Dear NC Countdown to College Site Coordinator:

On behalf of CFNC, thank you for hosting a NC Countdown to College event at your school or organization! The goal of NC Countdown to College is to support high school seniors in completing three important college enrollment steps: residency, FAFSA, and applications.

While NC Countdown to College focuses especially on first-generation college students and students who may not otherwise apply to college, we encourage participating sites to include activities for all students and ages.

For almost 20 years, NC Countdown to College has been a statewide effort, and we look forward to continuing this tradition across North Carolina. We hope this handbook assists you, whether this is your first year or you are seasoned! Please contact us if you have any questions or concerns about planning and implementing the event at your site. Be sure to visit our website, NC Countdown to College, for up to date information about the event!

Thank you in advance for your commitment to this important statewide college access event. Your participation will encourage North Carolina students and their families to make college a part of their future.

Sincerely,
NC Countdown to College Committee
C2C@northcarolina.edu

Planning Your Site for NC Countdown to College

We intend for this to be a useful guide for Site Coordinators when planning and implementing a NC Countdown to College event. Additional resources and materials are available online at www.CFNC.org/C2C.

Step 1. Identify a Site Coordinator

Every school or organization participating in NC Countdown to College (C2C) should identify a site coordinator or co-coordinators. This can be a counselor, advisor, coach or other professional who will be responsible for planning and implementing event(s) for your site. It is also recommended that you designate a back-up coordinator.

Step 2. Register Your Site

To participate in NC Countdown to College 2023, your school should register at: Registration Link

Why Register?

- Receive "I Applied" stickers
- You will be among the first to receive the list on October 1st of which colleges are waiving their fees for CAW!
- You will receive C2C and College Application Week (CAW) updates from us, including any updates to the fee waiver list.
- Timely emails from us leading up to October, with updates, activities for students, etc.
- Any communication related to technology that is deemed necessary for site coordinators.
- Data! We use the registration data to make improvements each year. Help us get the most accurate information to use in analytics.
- We will send all site coordinators a feedback survey after C2C to get your thoughts and to continue those yearly improvements.

Step 3. Perform Technology Preparations

The success of your event could hinge on your technology readiness. Here is a list of preparations:

- Provide your IT staff with the Technology Guidelines: Link.
- Ensure your IT staff reviews the list of whitelisted websites.
- Work with technology support staff to ensure that firewalls or other access restrictions will not prevent students from accessing online applications the day of the event.

Step 4. Coordinate Your Site Team

- Bring together a planning committee to help plan month-long activities. This group may include faculty, staff, parents, students, and community members. Students could earn community service hours for volunteering.
- Survey students to find out what they want to know about education beyond high school and plan mini workshops around those topics.

- Contact your local campus-based admissions and financial aid office to help with your events. Don't forget that your CFNC Rep is also a valuable resource.
- Encourage your site team, and all staff at your school or organization, to print off this "I Attended" resource and place it, filled out, outside their door to originate conversation.

Step 5. Plan Your Events

Weekly Themes

Consider defining themes for each week of NC Countdown to College and scheduling activities related to those themes. We break up each week for students as follows: *Week 1: Plan Your Future; Week 2: FAFSA and RDS; Week 3: College Application Week; and Week 4: Special Topics/I Applied, Now What?*

Activity Suggestions

We have activity suggestions below, listed by week. We have provided you with any resources needed, and each activity should take no more than 15 minutes. *Please note that many of these activities are also appropriate for grades 9-11, if you are interested in getting your whole school involved. The activity is noted with an asterisk if it can easily be used with younger students.*

Week 1:

a) Be Prepared*: Ensure that students have a log-in for CFNC.org by either having them make an account for the first time or resetting their password (if needed). This can be done via your ProTools account. ProTools information: https://www.cfnc.org/education-professionals/professional-center-and-professional-tools/

b) Career Assessments*: Have students complete an assessment on CFNC.org and review career requirements. Students can then explore programs and majors at the colleges to ensure their plans are aligning. Assessments can be found here: https://www2.cfnc.org/learnAboutYourself

c) College Search on CFNC.org*: Have students utilize the College Search feature to plan and finalize where they will apply during College Application Week. Have them review admissions requirements and academics, to ensure the colleges they may apply to have their major or interest area. https://www2.cfnc.org/college-search If these colleges align with those waiving fees during College Application Week, even better!

d) Vision Board*: A vision board is a representation of our goals and dreams; what better way to prep for C2C and CAW! The board may be a collage of images, words, and phrases that capture college and career goals. Here is a link to show more information: https://www.lifehack.org/articles/productivity/8-ideas-create-your-own-vision-board.html

Week 2:

a) Paying for College* Have students watch this recording from CFNC and NCSEAA on how to pay for college: https://youtu.be/Okphkmptrqk The bulk of the information can be found starting at minute 7, ending at minute 52.

b) <u>Scholarship Search</u>: Have students review the Scholarship Search on CFNC.org. Students should find at least one scholarship they are eligible for and plan to apply for: https://www.cfnc.org/pay-for-college/scholarship-search/ As students are researching scholarships, they can use this free scholarship tracking sheet from Mapping Your Future: https://www.mappingyourfuture.org/downloads/MappingYourFuture_Scholarship_Tracking.xlsx

c) <u>Residency Determination Service (RDS)</u>: Students should review this video to understand how to access RDS: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kEvHIod7VSk&t=17s and where to find resources they may need: https://www.ncresidency.org/resources/

Week 3:

a) <u>Who Would You Admit?*</u>: Have students complete the admissions activity found on page 16 here: https://www.cfnc.org/media/4rjh0mx5/student-activities-11th.pdf
This is a great activity that gives students a feel for the decisions that admissions professionals make each day.

b) <u>Writing Your College Admissions Essay</u>: Pass along this link on writing college admissions essays to give students some great tips: https://www.cfnc.org/apply-to-college/college-application-resources/admissions-essay-tips/ Have students review the sample essay questions from colleges in NC and ask them to work on a sample essay at home. Review these as a group or in small groups as a short activity in their English classrooms or as a separate activity this week.

c) <u>Extra activity for grades 9-11*</u>: Have students complete a practice application located here: https://www.cfnc.org/apply-to-college/college-application-resources/practice-application/

Week 4:

a) <u>Financial Aid Offer Letters</u>: Once students complete their FAFSA and admissions application, they will receive offer letters from the financial aid offices. Have students prepare for these by reviewing pages 16 & 17 here: https://www.cfnc.org/media/5v1fdxr1/student-activities-12th.pdf After they have reviewed these two pages, head to this site for videos and sample offer letters: https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/for-parents/webinar-comparing-financial-aid-awards

b) <u>Types of Financial Aid*</u>: Students may be offered various types of financial aid: grants, scholarships, loans, and/or work study. Have students review this page and watch the short video to become familiar with terms and funding options: https://www.cfnc.org/pay-for-college/college-financing-resources/
In addition, make sure students bookmark this website for more information: https://studentaid.gov/

c) <u>Post-RDS</u>: What happens after you complete your RDS interview? By clicking on the FAQ page, students can find information on topics such as: reconsideration and appeals, forgetting their RCN, required documentation, validation, and more. https://www.ncresidency.org/faqs/

d) <u>After You Apply</u>: Congratulations! Students completed their admission application(s) to college. Now what? Offer students this handout to review: https://www.cfnc.org/media/yuqpmtlj/i-applied-now-what.pdf
Students may also want to become familiar with the College Redirection Pool, in case they aren't accepted, they are waitlisted, or want to look elsewhere later in their senior year.

6. Promote Your Event
Get the Word Out

Getting the word out in your community and school are a vital part of the C2C process. It is helpful to get buy-in and support from other teachers, administration, parents, and community members. You can also consider working with your media team to submit a press release to a local media outlet, letting them know about the great work your school or site is doing to help students with the college process. Let us know if we can assist in any way and don't be shy to let us know if you have some creative and/or successful ideas that we should share in the future!

Sample Letters
Sample Volunteer Recruitment Letter

SCHOOL LOGO
SCHOOL ADDRESS
(MONTH) (YEAR)

Dear (NAME OF ORGANIZATION),

(NAME OF YOUR HIGH SCHOOL) is pleased to announce its participation in the statewide NC Countdown to College event. In an effort to further expand college access initiatives, College Foundation of North Carolina (CFNC) is sponsoring the annual NC Countdown to College Month to be held (C2C) DATES AND YEAR). The goal of NC Countdown to College Month is to provide every graduating high school senior the opportunity to apply to college online through CFNC.org with a particular focus on helping first-generation students and students who may not otherwise apply to college.

We will be hosting our event on (DATE(S)) and would welcome representatives from (NAME OF ORGANIZATION) to visit our school during this exciting and important time.   Volunteers can greet and sign-in students, assist students with the completion of CFNC online college applications, or distribute information about financial aid opportunities. Our students would

really appreciate your help and support as they take a big step in the direction of going to college.

If you or any of your colleagues at (NAME OF ORGANIZATION) are interested in working with (NAME OF YOUR HIGH SCHOOL) in any capacity please contact (NAME, CONTACT INFO).

Thank you!

(YOUR NAME & TITLE)

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Student/Family Information Letter
SCHOOL LOGO
SCHOOL ADDRESS
(MONTH) (YEAR)

Dear Students and Families,

During (C2C DATES), College Foundation of North Carolina (CFNC) will be sponsoring NC Countdown to College Month. On (DATE(s) OF EVENT), all seniors expected to graduate in June (YEAR) will be encouraged to use the CFNC.org online application to apply for admission to a North Carolina college or university, if they have not already done so. Additionally, during the week of (COLLEGE APPLICATION WEEK DATES), many colleges will waive their admissions application fees, which can be a great money saver for families. The list of colleges who have opted to waive their fees will be available on October 1st, and can be found at CFNC.org/c2c. This entire event is possible due to the collaborative efforts of the administration, faculty, and staff at (NAME OF YOUR HIGH SCHOOL), as well as students, their families, and volunteers across the community.

The purpose of this event is to support students in completing three important college enrollment steps: **Residency Determination Service (RDS); FAFSA; and College Applications.** In order to fully participate, students will need to have an account on CFNC.org. Your student will use his/her CFNC Account for both 1) college applications, and 2) completion of RDS (to establish eligibility for in-state tuition and state grants).

CFNC provides a host of free resources on their C2C website, www.cfnc.org/C2C. Students and their families will need to work together to prepare because parent information is essential to complete RDS and FAFSA. CFNC provides a helpful chart of parent and student information needed to complete the FAFSA and RDS. We encourage all students to print and review the College Application Checklist prior to the event, as well as FAFSA/RDS Chart, found here:

https://www.cfnc.org/media/spdnrtmk/cfnc-college-admission-checklist.pdf and
https://www.cfnc.org/media/hrgfskx5/rds-and-fafsa.pdf

Families are welcome to visit (NAME OF YOUR HIGH SCHOOL) on (DATE(s) OF EVENT) to assist their student during the NC Countdown to College events. In addition, if family members are interested in volunteering or guest speaking during the event, please let me know. Volunteers can greet and sign-in students, assist students with the completion of CFNC online college applications, or distribute information about financial aid opportunities.

If you have any questions, please call (NAME, TITLE), at (PHONE NUMBER). Thank you in advance for your support of this exciting initiative to encourage North Carolina's students to make college a part of their future.

Sincerely,
(SCHOOL COUNSELOR/PRINCIPAL/SITE COORDINATOR)

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Spanish Student/Family Information Letter
SCHOOL LOGO
SCHOOL ADDRESS
(MONTH) (YEAR)

Estimados Estudiantes y Padres de Familia,

Durante el mes de Octubre, (YEAR), la Fundación Universitaria de Carolina del Norte (*College Foundation of North Carolina, CFNC*) van a patrocinar NC Countdown to College. Una semana durante este mes, todos los estudiantes de último año que piensan graduarse en junio del (YEAR) serán animados a usar las solicitudes de la página en la red de CFNC.org para solicitar ingreso a una universidad de Carolina del Norte si no lo han hecho hasta ese punto. Este evento es posible solo por los esfuerzos colaborados de la administración, la facultad, y el personal de (NAME OF YOUR HIGH SCHOOL), y también por los estudiantes, sus familias y voluntarios de la comunidad.

El propósito de este programa es para ayudar estudiantes en completar tres cosas importantes: Residency Determination Service (RDS); FAFSA; y sus aplicaciones para la universidad. Los estudiantes y sus familias deberán trabajar juntos para prepararse porque la información de los padres es esencial para completar el RDS y la FAFSA. CFNC proporciona una tabla de información para padres y estudiantes necesaria para completer:
https://www.cfnc.org/media/vmyfvae0/navegando-fafsa-rds.pdf.

Para participar completamente los estudiantes deben tener una cuenta gratis de CFNC en línea e información para la solicitud de ingreso. Un manual del estudiante (*College Application Checklist*) también está disponible para los estudiantes en la página de Recursos en cfnc.org/C2C y [Lista de Acciones para Asistir a la Universidad](). Estamos aconsejando a todos los estudiantes que impriman y completen la información en el manual del estudiante antes del evento para que tengan todos los datos disponibles para cumplir las solicitudes de ingreso en línea. Anticipamos que los estudiantes y sus familias tendrán que trabajar juntos en compilar la información que se encuentra en el manual del estudiante (*College Application Checklist*).

Los padres de familia son bienvenidos a visitar (NAME OF YOUR HIGH SCHOOL) el (DATE(s) OF EVENT) para ayudar a su hijo/hija durante el proceso de completar la solicitud. Además, si miembros de su familia están interesado en ofrecerse voluntariamente durante el evento, favor de contactarme. Los voluntarios pueden saludar y registrar estudiantes, ayudar a estudiantes con las solicitudes de ingreso a la universidad, o distribuir información sobre oportunidades de ayuda financiera.

Si tiene cualquier pregunta, por favor llama a (NAME, TITLE), al (PHONE NUMBER). Gracias adelantado por su apoyo en esta iniciativa emocionante para animar a los estudiantes de Carolina del Norte a hacer la universidad parte de su futuro.

Sinceramente,
(SCHOOL COUNSELOR/PRINCIPAL/ SITE COORDINATOR)