**FAQs in Minority Serving Institution (MSI) and Title III status at UNCG**

*The following document is intended for use as an internal document only. Do not attach this document to grant application packages. See below for the correct attachments to application packages.*

**Who may I contact with questions?**

For questions about grant applications in which you wish to mention MSI status, or if you want to discuss grant eligibility, please contact Aubrey Turner, Ph.D. (336-334-4920 or [aubrey.turner@uncg.edu](mailto:aubrey.turner@uncg.edu)) or Julie Voorhees (336-334-3729 or [jkvoorhe@uncg.edu](mailto:jkvoorhe@uncg.edu)). For general questions about MSI status or consultation about proposal aims related to minority serving institutions, please contact Julia Mendez Smith, Ph.D. (336-334-4927 or [jlmendez@uncg.edu](mailto:jlmendez@uncg.edu)).

**How can I get a letter to certify UNCG is eligible for an MSI funding opportunity?**

Many MSI funding programs require an official university letter that verifies the institution’s eligibility to apply for the specific program.  Once you have spoken with Aubrey or Julie to verify UNCG’s eligibility (see previous question), we can then help generate an eligibility letter and get the appropriate signatures.  These letters must be signed by an individual who is authorized to sign agreements on behalf of UNCG, such as the Vice Chancellor for Research and Engagement or the Director of the Office of Sponsored Programs.

If the funding opportunity requests a copy of the letter verifying UNCG’s Title III Part A status, that may be found at: <https://sponsoredprograms.uncg.edu/templates-and-boilerplates/> (look for the current “Title III Eligibility Letter”.

**What is MSI status?**

MSI is a descriptive term that allows universities to concisely indicate that they enroll at least 25% of a specific minority group, typically limited to undergraduates. The 25% threshold is consistent with the definition used in a report on MSIs that was issued by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) at the U.S. Department of Education (DOED):

“Black-serving non-HBCUs: institutions that are not HBCUs/TCUs but in which Black students constitute at least 25 percent of the total undergraduate enrollment, while students of all other individual minority groups each constitute less than 25 percent of the total undergraduate enrollment” (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2008/2008156.pdf>)

**What is Title III status?**

Institutions meeting specific criteria, as set forth in Title III of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (as amended), are designated by DOED as having Title III status. Title III is broken down into Parts A through G (<https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/20/chapter-28/subchapter-III>). Most relevant to UNCG, Part A of Title III applies to universities with a substantial percentage of students receiving need-based federal financial aid, such as Pell Grants.

**Does UNCG have MSI status? Title III status?**

Yes, UNCG is a Minority Serving Institution for African American Students, with 34.7% (n=5,588) of the undergraduate enrollment for Fall 2019.

Yes, UNCG is a Title III Part A institution, based on the significant enrollment of students that are eligible for need-based federal grants (e.g., Pell Grant eligible is 51.8% (n=8,344), as of Fall 2019).

**What are some ways to describe MSI status and Title III status in publications, grants, and the media?**

The use of MSI will depend on the context. In general, you may wish to describe MSI status based on the following example:

“UNCG is a Minority Serving Institution, with a student body in Fall 2019 consisting of 16,106 undergraduates, among which approximately 34.7% (n=5,588) identify as African American[[1]](#footnote-1) and 11.7% (n=1,879) identify as Hispanic or Latinx. UNCG also serves a significant proportion of students with financial need, with approximately 51.8% (n=8,344) of UNCG students eligible for need-based Pell Grants, resulting in the U.S. Department of Education officially recognizing UNCG as a Title III Part A institution.”

You may also wish to highlight that UNCG goes beyond enrolling a diverse student body. UNCG also excels in retention and graduation of all students, with the following examples:

Beyond these significant enrollment numbers, UNCG is one of just 13 public four-year institutions nationwide to be recognized in a 2016 report released by the U.S. Department of Education for “excelling in access and success” in enrolling and graduating Pell Grant recipients. (<https://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/focus/advancing-college-opportunity.pdf>)

UNCG was recognized as a top-performing institution for its success in eliminating the Black-White Completion Gap, by The Education Trust (2017) and Deloitte Educational Services (2018). In fact, at UNCG there is no completion gap, with the six-year graduation rate for Black students 4% higher than that of White students. When compared with its top 15 peer institutions, UNCG’s Black student six-year graduation rates were 13.8 percentage points higher.

<https://provost.uncg.edu/blog/2018/09/17/closing-the-attainment-gap-at-uncg/>

UNCG now ranks No. 1 statewide and No. 27 nationally for social mobility, a new U.S. News category highlighting institutions that are most successful in enrolling and graduating students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

<https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/unc-greensboro-2976/overall-rankings>

In addition, you may wish to highlight UNCG’s research excellence with regard to community engagement of diverse groups, and programs for students, with the following examples:

UNCG serves Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Nation, through a variety of programs and research projects aimed at diverse groups. Significant externally funded service and research efforts for diverse and underserved populations span the university; these include innovative educational enrichment programs for K-12 schools, research and programs to address “food deserts”, initiatives for education opportunities for individuals experiencing homelessness, programs on safe and affordable housing, National Institutes for Child Health and Development funded research on early child development, state contracts for childcare certifications, and improved recovery of wounded warriors from traumatic brain injuries.

With respect to students, we have garnered a number of research awards to support our efforts including: 1) a $1 million grant from NSF to enroll academically talented and financially challenged minority, female, and first-generation students seeking degrees in STEM, as part of the Science, Technology, and Math Preparation Scholarship (STAMPS) program; 2) in March 2017, UNCG was selected for the Gates Foundation’s Frontier Set, joining 31 institutions across the country working to close achievement gaps in higher education; 3) in May 2017, we received a $1.4 million NIH Maximizing Access to Research Careers Undergraduate Student Training in Academic Research (MARC U-STAR) grant to support underrepresented minority and disadvantaged students pursuing biomedical and behavioral health degrees; 4) in September 2017, UNCG was selected to host a $1.2 million McNair Post baccalaureate Achievement Program to prepare first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented undergraduate students for doctoral studies, and: 5) UNCG has been awarded an NIH T32 program with $858K in funding, to support diverse pre-doctoral chemistry students who are studying innovative technologies for natural products and alternative medicines research.

UNCG is classified by The Carnegie Foundation as a Research University with “Higher Research Activity-R2” and a “Community-Engaged Institution”, one of only 50 such institutions in the country to have both.

You may wish to highlight UNCG’s commitment to provide research training opportunities to diverse groups of students across all academic disciplines

The philosophical underpinnings of this very proposal speak to this commitment to inclusion. Students that come from traditionally underserved backgrounds must have access to the highest quality education, including exposure to advantages that instruction in the humanities and participation in undergraduate research confer, in order to maximize the talent of all individuals that pursue higher education opportunities and to strengthen the pool of prepared individuals in all disciplinary backgrounds for future success.

You may wish to highlight UNCG’s overall commitment to inclusive excellence:

UNCG defines diversity as the rich array of human characteristics that combine to shape what makes each of unique. These characteristics include not only the familiar categories of race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation, but also: age, cognitive style, disability, economic, educational and geographic background, languages spoken, marital status, political affiliation, religious beliefs and more. We value diversity, recognizing that we are all shaped by these numerous and varied factors and that each student, faculty, and staff are uniquely qualified to contribute to the collective goals of the university.

UNCG is committed to moving beyond the demographics of diversity to creating an inclusive environment that brings us together, harnessing these diverse characteristics to advance the university’s mission and vision. In September 2019, UNCG was one of four UNC System institutions to receive the INSIGHT Into Diversity Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award, which recognizes colleges and universities for their outstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion. This year marks the second straight year that UNCG has received this award.

Recent funding to support a culture of inclusive excellence among UNCG’s faculty include an NSF ADVANCE grant aimed at enhancing the systemic factors that support equity and inclusion and to mitigate the systemic factors that create inequities in the academic profession and workplace. In addition, UNCG was awarded a 2020-23 Sponsored Programs Administration Development (SPAD) grant from NIH, that seeks to increase the productivity of sponsored programs activities to enhance biomedical research and/or research training. The SPAD award allows us to provide targeted support to faculty from groups identified as nationally underrepresented in the biomedical, clinical, behavioral and social sciences.

For proposals that seek to work specifically with Hispanic populations, you may want to note:

UNCG maintains an Associate Membership with the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities<https://www.hacu.net/hacu/What_is_HACU.asp> based on our enrollment of over 10% Hispanic students. The only other school in the UNC system with this membership is UNC Charlotte.

**Does MSI status and Title III Part A designation allow UNCG faculty to apply for additional grant funding opportunities?**

Yes, MSI status will open up additional avenues to fund academic programs, research and scholarly activities; however, read the guidelines of the funding opportunity very carefully.

For example, some funding mechanisms from the Dept. of Education (DOED) allow all Title III eligible institutions to apply, while other mechanisms from DOED might exclude institutions with Part A of Title III from eligibility. Similarly, the criteria for NIH and the Dept. of Defense (DOD) varies by funding mechanism. In general, most “Minority Institution” funding from NASA and NSF will exclude UNCG’s MSI status, instead using a very specific definition (<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/edlite-minorityinst-list.html>). In some examples, funding announcements have not been very clear, and we have written to the program officer (typically a couple of months in advance of the application deadline), to confirm eligibility. The Office of Sponsored Programs continues to make a concerted effort to identify appropriate funding opportunities and is available to evaluate eligibility for specific funding announcements.

**What are some specific examples of funding opportunities that UNCG has been or will likely be eligible for based on MSI and/or Title III Part A status?**

1. Dept of Defense: Research and Education Program for Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Minority-Serving Institutions (HBCU/MI)
   1. FY 2020 (for basic research): <https://www.arl.army.mil/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/arl-baa-FY-2020-DoD-HBCUMI-Research-FOA-as-of-March-27_2019.pdf>
   2. FY 2021 (for equipment): expected BAA release early May with expected due date July 2020, watch for announcement at <https://www.arl.army.mil/business/broad-agency-announcements/>
2. National Institutes of Health NHLBI: T32 Training Program for Institutions That Promote Diversity
   1. Intended to support training of predoctoral and health professional students and individuals in postdoctoral training institutions with an institutional mission focused on serving health disparity populations not well represented in scientific research, or institutions that have been identified by federal legislation as having an institutional mission focused on these populations, with the potential to develop meritorious training programs in cardiovascular, pulmonary, hematologic, and sleep disorders.
   2. <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-HL-19-023.html>
3. National Institutes of Health: Support of Competitive Research (SCORE) Research Advancement Award (SC1, SC2, and SC3)
   1. The SCORE Program is a developmental program designed to increase the research competitiveness of faculty and research base of institutions with a historical mission or demonstrated commitment to training students from backgrounds underrepresented in biomedical research. See Aubrey Turner for assistance with applying to NIH SCORE.
      1. SC1: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-20-039.html>
      2. SC2: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-20-040.html>
      3. SC3: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-20-041.html>
4. Dept. of Education: Title III Part A, “Strengthening Institutions Program (SIP)”
   1. The program helps eligible IHEs to become self-sufficient and expand their capacity to serve low-income students.
   2. <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/iduestitle3a/index.html>
5. Dept. of Education: Curriculum Development Stipends
   1. Through funding from the U.S. Dept. of Ed., six Title VI National Resource Centers award stipends to faculty at community colleges and minority-serving institutions to develop and incorporate greater content about Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia into the curricula of the institutions at which they teach.
   2. <https://slaviccenter.osu.edu/news/call-applications-course-development-stipends-russia-eastern-europe-and-eurasia-0>
6. Dept of Education: Pathways to the Education Sciences Research Training Program
   1. Pathways Training Program grants are awarded to minority-serving institutions (MSIs) and their partners that create education research training programs to prepare fellows for doctoral study. While the formats of Pathways programs vary, the core features are:
      1. a required research apprenticeship, in which participants gain hands-on research experience under the supervision of faculty mentors.
      2. an education problem or issue chosen as the research theme of the training program,
      3. the development of methodological knowledge and skills; and
      4. career development.
   2. Training participants (known as Pathways fellows) may include upper-level undergraduates (juniors and seniors), post-baccalaureate students (within 5 years of receiving a bachelor's degree), or students enrolled in master's degree programs. Fellows who complete their Pathways Training Program should be prepared to enter a doctoral program in which they can pursue a future career in education research.
   3. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncer/projects/program.asp?ProgID=95>

In addition, there are funding mechanisms that do not explicitly require MSI status, but applications would likely be strengthened by mentioning MSI and/or Title III status. For example, the NIH R15 program requires a “profile of the students of the applicant institution” as a section within the Facilities & Other Resources attachment to the proposal, and MSI status can be a nice component of that section.

**Will UNCG continue to maintain MSI status?**

Given UNCG’s commitment to recruiting, retaining, and graduating a diverse student body, and a university commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion, it is anticipated that UNCG will continue to maintain MSI status.

**Does a federal agency provide a list of MSIs? Title III schools?**

The term “MSI” is not defined in U.S. General Statutes, and there is no federal list of MSIs. DOED does not officially designate any institutions of higher education as an MSI. On the other hand, as an unofficial descriptive term, MSI is used in reports/criteria issued by the DOED (e.g., <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2008/2008156.pdf>), and a variety of other funding agencies.

A similar term, Minority Institutions (MI), is often confused with MSI. There is a very specific legal definition for MI (<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCODE-2011-title20/html/USCODE-2011-title20-chap28-subchapIII-partE-subpart3-sec1067k.htm>). DOED does maintain a list of Minority Institutions (MI), Historically Black Colleges or Universities (HBCU), and Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) (<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/edlite-minorityinst.html>).

For Title III status, the DOED maintains a list (eligibility matrix) of universities that have Title III/V status: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/idues/eligibility.html#el-inst>

1. *(note the 34.7% African American undergraduate enrollment in the preceding paragraph includes any student (including multiracial) who checks the African American box on forms. Some sources may state the number is 29.6%, by counting only the students that check only the African American box.)* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)