum. It should broker community partnerships that are reciprocal and equitable, train and support faculty in best-practices for community-engaged learning, and ensure students are entering the community with cultural sensitivity, awareness of systems thinking, and means of engagement that contribute to an equitable and just society. Re-thinking how our students and campus are connected to the community is essential to our land-grant mission. All of our public elementary, middle, and high schools, for example, could benefit from direct interaction with our students and faculty, particularly in our rural, low income, and minority areas. Community-engaged learning contributes to a deeper sense of citizenship and builds relationships that enable healthy communities.

Recommendation 4: Provide structure and resources that support development and implementation of student-driven strategic plans that ensure our graduates are financially stable, independent and inclusive thinkers and professionally prepared to contribute impactfully in a global society.

Our students should be provided with support and resources that facilitate their academic journey at NC State. As we continue to strive for providing an efficient, affordable, and excellent education, we must ensure that students can set a path for degree completion, preferably in four years. To do this requires advising, mentoring, student vision or planning, curricula that are

aligned with the needs for 21st Century career paths, and experiences that add value to student development.

As we focus on Graduating the Successful Student, we believe that the following initiatives are essential.

All students will have equitable access to high-quality advising and mentoring during their entire academic journey at NC State. All students at NC State, whether first time, full time freshmen, transfer students, or graduate students should expect to have equitable access to exceptional advising, guidance and mentorship.

While we acknowledge that each college at NC State has its own advising culture, it is also clear that the quality of the experience is variable, within and across colleges. Each student should expect a quality advising floor beneath which their experience will not fall. We recommend that all professional staff advisors have at least a strong dotted line to a central advising leader, for example the Assistant Dean for Academic Advising in DASA.

In the Pathway to the Future, a move to intrusive (better known as proactive) advising was called for. We fell short of campus-wide adoption, even as progress was made. What is proactive advising? According to NACADA (2014), “Programs utilizing proactive academic advising build structures that incorporate intervention strategies mandating advising contacts for students who otherwise might not seek advising.” This means we must find ways to work with students before a crisis happens, not after.

The NC State University Academic Advising Council recommended that first year students be provided with a proactive advising experience with well-trained professional staff advisors. Their recommendations included:

- One face-to-face, individual meeting between student and advisor within the first 6 weeks of each of the first two semesters.
- One face-to-face, individual meeting between student and advisor within each pre-enrollment advising period
- Early communication to students of advising responsibilities, expectations, and learning outcomes
- Frequent communication with students regarding university policies, procedures, resources, opportunities, course planning, etc., including communication that begins before their arrival at New Student Orientation.
- Teaching a first-year experience course to assigned advisees.
- Monitoring student scheduling decisions and academic performance.
- Direct follow-up with students regarding issues of concern (e.g., progress reports, first-semester academic performance).

These types of advising activities would go a long way towards increasing retention, persistence, and graduation. However, if we are to truly close achievement gaps and accelerate our four-year graduation rate further, we need to adopt a coordinated culture of care throughout the students' time on campus.

We can provide countless examples of students at NC State in the past decade who have made it to 100 hours or more who had no real path to the intended degree. These students were not flagged by staff or faculty advisors until it was too late. It has been too easy for a student to take courses that do not advance their degree in order to simply stay academically eligible. This is where we must take advantage of technology. The EAB Navigate advising and analytics platform can be used to identify these students much earlier. This is really an opportunity to grow our coordinated culture of care where a staff of advisors and advising technology experts work together to ensure that students are on track upon entry (e.g., the University of South Florida [Academic Advocacy](#) unit). NC State currently has a staff of one working the Advising Technology unit in loose coordination with Academic Advising Services to both expand the use of Navigate and to identify students at risk. Much more needs to be done and a unit at NC State should include not only the high level technology (Navigate) but also well-trained advising case managers to shepherd students through the process. We recommend that each college have a case manager who has expanded access to Navigate and can use the system to identify students in need of more assistance. These case managers would work closely with the Director of Advising Technology to ensure quality service campus-wide.

To ensure equitable and holistic student advising, centralized and robust advisor training is needed. In addition to domain-specific curricular requirements, advisors should be trained in other areas to maximize their capacity to support and enrich the student experience that include but are not limited to: mental health; basic needs resources on campus; employment, research, and HIP opportunities; and social and academic clubs.

Graduate students should also expect exceptional guidance from faculty advisors and committee members. The experience is very different from that of the undergraduate student, but there should be a clear expectation that students will get the guidance they need. Bloom et al. (2016) recommended three specific strategies for positively influencing graduate students' progress towards graduation; setting clear expectations, progress meetings, and providing advocacy.

We should be setting clear expectations for roles and responsibilities for our students. This can be done through thorough orientation experiences as well as comprehensive graduate student handbooks for reference (for students and faculty). And, expectations for progress should be clear from the start, and not changed significantly once the student has progressed into their studies and research.

Graduate students should have periodic progress meetings with faculty advisors, to ensure they are on track. This progress can, and perhaps should, also be tracked by a Graduate Services Coordinator who can ensure students are meeting deadlines and progressing.

Finally, we need to provide channels for students to confidentially discuss issues. This can of course be with the student's advisor, but it may also be a director of graduate studies, or an ombudsperson.

All students will have equitable access to mentoring relationships with faculty during their entire academic journey at NC State. The proactive advising model does not discount faculty members as integral to the process. The 2014 Gallup-Purdue Index report, a survey of over 30,000 college graduates, makes clear that a meaningful relationship with a caring faculty member, along with five other indicators, is key to long-term engagement and satisfaction in their work. In other words, they are more likely to be *Successful Graduates*. This study showed that students who reported that they had a mentor who encouraged them to pursue their goals and dreams, had at least one professor who made them excited about learning, and had professors who cared about them as a person were 2.3 times more likely to be engaged and satisfied in their work.

Therefore, all students should have high-quality professional advising and a mentoring relationship with at least one faculty member who cares. This points out the claim made in this report:

“When it comes to finding the secret to success, it’s not “where you go,” it’s “how you do it” that makes all the difference in higher education” ([Gallup-Purdue, 2014](#)).

Colleges and departments should therefore look for ways to engage all students in the majors with faculty in meaningful ways.

NC State will require all undergraduate and graduate students to develop a personal strategic plan that will be supported and facilitated by equitable institutional resources and processes. With guidance from professional and broadly trained advisors (first and second year undergraduates; first year transfer students) and faculty mentors (more advanced undergraduates and graduate students), students will develop a personal strategic plan that incorporates curricular requirements while also reflecting personal and professional goals. The plan will be flexible such that it can evolve with the changing mindset and experiences of the student during their academic career. This plan will include a tentative timeline of curricular elements, a HIP (for undergraduates), and other concrete, actionable items that reflect personal and professional goals. The expectation is that the advisor, through centralized training and programmatic support, will be well positioned to make suggestions and present opportunities that will enrich the student's experience. Each Fall and Spring, the student will meet with the advisor to review and modify the strategic plan. A personal strategic plan includes tools that empower students' self-assessment and monitoring of their academic progress, their campus and community engagement and their personal health and wellness. Empowering students' self-management contributes to personal responsibility, maturation and resilience.

All students will have equitable access to courses and extracurricular experiences - Semester enrollments tend to be space limited. The practice of priority registration inhibits fair access to courses and too often favors populations within elite programs. Priority registration should be eliminated except in cases deemed necessary for meeting students' assessed learning needs. Enrollment or seat limitations often hinder students that are late admissions or transfer students. Often these students are some of the most academic and financially vulnerable students. Students finding themselves unable to register for courses required by their majors or programs of study may be delayed in their progress to degree completion. This delay may lead to additional time and tuition costs, and further increases the academic course load that the student will need to complete in subsequent semesters, as well as increased student debt for some of the most vulnerable students.

All students will have access to consistently high quality teaching, particularly in foundational/gateway courses. Gateway courses and their instructors hold great influence on the majors that students pursue. These courses should be robust, regularly updated, and taught by our best instructors. To ensure that all instructors have the resources they need to deliver exciting, engaging, and inclusive content, colleges and departments should put in place structured and transparent peer-evaluation and teaching mentorship processes. In addition, university resources to support teaching should be communicated to faculty in a centralized manner (e.g., a website that cuts across different resources such as DELTA, DASA, etc.) and leveraged for required and recurring faculty training. We recommend the addition of more Visiting Professorships / Professors of Practice that connect students, curricula and faculty to the current needs of companies, businesses and industry and connect NCSU to our local communities, businesses, K-12, community colleges, other institutions of higher learning.

Diversity and inclusion will be a prominent and intentional part of the NC State curriculum. Mechanisms must be put in place to ensure that all faculty, teaching courses at every level, are incorporating inclusive content to ensure that all students are treated and taught respectfully and equitably. Not only is this ethically critical, but our students expressed this expectation according to results from the Office of Institutional Research and Planning's Fall 2019 Campus Climate Survey for our undergraduate and graduate students. Recommendations include: use of an inclusive syllabus template that provides a strongly worded inclusion statement and rules of engagement within the classroom; first day of class inclusion statements so that students are clear on the faculty and university's position on diversity and inclusion; a "broader impact statement" for each course that is provided to the department head or college explaining how inclusivity/diversity has been woven into the content of the course; and development of focus groups that provide feedback on performance with respect to diversity and inclusivity.

Transfer and readmitted students will receive specific on-boarding support that ensures they maximize their experience in an accelerated time frame. Transfer students often note a lack of guidance and sense of community because their upper class status

suggests accumulated knowledge of the campus and its resources. Students will be paired with a professional advisor for a minimum of their first year during which they will develop an accelerated strategic plan (see above). In addition, NC State will provide clear, cohort-based on-boarding for transfer and readmitted students to ensure that they have experiences that mirror those of four-year students and to facilitate community networking. A peer-mentoring network should be established that links transfer and readmitted students to broader academic and student engagement opportunities. A transfer/readmitted student focus group should be established by which the department/college/university can receive feedback on the experience of this student population.

Graduate Students will receive competitive, livable stipends; consistently high-quality mentoring; and opportunities for professional development outside of the classroom/research environment.

By strengthening the financial and mentoring support, we aim to graduate financially stable, confident, well-trained, and professionally connected graduate students while increasing the 6-year completion rate for graduate students to 70%.

a. With guidance from their graduate program or primary mentor, incoming graduate students will develop a strategic plan for their academic and professional goals that can be revisited annually. To ensure consistency of compliance these plans will be submitted and reviewed by the graduate school. The graduate school will provide clear on-boarding and off-boarding (entry and exit) for graduate students (mirroring the undergraduate) in the mission and values of NC State, respect for diversity and inclusion, and benefits and resources available to graduate students.

b. A multidisciplinary committee of faculty and graduate students will be established to conduct regular reviews of stipends and other graduate student resources. The disciplinary focus of the committee will rotate and provide recommendations to the graduate school regarding student support (e.g., raising stipends, modifying fee structure) to ensure that NC State is competitive with its peers.

c. NC State will provide robust and equitable professional development support for graduate students. Support for travel/externship awards will be provided to ensure that graduate students have the ability to attend meetings, develop their professional networks, and engage in externships that will expand their training and eventual marketability. The dissertation completion grants program will be expanded to ensure that students have protected time to write high-quality, impactful dissertations. Summer programs (e.g. Edge) should be expanded particularly for low-income, first generation and underrepresented students.

d. As graduate studies become increasingly multidisciplinary, the NC State graduate school must provide mechanisms by which students, in coordination with a faculty mentor, can develop multidisciplinary courses of study outside of formal programs.

e. All graduate students will be informed about resources and procedures that allow them to provide feedback about their programs or mentors anonymously and without fear of retribution. It is critical to ensure that our graduate students are being treated with fairness and respect, yet many do not enjoy the freedom or security to speak out if they experience challenges or abuse. The graduate school should provide each program with a clear list of resources and protective procedures available to students; this list should be incorporated into graduate program handbooks and given to students upon matriculation and updated annually. As part of their annual review, graduate students should be provided the option of submitting an anonymous review of both their mentor and their program to the graduate school - this feedback will be required after the second year in the program and upon completion. An off-boarding process should be implemented by the graduate school. As part of this process, all graduating students should have an exit interview with the department head or graduate school representative to get feedback on the student's experience and suggestions for improvement.

July 2020

Graduating the Successful Student Editing Team:

Janice Odom, Carolyn Mattingly, Stacy Nelson, Jeff Braden, Mike Mullen

In closing, it seems impossible to exaggerate the tremendous change and challenge we currently face as a country. Our collective gaze is upon the great social divides of justice and opportunity that glaringly surround us. It is a time of crisis - rife with both danger and opportunity. Undertaking the work of this report has been an exercise in hope. We are believers in this fine university, its imperfect but visionary history, and its character and potential to be instrumental in a more equitable tomorrow for our students, our state and our world.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this meaningful undertaking. It has been our privilege to work together. Our thanks to the entire task force and particularly to Louis Hunt for his thoughtful guidance and input.

Notes:

Common Core:

UNC-Asheville has a common core; you can find a link to it here:

<https://www.unca.edu/programs/liberal-arts-core/> I'd also note the three humanities courses required of all students (HUM124, 214, and 314) form the common intellectual experience described in the HIP document (i.e., common readings, coherent classes over multiple semesters addressing a theme from multiple perspectives). Michigan State offers CIEs for subgroups of students (i.e., it is common within a college or collection of disciplines, but not across the entire campus:

<https://undergrad.msu.edu/programs/cie>). Columbia is still the sine qua non (see

<https://www.college.columbia.edu/core/center/visiting-prof/curriculum>), and provides the clearest description of the concept of a core curriculum.

