THE **UNIVERSITY** OF **NORTH CAROLINA SYSTEM**

September 17, 2025 at 10:15 a.m.
Via Videoconference and PBS North Carolina Livestream
UNC System Office
223 S. West Street, Board Room
Raleigh, North Carolina

AGENDA

OPEN SESSION

A-1.   Approval of Open Session Minutes of April 9, 2025……………………………………………………………………Joel Ford

A-2.   Project Kitty Hawk Update……………………………………………………………………………………Andrew Kelly

A-3.   Exploration of Achievement Culture……………………………………………………………………Shun Robertson

A-4.   Adjourn

THE **UNIVERSITY** OF
NORTH CAROLINA SYSTEM

DRAFT MINUTES

April 9, 2025, at 2:15 p.m.
Via Videoconference and PBS North Carolina Livestream
UNC System Office
223 S. West Street, Board Room
Raleigh, North Carolina

This meeting of the Committee on Strategic Initiatives was presided over by Chair Joel Ford. The following committee members, constituting a quorum, were also present in person or by phone: John Fraley, Swadesh Chatterjee, Gene Davis, and Cameron Brown.

Chancellors participating were Franklin Gilliam (University of North Carolina at Greensboro), Heather Norris (Appalachian State University), and Philip Rogers (East Carolina University)

Staff members present included Shun Robertson and others from the UNC System Office.

1. Call to Order and Approval of OPEN Session Minutes (Item A-1)

The chair called the meeting to order at 2:15 p.m. on Wednesday, April 9, 2025. The open session minutes from February 26, 2025, were approved by unanimous consent.

2. Accelerating Time to Degree (Item A-2)

Chair Ford provided a brief introduction regarding the importance of timely degree completion. He then introduced Dr. Shun Robertson, who discussed UNC System strategies to decrease lengthy degree completion. Named initiatives included utilization of the military equivalency program and year-round enrollment. Following Dr. Robertson, Chancellor Franklin Gilliam discussed four degree completion strategies at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, including elective credit realignment and increasing credit efficiency. Later in the meeting, Chancellor Aswani Volety of the University of North Carolina Wilmington discussed their institutional student success initiatives, including fostering holistic well-being of students, optimization of need-based scholarships, peer mentors, and career exploration.

There being no further business and without objection, the meeting adjourned at 2:51 p.m.

_____
Swadesh Chatterjee, Secretary

AGENDA ITEM

A-2. Project Kitty Hawk Update .... Andrew Kelly

Situation: The committee will hear an update on Project Kitty Hawk, including the nonprofit's new initiative with the UNC System Office: FASTER (Find and Streamline Tactics for Enrollment and Retention)

Background: The General Assembly's 2021 budget created Project Kitty Hawk, a nonprofit affiliated with the UNC System that is charged with building digital learning pathways for working adults to earn degrees and credentials in high-demand fields.

As of this fall, nearly 1,900 students are enrolled in 15 degree programs supported by Project Kitty Hawk across three university partners (called "Flight Path" degree programs). Since the inaugural degree program launched in October 2023, more than 2,300 students have enrolled in a Flight Path program.

The organization has launched its first graduate program—North Carolina Central University's Master's in Business Administration (MBA)—and recently announced a new partnership with North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University that will result in seven additional degree programs over the next two fiscal years.

In response to President Hans' April report regarding steps the System will take to improve administrative efficiency and customer service, Project Kitty Hawk has also launched the FASTER initiative. This partnership with the UNC System Office will assess and improve the practices, processes, and policies that shape the student experience at eight additional campuses across the System. This year, Project Kitty Hawk staff are applying lessons learned from the first three partnerships about how to streamline application processes, financial aid practices, transcript processing and transfer of credit, and advising and degree planning to provide a detailed assessment and recommendations to: Fayetteville State University, Elizabeth City State University, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, University of North Carolina Asheville, and Winston-Salem State University. .

Assessment: In this session, the committee will hear an update on Project Kitty Hawk and an overview of the FASTER initiative.

Action: This item is for information only.

September 17, 2025

Project Kitty Hawk

Board of Governors Update

PROJECT KITTY HAWK

We're Project Kitty Hawk

✓ LAUNCHED IN 2022

A nonprofit affiliate of the UNC System on a mission to build pathways for adult learners to earn high-quality, workforce - aligned degrees and credentials from North Carolina's public universities.

SENATE BILL 105: 2021 Appropriations Act, Sec. 8.24: Kitty Hawk Public-Private Partnership Project for Digital Learning and Career Development in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic: Project Kitty Hawk as a public-private partnership to support digital learning and career development programs offered by constituent institutions of The University of North Carolina.

Today's Agenda:

1. PKH performance update

2. Common challenges and new solutions for a better student experience

3. FASTER Initiative

ALL TIME ENROLLMENT

15	6	20
PROGRAMS LIVE (Accepting Apps)	INSTITUTION PARTNERS	All TIME FLIGHT PATH GRADUATES

2,360
ALL TIME NEW STUDENT STARTS

PERSISTENCE & SUCCESS

88%	110%
PERSISTENCE IN FY25 As of June 30, 2025	PERSISTENCE FROM SUMMER TO FALL (Above 100% Due to Summer Skips)

INSTITUTION T&F REVENUE*

$14.6M	$33.9M
FLIGHT PATH TUITION & FEE REVENUE TO DATE (All Time)	PROJECTED BY END OF YEAR (All Time)

FALL 2025 FLIGHT PATH ENROLLMENTS

INST.	PROGRAM	STUDENTS
NCCU	RN to BSN	57
NCCU	BS IT	142
NCCU	BBA	174
NCCU	BS Health Admin	162
NCCU	BS Public Health Ed	24
NCCU	MBA	172
ECU	BA Psychology	403
ECU	BS ICT	151
ECU	BS Security Studies	23
ECU	BS Criminal Justice	125
APP	BS Health Care Mgmt.	103
APP	BSBA Supply Chain Mgmt.	74
APP	BS Accounting	131
APP	BS Criminal Justice	63
APP	BS Org Leadership & Learning	71
TOTAL		**1,875**

PKH FYE 2025 EXPENSES & REVENUE

	ACTUALS	BUDGET	%
EXPENSES	$27.4M	$33.3M	82%
REVENUE	$31.5M	$45M	70%

$18.8M	$37.7M
PROGRAM REVENUES (INCEPTION – FYE25)	PROJECTED PROGRAM REVENUES (INCEPTION – FYE26)

GRANT DRAWDOWN

$74.1M	$22.9M**
GRANT FUNDS SPENT AS OF JUN 30	GRANT FUNDS ENCUMBERED

FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
$1.4M	$20.6M	$24.7M	$27.4M

Total Grant Draw Down: $97M (76% Spent)

** Does not include tuition and appropriation generated through the re-enrollment program
*These funds will be used for contracts, personnel, ancillary expenses, and current/future obligations

Cumulative New Student Starts Since Partner Launches
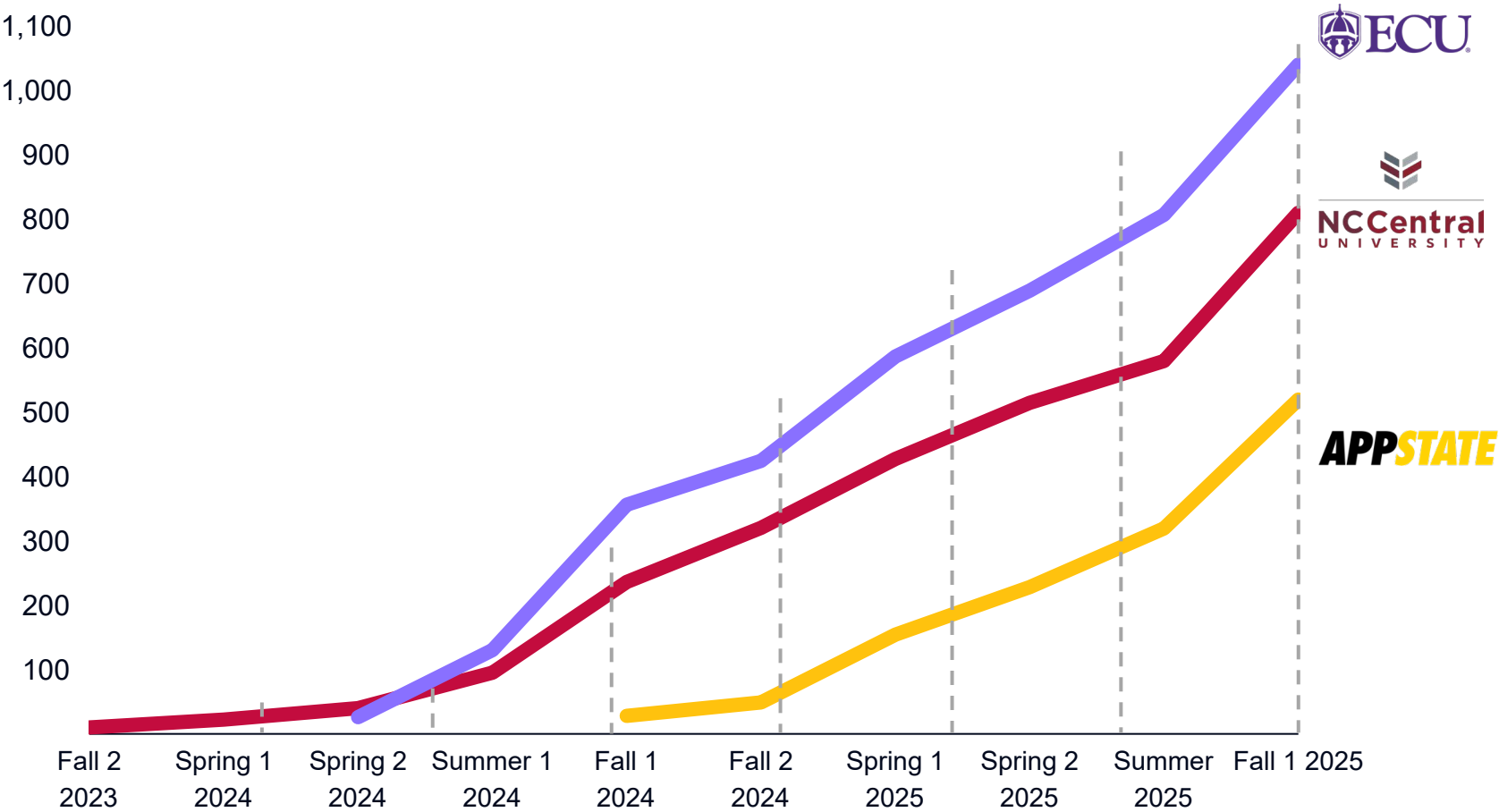
All partners saw record numbers of new student starts in Fall 1 2025, bringing PKH all-time student starts in Flight Path programs to:

2,360

Updated:9/07/25

MAINTAINING HIGH STANDARDS: FY26 KPIs
(Approved by the Board of Directors July 2025)

METRIC	DEFINITION	TARGET	STRETCH
New Student Starts	*All time new student starts*	**3,800** (by EOY)	**4,190**
Cost per Start	*Marketing spend divided by number of new starts*	**$2,600**	**$2,400**
First − Second Term Persistence	*% of new student starts who return for a second term*	**86%**	**89%**
Term over Term Persistence	*% of eligible students who reenroll in the next term*	**93%**	**95%**
Academic Progress	*Percent of students who earned a "C" or better in summer courses*	**80%**	**85%**
Financial Sustainability	*Exceed projected ratio of revenue to expenses*	**+10%**	**+20%**

New Flight Path Partner: NC A&T

North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University MSA was signed July 3. **NC A&T will launch 7 total programs over the next two fiscal years.**

The initial program launches are:

- **Spring 1 (January 2026):** BA Liberal Studies, BS Criminal Justice

- **Fall 1 (August 2026):** MBA (Human Resource Management concentration), BA Psychology

Other programs for consideration:
MS Data Analytics, BS Environmental Health

Current Flight Path Partners: Progress & Momentum

NCCentral UNIVERSITY

First master's program launched with strong enrollment

178 students enrolled in the inaugural MBA cohort, marking NCCU's first graduate Flight Path program.

ECU

High-demand programs in the pipeline

Looking to launch a BS in Hospitality Management and a BS in Distribution & Logistics in Spring 2026. Both degree programs are directly aligned with workforce needs.

APPSTATE

Expanding business portfolio

Launching a BSBA in Marketing in Spring 2026; third program in Walker College of Business and sixth overall Flight Path program.

Custom Education Services (CES) Partners: Progress and Momentum

Expansive support for pre-nursing students

Student Success Coaching

Focused on enhancing the pipeline of successful, on-time nursing program applicants by embedding proactive, responsive mentorship for pre-nursing students, with a focus on academic readiness, application completion, and community-building.

Targeted marketing and instructional design support.

Master of Applied Professional Studies

- In 5 weeks, **PKH generated more than 220,000 leads and drove 3,000+ visits** to the website.

Masters of Social Work

- Provided surge capacity to develop and complete a course for the new online MSW.

Strategic growth consulting for measured online growth

Online Growth Strategy

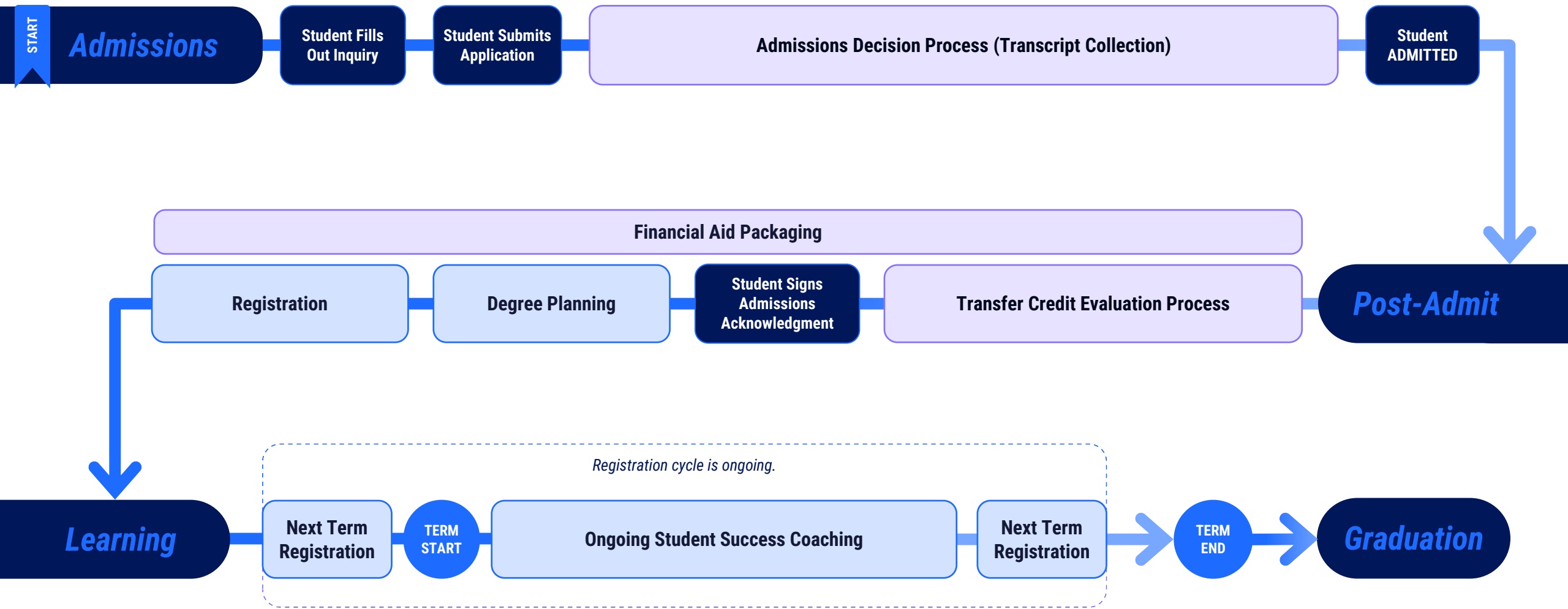PKH is working with senior leadership to establish and activate a strategic approach to online learning growth at UNCG.
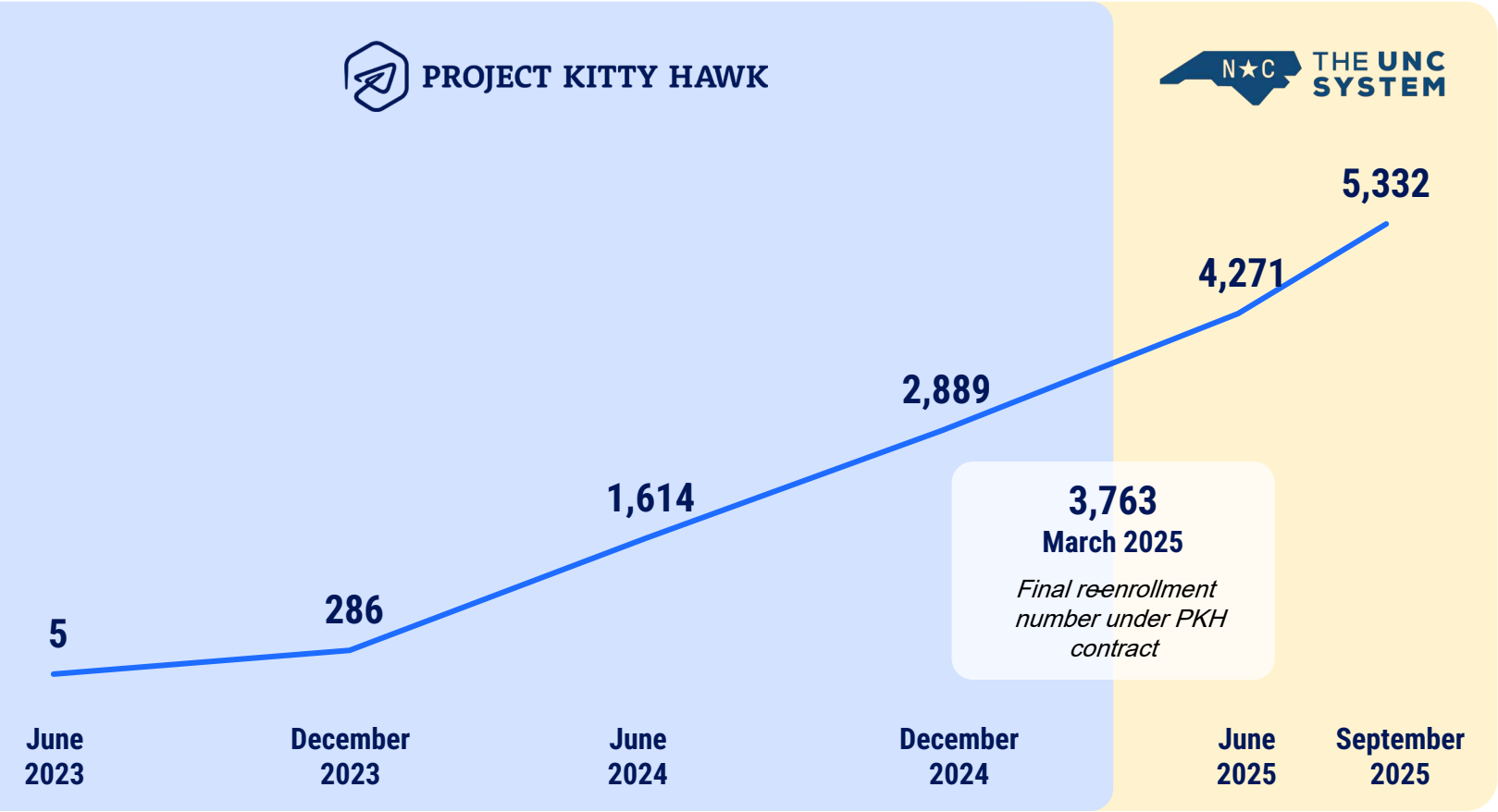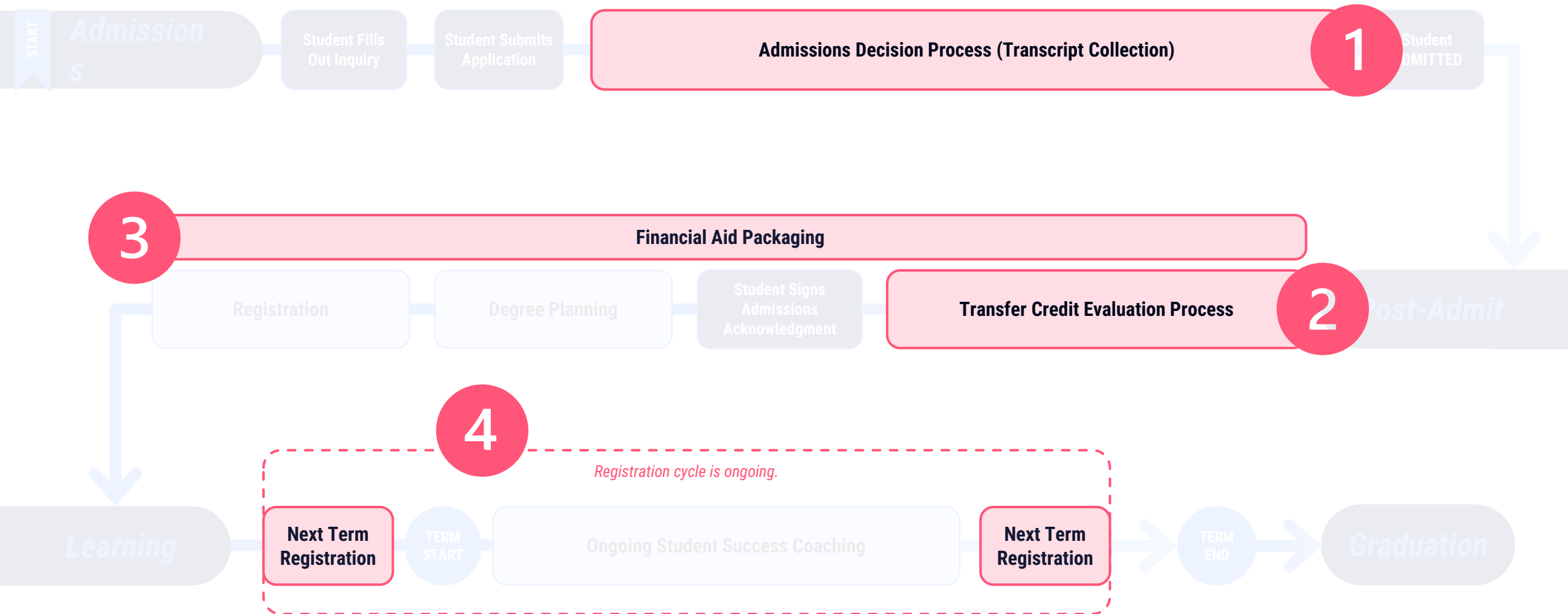
PROJECT KITTY HAWK

Shared Challenges, Shared Solutions

Inaugural partnerships reveal opportunities to streamline the student experience.

Challenge

1

High transcript volumes from varying senders create manual work, delays, and student frustration.

- Multiple transcripts from different institutions

- Manual processing due to format and system issues

- Delayed admissions decisions and student drop -off

Solutions

Document Collection Audits and Student Process Improvements

PKH's Parchment audit uncovered process and system configuration issues that slowed transcript routing and review. By correcting picklist setups, reducing routing errors, and streamlining transcript intake, the institution achieved:

- **Faster Student Processing**
  With students averaging 3.5 transcripts from multiple institutions, cleaner workflows accelerated transcript matching and admissions review.

- **Reduced Staff Workload**
  Fixes for name variances, format differences, and ingestion errors created a more efficient process, freeing staff time for admissions decision   -making.

Challenge

2

Manual TCE processes demand significant staff time and resources, often before students commit to enroll.

- Manual, resource-intensive workflows

- High staff time investment up front

- Limited return when students don't enroll

Solutions

Adding Admissions Confirmations

PKH partnered with admissions teams to implement confirmations and new "Acknowledgement Forms" to verify student intent before starting labor-intensive evaluations. This improvement delivered:

- **Greater Funnel Efficiency**
  Shorter inquiry-to-admit timelines increased enrollment conversion and persistence.

- **Clearer Student Expectations**
  Early engagement identified barriers, set timelines, and built urgency, supported by step-by-step guidance tailored to adult learners.

Challenge

3

Traditional aid processes don't align with shorter terms, leading to over-awarding, fund shortages, and compliance risks.

- Over-awarding financial aid

- Fund shortages across terms

- Delayed SAP reviews and compliance issues

Solutions

Operating in a Parts-of-Term Environment

Transitioning to shorter 8 -week terms with structured financial aid cycles improves both compliance and student success. The shift resulted in:

- **Improved Financial Literacy**
  Proactive advising, structured disbursements, and term-by-term budgeting help students borrow responsibly and pace funding.

- **Stronger Compliance**
  More add/drop points and SAP reviews reduce over - awarding risk and strengthen Title IV alignment.

- **Greater Institutional Efficiency**
  Defined disbursement and refund cycles streamline operations across financial aid, registrar, and student accounts.

Challenge

4

One-term registration cycles disrupt planning and routines, creating barriers that weaken persistence for adult learners.

- Lack of long-term planning

- Single-term registration only

- Disrupted student routine and persistence

Solutions

Continuous Enrollment as the Default

PKH partnered with institutions to make continuous enrollment the standard, moving students into multi-term registration cycles. This change delivered:

- **Higher Persistence**
  Continuous registration reduces gaps that disrupt academic progress.

- **Better Planning**
  Registering for multiple terms at once (e.g., Spring 1, Spring 2, Summer) maintains momentum and minimizes scheduling disruptions.

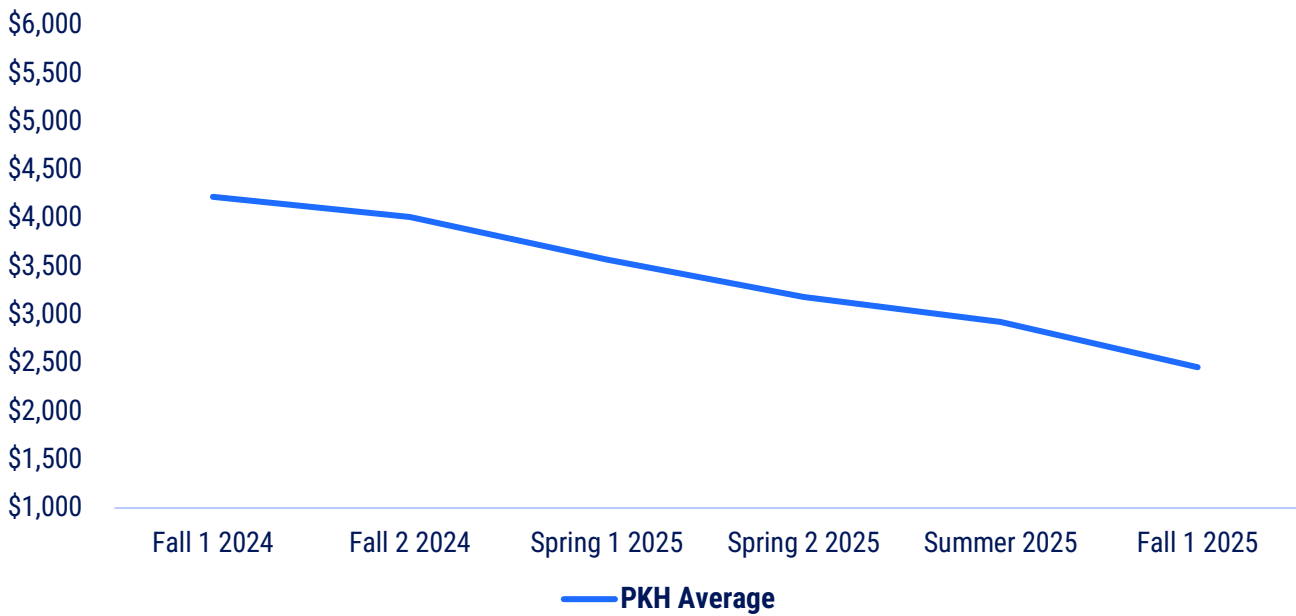# PKH-led process enhancements are already fueling more efficient student experiences.

Improved App to Start Ratios

Process changes have increased app to start ratios by 5 percentage points compared to the past fiscal year.

	FY25	Fall 1 2025
All time: App-to-Start	**35%**	**40%**

Lowering Cost per Start

Cost per start fell 42% from Fall 1 2024 (from $4,220)

PKH Average

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PROJECT KITTY HAWK

FASTER Initiative

Removing Barriers at Additional
UNC System Universities

"

The single most common complaint I hear
from faculty, staff and students about the university
is that it's just painfully hard to get things done…

As we stare down a future of fewer traditional-age students,
I am thinking of all the promising young people we've discouraged
with difficult process to fully access our public universities.

– PRESIDENT HANS

Advancing UNC System Competitiveness

FASTER is a comprehensive assessment designed to enhance student and staff experiences across the enrollment journey at UNC System institutions.

Project Kitty Hawk will conduct structured interviews with key stakeholders to identify areas of excellence and opportunities for improvement in marketing, admissions, enrollment processes, and student support services.

Goals

- Find and fix the administrative hurdles that frustrate students and staff

- Map the entire student journey to see where things break down

- Discover new program opportunities that meet community needs

- Create clear, actionable recommendations for each university

- Build a roadmap that turns insights into real improvements

Find
And
Streamline
Tactics for
Enrollment and
Retention

FASTER Institution Schedule

8 UNC System institutions are confirmed to participate in FASTER. 5 beginning in FY26 and 3 more in FY27.

Q1 FY26	Q2 FY26	Q3 FY26	Q4 FY26	FY27

UNC GREENSBORO

FAYETTEVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY

ECSU ELIZABETH CITY STATE UNIVERSITY

WINSTON-SALEM STATE UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA ASHEVILLE

3 Additional Inst. TBD

FASTER Deliverables

Student Journey Mapping Report

The final report will serve as a strategic roadmap, outlining **challenges, opportunities, and actionable steps to improve the student journey**.

Organized around four key areas—marketing, admissions, enrollment processes, and student support services—the report will highlight opportunities **to better serve both traditional and adult learners**.

Recommendations will be grounded in the expertise of Project Kitty Hawk subject matter experts, informed by first-hand observations of how bureaucratic barriers can deter students from pursuing UNC System programs.

Online Market Analysis

Project Kitty Hawk will conduct a **comprehensive online market opportunity assessment** with a programmatic focus.

This phase will include in-depth market research, an analysis of current program portfolios and online presence, competitor benchmarking, and a review of approval processes and internal capabilities.

The assessment will **identify portfolio gaps, high-demand program areas, and opportunities for strategic growth in the online space,** including pathways for community college transfers.

AGENDA ITEM

A-3. Exploration of Achievement Culture ....Shun Robertson

Situation:	Over the next year, the Committee on Strategic Initiatives will build a shared understanding of achievement culture and better define the role the System plays in countering unhealthy standards.
Background:	While striving for success can provide purpose, excessive pressure and perfectionism can harm mental health. Recent research explores how perfectionism and social comparison, fueled by family expectations, academic competition, and social media, shape the student experience from childhood through college. These pressures can lead to unintended consequences of achievement culture, including underachievement and disengagement.
Assessment:	The Committee on Strategic Initiatives will look at how achievement culture starts as early as middle school and how it continues to grow during a student's college experience. We will examine how many students put undue pressure on themselves to meet unrealistic expectations of achievement. The committee will also consider the college-going pathways available to students, learn more about admission decision timelines, and explore strategies that will help us support mentally healthy habits for our students while they are enrolled at our institutions. Additionally, the committee will take time to learn about how existing college access efforts are working to serve the needs of our students and ease the college admission pressures, including NC College Connect and Choose NC.
Action:	This item is for discussion only.

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EXPLORATION OF ACHIEVEMENT CULTURE

Committee on Strategic Initiatives
September 17, 2025

"College is supposed to be challenging for our students. It is intended to be rigorous and to refine the academic, interpersonal, and professional skills that help us mature. What it is not intended to do, however, is to push students to unhealthy limits in the name of achievement."

Chair Wendy Murphy
Board of Governors Meeting, May 15, 2025

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What is Achievement Culture?

A societal mindset where success is primarily defined and measured by tangible accomplishments, productivity, and external validation. It emphasizes constant striving for goals, often prioritizing career milestones, grades, and accolades over well-being and personal growth. This culture can lead to unrealistic expectations, perfectionism, and a fear of failure, potentially impacting mental and emotional health.

AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

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Home > Monitor on Psychology > 2024 > October >

Perfectionism and the high-stakes culture of success: The hidden toll on kids and parents

Young people are facing mounting pressure to succeed, and it's causing mental health problems. But there is a solution: mattering
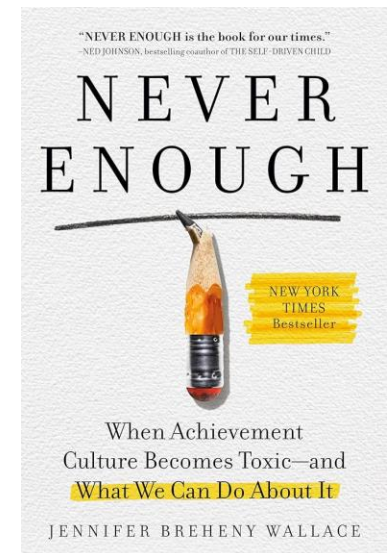
HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW

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Personal Strategy And Style

The Perils of an Achievement Culture

by Ania W. Masinter

From the Magazine (November–December 2023)

"NEVER ENOUGH is the book for our times."
—NED JOHNSON, bestselling coauthor of THE SELF-DRIVEN CHILD

NEVER ENOUGH

NEW YORK TIMES Bestseller

When Achievement Culture Becomes Toxic—and What We Can Do About It

JENNIFER BREHENY WALLACE

From a survey with over 6,000 responses …

73% Agree that parents in their community believed **getting into a selective college** is one of the most important ingredients to later life success
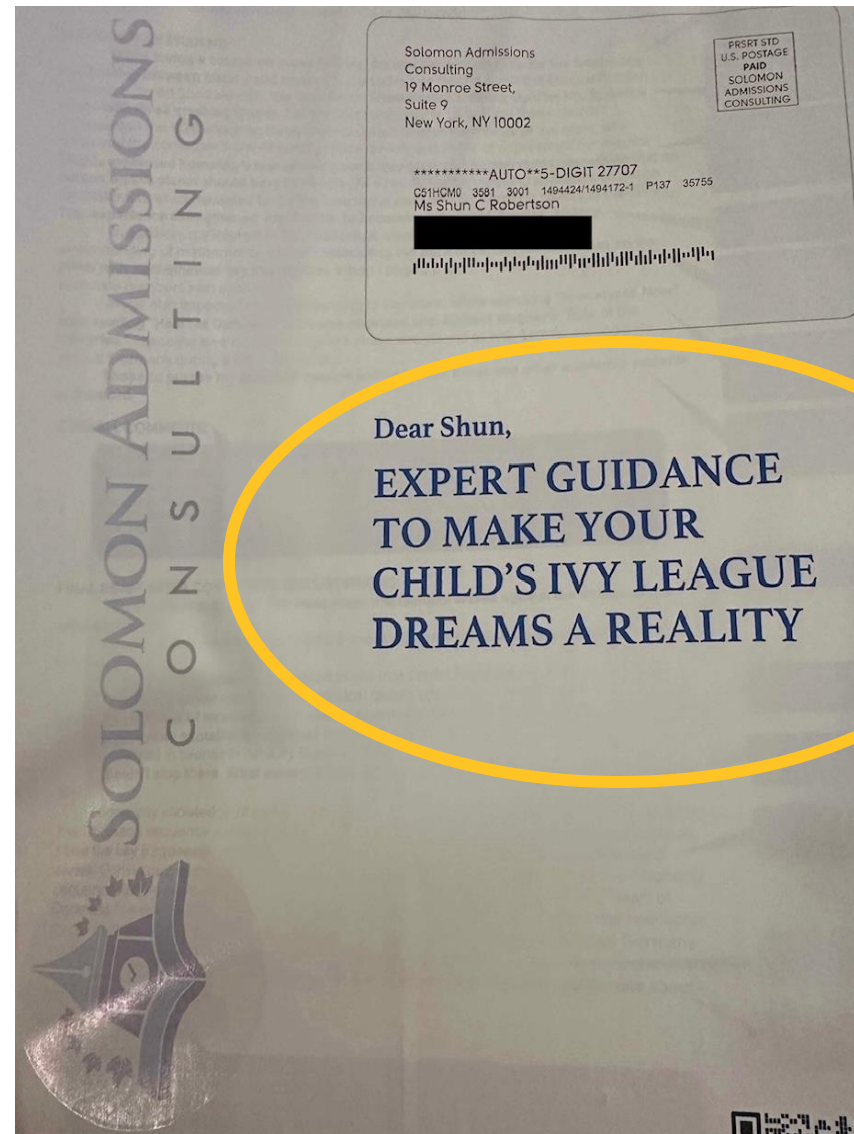
83% Agree that their children's academic success is a reflection of their parenting

87% Wish that childhood was less stressful for their kids

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Wallace, J. B. (2023). Never enough: When achievement culture becomes toxic—and what we can do about it.

It starts early!

Achievement Culture is the Sibling of Perfectionism

<u>Self-oriented perfectionism</u>: people who set unrealistic self-expectations

<u>Other-oriented perfectionism</u>: the projection of unrealistically high standards onto other people

<u>Socially prescribed perfectionism</u>: the perception that other people expect you to be perfect and that you need to meet those expectations

Curran, T., & Hill, A. P. (2019). Perfectionism is increasing over time: A meta-analysis of birth cohort differences from 1989 to 2016. *Psychological Bulletin, 145*(4), 410–429.

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Achievement Culture is the Sibling of Perfectionism

10% ↑ <u>Self-oriented perfectionism</u>: people who set unrealistic self-expectations

16% ↑ <u>Other-oriented perfectionism</u>: the projection of unrealistically high standards onto other people

33% ↑ <u>Socially prescribed perfectionism</u>: the perception that other people expect you to be perfect and that you need to meet those expectations

Curran, T., & Hill, A. P. (2019). Perfectionism is increasing over time: A meta-analysis of birth cohort differences from 1989 to 2016. *Psychological Bulletin, 145*(4), 410–429.

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Achievement Culture and Social Media

"The internet revolution has created **a social environment that our brains were not designed to handle**, particularly with respect to comparing ourselves to so many other people and being concerned with so many other people's views of us. No matter how well a person is doing in life, there are hordes of others online who seem to be doing better (though they often aren't) and many others who stand ready to be critical and rejecting. As a result, many young people put a great deal of **effort into trying to be socially acceptable and gain approval, but it's a never-ending task that is rarely successful.**"

Mark Leary Ph.D.
Garonzik Professor of Psychology & Neuroscience
Duke University

American Psychological Association. (2024, October). *An antidote for achievement culture. Monitor on Psychology*. American Psychological Association.

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Disengagement as a Consequence of Achievement Culture

Achievement culture can cause previously high-achieving students to become disengaged and experience a drop in achievement.

Plucker, J. (Host). September 19, 2018. Undermotivation [Audio podcast episode]. In Bright *Now.* Johns Hopkins University School of Education.

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How Disengagement Shows Up

- Disconnect between what we know a student is capable of achieving and what they're actually achieving

- Disconnect between curriculum and real world (i.e., students don't see the value in what they're doing)

- Curriculum isn't challenging enough, and students get tired of teaching themselves

Plucker, J. (Host). September 19, 2018. Undermotivation [Audio podcast episode]. In Bright *Now*. Johns Hopkins University School of Education.

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HOW CAN WE RESPOND TO ACHIEVEMENT CULTURE?

First Things First:
Supporting Student <u>Mental Health</u> Before They Arrive

- *Youth Mental Health First Aid Training:* **Teaching Fellows and Principal Fellows and faculty and staff at System Lab Schools** learn how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental health challenges among school-aged children

- *Teen Mental Health First Aid Training*: **Students in UNC System early college high schools** learn how to recognize when a peer may be experiencing a mental health problem and how to connect them to a trusted adult

Manage Messaging:
Alleviating College Application Pressures
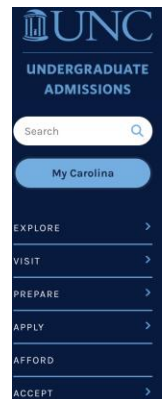
Manage Messaging: Spring Admissions

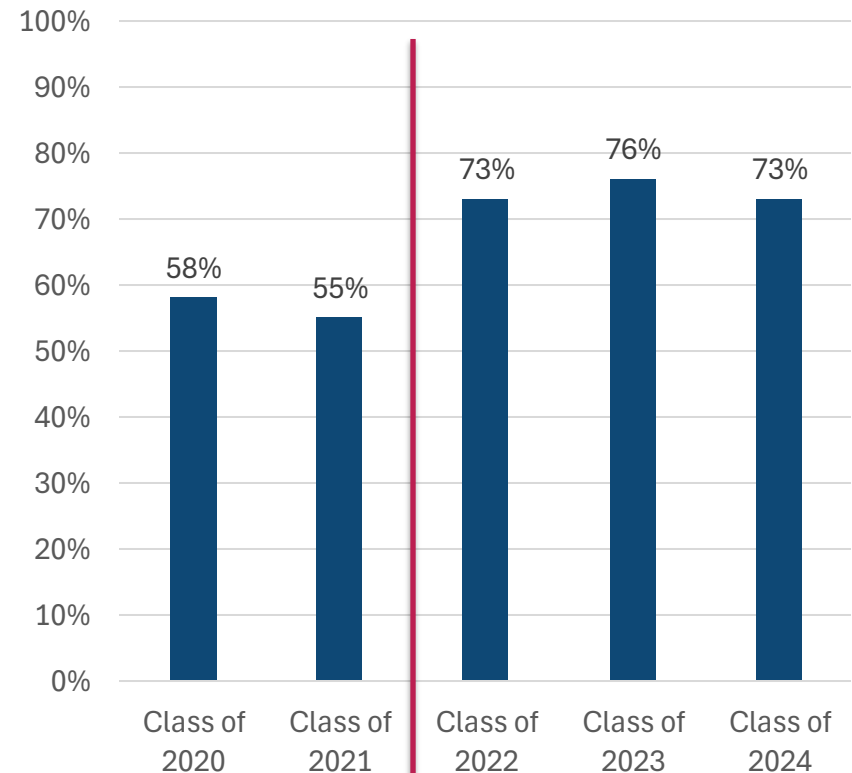# Retaining High-Achieving Students in NC... and the UNC System

Destination for College-Going NC Public High School Graduates, Class of 2023

2/3 of Top College-Going High Schoolers already attending UNC System

Categories: UNC System, Out-of-State Public, Out-of-State Private, In-State Private, NCCCS

- ■ Top 10% of Graduating Class by GPA
- ■ Remaining Graduating Class (with at least 2.5 GPA)
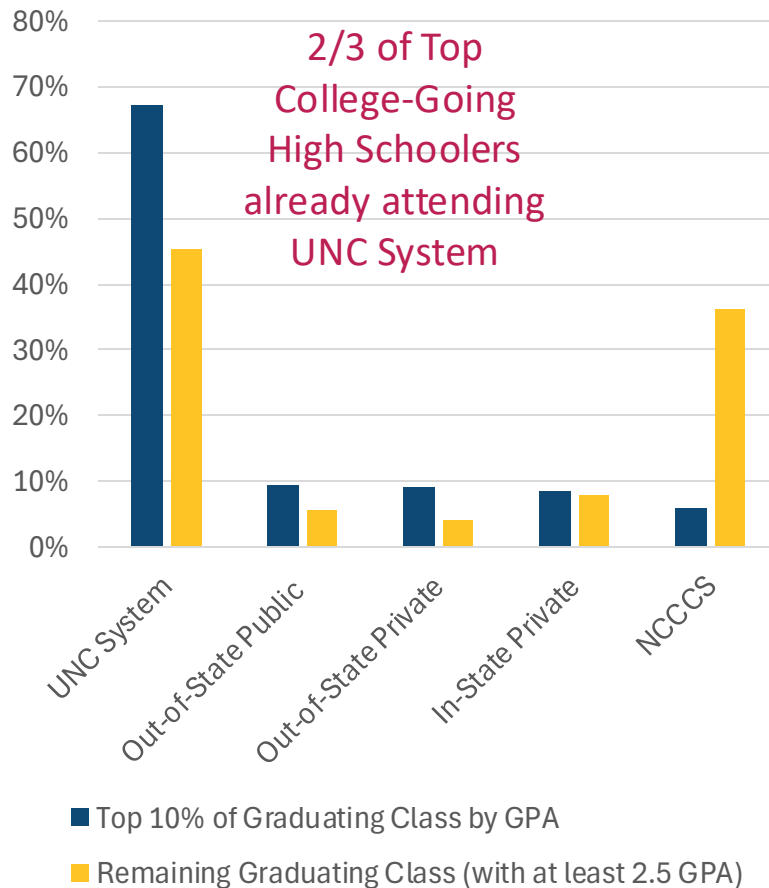
NCSSM Graduating Class attending UNC System

- Class of 2020: 58%
- Class of 2021: 55%
- Class of 2022: 73%
- Class of 2023: 76%
- Class of 2024: 73%

Guaranteed admission and tuition grant policies implemented

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Source: NSC-DPI Dataset

Supporting Students Once They Arrive on Campus

- **Adult Mental Health First Aid Training:** UNC System faculty and staff develop skills to help someone who may have a mental health problem or is experiencing a mental health crisis

- **Penn Resilience Training:** UNC System students learn resilience skills to move past unexpected setbacks

- **Experiential Learning:** Reduce disengagement by increasing experiential learning opportunities (internships, research opportunities, study abroad).

Thank You

Questions?

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