STATE BOARD OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES
FY 2017-18 Allocations for Virtual Learning Community Centers

Request: The State Board of Community Colleges is asked to approve $650,000 to renew funding for three existing Virtual Learning Community (VLC) Centers: The Professional Development Center at Wake Technical Community College ($110,000), the Technology Center at Fayetteville Technical Community College ($125,000), and the Quality and Assessment Center at Surry Community College ($415,000) for FY 2017-18. The Quality and Assessment Center funds consist of $125,000 for operational costs and $290,000 for collaborative projects that are the combined efforts of all three centers.

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 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.

The role of the VLC expanded in 2006, when VLC strategic objectives moved beyond course development to bring about 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 of 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 State Board of Community Colleges approved the proposal in May 2011 that the location of these centers become permanent, contingent upon satisfactory performance.

Rationale: The VLC Executive Board requires all three centers to submit a report each fiscal year detailing the work of their center. Included in that evaluation is the emphasis each center places on outreach to colleges and faculty in our system, as well as their demonstrated knowledge and adherence to quality standards and creation of rich, interactive content for courses and programs. Based on their performance of the VLC completed projects, courses, and professional development sessions, workshops and tutorials for FY 2016-17, the VLC Executive Board recommends funding the current centers at Wake Technical Community College, Fayetteville Technical Community College, and Surry Community College for FY 2017-18.

The VLC plays an important role in implementing system-wide initiatives, such as accessibility compliance, curriculum improvements, course redesign for core courses affected by the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement, content for U.S. Department of Labor grants, 2+2 eLearning Initiatives, and other current and future SuccessNC initiatives, or other grant

projects. Future course redesign or content development will rely upon the progress of system initiatives and completion of course competencies. Funding for all projects for course redesign, content development, and special initiatives are routed through the Quality and Assessment Center at Surry Community College for distribution of contracts and/or duties for fulfillment of the needs of special projects. This center is tasked with the coordination of efforts by all three centers. By coordinating initiatives of NCCCS that affect distance learning programs, the VLC will provide a higher return on investment of system resources and will be the vehicle to improve the scalability of these efforts.

Permanency of the centers depends upon successful completion of all projects, proper budget management, and widespread participation of other colleges through Requests for Proposals on projects, development of an approved succession plan, and completion of interim and annual reports to the NCCCS Senior Vice President and Chief of Technology, who coordinates and provides programmatic direction for the VLC Centers.

To alleviate the numerous contracts between centers, each college is allocated an operational budget to cover salaries, benefits, travel, supplies, equipment, software, etc. that are needed for the individual centers. The remaining funds for projects or content development will be allocated to Surry Community College, which will serve in a fiduciary capacity for managing all project funds for the VLC. Course development and editing is coordinated through the Quality and Assessment Center at Surry Community College. The courses to be chosen for development will be selected in conjunction with program and student services.

All three center directors have administrative responsibilities for projects, facilitate participant selection, oversee projects, and review deliverables to ensure they are of the highest quality and meet VLC standards. The funding for the projects will be managed by Surry Community College but the responsibilities for the projects will be shared among all three centers. Projects for FY 2017-18 include continued development of web accessibility guidelines, course content accessibility, State Authorization content and distribution, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance support for local colleges developing mandated five-year compliance plans, a course evaluation pilot project to review the courses developed in FY 2015-16, research and professional development of Open Educational Resources (OER), content mapping of North Carolina Learning Object Repository (NCLOR) resources to Universal General Education Transfer Component (UGETC) courses, and digital applications mapped to UGETC courses. Additional projects and professional development workshops, webinars, and tutorials will be added as results are compiled from the annual system-wide faculty needs survey.

Allocation Amount and Time Period: Funding from state appropriations as follows: Wake Technical Community College, Professional Development Center, $110,000; Fayetteville Technical Community College, Technology Center, $125,000; and Surry Community College, Quality Assessment Center, $415,000 for the period of July 1, 2017, through June 30, 2018 (FY 2017-18).

<u>Fund Availability:</u> Funding is contingent upon the availability of FY 2017-18 State General Fund appropriations and the execution of the Memorandums of Understanding with the colleges.

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