



NORTH CAROLINA BOARD OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION CREDENTIALS FINAL REPORT



North Carolina Board of
Postsecondary Education Credentials

The North Carolina Board of Postsecondary Education Credentials (PSEC) set out to review and make recommendations for the development of a statewide system of postsecondary education with an emphasis on evaluating and scaling industry-valued postsecondary education credentials. Working with member organizations/institutions and using research provided by RTI International, the Board has developed a series of recommendations for postsecondary education credentials in North Carolina. Below is a summary of the Board's recommendations to ensure that all North Carolinians have access to high-quality, industry-valued postsecondary education credentials.

RECOMMENDATIONS IN BRIEF

1. Target: Support the statewide postsecondary attainment goal set by myFutureNC.

Key Steps:

- Review the recommendations of myFutureNC, which used labor market data and stakeholder engagement to determine a statewide postsecondary attainment goal, including a numeric and measurable metric for attainment as well as an anticipated end date.
- Partner with myFutureNC to determine which types of degrees, certificates, certifications, etc. will count toward the goal and how progress will be tracked.
- Assess alignment of the statewide goal with system-level efforts toward developing and reaching an attainment goal.
- Consider myFutureNC's recommendations for which agency or system should be named to monitor and publicize the statewide goal.

2. Alignment: Establish an NC-specific credentials-of-value list.

Key Steps:

- Develop a list of high-value credentials and programs aligned with industries and/or occupations determined to be high priority by the governor's office, state workforce and education entities, and regional workforce and education organizations.
- Choose the types of credentials to be included in the list, such as certifications, certificates, degrees, and/or licenses.
- Assess the value of the national database of credentials being compiled by the Credential Engine to help populate the list with industry-valued credentials that are transferrable across state lines.
- Maintain and manage changes to the list each year (should be managed by the NC Community College System in partnership with the Department of Commerce).

3. Incentives: Incentivize credentials aligned with in-demand jobs.

Key Steps:

- Offer monetary incentives for participation in programs leading to credentials of value and/or completion of credentials of value.
- Determine whether the incentives will be student-, institution-, and/or employer focused. Examples include student scholarships or other monetary incentives (e.g., partial tuition rebates) for reporting third-party credentials, additional funds for institutions, or training funds to employers that produce employees with credentials of value.

- Provide resources that enable institutions or participants to report data on participation and completion, which will be used to track the incentive program's reach and impacts.
- Identify an agency or system to monitor and implement the incentive program. Potential leaders include the NC Community College System for an incentive system focused on institutions and students, or the NC Department of Commerce for a program focused on employers.
- Recommend funding to develop, implement, and monitor the incentive program.

4. Dissemination: Market program quality and career path alignment to students.

Key Steps:

- Endorse the NC Department of Commerce's effort to develop a user-friendly, interactive web platform (nccareers.org) to share program-specific information on related career pathways (including related credentials), employment supply-demand, and return-on-investment metrics.
- Publicize short-term continuing education programs aligned with credentials of value and stackable credential opportunities across both short-term and degree programs.
- Incorporate 2- and 4-year programs by highlighting the career-related skills related to learning outcomes for each field of study.
- Use the online platform to support ongoing program improvement efforts.
- Recommend staff and funding to manage the online platform being developed by the NC Department of Commerce, implement a marketing campaign around the portal, and (during the development process) scope out specific uses of the portal by career advisors in NCWorks, community colleges, universities, and other workforce and education partners.

5. Data: Collect data on certifications.

Key Steps:

- Support the NC Community College System's efforts to acquire certification data through a partnership with the National Student Clearinghouse.
- Scope options for a centralized reporting system for student certification attempts and completions at 2-year institutions that already collect this data.
- Follow guidelines from the Data Sharing Project on what data elements should be collected by education systems and certifying bodies to maximize the possibility of data sharing and share these guidelines with institutions. Where data sharing may not be possible, develop work-arounds such as providing resources for the agencies that keep the data to run analyses for other agencies.

6. Military Credentials: Expand the work related to military credit for prior learning.

Key Steps:

- Continue to advance an online web portal (joint effort between the UNC System Office and the NC Community College System set to launch in fall 2019).
- Connect with NC Independent Colleges and Universities on similar efforts for military credit for prior learning.
- Develop a process for consistent transcripts.
- Create bridge and gap courses to expand course credits awarded for military experience.
- Recommend staff and funding to expand and support military credit for prior learning work within the NC Community College System.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT FOR THE NC BOARD OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION CREDENTIALS

The North Carolina Board of Postsecondary Education Credentials (PSEC) was established in 2017 by the NC General Assembly to review and make recommendations for the development of a statewide system of postsecondary education with an emphasis on evaluating and scaling industry-valued postsecondary education credentials. The Board was charged with ensuring that appropriate courses of study and vocational training are available to North Carolinians.

To meet the legislative vision, the Board of PSEC agreed to achieve the following goals:

1. Assess the hiring challenges faced by State employers due to lack of education, certification or training of applicants.
2. Assess the ability of State residents to access industry-valued credentials.
3. Identify alternative ways in which people gain workforce skills and experience that are not represented by 4-year or 2-year degrees.
4. Create a plan to ensure that employer-valued credentials are readily available in the geographic locations and industry sectors needed.
5. Create a plan for monitoring the value of postsecondary nondegree credentials.

The Board produced actionable recommendations on the following:

1. Establishment of a state goal to ensure that the appropriate percentage of the State's adult citizens hold degrees, certificates, or other high-quality postsecondary credentials.
2. Identification of guidelines to ensure value and quality of a nondegree.
3. Understanding of the various levels of skill and knowledge credentials signify, and how to accurately convey that information to employers, students and trainees, and providers of postsecondary education.

KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Certifications refer to *industry-recognized certifications* or *industry-based certifications* not issued by postsecondary institutions. Industry-recognized and industry-based certifications are developed and offered by third-party, non-education organizations associated with specific industries.

Examples include the Certificate in Medical Assisting (CMA), Cisco Certified Entry Networking Technician, National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) certification, Manufacturing Skill Standards Council (MSSC) Certified Production Technician, and C++ Associate Programmer Certification.

Certificates refer to credit or non-credit-bearing certificates issued by postsecondary institutions. Programs leading to certificates may also prepare students for certifications. Certificate programs are offered mainly by community colleges and for-profit schools, although some 4-year public and private nonprofit institutions offer them as well. Certificate programs vary in length, including short-term certificate programs that last for less than a year, medium-term certificate programs that last from 1 to 2 years, and longer-term programs that take from 2 to 4 years to complete.

Examples include human resources management certificates; hydraulics, engineering, and transmissions certificates; cybersecurity support certificates; and database programming certificates.

Skills-based short courses refer to intensive courses that last for less than 1 year and focus solely on preparing students for jobs in specific fields. These courses are offered by industry and by postsecondary institutions (including workforce continuing education). They can stand on their own or be incorporated into other credentialing programs (such as certificate programs). At the end of these courses, students may earn a credential (such as a short-term certificate or a certification) or compile a portfolio. Some of these courses, including coding boot camps, offer job-placement programs or job-placement guarantees.

Credentials of value refer to a variety of academic and/or industry-recognized credentials used to designate programs of high value to the workforce pipeline. *Value* is often defined in terms of labor market value, with the attainment of a job in the field and/or increased wages defining value; however, the Lumina Foundation and Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce have also recognized that states sometimes consider credentials that enable students to be employed in fields that may not pay well but are valuable to society (e.g., first responders or child care teachers). These credentials are presented as a list to be referenced by state agencies and can apply to the secondary, postsecondary, or both levels. Generally, the list focuses on third-party certifications, but it may also include certificates and degrees offered by postsecondary institutions, licenses, and/or programs leading to credentials.

Postsecondary attainment goal refers to a state-level target for the number or percentage of the working population with a postsecondary credential. The types of credentials counted toward the goal vary by state and may include 4-year degrees, 2-year degrees, certificates, and/or certifications. The goal may also be specified to include only high-quality credentials (with quality being defined by the state) or a certain age group within the working population.

MEASURING AND ENSURING QUALITY OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION CREDENTIALS

Measuring quality in postsecondary education credentials can present a challenge because there are many ways to define quality and there are varying levels of tracking how/when/where credentials are awarded. Other states and national groups (such as the Lumina Foundation and Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce) are assessing credential quality through measures such as

- Program completion rates
- Percentage of completers that receive government assistance after program completion
- Employment (in field, if possible) of program completers at certain intervals after completion
- Wages/salaries of program completers at certain intervals
- Wage premiums (analysis of wages of those with/without the credential)
- Demonstrating employment supply and demand data

It is important to note that, with postsecondary education, there are quality considerations in terms of both the institution or program awarding the credentials and the quality of the credential. Most other states are defining the quality of the credential based on alignment with labor market needs/demand as shown through regional and state commerce data.

The following are examples of quality procedures and oversight bodies that are in place in North Carolina to ensure quality at the institution or program level.

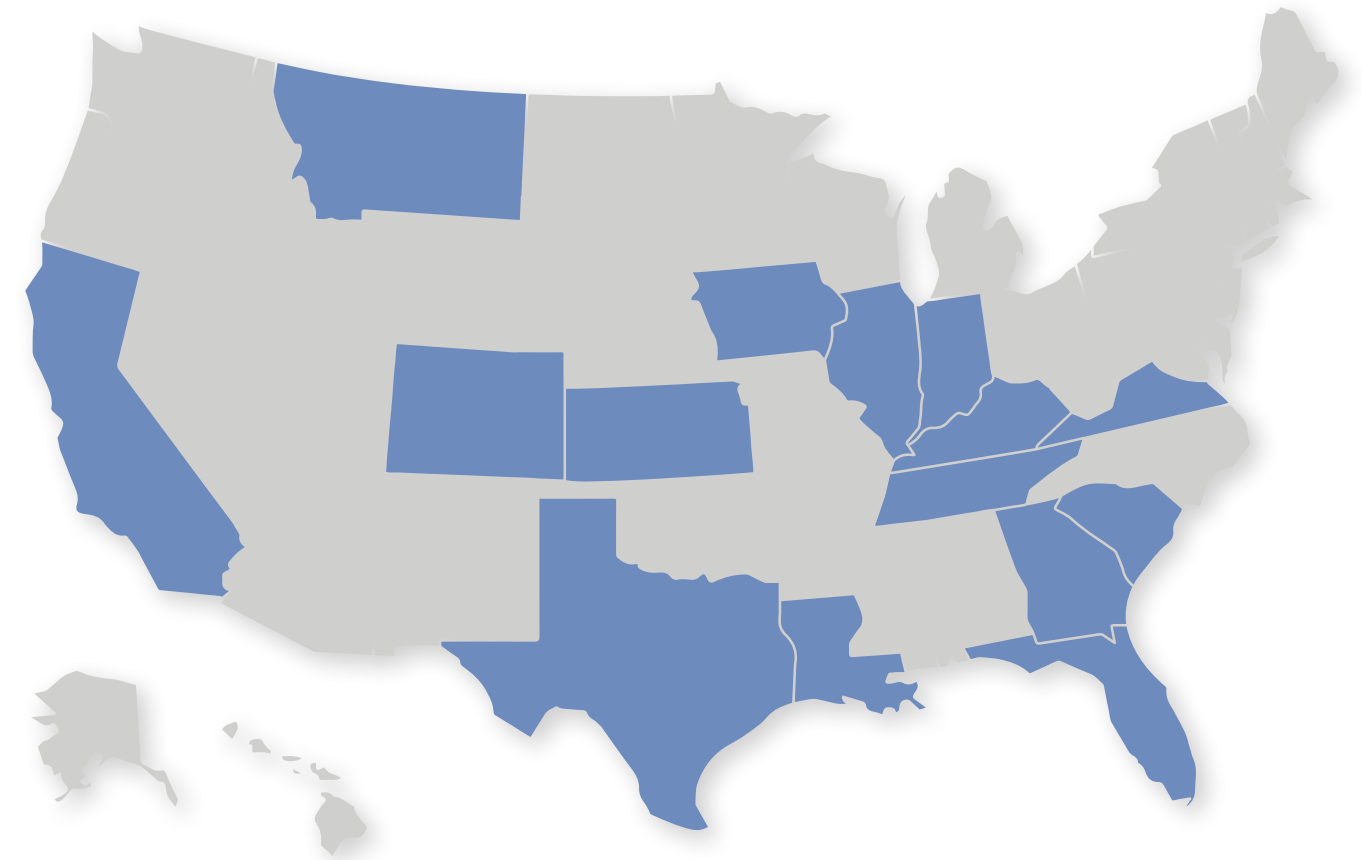
- Accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) (community colleges, universities, and colleges)
- Office of Proprietary Schools (licensing process)
- The Council on Integrity in Results and Reporting (Project Shift is the only NC boot camp with data listed on the Council on Integrity in Results and Reporting website)

Measuring and ensuring quality is one of the greatest areas of improvement for postsecondary education credential work in many states—not just in North Carolina. A key part of the work is considering what quality is and how it is determined so that consumers can be provided with information about program value and return on investment.

EXAMINING BEST PRACTICES

From December 2018 through January 2019, RTI International collected information on postsecondary credential goals and certification data collection in 15 states through interviews with state postsecondary and workforce leaders and through documentation reviews. RTI collected information on certification data collection, goal setting, and industry alignment of programs and goals. Several recommendations outlined in this report are based on best practices identified through this research that are applicable to the North Carolina context.

States were selected for the study if they were collecting certification data, incentivizing postsecondary credential attainment, connecting credentials with high-demand career paths, collecting industry certification data and aligning certificates with industry needs, and/or located in the southeastern United States (see Appendix B for a list of contacts from each state and Appendix C for more detail on each of the states). The 15 states were



- California
- Colorado
- Florida
- Georgia
- Illinois
- Indiana
- Iowa
- Kansas
- Kentucky
- Louisiana
- Montana
- South Carolina
- Tennessee
- Texas
- Virginia

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: CERTIFICATES AND DEGREES BY INSTITUTION*

INSTITUTION NAME	CERTIFICATES (ALL TYPES)	ASSOCIATE DEGREES	BACHELOR'S DEGREES	GRADUATE DEGREES
Alamance Community College	1130	591	-	-
Alexander Paul Institute of Hair Design	32	-	-	-
Anson College of Cosmetology	2	-	-	-
Apex School of Theology	-	21	72	63
Appalachian State University	-	-	4041	804
Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College	553	921	-	-
Aveda Institute-Chapel Hill	147	-	-	-
Barton College	-	-	269	22
Beaufort County Community College	118	280	-	-
Belmont Abbey College	-	-	313	-
Bennett College	-	-	73	-
Beyond Measure Barbering Institute	30	-	-	-
Bladen Community College	156	209	-	-
Blue Ridge Community College	323	305	-	-
Brevard College	-	-	164	-
Brightwood College-Charlotte	184	12	-	-
Brunswick Community College	181	300	-	-
Bull City Durham Beauty and Barber College	7	-	-	-
Cabarrus College of Health Sciences	3	90	30	15
Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute	156	710	-	-
Campbell University	-	74	912	702
Cape Fear Community College	584	1338	-	-
Carolina Christian College	-	2	4	1
Carolina College of Biblical Studies	-	15	15	-
Carolina College of Hair Design	23	-	-	-
Carolina School of Broadcasting	23	-	-	-
Carolinas College of Health Sciences	33	125	-	-
Carteret Community College	257	242	-	-
Catawba College	-	-	287	3
Catawba Valley Community College	130	689	-	-
Center for Massage	48	-	-	-

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS): 2016-17

NOTE: Certificates include awards of less than 1 academic year, awards of at least 1 but less than 2 academic years, and awards of at least 2 but less than 4 academic years. These awards are referred to as certificates, but in some cases may actually be postsecondary diplomas.

INSTITUTION NAME	CERTIFICATES (ALL TYPES)	ASSOCIATE DEGREES	BACHELOR'S DEGREES	GRADUATE DEGREES
Central Carolina Community College	602	583	-	-
Central Piedmont Community College	941	2056	-	-
Chamberlain University-North Carolina	-	-	-	-
Charlotte Christian College and Theological Seminary	-	5	11	3
Chowan University	-	-	209	7
Cleveland Community College	491	303	-	-
Coastal Carolina Community College	790	701	-	-
College of the Albemarle	231	291	-	-
College of Wilmington	91	-	-	-
Craven Community College	199	341	-	-
Daoist Traditions College of Chinese Medical Arts	-	-	-	26
Davidson College	-	-	503	-
Davidson County Community College	970	625	-	-
DeVry University-North Carolina	-	7	34	50
Duke University	-	-	2446	3924
Durham Beauty Academy	17	-	-	-
Durham Technical Community College	494	481	-	-
East Carolina University	-	-	4883	1651
Edgecombe Community College	209	333	-	-
Elizabeth City State University	-	-	261	17
Elon University	-	-	1635	251
Empire Beauty School-Charlotte	29	-	-	-
Empire Beauty School-Concord	43	-	-	-
Empire Beauty School-E Greensboro	30	-	-	-
Empire Beauty School-Pineville	61	-	-	-
Empire Beauty School-West Greensboro	39	-	-	-
Empire Beauty School-Winston-Salem	29	-	-	-
Fayetteville State University	-	-	1016	171
Fayetteville Technical Community College	2396	1852	-	-
Forsyth Technical Community College	504	1046	-	-
Gardner-Webb University	-	28	593	566
Gaston College	335	808	-	-
Grace College of Barbering	8	-	-	-
Grace College of Divinity	23	10	8	-
Greensboro College	-	-	111	54
Guilford College	-	-	505	-
Guilford Technical Community College	1038	1447	-	-
Gwinnett College	93	-	-	-

INSTITUTION NAME	CERTIFICATES (ALL TYPES)	ASSOCIATE DEGREES	BACHELOR'S DEGREES	GRADUATE DEGREES
Halifax Community College	478	138	-	-
Harrison College-Morrisville	-	73	-	-
Haywood Community College	383	309	-	-
Health And Style Institute	142	-	-	-
Heritage Bible College	-	3	11	-
High Point University	-	-	939	79
Hood Theological Seminary	-	-	-	39
Isothermal Community College	340	263	-	-
James Sprunt Community College	143	168	-	-
John Wesley University	-	-	19	8
Johnson & Wales University-Charlotte	-	363	334	-
Johnson C Smith University	-	-	232	54
Johnston Community College	466	667	-	-
Jung Tao School of Classical Chinese Medicine	-	-	-	21
King's College	82	107	-	-
Lees-McRae College	-	-	326	-
Lenoir Community College	437	403	-	-
Lenoir-Rhyne University	-	-	277	228
Leons Beauty School Inc	109	-	-	-
Living Arts College	107	-	34	-
Livingstone College	-	2	151	-
Louisburg College	-	142	-	-
Mars Hill University	-	-	229	3
Martin Community College	63	76	-	-
Mayland Community College	163	122	-	-
McDowell Technical Community College	91	150	-	-
Meredith College	-	-	424	167
Methodist University	-	2	404	73
Mid-Atlantic Christian University	2	6	33	-
Miller-Motte College-Cary	134	83	-	-
Miller-Motte College-Fayetteville	541	83	-	-
Miller-Motte College-Greenville	209	52	-	-
Miller-Motte College-Jacksonville	370	112	-	-
Miller-Motte College-Raleigh	206	103	-	-
Miller-Motte College-Wilmington	87	478	126	-
Mitchell Community College	272	429	-	-
Mitchell's Hair Styling Academy-Raleigh	37	-	-	-
Mitchells Hairstyling Academy-Wilson	4	-	-	-

INSTITUTION NAME	CERTIFICATES (ALL TYPES)	ASSOCIATE DEGREES	BACHELOR'S DEGREES	GRADUATE DEGREES
Montgomery Community College	361	89	-	-
Montreat College	-	14	153	61
MyComputerCareer.edu-Raleigh	757	-	-	-
NASCAR Technical Institute	634	-	-	-
Nash Community College	412	387	-	-
North Carolina A & T State University	-	-	1524	458
North Carolina Central University	-	-	1132	658
North Carolina State University at Raleigh	-	157	5632	3352
North Carolina Wesleyan College	-	-	575	-
Pamlico Community College	283	62	-	-
Paul Mitchell the School-Fayetteville	89	-	-	-
Paul Mitchell the School-Gastonia	158	-	-	-
Paul Mitchell the School-Raleigh	76	-	-	-
Pfeiffer University	-	-	255	255
Piedmont Community College	222	132	-	-
Piedmont International University	3	6	57	78
Pinnacle Institute of Cosmetology	28	-	-	-
Pitt Community College	1501	1261	-	-
Queens University of Charlotte	-	-	422	283
Randolph Community College	527	1123	-	-
Richmond Community College	403	388	-	-
Roanoke-Chowan Community College	107	68	-	-
Robeson Community College	166	245	-	-
Rockingham Community College	134	266	-	-
Rowan-Cabarrus Community College	613	821	-	-
Saint Augustine's University	-	-	137	-
Salem College	6	-	238	29
Sampson Community College	102	188	-	-
Sandhills Community College	284	550	-	-
Shaw University	-	-	183	24
Shepherds Theological Seminary	-	-	-	23
Sherrill's University of Barber & Cosmetology	41	-	-	-
South Piedmont Community College	249	248	-	-
South University-High Point	-	14	73	18
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary	21	6	64	347
Southeastern Community College	187	170	-	-
Southeastern Institute-Charlotte	186	-	-	-
Southwestern Community College	189	405	-	-

INSTITUTION NAME	CERTIFICATES (ALL TYPES)	ASSOCIATE DEGREES	BACHELOR'S DEGREES	GRADUATE DEGREES
St. Andrews University	-	-	127	18
Stanly Community College	349	360	-	-
Strayer University-North Carolina	-	102	201	353
Surry Community College	199	448	-	-
The Art Institute of Charlotte	10	92	48	-
The Art Institute of Raleigh-Durham	6	19	63	-
Tri-County Community College	15	157	-	-
University of Mount Olive	4	193	617	56
University of North Carolina at Asheville	-	-	802	6
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	7	-	5811	3436
University of North Carolina at Charlotte	-	-	5266	1892
University of North Carolina at Greensboro	-	-	3249	1055
University of North Carolina at Pembroke	-	-	1006	240
University of North Carolina School of the Arts	-	-	199	37
University of North Carolina Wilmington	-	-	3484	720
University of Phoenix-North Carolina	-	-	103	20
Vance-Granville Community College	214	511	-	-
Virginia College-Greensboro	148	29	-	-
Wake Forest University	-	-	1307	1260
Wake Technical Community College	3448	2627	-	-
Warren Wilson College	-	-	152	24
Watts School of Nursing	74	-	-	-
Wayne Community College	739	501	-	-
Western Carolina University	-	-	2224	535
Western Piedmont Community College	83	381	-	-
Wilkes Community College	263	429	-	-
William Peace University	-	-	209	-
Wilson Community College	239	272	-	-
Wingate University	-	-	353	409
Winston Salem Barber School	42	-	-	-
Winston-Salem State University	-	-	1135	131

APPENDIX B: TABLE: OVERVIEW OF STATE RESEARCH AND CONTACTS

Overview of state research and contacts

STATE	DOCUMENT REVIEW	INTERVIEW AND DOCUMENT REVIEW	CONTACT
California		X	Jean Claude Mbomeda, Program Assistant, California Community Colleges
Colorado	X		
Florida		X	Eric Godin, Associate Vice Chancellor for Research & Analytics, Florida Department of Education
Georgia	X		
Illinois		X	Jay Brooks, Director for Research and Policy Studies, Illinois Community College Board
Indiana	X		
Iowa	X		
Kansas	X		
Kentucky		X	David Mahan, Executive Director of Data, Research and Analytics, Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education Alicia Crouch, Vice Chancellor of Research and Policy Analysis, Kentucky Community and Technical College System
Louisiana		X	Ingrid Cook, Director of Institutional Research and Data Quality, Louisiana Community and Technical College System Will Seaman, Director of Workforce Alignment, Louisiana Community and Technical College System
Montana	X		
South Carolina	X		
Tennessee	X		
Texas		X	Ginger Gossman, Senior Director for Innovation and Policy Development, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
Virginia		X	Lori Dwyer, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Workforce Policy, Virginia Community College System

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