

**STATE BOARD OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES**  
**Allocation for Enhancing Online Learning**

**Request:** The State Board of Community Colleges (SBCC) is asked to approve an allocation in an amount not to exceed \$3,000,000 to enhance online learning across the NC Community College System.

**Strategic Plan Reference:** This initiative crosses all four themes of the strategic plan: student interest and access, clear and supported pathways for student success, economic and workforce impact, and system effectiveness.

**Background:** Providing quality, flexible educational opportunities to students has always been key to achieving our state's attainment goals. However, the coronavirus pandemic has elevated this issue to the forefront and making clear the need to offer online learning in areas long considered to only be possible to be delivered face-to-face.

Through private funding, the System Office has engaged the services of a consulting group, Guild Education, to review the System's online education offerings and structure and offer recommendations to better position the colleges for success. While that work is still ongoing and final recommendations are due by early fall, new federal guidelines for the source of funding for this work require all services to be completed by December 30, 2020 and the System Office is accelerating work as a result.

This initiative includes three areas:

1. **Platform improvements:** Improvements to the existing Virtual Learning Community (VLC) Platform, to improve the user experience for students searching for online offerings and for faculty searching for online content.
2. **Quality improvements:** Allocations of funding to colleges to certify courses through Quality Matters and to provide professional development for faculty through micro-credentials in inclusive and supportive online learning. This will ensure a consistent level of quality in online courses throughout the system. If requests for funding exceed available resources, priority will be given to those colleges focusing on courses most frequently taken, courses with the lowest success rates, and courses newly offered online.
3. **Content Improvements:** The VLC's existing offerings include many college transfer courses but are lacking short-term workforce training opportunities – the very training that is critical to driving the state's economic recovery. The System Office is currently seeking grant funds to build out pathways leading to NC Workforce Credentials over the next several years. These funds would kickstart that initiative, focusing primarily on health and science pathways such as biopharma and allied health and, as needed, provide train-the-trainer opportunities for new content for college faculty.

**Rationale:** To meet the state's attainment goals, North Carolina's community colleges to be leaders in flexible learning. If approved, these investments would represent the first steps in that process.

**Budget:** The final cost of the work has not been determined, but the Board is asked to approve up to \$3,000,000 for this project.

**Fund Source and Availability:** Funding is available through the 2020 COVID-19 Recovery Act (Session Law 2020-04) and is contingent upon certification of those funds by the Office of State Budget and Management. At the discretion of the System President, colleges may be allocated any portion of the funds should he determine it to be the most efficient method complete the work.

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