On The Cutting Edge

*Showcasing **Distance Learning** in the **NC Community College System***

Senate Bill 622: NCCCS-UNC 2+2 E-Learning Initiative

In passing Senate Bill 622, the General Assembly approved $1 million in recurring funds for the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) and $1 million in non-recurring funds for the University of North Carolina (UNC) System to boost the state's distance learning initiatives, especially in the area of teacher education.

The provision mandates that NC community colleges and UNC System schools continue a partnership to address the critical teacher shortage facing the state and nation, now and in the future. The areas to be addressed in this legislation include 2+2 online teacher education programs, professional development, student tracking, and technology infrastructure.

The budget proposals and plan of work for the 2+2 E-Learning Initiative were approved by the State Board of Community Colleges on November 18, 2005. Highlights of the initiative follow:

Online Degree Courses in VLC

1) A three-year plan for developing online courses that are not currently available in the Virtual Learning Community (VLC) Library to complete the following degrees:

- Biology Education
- Birth-Kindergarten Education
- Elementary Education
- Math Education
- Middle School Education
- Science Education
- Special Education

These new online courses will be developed either through the VLC Centers or a

Request for Proposal (RFP) process that will allow individual colleges to develop courses to share with the VLC to complete degrees for online delivery.

Online Student Support Services

2) A three-year plan to expand the partnership with the Center for Occupational Research and Development (CORD) to develop online student support services. One of the greatest challenges for the NCCCS is the lack of funds for professional development of faculty and student services staff to support online teaching, advising, financial aid, and counseling services. In order for the online teaching and learning process to be successful, it is essential that both faculty and student services staff have expertise in the online process.

New Vision – New Name

On The Cutting Edge represents a new vision for the NCCCS Virtual Learning Community (VLC) newsletter. For details, see page 8.

Highlights In This Issue:

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CFNC Teacher Education Module

3) A plan to create a Teacher Education Module for the College Foundation of North Carolina (CFNC) website, www.cfnc.org. This module will facilitate the exploration of the teaching career by potential students in the 2+2 E-Learning Initiative using the collaborative online technology of the CFNC website.

Infrastructure Upgrades

4) A three-year plan of work for the technology infrastructure that will be provided to support the NCCCS-UNC 2+2 E-Learning Initiative. Recommended purchases include a learning object repository and several commercial products: Blackboard 6.3, Elluminate collaboration software, Open Source CMS, and Late Night Labs online lab simulation software.

Student Tracking

5) A plan for tracking K-20 (kindergarten through graduate) student data in North Carolina. Tracking student data will give decision-makers the necessary tools to make informed assessments of students and schools in the state. In collaboration with the State Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (SOICC) and the Common Follow-up System, UNC and NCCCS will identify additional data that should be tracked on students from K-12 though community colleges and UNC System schools, with the possibility of including employment information, as well.

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Want to Know More About NCCCS Distance Learning?

http://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/
Distance_Learning/index.html

SCORE: Southern Regional Education Board's "Learning Objects" Initiative

The NCCCS has been involved in the planning stages of SCORE, a new learning objects repository project spearheaded by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB).

Learning Object Repository

SCORE stands for *Sharable Content Object Repositories for Education*, a project designed to allow participants to share pieces of digital content, called learning objects, that make up online courses. The goal is to allow SREB member states to multiply benefits and divide costs by sharing digital learning content, resources, and expertise.

Multiple learning object repositories located in member states will be linked through a registry that provides a single point of access. The registry does not store the content; rather, it references the URL where the content is permanently located. A peer-review process will be created to ensure the quality and consistency of the learning objects.

Improving Teaching and Learning

The SCORE project is also intended to improve its members' digital knowledge and capabilities by helping teachers and faculty learn how to use the content effectively to improve teaching and learning. Currently, the NCCCS is involved in the initial planning of the SCORE project, and a memorandum of agreement is being drafted so that state partners can be identified.

More information about SCORE and learning objects can be found by going to http://www.sreb.org/programs/EdTech/SCORE/index.asp.

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Project IDEAL: NCCCS Continues Participation in National Distance Education Project for Basic Skills

North Carolina Basic Skills programs are continuing their participation in a national distance learning project, Project IDEAL. The project is a consortium of 13 states working with the University of Michigan to develop effective distance education programs for adult learners in Basic Skills programs.

Project IDEAL Support Center
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The Project IDEAL Support Center at the University of Michigan helps consortium states by developing training materials and web-based tools, as well as providing technical support in the areas of teacher training, research design, data collection, data analysis, and reporting.

Crossroads Café for ESL Students

North Carolina was one of the first states to enter the project and started funding local programs in 2003 to use the Crossroads Café Wrap-Around series for English as a Second Language students in a hybrid distance learning setting (using both face-to-face and distance, self-directed learning). Programs were funded for $12,000 each to serve at least 16 students per program.

2005 Project Sites

In July 2005, the State Board of Community Colleges approved $153,000 for 13 community colleges and two community-based organizations to operate Basic Skills Project IDEAL distance learning projects for the period July 18, 2005 through December 31, 2005.

The following colleges received funding: Alamance Community College, Brunswick Community College, Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute, Central Carolina Community College, Central Piedmont Community College, Martin Community College, Mayland Community College, Pitt Community College, South Piedmont Community College, Stanly Community College, Tri-County Community College, Wilkes Community College, and Wilson Technical Community College. The following community-based organizations also received funding: Literacy Council of Wake County and Reading Connections.

New Grant Funding

The University of Michigan has been working with Basic Skills programs in 13 states, including North Carolina, to help states provide distance education programs through Project IDEAL. The United States Department of Education has just announced a new three-year grant, which has been awarded to the University of Michigan and the Sacramento County Office of Education to continue working with these states.

Assessing Instructor Strengths as Distance Educators

New Project IDEAL grant initiatives include creation of a web-based tool to help teachers assess their strengths as distance instructors and a second web-based tool to assess their knowledge of ways to use technology to improve the quality of classroom instruction. The web-based tool to assess faculty strengths as distance instructors will be available in Fall 2006. The web-based tool on technology will be available Fall 2007.

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Project IDEAL provided funding for an innovative distance learning program for ESL students in NC

ITS Data and NCIH Consolidation Project Almost Complete

A system-wide project to consolidate Information Technology Services (ITS) data and North Carolina Information Highway (NCIH) services into one fund and to migrate colleges to the industry standard for videoconferencing has led to cost savings for the System and, as a result, to additional colleges being able to afford video capability.

Consolidation Project Goals

The original goals of the Consolidation Project, as outlined in NCCCS numbered memo CC05-044, included the following:

- Upgrade the System's videoconferencing network to the current H.323 industry standard;
- Allow for the expansion of video services to all main campuses;
- Facilitate the expansion of data infrastructure at each college;
- Move all budget management to the System Office.

Consolidation Project Highlights

The results of the Consolidation Project include the following:

- Useable bandwidth has increased by at least 50 percent;
- 15 new video sites have been added (note: individual colleges may have multiple video sites);
- 34 colleges have migrated to H.323; and
- 49 colleges now have video-conferencing capability.

For details on the project, go to www.ncih.net/ccproject.html.

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NCCCS Instructors Teach Online Classes for National Audiences

NC community college instructors are creating innovative online courses for a variety of audiences, including those who access online courses from ed2go ® (www.ed2go.com), a national online course reseller that many NCCCS colleges use to provide continuing education courses for online students.

Creating Online Courses

Two instructors who have developed ed2go® courses are Bryan Scyphers from Davidson County Community College, who teaches the course *Handling Medical Emergencies*, and Neal Bevans from Western Piedmont Community College, who teaches *Introduction to Criminal Law* and *Legal Nurse Consulting.*

Teaching a course for ed2go® involves having a proposal accepted for development; creating the course description, lessons, assignments and test questions; and being available daily to monitor class discussion boards.

These instructors and many others are providing high-quality online courses for an increasingly national market through locally developed and/or nationally marketed courses.

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BLET School Directors Use Blackboard for State Testing

Numerous NC community colleges are using the e-learning software platform Blackboard to administer, grade, and track the unit tests required for Basic Law Enforcement Training (BLET).

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BLET Online Testing Strategy

BLET school directors willing to share this Blackboard-based test administration strategy with others include Beverly Deans (bdeans@waynecc.edu) at Wayne Community College, Gordon Knight (gknight@mitchell.cc.nc.us) at Mitchell Community College, and Tony Pendergrass (pendergrass@vgcc.edu) at Vance-Granville Community College.

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Welcome, Dr. Sharon Tanner

Dr. Sharon J. Tanner joined the System Office staff on November 14, 2005, as the new Associate Vice President for Instructional Development and Technology.

Dr. Tanner has served as the Dean of Allied Health and Nursing at Roane State Community College in Harriman, TN, for the past eight years. Previously, she served as a faculty member, program director, and administrator in both two- and four-year college settings.

She completed her doctoral studies in Educational Administration and Policy Studies, with an emphasis in assessment and evaluation, at the University of Tennessee. For the past ten years, she has been active in accreditation and was recently elected to the Board of Commissioners of the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission. She also has been active in distance and online learning and has been instrumental in the development and delivery of regional and statewide educational programming.

Dr. Tanner's major areas of responsibility include distance learning initiatives and curriculum development.

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Distance Learning Data Online

Hot off the press are the distance learning (DL) statistics for the 2004-2005 academic year for curriculum courses and the 2004 calendar year for continuing education courses.

The system totals follow:

Curriculum Data (2004-2005)

Delivery Method	Students*	FTE
Internet	138,565	14,234
Telecourse	13,595	1,299
Teleweb	3,862	203
Two-Way Video	8,681	828
Hybrid	16,221	1,879
Web-Supported	54,327	6,338
Digital Media	100	8
Other DL	3,346	352
System Total - DL	238,697	25,141

* duplicated headcount
Source: NCCCS Data Warehouse

Continuing Education Data (2004)

Delivery Method	Students*	FTE
Internet	22,549	877.2
Telecourse	247	11.6
Teleweb	101	4.9
Two-Way Video	114	6.3
Hybrid	38	3.0
Web-Supported	657	85.3
Digital Media	0	0
Other DL	2,842	81.0
System Total - DL	26,548	1,069.3

* duplicated headcount
Source: NCCCS Data Warehouse

Local College Statistics Available Online

The most recent college-by college statistics are now available online.

For local distance learning statistics, go to the following link on the NCCCS website:

http://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/Distance_ Learning/distance_learning_data.htm.

Revised DL Data Codes

Earlier this year, the Distance Learning Council approved much needed changes to the distance learning codes in the Data Warehouse, which is the source of the DL data for the NCCCS.

In an effort to capture and better define the "other" category, three new codes were added for hybrid, web-supported, and digital media. This code change will allow for more specific data analysis.

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What is the Virtual Learning Community (VLC)?

The Virtual Learning Community (VLC) is a collaborative effort of all of North Carolina's Community Colleges to increase the quality and availability of online learning and support services.

The VLC began as an idea of the Distance Learning Consortium and VLC Steering Committee, and in 1999, this idea became a reality. The VLC has been growing ever since, with hundreds of educators from the NCCCS participating.

2005-2006 Virtual Learning Community (VLC) Development and Editing Centers

For the 2005-2006 funding cycle, Carl D. Perkins Funds or State Board Reserve Funds are funding Virtual Learning Community (VLC) Centers at four colleges within the NCCCS.

Virtual Learning Community Centers

VLC Centers serve as course development and editing centers for the NCCCS Virtual Learning Community. The four centers funded for 2005-2006 are located at Robeson Community College, Fayetteville Technical Community College, Surry Community College, and Mayland Community College.

The VLC Centers have the following goals:

VLC Center 1: Robeson CC
AAS Course Editing Center

(Center Director, Crystal Edmonds)

This Center will edit up to 30 of the Associate in Applied Science (AAS) courses in the VLC Library.

VLC Center 2: Fayetteville Technical CC
AAS Course Development Center

(Center Director, Cheryl Thomas)

This Center will develop six to eight AAS courses to add to the VLC Library. Currently, this Center is planning to develop the following courses:

- **EDU 234 Infants, Toddlers, and Twos** (to complete the Infant, Toddlers, and Twos stand alone certificate)
- **EDU 271 Education Technology** (to complete the Early Childhood Education degree)
- **FIP 220 Fire Fighting Strategies** (one of three courses needed to complete the Fire Protection Technology degree)
- **MKT 221 Consumer Behavior**

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- **MKT 230 Public Relations**
- **OST 148 Medical Coding, Billing, and Insurance** (to complete the Medical Office Administration degree)
- **OST 149 Medical Legal Issues** (to complete the Medical Office Administration degree)

VLC Center 3: Surry CC
AA/AS Course Development and Editing

(Center Director, Candace Ring)

This Center will develop ten Associate in Arts/Associate in Science (AA/AS) courses to add to the VLC Library and edit approximately ten AA/AS courses in the VLC Library.

Currently, this Center is planning to develop the following courses:

- **COM 130 Nonverbal Communication**
- **COM 140 Intercultural Communication**
- **COM 150 Introduction to Mass Communication**
- **ECO 151 Survey of Economics**
- **ENG 233 Major American Writers**
- **GEO 112 Cultural Geography**
- **HIS 112 World Civilizations II**
- **HUM 170 The Holocaust**
- **PHI 210 History of Philosophy**
- **SOC 225 Social Diversity**

VLC Center 4: Mayland CC
Web Development Center

(Center Director, Jon Wilmesherr)

This Center will expand the functionality and databases of the new VLC/Distance Learning website, which is under development.

The VLC/Distance Learning website will have links for students, faculty, and administrators, and will provide information on distance learning courses, programs, instruction, and professional development.

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Mark Your Calendars Now!

**2006
NC Community College
Association of Distance Learning
Conference**

February 20-21, 2006

Ramada Inn, Burlington

**For details, go to
www.ncccadl.org**

A-B Tech To Host 2006 Distance Learning Alliance Conference

The 2006 North Carolina Distance Learning Alliance (NCDLA) Conference, *K-20 Working Together to Build Lifelong e-Learning,* will be hosted at Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College on May 15 -17.

Blended Technology Delivery

As before, "blended technology delivery" of conference sessions will be available. Presenters will have a choice of face-to-face, online, and/or videoconferencing delivery methods.

Parks Todd DL Educator Award

A conference highlight will be the recognition of the 2006 Parks Todd Distance Learning Educator Award winner. Nominations are currently being accepted.

For more information on the Alliance and the conference, go to www.dlalliance.org.

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NC-NET Provides Online Professional Development

The NCCCS Office established the North Carolina Network for Excellence in Teaching (NC-NET) in 2003 to create an infrastructure to support comprehensive faculty development within the System.

NC-NET Academy

An exciting component of NC-NET is the online NC-NET Academy, a program that offers six-week, facilitator-led professional development courses via Blackboard.

Academy participants receive tuition scholarships and a $100 course-completion stipend.

Upcoming Academy courses include *Service Learning in the Community College* and *Embracing Diversity in the Classroom.*

Professional Development Focus

NC-NET focuses on the following programmatic areas: Teaching and Learning; Discipline-Specific; Career and Personal Development; Technology in the Classroom; and Online Teaching.

NC-NET Regional Centers

The following colleges serve as NC-NET Regional Centers: Fayetteville Technical Community College, Martin Community College, and Southwestern Community College.

To access the resources of NC-NET, go to www.nc-net.info.

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The Newsletter That Has a New Name

The Virtual Learning Community was expanded in the spring of 2004 to include all distance learning delivery methods. As a result, the *Virtual Learning Community Newsletter* was renamed *Expanding the Virtual Learning Community*.

Now, the newsletter is expanding again, with an even greater vision and a new name, *On The Cutting Edge.*

New Vision, New Name

In order to expand the scope of the newsletter, several System Office staff members have been recruited to join Jalaine Gross, NCCCS Distance Learning Coordinator, in creating this and future editions of the newsletter. The goal is to include distance learning news and initiatives that impact curriculum, continuing education, basic skills, and other NCCCS programs.

Staff Contacts for Newsletter

The following NCCCS Office staff are helping with the production and editing of the distance learning newsletter:

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On The Cutting Edge will be published three times a year (Fall, Spring, and Summer). Faculty and staff at NCCCS colleges are encouraged to submit story ideas to any of the staff listed above.