



THE UNIVERSITY
of NORTH CAROLINA
at CHAPEL HILL

Carolina Engagement Council Newsletter July 2022

Welcome to the July edition of the Carolina Engagement Council (CEC) newsletter! We have updates and reminders to share and continue to be knee-deep in planning for our first in-person learning Forum with the communities that are part of the “Our State, Our Work” program. The Forum will take place at the UNC School of Government September 19-20th, and you will all be hearing more about that soon! In the meantime, read on to hear about funding updates, recent publications, reminders, and faculty and student spotlights.

Funding Update

The Carolina Across 100 team is proud to announce an exciting partnership with BlueCross BlueShield of North Carolina!

[BlueCross BlueShield of North Carolina \(BCBSNC\) awarded the “Our State, Our Work” program \\$665,000 for support over 3 years!](#)



This funding will be used for direct expenses to design and implement programming, widely share learnings, and help support evaluation activities:

- Hosting five community learning forums for our collaboratives, bringing them together for training, technical assistance, and sharing lessons learned
- Funding directly to community collaboratives for program management support
- Funding directly to community collaboratives for mini grants to pilot and test interventions
- Consultants and partners to adapt and implement program support content for community collaboratives
- Funding to support expanded evaluation and dissemination efforts that provide insights on impacts, identify areas of success, and opportunities for expansion and scalability

BCBSNC is passionate about supporting the young people of our state and ensuring opportunities for them to live healthy, fulfilling lives. Their support extends beyond funding and into active participation in Forums and activities with communities. We are incredibly grateful to have such thoughtful and committed partners in this work!

Read the latest from our recurring blog series

Our team has recently published the blog, "[Helping young adults disproportionately hurt by the pandemic.](#)" This accessible publication discusses recent data on the good, the bad, and the ugly when it comes to our current labor market. It focuses on the impacts of these ups and down on Opportunity Youth and how "Our State, Our Work" specific supports that we will make available to bolster communities' existing efforts to support these young people.

Helping young adults disproportionately hurt by the pandemic

Jess Dornance and Aislinn Folds-Jones, [Carolina Across 100](#)
June 8, 2022



The last couple of years have been record-breaking ones for the labor market. In March 2020, at the start of the pandemic, unemployment spiked as businesses reduced their operations or closed entirely. It was the largest

CEC member spotlight

Dr. Gary M. Nelson, DSW is a Distinguished Chair in Public Policy at the UNC School of Social Work. Dr. Nelson has represented the School of Social Work on the CEC. He presently serves as the Director of the School's Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Lab, its Community Aspirations Hub, and the School's Center for Aging Research and Educational Services (Cares). He is Director Emeritus and founder of the School's Family and Children's Resources Program, the founder of the School's Behavioral Health Springboard program, a founding Associate Director for the School's Jordan Institute for Families, Interim Director of the School's former Developmental Disabilities Training Institute, and founding member of the University's Institute on Aging.



In his work with the School of Social Work and the University, Dr. Nelson has focused the majority of his career on engagement and engaged scholarship as it addresses issues of system transformation to advance policies and practices of equity, inclusion, and well-being for vulnerable populations. He has extensive experience in community change methods, leadership development, and competency-based training for those serving communities and families through public, nonprofit and private sector organizations throughout North Carolina and the nation. His global experience includes leadership development and change management with the World Bank, Habitat International, the United Nations Development Program, and Uzbekistan.

In recent years, Dr. Nelson has led a team headed by Beth Lowder, MSW to develop [the Aspire tool](#) for the School's [Community Aspiration Hub](#), the community innovation arm of their [Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Lab](#). *Aspire* is an assessment and engagement tool that helps nonprofits, public agencies, collaborative initiatives, and businesses support the holistic well-being of individuals and communities. *Aspire* measures social determinants of health and other aspects of self-reported well-being, capturing the lived experience, voice and aspirations of individuals and families. *Aspire* data reflects the strengths and challenges faced by individuals as they seek, with the support of community, to reach their goals, improve their overall well-being, and move out of poverty.

We are incredibly excited and fortunate to be working with Gary and his team to adapt *Aspire* for the Carolina Across 100 "Our State, Our Work" program to support the Opportunity Youth population.

Chancellors Fellows



Photo of South Building, courtesy of Johnny Andrews/UNC-Chapel Hill

As you may remember, this past year, Carolina Across 100 was fortunate to work with two Chancellor's Fellows, **Katie Sessoms** and **Josh Romero**, because we could not stop raving about them! This year, we are ecstatic to have the opportunity of working with two more amazing UNC graduates through the Fellows program! **Abby Wooten** and **Ashiya Campbell**, who were selected for two of the three Chancellor's Fellow positions, will work with Carolina Across 100 and the "Our State, Our Work" program beginning this summer and through the academic year.

The Fellows will assist with the planning and logistics of the cross-collaborative learning forums, communication with local program managers, increase our capacity to engage with undergraduate students, and contribute ideas for outreach and engagement with Opportunity Youth. They will also engage with you as they contribute to the CEC agendas and newsletters. We will share more about them in future editions.

Student Spotlight

We're glad to welcome **Rory Howard** to the nciMPACT Initiative team for the summer! He joins us as a second-year student of the UNC Master of Public Administration program and is completing his professional work experience as a research assistant and summer fellow. Rory earned a bachelor's degree in Political Science and Government from UNC in 2019.


He brings practical knowledge and experience to the nciMPACT Initiative, as he has worked for the City of Greensboro as a community relations intern, a poll greeter, and an Enumerator for the U.S. Census. When not working or studying, Rory enjoys listening to many different music genres and following his favorite sports teams.



Important reminders

Enrollment for the Carolina Across 100 Experiential Learning course continues! We hope that you will keep spreading the word about this course to students you think might be interested and through department newsletters and listservs.

Undergraduate students who register for **ANTH 395, Research in Anthropology: Carolina Across 100** will assist program managers as they develop projects supporting “Opportunity Youth” at 13 sites across North Carolina through fact-finding efforts, connecting county projects to UNC’s on-campus knowledge and resources, and facilitating cross-project information sharing. Students will learn about youth employment, young adult aspirations, and post-COVID cultures of work, learning, and careers - and put various research skills to use. Guided by faculty who are experienced in engaged research, students will learn how to adapt social science methods to align with community purposes, reflect on their work, and will be offered strategies for translating their skills and experience to their next career steps. The class will meet Wednesdays from 4:40-7:30 p.m. and is three credit hours.



CAROLINA ACROSS 100
FALL 2022 COURSE

Register for **ANTH 395 Research in Anthropology** for a semester of experiential learning and statewide impact

Wednesday, 4:40-7:30, Hamilton Hall 452

Tar Heel Bus Tour Update

Thanks to you all for helping to spread the word about the Tar Heel Bus Tour (THBT) application. We were thrilled by the response and we’re continuing to work hard on mapping out the stops for our trips. We can’t wait to get our Heels back on the bus!

Next Meeting

Our next CEC meeting will take place virtually on **Tuesday, September 20th** at 1:30 p.m. We will send a reminder with the link in advance of the meeting, and look forward to seeing you all there!