



NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

Dr. R. Scott Ralls, President

June 24, 2010

MEMORANDUM

TO: CC Presidents
Chief Academic Officers
Registrars

FROM: Kennon D. Briggs, Executive Vice President and Chief of Staff

SUBJECT: **Skills Lab Audit Relief**

Over the past few years, the ability for students having academic difficulty in specific classes to receive individualized academic support in lab settings has proven critical to their success in program completion. In providing this support, colleges have not only served students in skills lab settings but also students in open lab settings similar to those that are part of scheduled course hours. In addition, labs have been set up and made available to any student needing academic assistance regardless of referral from their instructor.

Regardless of the type of academic difficulty students may be experiencing, the need for assistance is legitimate, and the colleges' support of these students is to be commended. The North Carolina Administrative Code (23 NCAC 2D.0323(d)) however has only allowed colleges to claim budget FTE hours when students are referred by their instructor for remedial or developmental assistance when they are experiencing academic difficulty in a particular curriculum course. The efforts of colleges to address a variety of student needs in lab settings have brought this section of the code under review. This review may result in code changes or additions, and may also result in new standards for certain courses.

As we have been traveling on our "SuccessNC Listening Tour," we have heard from many colleges that the Code does not reflect modern day practices aimed at facilitating student success. Colleges have become frustrated with audit findings which, while consistent with the Code, take exception to legitimate hours of instruction in skills labs that embrace a sound educational purpose and foster positive student outcomes. Several colleges have, in fact, discontinued the practice of reporting skills lab hours out of concern that the reporting may result in an audit finding. This is counter-intuitive to the process of identifying best practices among colleges, such as many years of positive skills lab instruction, and promoting those practices system wide.

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As we have communicated consistently with both you and the State Board of Community Colleges, we will make changes to those practices or procedures – where possible – to remove barriers that frustrate both innovation and stifle student success. Toward that end, I asked Dr.'s Sharon Morrissey and John Pettitt to establish a focus group directly related to skills labs, for the purpose of examining ways in which the Code can be re-written both to reflect modern educational practices and insure appropriate reporting and accountability. That work is already underway.

Beginning July 1, 2010, and until changes based on this review are in effect, use of skills labs for remedial purposes (both for developmental and non-remedial work) will be held harmless from audit exceptions. Student participation without referral from an instructor, or lack of documentation for individual student contact hours however, may result in an exception. Budget FTE hours claimed for non-remedial work but with documentation of referral and student contact hours may result in an audit concern, depending upon the circumstances. In other words, while the Code currently in effect can't be ignored, legitimate skills lab work for both developmental and non-remedial course work will not be excepted, if proper documentation is available.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact either Dr. John Pettitt (919-807-7224) or me (919-807-7068).

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