

STATE BOARD OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES
Outreach and Marketing Contract for the Longleaf Commitment

Request: The State Board of Community Colleges is requested to approve the System Office entering into a contract not to exceed \$725,000 for a statewide awareness campaign for the Longleaf Commitment Grant.

Strategic Plan Reference:

Theme: Student Interest and Access

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

- Objective 1.1: Improve the understanding and perceived value of educational opportunities, including lifelong learning, offered by NC community colleges.
 - 1.1.1: Implement a comprehensive, systemwide marketing and communications plan that focuses on the value of community colleges and promotes the image of the System and our institutions.
- Objective 1.2: Increase student interest and success in industries experiencing skills gaps.
 - 1.2.1: Market the value of technical education and workforce training for jobs/careers.

Background: North Carolina has received a total of \$137.8 million in aid from the Governors Emergency Education Relief (GEER) fund through federal COVID-19 relief packages. To date, the Governor has awarded \$86.4 million of GEER funds, including \$15 million to NC community colleges, to fund tuition assistance grants for students in high-demand workforce training programs.

On May 24, 2021, the Governor’s office announced the “Longleaf Commitment Grant,” which guarantees that eligible 2021 North Carolina high school graduates receive enough financial aid to cover tuition and fees for up to two years to earn an associate degree and/or credits to transfer to a four-year institution. Critical to NC’s attainment goal, this program will facilitate learning recovery and ensure today’s high school graduates do not fall out of the education pipeline for good. The Commitment sends a clear message to students that they are not alone in the pandemic and college is in reach despite the challenging circumstances. The Governor is committing up to \$31.5 million to support this program, which will include \$25.5 million for student aid, \$5 million in matching funds to expand student support services, and \$1 million for communication/outreach and administration.

To help create awareness about the grant program among parents, 2021 high school graduates, and high school guidance counselors, \$725,000 of the GEER funds are being provided to the Community Colleges System Office for outreach efforts. These funds will be used to build upon an already established statewide awareness campaign about educational opportunities and job-training programs at “The Great 58” community colleges. This new campaign would begin as quickly as possible through various media platforms in order to make recent graduates aware of the program and to prompt them to enroll in a curriculum program during the 2021-22 academic year.

Rationale: The System is experienced in running statewide awareness campaigns, having conducted three such efforts as part of the Your Hire Education campaign since the summer of 2019. Working with a marketing firm, we could launch this campaign quickly. The majority of the campaign would be

complete by August 2021. The campaign would build upon an already existing and successful statewide marketing campaign.

Method of Procurement: Section 1.7 of Session Law 2020-97 as amended by Section 3.12 of Session Law 2021-1 allows State departments, institutions, and agencies subject to Article 3 of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes to obtain in the open market necessary supplies, materials, equipment, printing or services to address the COVID-19 pandemic, including purchases that exceed benchmarks established in G.S. 143- 53.1 without the approval of the Department of Administration. A report on these expenditures shall be made a matter of record, and if the expenditure exceeds the benchmark, a report must be made to DOA's Division of Purchase and Contract. This provision applies to all contracts entered into between September 4, 2020, and December 31, 2021.

The System Office has sought a Request for Quotation to develop and implement a campaign. The scope of work includes developing the strategic marketing plan for the current campaign to target several different audiences, including underserved communities; recommendations for placement of advertising across a range of media; updating the Your Hire Education website to include information about this new program; and placement of ads.

Contract Amount and Time Period: The contract is for the period through December 31, 2021, and shall not exceed \$725,000.

Fund Source and Availability: Funding is available through the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEER Fund) as authorized by the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021 (CRRSA), Pub. L. No. 116-260 (December 27, 2020), and awarded to the North Carolina Office of the Governor by the U.S. Department of Education. From these funds, the Office of State Budget and Management has awarded the System Office the funds necessary to enter into the contract described above.

Contact:

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