

Community Colleges ^[1]

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by Edwin R. Andrews and Benjamin Eagles Fountain Jr., 2006

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In 1957, in an effort to address the educational needs created by the rapid shift from an agricultural to an industrial economy, the North Carolina [General Assembly](#) ^[5] provided funds for a tax-supported community college system and initiated a statewide system of industrial education centers. A report titled *Community Colleges for North Carolina: A Study of Need, Location, and Service Areas (1962)* ^[6], popularly known as the Hamilton Report, subsequently documented the need for such a system. It was prepared by Professor [C. Horace Hamilton](#) ^[7] of the [Department of Rural Sociology](#) ^[8] at North Carolina State College (modern [North Carolina State University](#) ^[9]) at the request of the North Carolina Board of Higher Education and the [Governor's Commission on Education](#) ^[10] beyond the High School. The study projected the populations of county high schools and colleges, considered the potential impact of proposed community colleges on existing public and private colleges, verified the low college attendance rate in North Carolina compared to other states, and noted the low income constraints on many college-age citizens. It concluded that a community college system should be established and recommended locations for the institutions.

The [Department of Community Colleges](#) ^[11], which was to be supervised by the [State Board of Education](#) ^[12] and local boards of trustees, was established in 1963. At that time there were 6 community colleges, 20 industrial education centers, and 5 extension units in the state. Fifteen years later-by 1978-a total of 58 community colleges brought higher education within commuting distance of practically every North Carolinian.

In 1981 control of the community college system was transferred to the new State Board of Community Colleges, whose 20 members were appointed by the governor, State Senate, and State House of Representatives. The board's central responsibility has been to ensure the equitable distribution of funds, maintain state priorities, and approve programs to be offered by the schools. Each college has a board of 12 trustees who are elected by the local school board, county commissioners, and governor. The trustees determine local policy, under which the school's president may make various personnel and administrative decisions.

The 58 constituent colleges of the [North Carolina Community College System](#) ^[11] maintain academic and technical programs organized under several broad categories. Many colleges provide training in business and office skills, agriculture, nursing, allied health skills, and engineering technologies, while others offer courses paralleling the first two years of liberal arts instruction at universities. Several schools emphasize programs for adult basic education, general education development, and continuing education. An additional school, the [North Carolina Center for Applied Textile Technology](#) ^[13] in Belmont, came under the management of the North Carolina State Board of Community Colleges in 1991. The state's community college system is the nation's third largest, with an annual enrollment of more than 800,000 students on campuses that are within 30 miles of 99.9 percent of the population.

References:

A Matter of Facts: The North Carolina Community College System Fact Book(1991).

Kenyon Bertel Segner III, *A History of the Community College Movement in North Carolina, 1927-1963*(1974).

Jon Lee Wiggs, *The Community College System in North Carolina: A Silver Anniversary History, 1963-1988*(1989).

Additional Resources:

North Carolina Community Colleges: <http://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/> ^[11]

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