

Still the People's Colleges: The Demographics of the N.C. Community College System

by Aisander Duda

Executive Summary

North Carolina's community college students represent a variety of ages, ethnicities, and walks of life. Unlike the UNC system, the majority of whose students are between the "traditional" undergraduate ages of 17 and 24, the average North Carolina community college student enrolled in a curriculum program is 28 years old. Community colleges serve everyone from home-schooled high school students to middle-aged occupational trainees to senior citizens holding advanced degrees who are simply learning for the fun of it. But, community college student bodies

are diverse in more than just student age. Indeed, 45 percent of all first-generation undergraduates nationwide are community college students. In the fall of 2005, only 28 percent of North Carolina's community college students were enrolled full-time, as contrasted with the nearly 79 percent of UNC system students. Non-traditional students actually typify community college enrollment, the majority of which are not full-time students. Community colleges are a microcosm of the statewide demographic shift towards increased diversity, with more Hispanics, African Americans, and older adults.

Age Diversity

- *The 17–24 age group, ages when students commonly attend college, accounted for only 29 percent of total enrollment within the N.C. Community College System during the 2005–06 school year. That same 17–24 age group in the UNC system accounted for 84 percent of total enrollment.*

- *During the 2005–06 school year, the N.C. Community College System reported that 36 percent of enrolled students were over the age of 40. By contrast, community colleges nationally enrolled only 16 percent over the age of 40, and the UNC system recorded a mere 3.6 percent.*

Already Working

- *In the U.S. today, self-supporting adults over the age of 24 constitute almost 40 percent of all college community students.*

Greater Percentages of Minorities

- *All but two community colleges in North Carolina serve a higher percentage of minorities than the percentage in their service area. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2006, the non-white population in North Carolina was 29.7 percent of the total population. The N.C. Community College System's non-white enrollment during 2005–06 was approximately 36 percent of total enrollment.*

- *While white students constitute 64 percent of N.C. community college students, African Americans constitute 24 percent, Hispanics 7 percent, Asians 2 percent, Native Americans*

1 percent, and others 2 percent. Community college students compose 42 percent of all North Carolina undergraduates (all students in public and private 2- and 4-year colleges), and 20 percent of all first-time freshmen. Likewise, African American community college students compose 44 percent of all African American undergraduates, Hispanics 49 percent, Native Americans 51 percent, and Asians 33 percent.

Part-Time Students

- *As of fall 2005, 246,929 North Carolina community college students, or 72 percent, were listed as part-time students. In the UNC system, 154,260 students were registered full-time, equaling nearly 79 percent of the total enrollment.*

Students Who Work

- *Nearly half of all U.S. undergraduate students enroll on a part-time basis, more than one-third are employed full-time, and 27 percent are parents. Of those working college students above the age of 24, two-thirds of all college students and a majority of community college students classify themselves as “employees who study,” as opposed to “students who work.” Of those, more than three-quarters work full-time (87 percent) or attend school part-time (76 percent), and approximately two-thirds do both (68 percent). When compared with students who work, employees who study are more likely to be aged 30 or more, married with children, and working towards associate degrees*

in computer science, business, vocational and technical fields. Employees who study have a 68 percent non-completion rate due to the strain of working full-time and attending college part-time. Of students who work, 39 percent fail to complete an undergraduate degree within six years after beginning their college or university programs, as compared with 62 percent of employees who study.

Low Degree Completion Rates

- *About 78 percent of first-time, full-time community college students nationwide fail to complete an associate's degree within three years, excluding the much larger number of part-time community college students. Only 48 percent of North Carolina's first-year community college students returned for their second year, as compared with 80 percent in the UNC system.*

- *These poor completion rates may be partly explained by the challenges facing community college students. For instance, the majority of students nationwide (61 percent) are part-time, with over half (57 percent) working more than 20 hours per week, a third (34 percent) spending 11 plus hours per week caring for dependents, and a fifth (21 percent) commuting for six to 11 hours per week.*

- *These poor completion rates may also result from community college students' personal goals. For instance, only 58 percent of community college students enroll with the primary intent of pursuing an associate's degree. Forty-one percent primarily seek to obtain or update job-related skills. Of those who do not primarily intend to pursue an associate's degree, 21 percent identify degree completion as a secondary goal while 21 percent stipulate that it is not a goal at all.*



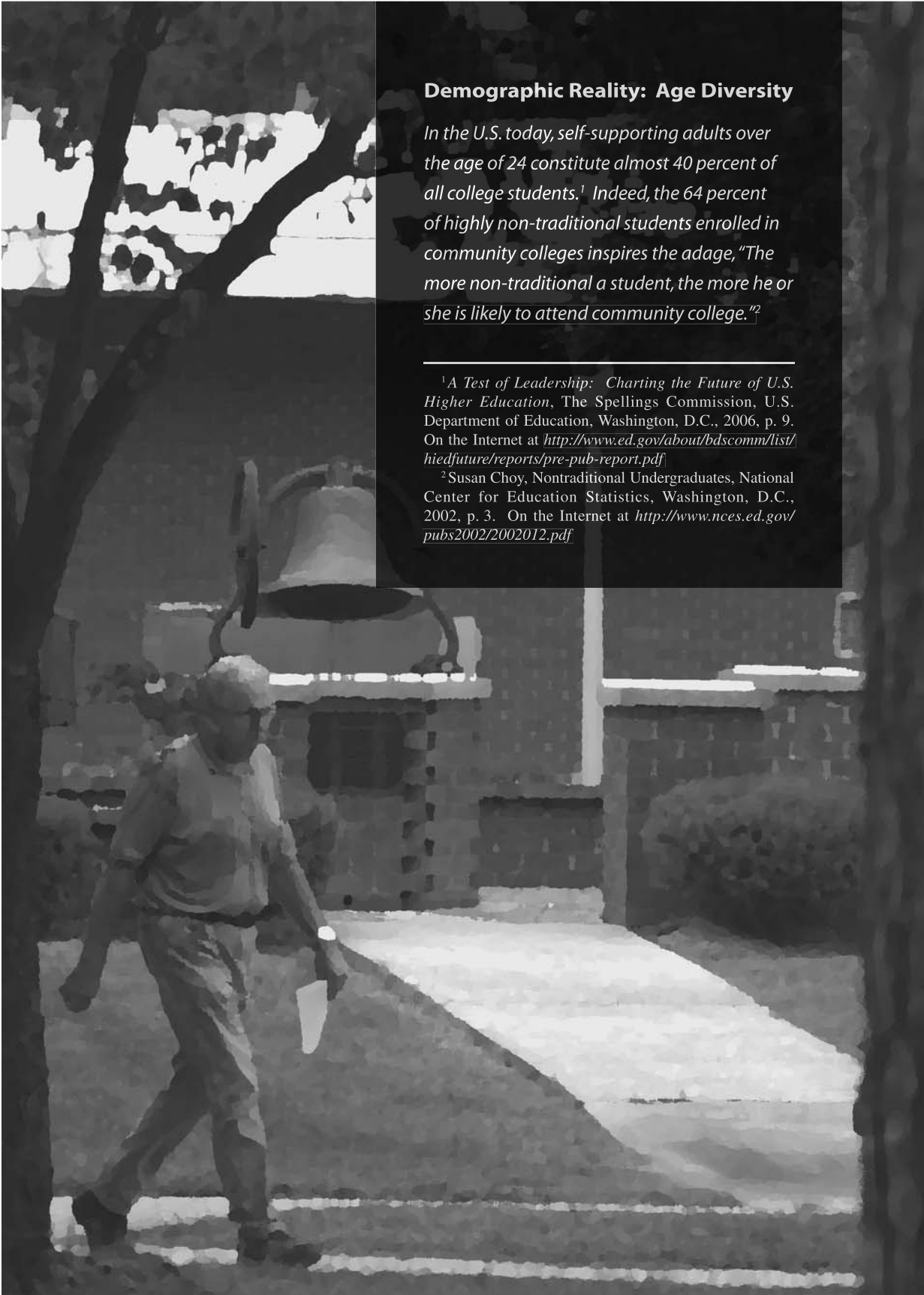
Community colleges are a patchwork. Much like a well-worn quilt, these institutions are comprised of a variety of shapes and colors. Transfer students, working mothers, mid-life career changers, Hispanic immigrants, high school dropouts, home-schooled students, adult literacy students, and even retired elders who already possess advanced degrees—each constitute a piece of fabric in the community college quilt. Although these student groups are vastly different, they share many of the same aspirations and find themselves bound together by the thread of desire for more education and training.

While in the past community colleges may have been considered remedial education facilities aiding those who could not gain access to the standard four-year universities, the system of community colleges in place today across North Carolina has replaced that image with one that aims for “a globally and multi-culturally competent workforce.”¹ This is evident at many community colleges across our state, including Durham Technical Community College (Durham Tech), where in one respiratory therapy class there are foreign-born students from India, Nigeria, Norway, and the Philippines. During the spring semester of 2006, there were twice as many curriculum students at Durham Tech who had previously attended foreign high schools than those students who had previously attended high schools in neighboring Orange County: 12 percent to 6 percent, respectively.² “We have 102 different countries represented on campus this semester,” says Wanda Winslow, vice president of Durham Tech’s Institutional Support Services. “There are many different lifestyles and backgrounds across this campus.”

The draw of Durham Tech is so powerful that in 2006, 28 percent of the total enrollment at the college lived outside the “service area,” or the targeted counties the college is meant to serve.³ This phenomenon can be best explained by the development of certain programs based on employment opportunities in the community. “I think a lot of people are drawn to the health care programs here,” says Christie, a 24-year-old occupational therapy student. “There aren’t many [occupational therapy] programs like the one at Durham Tech. It’s really focused.” The N.C. Community College System on the whole draws over 30,000 non-residents into the state each year to attend various programs.⁴



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Demographic Reality: Age Diversity

In the U.S. today, self-supporting adults over the age of 24 constitute almost 40 percent of all college students.¹ Indeed, the 64 percent of highly non-traditional students enrolled in community colleges inspires the adage, “The more non-traditional a student, the more he or she is likely to attend community college.”²

¹ *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education*, The Spellings Commission, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C., 2006, p. 9. On the Internet at <http://www.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/hiedfuture/reports/pre-pub-report.pdf>

² Susan Choy, *Nontraditional Undergraduates*, National Center for Education Statistics, Washington, D.C., 2002, p. 3. On the Internet at <http://www.nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/2002012.pdf>

A Face with a Few More Wrinkles: Age Diversity

Doug Tate is far from what some would consider the “average” college student. But after spending 27 years working in the textile industry, the 50-year-old Mebane resident saw his type of job being shipped rapidly overseas. He had advised many of his peers to reconsider higher education in the past. “I guess I finally decided to take my own advice,” says Doug, smiling, as he twitches his bristly mustache. “But I’m not the only older student on campus, either. There seems to be more and more folks like me each semester,” he says, pointing to several middle-aged students walking across campus. “Being at Durham Tech, you definitely get to see all walks of life.”

During the 2005–06 school year, the N.C. Community College System reported that 36 percent of enrolled students were over the age of 40.⁵ Community colleges nationally enrolled only 16 percent over the age of 40,⁶ and the UNC system enrolled a mere 3.6 percent.⁷

Doug’s is not an isolated case but a sweeping trend in community college enrollment. A student like Doug is more common than the “traditional” student from the 17–24 age group, ages when students commonly attend college, which accounted for only 29 percent of total enrollment within the N.C. Community College System during the 2005–06 school year.⁸ That same 17–24 age group in the University of North Carolina (UNC) system accounted for 84 percent of the total enrollment.⁹ That age trend continues among community colleges nationally: The American Association of Community Colleges reports that the average age of community college students is 29.¹⁰

“It [teaching students at various ages] challenges you to make whatever you’re presenting interesting to people at all levels,” says Margaret L. Skulnik, dean of health technologies at Durham Tech. “You have to engage the students and get them to participate, because they have a rich body of knowledge, and you want them to share that with the rest of the class.” But as much as a multi-generational class may improve learning, it can be equally problematic. Skulnik continues, “Sometimes it’s difficult to get all the students at the same level. . . . You have an objective that everyone needs to reach this level. Some students get there a little faster than others. You have to really work at making sure everybody comes along.”

Students themselves sometimes find the generation gap too much to overcome. “Young students that come from unstructured backgrounds can be rude and immature sometimes,” says Wannesia, a 44-year-old nursing student. “They lose focus and can be disruptive.”

Serving All People: Racial and Ethnic Diversity

In 2005–06, all but two community colleges in North Carolina—Central Carolina Community College and Beaufort County Community College—serve a higher percentage of minorities than the percentage in their service area. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2006, the non-white population in North Carolina was 29.7 percent of the total population, of which African Americans comprised 21.4 percent, Hispanics 6.7 percent, Asian Americans 1.8 percent, and Native Americans 1.1 percent.¹¹ The N.C. Community College System’s non-white enrollment during 2005–06 was approximately 36 percent of the total enrollment.¹² In the 2005–06 school year, Hispanics comprised 3.1 percent of curriculum enrollment and 8.1 percent of continuing education enrollment (a difference accounted for by the high Hispanic enrollment in the continuing education classes known as ESL or English as a Second Language). African Americans composed 25.8 percent of curriculum enrollment and 23.7 percent of continuing education enrollment, Asian Americans

Table 1. N.C. Community College System Enrollment by Race, 2005–06

Race	Percent of Curriculum Enrollment	Percent of Continuing Ed. Enrollment	Percent of All Students
Whites	65.3%	63.3%	64.0%
African Americans	25.8%	23.7%	24.0%
Hispanics	3.1%	8.1%	7.0%
Asian Americans	2.0%	1.8%	2.0%
Native Americans	1.4%	1.4%	1.0%
Other	2.4%	1.7%	2.0%

Source: A Matter of Facts: The North Carolina Community College System Fact Book 2007, North Carolina Community College System, Raleigh, N.C., May 2007, pp. 63 and 80. On the Internet at <http://www.ncccs.cc.nc.us/Publications/docs/Publications/fb2007.pdf>

2 percent of curriculum and 1.8 percent of continuing education, and Native Americans 1.4 percent of both curriculum and continuing education.¹³

Of the few seemingly homogenous campuses, nearly all serve a higher percentage of minorities than the population in their service area. For instance, consider Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute's Watauga Campus, nestled in the picturesque Appalachian Mountains, just minutes from Boone. The campus itself sits upon a plateau, bordered on one side by a mountain and on the other by a valley. Bathed in beauty, it seems the ideal place to learn. But as students come pouring out of the main building, there is something amiss. Not a single African American, Latino, Asian, or Native American can be seen in this homogenous stream of people. "I'm pretty sure that most, if not all, the students are white here," says Jamie, a 19-year-old student on the Watauga campus. Jamie continues, "I would say that I've never had a non-white student in my classes since coming here."

This observation seems odd, considering that in 2005–06 29.6 percent of the state's population was minority and 36 percent of the enrollment in community colleges was minority.¹⁴ But in the case of Caldwell Community College, the student body is actually an accurate representation of the local population. The service area for Caldwell Community College is both Watauga and Caldwell counties. The percentage of non-white residents in this service area is 5.9 percent of the total population.¹⁵ Still, Caldwell Community College had a non-white enrollment of 8.5 percent of the total student body.¹⁶ During the spring 2006 semester, the Caldwell campus had a non-white enrollment of 10 percent and the Watauga campus had a non-white enrollment of 4.7 percent.

Caldwell Community College's student demographics appears anomalous in North Carolina, where since the early 1990s, North Carolina has found itself on the leading edge of a growing national immigration trend, one that is changing the political and educational future of the state.¹⁷ For instance, in 2007, Hispanics constituted 15.5 percent of the national population, African Americans constituted 12.3 percent, Asians 3.7 percent, and Native Americans 0.9 percent. In North Carolina, African Americans

composed 21.6 percent of the state population, Hispanics 6.9 percent, Asians 1.4 percent, and Native Americans 1.2 percent.¹⁸ North Carolina's Asian population increased by 128 percent between 1990 and 2000¹⁹ and by 10 percent between 2000 and 2007.²⁰ Meanwhile, North Carolina's Hispanic population increased by 394 percent between 1990 and 2000²¹ and by 60 percent between 2000 and 2007.²² Moreover, a national study, *Rise, Peak, and Decline: Trends in U.S. Immigration 1992–2004*, conducted by the Pew Hispanic Research Center, noted a “shift of immigrant flows away from states with large foreign-born populations such as California and New York

towards new settlement states such as North Carolina. . . .”²³

The influx of both documented and undocumented immigrants puts the onus to educate and socially integrate these transplants upon the state, and more directly, the community college system. “Community colleges play a critical role in the work force development of our local communities,” says John Herrera, vice president for Latino Hispanic affairs of the Durham-based Center for Community Self-Help. “They help integrate immigrants into mainstream society by facilitating the acquisition or enhancement of language skills. They also provide a cost-effective education to deal with the changing demands of the

Demographic Reality: Racial Diversity

While white students constitute 64 percent of N.C. community college students, African Americans constitute 24 percent, Hispanics 7 percent, Asians 2 percent, Native Americans 1 percent, and others 2 percent.¹ In addition, community college students compose 42 percent of all North Carolina undergraduates and 20 percent of all first-time freshmen. Likewise, African American community college students compose 44 percent of all African American undergraduates, Hispanics 49 percent, Native Americans 51 percent, and Asians 33 percent.²

¹ *A Matter of Facts: The North Carolina Community College System Fact Book 2007*, North Carolina Community College System, Raleigh, N.C., May 2007, p. 63. On the Internet at <http://www.ncccs.cc.nc.us/Publications/docs/Publications/fb2007.pdf>

² Xiaoyun Yang, *Statistical Abstract of Higher Education 2005–06*, The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, N.C., May 2006, pp. 39–40. On the Internet at <http://www.northcarolina.edu/content.php/assessment/reports/previousabs.htm>



Table 2. Community College Demographics, 2005–06

	North Carolina ^a	National ^b
<i>Number and Type of Community College</i>		
Public Institutions	*58	991
Independent**	* 1	180
Total	*59	1,202
<i>Enrollment</i>		
Total	801,676	11.6 million
Full-Time	28%	40%
Part-Time	72%	60%
<i>Demographics</i>		
Average Age	*28	29
21 or Younger	NA	43%
22–39	NA	42%
24 or Younger	29%	NA
25–39	35%	NA
40 or Older	36%	16%
Women	53%	59%
Men	47%	41%
White	64%	66%
African American	24%	13%
Hispanic	7%	14%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2%	6%
Native American	1%	1%
Other	2%	NA
<i>Degrees and Certificates Awarded Annually</i>		
Associate's Degrees	16,071	550,000
Certificates	7,850	270,000

labor markets. Community colleges facilitate the transition caused by technological innovations, new family structures, immigration, and multicultural issues shaping the marketplace.”

Over the past decade, the enrollment of Hispanic students has risen in community colleges. In 1996, the proportion of Hispanic students in North Carolina mirrored that of other non-black minorities, hovering around 1.3 percent of all curriculum students, and 3.8 percent of continuing education students.²⁴ By 2000, those percentages had risen significantly to 2.0 percent and 5.7 percent, respectively.²⁵ By 2006, those numbers rose to 3.1 percent of curriculum students and 8.1 percent of all continuing education students.²⁶ While these gains may seem small, they are telling.

Table 2. Community College Demographics, 2005–06, *continued*

	North Carolina ^a	National ^b
<i>Average In-State Tuition and Fees</i>		
58 Community Colleges	*\$1,330	\$2,272
16 4-Year Public Universities	*\$3,424	\$5,836
<i>Community College Students Constitute the Following Percentages of All Undergraduates***</i>		
All NC/US Undergraduates	*42%	46%
First-Time Freshmen	*20%	45%
African American	*44%	47%
Hispanic	*49%	55%
Native American	*51%	57%
Asian	*33%	47%

Sources:

^a *A Matter of Facts: The North Carolina Community College System Fact Book 2007*, North Carolina Community College System, Raleigh, N.C., May 2007. On the Internet at <http://www.ncccs.cc.nc.us/Publications/docs/Publications/fb2007.pdf>

^{*} *Alternate Source:* Xiaoyun Yang, *Statistical Abstract of Higher Education 2005–06*, The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, N.C., May 2006. On the Internet at <http://www.northcarolina.edu/content.php/assessment/reports/previousabs.htm>

^{**} Louisburg College is North Carolina’s only private junior college.

^{***} Denotes all community colleges, private junior colleges, and public and private senior colleges and universities.

^b *Community College Facts at a Glance 2007*, American Association of Community Colleges, Washington, D.C. On the Internet at <http://www2.aacc.nche.edu/pdfs/factsheet07.pdf>

The Pew study found the peak of Hispanic migration to be during the 1999–2000 year period, which “took the inflow to more than 1.5 million . . .”²⁷ During the two school years at the peak of this migration, 1999–2000 and 2000–01, the N.C. Community College System saw a dramatic 30.3 percent increase in English as a Second Language (ESL) enrollment, and its highest enrollment ever of 40,378 ESL students occurred during the 2000–01 school year.²⁸ According to the U.S. Census in 2000, the Hispanic population in North Carolina was 378,963, totaling 4.7 percent of the total state population.²⁹ The Census Bureau’s 2006 American Community Survey for North Carolina estimates the Hispanic population to have grown to 597,382 residents, totaling 6.7 percent of North Carolina’s population.³⁰ During that same period,

between 2000–06, the Hispanic population grew from 12.5 percent to 14.8 percent of the national population.³¹ It is also important to note that those figures may not cover all or even most undocumented immigrants, notes the Pew study.³²

The Census Bureau's 2006 American Community Survey also reports that 394,151 North Carolina residents speak English "less than very well." Out of those, 309,730 residents, or 78.6 percent, are from households that speak Spanish.³³ But despite this, North Carolina's community college enrollment for ESL courses has fallen by nearly 13 percent from the high of 40,378 students in 2001 to 35,258 in 2006.³⁴ "For us to convince [Hispanic immigrants] that more education is needed, well, that is a hard thing," said Marco Zarate, president of the North Carolina Society of Hispanic Professionals, in *The News & Observer* of Raleigh. "You need to realize that for some families, they were already struggling in Mexico or wherever they lived before... It is already better for them... [T]hey don't realize the chances they are missing."³⁵

A national study by the American Association of Community Colleges, *Faces of the Future: A Portrait of First-Generation Community College Students*, finds that more than 50 percent of Hispanic community college students are the first of their family to attend college. The report describes the motivations and desires that differ between first-generation students and those students whose parents were of either moderate or high education levels. Most notably, the study concludes that first-generation students are more concerned with preparing for a future job (47 percent), whereas those students who are not the first in their family to attend college are more focused on transferring into a four-year institution (57 percent).³⁶ Typical first-generation students have lower incomes, take fewer credit hours, and generally face more financial difficulties than their moderate or higher education counterparts.³⁷ According to the American Association of Community Colleges, 45 percent of all first-generation undergraduate students are community college students.³⁸

Finding the Time: Part-Time Students and Students Who Work

For some students, a standard four-year program cannot meet their needs. Non-traditional students actually typify community college enrollment, the majority of which are *not* full-time students. In fact, as of fall 2005, 246,929 North Carolina community college students, or 72 percent, were listed as part-time students.³⁹ In the UNC system, 154,260 students were registered full-time, equaling nearly 79 percent of the total enrollment.⁴⁰

Students are drawn to community colleges for their flexibility. Students can take a full-time course load or one or two classes part-time. In 2005–06, those students taking six to eight or nine to 11 credit hours accounted for 40 percent of the total enrollment, while students taking one to five credit hours accounted for 30 percent of the community college population.⁴¹ A majority of students prefer a daytime class schedule as 77 percent of curriculum and 65 percent of continuing education students pursue their studies during the day.⁴²

However, many students involved in work force development programs, such as health care training and technology fields, do take courses full-time. "The occupational therapy program is really fast-tracked so I take a full load to finish sooner," says Jillian, a middle-aged student. "I used to be an interior designer, but I felt like I really wanted to help people, not just help them pick curtains."

Of the community college students who are unemployed, a 38 percent minority in 2005–06, many were still living at home with relatives and enrolled in the 2+2 program. This program is a four-year degree program with the first two years of coursework centered at a community college and the next two years at a University of North Carolina institution.⁴³ "I'm hoping next to attend UNC-Chapel Hill or

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Demographic Reality: Employment Status

Nearly half of all U.S. undergraduate students enroll on a part-time basis, more than one-third are employed full-time, and 27 percent are parents.¹ Of those working college students above the age of 24, two-thirds of all college students and a majority of community college students self-classify as “employees who study,” as opposed to “students who work.” Of these employees who study, over three-quarters work full-time (87 percent) or attend school part-time (76 percent), and approximately two-thirds do both (68 percent). When compared with students who work, employees who study are more likely to be aged 30 or more, married with children, and working towards associate’s degrees in computer science, business, vocational, and technical fields.² Employees who study have a 68 percent noncompletion rate due to the strain of working full-time and attending college only part-time. Of students who work, 39 percent fail to complete an undergraduate degree within six years after beginning their college or university programs, as compared with 62 percent of employees who study.³

¹ *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education*, The Spellings Commission, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C., 2006, p. 9. On the Internet at <http://www.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/hiedfuture/reports/pre-pub-report.pdf>

² Ali Berker, Laura Horn, and Dennis C. Carroll, *Work First, Study Second: Adult Undergraduates Who Combine Employment and Postsecondary Enrollment*, National Center for Education Statistics, Washington, D.C., Aug. 2003, pp. iii–iv. On the Internet at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2003/2003167.pdf>

³ *Ibid.*, p. ix.



Table 3. N.C. Community College Non-White

Non-White Enrollment by Community College				
Community College	Total Enrollment	Non-White Enrollment	% of Non-Whites	
1. Alamance CC	4,451	1,536	35%	
2. Asheville-Buncombe Tech. CC	6,259	727	12%	
3. Beaufort County CC	1,392	506	36%	
4. Bladen CC	1,476	891	60%	
5. Blue Ridge CC	2,048	230	11%	
6. Brunswick CC	980	246	25%	
7. Caldwell CC & Tech. Institute	3,690	313	9%	
8. Cape Fear CC	7,463	1,475	20%	
9. Carteret CC	1,619	244	15%	
10. Catawba Valley CC	4,822	976	20%	
11. Central Carolina CC	4,636	793	17%	
12. Central Piedmont CC	16,440	7,035	43%	
13. Cleveland CC	3,004	747	25%	
14. Coastal Carolina CC	4,103	1,340	33%	

Enrollment by Counties Served, 2005–06

	Non-White Population by County				% Non-Whites for Entire Service Area
	County(ies) Served by Community College	Total Population	Non-White Population	% of Non-Whites	
	Alamance	140,494	29,537	21%	21%
	Buncombe	219,082	20,390	9%	9%
	Madison	20,466	307	2%	
	Beaufort	46,235	13,357	29%	35%
	Hyde	5,592	2,056	37%	
	Tyrrell	4,240	1,763	42%	
	Washington	13,389	6,877	51%	
	Bladen	33,010	13,174	40%	40%
	Henderson	99,544	4,575	5%	5%
	Transylvania	30,129	1,705	6%	
	Brunswick	92,686	13,856	15%	15%
	Caldwell	78,783	5,350	7%	6%
	Watauga	43,101	1,308	3%	
	New Hanover	185,222	33,301	18%	19%
	Pender	47,833	10,679	22%	
	Carteret	63,511	5,329	8%	8%
	Alexander	36,553	2,227	6%	12%
	Catawba	150,812	20,223	13%	
	Chatham	57,201	9,479	17%	22%
	Harnett	103,884	26,269	25%	
	Lee	54,765	11,674	21%	
	Mecklenburg	820,487	277,553	34%	34%
	Cleveland	97,367	21,846	22%	22%
	Onslow	158,194	37,747	24%	24%

Table 3. N.C. Community College Non-White

Non-White Enrollment by Community College				
Community College	Total Enrollment	Non-White Enrollment	% of Non-Whites	
15. College of The Albemarle	2,146	624	29%	
16. Craven CC	3,075	913	30%	
17. Davidson County CC	3,128	567	18%	
18. Durham Tech. CC	5,495	3,090	56%	
19. Edgecombe CC	2,403	1,443	60%	
20. Fayetteville Tech. CC	8,408	4,737	56%	
21. Forsyth Tech. CC	6,996	2,258	32%	
22. Gaston College	5,094	1,069	21%	
23. Guilford Tech. CC	9,814	3,937	40%	
24. Halifax CC	1,482	863	58%	
25. Haywood CC	2,053	93	5%	
26. Isothermal CC	2,130	415	20%	
27. James Sprunt CC	1,402	644	46%	
28. Johnston CC	4,164	1,100	26%	
29. Lenoir CC	2,594	1,171	45%	

Enrollment by Counties Served, 2005–06, *continued*

	Non-White Population by County				% Non-Whites for Entire Service Area
	County(ies) Served by Community College	Total Population	Non-White Population	% of Non-Whites	
	Camden	9,307	1,445	16%	22%
	Currituck	23,757	1,726	7%	
	Dare	35,391	1,332	4%	
	Gates	11,328	4,299	38%	
	Pasquotank	39,693	17,480	44%	
	Perquimans	12,339	3,286	27%	
	Craven	93,115	26,128	28%	28%
	Davidson	155,864	17,211	11%	10%
	Davie	39,805	2,846	7%	
	Durham	245,284	114,193	47%	37%
	Orange	123,778	23,857	19%	
	Edgecombe	52,598	31,011	59%	59%
	Cumberland	305,829	132,869	43%	43%
	Forsyth	331,289	94,890	29%	26%
	Stokes	46,690	2,432	5%	
	Gaston	195,546	32,439	17%	14%
	Lincoln	70,914	4,850	7%	
	Guilford	448,694	160,066	36%	36%
	Halifax	56,172	32,984	59%	59%
	Haywood	57,005	1,439	3%	3%
	Polk	19,207	1,183	6%	11%
	Rutherford	63,617	7,918	12%	
	Duplin	52,652	14,655	28%	28%
	Johnston	151,031	24,655	16%	16%
	Green	20,466	8,578	42%	41%
	Jones	10,282	3,656	36%	
	Lenoir	58,244	24,575	42%	

Table 3. N.C. Community College Non-White

Non-White Enrollment by Community College				
Community College	Total Enrollment	Non-White Enrollment	% of Non-Whites	
30. Martin CC	969	579	60%	
31. Mayland CC	1,366	69	5%	
32. McDowell Tech. CC	1,217	133	11%	
33. Mitchell CC	1,898	501	26%	
34. Montgomery CC	852	270	32%	
35. Nash CC	2,511	1,013	40%	
36. Pamlico CC	378	172	46%	
37. Piedmont CC	2,613	1,100	42%	
38. Pitt CC	6,085	2,340	39%	
39. Randolph CC	2,292	347	15%	
40. Richmond CC	1,475	651	44%	
41. Roanoke-Chowan CC	935	631	68%	
42. Robeson CC	2,162	1,625	75%	
43. Rockingham CC	2,065	467	23%	
44. Rowan-Cabarrus CC	5,220	1,332	26%	
45. Sampson CC	1,459	644	44%	
46. Sandhills CC	3,605	1,287	36%	

Enrollment by Counties Served, 2005–06, *continued*

	Non-White Population by County				% Non-Whites for Entire Service Area
	County(ies) Served by Community College	Total Population	Non-White Population	% of Non-Whites	
	Martin	24,504	11,506	47%	47%
	Avery	18,146	983	5%	3%
	Mitchell	15,887	179	1%	
	Yancey	18,297	211	1%	
	McDowell	43,528	2,706	6%	6%
	Iredell	143,154	22,115	15%	15%
	Montgomery	27,643	6,350	23%	23%
	Nash	92,480	34,559	37%	37%
	Pamlico	13,147	3,333	25%	25%
	Caswell	23,904	8,455	35%	31%
	Person	37,512	10,739	29%	
	Pitt	145,429	53,018	37%	37%
	Randolph	139,223	10,380	8%	8%
	Richmond	46,847	16,368	35%	41%
	Scotland	36,943	18,335	50%	
	Bertie	19,582	12,514	64%	58%
	Chowan	14,505	5,568	38%	
	Hertford	23,950	15,081	63%	
	Northampton	21,669	13,053	60%	
	Robeson	129,148	83,564	65%	65%
	Rockingham	91,981	18,544	20%	20%
	Cabarrus	154,284	22,088	14%	16%
	Rowan	134,511	23,703	18%	
	Sampson	64,749	20,565	32%	32%
	Hoke	42,339	20,694	49%	27%
	Moore	82,296	13,454	16%	

Table 3. N.C. Community College Non-White

Non-White Enrollment by Community College				
Community College	Total Enrollment	Non-White Enrollment	% of Non-Whites	
47. South Piedmont CC	1,935	785	41%	
48. Southeastern CC	1,810	721	40%	
49. Southwestern CC	1,906	264	14%	
50. Stanly CC	2,046	345	17%	
51. Surry CC	3,000	245	8%	
52. Tri-County CC	1,066	57	5%	
53. Vance-Granville CC	4,042	2,030	50%	
54. Wake Tech. CC	12,236	4,586	38%	
55. Wayne CC	3,171	1,256	40%	
56. Western Piedmont CC	2,774	458	17%	
57. Wilkes CC	2,592	215	8%	
58. Wilson Tech. CC	1,892	988	52%	
Total Community Colleges	198,339	66,153	33%	

Source: Statistical Abstract of Higher Education 2005–06, The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, N.C., May 2006, p. 19. On the Internet at <http://www.northcarolina.edu/content.php/assessment/reports/previousabs.htm>

Enrollment by Counties Served, 2005–06, *continued*

	Non-White Population by County				% Non-Whites for Entire Service Area
	County(ies) Served by Community College	Total Population	Non-White Population	% of Non-Whites	
	Anson	25,864	13,083	51%	18%
	Union	168,270	21,629	13%	
	Columbus	54,757	19,268	35%	35%
	Jackson	36,114	4,837	13%	12%
	Macon	33,154	714	2%	
	Swain	13,743	4,618	34%	
	Stanly	59,209	8,718	15%	15%
	Surry	73,908	4,155	6%	5%
	Yadkin	37,862	1,549	4%	
	Cherokee	26,537	1,089	4%	4%
	Clay	10,036	143	1%	
	Graham	8,176	673	8%	
	Franklin	55,310	16,050	29%	40%
	Granville	54,139	18,747	35%	
	Vance	43,761	22,511	51%	
	Warren	20,425	12,113	59%	
	Wake	782,283	194,926	25%	25%
	Wayne	116,458	42,154	36%	36%
	Burke	88,619	11,261	13%	13%
	Allegheny	10,889	196	2%	4%
	Ashe	25,752	390	2%	
	Wilkes	67,162	3,321	5%	
	Wilson	77,478	32,177	42%	42%
	North Carolina	8,828,041	2,244,972	25%	25%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005 American Community Survey

(continued from page 88)

UNC-Greensboro,” says Rachel, a 19-year-old 2+2 transfer student at Durham Tech. “Living with my parents and taking classes here is a less expensive way to get my first two years out of the way.”

Conclusion

Woven together, the 58 community colleges are patches of a quilt of education and training that may safeguard North Carolina as it weathers the shift from a manufacturing to a service-based economy. Sandhills Community College has focused over the years on getting students to transfer to four-year colleges and universities, according to Kristie Huneycutt Sullivan, the college’s dean of planning and research. Within the N.C. Community College System, Sandhills ranks 11th for student transfers to four-year colleges and universities.⁴⁴

Yet Sandhills is a microcosm of the system as a whole. Sandhills’ annual continuing education enrollment is about 15,000 students, and its curriculum classes enroll approximately 4,000 students. Of the 3,790 curriculum students enrolled during the current fall 2007 semester, 66 percent are female and more than 53 percent have enrolled part-time. Although the average student age is 26 years of age, about 40 percent of the students are under the age of 20, and 15 percent aged 40 or older. More than 36 percent of the student body is non-white, with African Americans comprising more than 23 percent. In Moore County, the college’s service area, 19 percent of the population is non-white, with African Americans comprising more than 15 percent.⁴⁵ While about 8 percent of enrolled students have a

The ever popular drag racing classes at Sandhills Community College



Photo provided by Sandhills Community College

Demographic Reality: Completion Rates

About 78 percent of first-time, full-time community college students nationwide fail to complete an associate's degree within three years, excluding the much larger number of part-time community college students.¹ Only 48 percent of North Carolina's first-year community college students returned for their second year, as compared with 80 percent in the UNC system.²

In order to assess these low community college completion rates, one must first become aware that, nationally, "community colleges often serve students who have the fewest options and the greatest challenges." For instance, the majority of students (61 percent) are part-time, with over half (57 percent) working more than 20 hours per week, a third (34 percent) spending 11 plus hours per week caring for dependents, and a fifth (21 percent) commuting for six to 11 hours per week.³ Such challenges are significant for community college students, 89 percent of whom are considered "non-traditional." Non-traditional status is determined by one or more of the following characteristics: delayed college enrollment after high school, part-time attendance for at least part of the academic year, full-time employment, financial independence, dependents other than a spouse, status as a single parent, and/or possession of a GED instead of a high school diploma. According to Phil Kirk, vice president for external relations at Catawba College, "traditional" students are enrolling in college transfer programs for reasons such as cost, the need to develop stronger basic skills and study skills, and flexible scheduling.

While 46 percent of non-traditional community college students leave in their first year (as compared with 48 percent in North Carolina), 62 percent leave without a degree within three years. By contrast, 19 percent of "traditional" community college students leave without a degree within three years.⁴ For non-traditional students with two or more risk factors, the community college completion rate is less than 15 percent—a stark contrast to the 57 percent of traditional students.⁵

These poor completion rates may also result from community college students' personal goals. For instance, only 58 percent of community college students enroll with the primary intent of pursuing an associate's degree. Forty-one percent primarily seek to obtain or update job-related skills. Of those who do not primarily intend to pursue an associate's degree, 21 percent identify degree completion as a secondary goal while 21 percent stipulate that it is not a goal at all.⁶

¹ *Adult Learners in Higher Education: Barriers to Success and Strategies To Improve Results*, U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, Washington, D.C., Mar. 2007, p. 16. On the Internet at http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/custom/portlets/recordDetails/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=ED497801&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=eric_accno&accno=ED497801

² *Measuring Up 2006: The State Report Card on Higher Education—North Carolina*, The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, San Jose, Cal., 2006, p. 10. On the Internet at <http://www.measuringup.highereducation.org/docs/2006/statereports/NC06.pdf>

³ *Act on Fact: Using Data to Improve Student Success*, Community College Survey of Student Engagement, Austin, Tex., 2006, pp. 3 and 5. On the Internet at <http://www.ccsse.org/publications/CCSSENationalReport2006.pdf>

⁴ Susan Choy, *Nontraditional Undergraduates*, National Center for Education Statistics, Washington, D.C., 2002, pp. 2–3 and 13. On the Internet at <http://www.nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/2002012.pdf>

⁵ *Adult Learners in Higher Education*, note 1 above, p. 9.

⁶ *Act on Fact*, note 3 above, p. 5.

General Equivalency Degree, nearly 17 percent dropped out of either middle school or high school and never obtained an equivalent high school certification. By contrast, 129 students, or more than 3 percent, have either a bachelor's or master's degree, and 29 students, or nearly 1 percent, have a doctorate or other advanced degree.⁴⁶

In addition to its renowned horticulture program featuring beautiful gardens that are the pride of the community, Sandhills attracts students with curricula that include polysomnography (the study of sleep), gaming and simulation, and the ever-popular drag racing. Prompted by the high retiree population in Moore County, Sandhills' continuing education department includes the Center for Creative Retirement, which equips active retirees with "programs and resources to enhance . . . intellectual, physical, and personal well being," and promotes participation with local organizations.⁴⁷ Moreover, Sandhills' Hoke Center satellite campus in Raeford caters to a variety of continuing education students, including those enrolled in Adult High School. By contrast, Sandhills Early College High School gives first-generation college students the opportunity to earn both a high school diploma and associate's degree in fine arts on a tuition-free basis.⁴⁸

With a student body diverse in age, race, employment status, and career aspirations, Sandhills is a microcosm of the N.C. Community College System at large. Taken together, the system serves not only remedial and transfer students, but also North Carolina's emerging "globally and multi-culturally competent workforce."⁴⁹



Photo provided by Sandhills Community College

Footnotes

¹ Mission Statement of the North Carolina Community College System, on the Internet at http://www.ncccs.cc.nc.us/External_Affairs/system_mission.htm. See also *A Matter of Facts: The North Carolina Community College System Fact Book 2007*, North Carolina Community College System, Raleigh, N.C., May 2007, pp. 2–3. On the Internet at <http://www.ncccs.cc.nc.us/Publications/docs/Publications/fb2007.pdf>

² “Student Profile,” Durham Technical Community College, Spring 2006.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Fact Book 2007*, note 1 above, p. 64.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁶ *Community College Facts at a Glance 2007*, American Association of Community Colleges, Washington, D.C. On the Internet at <http://www2.aacc.nche.edu/pdfs/factsheet07.pdf>

⁷ *Statistical Abstract of Higher Education 2005–06*, The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, N.C., May 2006, p. 19. On the Internet at <http://www.northcarolina.edu/content.php/assessment/reports/previousabs.htm>. In order to establish parity with the N.C. Community College System’s most recent available data from academic year 2005–06, all comparative *Statistical Abstract* data in this article will be from 2005–06. However, 2006–07 *Statistical Abstract* data will be recorded in the endnotes. Thus, for the 2006–07 academic year, the number of students over the age of 40 enrolled in the UNC system was also 3.6 percent. *Statistical Abstract of Higher Education 2006–07*, The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, N.C., May 2007, p. 19. On the Internet at <http://www.northcarolina.edu/content.php/assessment/reports/abstract-current.htm>

⁸ *Fact Book 2007*, note 1 above, p. 62.

⁹ *Statistical Abstract of Higher Education 2005–06*, note 7 above, p. 19. For the 2006–07 academic year, the number of students under the age of 24 enrolled in the UNC system was also 84 percent. *Statistical Abstract of Higher Education 2006–07*, note 7 above, p. 19.

¹⁰ *Community College Facts at a Glance 2007*, note 6 above, p. 4.

¹¹ U.S. Census Bureau, *American Community Survey, 2006 Summary Tables*, generated by Aisander Duda using *American FactFinder* at <http://factfinder.census.gov> on Oct. 9, 2007. See generally on the Internet at <http://www.census.gov/acs>

¹² *Fact Book 2007*, note 1 above, p. 80.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 63 and 80.

¹⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, *American Community Survey*, note 11 above.

¹⁶ *Statistical Abstract of Higher Education 2005–06*, note 7 above, p. 39. In the 2006–07 academic year, the percentage of non-white students enrolled at Caldwell Community College was 10.5 percent. See *Statistical Abstract of Higher Education 2006–07*, note 7 above, p. 39.

¹⁷ See also “Race, Ethnicity, and Public Policy Outcomes: From Disparity to Parity,” *North Carolina Insight*, Vol. 21, Nos. 1–2, N.C. Center for Public Policy Research, Raleigh, N.C., June 2004.

¹⁸ Data Appendices in *State of the North Carolina Workforce*, N.C. Commission on Workforce Development, Raleigh, N.C., Jan. 2007. On the Internet at <http://www.nccommerce.com/en/WorkforceServices/FindInformationForWorkforceProfessionals/PlansPoliciesandReports/>

¹⁹ Census 2000 Redistricting Data (PL. 94–171) Summary File and 1990 Census, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, D.C., Table 3. States Ranked by Percent Population Change: 1990–2000, as cited in “Race, Ethnicity, and Public Policy Outcomes: From Disparity to Parity,” note 17 above, p. 20.

²⁰ Editorial calculation based on *State of the North Carolina Workforce*, note 18 above, and U.S. Census Bureau, note 11 above.

²¹ Census 2000 Redistricting Data, note 19 above.

²² *State of the North Carolina Workforce*, note 18 above.

²³ Jeffrey S. Passel and Robert Suro, *Rise, Peak, and Decline: Trends in U.S. Immigration 1992–2004*, Pew Hispanic Center, Washington, D.C., Sept. 27, 2005, p. iv. On the Internet at <http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/reports/53.pdf>

²⁴ **Curriculum programs** include credit courses contributing to certificates, diplomas, or associate degrees and range in duration from one semester to two years. Most curriculum programs are designed either to prepare students for entry level positions in business and industry or to allow students to transfer to a senior college or university. **Continuing Education programs** include non-credit courses that are occupational, academic, or avocational. Most Continuing Education programs are designed either as categorically-funded community service or as a means to upgrade occupational skills. *A Matter of Facts: The North Carolina Community College System Fact Book 1997*, North Carolina Community College System, Raleigh, N.C., pp. 6 and 65. On the Internet at <http://www.ncccs.cc.nc.us/Publications/docs/Publications/fb1997.pdf>

²⁵ *A Matter of Facts: The North Carolina Community College System Fact Book 2000*, North Carolina Community College System, Raleigh, N.C., p. 65. On the Internet at <http://www.ncccs.cc.nc.us/Publications/docs/Publications/fb2000.pdf>

²⁶ *Fact Book 2007*, note 1 above, p. 63.

²⁷ Passel and Suro, note 23 above, p. 3.

²⁸ *2006 Critical Success Factors for the North Carolina Community College System*, North Carolina Community College System, Raleigh, N.C., May 2006, p. 59. On the Internet at <http://www.ncccs.cc.nc.us/Publications/docs/Publications/csf2006.pdf>

²⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, note 11 above.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Passel and Suro, note 23 above, pp. 14–15.

³³ U.S. Census Bureau, note 11 above.

³⁴ *2006 Critical Success Factors*, note 28 above, p. 59, and *2007 Critical Success Factors for the North Carolina Community College System*, North Carolina Community College System, Raleigh, N.C., May 2006, p. 63. On the Internet at <http://www.ncccs.cc.nc.us/Publications/docs/Publications/csf2007.pdf>

³⁵ Tim Simmons, “He pushes Latinos to help themselves,” *The News & Observer*, Raleigh, N.C., Sept. 21, 2003, p. B1.

³⁶ Takako Nomi, *Faces of the Future: A Portrait of First-Generation Community College Students*, American Association of Community Colleges, Washington, D.C., 2005, p. 8. On the Internet at http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Content/NavigationMenu/ResourceCenter/Projects_Partnerships/Current/FacesoftheFuture/SurveyContent/Faces_Brief_Final.pdf

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 3–6.

³⁸ *Community College Facts at a Glance 2007*, note 6 above.

³⁹ *Fact Book 2007*, note 1 above, p. 65.

⁴⁰ *Statistical Abstract of Higher Education 2005–06*, note 7 above, p. 6. For the 2006–07 academic year, 158,267 students were registered full-time in the UNC system, equaling approximately 78 percent of the total enrollment. See *Statistical Abstract of Higher Education 2006–07*, note 7 above, p. 6.

⁴¹ *Fact Book 2007*, note 1 above, p. 65.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 62, and *Report to the General Assembly on Existing and New 2+2 Programs Between UNC and N.C. Community College System*, Raleigh, N.C., Feb. 2006.

⁴⁴ Sandhills Community College website, accessed Oct. 30, 2007 on the Internet at <http://www.sandhills.edu/campus-information/pages/facts-history.html>

⁴⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, note 11 above.

⁴⁶ *Fall 2007 Enrollment Report*, Sandhills Community College, Pinehurst, N.C., Oct. 2007.

⁴⁷ Sandhills Community College, note 44 above.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Fact Book 2007*, note 1 above, pp. 2–3.