



THE UNIVERSITY
of NORTH CAROLINA
at CHAPEL HILL

Carolina Engagement Council Newsletter March 2022

Our State, Our Work

We said it would be our own kind of March Madness and it has been – in the best of ways! First, on March 16th we made the public announcement of our first program under the [Carolina Across 100](#) banner. The excitement in the room was palpable! We are grateful to those of you who could be with us at Durham Tech for this event.



Pictured L-R: Tai Huynh (Member, Chapel Hill Town Council), Kevin Guskiewicz (Chancellor, UNC Chapel Hill), Anita Brown-Graham (Director, nclIMPACT Initiative), Steve Pearson (U.S. Corporate Social Responsibility Leader, IBM), JB Buxton (President, Durham Technical Community College-Orange County), Kevin Austin (Chair, Yadkin County Board of Commissioners), Jessica Dorrance (Research Director, nclIMPACT Initiative)

The [“Our State, Our Work: Connecting Young Adults with Their Future”](#) program will work with 20 community collaboratives to expand and deepen education and employment pathways for young adults aged 16-24 who are not now connected to school or work. This population, which we (and many others) refer to as Opportunity Youth, experienced the greatest increase in unemployment during the pandemic, according to the Economic Policy Institute. In North Carolina, about 11% of 16–24-year-olds were not in school or in the workforce in 2019. Some national projections indicate that number may have tripled during the pandemic. Working alongside our partners, we are ready to reverse that course.

Others across the state are clearly ready, too. Our inboxes have been overflowing with communities indicating their interest in applying, and partners interested in collaborating and supporting this work. This response has been enhanced by coverage from [WRAL](#), the [Triangle Business Journal](#), CBS 17 and other media outlets that ran stories highlighting our program of work. We have had more than 6.7 million media impressions. That's a lot!

We hope you will continue to spread the word about the program and application process. We are excited to help support, expand, and lift up efforts to re-engage opportunity youth across the state. Interested communities can apply on the [Carolina Across 100 website](#).

The timeline below shows how the program is shaping up.

OUR STATE, OUR WORK: CONNECTING YOUNG ADULTS WITH THEIR FUTURE Carolina Across 100 | Program One Timeline



We cannot say enough about the value of our CEC members' input, guidance, and support, and we remain grateful for it!

Engagement Week

This newsletter is coming to you on the heels of UNC's first ever Engagement Week, a University-wide effort to highlight collaborative efforts between Carolina and community-based organizations. Although Carolina Engagement Week is over, there is a lot of good content to explore, including recordings of several of the events, on the [24/7 Engagement page](#). We look forward to getting many Carolina Engagement Council members involved in planning next year's Engagement Week – let us know if you have ideas.

Carolina Across 100 worked closely with the organizing committee and contributed to two sessions during the week – a *Hackathon* and *Measure What Matters* – see more below.

Hackathon

The weeklong Carolina Across 100 Hackathon, with 20 teams totaling 55 students signed up to participate, was an opportunity for undergraduate, graduate, and professional students to dive into the rich data collected through the 2021 CX100 survey and many other publicly available data sources to create visualizations that help tell the story of the impact of

COVID-19 on North Carolina. Students from diverse academic backgrounds participated, from marine science to art history to comparative literature and several majors in between.

Over the course of a week, students worked in teams to create high-impact data visualizations that will contribute to the conversations we have with communities selected for our first program. The visualizations will also serve as some of the many tools and resources that other communities can access and use.

Ultimately, nine teams submitted final products. A panel of experts, including one of our own CEC members, Terence Oliver, Walter Spearman Distinguished Professor in the UNC School of Media and Journalism, judged the submissions and selected two winners. All of the submissions are now available on our [Hackathon](#) page. Check them out – you will see why we were so thrilled with what our students created. Their products reflect the diversity of their disciplines, interests, and skills, as well as the diversity of data available as we share our stories, expand our understanding, and make informed decisions about our future.

Measure What Matters

The Carolina Across 100 team led a workshop last week titled “[Measure What Matters](#).” The goal was to tackle the difficult question of how to define and evaluate “success” in a campus and community partnership such as [Our State, Our Work](#). We capped the registration to keep the group manageable. With over 40 participants (several members of the [Carolina Engagement Council](#) among them), the session was a lively and substantive discussion of goals, metrics, and balancing competing interests in large-scale partnership projects.

Discussions in breakout rooms pointed to some interesting areas of consensus about key metrics and markers of success, as well as places where different constituents have different priorities. We will continue to analyze what we heard in the session with our evaluation team and share it all with you at our upcoming meeting.

Next Meeting

Our next CEC meeting is Wednesday, April 13th, from 3:00-4:30pm. We will meet on Zoom to accommodate maximum participation in this important meeting.

Student Spotlight

Christopher Gsell, a student interviewer and Hackathon participant, is pursuing a Master of Science in Computer Science, concentrating in software engineering. With a strong background in coding and software development, he brings this skillset to Carolina Across 100 and to the UNC Collaborative Studies Center, supporting a broad array of University partnerships. Outside of academic and professional pursuits, Chris is also an avid squash player.

