

# UNC SYSTEM FEDERAL PRIORITIES FOR 118th CONGRESS

## PRIORITY 1: SUPPORT FEDERAL RESEARCH

North Carolina is the ninth fastest growing state in the nation due in large part to the state's long-term investment in higher education. Federal research funding is the lifeblood of the nation's universities and colleges. Every year, the UNC System relies on approximately \$1.9 billion in sponsored research funding to advance important discoveries, including medical priorities such as vaccines and treatments for vexing public health and societal challenges. Federal research funding provides future researchers and scientists invaluable laboratory experience, fosters innovation and competitiveness through the development of new knowledge, and grows the future workforce in STEM fields and social sciences. The major federal agencies and their corresponding UNC System programs, include:



### The National Science Foundation (NSF)



### National Aeronautics Space Administration (NASA)

Science Mission Directorate, Aeronautics Research Directorate, Space Technology, Space Grant Program



### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

Oceanic and Atmospheric Research, Sea Grant Program



### National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST)

Manufacturing Extension Partnerships (MEP), National Network for Manufacturing Innovation (NNMI)



### Economic Development Agency (EDA) Regional Innovation



### US Department of Agriculture (USDA)

National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA); Hatch Act Funds, Smith Lever Funds 3(b) and 3(c), Evans-Allen Program, McIntire-Stennis Cooperative Forestry, 1890 Institutions Extension Services



### Department of Defense (DoD)

Science & Technology, S&T Basic Research, Medical Research, DARPA



### Department of Energy (DOE)

Office of Science: Advanced Research Projects Agency for Energy (ARPA-E)



### National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH)



### Department of Interior

U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Water Resources Research Institutes



### Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Office of Science and Technology



### Department of Education (ED)

Student Aid: Pell Grants, Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAAN), Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (SEOG), Federal Work Study, TRIO, GEAR UP



### National Institutes of Health (NIH)

### Additional Research Priorities:

- Support funding for increased federal research funding authorized, but not funded, in the CHIPS and Science Act.
- Support increased funding for the new research infrastructure account for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs), included in the FY 23 omnibus spending bill (LHHS-Education).

## PRIORITY 2: COMMITMENT TO EXPANDING ACCESS, AFFORDABILITY, AND STUDENT SUCCESS

The UNC System has frozen undergraduate in-state tuition for seven straight years, streamlined financial aid, incorporated performance metrics in funding allocations, eased transfer for community college students, and set clear goals for improved student outcomes. The System is also expanding its reach to new populations, including working adults and military-affiliated students.

- **Support and increase Pell Grant funding:** Currently, UNC System universities receive approximately \$336 million annually in Pell Grant funding, supporting nearly 70,000 students at System universities. The percentage of students relying on Pell Grants ranges from roughly 30% to as high as 60% on some UNC System campuses. Congress should consider ways to:
  - Continue to increase the maximum Pell Grant annually. Pell Grants remain the most effective way to target students with clear financial need: Approximately three-fourths of all Pell Grant dollars are awarded to students with a family income below \$30,000. Today, the maximum grant covers just 30% of the cost of attending college.
  - Fund the Pell Grant Program on the mandatory side of the budget so that it automatically responds to increases and decreases in student enrollment without the need for congressional action, and/or extend the annual inflation adjustment levels.
- **Support and increase campus-based student aid programs:**
  - Preserve Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (SEOG) for the neediest of students.
  - Preserve and expand the federal Work-Study program for all students, including graduate students. In 2020-2021, nearly 5,000 UNC System students received roughly \$8 million from the FWS program.
  - Preserve and support TRIO, GEAR UP, and Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAAN) - all of which help UNC System campuses attract and retain students who otherwise might not be able to access or afford college.
  - Increase funding for Student Success Completion and Basic Needs Grants (Funds for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education - FIPSE)
  - Support and increase funding for HBCU/MSI infrastructure research.
- **Support for Graduate, and Postdoctoral Students:**
  - Including federal financial aid, loans, scholarships, fellowships, research awards, transitions to the workforce, mental health services, and related programs.

## **PRIORITY 3: RECRUITMENT OF ADULT LEARNERS**

- **Project Kitty Hawk**
  - In 2021, The UNC System developed a first-of-its kind effort to bring the best practices of online program management into the public sector, launching Project Kitty Hawk to allow our 16 universities to better serve working adults, including military-affiliated individuals. The UNC System is working to provide affordable, high-quality education to adult learners, many of whom are currently enrolled out of state.
  - Complimentary to Project Kitty Hawk, in 2022 the UNC System implemented new policies for reducing barriers to access for military learners, including mechanisms for awarding academic credit for military training and experience.
  - To meet current and future workforce shortages nationally, Congress should support programs that promote adult learning and upskilling, as well as funding for outdated technology on US college and university campuses, including broadband connectivity in rural areas.

## **PRIORITY 4: SUPPORT FOR STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH**

- **Raise visibility and support legislation and funding that helps US colleges and universities address student mental health challenges**
  - Supporting student mental health and wellness is one of the highest priorities for the UNC System.
  - The UNC System is investing substantial funding into the implementation of multiple resources, including telepsychiatry, an off-campus provider referral system, micro-grants, and the implementation of the Healthy Minds Study across all campuses.

## OTHER IMPORTANT INITIATIVES

- **Ensure Smooth Transition of Student Veteran Benefit Systems**
  - Support legislation and efforts to ensure seamless rollout of new benefit systems, including ArmyIgnitED 2.0 and the transition from VA-ONCE to the new VA Enrollment Manager System.
- **Support the Pathfinder Airborne Program**
  - UNC institutions are partnering with the Army Futures Command and the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg to develop soldier-led innovations. The UNC System will seek continued programmatic funding for this partnership in FY 2024.
- **Support UNC System's Historically Minority-Serving Institutions (HMSIs)**
  - The UNC System is made up of six distinct HMSIs, including Elizabeth City State University, Fayetteville State University, N.C. A&T State University, NC Central University, UNC Pembroke, and Winston-Salem State University. Its five Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and one Native American-Serving Nontribal Institution (NASNTI) make a significant impact to the state's economy through affordable academic offerings, research, and partnerships that serve the community and region.
  - **Fully Fund Title III, Part B: Strengthening Historically Black Colleges and Universities.** These programs support the university's ability to address national challenges associated with global competitiveness, job creation, and changing demographics. Funding supports a number of services, including educational equipment, teacher education, campus construction activities, counseling, and student aid services.
  - **Increase Funding for Native American-Serving Nontribal Institutions (NASNTIs):** UNC Pembroke is one of 34 NASNTIs not federally recognized in the United States. UNC Pembroke is one of the most diverse campuses in the UNC System and a leader in addressing health disparities in the southeastern region. The university is one of the state's four NC Promise schools that offer \$500/semester tuition.
- **Support Funding for Campus Resilience Related to Natural Disasters**
  - The UNC System supports the inclusion of funding for campus resiliency related to natural disasters in any future emergency supplemental spending bill.
- **Support the EAGLES Act**
  - The EAGLES Act, which has been introduced in previous Congresses, would reauthorize and expand the U.S. Secret Service's National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC), which researches all forms of targeted violence to assist law enforcement, government agencies, schools, campuses, and others in preventing school violence using a behavior-based threat assessment model. The EAGLES Act is supported by UNC System police chiefs.
- **Support Legislation that Protects and Encourages International Students, Scholars, and Faculty**
  - There are more than 10,000 undergraduate and graduate international students making contributions on UNC system campuses, representing 4.5% of total fall 2022 enrollment.
  - Support federal legislation that fosters the work of highly skilled international students, scientists, and doctors.
- **Support federal funding for public media that benefits PBS North Carolina**
  - More than 10 million North Carolinians rely on PBS NC as an important learning tool for children, as well as lifesaving information during and following emergency situations, as PBS North Carolina partners with the North Carolina Department of Public Safety with shared infrastructure for emergency communications around the state.
  - During the pandemic, PBS North Carolina distributed over 150 teacher-created lesson plans for students isolated at home via their broadcasts and streamed on the PBS NC website.
  - PBS North Carolina is helping lead a Department of Homeland Security effort to develop Public Safety Communications applications utilizing the new broadcast technology, NEXTGEN TV.
  - Support FY 24 funding for public media, including the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Ready To Learn and the Next Generation Warning System.