



MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS
Committee on Strategic Initiatives

November 19, 2025 at 1:00 p.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 the Minutes of September 17, 2025.....Joel Ford
- A-2. Educator Preparation Updates.....Ashton Wheeler Clemmons
- A-3. Strengthening Mental Health Education: A Strategic Investment in Mental HealthSuzie Baker
- A-4. Best Practices for a Healthy Achievement Culture.....Lori Newnam
North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics
- A-5. Adjourn

DRAFT MINUTES

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

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: John Fraley, Swadesh Chatterjee, Pearl Burris-Floyd, Gene Davis, and Javier Limon.

Chancellors participating were Heather Norris, Franklin Gilliam, and Aswani Volety.

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 10:15 a.m. on Wednesday, September 17, 2025. The open session minutes from the April 9, 2025, meeting were approved by unanimous consent.

2. Project Kitty Hawk Update (Item A-2)

The committee first received an update on Project Kitty Hawk from Dr. Andrew Kelly, president and CEO. Dr. Kelly reported that the initiative celebrated its largest fall enrollment since inception, serving more than 2,300 adult learners across North Carolina through its Flight Path programs. He highlighted a new partnership with North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University to launch seven additional Flight Path offerings. Dr. Kelly also emphasized that lessons from earlier partnerships have underscored opportunities for the UNC System to streamline the student experience in admissions, transcript processing, financial aid, and registration. While Project Kitty Hawk was designed to serve online adult learners, these improvements are also expected to benefit campus-based students. To further this work, Dr. Kelly and other members of the Project Kitty Hawk team introduced the new FASTER initiative, which is focused on assessing and improving practices, processes, and policies that shape the student journey, with the goal of addressing barriers that can result from cumbersome administrative procedures.

3. Exploration of Achievement Culture (Item A-3)

Dr. Shun Robertson began a discussion on achievement culture by examining how the drive for achievement can have harmful effects on student well-being when expectations become unrealistic or perfectionistic. She noted

that these pressures begin early. Social media often amplifies and normalizes these pressures, intensifying the challenges students face. The committee then considered strategies for counteracting the negative effects of achievement culture, including supporting student mental health even before students arrive on campus, the role of UNC System college access efforts in easing admissions-related stress, and resilience and mental health initiatives currently underway across institutions.

There being no further business and without objection, the meeting adjourned at 11:15 a.m.

Swadesh Chatterjee, Secretary

AGENDA ITEM

A-2. Educator Preparation Updates Ashton Wheeler Clemmons

Situation: The UNC System Office is dedicated to strengthening student outcomes in North Carolina's public schools through preparation of excellent teachers and principals. The P12 Strategy and Policy area serves as the primary liaison between the schools and colleges of education within the UNC System, the UNC Board of Governors, the NC Department of Public Instruction and State Board of Education, and the NC General Assembly.

Background: Ensuring that all North Carolina's schools have highly effective educators is critical. Recruiting and retaining effective new teachers and principals is paramount to the success of our state's students and to ensuring that there is a well-trained workforce to support economic growth. Our success recruiting educators today will define the success of the public schools in North Carolina tomorrow. Indeed, increasing the number of first-year educators working in a North Carolina K-12 public school after earning their credential from a UNC System institution is among the 12 goals in the UNC System 2022-2027 Strategic Plan.

Assessment: The committee will hear an update on the System's P12 efforts, including the North Carolina Teaching Fellows program, early literacy, and math instruction.

Action: This item is for information only.



EDUCATOR PREPARATION UPDATES

Committee on Strategic Initiatives
November 19, 2025

AGENDA

- Division Overview
- Program Highlights
- Educator Preparation Program Updates
 - Early Literacy Work
 - Math Instructional Framework
 - Other Updates

DIVISION OVERVIEW

Dr. Shun Robertson, Senior VP

Dr. Ashton Clemmons, Associate VP

NC Teaching Fellows

- Dr. Bennett Jones, Director
- Crystal Espey, Asst. Director

Principal Fellows

- Dr. Lauren Lampron, Director
- Dr. Tony Stewart, Asst. Director

Additional Leadership

- Monique Keyes, Future Teachers of NC
- Zoe Turner, Data and Policy Analyst

Laboratory Schools

- Dr. Ashton Clemmons, UNC System Office
- Chancellors

North Carolina Teaching Fellows Highlights

Year	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Currently Enrolled Students	259	276	575	974
New NCTF Incoming Class	86	107	403	515

- Completed Strategic Planning Process
- Statewide Programming
- Continued GYO Pilot with 18 Local School Districts



North Carolina Principal Fellows Highlights



- Growth scores of schools led by Principal Fellows are 2.2 growth points higher than non-Principal Fellows led schools
- 8.5 percentage points more likely to Meet or Exceed growth than non-Principal Fellows led schools



Future Teachers of North Carolina



- On-campus experiences for Juniors and Seniors in High School who are interested in becoming teachers
- Received 432 applications – up from 207
- East: UNC-Chapel Hill, NCSU, and UNC Pembroke
West: NC A&T, UNC Charlotte, and WSSU



UNC Laboratory Schools

- Six Laboratory Schools: App State, ECU, NC A&T, UNCW, WCU and recently closed at UNCC
- Serve 1,000 students across North Carolina
- Strengthen innovative practices for current and future teachers





EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAM PRIORITIES

Science of Reading and Early Literacy

- Early Literacy Assessment Access
- Early Literacy EPP Summit – December 10 and 11
- Distinguished Professors
 - Literacy Hub Development
 - Connection with new ELA Standards



Math Instructional Framework

- Math Fellows Selected
- Working with Deans for Impact to create Math EPP Instructional Framework
 - Building resources for implementation
- Math EPP Summit – April 2026



Additional Priorities

- Faculty Learning Communities
- Strengthen Dean Collaboration
- Microcredentials
- Connections to K-12 Leaders Across North Carolina



AGENDA ITEM

A-3. Strengthening Mental Health Education: A Strategic Investment in Student Success Suzie Baker

Situation: The UNC System continues to advance its commitment to student mental health as a strategic investment in student success. Building upon the success of the *Healthy Minds, Strong Universities* initiative, the System has expanded its focus to include early intervention and prevention. This presentation provides an overview of the System’s student mental health support efforts to date and describes the evolution, implementation outcomes, and next steps of leveraging Mental Health First Aid as a key vehicle for building resilience and well-being across the continuum from K-12 through higher education, creating a connected “prevention pipeline.”

Background: In 2020, the UNC Board of Governors charged President Hans to convene a systemwide task force to evaluate the status of campus mental health services. The group identified three core challenges: rising demand for services, limited provider capacity, and insufficient ongoing funding. In May 2021, the task force released the *Healthy Minds, Strong Universities* report, outlining recommendations focused on measurement and outcomes, promising practices and innovations, and sustainable financing. To advance this work, the UNC System secured nearly \$13 million in Governor’s Emergency Education Relief (GEER) funds, launching 18 behavioral health initiatives across the UNC System and extending partnerships with the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) and North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities (NCICU).

The funding spanned from 2022 through 2024, supporting the UNC System in strengthening its behavioral health infrastructure through data-driven initiatives and prevention strategies, including the Healthy Minds Study, aligned with the *UNC System Strategic Plan (2022–2027)*.

Assessment: UNC System data, as well as national mental health trends, reveals that many students who arrive on college campuses are already experiencing significant mental health challenges. By implementing Youth and Teen Mental Health First Aid curricula across K–12 stakeholders, the UNC System can strengthen protective factors that promote student mental well-being and resilience, laying the foundation for positive mental health and academic success in college which will positively impact degree completion and retention for our students.

Action: This item is for information only.



**THE UNC
SYSTEM**

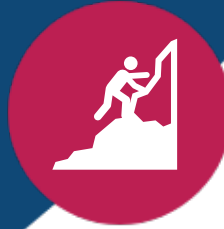
**STRENGTHENING MENTAL
HEALTH EDUCATION:
A STRATEGIC INVESTMENT
IN STUDENT SUCCESS**

EVOLUTION OF FOCUS ON COLLEGE STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH



August 2023 – June 2024

Healthy Minds Study administered at post-secondary UNC System Institutions



June 2022

Higher Expectations: UNC System Strategic Plan for 2022-2027



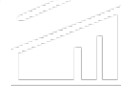
August 2021 – September 2024

Launched ~18 mental health initiatives across the UNC System, NCCCS, and NCICU



May 2021 - March 2023

President Hans secured \$12.7M in GEER funding for mental health initiatives



September 2020 - May 2021

Healthy Minds, Strong Universities Report developed after resolution passed by the Board of Governors; recommendations made to address highest mental health priorities

SYSTEMWIDE FINDINGS AND TRENDS

(Healthy Minds Study, 2023-2024, n=7,831)

Prevalence and Perceived Need:

- Nearly 30% of respondents reported a lifetime diagnosis of depression
- 36% reported anxiety
- 66% agreed they needed help for emotional or mental health challenges

Positive Mental Health:

- 64% of students were categorized as “Not Flourishing” in areas such as relationships, self-esteem, purpose, and optimism

Loneliness and Connectedness:

- 21% often lack companionship
- 26% often feel isolated

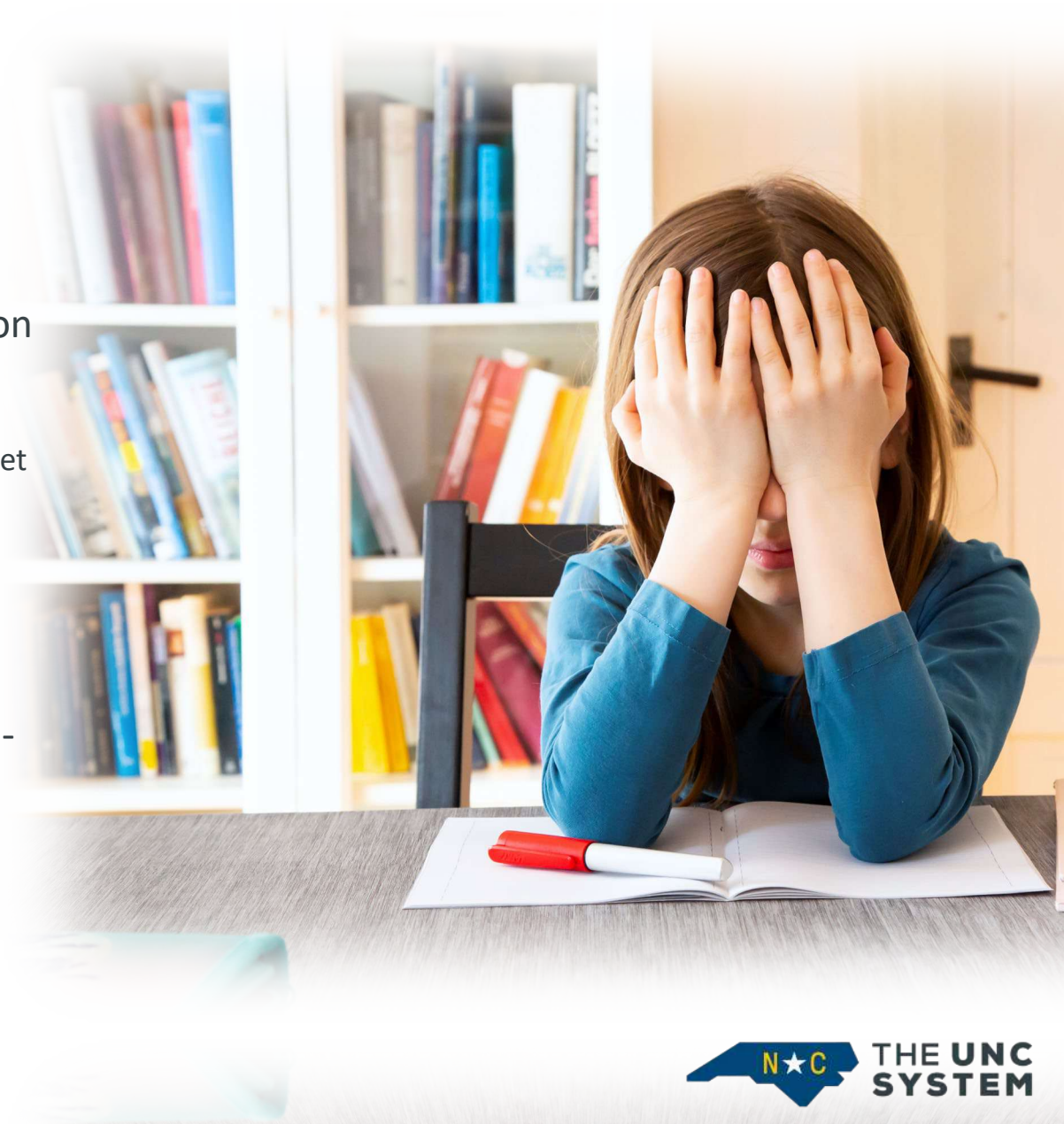
Academic Impairment:

- Mental health struggles correlate with academic difficulties
- 56% of students reported emotional or mental health issues adversely affected their performance on 3–5 days or more over a 4-week period

*At one institution,
“Mental or
Emotional Health
Problems” ranked
highest among
factors most likely
to prevent degree
completion.*

K-12 STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH TRENDS

- 20% of adolescents ages 12-17 live with a mental health condition (Sappenfield et al., 2023)
- 50% of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14 (Kessler et al., 2005)
- Approximately 50% of students age 14 and older with a mental health condition drop out of school (Alikhan, et al., 2016)
- 2020 mental health ER visits jumped 31% among adolescents 12-17 years of age (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020)
- 1 in 5 adolescents will experience a mental health challenge (Sappenfield et al., 2023)
- Nearly 50% of youth with mental health challenges do not seek help (Whitney & Peterson, 2019).



MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID PARTNERSHIPS ACROSS THE UNC SYSTEM

MHFA curriculums teach individuals how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental health and substance use challenges among adults and adolescents.

UNC System
NCCCS
NCICU

Adult MHFA

- Designed for ages 18+
- Higher ed and secondary faculty and staff, college students

NC Teaching Fellows
NC Principal Fellows
Education Prep Programs
Lab Schools

Youth MHFA

- Designed for adults who interact with youths aged 12-18.
- Faculty, staff, parents

UNC School of the Arts
NCSSM Durham
NCSSM Morganton
Cooperative Innovative
High Schools

Teen MHFA

- Designed to be delivered to students in grades 9-12

EVOLUTION OF FOCUS ON K-12 STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH



October 2025 - present

Coordinating Teen MHFA efforts at NCSSM campuses; 1 CIHS campus



August 2025 - present

Youth MHFA training with UNC System Lab Schools



March 2025 - present

Youth MHFA training with UNC System Principal Fellows and alumni



October 2024 - present

Introduced Teen MHFA to CIHS campuses



June 2024; July 2025

Youth MHFA training with UNC School of the Arts summer camp counselors and residence hall staff



March 2024 - present

Youth MHFA training with UNC System Teaching Fellows

THE RIPPLE EFFECT

- **Educators trained (Mar 2024 – present): 241**
 - **Elementary:** Daily reach $241 \times 25 = 6,025$
 - **Middle/High:** Daily reach $241 \times 125 = 30,125$
 - **Blended (½ elem, ½ sec):** Daily reach $241 \times (25 + 125) / 2 = 18,075$
- **Teen MHFA students (since Oct 2024): 250**
 - Peer impact (10 friends each): $250 \times 10 = 2,500$
- **Combined daily ripple (conservative → high):**
 - **Range:** $8,525 \rightarrow 32,625+$
 - **Blended total:** $18,075 + 2,500 = 20,575$
- **And growing:**
 - Students take skills home → families & communities → sustained culture shift



UNC SYSTEM MHFA EVALUATION RESULTS 2024-2025

Youth MHFA

98% were “knowledgeable to very knowledgeable” regarding their ability to recognize signs and symptoms of a mental health challenge and/or substance use crisis in teens.

100% of participants agree or strongly agree that they are confident in their ability to have a supportive conversation with a youth about mental health or substance use challenges.

99% of participants stated that the course was “helpful and informative” and that it “better prepared me for the work that I do professionally.”

Teen MHFA

96% say they would recommend TMHFA to a friend.

What was your favorite part of the course?

“Being able to voice what thoughts I had and the really meaningful conversations that the class had.”

“Being able to have open conversations and feel no judgment when talking with the professionals.”

What was your overall response to this course?

“I really liked this course as we need more teens to understand how to help and to watch out for signs”

“The course helped me understand how to best help those around me who are struggling.”

QUESTIONS?

AGENDA ITEM

A-4. Best Practices for a Healthy Achievement CultureLori Newnam
North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics

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: The North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics, a recognized leader in public education, has developed a comprehensive approach to balancing academic excellence with student well-being. The school's initiatives foster holistic development, collaborative learning environments, and sustainable achievement practices that empower students to thrive both academically and personally.

Assessment: Representatives from NCSSM will share insights on how they maintain academic rigor while fostering student wellness in their academic and residential environment. They will also include best practices that other institutions can replicate to promote their own healthy achievement culture.

Action: This item is for information only.



North Carolina
School of Science
and Mathematics

Promoting a HEALTHY Achievement Culture: NCSSM Best Practices

Lori Newnam,
Dean of Counseling

Academics



- No Class rank or valedictorian
- Experiential learning opportunities that are non -graded
- Pod structure in classrooms to promote collaboration over competition
- Switch to semesters, flexible use time, choice in graduation requirements

Co-Curricular/ Extracurricular



- Emphasis on Physical Health and Activity
- Service Learning
- Campus Service
- Student Collaboration and Engagement in Clubs

Support Systems



Each student has a Support Team

- Community Coordinator
- Counselor
- Advisor
- Parent

CAAS (Center for Advising & Academic Success)

Counseling



- School & Wellness Counselors (Specialization & Collaboration)
- Mental Health Partnerships
- Financial Assistance
- Weekly/Monthly Wellness Events
- Resiliency Education

College Planning



- Guaranteed admission to UNC system institutions and tuition waiver
- Required College & Career Planning course for all juniors
- College Planning Week