

§ 116-209.62. North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program established; administration.

(a) Program. – There is established the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program to be administered by the System Office of The University of North Carolina, in conjunction with the Authority and the Commission. The purpose of the Program is to recruit, prepare, and support students residing in or attending institutions of higher education located in North Carolina for preparation as highly effective teachers in qualifying licensure areas in the State's public schools. The Program shall be used to provide a forgivable loan to individuals interested in preparing to teach in the public schools of the State in qualifying licensure areas.

(b) Trust Fund. – There is established the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program Trust Fund to be administered by the Authority, in conjunction with the System Office of The University of North Carolina. All funds (i) appropriated to, or otherwise received by, the Program for forgivable loans and other Program purposes, (ii) received as repayment of forgivable loans, and (iii) earned as interest on these funds shall be placed in the Trust Fund. The purpose of the Trust Fund is to provide financial assistance to qualified students for completion of teacher education and licensure programs to fill qualifying licensure areas in the public schools of the State.

(c) Uses of Monies in the Trust Fund. – The monies in the Trust Fund may be used only for (i) forgivable loans granted under the Program, (ii) administrative costs associated with the Program, including recruitment and recovery of funds advanced under the Program, (iii) mentoring and coaching support to forgivable loan recipients, and (iv) extracurricular enhancement activities of the Program in accordance with the following:

- (1) The Authority shall transfer the greater of six hundred thousand dollars (\$600,000) or ten percent (10%) of the available funds from the Trust Fund to The University of North Carolina System Office at the beginning of each fiscal year for the Program's administrative costs, the salary of the Director of the Program and other Program staff, expenses of the Commission, and to provide the Commission with funds to use for the extracurricular enhancement activities of the Program.
- (2) The Authority may use the greater of two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000) or four percent (4%) of the funds appropriated to the Trust Fund each fiscal year for administrative costs associated with the Program.
- (3) The Authority shall provide the Commission with up to six hundred thousand dollars (\$600,000) from the Trust Fund in each fiscal year for the Commission to provide mentoring and coaching support to forgivable loan recipients through the North Carolina New Teacher Support Program in an amount of up to two thousand two hundred dollars (\$2,200) for each Program recipient. Funds shall be prioritized for teachers serving in North Carolina public schools identified as low-performing under G.S. 115C-105.37.

(d) Director of the Program. – The Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina shall appoint a Director of the Program. The Director shall appoint staff to the Commission and shall be responsible for recruitment and coordination of the Program, including proactive, aggressive, and strategic recruitment of potential recipients. Recruitment activities shall include (i) targeting regions of the State with the highest teacher attrition rates and teacher recruitment challenges, (ii) actively engaging with educators, business leaders, experts in human resources, elected officials, and other community leaders throughout the State, and (iii) attracting candidates in qualifying licensure areas to the Program. The Director shall report to the President of The University of North Carolina. The Authority shall provide office space and clerical support staff, as necessary, to the Director for the Program.

(e) Student Selection Criteria for Forgivable Loans. – The Commission shall adopt stringent standards for awarding forgivable loans based on multiple measures to ensure that only the strongest applicants receive them, including the following:

- (1) Grade point averages.
- (2) Performance on relevant career and college readiness assessments.
- (3) Experience, accomplishments, and other criteria demonstrating qualities positively correlated with highly effective teachers, including excellent verbal and communication skills.
- (4) Demonstrated commitment to serve in a qualifying licensure area in North Carolina public schools.

(f) Program Selection Criteria. – The Authority shall administer the Program in cooperation with up to 10 institutions of higher education with approved educator preparation programs selected by the Commission that represent a diverse selection of both postsecondary constituent institutions of The University of North Carolina and private postsecondary institutions operating in the State. The Commission shall adopt stringent standards for selection of the most effective educator preparation programs, including the following:

- (1) Demonstrates high rates of educator effectiveness on value-added models and teacher evaluations, including using performance-based, subject-specific assessment and support systems, such as edTPA or other metrics of evaluating candidate effectiveness that have predictive validity.
- (2) Demonstrates measurable impact of prior graduates on student learning, including impact of graduates teaching in qualifying licensure areas.
- (3) Demonstrates high rates of graduates passing exams required for teacher licensure.
- (4) Provides curricular and co-curricular enhancements in leadership, facilitates learning for diverse learners, and promotes community engagement, classroom management, and reflection and assessment.
- (5) Requires at least a minor concentration of study in the subject area that the candidate may teach.
- (6) Provides early and frequent internship or practical experiences, including the opportunity for participants to perform practicums in diverse school environments.
- (7) Is approved by the State Board of Education as an educator preparation program.
- (8) For an educator preparation program enrolling loan recipients in a program of study leading to licensure in elementary education (K-6), provides training that is aligned with the Science of Reading in accordance with G.S. 115C-269.20. The Commission shall contract with a third-party entity to biennially evaluate whether a program identified in this subdivision is providing training that is aligned with the Science of Reading.

(g) Awards of Forgivable Loans. – The Program shall provide forgivable loans to selected students to be used at up to 10 selected institutions for completion of a program leading to initial teacher licensure as follows:

- (1) North Carolina high school seniors. – Forgivable loans of up to five thousand dollars (\$5,000) per semester for up to eight semesters.
- (2) Students applying for transfer to a selected educator preparation program at an institution of higher education. – Forgivable loans of up to five thousand dollars (\$5,000) per semester for up to six semesters.

- (3) Individuals currently holding a bachelor's degree seeking preparation for teacher licensure. – Forgivable loans of up to five thousand dollars (\$5,000) per semester for up to four semesters.
- (4) Students matriculating at institutions of higher education who are changing to an approved program of study at a selected educator preparation program. – Forgivable loans of up to five thousand dollars (\$5,000) per semester for up to four semesters.

Forgivable loans may be used for tuition, fees, the cost of books, and expenses related to obtaining licensure.

(h) Identification of STEM and Special Education Licensure Areas. – The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall identify and provide to the Commission and the Authority a list of STEM and special education licensure areas and shall annually provide to the Commission the number of available positions in each qualifying licensure area relative to the number of current and anticipated teachers in that area of licensure. The Commission shall make the list of STEM and special education licensure areas readily available to applicants.

(i) Administration of Forgivable Loan Awards. – Upon the naming of recipients of the forgivable loans by the Commission, the Commission shall transfer to the Authority its decisions. The Authority, in coordination with the Director, shall perform all of the administrative functions necessary to implement this Part, which functions shall include rule making, disseminating information, acting as a liaison with participating institutions of higher education, implementing forgivable loan agreements, loan monitoring, loan cancelling through service and collection, determining the acceptability of service repayment agreements, enforcing the agreements, and all other functions necessary for the execution, payment, and enforcement of promissory notes required under this Part.

(j) Annual Report. – The Commission, in coordination with the Authority, the Department of Public Instruction, and the selected educator education programs participating in the Program shall report no later than January 1, 2019, and annually thereafter, to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee regarding the following:

- (1) Forgivable loans awarded from the Trust Fund, including the following:
 - a. Demographic information regarding recipients.
 - b. Number of recipients by institution of higher education and program.
 - c. Information on number of recipients by anticipated qualifying licensure area.
- (2) Placement and repayment rates, including the following:
 - a. Number of graduates who have been employed in a qualifying licensure area within two years of program completion.
 - b. Number of graduates who accepted employment at a low-performing school identified under G.S. 115C-105.37 as part of their years of service.
 - c. Number of graduates who have elected to do loan repayment and their years of service, if any, prior to beginning loan repayment.
 - d. Number of graduates employed in a qualifying licensure area who have received an overall rating of at least accomplished and have met expected growth on applicable standards of the teacher evaluation instrument.
 - e. Aggregate information on student growth and proficiency in courses taught by graduates who have fulfilled service requirements through employment in a qualifying licensure area.
- (2a) Mentoring and coaching support through the North Carolina New Teacher Support Program, including the following:

- a. Number of forgivable loan recipients who received mentoring and coaching support when employed at a low-performing school identified under G.S. 115C-105.37.
 - b. Number of forgivable loan recipients who received mentoring and coaching support when employed at a school not identified as low-performing under G.S. 115C-105.37.
- (3) Selected school outcomes by program, including the following:
- a. Turnover rate for forgivable loan graduates, including the turnover rate for graduates who also received mentoring and coaching support through the North Carolina New Teacher Support Program.
 - b. Aggregate information on student growth and proficiency as provided annually by the State Board of Education to the Commission in courses taught by forgivable loan graduates.
 - c. Fulfillment rate of forgivable loan graduates. (2017-57, s. 10A.3(a); 2018-5, s. 10A.2(a); 2018-12, s. 9; 2020-56, s. 5(a)-(c); 2023-134, s. 8A.4(a).)