

STATE BOARD OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES
Allocations for Virtual Learning Community Centers
FY 2021-22

Request: The State Board of Community Colleges is requested 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 2021-22. 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.

Strategic Plan References:

Theme: Student Interest and Access

Goal 1: Increase the percentage of North Carolinians, particularly within underserved populations, pursuing and easily accessing education or training through North Carolina community colleges.

- Objective 1.3: Identify and reduce access barriers for all prospective students, particularly among underserved populations.
 - Strategy 1.3.2 Promote more flexible scheduling and instructional delivery formats to reach non-traditional students.

Background: The Virtual Learning Community is a collaborative effort of the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) 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 community 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 (WTCC) 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 (FTCC) 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 (SCC) 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: 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 annual reports to the NCCCS Senior Vice President of Technology and Chief Information Officer.

The VLC Executive Board requires all three centers to submit a report each fiscal year detailing the work of their center. Included in the annual 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 2020-21, the VLC Executive Board recommends funding the current centers at WTCC, FTCC and SCC for FY 2021-22.

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 Reinforced Instruction for Student Excellence (RISE). 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 SCC 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 provides a higher return on investment of System resources and is the vehicle to improve the scalability of these efforts.

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 serves 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 is 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 is managed by SCC but the responsibilities for the projects are shared among all three centers. Projects and professional development for FY 2021-22 include course development, 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 accessibility compliance plans, a course evaluation pilot project to review the courses developed in FY 2020-21, online course facilitation and support of the Career and College Readiness (CCR) course content and the Employability Skills Alignment Program (ESAP)

certification, research and professional development of Open Educational Resources (OER), course mapping and conversion of FLASH content to HTML5 for contribution to the openNCCC platform for VLC courses, expansion of NC Brain machine learning algorithms on the VLC website, and research studies on engaging students in online course environments using synchronous and asynchronous instructional deliveries, online proctoring, advising, and tutoring software platforms, as well as updates to the technology showcase of tools and resources. Additional projects and professional development workshops, webinars, and tutorials will be added throughout the year based on requests by community colleges.

Allocation Amount and Time Period: Funding from state appropriations is as follows: WTCC Professional Development Center, \$110,000; FTCC Technology Center, \$125,000; and SCC Quality Assessment Center, \$415,000 for the period of July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022.

Fund Availability: Funding is contingent upon the availability of FY 2021-22 State General Fund appropriations and the execution of Memorandums of Understanding with the colleges.

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