



NC Community Colleges  
Hope • Opportunity • Jobs

Dr. R. Scott Ralls, President

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **NC Community Colleges Receive Jobs for the Future’s Accelerating Opportunity Initiative Design Grant**

*Award Will Support Community College Efforts to Transform Adult Education*

RALEIGH – NC Community Colleges have been awarded a \$200,000 grant as a part of *Accelerating Opportunity, a Breaking Through Initiative*. Supported by a strategic partnership of five of the nation’s leading philanthropies, *Accelerating Opportunity* will help North Carolina Community Colleges transform adult education into more successful pathways leading to economic security for underprepared workers in today’s demanding job market.

The number of adults who lack skills beyond a high school diploma is a national emergency and in North Carolina alone there are more than one million adults with low literacy. The trend will only continue—by 2018, 70 percent of all jobs will require workers with some form of postsecondary credentials. This exacerbates the current difficulty employers across the state report in finding qualified workers who can fill skilled positions.

“In order to compete not only with other states, but other countries, North Carolina must have a workforce that has the education and training necessary to meet the needs of current and potential employers,” said Dr. Scott Ralls, NC Community College System President. “The opportunity presented to us by *Accelerating Opportunity* is one we must capitalize on so that adults across the state are prepared to enter a workforce that is expected to have a higher skill level and nationally recognized credentials.”

*Accelerating Opportunity* seeks to change the way adult basic education is delivered by putting adult students on track to earn a postsecondary credential so they can seize the opportunity to earn family-sustaining wages and break the intergenerational cycle of poverty. *Accelerating Opportunity* is funded by a strategic collaboration of diverse philanthropies including the Bill &

Melinda Gates Foundation, the Joyce Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Kresge Foundation and the Open Society Foundations. For program and implementation expertise, Jobs for the Future (JFF) has engaged the National Council on Workforce Education, National College Transition Network and the Washington State Board of Community & Technical Colleges as partners.

“We’re aiming at nothing less than radically reshaping the way that adults get education in this country,” says (JFF) President and CEO Marlene B. Seltzer. “We know that American workers can be successful. We’re giving them the tools they need to do this by building the worker-friendly, flexible programs. By providing clear and relevant paths, more adults will earn the educational credentials that employers are looking for and that are needed to secure a family-sustaining career.”

Design grants were also awarded to, Alabama, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oregon and Wisconsin to support efforts to redesign adult basic education and postsecondary programs to integrate basic skills with practical, occupational training. After the design stage, the states will be eligible to compete for implementation grants, of which five states will receive \$1.6 million each over three years to implement their plans. The initiative will engage nearly 40 community colleges across the country and impact over 18,000 adult learners. Educational pathways to higher skills, credentials, and employment will be rigorously tested and independently evaluated. This evidence will be provided to philanthropy, labor, employers, adult education planners and other stakeholders in North Carolina and around the country to ensure that adult education programs lead to postsecondary credentials and good jobs.

*Accelerating Opportunity* is informed by JFF’s *Breaking Through* initiative, which has promoted the support of 41 community colleges in 22 states to improve career pathways and postsecondary education for low-skilled adults. Six North Carolina community colleges were involved in the *Breaking Through* initiative, Davidson County Community College, Durham Technical Community College, Forsyth Technical Community College, Pamlico Community College, Pitt Community College and South Piedmont Community College.

“Building from our previous work with *Breaking Through*, states will get the opportunity to identify the barriers to success for their residents and design a plan that will address the unique needs of their workforces and communities,” says Maria Flynn, JFF vice president, Building Economic Opportunity. “We are thrilled to expand this work and engage every important stakeholder, from community college presidents and trustees to local politicians and policymakers, allowing for redesigned programs that are genuinely sustainable.”

*Accelerating Opportunity: A Breaking Through Initiative* is a multi-state effort managed by Jobs for the Future that promotes improved academic access and economic opportunity for low-skilled adults. This effort seeks to reform adult basic education and postsecondary systems by integrating basic skills with occupational training and adequate institutional support for adult learners, ensuring they receive the postsecondary credentials needed to succeed in high-skilled jobs and break the cycle of poverty in their communities. For more information, visit [www.acceleratingopportunity.org](http://www.acceleratingopportunity.org).

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