



# North Carolina Community College System

January 20, 1999

To: Information Systems for the Future Steering Committee,  
Project Management Team and Functional Working Group  
Members

From: Douglas Eason, Chair  
Information Systems for the Future Steering Committee

Robert R. Blackmun  
Assoc. Vice President for Information Resources and Technology

Subject: Vendor Contacts Advisory

During the past several months, members of our Project Management Team and Functional Working Groups have focused intensively on developing bid specifications for our information systems for the future. I want to commend each of you for your diligence and thank you for the outstanding work. As you are aware, we are now entering a critical phase in this important project.

Some of the potential vendors have been contacting members of the Steering Committee and Project Management Team to schedule a variety of activities related to their systems and our needs. The Steering Committee and Project Management Team believe that it is not appropriate for either group, or the System Office, to schedule any meetings, demonstrations, etc. while we are actively involved in the bid process (including developing our formal specifications). However, staff members at several colleges have indicated an interest in learning about the functions and features of various vendors' systems. We recommend that any such activities be vendor-initiated and that it be made clear that these meetings, demonstrations, etc. have no connection with the Steering Committee or Project Management Team and are solely the responsibility of the local community college, as all other vendor contacts are.

The calendar of events for the spring of 1999 includes completing the bid specifications and seeking bids through the N.C. Division of Purchase & Contract (P&C), based on those specifications. We expect that P&C will send the Invitation for Bids (IFB) to the vendors in late February or early March and receive their responses in late April. During this time period, and continuing through the time period in which we will all be working to evaluate the bids, it will be crucial that we follow P&C's regulations concerning contact with vendors. Failure to do so could result in possible cancellation of the procurement activity

Knowing that there are a number of state-wide conferences during this time period, and that several of the vendors will likely participate in those conferences, we suggest the following guidelines for the Steering Committee, Project Management Team and Functional Working Group members:

Refer all persons with questions directly to the official Invitation For Bid document. Caution in this regard should be exercised when making public presentations or leading discussion sessions;

Avoid one-to-one conversations with vendors' representatives; and

Advise the vendor representatives, if they contact you directly, that you are not in a position to have any discussions with them about their software, services, etc. or about our bid request. Any such contacts should be referred to Charles Valrie, the System Office purchasing contact.

Please contact me or Bob Blackmun if you have any questions or concerns regarding these matters.

cc: Community College Presidents  
President Lancaster  
Dr. Elizabeth Johns  
Dr. Brenda Rogers  
Mr. Kennon Briggs