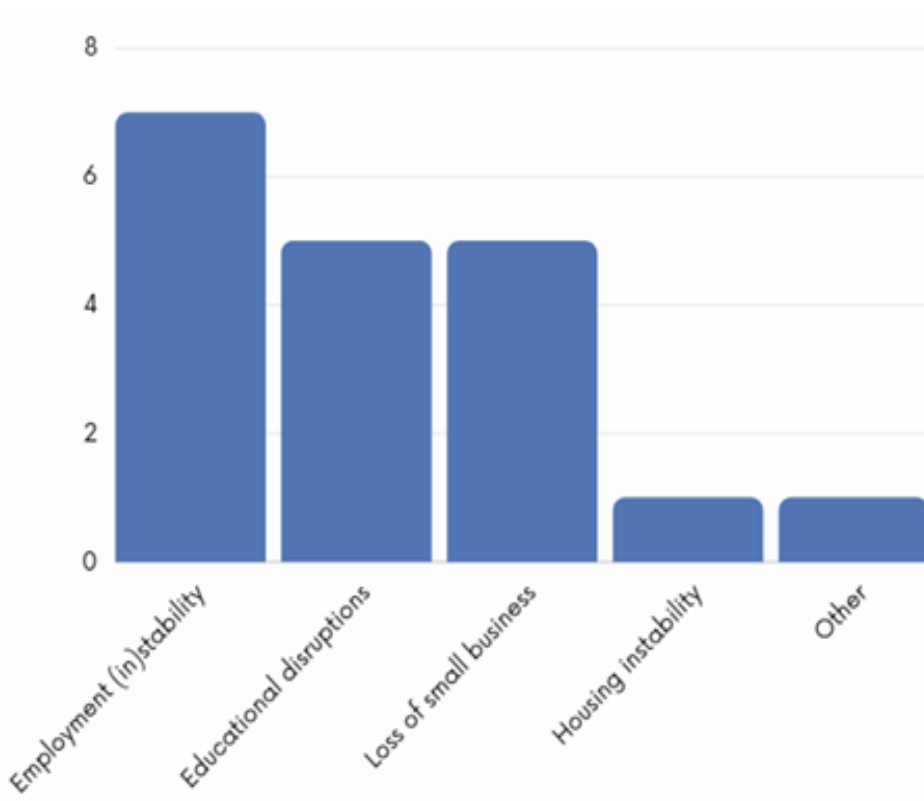


CAROLINA ENGAGEMENT COUNCIL UPDATE



NOVEMBER 2021



Welcome to the latest issue of the Carolina Engagement Council newsletter!

It's been a whirlwind since our last issue. The Carolina Engagement Council (CEC) met on October 25 to consider what state residents told us in more than 3,200 usable (of 4,000) Carolina Across 100 survey responses. We heard from people who live and/or work in every county of the state. Based on the priorities they shared, the CEC decided that the focus for our first partnerships with communities had to be **employment stability**. As you can see from the graph at left, it was clearly the top vote-getter.

SAVE THE DATE: the next **CEC meeting is**
January 11 from 10:00-11:30 a.m. Click [Zoom Link](#)

Understanding Our Focus Area

We know that employment and workforce issues are important not only in North Carolina, [but across the country](#). Nationally, the labor force has [shrunk by millions](#) as people stay home for myriad reasons. Fear of a resurgent COVID strain, padded savings that allow people to take time off or search longer for a job, the construction of individualized income flows different from the traditional nine-to-five, and caregiving constraints that require more time have all pulled people from the wider labor market as businesses seek to return to pre-COVID staffing and service levels.

This is [a trend that has continued](#) since the economic recovery began to kick into full swing. The persistence of the problem, its complex and multilayered drivers, and the clear need for more work in this area in North Carolina all helped motivate the selection of this topic as the first for Carolina Across 100 to tackle.

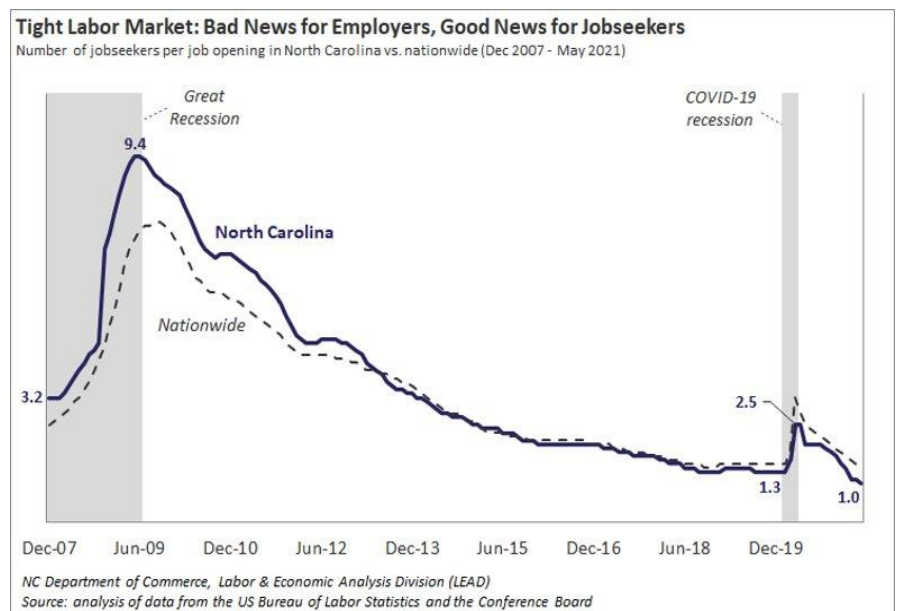
We will make a public announcement in late January or early February. Before then, we are exploring existing data on employment/labor markets, looking at the opportunities that survey respondents noted in our qualitative data, and scouring the campus to learn what relevant work is already taking place.

Existing Data on Employment/Labor Markets

Many sources – such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Federal Reserve, and the Census – track and report employment-related trends. We have been diving deep into these data to understand the picture of employment in North Carolina, and to situate our state within the broader landscape.

What is clear so far is that the effects of COVID on employment can be seen far and wide – from help wanted signs in store windows, to popular media stories about the significant toll on workers in sectors such as healthcare, to data on business closures as well as business formations.

Quantitative and qualitative data from our survey and interviews reflect these trends, with respondents repeatedly expressing concerns about workforce shortages. Indeed, data from the NC Department of Commerce indicates that the labor market is “tight” and fewer employees are applying for existing job openings.



Opportunities Identified by Survey/Interviews

We have focused our qualitative data analysis on identifying opportunities for UNC to partner with and support communities to address employment and workforce-related issues. Our matrix/framework analysis approach has quickly identified themes. So far, suggestions fall into several core categories, including:

- Providing new or ongoing research support, data/forecasting, and/or leading demonstration projects
- Identifying and promoting existing organizations and efforts working to improve employment issues, prepare workers, and address employee shortages
- Focusing efforts on specific employee groups/employment sectors, such as healthcare and teaching, and/or on specific geographies, such as rural or urban areas
- Providing skill-building, training, and educational opportunities to create well-qualified employees
- Acting as matchmaker to connect available workers to available job openings
- Helping address specific gaps in organizational capacity, such as grant writing, or business plan development
- Working to address issues that facilitate work, such as improved benefits, transportation, and childcare

Relevant Expertise and Experience on Campus and Beyond

In addition to seeking out existing data, we have also been seeking out experts to help us interpret the data and provide additional knowledge and resources to inform our next steps.

We need your help to connect us with those who have relevant knowledge and expertise. **Please click [this link](#) to share a name and email of a colleague you think would be interested in engaging with us on this work.**

As we endeavor to more fully develop this project, we want to make sure that you have access to the same rich picture of North Carolina that we were able to paint using these survey responses, and that we're using to inform our work. Smaller pieces of analysis, via blog posts and data visualizations, will be posted regularly to the [Carolina Across 100](#) website to help illustrate the wide variety of facts and figures we were able to pull together from our robust data.



Student Interviewer Profile



THOMAS PERSICO

- Judge advocate in the Marine Corps, stationed aboard Camp Lejeune
- MPA student within the School of Government
- Pursuing the Graduate Certificate in Innovation for the Public Good
- Member of the MPA@UNC Student Leadership Council
- One of two managing associates of the UNC Graduate & Professional School Honor System

Carolina Across 100 Blog Series Launches

Our first two blogs have already been posted, and we hope you'll take a look at them on our "[stories](#)" page. In these posts, Greg Brown, Director of the [Frank Hawkins Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise](#), and Ashley Brown, Director of Research Services at the Kenan Institute, break down the important role that small businesses play in our economy, the particular challenges that they faced even before the pandemic, and how the economics of COVID-19 have had an outsized impact on the small business environment.

WRAL Series Launches

We are partnering with WRAL to share insights from the survey with a wider audience. The six-part series will focus on community challenges identified in our surveys and interviews, such as food insecurity and learning loss, as well as our first Carolina Across 100 focus area of employment and workforce stability. Some of you have been contacted by WRAL for these articles, and we are grateful for the time and insights you shared. The first of these stories will be released in December, with more rolling out in the new year.

Carolina Across 100 Website

We are excited about the upcoming launch of the new and improved website, which will happen before the end of the year. The web address will be the same, but the content will be more visual and engaging. We can't wait to share it with you!

Engagement Week

The submission deadline for Engagement Week proposals was November 19th and we are encouraged by the response. Once we assess the proposals we received, we may be circling back to some of you to ensure that we're covering a broad array of locations and issue areas.

Thorp Faculty Engaged Scholars

Congratulations to the newest class of Thorp Faculty Engaged Scholars! In October, the [Carolina Center for Public Service](#) announced the 8th class of scholars, which includes 10 members from a diverse range of professional schools and departments. Read more about these scholars and their exciting work [here](#).

Community Engaged Scholars Directory

If you haven't already, please be sure to explore the Community Engaged Scholars Directory by clicking [here](#). The directory includes individuals from across UNC-Chapel Hill who conduct community engaged scholarship. We also encourage you to consider adding yourselves and invite other engaged scholars (faculty and staff) in your departments and schools to do the same. Help us capture and showcase the breadth of community engaged scholarship that is happening across our campus.

Upcoming Event

Finally, mark your calendars for January 12th at 4:00 p.m. for a CCPS virtual event featuring our own Lynn Blanchard and Andy Furco, Associate Vice President for Public Engagement at the University of Minnesota. Lynn and Andy will discuss their Academy of Community Engagement Scholars white paper, "Faculty Engaged Scholarship: Setting Standards and Building Conceptual Clarity." You can access the Zoom link [here](#). We will send out more details soon!