



Carolina Engagement Council Newsletter May 2023

After graduation's pomp and circumstance fades and summer's blazing heat settles in, things around campus tend to slow down a bit. That doesn't happen with the Carolina Across 100 (CX100) team and our amazing community collaboratives! This newsletter edition brings you up to speed on planning for Program 2, highlights a visit from Blue Cross NC to our community collaborative team in Lincoln County, announces the first *Our State, Our Work* (OSOW) innovation mini-grants, shares our contributions to Arts Everywhere, provides updates on focus groups from nIMPACT's related project called *Where are the Workers*, and spotlights two new CEC members and a Carolina student (re)joining our team for the summer.

Identifying the next program of work for CX100

At the most recent CEC meeting, we shared updates on the planning for the second program of work for CX100, which will focus on suicide prevention. This topic emerged in our initial listening phase, and recent research has reinforced the urgency to address this challenge now. Unanimous support from the CEC members in the meeting solidified our confidence that we are addressing one of the most critical issues for communities across the state. For Program 2, CX100 will partner with the [UNC Suicide Prevention Institute](#) to ensure we provide the critical expertise, connections, and resources communities need.

Applications for participating communities will open when we launch Program 2 on June 13. Please stay tuned for updates and help us spread the word to your networks.

CX100's Lincoln County Strong featured in Blue Cross NC Extra Miles Tour

Blue Cross NC has launched the "Extra Miles Tour," traveling across North Carolina and listening to local leaders talk about their toughest problems and the collaborative efforts that lead to solutions.

Recently, the tour stopped in Lincoln County to visit with Anita Brown-Graham and the local OSOW team "Lincoln County Strong." The conversation focused on re-engaging and re-inspiring Opportunity Youth through career exploration, apprenticeship opportunities, and expansive thinking about potential career paths. They also discussed one of the greatest challenges this and other rural counties face when accessing those job opportunities - transportation. [Read more](#) about the visit.



Congratulations to the first round of mini-grant awardees!

We have selected the first group of OSOW teams to receive mini-grants of up to \$5,000 to pursue innovative ways to engage Opportunity Youth. These funds let teams get creative, experiment, learn, and develop evidence-based practices that can inform their future work and the work of other community collaboratives. We are grateful to our funder, the Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation, for their desire for teams to be bold in authentically connecting with the young adults they seek to support.

We are conducting two application cycles in response to teams' eagerness to get to work immediately. The next application deadline is June 1.

[Learn more about their exciting plans here!](#)

Team 5
Collaboration Over Competition



Team 9
Communities Connected for Success



Team 10
Our Future ENC Youth



Engaging with students through Arts Everywhere 2023

Last month, the Carolina Across 100 team participated in the Carolina Performing Arts' on-campus event, [Arts Everywhere](#). In keeping with the 2023 theme "YOU Are an Artist," students were invited to interact with a large wooden map created by our graduate research assistant, **Charlie Chapman**, at the [BeAM Makerspace](#) on campus. Students placed pins on their hometowns and other places across the state to which they felt connected and left doodles, notes, and fun facts about their home regions of North Carolina!



This event functioned as an outreach effort for the CX100 team, and we loved connecting with students eager to jump into the effort when they return in the fall!

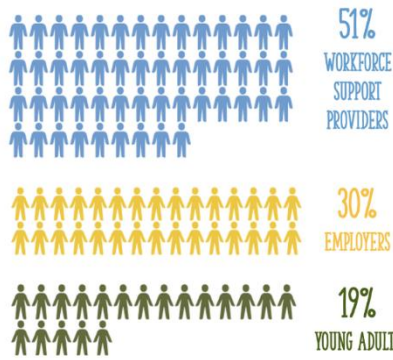
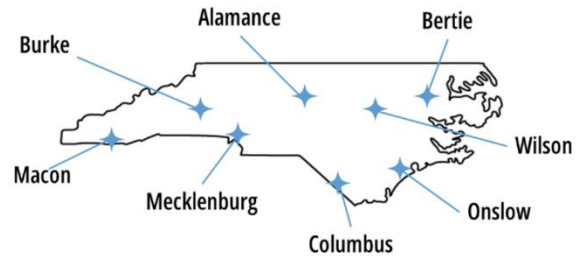
[Learn more about our student engagement here.](#)

Know a student who might be interested in our work? [Please direct them to this form.](#) We're always looking to connect!

Update on data analysis from the *Where Are the Workers* project

nclIMPACT and NCGrowth collaborated on a series of focus groups across all eight of NC's prosperity zones. We talked with employers, workforce support providers, and young adults about their experiences in the labor market since the onset of the pandemic.

Our focus on younger workers was driven by the awareness that this age was especially hard hit during the pandemic due to the combination of educational disruptions and higher levels of unemployment compared to other age groups.



Individuals from these groups shared their challenges, barriers, concerns, needs, and opportunities openly. Across these geographies and populations, we heard from a diverse set of participants.

While our data analysis is ongoing, key themes from each group have already emerged. One of the most salient points so far is a disconnect between what some young workers seek in a workplace and what employers provide to attract and retain young workers.

 <p>Employers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant difficulty attracting and retaining workers • High demand for soft skills • Mixed feelings that the quality of workers has changed/declined • Some willingness to be more creative and flexible with benefits and workplace environment 	 <p>Workforce Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant concerns about mental health and wellbeing of young workers • Concerns about barriers to employment • Seeking to expand how they expose young workers to employment opportunities • Working with employers to adapt/expand hiring practices • Training needs for young workers AND employers 	 <p>Young Adults</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivated by salary/wages, but equally by other benefits, the workplace culture, and growth • Some report not feeling respected in the workplace; they do not want to just be someone's employee • Seeking employers with understanding, inclusiveness, and respect related to diversity (and neurodiversity) and flexibility in the workplace
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To learn more, [watch this recording](#) of the first webinar in the series.

Getting to know more about two of our newest CEC Members

We are excited to welcome Aimee Wall, Dean of the UNC School of Government, and Brian Sturm, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Professor at the UNC School of Information and Library Science.

Aimee Wall is Dean of the UNC School of Government, a position she has held since February 2023. She is only the fifth person and the first woman to lead the School in its 92-year service history to North Carolina.

Prior to her appointment, Wall was senior associate dean of the School and a professor of public law and government. She joined the School of Government faculty in 2001, providing expertise and advising focused on human services law and policy, legislative training and support, animal control law, and public health law. She has worked closely with legislators, state and county officials, and others to study the state human services systems and explore opportunities for change. Wall also spent a decade as the faculty lead for the Legislative Reporting Service, a 90-year partnership with the North Carolina General Assembly.

From 2020 to 2023, Wall served as senior associate dean and helped oversee the School's administration, finances, and strategic direction. She has held the Thomas Willis Lambeth Distinguished Chair in Public Policy.

Before joining the Carolina faculty, Wall worked in healthcare law with Powell, Goldstein, Frazer, and Murphy in Washington, D.C., and served as a health policy analyst in the Office of the Secretary in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. She is a member of the North Carolina State Bar and the District of Columbia State Bar. A two-time Carolina alumna, Aimee earned a Master of Public Health from the Gillings School of Global Public Health and a Juris Doctor at the UNC School of Law. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in English from The Ohio State University.



Dr. Brian Sturm is a professor and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at the UNC School of Information and Library Science (SILS). His research focuses on immersion in information environments, the state of being completely engrossed in whatever you are doing, whether that's reading, story listening, or playing video games. Most people have been "lost in a book" or deeply engaged in some form of media. Dr. Sturm has dedicated his career to exploring the experience of immersion and the various influences that help us get immersed.

Before his academic career, Dr. Sturm was a natural history museum docent, gave planetarium shows, worked as a wildlife rehabilitator, and taught outdoor education to 5th graders in California. He has also been a professional storyteller for over 25 years.

Student Spotlight

Jillian Everhart (she/her) is from Lexington, North Carolina, and has been a Tar Heel ever since she can remember. She graduated this month with majors in Public Policy and Political Science and a minor in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics.

As a Fall 2022 Capstone team member, Jillian contributed to [the students' excellent portfolio](#). We are delighted that she is joining the CX100 team once again to complete the internship requirement of her Master of Public Policy degree this summer. Jillian will assist with various research, writing, and data analysis tasks this summer, including building on the work of the previous MPH cohort to create a robust community toolkit.

Jillian will become a double Tarheel in Spring 2024 when she graduates with a Master of Public Policy degree. After graduation, she is interested in working in the K-12 Education Policy and Public Health Policy arenas. Jillian enjoys reading a book by the pool or having a movie night with friends when not in class or working.



Stay tuned for updates about the next CEC meeting

Our next meeting will take place in September. Watch for an Outlook calendar invitation from [Margaret Barrett](#) soon. We hope you enjoy a well-deserved break over the summer!