

# **To a Culture of No Excuses**

**A Look at the Success of High School Graduates in the  
University of North Carolina System**

**Part I**

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## Introduction

The year 2003. Pillowtex, a textile giant in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area, fell victim to bankruptcy and closure. On July 30, 2003, 7,500 people became unemployed (4,340 alone in Kannapolis, a town about 30 miles north of Charlotte). This was the largest permanent layoff in North Carolina's history. Many of these individuals had worked in the mills for 25 or more years -- beginning work right out of high school when it was Cannon Mills, a family owned business begun by J.W. Cannon in 1887. Cannon Mills had grown into a multi-million dollar organization where individuals with only a high school education or even less could find a good paying job. In 1997, the company that had become Cannon-Fieldcrest was sold to the large textile conglomerate Pillowtex. While the factories were no longer locally owned, jobs remained for those with no postsecondary education.

Soon though, with most textile companies moving overseas or south of the border, Pillowtex was in deep financial trouble. Bankruptcy was the only answer. Now these former textile workers were without jobs; there were almost no factory/mill jobs anywhere in the area. Jobs simply had dried up for people with little education.

Then in September, 2005, David Murdock, owner of Castle & Cooke and Dole Food Company, and the University of North Carolina announced plans for a North Carolina Research Campus. To be built on 350 acres where the mills had once stood, the 5,800,000 square foot campus would house the most state-of-the-art laboratories in over 100 biotechnology companies. This would result in a massive economic revitalization for the area. The hub of the Research Campus would be operated by Duke University as well as UNC at Chapel Hill, North Carolina A&T University, North Carolina State University, and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Private companies such as LabCorp, RedHat, Sensory Spectrum, Carolinas Healthcare System, Dole Food Inc (Research & Development), PPD Inc, Anatomics, and PepsiCo are also now in the process of setting up shop.

While all of this seems like great news for the area, the educational requirements for the area's workers have changed dramatically. Job opportunities will abound. But the job opportunities will come with a prerequisite – required postsecondary education and for the most part a degree from a four-year institution. Workers with only a high school education, or less, will find little to no employment opportunities. Those without postsecondary education will find it difficult to make a reasonable living.

As we move from an industrial society to a knowledge-based society, this story is no different than what is being seen throughout the entire state of North Carolina (NC), and even throughout the entire nation.

To be eligible for most of the jobs now being created, all students must be adequately prepared for postsecondary education no matter the high school from which they graduated. High expectations for success must be present for all students.

All high schools must ensure students are prepared to apply to UNC system schools and prepared for the rigors of college-level courses. There can be no excuses – excuses about the quality of the high school or the course offerings. All high schools must help students realize what it takes to apply to one of these schools and to realize they in fact can apply and be admitted – no excuses. And, students must afford themselves of the opportunities to be able to apply, be accepted, enroll, perform well in the universities, and graduate in a timely fashion – no excuses.

For both students and adults, there must be a culture of “No Excuses!”

## Research Questions

The Public Education Research Institute of Queens University of Charlotte has studied the postsecondary experience of students in North Carolina (NC) who have entered the University of North Carolina (UNC) system, with particular attention to the graduates of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS). The study was designed to answer four questions:

- How many of our CMS students are actually pursuing postsecondary education through our UNC system and are they successful in obtaining a degree?
- Are our students prepared for the rigors of the universities?
- Do students from the various CMS high schools pursue an education at one of the UNC system schools in equal proportions, and do they perform equally well in the university system?
- How do CMS students perform when compared to UNC system students who graduated from all NC public schools as well as compared to UNC system students from other NC urban districts – that is, from Durham, Forsyth, Guilford, and Wake Counties?

## Report Design

The report answers these questions based upon recent history and is divided into two parts.

- *Part I* examines whether CMS students apply to, are accepted by, and enroll in one of the UNC system schools. The study looks at CMS students compared to others across the state, and it also looks at results within the individual CMS high schools.
- *Part II* examines how well CMS students performed once enrolled in a UNC school and how many persisted through graduation. Again CMS UNC freshmen are compared to freshmen from all NC public schools and to freshmen from the four other NC urban districts. Success rates of students from all CMS high schools are also compared.

## Report Methodology

There are many options for students when they graduate from high school. They may enter the workforce directly, enter the military, attend a trade school or a community college, or enroll in a university or college. Even enrolling in a college or university presents several options -- in or out of state private or public school.

Based upon surveys conducted each year by the NC Department of Public Instruction, the largest percentage of NC high school students graduating in 2006 indicated they intended to enroll in a 4-year NC public institution<sup>1</sup>:

Indicated Intention for Post High School	% of NC Public High School Seniors Indicating That Intention	% of CMS Seniors Indicating That Intention	% of Durham County Seniors Indicating That Intention	% of Forsyth County Seniors Indicating That Intention	% of Guilford County Seniors Indicating That Intention	% of Wake County Seniors Indicating That Intention
<b>Public 4-Year School – In State</b>	<b>35.7%</b>	<b>41.7%</b>	<b>42.7%</b>	<b>44.5%</b>	<b>43.7%</b>	<b>49.9%</b>
<b>Public 4-Year School – Out of State</b>	<b>2.6%</b>	<b>6.6%</b>	<b>3.0%</b>	<b>4.0%</b>	<b>2.6%</b>	<b>3.6%</b>
<b>Private 4-Year School – In State</b>	<b>6.9%</b>	<b>7.5%</b>	<b>9.5%</b>	<b>8.8%</b>	<b>6.8%</b>	<b>7.4%</b>
<b>Private 4-Year School – Out of State</b>	<b>2.8%</b>	<b>4.4%</b>	<b>6.4%</b>	<b>3.9%</b>	<b>3.3%</b>	<b>3.8%</b>
<b>Community/Technical College</b>	<b>33.7%</b>	<b>26.0%</b>	<b>19.4%</b>	<b>23.0%</b>	<b>28.6%</b>	<b>21.3%</b>
<b>Private Junior College</b>	<b>0.7%</b>	<b>0.8%</b>	<b>0.7%</b>	<b>0.5%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>1.2%</b>
<b>Trade/Business College</b>	<b>2.1%</b>	<b>2.7%</b>	<b>3.5%</b>	<b>2.5%</b>	<b>1.5%</b>	<b>0.9%</b>
<b>Military</b>	<b>3.4%</b>	<b>1.8%</b>	<b>1.7%</b>	<b>2.3%</b>	<b>2.0%</b>	<b>2.4%</b>
<b>Employment</b>	<b>9.0%</b>	<b>4.2%</b>	<b>9.1%</b>	<b>6.5%</b>	<b>8.7%</b>	<b>5.6%</b>
<b>Other (includes where information unavailable, married, etc.)</b>	<b>3.1%</b>	<b>4.3%</b>	<b>4.0%</b>	<b>4.1%</b>	<b>2.4%</b>	<b>2.9%</b>

Because many of the jobs being created in NC – such as those in the biotechnology and knowledge-based industries – require at least a 4-year degree from a college or university, and because the largest percentage of our seniors indicates they intend to attend a public 4 year college in the state, this report examines students within the UNC system institutions.

All data used in this report were generated by the University of North Carolina's (UNC) Office of General Administration. Each year this office distributes the annual report on high school graduates entering one of the UNC system universities and colleges. It includes a variety of data concerning the students' performance and graduation rates within the various schools.<sup>2</sup> It also includes information about the freshmen entering the universities. (Information for the freshmen class of 2006-07 school year is the most current data available. The most current data available for graduation rates are for the class that entered as first-time freshmen in 2002-03.)

The data are broken down by the 115 public school districts (as well as charter schools and special schools) and by the individual high schools within those districts. Performance data are given for 15 of the universities within the system. The University of North Carolina School of the Arts data are not included in the reports produced by the Office of General Administration.

<sup>1</sup> North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. *North Carolina Public Schools Statistical Profile: 2007*. Retrieved April 3, 2009 at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/fbs/resources/data/statisticalprofile/2007profile.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> This report produced by the Office of General Administration is available online at [http://www.northcarolina.edu/content.php/assessment/reports/student\\_info/far.htm](http://www.northcarolina.edu/content.php/assessment/reports/student_info/far.htm)

The following indicates the 15 schools in the UNC system:

ASU = Appalachian State University	NCCU = NC Central University	UNC-G = UNC Greensboro
ECU = East Carolina University	NCSU = NC State University	UNC – P = UNC Pembroke
ECSU = Elizabeth City State University	UNC-A = UNC Asheville	UNC – W = UNC Wilmington
FSU = Fayetteville State University	UNC – CH = UNC Chapel Hill	WCU = Western Carolina University
NC A&T = NC A&T	UNC –C = UNC Charlotte	WSSU = Winston-Salem State University

Using this source of data, the Public Education Research Institute at Queens University of Charlotte, analyzed the data by school district and by the individual high schools within CMS.

## What Happens To Our High School Graduates?

Each year our NC public high schools graduate thousands of students -- students who will be competing against students from all other parts of NC, the United States, and even the world to be accepted by universities and colleges as well as competing for jobs.

But what happens to our high school graduates? Almost ½ of the state's public high school seniors, and more than ½ in each of the state's five urban districts, indicate they intend to attend a 4-year institution of higher education, and the majority of those indicate a NC public 4-year school as their primary intention.

As shown in the chart below, for the state of NC as a whole over 35.7% of 2006 high school seniors indicated they would like to attend one of the state's public 4-year colleges or universities. The assumption is that these students intend to graduate from that institution. For Charlotte-Mecklenburg high school graduates that percentage was even higher at 41.7%. Yet that percentage was lower than that of all the other urban districts in the state.

Even the percentage of CMS high school graduates indicating their intentions of attending *any* 4-year institution (whether in or out of state and whether public or private) was slightly lower than that of all urban districts except Guilford County.

	% of high school seniors indicating they plan to attend a school in the UNC system	% of high school seniors indicating they plan to attend any 4-year institution – private or public, in or out of state
<b>All NC Public Schools</b>	<b>35.7%</b>	<b>48.0%</b>
<b>Charlotte-Mecklenburg</b>	<b>41.7%</b>	<b>60.2%</b>
<b>Durham County</b>	<b>42.7%</b>	<b>61.6%</b>
<b>Forsyth County</b>	<b>44.5%</b>	<b>61.2%</b>
<b>Guilford County</b>	<b>43.7%</b>	<b>56.4%</b>
<b>Wake County</b>	<b>49.9%</b>	<b>64.7%</b>

Source: NC Department of Public Instruction.

<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/fbs/resources/data/statisticalprofile/2007profile.pdf>

But do these students fulfill their goals for higher education?

Are they able to be admitted to these schools, do they enroll, and are they prepared for college work? Once they get there, are they successful in their classes and do they graduate within five years of entering as freshmen?

### ***What Percentage of the High School Graduates Apply and Enroll in UNC Schools?***

In 2006, 46.3% of North Carolina's graduating high school seniors applied to one of the schools within the UNC system (34,076 students applied out of the 73,527 high school graduates). But only 30.9% of these high school graduates in fact enrolled in one of the 15 institutions (22,740 students enroll out of the 73,527 graduating seniors).

Urban districts in NC had slightly higher percentages applying and enrolling in the UNC system. Wake County had the highest percentage of all these districts:

- Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools had 58.9% (3,576 out of 6,075) of its high school graduates apply to at least one of the UNC schools; approximately 35.3% of its high school graduates actually enrolled in one of the UNC schools.
- Wake County had even higher percentages. In fact, 65.7% (4,470 of the 6,799 graduates) of Wake County's public high school graduates applied to at least one school and 43.7% enrolled in one of the 15 institutions.

### ***Do the Freshmen in UNC Schools Stay and Graduate?***

Of these 22,740 freshmen from our NC public high schools, approximately 81% returned for a second year; however only 71% returned for year 2 with a grade point average of at least a 2.0 (a C average).

Five years later, based on recent past history indicating 54.1% would in fact have graduated, approximately 12,302 of the 22,740 students who had enrolled in the university system as freshmen in 2006-07 will have graduated.

Both CMS and Wake County have higher percentage of its freshmen actually graduating within 5 years: CMS has approximately 56.2% graduating and Wake County has 63.9% obtaining a degree in 5 or fewer years.

On the other hand, of *all public school graduates* from NC, approximately 17% attended and graduated within 5 years from one of the state's 4-year public universities or colleges. Keep in mind, this compares to the 35.7% who had indicated when they were high school seniors they wanted a public 4-year university education.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools closely mirror the state's percentage *for all of its high school graduates* who actually graduated from one of the UNC system schools within 5 years: 19.1%. For Wake County students, the percentage is higher with 27.9%. Remember approximately 42% of CMS students and approximately 50% of Wake County public school students had indicated their intention to attend a UNC school.

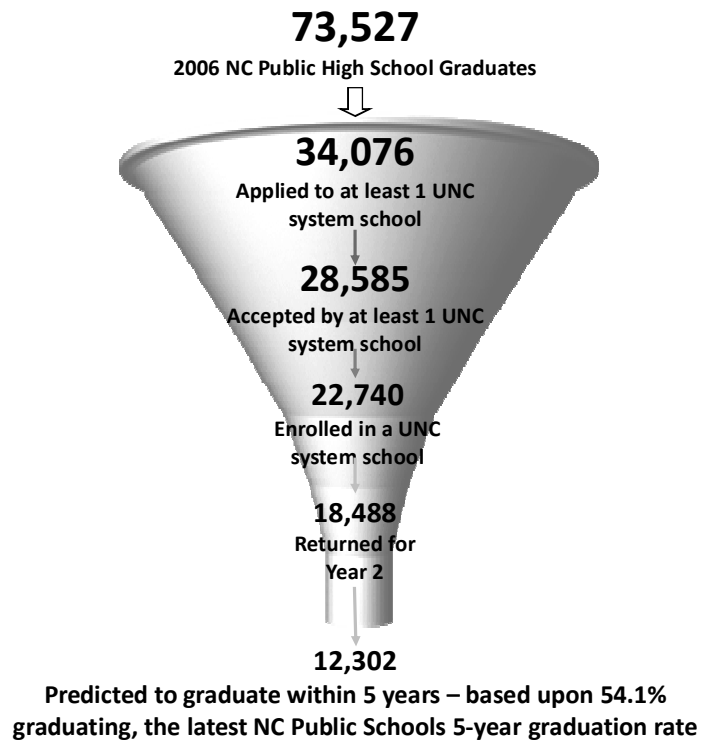
### ***From High School Graduation to University Graduation***

The following figures indicate this “elimination” process that takes place for our students. You will note, it begins with all high school graduates and these are filtered down so that the *final result* represents those students who will be predicted to have obtained a degree from one of the UNC system schools within five years of their high school graduation.

The first figure shows all NC public schools students. The two figures following show the same process for CMS students and Wake County Public Schools students. (*For a detailed look at which schools within the UNC system the students attend, see Appendix A in this report. For a detailed look at the most recent graduation rates, see Part II of this report.*)

## **North Carolina Public Schools**

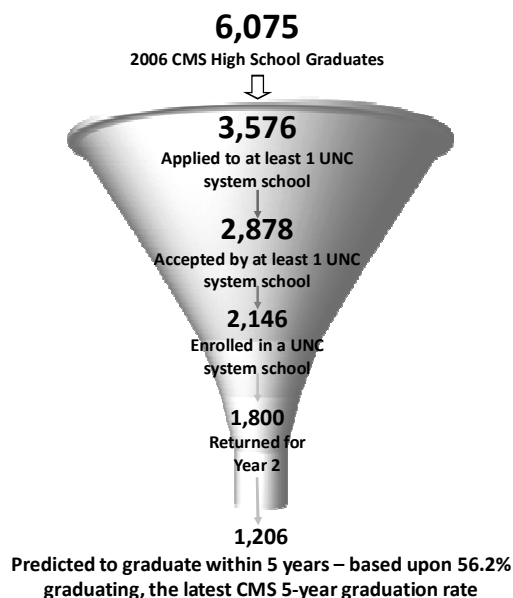
### **From High School Graduates to University of North Carolina System Graduates**





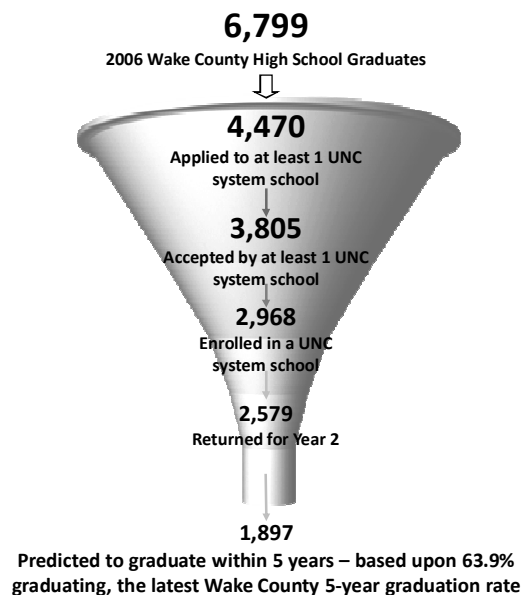
## Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools

### From High School Graduates to University of North Carolina System Graduates



## Wake County Public Schools

### From High School Graduates to University of North Carolina System Graduates



*Note:* Despite the two districts having about the same total student enrollment:

- Wake County has approximately 700 more graduating high school seniors.
- Wake County has 900 more students to apply, over 900 more to be accepted, and over 800 more students to enroll in one of the 15 UNC schools. This results in almost 700 more students graduating from one of these 15 schools within five years of their entering as freshmen.

## Taking a Closer Look at the Numbers for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools

While almost 42% of the 2006 CMS high school seniors indicated they intended to attend one of the 15 schools in the UNC system after graduation, a smaller percentage did. Where was the breakdown? Did some of the students who had indicated they wanted to attend one of these schools simply not apply? Were they not accepted? Or were they accepted and chose not to enroll?

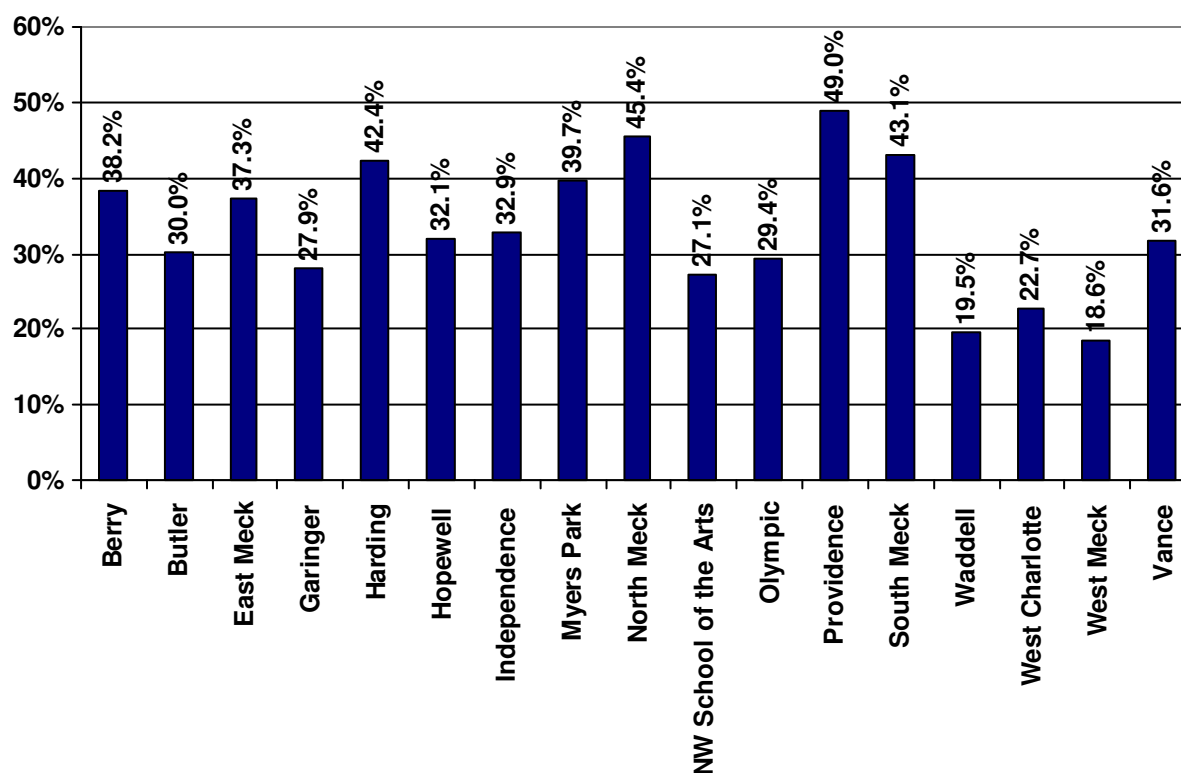
The following indicates how many CMS students who applied to at least one of the institutions and were accepted, actually enrolled in one of the UNC schools. The data are broken down by individual CMS high school in order to see whether there are large differences even among the district's high schools.

In order to see where the breakdown occurred, first the number who enrolled are analyzed and then patterns in applications and acceptance to one of the schools are examined.

### ***CMS High School Seniors Enrolling in a School in the UNC System***

There is wide variation in the percentage of students from the various CMS high schools actually enrolling in one of the 15 universities within UNC. While only 18.6% of the graduates of West Mecklenburg High School and 19.5% of those from E.E. Waddell High School enrolled in one of the schools, 49% of Providence High School graduates and 45.4% of North Mecklenburg High School graduates enrolled in one of the 15. (Keep in mind that Ardrey Kell and Mallard Creek High Schools were too new to have graduates attending a UNC School.)

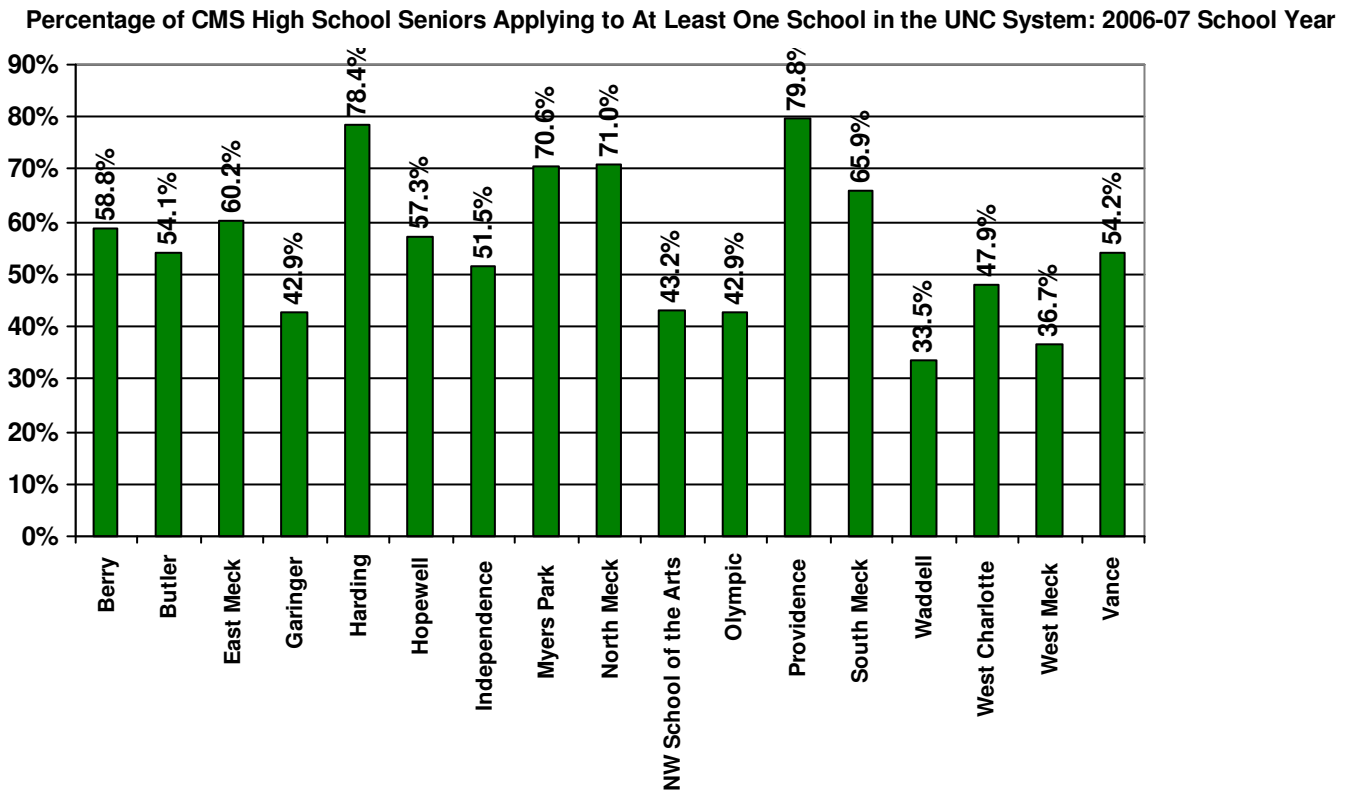
**Percentage of CMS High School Seniors Enrolling in a School in the UNC System: 2006-07 School Year**



### ***CMS High School Seniors Applying to At Least One School in the UNC System***

This wide disparity between the CMS high schools appears to have begun in the application process.

While over 79% of the 2006 high school seniors at Providence applied to at least one of the UNC schools, only 33.5% from Waddell applied.

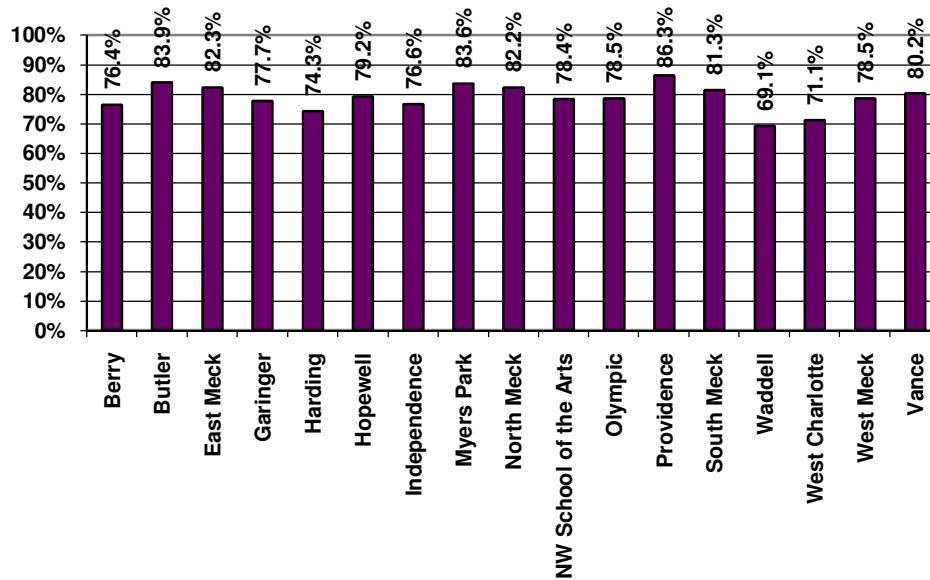


### ***CMS High School Seniors Accepted by At Least One School in the UNC System***

The data indicated that of those who did apply to at least one school, the vast majority were accepted by at least one. For example, for all public schools in NC, 83.6% of those who applied to one or more schools were accepted by at least one school.

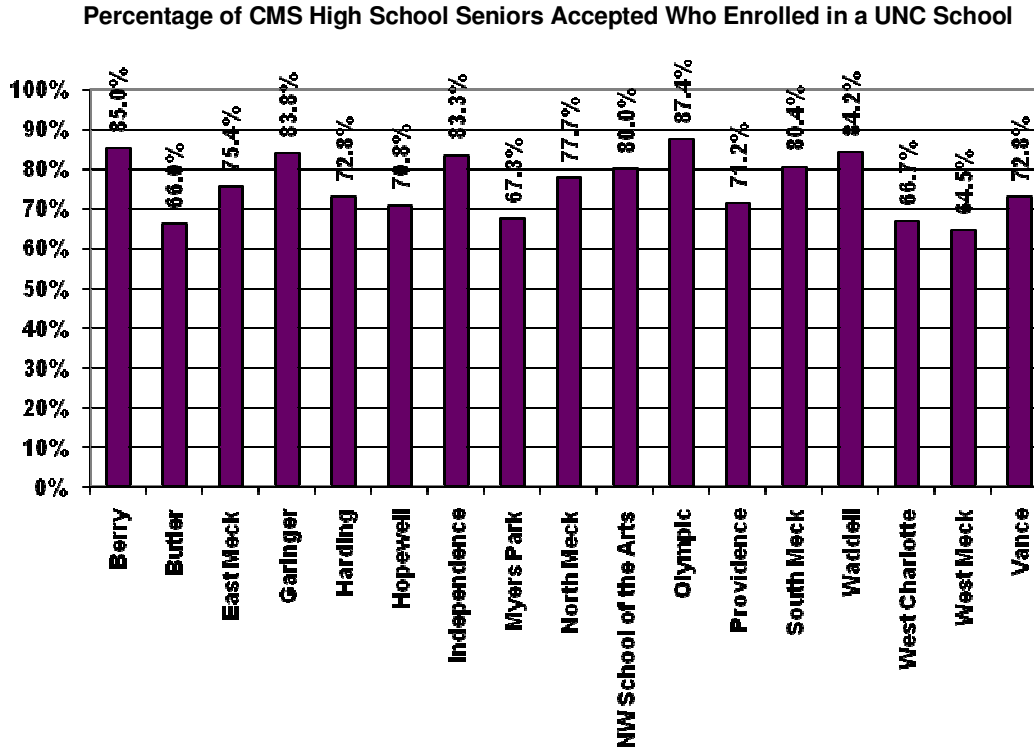
That percentage was also quite high--80.5%--for CMS high school seniors. For the 17 CMS high schools, this percentage ranged from a low of 69.1% at Waddell High to 86.3% of those applying from Providence High being accepted by at least one school. Thus even at Waddell High School, where the percentage of those accepted was the lowest of all CMS high schools, the chances of being accepted were high for those who applied. This was true for every CMS school.

**Percentage of 2006 CMS High School Seniors Who Were Accepted by At Least One UNC System School To Which They Applied**



**Percentage of CMS High School Seniors Accepted Who Enrolled in a UNC School**

In all the CMS high schools, the vast majority of the high school seniors who were accepted by at least one of the 15 UNC schools did enroll within the UNC system.



## **Summary: From High School Graduation to Enrollment in a UNC School**

Fewer 2006 NC high school graduates enrolled in UNC system schools than had originally indicated they wanted to attend one of these schools. And, the percentage of students who then graduated from our public universities and colleges in five years is in stark contrast to the percentage who indicated they wanted to go to one of these schools and graduate. (While some may have chosen to attend private colleges and universities and did graduate from those institutions, that would not account for the large differences seen.)

There were differences in the percentage of students among the various urban districts within NC from the beginning of the process. These differences were seen in the high school seniors indicating their postsecondary intentions, to applying to UNC schools and being accepted, to enrolling in one of these schools. CMS students continued to lag behind Wake County students.

Even more dramatic were the differences among the CMS high schools. In some of the high schools it is clear that the expectation was to apply and attend a 4-year college; in other of the high schools it appears that expectation was just not there. In fact, the percentage of students even applying to one or more UNC schools range from 34% to 80%.

What happened? Why the differences?

Do our high school graduates believe they can be successful in applying or do they have a list of excuses as to why they cannot? Are our high school graduates able to apply to these schools by taking the appropriate courses and tests and by having sufficient grade point averages? Once our students enroll in the universities why are they not as successful as others in completing the work in 5 or fewer years? Are they prepared for the rigors of college-level work or do they come in at a disadvantage?

Are high expectations to succeed in place in all our high schools or do we simply have a culture of lower expectations and excuses – excuses by students, by educators, and even by our community?

## Summary Tables

The following table summarizes by NC urban districts the following:

- Number of high school graduates in the spring of 2006
- Number and percentage of graduating students who applied to at least one UNC school
- Number of students who were accepted by at least one UNC School and the percentage of those who applied who were accepted
- Number of students who actually enrolled in a UNC school and the percentage of those who were accepted who enrolled and the percentage of all graduating seniors who actually enrolled in a UNC school enrolled

### 2006 High School Seniors by Districts Who Applied, Were Accepted, and Enrolled in a UNC School

	# Graduating from High School	# Students Who Applied to 1 or More UNC Schools (% of the high school graduates who applied)	# Students Who Were Accepted to 1 or More UNC Schools (% of those who applied who were accepted)	# Freshmen Enrolled in UNC System (% of those accepted who enrolled)	% of High School Graduates Enrolled in UNC System
<b>All NC Public High School</b>	<b>73,527</b>	<b>34,076</b> 46.3%	<b>28,585</b> 83.9%	<b>22,740</b> 79.6%	<b>30.9%</b>
<b>CMS</b>	<b>6,075</b>	<b>3,576</b> 58.9%	<b>2,878</b> 80.5%	<b>2,146</b> 74.6%	<b>35.3%</b>
<b>Durham</b>	<b>1,785</b>	<b>1,050</b> 58.8%	<b>850</b> 81.0%	<b>633</b> 74.5%	<b>35.5%</b>
<b>Forsyth</b>	<b>2,579</b>	<b>1,519</b> 58.9%	<b>1,289</b> 84.9%	<b>1,000</b> 77.6%	<b>38.8%</b>
<b>Guilford</b>	<b>4,048</b>	<b>2,347</b> 58.0%	<b>2,004</b> 85.4%	<b>1,618</b> 80.7%	<b>40.0%</b>
<b>Wake</b>	<b>6,799</b>	<b>4,470</b> 65.7%	<b>3,805</b> 85.1%	<b>2,968</b> 78.0%	<b>43.7%</b>

The following table gives the same information about the 17 Charlotte-Mecklenburg High Schools with graduating senior classes in 2006.

**2006 CMS High School Seniors by Schools Who Applied, Were Accepted, and Enrolled in a UNC School**

	# Graduating from High School	# Students Who Applied to 1 or More UNC Schools (% of the high school graduates who applied)	# Students Who Were Accepted to 1 or More UNC Schools (% of those who applied who were accepted)	# Freshmen Enrolled in UNC System (% of those accepted who enrolled)	% of High School Graduates Enrolled in UNC System
<i>Berry</i>	238	140 58.8%	107 76.4%	91 85.0%	38.2%
<i>Butler</i>	460	249 54.1%	209 83.9%	138 66.0%	30.0%
<i>East Mecklenburg</i>	394	237 60.2%	195 82.3%	147 75.4%	37.3%
<i>Garinger</i>	240	103 42.9%	80 77.7%	67 83.8%	27.9%
<i>Harding</i>	278	218 78.4%	162 74.3%	118 72.8%	42.4%
<i>Hopewell</i>	461	264 57.3%	209 79.2%	148 70.8%	32.1%
<i>Independence</i>	456	235 51.5%	180 76.6%	150 83.3%	32.9%
<i>Myers Park</i>	534	377 70.6%	315 83.6%	212 67.3%	39.7%
<i>North Mecklenburg</i>	538	382 71.0%	314 82.2%	244 77.7%	45.4%
<i>NW School of the Arts</i>	118	51 43.2%	40 78.4%	32 80.0%	27.1%
<i>Olympic</i>	282	121 42.9%	95 78.5%	83 87.4%	29.4%
<i>Providence</i>	520	415 79.8%	358 86.3%	255 71.2%	49.0%
<i>South Mecklenburg</i>	504	332 65.9%	270 81.3%	217 80.4%	43.1%
<i>Waddell</i>	164	55 33.5%	38 69.1%	32 84.2%	19.5%
<i>West Charlotte</i>	238	114 47.9%	81 71.1%	54 66.7%	22.7%
<i>West Mecklenburg</i>	215	79 36.7%	62 78.5%	40 64.5%	18.6%
<i>Vance</i>	373	202 54.2%	162 80.2%	118 72.8%	31.6%



## Conclusions and Implications

- **A lower percentage of CMS high school seniors, when compared to other NC urban districts, intended to enroll in one of NC's public 4-year institutions.** A smaller percentage of CMS students appear to consider a 4-year postsecondary education as a possibility. **It appears, as a whole, the expectation for students in Wake County to pursue a 4-year degree is higher than it is for CMS students.**

In fact, the percentage of CMS students indicating they intended to pursue a degree at *any* 4-year institution was lower than that of all urban districts except Guilford County. Of the urban districts, Wake County had the highest percentage of seniors indicating their intention to attend a 4-year institution of higher education.

*Implication:* Without even considering a 4-year degree, CMS students put themselves at a disadvantage in obtaining a job in our new knowledge-based economy.

- **A higher percentage of Wake County students actually enrolled in one of the UNC schools than students from CMS, Durham, Guilford, and Forsyth Counties.**

Out of those who applied, the percentage of those accepted is approximately equal among these urban districts (between 80% and 85%). The percentage of those accepted who enrolled was quite high for all districts (between 70% and 80%). However, because a larger percentage of students from Wake County applied for admissions, the number of all their high school graduates who enrolled was considerably higher than that of the other urban districts.

Large percentages of the urban district students who apply are accepted in one of the UNC schools; the vast majority of those accepted actually enroll in one of them. Opportunities are there for our students; they need to be encouraged to apply.

*Implication:* The expectations for attending and graduating from a 4 year institution must be raised within the urban districts. All students must be aware of the difference a degree can make in their lives and be taught to "reach for the stars." The adults must provide the support needed.

- **There were wide variations among CMS high schools in the percentage of students enrolling in one of the UNC schools. It appears this variation was more related to the lack of students in some of our high schools applying to the schools rather than in their failure to be accepted or their just not enrolling once accepted. The CMS high school where the students attended appears to be a factor in whether they apply to one of the 15 UNC schools.**

*Implication:* While student assignment may have created some schools where there are not strong expectations from families and peers for attending college, without adults in the students' lives giving proper support and not accepting any excuses from students, students in those high schools will not be afforded the opportunity to be effective and productive citizens in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In research conducted by John U. Ogbu in the 1970s and 1980s, as cited by Dorothy C. Holland and Margaret A. Eisenhart's book *Educated in Romance: Women, Achievement, and College Culture*, ". . . black students often view schooling as having questionable significance for their futures . . ."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Holland, Dorothy C. and Margaret A. Eisenhart. *Educated in Romance: Women, Achievement, and College Culture*. The University of Chicago Press. 1990., page 223.

Schools must ensure that feeling does not still exist in any of our schools. Student assignment may not be able to change, but expectations can be. All students in our public schools need to know what it takes to be successful after high school and they must know adults in the schools will help them be successful – no excuses from students or adults.

## Recommendations

- **Why so few students in some of our high schools apply to one of our public 4-year institutions needs to be examined. A plan must be designed and implemented to address these issues in order to increase the percentage of students in those schools who do apply.**

- ***Do the students at those schools believe they cannot be accepted?*** Students need to be shown the high percentage of those who apply who are actually accepted.
- ***Do they believe they cannot afford to apply or to attend?*** If application fees are prohibiting students from applying, the need for that assistance should be made known to education-focused non-profits and businesses in the community.

If students do not believe they can afford college, guidance counselors and Communities in Schools must support them in finding grants, scholarships, and loans to which they can apply. Adults in the schools need to assist in filling out forms and ensuring they fill out the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) forms on time. There are organizations such as Think College, a component of Communities in Schools, that can assist in this process. Students must be aware of them.

- ***Do they know how to apply?*** Do these students even know how to navigate the complex application process? Because so many students in some of the high schools would be the first in their families to attend college, parents/caregivers often do not know the process themselves. As a result, adults in the schools must support these students: Possible activities could include:
  - Parent and junior night where parents and students are walked through the process
  - Organized “caravans” to college fairs – there must be effective marketing of these college fairs
  - Partnership with local universities whereby college students are teamed with juniors and seniors to help them understand the process and to help them write effective essays needed for college applications (this is being done with University of Pennsylvania’s partnering with Sayre and University City High Schools in Philadelphia in college preparation sessions – partnering Penn students with high school juniors)
- ***Have the students taken the appropriate subjects to fulfill requirements for the UNC system?*** Parents and students must be made well aware of UNC requirements by the time they enter high school. While these requirements should be gone over by the counselors in middle school, there needs to be special emphasis for students and parents as soon as the students enter 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Ideally, counselors would create a 4-year plan for each student – again emphasizing the expectations that students will be prepared for postsecondary life.
- ***Have the students taken the SAT and scored appropriately?*** Parents and students need information concerning taking the SAT and typically what scores are needed for various universities. However, information should not stop there. Students must be aware of what else colleges are looking for – rigor of courses, class rankings, extracurricular activities, involvement in community, etc. Partnerships with local universities and/or other organizations should be created to provide SAT review sessions.

- **High expectations for all students and a *no excuses* culture must be created in all the high schools. Students must understand what a college education can mean for them and know what possibilities are there for them. Students applying to colleges must be the norm, not the exception.**
  - Ensure strong AVID programs are in these high schools as well as the feeder middle schools. Organizational skills are often lacking in college freshmen. AVID helps build those skills as well as to expose students to college possibilities.
  - Support a strong Communities in Schools (CIS) program in these schools; ensure an effective counseling program is in place (both school counselors and CIS counselors) to work with all students but particularly those needing extra support.
  - Make visits to college campuses available.
  - Begin continual conversations about colleges in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade; in various ways expose students to different potential colleges.
  - Examine techniques used by schools such as KIPP Academies and other schools designed for high poverty schools – techniques whereby the students are expected to attend college and almost all do.
- **The data must be monitored annually: (1) to examine how CMS performs compared to the universities at large and to the other urban districts and (2) to examine to see if gaps in the percentage of seniors applying to UNC schools are being closed among CMS high schools.**

## Part II: To a Culture of No Excuses

Part I of this study has examined how many CMS students, compared to others in the state, applied, were accepted, and enrolled in one of the UNC system schools. In addition, the study looked at whether there were large differences between the high schools within CMS.

But the story does not stop with students enrolling in a college or university. In fact, some college could be worse than no college. If a student attends only 1 or 2 years of college, he or she does not have greater job opportunities than if he or she had only graduated from high school. Yet, he or she may now have a loan debt of tens of thousand dollars, and the tax payers of NC have paid a large percentage of his or her tuition, averaging over \$12,000 a year per student<sup>4</sup>, and will not see a return on its investment.

In looking at the data, we see that freshmen do not come into the universities equally prepared. The variations among districts and among high schools are great in SAT scores, in percentage of students passing Advanced Placement exams in high school, or in the percentage of students who are recommended for remedial courses or who are recommended for higher level courses and honors programs.

The ultimate goal – graduation from the university – varies widely among the UNC schools, the urban districts, and the individual CMS high schools. The 5 year graduation rates range from UNC-Pembroke where only slightly more than ¼ of the 2002 freshmen had graduated 5 years later (28.9%) to UNC-Chapel Hill where 83.5% of their 2002 freshmen had graduated by May 2007.

Part II examines how well CMS students performed once enrolled in a UNC school and how many persisted through graduation. Again CMS UNC system freshmen are compared to freshmen from all NC public schools and to freshmen from the four other NC urban districts. Success rates of students from all CMS high schools are also compared.

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<sup>4</sup> Based upon information provided by East Carolina University. Information retrieved from [http://www.ecu.edu/cs-admin/financial\\_serv/customcf/Fees\\_Main\\_Campus\\_Spring\\_2009.pdf](http://www.ecu.edu/cs-admin/financial_serv/customcf/Fees_Main_Campus_Spring_2009.pdf) on April 6, 2009

**Appendix A: Freshmen Enrollment  
By Districts and By CMS High School**

***Freshman - 2006-07***

### Number of Freshmen at Each of the 15 Universities: By NC Urban Districts

	ASU	ECU	ECSU	FSU	NC A&T	NCCU	NCSU	UNC-A	UNC- CH	UNC-C	UNC-G	UNC-P	UNC-W	WCU	WSSU	TOTAL
<b>All Freshmen</b>	2,633	3,776	496	749	2,011	906	4,482	538	3,742	2,693	2,369	886	1,960	1,514	896	29,651
<b>All Freshmen from NC Public Schools</b>	1,846	2,873	388	619	1,533	655	3,542	404	2,587	2,117	2,007	766	1,355	1,277	771	22,740
<b>CMS</b>	172	77	26	39	204	83	247	29	293	409	136	49	119	123	140	2,146
<b>Durham</b>	38	27	8	14	82	93	60	14	81	44	78	11	28	8	47	633
<b>Forsyth</b>	107	69	11	10	107	26	175	14	112	86	139	7	39	32	66	1,000
<b>Guilford</b>	147	89	5	12	263	45	208	17	216	131	307	22	57	48	51	1,618
<b>Wake</b>	181	543	17	30	164	64	725	31	439	138	181	73	234	104	44	2,968

### Number of Freshmen at Each of the 15 Universities: By CMS High School

	ASU	ECU	ECSU	FSU	NC A&T	NCCU	NCSU	UNC-A	UNC- CH	UNC-C	UNC- G	UNC-P	UNC- W	WCU	WSSU	TOTA L
Berry	0	4	5	2	17	11	9	1	4	8	13	0	0	4	13	91
Butler	0	6	0	0	11	0	12	3	22	34	5	7	9	24	5	138
East Meck	10	5	0	5	13	5	22	5	19	35	8	1	10	1	5	147
Garinger	3	1	4	5	10	3	2	0	3	10	4	4	1	4	13	67
Harding	6	2	3	3	10	18	12	0	16	17	11	1	0	4	15	118
Hopewell	0	12	2	1	14	3	15	1	18	33	7	3	13	13	13	148
Independence	2	6	2	3	35	8	9	1	16	25	16	3	10	1	13	150
Myers Park	33	8	0	2	4	0	42	4	56	26	14	1	13	7	2	212
North Meck	29	8	1	1	16	3	27	1	4	51	15	3	21	17	10	244
NW School of the Arts	0	1	0	0	0	4	2	2	4	10	3	1	1	2	2	32
Olympic	14	0	2	3	8	2	4	0	8	25	5	0	0	1	11	83
Providence	41	10	0	1	2	0	37	4	48	43	9	11	18	29	2	255
South Meck	31	8	0	0	9	2	36	6	30	41	10	7	17	10	10	217
Waddell	0	0	1	0	12	1	2	0	0	0	2	1	2	4	7	32
West Charlotte	1	0	2	0	22	12	4	0	0	5	2	0	0	1	5	54
West Meck:	2	0	0	7	5	4	2	0	1	15	2	1	0	0	1	40
Vance	0	6	4	6	13	7	10	1	7	31	10	5	4	1	13	118
<b>Total Number of CMS Students</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>2,146</b>
<b>% of CMS Students Enrolling in UNC school</b>	<b>8.0%</b>	<b>3.6%</b>	<b>1.2%</b>	<b>1.8%</b>	<b>9.4%</b>	<b>3.9%</b>	<b>11.5%</b>	<b>1.4%</b>	<b>11.9%</b>	<b>19.1%</b>	<b>6.3%</b>	<b>2.3%</b>	<b>5.5%</b>	<b>5.7%</b>	<b>6.5%</b>	