Performance textiles provide long-term potential for many United States’ (U.S.) textile companies. Performance textiles are textile materials and products manufactured primarily for their technical and performance properties in addition to their aesthetic or decorative characteristics.¹

In 2000, estimates suggest performance textiles accounted for some 30% of end-use fiber consumption in the region and were worth 17 billion dollars.² Performance textile demand is closely linked with economic activity. Another driver of performance textiles is technical innovation that results in the wider application of textile materials across a broad range of end-uses.

The performance industry is a new avenue for U.S. companies who have experienced little growth due to intensified competition in apparel and household textile markets. The performance textile industry is somewhat difficult to enter; it has high barriers to entry, lack of information, high costs of product development, and the difficulty of breaking into segments where strong relationships bind customers to established suppliers.² Many companies are using realignment methods such as mergers, acquisitions, and divestitures to enter and compete in performance textiles.

Performance markets can deter competition from developing countries by focusing on tight specification standards and highly technical products. United States’ companies investing in product development are fostering close partnerships with customers and providing new growth markets, with some benefits of competitiveness (at least in the short-term – against global competitors). Performance textiles offer many export opportunities since many developing countries need technical products, but lack the infrastructure to manufacture these products.

The North Carolina performance industry is represented in 76 out of 100 counties. The geographic dispersion is statewide with heavy concentration in four specific cluster areas. These areas include the Charlotte area cluster, Triad cluster, Hickory area cluster, and Triangle cluster. These clusters were previously identified as textile clusters in the 2006 study.³

North Carolina has approximately 517 companies competing in the performance textile industry. Of these 517 companies, 148 compete in multiple performance textile sub-sectors in North Carolina. Eleven percent of the companies competing in the performance textile industry in North Carolina are publicly held and 89% percent of the performance textile companies are privately held. Currently all 12 performance textile sub-sectors exist in North Carolina. Collectively performance clusters provide an estimated $18,094,043,464 in annual sales. There are approximately 60,000 employees working in the performance textile industry in North Carolina.

