

**FOR POSTING: ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION
(4/17/08)**

**UNC Tomorrow Report:
Our Citizens and Their Future: Access to Higher Education**

Major Finding: UNC should increase access to higher education for all North Carolinians, particularly for underserved regions, underrepresented populations, and non-traditional students.

Recommendations:

- 4.2.1 Increase access to educational programs – including academic courses, degree programs at all levels and certificate programs – for traditional students, non-traditional students and lifelong learners.**
- 4.2.2 Continue ongoing efforts with the Community College System to strengthen and streamline articulation between the two systems to develop a more seamless relationship.**
- 4.2.3 Model accommodating needs of persons with disabilities, including students, faculty, staff and the general public.**
- 4.2.4 Maintain affordability and increase financial aid options.**
- 4.2.5 Increase the educational attainment of all underrepresented populations, especially African-American males and Hispanic students.**
- 4.2.6 Help ensure that all students are better prepared to enter and succeed academically in college.**

New Program Proposals:

Expansion of Scholars' Latino Initiative

The goal of the Scholars' Latino Initiative program is to involve Carolina's Scholars in direct service to Latino youth -- to serve as role models, help shape aspirations for college, and facilitate transition to the college experience.

The Scholars' Latino Initiative is a program of cultural enrichment, skills development, public service, and early college classes that prepare Latino youth to make successful applications for college admission and scholarship assistance. It benefits both the Scholars at Carolina who participate through service and the youth who receive assistance. Its success in the model program is a matter of record (see www.unc.edu/sli). All eight seniors from the pilot sites, Jordan Matthews High School and Asheboro High School, have been admitted to college. The initiative was commenced within the Office of Scholarships and Student Aid as part of our scholars' programming activities, because of the interest and leadership of Professor Peter Kaufman, Faculty Coordinator for the Johnston and Carolina Scholars programs.

College Access and Advising Course and Curriculum

The goal of this program is to create a curriculum that will help university students, pre-service educators and school counselors, and student-service personnel provide exemplary advising to those who seek access to college. The program would be piloted at UNC-Chapel Hill as an elective course, and then be developed as a distance-learning course for other institutions in North Carolina, thus increasing the number of trained access practitioners and college advisers throughout the state.

By combining expertise and current efforts in the Schools of Education and the National and Carolina College Advising Corps, we will develop a three-hour advanced undergraduate- and graduate-level course on college access and advising. This course will provide current university students and pre-service educators and counselors additional expertise in college access, in terms of both policy and practice. It will also enhance current educator and school-counselor competency by providing a professional-development opportunity in contemporary access issues, admissions, and financial aid. By fusing components of traditional courses in school and guidance counseling with the admissions and financial aid curriculum developed in Advising Corps training, we will create a dynamic course that will help students and counselors develop expertise that will ultimately increase college-participation rates.

Once piloted successfully, the curriculum will be offered via distance learning to other institutions in North Carolina, including UNC-system universities and community colleges, from the Carolina Center for Educational Excellence and the School of Education extension building designed for distance education. The curriculum could also grow into a certificate program for advisers, counselors, and other non-profit access practitioners.

The development of the course would address a strong need for training in college advising, particularly advising that addresses low-income and underserved students. There have been multiple calls for the development of such a curriculum by NACAC (National Association of Admissions Counselors), the Education Trust, and the American School Counselors Association.

Access for Youth from North Carolina's Public Foster Care System

The goal of this proposed program is to support the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), community colleges, and the UNC system by advertising scholarship sources and helping students in the foster care system prepare for, and choose, postsecondary education. The official state program, already authorized, is known as "N.C. Reach." News 14 Carolina states: "N. C. Reach, a first of its kind program in the country, is giving foster kids a chance to go to college, get a degree and be debt-free when they're done." It can be thought of as a modified Carolina Covenant®.

The "program" as referenced above would be a communications effort to help DHHS and others advertise a new state program, which is described below [extracted from DHHS publications], and to help facilitate their entrance into postsecondary education.

Background: In Session Law 2007-323, the North Carolina General Assembly approved funding which provides scholarships to youth who are either adopted after age 12 from North Carolina public foster care or who aged out of North Carolina foster care at age 18. The working title of the funding program was originally “Case Management Services for At-Risk College Student Recipients of Postsecondary Education Support Scholarships.” The program has since been named “N. C. Reach.” The scholarships are for students who attend an undergraduate-level program at any of the 16 branches of the University of North Carolina or any of the public North Carolina community colleges, and are intended to pay any unmet cost of attendance up to the full cost of a college education. An additional aspect funded through this scholarships program is to provide case management services to students who receive the scholarships. [The state program is administered by the Orphan Foundation of America, under contract with the Department of Health and Human Services. The contract was executed in January 2008, so efforts are just now starting.]

Undergraduate Certificate and Degree-Completion Program

This program seeks to enable qualified students, and especially working and nontraditionally aged students, to improve their skill levels in their workplace and position themselves to complete a bachelor degree. A primary component of the proposal is a new undergraduate certificate which would cover the basic arts and sciences disciplines. The certificate would allow students to earn a meaningful academic credential, which could also serve as a stepping-stone towards a bachelor degree. This component would complement the other major element of the program, which is an opportunity for students to complete baccalaureate degree requirements by earning a new interdisciplinary degree.

Three years ago UNC-Chapel Hill introduced a pilot part-time degree-completion program for University employees in response to recommendations of the Chancellor's Task Force for a Better Workplace. Based on the success of that program, as well as the lessons learned from it, we propose to pilot a similar program for students who seek to complete an undergraduate degree on a part-time basis after having completed either an appropriate associate degree or the general-education core curriculum offered through the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS). Students could also qualify by meeting the requirements of the certificate program described in this proposal or by having completed a requisite number of credit hours at UNC-Chapel Hill or other four-year institutions.

Since traditional university majors are designed to accommodate full-time students who have not yet entered the workforce, the program will include the creation of alternate concentrations that are equally rigorous but more flexible and more in keeping with the legitimate intellectual and professional needs of working adults. These concentrations, ideally, will correspond with the workforce needs identified by UNC Tomorrow.

In a similar manner, in order to encourage students to reenter the university after being away for several years, this proposal includes the development of a basic skills certificate made up of fixed course requirements drawing on several disciplines within the College of Arts and Sciences. Students completing the required course work would receive a certificate affirming their attainment of a significant body of knowledge applicable to the needs of the workplace.

This certificate would also establish their eligibility to apply to UNC-Chapel Hill as an undergraduate; admission requirements of the university would be modified to include consideration of the successful completion of requirements for this certificate.

Because UNC-Chapel Hill certificate programs at the graduate level have attracted students into master's and other graduate degrees after long absences from formal education and allowed them to be successful, those programs can serve as useful models for the undergraduate certificate program. Among the exemplars of certificate programs at the graduate level are those currently offered by the professional schools at UNC-Chapel Hill, and in particular, the Core Public Health Certificate that has been offered for several years at the School of Public Health. Offered in a distance education format and emphasizing work experience instead of standardized testing to qualify for admission, this program has been notable in attracting a large number of applicants, most of whom are mid-career professionals. Students have not only completed this 15-credit certificate in large numbers but also, and more importantly, have been motivated to apply for master's-level graduate degree programs, into which many have been accepted. Fundamental to the success of this program is its focus on improving the skills and abilities of adult learners.

This core public health certificate can serve as a model for a pilot undergraduate certificate that underscores basic knowledge areas in the arts and sciences. A core arts and sciences curriculum can be developed with the goal of preparing and encouraging students to complete their undergraduate degrees as well as providing them with the skills needed to improve their performance in their careers and contribute more effectively to the economic growth of the state. Courses may span the range from a mathematical/statistical literacy to intensive writing skills, and may also include basic sciences and social science survey courses. In creating this program we may be able to take advantage of general interest courses that are currently available in other existing certificate programs, such as the Introduction to Environmental Sciences course that is now offered in distance and face to face format in the School of Public Health. It would also be of benefit from a cost perspective to take advantage of other online courses that are currently available at other schools within the UNC system, including the NCCCS. The experience of the NCCCS faculty in teaching in distance education formats can be a particular advantage for this program.

This program would be ideal for a distance-education format but could also include "hybrid" formats that combine distance technology with face-to-face formats, especially for the first courses in the sequence. Distance learning technologies will also provide opportunities for interactions outside the classroom that will parallel features of the traditional campus environment. It should also be noted that emerging technologies allow distance education approaches to simulate the on-campus experience in new ways that make these approaches worth considering for undergraduate education. A further option is to offer at least some face-to-face courses on the campuses of local community colleges. Where possible, both face-to-face and distance courses may be team-taught by UNC-Chapel Hill and NCCCS faculty. The support of arts and science faculty for this program may be enhanced through developing of specialized courses and a funding mechanism where tuition receipts from the certificate courses taught by arts and sciences faculty can be redirected to these faculty. This is a model that has contributed to the success of the core public health certificate in the School of Public Health.

Upon completion of the certificate it is expected that a large proportion of certificate graduates would apply for an undergraduate degree at UNC-Chapel, and in particular would take advantage of the opportunity to complete degree requirements through the new interdisciplinary degree that would include the courses taken as part of the certificate program. It is proposed that all courses in the certificate program be accepted for transfer into the degree program upon admission. This is a model that is currently in place with graduate certificates. One disincentive that has been shown to exist for adult learners seeking to resume their undergraduate education is the need for standardized testing as part of the admission requirement. For example, data are available to document an inverse correlation between age of students and score on quantitative portions of standardized tests. To overcome this impediment, it is proposed that graduates of the certificate program be allowed to waive the standardized tests that are part of traditional undergraduate admission requirements at UNC-Chapel Hill. With these incentives it is expected that a large proportion of certificate graduates will apply for and complete their undergraduate degrees at UNC-Chapel Hill. To confirm this assumption and to explore other issues related to the demand for this combined certificate/degree program, a market research study will need to be carried out prior to planning of the program.

The key to the success of these offerings is the ability to reacquaint students with the rigors of the academic experience, while at the same time helping them to succeed in their careers and, most important, provide avenues for them to complete a bachelor's degree at UNC-Chapel Hill. It should be noted that while this proposal seeks to address the broad issue of educational opportunity and attainment by the citizens of North Carolina, its focus is on the issue of access to undergraduate education that was identified as crucial in the UNC Tomorrow report.

Residential College Advising and Educational Support Program

The goal of this program is to establish focused partnerships in one or more underserved regions that will increase the number and percentage of students enrolling in and graduating from community colleges, colleges, and universities.

This pilot program--to be established in partnership with counties in one or more underserved regions of the state--aims to provide broad support for college access and success through a combination of proven approaches.

a. Multi-year residential program for high-potential secondary-school students. Building on the proven effectiveness of Project Uplift, Summer Bridge, and Upward Bound, UNC-Chapel Hill summer programs that have fostered college access and success for thousands of prospective undergraduate students, Carolina proposes to develop an intensive residential program for students from partner regions who have expressed interest in or aptitude for postsecondary study. At minimum, this residential program would involve either six weeks of summer study on the UNC-Chapel Hill campus for rising ninth-, tenth-, and eleventh-grade students; at its most ambitious, the program would provide a residential early-college experience for all of grades eleven and twelve. Either program would provide mentoring and other support services and would culminate in students' taking for-credit Carolina classes while on campus in Chapel Hill.

b. Near-peer college advising provided by the Carolina College Advising Corps. A constituent program of the National College Advising Corps, a thirteen-university consortium headquartered at UNC-Chapel Hill, the Carolina College Advising Corps places recent Carolina graduates as college advisers in high schools around the state. Initially developed in partnership with rural schools in Virginia, the near-peer model practiced by the Advising Corps has proven effective in raising college application and enrollment rates among first-generation, underrepresented, and underserved students. As part of the partnership between the University and the region, the Advising Corps will place advisers in each of the region's high schools. The advisers will aim to increase matriculation rates to all forms of post-secondary education by providing sound admissions and financial-aid advising to students and their families. The advisers will be fully trained and paid by the Advising Corps, and their work will supplement, not compete with, the work of guidance counselors already present in the schools. The partner high schools will be asked to provide office space, a computer with dedicated internet access, and an onsite mentor/supervisor.

c. Intensive engagement and service in local schools through the School of Education. In addition to offering a residential program for students and advisers for high schools in the partner region, the University will develop, in partnership with regional stakeholders, a program of educational engagement as outlined in the proposal of the UNC Tomorrow K-12 Education Committee.