## Columbus County

### 2030 NC Degree Attainment Goal: 2 million (67%)  
2030 Proposed Columbus County Attainment Goal: 5,798 (40%)

### Population Spotlight
- **2010 Census:** 58,098  
- **2020 Census:** 50,623  
- **Change:** -7,475

### Growth Rate
- **County:** -12.9%  
- **State:** 9.5%

### Median Household Income (2020)
- **$40,712**

### Child Poverty Rate (2020)
- **30.8%**

### Households with Broadband (2020)
- **78%**

### Home Owners (2020)
- **72%**

### Voter Registration Rate (2021)
- **71%**

### Unemployment Rate (2021)
- **6.3%**

### Fayetteville-Lumberton
#### Prosperity Zone Sub-Region
- **Peer County Type:** Rural Non-Metro
- **Local Education Agencies:** 2
- **Charter Schools:** 4

### Educational Attainment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Degree</td>
<td>9,174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have Degree or Credential</td>
<td>4,124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Educational Attainment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate (including GED)</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college, no credential</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term credential</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate degree</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate or professional degree</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Note:
Numbers may add to more than 100% due to rounding.

### Top Opportunities for Growth

**These three areas represent the biggest opportunities for Columbus County to improve future attainment outcomes.**

- **Postsecondary Completion**
  - 48% of Columbus County high school graduates who enroll in postsecondary earn a degree or credential within 6 years, below the rural non-metro county average of 55%.

- **Opportunity Youth**
  - 22% of Columbus County youth ages 16-24 are not working and not in school, above the rural non-metro county average of 15%.

- **Reading Performance**
  - 20% of Columbus County 3-8 graders earn college-and-career-ready scores in Reading, below the rural non-metro county average of 24%.

### Impact of Covid-19 on Education Pipeline

- **K-12 Enrollment (district schools)** -6.7%  
  - 2021-22 vs. 2019-20

- **Postsecondary Enrollment** -13.9%  
  - 2021 vs. 2020

- **FAFSA Completion** 11.9%  
  - 2021-22 vs. 2018-19

- **Postsecondary Intentions** -9.1%  
  - 2020-21 vs. 2018-19

### How students in Columbus County traditional schools are currently doing:

- To meet state goals, each year Columbus County needs:
  - Columbus County has met the goal for Pre-K enrollment (goal: 75% vs. 84%), 2022
  - 1,660 more 3-8 graders earning college-and-career-ready scores (level 4 or 5) in reading (goal: 73% vs. 20%), 2022
  - 1,985 more 3-8 graders earning college-and-career-ready scores (level 4 or 5) in math (goal: 86% vs. 23%), 2022
  - 78 more 9th graders to graduate within four years (goal: 95% vs. 83%), 2021
  - 954 more students to attend school regularly (goal: 11% chronic absenteeism vs. 25%), 2021
  
- Columbus County has a student-to-school counselor ratio of 353:1 versus 318:1 in peer counties. 2021

- 8,865 total students were enrolled in K-12 in Columbus County in the 2021-22 school year.

- **11%** of seniors completed the FAFSA in 2022. (112 more need to complete in 2022 to meet state goal of 80%).  

- 71% of graduates reported intentions to enroll in a postsecondary institution versus 69% in peer counties. 2021

- 276 graduates participated in Career & College Promise programs (50%) versus 49% in peer counties (2021).

- Students in Columbus County completed 365 Career & Technical Education concentrations in 2021. The top three CTE concentrations completed include Agricultural, Food, & Natural Resources; Health Science; and Human Services.

### School Choice

- 80% of students enrolled in K-12 in Columbus County in the 2021-22 school year.

### Career and College Preparation

- 86 high school students took at least one AP course (<5%) versus 7% in peer counties (2021).

### Postsecondary Enrollment Rates for Select Groups in Columbus County, 2021

**Note:** Outcomes for demographic groups with fewer than 10 students are not displayed.
**Success of Columbus County High School Graduates**

Top destinations of graduates, 2016-2020

- 35% of college-goers attended a public 4-year college
- 7% of college-goers attended a private 4-year college
- 57% of college-goers attended a public 2-year college
- <5% of college-goers attended a private 2-year college
- 95% of college-goers attended an in-state college

- 77% of students who enroll persist to their second year versus 73% in peer counties. 2021
- 48% of students who enroll earn a degree or credential within 6 years versus 55% in peer counties. 2021

**Adult Learners**

Columbus County resident enrollments in NC Community Colleges, 2021

- 244 Basic Skills
- 1,441 Continuing Education
- 1,368 Curriculum

10% of Columbus County residents have student loan debt; 7% of debt holders had student loans in default. 2020

**In your Prosperity Zone Sub-Region:**

80.4% of postsecondary degrees and credentials conferred by regional institutions are aligned with labor market needs.

1,855 Individuals served in an ApprenticeshipNC program in 2020

**UNC and NC Community College Outcomes:**

5,664 graduates in 2020

56% of 2016 graduates were employed in NC in 2021

$38,415 annual average earnings of graduates employed in NC (includes both part-time and full-time jobs)

**In 2021 your Workforce Development Board served:**

- 8,319 in Basic Services
- 4,329 in Career Services
- 501 in Education Services

22.0% of young adults ages 16-24 in Columbus County were not working and not in school versus 15.2% in peer counties. 2019

**Promising Attainment Practices**

The new Promising Attainment Practices Database is a curated, searchable, and filterable collection of about 250 county, region, and state-level initiatives and programs that directly address various components of the state’s attainment challenge. The Database allows local and regional initiative leaders and other stakeholders to identify groups across the state who are developing or operating initiatives designed to boost attainment.

Follow link to discover how Columbus County has been meeting local needs:

https://dashboard.myfuturenc.org/promising-attainment-practices/?wdt_search=Columbus

For more information about each indicator, including data sources and methodology, visit:

dashboard.myfuturenc.org/county-data-and-resources/