



Faculty Lunches with the Dean (No. 28) (Anita Brown-Graham)

Author : Mike Smith

Categories : [Faculty Lunches](#)

Date : July 25, 2017



The last round of Faculty Lunches with the Dean included conversations about a wide range of topics. This lunch series has demonstrated the breadth and depth of the School's work—in terms of faculty subject-matter expertise and the overall approach to the work. Anita Brown-Graham participated in the most recent lunch and she talked about one of the projects currently underway for ncIMPACT.



It may be helpful to provide everyone with a little more context about [ncIMPACT](#). This initiative is intended to support state and local decision-makers as they work to address complex policy issues facing North Carolina. We have been trying to find the right way to assist decision-makers since the idea emerged as a high priority during an earlier round of strategic planning in September 2009. Our goal is to be the go-to place that bridges policy and practice. I am thrilled that we successfully recruited Anita back to the School to lead this effort. She is building on a foundation of important early leadership in this area by Aimee Wall and Dave Brown.

In the last year Anita and Dave (ncIMPACT's research director) have interviewed more than 100 stakeholders, convened focus groups, and conducted a survey to determine the issues that will be addressed by ncIMPACT. There is interest in access to timely data, as well as help in understanding how it might be used. Not surprisingly, there also is interest in how to address the challenges facing high-growth, urban communities and rural communities facing out-migration and growing poverty. Anita also heard interest in having the School serve as a neutral convener—a safe space for rival groups to come together for constructive conversations. ncIMPACT has the opportunity to build on the School's reputation for non-partisanship and non-advocacy.

At our lunch Anita described the work she has been doing to support President Spellings and the creation of a commission to determine statewide educational attainment goals. North Carolina is one of ten states without such goals. The basic idea is to create a coordinated strategy to increase



the educational levels of adults so that they are aligned with the workforce needs of the state—something like a certain percentage of adults will hold a certificate or degree in certain fields from a two-year or four-year institution by a certain date.



President Margaret Spellings

President Spellings will co-chair a blue-ribbon commission with two other people to figure out attainment goals for North Carolina. There also will be a steering committee co-chaired by the President of the NC Community College System and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Anita has been helpful to President Spellings in thinking through the various stakeholders who should be represented on the commission. It will bring together top leaders from North Carolina's education and business communities, from the philanthropic and nonprofit sectors, and from all levels of government. The work also will be informed by experts and a professional staff assigned to the commission.

In addition to providing general support for the commission and its staff, Anita will be researching the process used by the other 40 states in creating and implementing their attainment goals. There are likely to be best practices that can inform the commission's work in North Carolina. Anita also will be researching the feasibility of creating a dashboard for labor market information. It will be important to identify growing industries and needed skills so that the attainment goals can be responsive and driven by demand—both initially and over time.



It is exciting to see the growing plan of work for ncIMPACT, and the educational attainment commission is an important early project. This long-time strategic priority for the School is really



starting to gain momentum. Kudos to Anita and Dave.