

MAJOR TRENDS FACING NORTH CAROLINA

IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR STATE AND THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA



Social Issues – Public Education, High School Dropouts, and Civil Society Implications Executive Summary

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Social Issues Executive Summary
(Public Education, High School Drop Outs, Student Diversity,
and Civil Society Implications)

UNC Tomorrow Scholar's Council Social Issue Group

Dr. Aminifu Harvey

Dr. David Oxendine

Dr. Nelson Reid

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Executive Summary of Social Issues

The new populations are diverse, the high levels of income disparity, cultural differences, low levels of education for some, out of state retiree several social issues affecting the public school system and the UNC University System. The increasing concentrations of relative privilege and the increasing distance of poverty dropouts, and the lack of income diversity and in turn makes stable and rational entering the university system difficult.

In the past few decades, North Carolina has undergone a dramatic transformation that has witnessed the decline of textiles, tobacco, and furniture, once stalwarts of North Carolina's economy, and the emergence of banking, technology development, and research as central to our economic and social development today. The consequence of this has been a shift of population, and cultural focus, from an extensive number of small- and middle-sized towns (and no large cities) typical of the state for most of the 20th century, to the sizeable regional city-states of Charlotte, the Triangle, the Triad, the Asheville area, and Wilmington and the southeast coast. These areas, while distinct in many ways, have come to characterize the "new" North Carolina of prosperity, opportunity, and cultural dynamism. Some 70% of North Carolinians live in these areas. The following points explain further:

NC has experienced an economic transformation from tobacco, textiles, furniture to banking, pharmaceuticals, technology, research and education.

Over the same period it's population has grown, especially in expanding metro areas (as opposed to the small towns that once characterized the state) most of it from migration of educated workers on the "new economy", retiree's into the high amenity recreation areas, and low skilled, often Hispanic, workers into the expanding service sector and what's left of low wage manufacturing.

The "old economy" rural areas and the rural counties that have become low density, low cost housing "suburbs" for nearby prosperous areas have levels of income, crime, educational achievement, and unemployment in stark contrast to the growing metro areas.

The University of NC has been directly and importantly involved in previous economic and social changes in the state.

The University has an opportunity to recommit itself to expanding the capacity of NC citizens and residents to participate knowledgeably and meaningfully in the social and economic development of the state through systematic engagement and dialogue and to contribute to the strengthening of civil society, both in the sense of shared values, understanding and intentions as well as the development of non profit and non governmental organizations so necessary for social stability and progress.

The issue of high school dropouts should be one of major concern to the state; to most regions of the state, and to local communities; because these student dropouts are the workforce of the future. Dropping out of elementary or high school increases the probability of lower earnings, decreased job mobility, involvement in crime, involvement in substance abuse and pregnancy. Thus, instead of contributing to the economic growth and stability of the region and the state, many dropouts wind-up costing the local community, the region and the state in not only money but in all social services and the loss of human resources and future labor power. In 2000, according to *Focus Adolescent Services* the United States' high school completion rate slipped to 10th place in the world; while from 1999 to 2004 there has been an increase in gang related activity in practically every state in the continental United States. The following information will provide some statistics and data on the severity of the dropout problem nationally and in the state of North Carolina. Some interesting facts include:

Almost half the students who leave school; leave by the eighth grade.

More than half the dropouts leave by the tenth grade, 20% quit by the eighth grade, and 3% drop out by the fourth grade.

Hispanics are twice as likely as African Americans to dropout, whites and Asians are least likely to drop out.

Recent high school dropouts will earn \$200,000 less than high school graduates.

Dropouts make up nearly half the heads of households on welfare.

Dropouts make up nearly half the prison population.

Each teen birth in North Carolina costs taxpayers approximately \$18,000.

Fifty percent of all teen mothers drop out of school and never return.

Teen moms frequently do not marry the father of the baby. The poverty rate for families headed by a female is consistently higher compared to the poverty rate among married couple families.

Teen fathers are 40% less likely to graduate than their peers who do not father children.

High school drop outs are three times more likely than college graduates to be unemployed.

The costs in terms of child abuse and child neglect as well as cost for public assistance programs such as Medicaid, WIC and Food Stamps are also greatly affected.

Data from 2003 *Kids Count* of The Annie E. Casey Foundation lists North Carolina 45th tied with Mississippi with an 11% high school drop out rate.

The lowest graduation rate in the state-Lexington City-43.7%

Based upon the Governor's Crime Commission's Gang Survey of 2004 in 1999 there were 332 gangs in the State of North Carolina with a total membership of 5,068. In 2004 the number of gangs jumped to 387 with a total membership of 8,517. The ages ranged from 8-50, with the highest concentration of members being in the 16 to 24 age group, the next highest in the 13-15 age group.

There is an abundance of research, articles and editorials outlining and describing failures of the public schools leading to difficulties on college and university campuses. It is clear that public school pipeline is composed of a diverse student body; in the school year 1999-2000, 41.2% of public school children had limited English proficiency, while those of color were as follows: 1.2% American Indian, 4% Asian, 15.1% Latin American, 17.3% African American and 62.5% were White. In 2003, 41% of total enrollments in the United States public schools were ethnic minority students. What then happens from public school to college and universities? Why the lack of student diversity in the UNC System? The following are but a few of the issues this paper focuses:

Lack of teacher diversity-83.5% elementary and 85.9% high school teachers are White.

Teachers have “one size fits all” philosophy.

Teachers have “deficit thinking;” the notion that people of color with diverse cultural, home languages, families, intelligences and self-esteem are viewed as deficits with the need to conform.

The flawed attempt to link race and intelligence with the notion that people of color achieve lower levels of academic achievement because intelligence levels are lowered due to race.

“No Child Left Behind” places students of diverse backgrounds at a distinct disadvantage by using a standardized test as a benchmark.

UNC System may need to review admissions policies moving away from utilizing and heavily weighting the SAT and other standardized tests for admissions, which exclude many talented people of color from admissions.

Social environment factors such as SES, region, urban or rural, educational status of parents are but a few of the factors that lead to lower educational status for students of color, not race or intelligence.

It should be understood that this summary provides focus only three factors that affecting the pipeline of students from the public school system to the UNC University System. As is true in most social issues there is no one solution that will solve these problems. It will take the efforts of many individuals, groups, institutions and organizations to help alleviate these issues.