

The Top 11 Best Credit Unions in North Carolina | 2016 Rankings & Reviews

2016 RANKING OF TOP CREDIT UNIONS

The Best Credit Unions in North Carolina: A Brief History of Credit Unions

Before exploring the specifics of the top North Carolina credit unions, it can be valuable to have an understanding of the origins of this distinct type of financial institution.

Credit unions have been serving the needs of United States consumers for [more than 100 years](#), and they've remained true to their initial founding principle, which was to create member-owned financial cooperatives.

The earliest financial co-ops were created in [19th century England](#), while the version of the credit union that most resembles what we see today was started in Germany.

Many of the core components of the setup of the original German credit unions remain true to what is seen today, including democratic decision-making and leadership under a board of volunteer directors elected by the members.

The first U.S. credit union was organized in Manchester, [New Hampshire, in 1909](#), and was known as the St. Mary's Cooperative Credit Association.



During the 1920s, the concept of the credit union became a popular one as families found themselves with more disposable income and, as a result, were also looking for cheap credit opportunities.

In 1934, the Federal Credit Union Act was signed into law, which designated a national charter system to provide regulatory guidance and oversight for credit unions.

In the 1980s, many credit unions began opening up their field of membership, so rather than being available only to members of certain organizations or employees of particular companies, more people had the opportunity to take advantage of the benefits that came with a credit union.

Just as other states throughout the country, the North Carolina credit union system is strong. There are credit unions in North Carolina located throughout the state, from the coast to the mountain region.

Each of the names on this list of the best credit unions in North Carolina maintains a sense of financial stability, as well as offering a broad array of services and products tailored to the unique needs of most members.

List of the Best Credit Unions in North Carolina

- [Allegacy Federal Credit Union](#)
- [Charlotte Metro Credit Union](#)
- [Coastal Federal Credit Union](#)
- [Latino Community Credit Union](#)
- [Local Government Federal Credit Union \(LGFCU\)](#)
- [Marine Federal Credit Union](#)
- [Members Credit Union](#)
- [Piedmont Advantage Credit Union](#)
- [Self-Help Credit Union](#)
- [State Employees' Credit Union](#)
- [Truliant Federal Credit Union](#)

This list is sorted alphabetically (click any of the above names to go directly to the detailed review for that credit union)

Methodology for Selecting Top Banks and Credit Unions

Many consumers wonder how AdvisoryHQ creates their lists, including this ranking of the best credit unions in NC. To begin, we research publicly available resources to determine the names of the most popular credit unions in the state, as well as the criteria relevant to consumers.

After creating an initial list of the credit unions in North Carolina that are well-known, we compare them to certain criteria that are consumer-centric. A few of the many areas considered include the diversity and availability of products and services, the field of membership, fees, interest rates, history, stability, and their reputation for customer service.

Click here for a detailed explanation of our methodology: [AdvisoryHQ's Methodology for Selecting Top Banks and Credit Unions](#).

Top Credit Unions in North Carolina

Credit Union	Location
Allegacy Federal Credit Union	Winston Salem
Charlotte Metro Credit Union	Charlotte
Coastal Federal Credit Union	Raleigh
Latino Community Credit Union	Durham
Local Government Federal Credit Union (LGFCU)	Raleigh
Marine Federal Credit Union	Jacksonville
Members Credit Union	Winston Salem
Piedmont Advantage Credit Union	Winston Salem
Self-Help Credit Union	Durham
State Employees' Credit Union	Raleigh
Truliant Federal Credit Union	Winston Salem

(List is sorted alphabetically)

Detailed Review—Top Ranking Credit Unions in North Carolina

After carefully considering North Carolina credit unions, we created the following list of the top 11. As you continue reading, you'll find detailed reviews for each of our picks, as well as specifics of some of the factors we used in our decision-making process.

FEATURED REVIEWS

Allegacy Credit Union Review

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Allegacy Credit Union is an NC credit union that serves the needs of employees, retirees, and families of over **550 companies**. Allegacy has worked to remain strong and financially sound through the years through conservative decision-making and following a carefully defined mission and set of guiding principles.

The mission of Allegacy Federal Credit Union is to help members make sound financial decisions. **Guiding principles** that are the force behind this credit union in NC include exceptional customer service across all areas of the organization, convenient accessibility, forward-thinking concepts paired with simplicity, and corporate responsibility.



Key Factors That Allowed This to Rank as a Top North Carolina Credit Union

Highlighted below are factors that led to the decision to include Allegacy on this ranking of the top credit unions in NC.

Checking Account Benefits

There are several different checking accounts available to members of Allegacy, including the SmartBalance Checking, as well as the dividend earning accounts, which include SmartRate Checking and Preferred Checking. Depending on the account you choose, you could receive some of the following benefits:

- A free Allegacy Visa Check Card
- Free WebBanking and PhoneBanking
- Free WebPay
- Free eStatements

- Free FinanceWorks
- A complimentary financial review and insurance analysis from an advisor of the Allegacy Investment Group
- Free overdraft protection
- Free Direct Deposit

FinanceWorks

As mentioned, the mission of Allegacy is defined as helping members make smart financial decisions. Part of this is giving them the tools, services, and products that help them build a strong foundation.

One of these tools is free to members with accounts at Allegacy, and that is FinanceWorks. FinanceWorks is a top online budgeting tool, and users can view their account and financial information from not just Allegacy but from all of their financial institutions.

There are more than **16,000 financial institutions** that can be linked using FinanceWorks, and it includes tools to manage a variety of account types including checking, savings, loans, credit cards, and retirement accounts.

This free tool offered to members of this top credit union in NC delivers options to analyze how you're spending money. FinanceWorks can also be used as a platform to build a budget and reduce debt.

This feature is located within Allegacy's convenient online banking portal.

Financial Planning

In an effort to deliver not just conventional banking products and services, but also to be a comprehensive financial resource for members, Allegacy offers complimentary plans and no-obligation workshops through Allegacy Investment Group. Allegacy Investment Group provides services for individuals and businesses.

Some of their specific services include investment and personal financial planning, 401(k) consultations, retirement and retirement income planning, estate planning, wealth transfer, and college education planning.

Financial advisors create objective plans following five steps. These steps include data collection, analysis using state-of-the-art software, presentation, implementation, and regular review.

Business Lending

In addition to offering personal banking and financial management services and products, Allegacy is a unique NC credit union because they also feature business services. One area of service available to members of this credit union is business lending.

Business lending options from Allegacy are designed to offer affordable loans to both the new businesses and established businesses in the Triad area of the state. Specific business loan options include term loans, lines of credit, and loans for commercial real estate.

Allegacy is also a Small Business Administration (SBA) lender, with options including the 7(a) Loan, SBA 504, SBAExpress, and the SBA Patriot Express.

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Charlotte Metro Credit Union Review

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The membership field of [Charlotte Metro Credit Union](#) is open to anyone who lives, works, goes to school, or worships in counties including Cabarrus, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Rowan, or Union. Membership is also available to people who live, work, or worship in South Carolina counties including York, Lancaster, and Chester.

CMCU was founded by [Herman J. Hoose](#), Charlotte's first traffic engineer, in 1962. Since then it's grown to include an extensive membership field, and it also boasts more than [\\$370 million in assets](#). There are currently more than [47,000 members](#) of this leading North Carolina credit union.

Key Factors Considered When Ranking This as a Top Credit Union in North Carolina

Featured below are some critical reasons CMCU is often ranked as one of the best North Carolina credit unions.

Student Loans

Uniquely, this leading credit union in NC offers student loans. The Smart Option Student Loan by Sallie Mae is designed for borrowers who are or will be attending degree-granting schools or institutions. This loan is considered to have a wide variety of features and benefits that make it advantageous for diverse needs.

These features and benefits include:

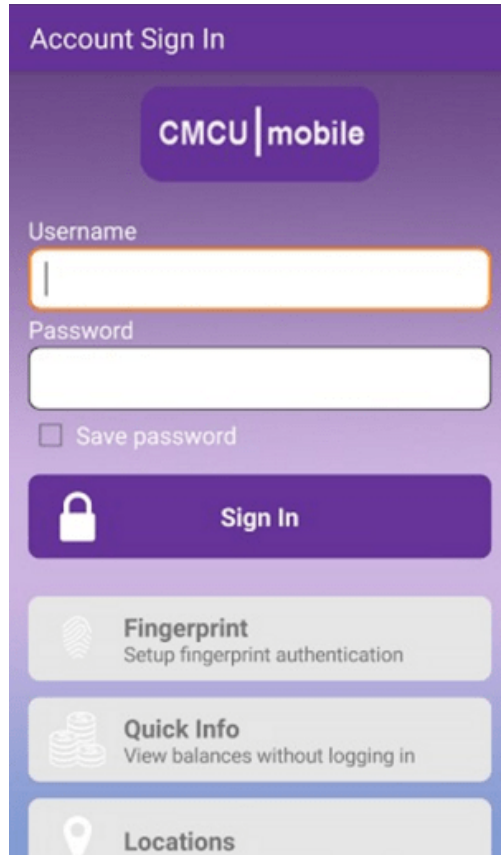
- In-school repayment options with variable interest rates for the highest possible flexibility
- No prepayment penalty
- No origination fees
- Rewards and interest rate reductions are available
- Rates are rewarded for creditworthy borrowers
- 100% U.S.-based Student Loan Specialists

Mobile Banking

This top North Carolina credit union offers a robust mobile banking app, which makes it possible to complete most tasks from a mobile phone, rather than having to visit a branch.

The mobile banking app from Charlotte Metro Credit Union can be used on an Apple or Android device, and functionality includes the ability to deposit checks, check account balances without logging in, and view activity.

It can also be used to make loan payments, set up outside bill payments, transfer funds, and apply for a loan. To help members maintain tighter control over their accounts and their finances, the mobile app also includes the option to track spending habits.



Auto Loans

Many consumers turn to a credit union when they want an excellent deal on a car loan, and CMCU is no exception. This NC credit union features financing for new and used auto loans, as well as options for recreational vehicles and refinancing.

Charlotte Metro Credit Union offers auto loans for cars that are up to 10 years old, all with competitive interest rates and 100% financing for qualified borrowers.

There are automatic payment plans available, and for some borrowers, the interest rates may start at **1.99% APR**.

Also available is the Payment Protection Plan, which is put in place to cover loan payments if a borrower is involuntarily unemployed, disabled, or deceased.

Rewards Credit Cards

Often consumers are reluctant to join a credit union because they worry there won't be rewards credit card options available, like at a conventional bank. This isn't the case at Charlotte Metro Credit Union.

This credit union offers the Visa Platinum Rewards Card, which lets cardholders earn points for every dollar they spend.

The points can then be redeemed for cash back, travel, or merchandise. This card has a low variable interest rate, and it can be managed online. The rewards card also has no annual fee, balance transfer fee, or cash advance fee. Optional checking account overdraft protection is available, and the credit limits are flexible, [ranging from \\$500 to \\$20,000](#).

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Latino Community Credit Union Review

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Among credit unions NC has to offer, [Latino Community Credit Union \(LCCU\)](#), is often considered among the best, particularly because of the focus on community involvement, ethical financial products, and the education options offered to members and their families.

LCCU has a unique history, having been [founded in Durham, NC, in 2000](#) as a grassroots response to a series of robberies and muggings of Latino immigrants in the area. It has since that time grown to become one of the leading financial institutions that serves immigrant communities who are otherwise not banking.

Key Factors That Enabled This to Rank as a Top Credit Union in NC

The following list highlights the primary reasons Latino Community Credit Union is part of this ranking of credit unions North Carolina is known for.

[CashPoints Global](#)

One of the most unique services available from this credit union in NC is CashPoints Global. This program is designed to provide an inexpensive and secure way for members to manage their money and also send their money abroad or to a child in college.



This program features the following benefits:

- Spending amounts are controlled through electronic asset
- It's not possible to incur overdrafts or non-sufficient funds because spending is limited to what's in the account
- One authorized user can be designated for each card
- It's free to add funds to an account anytime
- In-branch transactions, including deposits and withdrawals, can be made at any time
- There is no minimum balance, and the monthly maintenance fee is only \$2
- All deposits are federally insured by the NCUA up to \$250,000
- It includes an online BillPay service
- Cash can be accessed through CashPoints ATMs, phone, Internet, mobile, and text

Micro Business

Latino Community Credit Union features a variety of solutions for small businesses and microbusinesses, which are DBA/sole proprietors. Members can use these products to start a business or expand an existing one.

The benefits of Micro Business accounts from Latino Community Credit Union include lower fees than other institutions, and since LCCU operates locally, banking with them means you're also reinvesting in the community.

There are LCCU branches across North Carolina, and there's online banking, so it's convenient as well.

Micro Business services and products include checking accounts, savings accounts, and money markets. Also available are CDs for microbusinesses and loans, including start-up loans and expansion loans.

Personal Checking Accounts

Latino Community Credit Union specializes in offering checking accounts that are low-cost and convenient and that also create value for members because they earn interest. If you maintain a **\$250 balance** in your checking account, the already-low monthly maintenance fee is waived. It's easy to access an LCCU checking account online, by phone, or on a mobile device, and accounts include a Visa Debit Card.

LCCU offers an optional **\$5 overdraft protection** program, and other features of a personal checking account include online images of cleared checks and the option to deposit, withdraw, or close the account anytime you choose.

If you're an existing member of this pick for a best credit union in NC, you can even open a checking account online.

Credit Building Options

Along with their mission to help local residents have economic opportunities, Latino Community Credit Union offers a set of credit building products. LCCU emphasizes the importance of being able to access affordable credit to do things such as buy a home or a car. It's with that in mind that they offer two options for building credit.

The first is secured loans. With a secured loan from LCCU, the member would receive a loan equal to the amount in their savings account, and that deposit serves as a guarantee on the loan. A monthly payment is

then made until the loan is paid off. This is then reported to credit agencies.

The second is secured credit cards. With a secured credit card, you have a maximum limit that is the same as the amount you deposit into a linked account. Again, you then make regular, on-time payments to build your credit history.

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Local Government Federal Credit Union Review

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A North Carolina credit union for local government employees, elected and appointed officials, volunteers, and their families, [Local Government Federal Credit Union \(LGFCU\)](#) received a federal charter in 1983.

LGFCU was created as an extension of the State Employees' Credit Union, and there is still a strong relationship between these two top credit unions NC is known for. The members of LGFCU can use the SECU network of ATMs, as well as visiting Local Government FCU branches located across the state. LGFCU is involved in many local and state organizations and charities, including the North Carolina State Firemen's Association and the North Carolina Recreation and Parks Association.

Key Factors That Led Us to Rank This as A Best Credit Union in NC

When considering the best credit unions in North Carolina, the following are some of the reasons LGFCU is a standout.

Compass by LGFCU

Compass is a free money management tool from LGFCU that is designed to give members a complete view of their finances. Compass features visualizations including easy-to-understand charts and graphs of a user's entire financial picture. Everything is updated automatically.

Users can view their accounts not only from LGFCU but also other institutions, track their spending, create budgets, manage debt, review transactions, and track their assets to get a view of their net worth. According to LGFCU, the goal of Compass is to be a financial “GPS” to help members make a plan for their money. There’s also a mobile Compass app available for Android and Apple devices.



Estate Planning Essentials Program

Another exclusive program available to members of this North Carolina credit union is Estate Planning Essentials. This program is designed to be a simple, straightforward, and inexpensive way to plan how your assets will be passed down to your loved ones. It covers the basics of estate planning through one visit with an attorney, which happens right at an LGFCU branch.

Documents you receive through program participation include a will, durable power of attorney, healthcare power of attorney, a living will, and HIPAA authorization.

It’s a unique and valuable program for members of this NC credit union, and it covers topics many consumers find challenging or intimidating to deal with.

Recovery Assistance

Recovery Assistance is a program offered to members that is designed to help them more successfully navigate challenges in their lives and finances. The Recovery Assistance program includes access to a Recovery Specialist, who can work with the member to help them determine the best possible way to repay their LGFCU debt.

Recovery Specialists may also work out a settlement agreement for the member.

Once an account is active again after successful fulfillment of the recovery agreement, the member is once again seen as being in good standing. Along with this program, LGFCU can also provide access to free financial resources and counseling.

Checking Accounts

Checking account options from LGFCU have a few big goals: to be convenient, to be simple, and to be inexpensive. Accounts carry no minimum balance requirement, and they earn dividends that are compounded daily and paid monthly.

An LGFCU checking account also includes online services like MemberConnect and Bill Pay, all funds are NCUA-insured, and checking accounts from this leading credit union in NC can be covered by overdraft protection.

The monthly account maintenance **fee is only \$1** and accounts come with an LGFCU Visa Check Card or ATM/Member Access card.

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Marine Federal Credit Union Review

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Marine Federal Credit Union was chartered in 1959 in a warehouse on the premises of Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune. Since that time, this credit union in North Carolina has grown to a full-service financial institution. Marine FCU is owned by the members, and eligibility

includes military members, both active and retired, as well as their families.

Additionally, some business and organization members may be eligible to become part of Marine FCU. Many of the products and services offered by this NC credit union are specifically geared toward the needs of military members and their families, which is one of the ways this is a unique financial institution.



Key Factors That Led to Our Ranking of This as a Best Credit Union in NC

Marine FCU is ranked as one of the best credit unions in North Carolina for the following reasons, among many others.

Overdraft Protection Options

When you open a Marine FCU checking account, there are a number of benefits that come along with that account, and one is the option to choose from several overdraft protection programs.

These include:

- Automatic transfers from savings or money markets can be used if funds are available. There are no additional fees or charges to make these transfers, but there is a limit of **six transfers a month**.
- An automatic transfer from a personal Line of Credit is available, and transfers are unlimited, but interest is charged on the amount used. That interest rate is based on the rate at the time of transfer.
- Courtesy pay is an opt-in program that can be used no more than **18 times** in a year, and daily caps and fees do apply. Courtesy Pay covers ACH withdrawals, checks that are written, automatic transfers and authorized debit card transactions.

Shared Branching

Marine FCU participates in shared branching. This means that no matter where you're located, you're likely to have access to credit union services and your accounts. Shared branching includes fully-staffed branches and locations all over the country.

This is great if you're planning a vacation, traveling for work, or you transfer to a new duty station, and there isn't a branch of Marine FCU nearby. When you visit a Credit Union Service Center, you can make deposits and withdrawals, check your balance, make transfers, and perhaps even obtain a loan advance.

Online Services

Online services and features available to members of Marine FCU are extensive. Some of the things you can do through the Marine FCU online portal include the following:

- Set up scheduled and recurring transfers
- Transfer to or from another financial institution
- Online Bill Pay is no charge and makes it easy to pay all of your bills online, saving time and money in a secure environment
- View pending payments and your transaction history
- Access FinanceWorks for budgeting and more
- Take advantage of the Debit Rewards program that lets members earn eligibility for cashback offers every time they make a purchase with their Marine FCU debit card
- Set up eAlerts so you'll know when your balance is high or low, when a check is cleared, and more

- With Shared Account Access, members can give someone else access to their account and customize the permission levels

Deployment Club

The Deployment Club is a military-centric savings option for members of the Armed Forces. This signature savings account is designed to help make saving money easy during deployments. Payout amounts are automated based on the time period up to 12 months, in which money remains deposited. Then, funds are transferred to a Primary Savings account.

This dividend-earning account is available for **balances up to \$25,000**. Balances over that amount will earn the non-qualifying Bravo checking rate.

There is no minimum opening deposit for the deployment club, and the payout date is the expected date of return from deployment. To be eligible, the member must be active duty and deploying outside the U.S.

Deployment Club	Benefits	Minimum Opening Deposit	Restrictions
<p>Attention men and women of the Armed Forces! Here's a smart way to save while deployed. Payout amounts will be computed based on the time, up to 12 months, monies remain on deposit. Funds will be transferred to your Primary Savings. Check Dividends</p> <p>Get your finances in order for your deployment with our check list. Check here to open and print.</p> <p>Please note: Marine FCU cannot accept a Power of Attorney via fax. If you cannot come into a branch, you can mail a certified true copy to Attn: Finance, PO Box 1551, Jacksonville, NC 28541, or you can mail the original with a note requesting that it be mailed back to you.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Up to a maximum of \$25,000 will earn the stated rate. Balances above the maximum will earn the non-qualifying Bravo checking rate. ▶ Automatic transfers each payday 	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Must be active duty and deploying outside the United States ▶ The payout date is the expected date of return from deployment, but not longer than 12 months, from the date the share was opened ▶ One club share per member ▶ Payout deposit to Primary Savings only

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Members Credit Union Review

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Members Credit Union has 18 locations throughout North Carolina, and members also have access to more than 1,000 ATMs that are surcharge-free, making it convenient and accessible. Members was started in 1953 by 20 employees of McClean Trucking Company.

Since then, it's grown to include more than 50,000 members and 400 sponsor companies. This financial cooperative is based in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and the mission is a dedication to improving the financial well-being of members, regardless of their financial status.

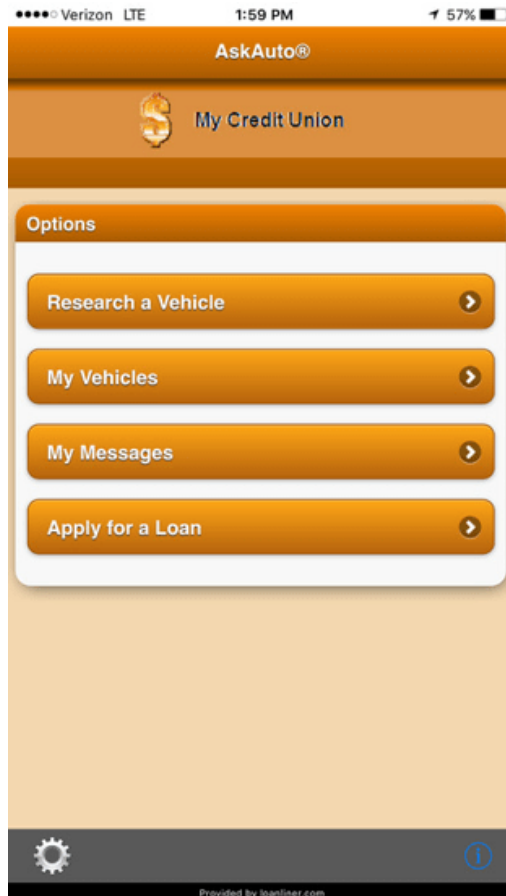
Key Factors That Enabled This to Rank as a Best Credit Union in NC

The details below indicate some of the reasons Members Credit Union was included on this list of the best credit unions North Carolina has to offer.

AskAuto App

The AskAuto App is an exclusive mobile offering from this leading NC credit union that features the ability to shop for the car you want and obtain financing in a way that's easier than ever before. AskAuto can scan a car's VIN to get information, including the average retail cost and EPA mileage estimates.

The app can be used to explore loan options while on the dealer's lot, and you can apply for a loan from anywhere by using your phone. You can also scan your driver's license to fill out your mobile loan application.



Checking Accounts

The premium checking account options from Members include a number of benefits and perks, along with low-cost and free features as well. When you open an MCU checking account, you'll have access to the following advantages:

- No fee per check and unlimited check writing privileges
- The option to earn monthly dividends
- You're only charged a low balance fee if you don't have **at least \$25** in your account on the last day of the month
- eBill is free
- Receive access to free online check images
- Visa Debit Card is included with the account
- Dividends are paid and compounded monthly and are based on the average daily balance of your account

Student Loans

MCU is a student loan lender. Members can apply for the Smart Option Student Loan for Members CU by Sallie Mae, which offers competitive interest rates and flexible options for repayment of the loan.

This student loan is designed to cover expenses of college or a degree-granting institution that aren't covered by scholarships or federal loans. Loan holders have the option to take advantage of in-school repayment opportunities, and interest rates can be fixed or variable.

This particular student loan includes no origination fee and no prepayment penalty, and there are also possible rewards and interest rate reductions available to some borrowers.

Investment Opportunities

In addition to offering the standard banking products and services, this credit union in North Carolina is unique because investment options are also available to members through Members Financial Services. Services are offered by Richard Davis, who can provide a free, no-obligation consultant to members.

Financial services include retirement and investment planning, insurance and estate planning, educational funding, and advice on mutual funds and annuities.

CDs are another investment option that might appeal to members, and dividends can be paid monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, annually, or at maturity. This is at the discretion of the member opening the account.

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Piedmont Advantage Credit Union Review

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Piedmont Advantage Credit Union was established in 1949 and now serves nearly 40,000 members across North Carolina. The [field of membership](#) is open to anyone who lives, works, worships, or goes to school in Bladen, Brunswick, Columbus, Duplin, Forsyth, Guilford, Iredell, Mecklenburg, New Hanover, Pender, or Rockingham Counties.

Membership may also be available to employees of more than [100 “Select Employee Companies,”](#) regardless of where these employees may live. Uniquely, this credit union in North Carolina also offers membership eligibility to people who make a donation to the USO of North Carolina.

Key Factors That Led Us to Rank This as One of the Top Credit Unions in North Carolina

Deciding factors that went into the ranking of Piedmont Advantage on this review of North Carolina credit unions are detailed below.

Online Services

Pivotal to everything Piedmont Advantage offers is a sense of hometown familiarity and locally-driven decision-making; at the same time, this credit union in North Carolina pairs this with innovation and technology.

Online services from PACU are intended to make everything as convenient and accessible as possible for members. When members log onto online banking, they can take advantage of virtual branch features that include the option to check balances, see their deposits and withdrawals and transfer funds between primary and joint accounts held at the credit union.

Also recently added are open transfers, so members can transfer funds into their Piedmont Advantage account from another financial institution.

Loans

For members seeking flexible, value-creating, and affordable lending options, PACU is an excellent option. Piedmont Advantage offers the following types of loans:

- General loans
- Signature loans
- Auto loans
- Recreational vehicle loans
- Mortgages
- Share secured loans

- Home equity loans
- Lines of credit

Each of these loan products boasts highly competitive rates, as well as a fast, streamlined loan application process with no application fees. The interest is simple, there are no prepayment penalties, and you can have payments automatically deducted from your payroll for effortless repayment.

Credit Cards

Piedmont Advantage is a local leader among North Carolina credit unions with a full selection of products and services members want and need. Among these options are Visa Credit Cards.

The Visa Platinum card from Piedmont Advantage has no annual fee, a [25-day grace period](#) for purchases, and a low non-variable rate. It also includes [\\$250,000 in travel accident insurance](#).

The Visa Platinum Rewards card has the same benefits as the Platinum standard card, but also gives members the opportunity to earn rewards for spending.

For members with past credit issues or no credit history, there's the Secured Visa, which also has no annual fee and a [25-day grace period](#) on purchases.

Transparent Fees

A primary complaint many consumers have about working with a conventional bank is not only that the fees are high, but also that they feel there's a lack of transparency on the part of the financial institution to let them know what fees are being charged or when an increase is happening and why.

This is an area where PACU excels. This North Carolina credit union features regularly updated charts that highlight not only the current interest rates paid on accounts and charged on loans, but it also clearly and simply details the current fees members are charged for certain products and services. The chart also shows how members can avoid the fee, which in most cases is very easy to do.

FEES SCHEDULE - EFFECTIVE 08/01/2015		
	FEE	AVOID THE FEE BY...
Account Opening & Usage - Checking & Savings		
Early Account Closure (within 60 days of opening)	\$10.00	keeping your account open.
Inactive Membership (no activity within 12 months)	\$7.00/month	making one transfer / year.
Low Balance Fee	\$2.00/month	maintaining a \$100.00 cumulative balance.
Return Mail	\$3.00/item	updating your address.
Return Statement	\$3.00/item	updating your address.
Duplicate Statement Copy (Quarterly/Monthly)	\$3.00 each	signing up for eStatements.
VOD	\$10.00/per	
ATM Usage (Non-PACU owned ATM)	\$1.00 each First five transactions are free.	Using your check card to make "cash back" purchases or using Piedmont Advantage ATMs.
Plastic Card Replacement (VISA® Debit)	\$20.00/card	
Returned Third Party Check	\$12.00/item	
Account Opening & Usage - Checking ONLY		
International VISA Debit Card Usage	FREE - There is no charge for using a Piedmont Advantage VISA outside the United States.	
CD of Canceled Checks	\$15.00/CD	using Bill Pay.
Check Copies	\$3.00 each	using Bill Pay.
Check Orders	Varies by Style	using Bill Pay.
Stop Payment	\$25.00/request	
Member's Returned Item (NSF)	\$32.00/item	
Overdraft Protection Options		
Overdraft Advantage	\$32.00/transfer	Using PACU Tel, telephone call center, or ATM to transfer funds.
Overdraft Protection from a share account	\$3.00/transfer	using PACU Tel, telephone call center, or ATM to transfer funds.
Transfers		
Share Transfer by Phone	\$2.00/transfer	using PACU Tel or online banking.
Wire Transfer - Domestic	\$20.00/transfer	
Wire Transfer - International	\$35.00/transfer	
Credit Union Services		
Christmas Club/Vacation Club Early Withdraw	\$20.00/withdraw	waiting for specified distribution date to receive funds.
Collection Item	\$10.00/item	
Foreign Check Processing	\$20.00/item	
Gift Cards	\$2.00/card	

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Self-Help Credit Union Review

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When listing credit unions NC is known for, [Self-Help Credit Union](#) is often at the top of the list. The Center for Community Self-Help was [created in 1980](#), based on the idea that the best way for families to build financial strength and security was through ownership. Self-Help was established to help people in rural North Carolina, with a focus on lending to small businesses.

Today, Self-Help has grown and diversified its lending products and services and has made more than [\\$800 million in loans](#) to local entrepreneurs. Over the years, the Self-Help network has expanded all over North Carolina, and also to California, Illinois, and Florida.



Key Factors That Enabled This to Rank as One of the Best Credit Unions in NC

When considering the many credit unions in North Carolina, the following are some of the criteria that went into the inclusion of Self-Help on this ranking of the selections for the best credit union in North Carolina.

WealthBuilder Loans

The WealthBuilder Loan is a signature lending option available from this top ranking credit union in NC. This loan is available as a refinancing option to members who have a high-interest rate personal loan or credit card. It offers a lower interest rate, and automatic contributions are made to a savings account while the loan is paid down.

To obtain the WealthBuilder Loan, members go through the regular application process for a consumer loan. They are then approved at a lower interest rate than what they currently have on the loan or credit card being refinanced. The amount of the loan pays off the balance of their high-interest rate loan, and they make payments to the credit union until the WealthBuilder Loan is paid off.

Then, a portion of their monthly payment amount is automatically set aside in a Self-Help savings account and is available once the loan is completely paid back.

CreditBuilder Loans

Along with the unique and signature WealthBuilder Loan, this North Carolina credit union also offers the CreditBuilder Loan. This is designed to help members establish or rebuild their credit, and this option includes dividends that are paid as the loan holder is paying it off.

Members apply for a loan amount that they can afford, and then the funds go into a limited-access savings account. The loan repayment record is reported to credit reporting agencies, and once the member pays the loan off, they receive the full amount of the loan along with dividends.

Checking Accounts

Self-Help offers members the ability to open a Basic or Premium Checking Account. With all accounts, regardless of whether it's Basic or Premium, features include competitive dividend earning opportunities, free online banking and bill pay, mobile banking, and unlimited check-writing capabilities.

Basic Checking is free when the member signs up for free e-Statements each month or sets up a recurring direct deposit of **\$25 or more**. Basic Checking can also be free if a member maintains a combined **average daily balance of \$5,000** across all Self-Help accounts.

Premium Checking earns a higher interest rate, but members do have to maintain an average daily balance of **at least \$2,500** to avoid the **\$5 monthly service fee**.

Advocacy

Self-Help is perhaps one of the most unique NC credit unions on this list; along with offering the products and services you're used to seeing from a credit union, they also have deep community involvement, work to rebuild communities, and they work as advocates in areas such as the prevention of predatory lending.

For example, Self-Help works with the Center for Responsible Lending to promote fair lending practices. Along with advocacy, CRL also conducts research to understand predatory lending and its impact, and this credit union in NC builds coalitions to strengthen safeguards that are put in place to protect American families.

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Conclusion—Top 11 Credit Unions in North Carolina

North Carolina is a diverse state — politically, demographically, and geographically. It extends from the largely agricultural coastal plain region, through the financial districts of the Piedmont and then on to the mountains of Western North Carolina. That diversity is reflected in the people who live in the state, and as consumers, they require access to financial institutions that address their needs.

For many North Carolina consumers, the right financial institution for them is often one of the credit unions North Carolina is known for. These credit unions tend to work from an understanding of the uniqueness of the state and its people, and they have a long history in the area.

Each of the names on this review and ranking reflects the best credit unions in NC, based on a broad range of criteria. Some of the names on

this ranking of North Carolina credit unions may excel in helping members regain their financial footing, while others may specialize in offering excellent interest rates on savings products. Whatever it is that sets each apart, they do have something in common, and that is the fact that they're recognized as leaders among credit unions in North Carolina.

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