

STATE BOARD OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES

“Virtual Learning Community” Center Awards for 2008-2010

Request:

The State Board of Community Colleges is asked to approve the award of \$450,000 to three colleges to serve as NCCCS Course Development Centers for the Virtual Learning Community (VLC) for 2008-2010. Funding is provided by 2+2 E Learning appropriations by the state and other state appropriations as described below. Each award is for two years and course content is to be completed by June 30 of each year.

Rationale:

The VLC, now entering its tenth year of operation, creates and maintains a library of high quality online courses for use by all colleges in the system. The VLC library now hosts 226 curriculum courses and 29 continuing education courses that complete 26 online degrees. Online courses and web materials developed by VLC course development centers become shared property of all colleges within the North Carolina Community College System. Goals for this year's VLC Centers include the development of online courses in math, science, engineering, early childhood education, nursing, developmental education, and continuing education. The courses will be developed using Learning Objects from the North Carolina Learning Object Repository, incorporated into the new Blackboard VLC template, and later converted to a VLC Moodle template.

The VLC course development centers for which this approval is requested and the work of the previous VLC course development centers that produced the library described above are part of on-going strategic planning for NCCCS distance learning initiatives. In 2005, the State Board of Community Colleges approved a plan for use of funds provided by S.L. 2005-276 for the UNC/NCCCS 2+2 E-Learning Initiative. This plan approved further funding for VLC developed courses tied to pre-major degrees in areas of the highest need. The STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) Center is to be funded from 2+2 E-Learning Initiative funds for development of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics courses. The remaining two centers are funded from state appropriations.

The three course development centers for which proposals were sought and are being recommended for approval this year have specific areas of focus as described below.

Center 1: The **STEM Course Development Center** will receive \$150,000 in 2+2 E-learning Initiative Funds each year to develop two chemistry courses, two physics courses, one math course, and two biology courses along with their respective labs in the first year. In the second year of the grant, the center will develop one computer science course, one drafting course, one engineering course and two additional biology courses, and the respective labs for each course.

Center 2: The **Early Childhood Education, Nursing, and Developmental Education Course Development Center** will receive \$200,000 in state appropriations each year to develop courses in nursing, education, and pre-major developmental courses. In the first year, the center will develop three nursing refresher courses, nine education courses, and half of the developmental courses. During the second year of the grant, specified courses will be edited based on the proposed changes by the EDU CIP. Please note that although the proposed changes are recommended by the EDU CIP, they are not effective unless approved by the Curriculum Review

Committee in September 2008. In addition to nursing and education, this center will develop three developmental reading courses, three developmental English courses, five developmental mathematics courses, two student success courses, one developmental chemistry course, and one developmental computer course over a two year period.

Center 3: The **Continuing Education Course Development Center** will receive \$100,000 in state appropriations to develop ten continuing education courses each year. Specific courses for year one include one course each in mental health, education, human resource development, hospitality, human services, renewable energy, veterinary assisting, customer service, conversational Spanish, and leadership. The specific courses for development during year two will focus on Green Technology and Homeland Security.

A request for self-nominations for course developers, a managing editor, course instructional designers, technical editors, course converters, and learning object catalogers from college faculty and staff members was issued via a Request for Proposals. The resulting roster of these experienced course developers and potential center staff will be provided strictly as a resource to all funded centers. Centers are free to contract course development or other duties as they wish.

Method of Allocation:

A single Request for Proposals addressing all three centers was sent out to all college presidents, chief academic officers, continuing education deans, and distance learning administrators and proposals were due to the System Office by September 26, 2008. Nine proposals were received from seven colleges. The proposals were read and evaluated by a selection committee represented by one State Board of Community Colleges member, a college president, and seven system office staff members from Academic and Student Services, Auditing, and Learning Technology Systems. Each member of the team has extensive experience in evaluating distance learning projects and funding. The proposal weighting criteria from the RFP was used to score each proposal. After individual reviewers scored each, the resulting rankings were discussed by the group and a consensus score was reached. Proposals were ranked by this consensus score for each center, from high to low, and then recommended for funding. Colleges could apply for more than one of the three centers (based on the content areas described above), but a college could only be approved for one of the centers.

At the end of the first year, center performance will be evaluated. Funding for the second year will be dependent upon satisfactory performance and delivery of all required courses. If a center fails to meet the requirements, the funds may be awarded to another college for the second year of the grant.

Recommended Colleges and Center Awards:

Center 1 – Wake Technical Community College STEM Course Development Center	\$ 150,000
Center 2 – Surry Community College Nursing, Education, and Developmental Course Development Center	\$ 200,000
Center 3 – Wayne Community College Continuing Education Course Development Center	\$ 100,000

Fund Availability:

Funding for Center 1 is supported by state appropriations of 2+2 Distance Learning Funds and funding for Centers 2 and 3 is provided through other state appropriations to NCCCS.

Contact Persons:

Dr. Sandra W. Williams, Senior Vice President, Technology and Workforce Development

Dr. Bill Randall, Associate Vice President, Learning Technology Systems

Ms. Wanda Barker, Distance Learning Instructional Designer

Ms. Katherine Davis, Distance Learning Technician