

STATE BOARD OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Allocations for Virtual Learning Community Centers

Request: The State Board of Community Colleges is asked to approve \$650,000 to fund three existing Virtual Learning Community (VLC) Centers: The Professional Development Center at Wake Technical Community College (\$200,000), the Technology Center at Fayetteville Technical Community College (\$175,000), and the Quality and Assessment Center at Surry Community College (\$275,000) for 2011-2012. The State Board of Community Colleges is further asked to approve the proposal that the location of these centers become permanent, contingent upon satisfactory performance.

Background: The Virtual Learning Community is a collaborative effort of the North Carolina Community College System to increase the quality and availability of online learning and support services for the benefit and success of distance learning students. The VLC began as an idea for a collaborative process for developing online course content which was supported by the 58 college presidents. In 1999, this idea became a reality and the VLC has been growing ever since. Forty-five different colleges and hundreds of educators from the NCCCS have participated through the annual process of Requests for Proposals (RFP) and Requests for Nominations.

The role of the VLC expanded in 2006, when VLC strategic objectives moved beyond course development in order to affect change and raise the bar for distance learning across the state. Centers were created to support professional development, technology enhancement, and quality and assessment. The VLC Professional Development Center at Wake Technical Community College coordinates efforts to deliver the training opportunities necessary to deliver online courses and programs based on sound pedagogy and the latest technology tools. The VLC Technology Center at Fayetteville Technical Community College coordinates a vetting process for learning technologies to address the rapid changes in online course delivery. The VLC Quality and Assessment Center at Surry Community College coordinates the research and documentation of distance learning standards, guidelines, and best practices for online course delivery, as well as needs assessment for distance learning resources.

The extended funding term for these three centers allowed for better continuity in the VLC operations. By the third year of the RFP (2007-10), the three centers had become such an integral part of distance learning for NCCCS that the State Board was asked to extend the funding for an additional year (2010-11) as we considered the best way to advance this process of continuous improvement and make the highest and best use of the VLC by either making the centers permanent or renewed on a rotating basis.

Rationale: Based on the review by the VLC Executive Board of the VLC history, the examination of the outreach to colleges in our system (45 of 58 colleges), the ability to reinforce quality standards and create rich, interactive content for courses, and the need to provide a higher level of continuity for VLC operations, the Executive Board recommends the current centers at Wake Technical Community College, Fayetteville Technical Community College, and Surry Community College become permanent locations.

**Attachment FC 9
(Revised 05/17/2011)**

In the past, RFPs were based on the colleges' abilities and what they could provide based on their own intention of what should be included in the RFP, rather than on system needs. The nature of an RFP promotes colleges to be competitive and not collaborative. The system priorities will guide the direction of the VLC centers, making adaptive change a seamless process. The VLC can play an important role in implementing system-wide initiatives, such as developmental education redesign, SuperCIP curriculum improvements, Innovative Ideas, and other current and future Success NC initiatives or grant projects. Initially, the focus will be to develop the modules of the developmental math courses that were redesigned by the Developmental Math Initiative this year. Rather than focus on a broader number of courses and degrees in the VLC, the centers will make the targeted courses more interactive and engaging through the use of technology while meeting course competencies and objectives that were defined by the Developmental Math Initiative team. Future course redesign or content development will be determined by the progress of system initiatives and completion of course competencies.

Course redesign, editing, or content development will be coordinated by the Quality and Assessment Center, as will any projects that may be funded through various grant resources or state appropriations. This center will be tasked with the coordination of efforts by all three centers. By coordinating initiatives of NCCCS that affect distance learning programs, the VLC will affect a higher return on investment of system resources and will be the vehicle to improve the scalability of these efforts.

The permanency will depend upon successful completion of all projects, proper budget management, widespread participation of other colleges through Requests for Proposals on projects, development of an approved succession plan, and completion of an annual report to the State Board of Community Colleges. The NCCCS Director of Distance Learning will coordinate and provide programmatic direction for the VLC Centers.

Method of Allocation: Permanent location of centers, subject to conditions set above, with funding from state appropriations: Surry Community College, Quality Assessment Center, \$275,000; Fayetteville Technical Community College, Technology Center, \$175,000; Wake Technical Community College, Professional Development Center, \$200,000.

Fund Availability: Funding is contingent upon the availability of FY 11-12 State General Fund appropriations.

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