

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 \$1 million 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 N.C. 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 Governors Emergency Education Relief (GEER) funds through federal COVID-19 relief packages. Through an award of GEER funds, the Longleaf Commitment Grant award was established to provide aid for eligible recent high school graduates. 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 North Carolina’s attainment goal, this program will facilitate learning recovery and help encourage today’s high school graduates stay in the education pipeline. 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’s award has enabled the Longleaf Commitment Grant for eligible 2021 high school graduates and was recently expanded for eligible 2020 high school graduates. As a part of this award, funds were provided for communication/outreach to create awareness about the grant program. The State Board approved FC 01 on June 2, 2021, and FC 04 on October 15, 2021, for the outreach/marketing contract.

In the recently enacted N.C. State budget, state leaders appropriated an additional \$25.5 million from the State Fiscal Recovery Fund (SFRF) for the Longleaf Commitment Community College Grant Program. This expansion will target eligible 2022 high school graduates.

To help create awareness about the grant program among parents, 2022 high school graduates, and high school guidance counselors, up to \$1 million of the SFRF 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 2022-2023 academic year.

Rationale: The System is experienced in running statewide awareness campaigns, having conducted four 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 December 31, 2023. The campaign would build upon an already existing and successful statewide marketing campaign.

Method of Procurement: The System Office has sought a Request for Proposals 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; social media content development; and placement of ads.

Contract Amount and Time Period: The contract is for the period through December 31, 2023, and shall not exceed \$1 million.

Fund Source and Availability: Funding is available through the appropriation of State Fiscal Recovery Fund in Session Law 2021-180.

Contact:

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