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SECU Foundation Grant Helps UNC School of Government Fund LFNC Fellowships

Raleigh, N.C. – In 2019, the [University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Government](#) received a grant from SECU Foundation to help launch a cohort pilot called [Lead for North Carolina](#) (LFNC), a post-graduate fellowship program. This week, SECU Foundation announced its renewed support for the successful program with a grant for \$1 million. The increased funding will enable the UNC School of Government to place up to 50 SECU Fellows in paid local government fellowships over a three-year period.

LFNC is a program that aims to cultivate the next generation of public service leaders to help strengthen local governments and improve the quality of life in underserved communities and the most economically distressed areas in the state. Objectives of the fellowship include increasing the talent pool to replace and build upon the legacy of retiring local government leaders and amplifying the voice of marginalized populations in local governments.



L to R: SECU Foundation Board members McKinley Wooten Jr., Jo Anne Sanford (Chair), and Jennifer Haygood, with UNC School of Government Dean Mike Smith, LFNC Executive Director Dylan Russell, LFNC lead faculty member Kara Millonzi, and Local Government Legal Educator Rebecca Badgett.



2021 SECU Fellow
Berekia Divanga,
Washington, NC.

The program has successfully increased awareness and sparked great interest among college graduates for the potential to serve in their local communities. In fact, the UNC School of Government received over 300 applications from a diverse group of graduates for the LFNC pilot. SECU Fellows were selected based on their commitment to public service and employed with government host sites for a year in or near their hometown. Feedback from the initial cohort showed that 94 percent of the host sites reported increased operational capacity, and 81 percent noted that participating SECU Fellows helped the jurisdiction tackle previously unaddressed challenges.

“SECU Foundation is a strong advocate for educational programs that provide unique opportunities for students to not only develop their capabilities, but also for them to enhance the future of local governments and the communities they serve,” said Jo Anne Sanford, SECU Foundation Board Chair. “Lead for North Carolina is an exciting program that serves as a natural transition from our SECU Public Fellows Internship program for those who want to continue exploring meaningful careers in public service. The UNC School of Government is well-known for its non-partisan, policy-neutral work, helping North Carolinians to understand and improve state and local government. The Foundation is very



Jo Anne Sanford

pleased to continue its support for this worthy initiative.”

“This grant from SECU Foundation is a vote of confidence in the Lead for North Carolina program and its exceptional Fellows,” said Mike Smith, Dean of the UNC School of Government. “These promising young leaders bring unparalleled energy, diverse perspectives, and fresh ideas to our communities and state. We all benefit from the program and the UNC School of Government is proud to support its continued development.”



Dean Mike Smith

About SECU and the SECU Foundation

A not-for-profit financial cooperative owned by its members, SECU has been providing employees of the state of North Carolina and their families with consumer financial services for 84 years. The Credit Union also offers a diversified line of financial advisory services including retirement and education planning, tax preparation, insurance, trust and estate planning services, and investments through its partners and affiliated entities. SECU serves over 2.5 million members through 272 branch offices, 1,100 ATMs, 24/7 Member Services via phone, a website, www.ncsecu.org and a Mobile App. Members can also follow and subscribe to SECU on Facebook and YouTube. The SECU Foundation, a 501(c)(3) charitable organization funded by the contributions of SECU members, promotes local community development in North Carolina primarily through high impact projects in the areas of housing, education, healthcare and human services. Since 2004, [SECU Foundation](#) has made a collective financial commitment of over \$200 million for initiatives to benefit North Carolinians statewide. In addition to the website, highlights are also available on the SECU Foundation Instagram page.