



Dr. R. Scott Ralls, System President

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State Board of Community Colleges approves budget request to address State's economic challenges

Click [here](#) for complete budget request

Click [here](#) for full text of President Ralls' report to the State Board

GRAHAM – “When the economy goes down, community college enrollment goes up, and we must have the funds to serve the people who need us.”

That's what President R. Scott Ralls told the State Board of Community Colleges today (*Friday, October 17*) when the board agreed that North Carolina Community Colleges need new state funding to achieve the goals of creating success for students, success in preparation for critical careers and success for North Carolina's businesses.

Meeting at Alamance Community College in Graham, State Board members unanimously approved the expansion budget request for 2009 – 2011 and pledged to continue a similar plan for the two subsequent years. The request includes \$64 million in new funds in fiscal year 2009 - 2010 and \$111 million in new funds in 2010 - 2011. The new funds would provide:

- Faculty and staff salaries that are competitive with the market and on par with national averages.
- Technology and equipment students need to be prepared to perform in the workplace.
- Additional capacity to train and support our State's healthcare workforce.
- Ability to re-establish and enhance high-cost technical programs.
- Customized training to help North Carolina businesses survive and thrive.

(more)

The budget proposal resulted from several months of work involving State Board members; President Ralls and his staff; and representatives of community college trustees, presidents, faculty, staff, students and supporters. The “Creating Success” theme is also reflected in a new coordinated effort to increase understanding of the vital work of North Carolina’s 58 community colleges.

Acknowledging the difficulty in asking for more money during a year when community colleges and other state agencies face cutbacks of up to three percent, President Ralls praised the State Board’s support for the expansion budget.

He said, “North Carolinians need us to play our customary role as North Carolina’s ‘economic cavalry,’ but as I learned as a boy watching movies, a cavalry needs soldiers and horses if it is to come to anyone’s rescue. And you can’t be world-class when you pay your instructors at only 79% of the national average, because you can’t hope to retain your best people. And you can’t pretend to be world-class when you can only replace your current stock of technology and equipment every decade.

“That is why the focused, multi-year budget approach you approved at this meeting is so important. If we are able to have success in garnering champions to it, it will mean that the teachers in the nursing programs and the machining instructors no longer see as great a discrepancy in teaching their profession as compared to the wages they would make in doing their professions. It will also mean that they will be able to educate their students on the type of technology and equipment that they will find when they leave the lab and enter the workforce.”

In other actions, the State Board:

- Approved the hiring of Jennifer Herrera Willis as Director of Governmental Relations, effective November 1. Willis is a graduate of The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and holds a Masters of Public Administration degree from North Carolina State University. She comes to North Carolina Community Colleges from Wake County government, where she has been most recently Intergovernmental Relations Manager. She has also worked in Fiscal Research with the North Carolina General Assembly.
- Approved the hiring of Megen George as Director of External Affairs and Marketing, effective November 1. George is a graduate of Morehead State University in Kentucky, where she worked as a public radio reporter and anchor. She comes to North Carolina Community Colleges from her post as News Director at Public Radio East in New Bern, which is associated with Craven Community College. She has also worked with National Public Radio.

North Carolina Community Colleges enroll more than 800,000 students in 58 comprehensive community colleges. Internationally recognized for the scope and quality of their programs, North Carolina Community Colleges are the State’s primary providers of workforce preparation and adult education, creating success by providing hope, opportunity and jobs.

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