

STATE BOARD OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Blackboard Inc. Online Help Desk

**Request:** The State Board is asked to approve an eight month contract with BLACKBOARD, INC., for up to \$400,000 to provide Online Help Desk services to all online learners in the NCCCS. This is a continuation of a contract with Blackboard which began July 1, 2006.

Non-Blackboard institutions will also be covered by this contract. Online Help Desk services offered by Blackboard contract are not Learning Management System (LMS) dependent. Therefore, the two non-Blackboard LMS providers used in the NCCCS, Moodle and Campus Cruiser can be effectively accessed by the Online Help Desk services.

**Rationale for Contract:** The NCCCS has been allocated \$600,000 recurring funds to provide Online Help Desk services to students taking online courses. The contract will be based on a total of 90,000 online students with a per user costs of \$7.00 and prorated for eight months.

The current contract is for eight months so that the contract schedule can be consistent with other technology based contracts.

Online Help Desk service is required by many distance learners for technical assistance throughout their online learning experiences. The first few days are especially critical to the future success of first time online students. Available, accurate, appropriate, and updated information and support contributes to the success of online students in general and first time online learners specifically.

An online Help Desk is designed to provide students with reliable and well managed support service deployed to meet student needs quickly, accurately, and satisfactorily. These services can be delivered at significantly reduced prices when compared to either locally supported or outsourced offerings. Such services can also protect and enhance the intellectual property and branded assets of each college. Online Help Desk resources leverage a combination of high tech and high touch approaches to enhance increased student success and achieve measurable improvements in student performance. Resources include chat, email, telephone, and personalized support portal available 24/7/365.

Blackboard Online Help Desk is customized for individual community colleges using a template of 500 items that each deal with an area of college operations important to students. These include:

- Technical information - how to login to college CMS resources, how to access library materials, what computer specs are required for optimal operations required for online courses, and access to orientations and tutorials.
- Registration information - dates, places, prerequisites, procedures.
- Schedule of events.
- Class schedules.
- Contact information for faculty and support services.
- Online access to forms, college catalogue, and other information.

Online help desk services reduce the number of college staff positions required to provide services and improves the consistency of service to those students requiring individual assistance.

**Method of Procurement:** In accordance with the procurement practice of the State of North Carolina, approval is being sought by outside purchasing authorities. Approval of the contract by the State Board is contingent upon approval by the State IT Procurement Office.

**Contract Amount and Time Period:** The State Board is asked to approve the expenditure not to exceed \$400,000 for the eight-month contract for the period November 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011.

**Fund Source:** Funding is available from FY10-11 State General Fund appropriations..

**Contact Persons:**

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