

Staying A Step Ahead: Higher Education Transforming North Carolina's Economy

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HB 1264 Interim Report Released

The *Staying A Step Ahead: Higher Education Transforming North Carolina's Economy* interim report – commissioned jointly by the University of North Carolina (UNC) and North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) – has been released to the N.C. General Assembly.

The interim report does not contain recommendations; rather, it is a snapshot of the higher education and economic development landscape. The final report will result in recommendations that will help the General Assembly set funding priorities to address higher education needs. It is scheduled to be released in December 2005.

In 2004, the N.C. General Assembly mandated a study (HB 1264) to identify the role played by higher education in responding to the economic and workforce challenges facing North Carolina.

UNC and NCCCS have launched this study to identify new and expanded academic programs, facilities and infrastructure needed to prepare citizens for jobs in North Carolina's changing economy. In calling for this study, the General Assembly has acknowledged the critical role higher education plays in the state's economy.

The report's preliminary findings show:

- UNC and NCCCS must change to respond to the challenges of the future;
- North Carolina needs to adapt to the ongoing transition from agriculture and manufacturing to more technical fields;
- Many of the fastest growing occupations will require postsecondary study and for a substantial number, a bachelor's degree;
- Distance learning needs to play a more pronounced role;
- The increasing pace of change in knowledge requires other lifelong and "just-in-time" learning;
- Both systems need to re-examine their liberal arts core to ensure they include the skills and knowledge needed to respond to an ever-changing environment;
- Public higher education institutions in North Carolina need to continue growing in size, quality and responsiveness;
- Historically Minority Institutions need to grow in size and quality to serve the economic needs of their regions, and the state.

There are some emerging areas that have great potential for the state, including biotechnology and pharmaceuticals; advanced manufacturing; advanced materials (chemicals, plastics and nanotechnology); computing, software and the Internet; design and arts; and logistics and distribution.

The existing gaps in the production of graduates for key fields, and the projected gaps that could exist for emerging fields, call for new approaches and collaboration from the higher education community. In order to manage and shape change, the report indicates intentional partnerships will need to be formed among the state, UNC and NCCCS, K-12, and the business community.

The interim report will be posted at:
www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/what's_new.htm
and www.northcarolina.edu/hb1264.htm

Widespread Media Coverage Generated from "Staying A Step Ahead" Listening Tours

The "Staying A Step Ahead" Listening Tours were designed to emphasize the importance of higher education in North Carolina's economic transformation.

Presidents Molly Broad and Martin Lancaster attended three Listening Tours hosted by North Carolina A&T State University, Pitt Community College and Catawba Valley Community College. Here, they heard from business and higher education leaders about higher education's growing contributions to North Carolina's economic development.

The three Listening Tours resulted in extensive statewide media coverage – including a feature story on President Broad and President Lancaster in the *News & Observer*, and an editorial from the *Charlotte Observer*.

To view complete coverage of the Listening Tours, go to: http://216.197.125.30/live/Listening_Tours_Media_Coverage.pdf

