



## DRIVE Task Force Discusses Challenges To Educator Recruitment & Retention

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Members of the DRIVE Task Force, a group [formed by Governor Cooper](#) in 2019 to “develop a representative and inclusive vision for education” met on Tuesday to discuss issues and solutions surrounding educator support and retention, especially for educators of color. The meeting was hosted by DRIVE Task Force Chair and Winston-Salem State University Provost Dr. Anthony Graham, and featured personal stories from NC educators, as well as updates on innovative programs led by education leaders across the country.

Sonia Márquez, a Durham County Public Schools (DPS) administrator, kicked off the meeting by sharing her challenges as one of the district’s only Latina education leaders. The “deep cultural loneliness” Ms. Márquez felt in her position led her to co-found “[DPS Latinx](#),” a group focused on providing support to DPS Latinx staff by “creating a safe space where members can meet, network, and grow together as professionals.” Several NC teachers later echoed Ms. Márquez’s concerns regarding the lack of diversity in their own schools, including Brittany Hammonds, a teacher in Robeson County Public Schools who shared her personal struggles as the only Native American educator in her school.

Ms. Hammonds noted she had been accepted to the NC Teaching Fellows Program as an undergraduate at NC State University, but actually failed out of the program after becoming pregnant with her first child and facing extreme financial hardships. Hammonds stressed the importance of not only continuing to provide meaningful scholarship opportunities for minorities, but also ensuring there is adequate community support for students facing personal struggles in the midst of their education journeys. In addition to a lack of community support, all educators on the panel agreed that educator pay also continues to be a major barrier to teacher retention. Jia Lin, a teacher at Charlotte Lab School, noted her parents were “highly disappointed” in her decision to become a teacher, as the most she could make in her current position was \$44,000, despite having excellent academic credentials and currently being enrolled in a Master’s program.

Following the educator panel, Task Force members heard from Dr. Ventura Rodríguez, Senior Associate Commissioner at the Massachusetts’ Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, who shared his state’s work in recruiting

diverse teaching candidates and retaining educators of color. Dr. Rodríguez noted the state's "Teacher Diversification Pilot Program" focused on the fastest ways to diversify existing teacher recruitment and retention programs, such as providing financial and academic assistance for college graduates in fields with high concentrations of minority workers to enroll in and complete educator preparation programs.

Tuesday's meeting was brought to a close by a presentation on North Carolina's progress on educational equity by DRIVE Task Force member and NC State Board of Education Director of Operations and Policy, Dr. Deanna Townsend-Smith. Dr. Townsend-Smith reflected on the start of her role at the State Board, when there were very few concrete goals on improving educational equity, compared to now, when State Board of Education members have approved specific objectives to "eliminate opportunity gaps, improve school and district performance, and increase educator preparedness" by 2025.

Past DRIVE Task Force meetings have focused on topics such as recruitment and preparation, and issue briefs for these initial meetings can be found [here](#). The Task Force's final meeting will be on December 7, 2020, during which time members plan to approve recommendations for increasing racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity within NC's educator workforce.

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