

SITE COORDINATOR'S RESOURCE GUIDE





Dear NC Countdown to College Site Coordinator:

On behalf of CFNC and CACRAO, thank you for hosting a NC Countdown to College event at your school! 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 high schools to include activities for all students, including freshman, sophomores, juniors, and seniors who have already applied to college. Involving all of your students in Countdown to College will add to the college-going culture at your high school.

Over the past years, NC Countdown to College has been a statewide effort, and we look forward to continuing this tradition across North Carolina. To help you prepare for the event, we are pleased to offer this Site Coordinator's Resource Guide.

Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns about planning and implementing the event at your school. I will be sure to keep you updated regarding any changes or additional information you may find useful. 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,

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This is the September 2021 version of the *Site Coordinator's Resource Guide*. Be sure you are looking at the most recent version of this guide by accessing it directly through NC Countdown to College For Schools web page on CFNC.org: [Link](#)

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For more information on NC Countdown to College visit CFNC.org: [Link](#).

Site Preparations

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

1. Identify a Site Coordinator

Every school or organization participating in NC Countdown to College 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 the event for your site. It is also recommended that you designate a back-up coordinator. It is recommended that each site coordinator has access to professional center and professional tools. More information on how access those tools can be found [here](#).

2. Register Your Site

To participate in NC Countdown to College 2020 your school should register at: [Registration Link](#)

3. Perform Technology Preparations

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

- Provide your IT staff with the Technology Guidelines: [Link](#).
- Ensure your IT staff reviews the list of whitelisted websites.
- Make sure the location you'll use for an event is equipped with a sufficient number of networked computers and printers, well in advance of the event. Typical event locations include the school or organization's media center, library, computer labs and classrooms with computers.
- Ensure that enough computers are available to allow adequate time for each student to participate. Typically, each student requires 45 minutes to an hour to complete a college application. To complete the FAFSA online students and parents may take approximately 30 to 45 minutes.
- 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.

4. Get Everyone on Board

Awareness and involvement are key to a successful event at your site:

- Talk to the principal about setting aside time for students to attend college access mini workshops.
- Get teachers, bus drivers, coaches, cafeteria staff, and all adults in the high school to talk to students about plans after high school.
- Set goals for the number of seniors participating, number of volunteers, etc. Remind everyone of these goals and the importance of reaching as many people as possible in order to promote a college-going culture in your school community.

5. Coordinate Your Site Team

Get a team together, brainstorm ideas and assign tasks;

- Bring together a planning committee to decide on the options throughout the NC Countdown to College month and brainstorm additional activities, then make assignments and deadlines. This committee may include different groups such as faculty, staff, families, student groups, and community members. The committee should begin as early as Spring to identify activities to be implemented throughout the fall to promote NC Countdown to College.
- Recruit counselors, teachers, and other staff to help plan and implement the events. Forming a team will help share the work and ensure school or organization support for the events. Include student and parent volunteers. Students could earn community service hours for volunteering.
- Have a meeting (or meetings) in the Spring for brainstorming, delegating, and finalizing plans for the month.
- 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 financial aid office to help with your FAFSA completion event during the school day and evening.
- Organize your event well through pre-planning, logistics, and follow-up. Having the event well-organized by a collaborative team helps it run smoothly.

6. Enlist Volunteers

Identify contacts in your community that may be interested in helping make your NC Countdown to College event a success by donating time and/or resources. We encourage you to have at least two volunteers at your school on the day of the event. Volunteers can provide refreshments, greet and sign-in students, assist students with the completion of CFNC online college applications, or distribute information about financial aid opportunities.

A. Suggestions on Who to Ask/Recruit

- **School Alumni:** Reach out to recent graduates of the high school, inviting them to present their post-high school success stories with students.
- **Parents and other students' family members**
- **Representatives from Colleges and Universities:** Ask college admissions professionals to volunteer with the understanding that their role is not to promote their individual college or university, but to assist students.
- **Business, Community and Political leaders**
- **Volunteer, Senior and/or Church groups**
- **Representatives from youth programs such as YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, 4H, etc.**
- **PTA and/or School Board members**

B. Tips for Managing Volunteers

- Send potential volunteer groups a NC Countdown to College Volunteer Recruitment Letter.
- When promoting your event, always mention the need for volunteers in your communication.
- Reach out to student leaders in your school. For example, students who have already completed their application/s could help other students during the event and be called the “college application ambassadors”.
- Create a system for collecting volunteer information. Depending on your school district’s policy, you may need to conduct a background check.
- Identify specific responsibilities and duties for your volunteers. For example, you may create shifts for greeting, sign-in, computer lab, other activities, etc. Create a short explanation of each responsibility for volunteers to follow throughout the day.
- Finalize a volunteer list and, as a reminder, send information using the following template notifying volunteers of event details.
- Provide name tags for volunteers on the day of the event.
- Conduct a quick orientation, perhaps the morning of the event, to familiarize volunteers on the details of your event.
- Send a thank you letter to all volunteers for their dedication to NC Countdown to College!

C. Sample 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) and the Carolinas Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (CACRAO) are cosponsoring the annual NC Countdown to College event to be held (C2C) DATES AND YEAR). The goal of NC Countdown to College 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 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)

(YOUR TITLE)

7. Determine Your Site Activities

A. Weekly Themes

Consider defining themes for each week of NC Countdown to College and scheduling activities related to those themes. Below are some suggestions:

Week 1 – “Imagine Your Future”

Focus events on generating interest in going to college. Topics to cover:

- Benefits of going to college
- Career choices and corresponding courses of study
- Choosing a college that’s right for you

Week 2 – “Financial Aid 101, FAFSA and RDS”

Focus on preparations to be ready to submit college applications. Topics to cover:

- Reviewing college application requirements for schools
- Residency Determination (RDS)
- Essay writing
- File free FAFSA (Federal Financial Aid)
- Paying for college

Week 3 – “College Application Week”

This week focuses on getting students to apply to college. Topics include:

- Information on Fee Waivers
- Schedule time in computer lab to assist students with completing and submitting applications.
- Submit your transcripts

Week 4 – “I Applied, Now What?”

Focus on next steps and what to expect. Topics to cover:

- Finish the FAFSA
- What to expect after you apply
- Completing any applications you started
- Event survey

B. Activity Suggestions

- 1) [CFNC's College Search](#)
Use CFNC's College Search to research 2-year and 4-year schools in North Carolina based on programs and majors, admissions requirements, cost of attendance, sports, or even distance from your house.
- 2) Invite a guest speaker to your NC Countdown to College event as part of a kick-off ceremony to elaborate from personal experience on the importance of applying to and completing college. This guest speaker could be a prominent member of your community, alumnus from your school who is currently in college or recently graduated, and / or a parent advocate for college.
- 3) Hold special event(s) such as a College Alumni Parent Night, Human Bingo, or schedule visits to your school prior to and during NC Countdown to College by college admission professionals, CFNC Representatives, first-year college students, and/ or community and business leaders.
- 4) Create a "College Wall". Seniors write the names of the colleges to which they have applied on banners or strips of construction paper to hang in a main hallway. Highlight college names when acceptances are received. Utilize art teachers (if available) for additional promotional materials to create a "college-going culture" on the walls of your school.
- 5) Provide pre-college application activities for all students in your school prior to and during to the NC Countdown to College event. Use CFNC curriculum materials to incorporate grade level appropriate activities for 9th - 11th grade students.
https://www.cfnc.org/static/pdf/home/sc/pdf/CFNC_High_School_Infographic.pdf
- 6) Coordinate writing workshops for personal statements or essays. English teachers can use the CFNC publication "Writing Your College Admissions Essay" to encourage students to work on admission or scholarship essays.
https://www.cfnc.org/static/pdf/home/sc/pdf/Writing_Your_Admissions_Essay.pdf
- 7) Complete a sample application with your students. Teachers can go over the correct grammar and language to use on a college application. Additionally, stress the importance of using appropriate email addresses.
- 8) Widely publicize students' college applications. Interview seniors about their college plans and send the articles to local newspapers, as public service announcements on local radio, as intercom/homeroom announcements, as ads in the school newspaper; or create a special section in the school newspaper that gives the names of seniors and their prospective colleges announcing applications submitted and acceptances.
- 9) Host a panel discussion with college and career representatives, current college students, and/or parents of current college students.

- 10) During lunch once a week or every other week, host a “college corner” where students can eat and ask questions about college. Consider having themes for your “college corner.” For example FAFSA, applications, residency determination, scholarships, choosing a college, etc.
- 11) Coffee with a Counselor: offer parents the chance to sign up for a time to have “coffee with a counselor” in the morning or evening to discuss college planning.
- 12) For your college planning event, create different stations in classrooms or at booths that students and families can rotate through. For example, information about applying, financial aid, getting involved in college, etc.
- 13) Have the entire faculty and staff display an 8 ½” x 11” poster that lists their alma maters (the colleges and universities where they completed degrees) and majors. Send students on a scavenger hunt to list as many different schools as they can find, as many different majors as they can find, the school the farthest away, the school with the most alumni, etc. Award small prizes.

C. Sample Student Sign-in Sheet

Student Sign-in Sheet

Please sign in on the day of the event and indicate the college(s) to which you plan to submit applications.

Student Name	College(s) Applying To

8. Promote Your Event

A. Ways to Get the Word Out

Communication is key to successful outreach. Below are some ideas to promote your event:

- Disseminate information by phone, mail, email, website, social media, fliers, meetings, and word of mouth.
- Holding special events/meetings prior to the event.
- Hosting guest speakers during the event.
- Send email reminders to all parents, students, and school staff in addition to the official Student / Family letter. Also, include information in the school newsletter and post fliers around the school and community about your Countdown to College event.
- Post CFNC widget (cfnc.org/widgets) to your school and/or school district's website promoting NC Countdown to College and your scheduled activities.
- Hold one or more "Senior Meetings" with school staff to facilitate communicating high expectations regarding Countdown to College and pre-event activities to students. Often, principals hold these types of meetings to communicate information.
- Provide information specific to your event and send to local media outlets (i.e., newspapers, TV stations, community newsletters, etc.). Also, disseminate via your school/school district's website.
- Invite college admission offices to send materials for display.
- E-mail a sign, like the following sample, to all faculty and staff and designate a posting date.

WHO? **Class of (GRADUATION YEAR)** and students interested in learning more about college

WHAT? Seniors across the state apply online to at least one college or university using CFNC.org with the support of school staff and volunteers.

WHERE? (NAME OF SCHOOL, ROOM NUMBER)

WHEN? (DATE AND TIME OF EVENT)

WHY?

Studies show that if you continue your education beyond high school you:

- Will make more money in your lifetime
- Are less likely to be unemployed
- Are likely to have better health and live longer

WHAT NOW?

Go to CFNC.org to create your user account, start or update your Profile, complete the College Application Checklist, and check out CFNC.org/c2c.

For more information or questions please contact:

(SITE COORDINATOR NAME)

B. Student/Family Information Letter

SCHOOL LOGO
SCHOOL ADDRESS

September (YEAR)

Dear Students and Families,

During (C2C DATES), College Foundation of North Carolina (CFNC) and Carolinas Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (CACRAO) will be sponsoring NC Countdown to College . 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. This 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 also provides a College Application Checklist for students to download from the www.cfnc.org/C2C website. 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 the [FAFSA/RDS chart](#).

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)
[If printing, attach copies of College Application Checklist and FAFSA/RDS chart.]

C. Sample Spanish Student/Family Informative Letter

SCHOOL LOGO
SCHOOL ADDRESS

Septiembre (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*) y la Asociación de las Carolinas de Secretarios Generales y Oficiales de Admisiones (*Carolinas Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, CACRAO*) 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 completar [FAFSA y RDS](#).

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. 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)