

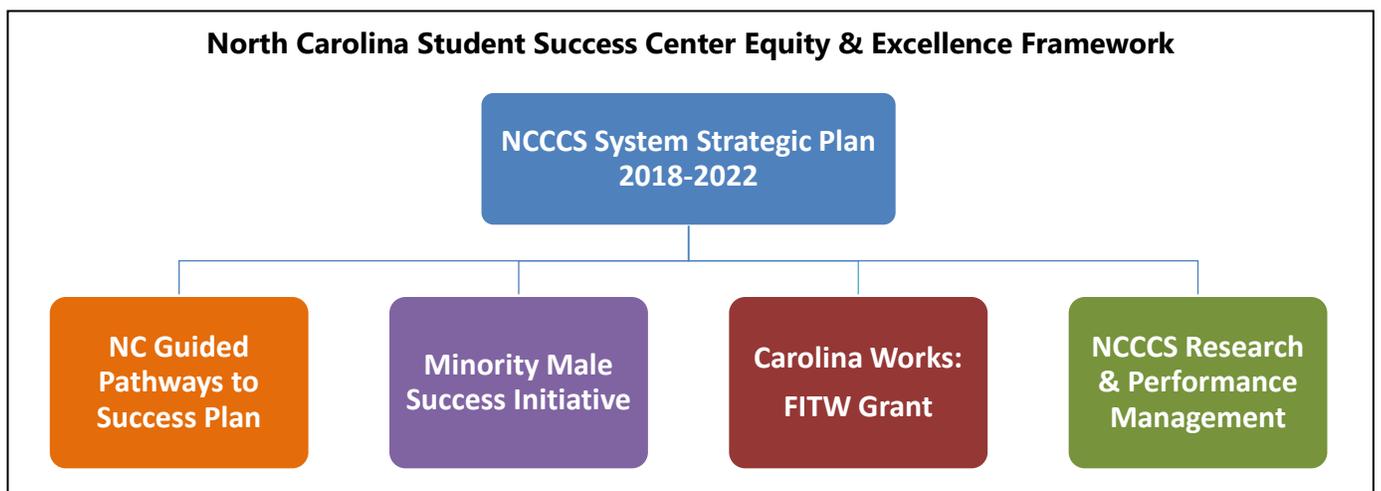


Imperative for Our Future: North Carolina Student Success Center Equity & Excellence Action Plan



Despite implementation of various programs to support underserved North Carolina community college students, alarming equity gaps persist. To help address these challenges, the North Carolina Student Success Center is adopting a *structural equity approach* recommended by the Aspen Institute. This system-level effort is being developed in collaboration with the Minority Male Success Initiative (MMSI), Carolina Works: First in the World (FITW) project, and the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) Research and Performance Management Division.

Together we are developing a draft of **Imperative for Our Future: the NC Student Success Center Equity and Excellence Action Plan**. The project will share data, promote promising practices, align programs, leverage resources, and inform policies that lead to equitable student success outcomes for underserved populations, including, but not limited to, first-generation, low-income, students of color, adults, veterans, students with disabilities, and currently and formerly incarcerated persons, among others.



The **Minority Male Success Initiative** was established in 2003 with funds from the NC General Assembly with the goal of improving retention and graduation rates for minority males in the System. Although MMSI has served more than 10,000 students since its inception, participation has averaged only four percent of target populations. Consistent and significant achievement gaps persist for students in these groups. In 2016, MMSI was redesigned to align and collaborate with other completion initiatives, including the Center's NC Guided Pathways to Success (NC GPS) and the Carolina Works: First in the World (FITW) projects.

A national FIPSE grant project currently in progress at 10 NC community colleges, the **Carolina Works: First in the World** model incorporates proactive success coaching and individualized support interventions determined by an early alert/advising system using predictive analytics. Early evidence suggests that the FITW model will lead to promising gains in student success outcomes among underserved students across the System.

In 2016, the **NC Student Success Center** began work to support System-wide improvement in student learning and graduation rates with equitable outcomes for underserved populations. In support of these aims and in concert with the **NCCCS System Strategic Plan 2018-2022**, the Center launched the NC Guided Pathways to Success (NC GPS) Plan, the state's Guided Pathways model of comprehensive, integrated, and adaptive practices. As demonstrated by national Guided Pathways evidence, NC GPS strategies may help reduce the persistent achievement gaps among underserved students in North Carolina community colleges.

Ultimately, the impact of *Imperative for Our Future: the NC Student Success Center Equity & Excellence Action Plan* will depend on access to near-time, relevant, quality data; institutional and practitioner research capacity; and colleges and practitioner groups that work collaboratively in a culture of continuous inquiry and improvement. Thus, the **NCCCS Research and Performance Management Division** is a key partner in an effort that will require significant and complex new data, analyses, support, and tools to meet the needs of the System, colleges, and practitioners across the 58 colleges as together we work to fulfill our mission to provide educational and economic opportunities for all North Carolinians.

Designing Interventions to Achieve Structural Equity

The NC Student Success Center Equity & Excellence Action Plan will incorporate strategies recommended by Aspen Institute for College Excellence project, *Structural Equity: Big-Picture Thinking & Partnerships that Improve Community College Student Outcomes*, published in 2016.

Strategy 1. Think Big Picture to Redefine Student Success and Set Equity Goals

Essential practices:

- Understand who your students are in their local and regional contexts
- Rely on data to set big-picture equity goals and define strategies that extend beyond the college
- Define specific measures against which to benchmark progress

Strategy 2. Work Externally to Change the Student Experience

Essential practices:

- Identify external partners vital to creating a seamless student experience
- Devise strategies that speak to the needs and goals of both partners
- Establish common metrics of progress and success
- Create structures for frequent and meaningful communication between partners about curriculum alignment and skills expectations
- Establish conditions in which all partners are accountable for success

Strategy 3. Work Internally to Build Urgency and Commitment to Equity Goals

Essential practices:

- Build urgency and leadership commitment throughout partnering institutions
- Create systems for regularly analyzing and discussing data
- Celebrate wins and build success on success
- Evaluate effectiveness and revise goals and strategies

Source: <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/publications/structural-equity/>

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“Structural equity requires an intentionality about making the community college the agent of change. . .working across an ecosystem.”

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