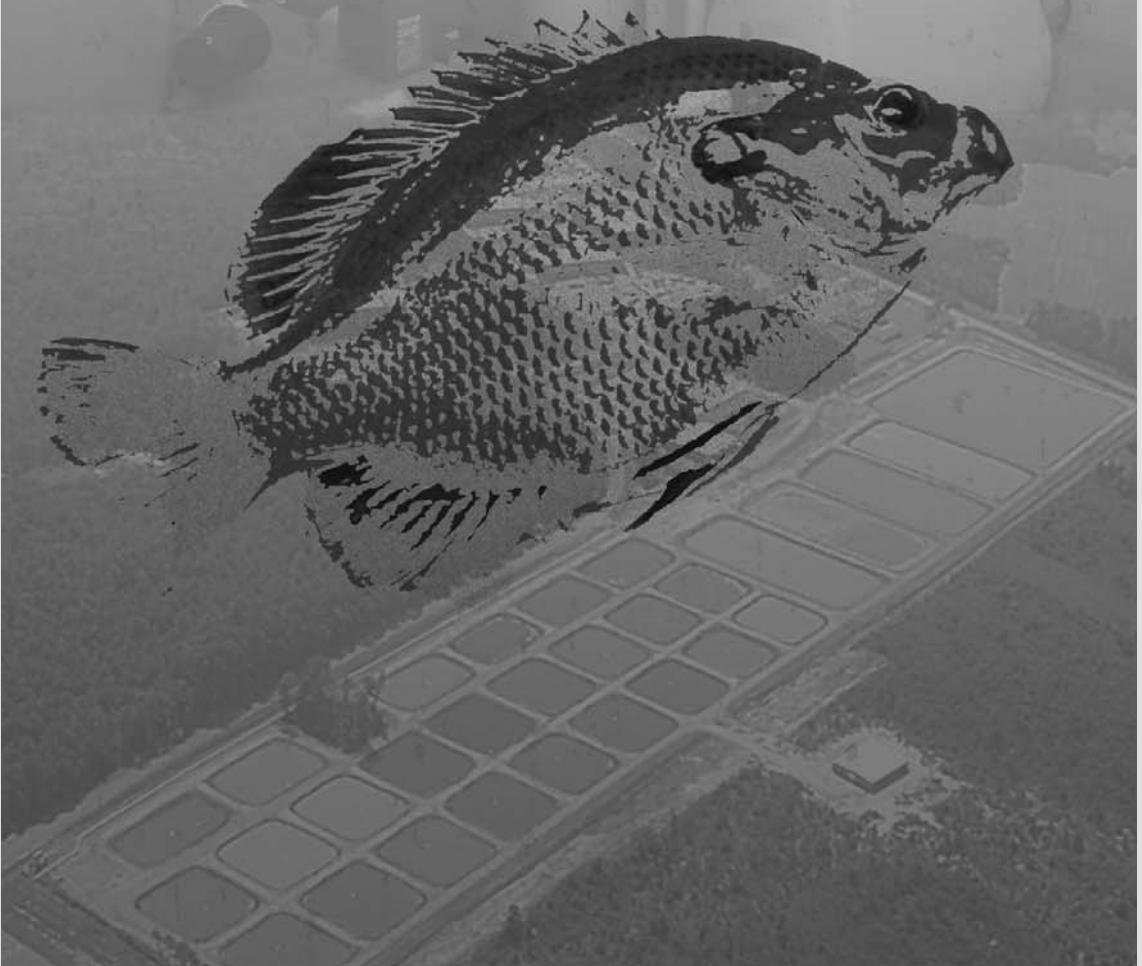


Meeting the Needs of North Carolina:

Community College Programs from Aquaculture to Viticulture

by Renee Elder Goldsmith



John Edward Baka

Executive Summary

From A to V, or from aquaculture (the cultivation of water plants and animals) to viticulture (the cultivation of grapes), North Carolina's community colleges, like their national counterparts, strive to offer a variety of programs that meet local work force and educational needs. Consequently, some courses reflect regional or statewide economic development needs, while others target students who are planning to transfer to continue their education at a four-year institution. Because students enroll in community college programs for a variety of purposes—work force training for new job skills, job retraining, basic educational skills, and academic- and certificate-track programs—community college programs vary greatly. They may be broken into three broad categories: curriculum, continuing education, and special programs.

Curriculum programs often lead to one of three types of credentials: a certificate, diploma, or associate's degree. While some degree programs prepare students for entry-level technical positions in business and industry, others enable students to transfer to a four-year college or university. For instance, certificate and diploma programs are curriculum tracks aimed at work force training. Examples of certificate programs include Greenhouse and Grounds Maintenance, Data Entry, Insurance, and Health Care Technology. Examples of diploma programs include Pharmacy Technology, Dental Assisting, Telecommunications Installation and Maintenance, and Positron Emission Tomography.

Curriculum programs also allow community college students to transfer credits to universities. Approved in 1997 by the UNC Board of Governors and the State Board of

Community Colleges, the **Comprehensive Articulation Agreement (CAA)** identifies which and under what circumstances community college courses may be transferred for credit to the UNC system or any of the 23 private colleges and universities which have signed the agreement.

The community colleges also collaborate with the UNC system in the **2+2 Program** to develop four-year degree programs, with the first two years of coursework centered at a community college and the next two years on a UNC campus. Some 2+2 programs allow a student to complete a four-year degree without leaving their community college campus, while others anticipate an actual transfer from a community college to a four-year college or university. For example, Lenoir Community College in Kinston has a 2+2 engineering technology program that identifies the coursework necessary for transfer to a university, eliminating guesswork for students.

Continuing education programs are non-credit courses that teach basic skills and provide occupational training. Basic skills courses include **Adult Basic Education**, which addresses competencies in reading, writing, mathematics, and other areas; **General Education Development**, which leads to a high school diploma equivalency degree; **Adult High School**, offered by the community college in collaboration with the local public schools and leading to a joint diploma issued by the college board of trustees and the local school board; **English Literacy/English as a Second Language**, designed to help non-English speaking adults achieve competency in the English language; and **Compensatory Education**, a program that provides a specially designed curriculum for adults with moderate

mental retardation who need supplemental education and training.

Special programs are tailored by the community colleges to meet the economic development needs of the local community. Such programming includes: *New and Expanding Industry Training (NEIT)*; *Customized Industry Training (CIT)*; *Focused Industrial Training (FIT)*; and the *Small Business Center Network*. Created and customized for companies bringing 12 or more “net new jobs” into the state, **New and Expanding Industry Training** prepares workers for new full-time jobs in North Carolina. Through NEIT, Getrag, a maker of motor vehicle gears in Newton, is able to identify capable workers and help them take their skills to the next level through specialized training.

Unlike the NEIT program, the **Customized Industry Training** program provides **retraining** for employees of **existing** industries that are introducing new equipment or techniques into the workplace, but that will **not** bring 12 or more net new jobs into the state. In an effort to assist local employers, **Focused Industrial Training** staff design customized programs to existing workers’ skills in response to advancements in the local manufacturing, computer, and telecommunications industries. For example, Stephenson Millwork Company Inc., an architectural millwork manufacturing company, used Wilson Community College’s FIT program to conduct training programs to meet its production needs. Finally, the **Small Business Center Network** supports business growth and development through training, counseling, and information.

Distance learning programs provide another path to education for community college students, with instruction provided over the Internet—through teleweb services and videoconferencing—or through a combination of face-to-face and online instruction.

Distance learning programs enable students to continue their education even when transportation issues, work schedules, or other obligations prevent them from regularly attending classes on campus. Through the Virtual Learning Community, the N.C. Community College System approaches distance learning as a collaborative effort—sharing hardware, software, content, and training instructors and administrators among all 58 campuses. Distance learning often comes into play when a specific community college program has state-wide impact. For instance, Progress Energy relies on Nash Community College’s distance learning program to train its utility linemen.

The need for **student services** is growing on community college campuses, including registration and academic counseling, basic skills and General Equivalency Degree assistance, career planning, financial aid, grants and scholarships, transfer information, and student records. System President Martin Lancaster says, “Student services such as counseling, tutoring, and child care services are key to student success. Until these services are boosted dramatically, the student success we’re capable of and which the students deserve will never happen. We are criticized for the low number of completers, but the fact of the matter is that only a small percentage of our stop-outs and drop-outs leave for academic reasons. They are not flunk-outs. They just need more help to stay in and persist to a certificate, diploma, or degree. Just because a staff person doesn’t teach doesn’t mean that they aren’t important to the educational program.”

In order to create **new programs**, often prompted by the local business community, community colleges must first complete a program curriculum application designed to ensure that the proposed offering meets certain academic guidelines and standards. This screening process also considers data on job openings in

that field, figures on the cost of implementing the program, funding plans, and whether the same or similar courses exist at other regional colleges. See “Establishing New Programs in Community Colleges,” pp. 114–15.

Funding new and existing community college programs has its challenges. While the State Board of Community Colleges has authority to set tuition, it does so within the confines set forth by the General Assembly in the “Current Operations Appropriations Act,” or budget bill. If the legislature has signaled its intention to raise tuition, but has not yet passed a budget bill with the tuition increase by the start of a new fiscal year on July 1, the State Board will usually increase the tuition to the anticipated new rate to avoid confusion when registration for the fall semester begins. The N.C. Community College System’s commitment to an “open door” tuition policy hinders the use of student tuition as a substantial generator of revenue for the system given the low economic resources of the student body. Kennon Briggs, vice president of business and finance for the N.C. Community College System, explains, “The State Board of Community Colleges has historically argued to keep tuition charges to students as low as practicable, in order to maintain access to higher education for adult learners. It is not necessarily low tuition that precludes the System from having a sufficient amount of funds, but rather low per capita funding. Given that 60 percent of curriculum students work full- or part-time and the fact that almost 60 percent of students receive some form of financial aid, it is counter-intuitive to raise tuition on working adults to spend more upon them, or to drive them to seek additional financial aid. These students might be called the ‘working poor.’ The State Board seeks to keep tuition low to facilitate upward financial mobility by

enhancing, through education, their value to employers and the marketplace.”

From aquaculture to viticulture, the programs offered by the N.C. Community College System strive to meet the needs of students, employers, and the state. To ease credit transfers between community colleges and public and private colleges and universities, to help community college programs adapt to the new opportunities provided by distance education, and to increase North Carolina’s college-going rates, the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research makes the following recommendations:

(1) **The University of North Carolina System and the N.C. Community College System should work together to continue to expand enrollment in the 2+2 programs with the goal of increasing the number of 18 to 24-year-olds enrolled in college in North Carolina from 30 percent in 2006 to 41 percent (the college-going rate of top five states) by 2012.**

(2) **The North Carolina General Assembly should expand funding for student services staff in the community college system.**

(3) **Given the trend towards distance learning and the mobility of students in North Carolina, the N.C. General Assembly should create a legislative study commission to study and facilitate distance learning and report to the 2009–10 N.C. General Assembly. Among other topics, the study commission should work with accrediting agencies, the UNC System, and the N.C. Community College System to study the possibility of creating a new state or regional authority that could serve as a repository for credits and grant degrees. This would allow students seeking an associate’s degree—either as an end in itself or as a component of a 2+2 program—to acquire the necessary credits from various institutions and would facilitate the attainment of both two- and four-year degrees.**

Fish harvest with tractor drawn seine at Brunswick Community College Center for Aquaculture Technology



John Edward Baka

“Although each campus is unique, the overall system provides a comprehensive range of course offerings, including work force training for new job skills, job retraining, basic educational skills, and academic- and certificate-track programs.”

Tad Daniels, 41, a native of Blowing Rock in the mountains, followed his love of the open water when he signed up for the aquaculture program at Brunswick Community College in Wilmington. “I grew up on my daddy’s farm, but I’ve always been interested in the sea, the ocean, and the water,” Daniels said. Right after high school, Daniels attended the University of North Carolina at Asheville as a computer science major. But, he discovered he did not really enjoy working in that field.

Instead, Daniels joined the U.S. Coast Guard, and then spent time on a shrimp boat before deciding to enroll in Brunswick Community College’s aquaculture technology program in 2005. “I see this program as a way for me to do something that I enjoy, and make money doing it. It’s a real special program.” Daniels said he has no doubts about aquaculture as a growth industry. “Look at marine fisheries—depletion happening as the demand [for seafood] goes up,” he says. “I think it’s the future, really.”

As a second-year student during fall 2007, Daniels took 13 credit hours of classes while working 35 hours a week at the Southport Marina, where he also lives on a houseboat. The aquaculture program has taught him to work with a variety of species, including cobia, large mouth bass, Louisiana crawfish, and prawns. Daniels points out that the geography of North Carolina is particularly well suited to the study of aquaculture. “We have plenty of water resources, a good aquifer, and lots of salt water,” he says. “There’s no telling what we can do in time with aquaculture. It just keeps getting better.”

From A (aquaculture, the cultivation of water plants and animals) to V (viculture, the cultivation of grapes), the 58 institutions that make up the N.C. Community College System provide learning opportunities in many diverse fields. Although each campus is unique, the overall system provides a comprehensive range of course offerings, including work force training for new job skills, job retraining, basic educational skills, and academic- and certificate-track programs. Some of the courses made available through the community colleges are tied to regional or statewide economic development needs, while others provide resources to advance students’ personal

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growth. Still others are geared toward students who are planning to continue their education at a four-year institution.

“Responsiveness to local need—that’s one of the things that is so unique about the community college system, what makes it strong, really,” says Norma Turnage, chair of the program services committee of the North Carolina Board of Community Colleges. “Each campus offers courses that respond to the needs of an individual community. You would not have the same curriculum in New Bern that you would have in Waynesville. The needs are different.”

A Variety of Programs

Students enroll in community college programs for a variety of purposes. Their coursework may be remedial, job-specific, or lead to a diploma, certificate of proficiency, or an associate’s degree. The types of programs available through the community college system can be broken into three broad categories: curriculum, continuing education, and special programs.

1. Curriculum Programs

There are more than 2,200 curriculum programs offered through the community college system under more than 250 titles.¹ These programs range from one semester to two years in duration. Some terminate in one of three types of credentials: certificate, diploma, or associate’s degrees. Many degree programs are designed to prepare students for entry-level technical positions in business and industry, while others are largely aimed at students intending to transfer to a four-year college or university.

The associate of applied science (AAS) program is offered at all colleges within the N.C. Community College System. Requiring 64 to 76 semester hours of work, the program can be completed within two years. While certain courses within the AAS curriculum may be accepted for credit at four-year colleges and universities, the primary goal of the AAS is to train students for entry-level work in their chosen field.²

Other two-year degrees include the associate in arts, associate in science, and associate in fine arts. The state’s Comprehensive Articulation Agreement (CAA) with the University of North Carolina system allows community college graduates who meet specific requirements to enroll as third-year students or juniors at a UNC campus or at any one of the 23 private colleges or universities which have signed the CAA. These requirements include successfully completing, with a grade of “C” or higher, 44 semester hours of core general education classes, including English, mathematics, natural sciences, and social sciences that may transfer to other community colleges within the system or to a four-year college or university.³

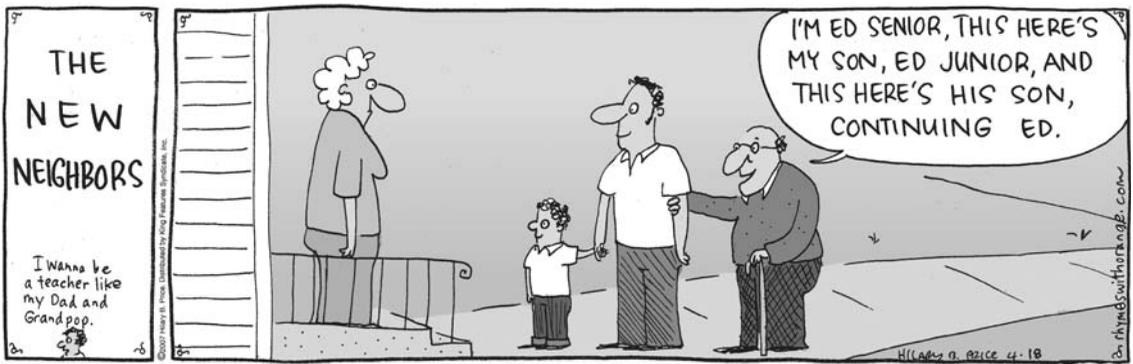
“Only about 25 percent of our students are transfer-bound,” says Martin Lancaster, President of the N.C. Community College System. “But it’s still a significant minority of our enrollment, and it is growing. All of the [community college] boards want that to be an option, but it continues to be a minor mission of our community colleges. Some colleges’ enrollments are 30 percent transfer-bound [such as Rockingham Community College in Wentworth], some are 11 percent [such as Catawba Valley Community College in Hickory].” At eight percent, Pamlico Community College in Grantsboro has the lowest transfer-bound percentage, while Coastal Carolina Community College in Jacksonville has the highest, at roughly 60 percent.⁴

Certificate and diploma programs are curriculum tracks aimed at work force training. Students in certificate programs take between 12 to 18 credit hours of classes,

“Many degree programs are designed to prepare students for entry-level technical positions in business and industry, while others are largely aimed at students intending to transfer to a four-year college or university.”



Carol Majors



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the equivalent of one full-time semester of coursework, while diploma programs require between 36 to 48 semester hours of credit, taking slightly more than two semesters to complete. Many students earning community college diplomas complete the requirements by enrolling in two full-time semesters plus a summer term. Examples of certificate programs include Greenhouse and Grounds Maintenance, Data Entry, Insurance, and Health Care Technology. Examples of diploma programs include Pharmacy Technology, Dental Assisting, Telecommunications Installation and Maintenance, and Positron Emission Tomography.⁵

The number of full-time equivalent students following an associate's degree track stood at 180,027 (65 percent of curriculum enrollment and 22 percent of the total community college enrollment of 801,676) at the end of the 2006 school year. The number of students in diploma programs was 17,635 (6 percent of curriculum enrollment and 2 percent of total enrollment), the number in certificate programs was 15,555 (6 percent of curriculum enrollment and 2 percent of total enrollment), and the number of transitional students or those enrolled in classes that do not lead to a formal degree or other award was 64,943 (23 percent of curriculum enrollment and 8 percent of total enrollment).⁶ The state's spending on curriculum programs for the fiscal year ending June 2006 totaled \$448.9 million.⁷

2. Continuing Education Programs

Another category of community college courses is continuing education. These programs are non-credit courses that teach basic skills and provide occupational training. Basic skills courses include Adult Basic Education, which addresses competencies in reading, writing, mathematics, and other areas; General Education Development, which leads to a high school diploma equivalency degree; Adult High School, offered by the community college in collaboration with the local public schools and leading to a joint diploma issued by the college board of trustees and the local school board; English Literacy/English as a Second Language (ESL), designed to help non-English speaking adults achieve competency in the English language; and Compensatory Education, a program that provides a specially designed curriculum for adults with moderate mental retardation who need supplemental education and training.⁸ State spending for the fiscal year ending June 2006 included \$41 million for Adult Basic Education and ESL; \$12.2 million for Adult High School; \$9.8 million for Compensatory Education; and \$2.4 million for General Education Development.⁹

3. Special Programs

A final category of instructional programs in the community colleges are known as special programs. These are courses tailored to the economic development needs of the local community. Within this category are New and Expanding Industry Training, Customized Industry Training, Focused Industrial Training, and the Small Business Center Network. (See Table 1, pp. 110–11.)

New and Expanding Industry Training (NEIT) is aimed at preparing workers for new full-time jobs in North Carolina. These courses are created and customized for companies bringing 12 or more “net new jobs” into the state. In 2006–07, 208 NEIT programs were created for 97 start-up and relocating companies within the state and 111 existing companies that were expanding their North Carolina operations. There were 19,380 trainees enrolled in NEIT programs during 2006–07 at a total cost of \$463.38 per trainee. NEIT expenditures for 2006–07 totaled \$9 million.¹⁰ (See Table 2, p. 112.)

According to Janet Robbins, training coordinator for Getrag Corp., a maker of motor vehicle gears in Newton, Getrag is able to fill highly skilled, high-tech jobs with training assistance through NEIT. “The training dollars and support through NEIT provide a tremendous service.” While helping Getrag fill specific jobs, the program also “improves the knowledge, skills and abilities of the state’s work force,” she said. Through NEIT, Getrag is able to identify capable workers and help them take their skills to the next level through specialized training. “We take assessments of the critical skills that are needed, and then we have the opportunity to go to the community college and advance those skills,” Robbins says.

Unlike the NEIT program, the Customized Industry Training (CIT) program provides *retraining* for employees of *existing* industries that are introducing new equipment or techniques into the workplace, but that will *not* bring 12 or more net new jobs into the state. The CIT program responds to the idea that, given the manufacturing industry’s decline in North Carolina, the future of the state’s manufacturing would be in new technology requiring worker training. Although the introduction of new technology decreases the actual number of jobs, those workers who complete the training would receive a wage increase and the continued presence of both the company and capital investment in the plant and equipment would increase the tax base of the county. Initiated in March 2006, the CIT program had trained 1,253 workers by June 2007 at an average cost of \$888.39 per trainee. The 2006–07 expenditures for the CIT program totaled \$1,113,156.¹¹

Focused Industrial Training (FIT) assists employers by designing customized programs to upgrade existing workers’ skills in response to advancements in the manufacturing, computer, and telecommunications industries. The FIT staff conducts an individualized needs assessment before designing and implementing the training program.¹² In 2005–06, the FIT program served 10,557 trainees through 1,074 classes, workshops, seminars, and meetings.¹³ The program’s annual budget in 2005–06 totaled \$3.7 million.¹⁴

According to Theresa Peaden, director of continuing education at Wilson Community College in Wilson, the college’s FIT program has received positive feedback from employers such as Lee Stephenson at Stephenson Millwork Company, Inc., an architectural millwork manufacturing company specializing in the design, production, and installation of millwork products for the commercial, residential, and institutional markets. Peaden quotes Lee Stephenson as saying in a FIT program evaluation, “A flexible approach from instructors and Wilson Community College allowed us to conduct training programs around our production needs. There is value in having someone from outside of our company come in to observe processes, make recommendations and train. Wilson Community College put the pieces together to make this happen, and the training was positive for everyone involved.”

Small Business Centers have been established in each of the 58 community college campus service areas. The Small Business Center Network was created to support business growth and development through training, counseling, and information. The network provides support to approximately 70,000 North Carolinians each year.¹⁵ The 2005–06 expenditures for Small Business Centers totaled \$5.23 million.¹⁶

Chris Robinson, director of the Ashe Center, a satellite campus of Wilkes Community College located at the foot of Mount Jefferson, says, “Work force training

““ Continuing Education Programs are non-credit courses that teach basic skills and provide occupational training.””

Table 1. Special Programs

Program Name	Description
New and Expanding Industry Training (NEIT)	New and Expanding Industry Training (NEIT) is aimed at preparing workers for new full-time jobs in North Carolina. These courses are created and customized for companies bringing 12 or more “net new jobs” into the state. In 2006–07, 208 NEIT programs were created for 97 start-up and relocating companies within the state and 111 existing companies that were expanding their North Carolina operations. There were 19,380 trainees enrolled in NEIT programs during 2006–07 at a total cost of \$463.38 per trainee. NEIT expenditures for 2006–07 totaled \$9 million. ¹
Customized Industry Training (CIT)	Customized Industry Training (CIT) provides <i>re-training</i> for employees of <i>existing</i> industries that that are introducing new equipment or techniques into the workplace, but that will <i>not</i> bring 12 or more net new jobs into the state. Initiated in March 2006, the CIT program had trained 1,253 workers by June 2007 at an average cost of \$888.39 per trainee. The 2006–07 expenditures for the CIT program totaled \$1,113,155.66. ²

¹ *A Matter of Facts: The North Carolina Community College System Fact Book 2007*, North Carolina Community College System, Raleigh, N.C., p. 41. On the Internet at <http://www.ncccs.cc.nc.us/Publications/docs/Publications/fb2007.pdf> See also Office of State Budget and Management (OSBM), *The Community College New and Expanded Industry Training Management Study*, as directed by § 8.7 of N.C. Session Law 2006–66, Apr. 2007.

² *New and Expanding Industry Training and Customized Industry Training—Trends and Statistics 2006–2007*, N.C. Community College System, Raleigh, N.C., Aug. 2007, p. 23. On the Internet at http://www.ncccs.cc.nc.us/Business_and_Industry/reports.htm

still emphasizes ‘new and expanding,’ rather than ‘stability and retention.’ Our cost of training is pretty low, but we need tools to constantly re-recruit our existing industries. The new CIT program is a start, but the threshold for those programs needs to be lowered to make additional companies eligible.”

Currently, the NEIT program requires employers to predict growth of at least 12 jobs in order to be eligible. The CIT program requires the industry both to raise wages at the completion of training and offer health care and other benefits.

The Cost of Programs: Tuition

The State Board of Community Colleges has statutory authority to set tuition for the N.C. Community College System. The North Carolina General Statutes state, “The State Board of Community Colleges shall fix and regulate all tuition and fees charged to students for applying to or attending any institution pursuant to this Chapter.”¹⁷ The statutes also specify that “The State Board shall have authority

Table 1. Special Programs, *continued*

Program Name	Description
Focused Industrial Training (FIT)	Focused Industrial Training (FIT) assists employers by designing customized programs to upgrade existing workers' skills in response to advancements in the manufacturing, computer, and telecommunications industries. The FIT staff conducts an individualized needs assessment before designing and implementing the training program. ³ In 2005–06, the FIT program served 10,557 trainees through 1,074 classes, workshops, seminars, and meetings. ⁴ The program's annual budget in 2005–06 totaled \$3.7 million. ⁵
Small Business Centers	Small Business Centers have been established in each of the 58 community college campus service areas. The Small Business Center Network was created to support business growth and development through training, counseling, and information. The network provides support to approximately 70,000 North Carolinians each year. ⁶ The 2005–06 expenditures for Small Business Centers totaled \$5.23 million. ⁷

³ *Fact Book 2007*, note 1 above, p. 38.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁶ Pat Fahy, *Workforce Development in the State of North Carolina: An Overview*, National Center on Education and the Economy, Washington, D.C., June 2005, p. 14. On the Internet at http://www.skillscommission.org/pdf/Staff%20Papers/North_Carolina_Workforce.pdf

⁷ *Fact Book 2007*, note 1 above, p. 51.

with respect to individual institutions: ... to establish and regulate student tuition and fees within policies for tuition and fees established by the General Assembly . . .”¹⁸ While the State Board has authority to set tuition, it does so within the confines set forth by the General Assembly in the “Current Operations Appropriations Act,” or budget bill. Though the State Board has the power to raise tuition and on occasion has done so, the State Board generally does not raise tuition on its own. If the legislature has signaled its intention to raise tuition, but it has not yet passed a budget bill with the tuition increase by July 1, the State Board will usually increase the tuition to the anticipated new rate to avoid confusion when registration for the fall semester begins.

The N.C. Community College System’s commitment to an “open door” tuition policy hinders the use of student tuition as a substantial generator of revenue for the system, given the economic resources of the student body. Kennon Briggs, vice president of business and finance for the N.C. Community College System, explains, “The State Board of Community Colleges has historically argued to keep tuition charges to students as low as practicable, in order to maintain access to higher education for

**Table 2. New and Expanding Industry Training (NEIT):
Twenty-Year Trends for 1987–88 – 2006–07**

Year	Number of			Total Expenditures	Number of Trainees	Average Expenditure Per Trainee
	Projects	New Companies	Expanding Companies			
2006–2007	208	97	111	\$8,980,238.63	19,380	\$463.38
2005–2006	197	92	105	8,382,557.11	23,799	352.22
2004–2005	164	70	94	5,484,063.55	12,398	442.33
2003–2004	121	38	83	3,841,225.22	10,117	379.68
2002–2003	131	52	79	4,005,104.75	10,610	377.48
2001–2002	155	65	90	5,391,598.35	14,771	365.01
2000–2001	203	82	121	7,024,819.47	24,068	291.87
1999–2000	197	81	116	7,247,885.47	20,256	357.81
1998–1999	193	77	116	7,614,677.69	19,960	381.50
1997–1998	201	100	101	8,086,955.47	22,985	351.84
1996–1997	184	93	91	10,090,944.73	25,076	402.41
1995–1996	183	93	90	8,554,529.00	27,505	311.02
1994–1995	197	88	109	7,132,426.00	18,740	380.60
1993–1994	180	84	96	7,126,896.00	19,537	364.79
1992–1993	160	83	77	6,186,847.00	16,640	371.75
1991–1992	151	96	55	5,484,869.00	15,738	348.51
1990–1991	140	93	47	5,400,630.00	14,857	363.51
1989–1990	165	117	48	7,828,250.00	16,805	465.82
1988–1989	149	101	48	8,938,463.00	16,833	531.01
1987–1988	167	104	63	5,874,136.00	12,263	479.01

Source: New and Expanding Industry Training and Customized Industry Training—Trends and Statistics 2006–2007, N.C. Community College System, Raleigh, N.C., Aug. 2007, p. 23. On the Internet at http://www.ncccs.cc.nc.us/Business_and_Industry/reports.htm

adult learners. It is not necessarily low tuition that precludes the system from having sufficient funds, but rather low per capita funding. Given that 60 percent of curriculum students work full- or part-time, and the fact that almost 60 percent of students receive some form of financial aid, it is counter-intuitive to raise tuition on working adults to spend more upon them, or to drive them to seek additional financial aid. These students might be called the 'working poor.' The State Board seeks to keep tuition low to facilitate upward financial mobility by enhancing, through education, their value to employers and the marketplace."

The fall 2007 tuition for curriculum programs at North Carolina community colleges was \$42 per semester hour, with a maximum charge of \$672 per semester for in-state students. Out-of-state students pay \$233.30 per semester hour or a maximum of \$3,732.80 per semester. Tuition is waived for students simultaneously enrolled in high school and for North Carolina residents aged 65 and older.

There are no registration fees for basic skills programs. Registration fees for other continuing education programs start at \$50 for courses of up to 10 hours in duration to \$65 for those of 100 hours or more.¹⁹

Online Programs: Distance Learning

Access to the programs offered at community colleges across the state is not limited to traditional classroom environments. Students at North Carolina's community colleges are given the option of enrolling via distance learning, with instruction provided over the Internet—through teleweb services and videoconferencing—or through a combination of face-to-face and online instruction. In addition, many instructors provide students with online supplements for traditional courses. These programs enable students to continue their education even when transportation issues, work schedules, or other obligations prevent them from attending classes on campus on a regular basis.

"Statistically, the typical distance learner is a working parent with job and family responsibilities," notes the N.C. Community College System Fact Book. "Removing scheduling, travel, and babysitting responsibilities increases the opportunities for education and the likelihood those students can enter and complete programs of study. Current registration data suggests a trend is emerging whereby students are migrating to online and/or hybrid courses or a combination of online/hybrid and traditional courses." A hybrid course is a blend of face-to-face and online instruction.²⁰

The distance learning phenomenon has spread throughout the UNC and N.C. Community College Systems. According to UNC system President Erskine Bowles, the next 10 years may see a UNC system enrollment expansion
(continues)



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Establishing New Programs in Community Colleges

Most North Carolinians have come to expect fine dining in Asheville, world-class golfing in Pinehurst, and great fishing along the North Carolina coast. But perhaps less known is that when it comes to academics, these regional strengths are also nurtured in courses at local community colleges in those areas. For example, Asheville-Buncombe Tech in Asheville is home to a top-notch culinary arts program, Brunswick Community College in Bolivia has a state-of-the-art aquaculture program with courses on fish hatcheries for the production of fish to stock ponds and streams for recreational fishing, and Sandhills Community College in Pinehurst teaches future golf course operators about turfgrass management.

Efforts to add a new course at a community college often get started within the local business community, particularly the office of economic development for the cities and counties in a college's service area. "Economic developers view the community college system and local campuses as primary partners in work force training and development, whether for new or expanding business," says Scott Daugherty, executive director of the Small Business and Technology Development Center, which is administered by N.C. State University on behalf of the University of North Carolina system and which operates in partnership with the U.S. Small Business Administration. Daugherty says, "I've been to several places where a new industry was coming in, and when they have the groundbreaking, they always credit the local community college for helping them train people and get them ready to go into the work force."

For instance, the N.C. Community College System's Small Business Center Network was created to support business growth and development through training, counseling, and information. Boat building is one area in which the Small Business Center Network acts, hosting all of the state's boat building programs. According to Scott Deal, president of Cobia Boat in Marion, "The community college [McDowell Technical Community College] played a key role in our decision to choose McDowell County and continues to play a major role in our employee training and new employee hiring."

These programs are examples of how North Carolina's community colleges update and tailor their offerings to meet the needs of the local economy as well as employment needs throughout the state. A first step for community colleges considering adding a new program is often a phone call to

the community college system office, where the staff may provide information about existing programs in that or a related field, says Jennifer Frazelle, director of program services for the community college system.

Before adding a new program, colleges must complete a program curriculum application designed to make sure that the proposed offering meets certain academic guidelines and standards.¹ This screening process also takes into consideration data on the number of available jobs in that field and figures on the cost of implementing the program—including equipment costs, information on how the funding is to be generated, and whether other colleges in the region are offering the same or a similar program, Frazelle says.

"You always have to keep an eye on how adding a particular course is going to affect other schools in the system," says James Woody, past chairman of the State Board of Community Colleges and a former trustee at Piedmont Community College in Roxboro. "Let's say I'm at Piedmont, and we want to add a high-dollar program [like allied health]. To have that program, the State Board has to approve it. They want to know how many people it is going to affect. They ask: Is it going to be worth the dollars knowing it's going to be a high-cost program? Either they approve or deny it."

Each year, the General Assembly approves a budget for the community colleges, which is allocated to each campus based on the previous academic year's enrollment of full-time-equivalent students.² The basic definition of a full-time student is one who takes 16 hours of coursework per semester for two semesters during the school year. A mathematical formula is used to convert hours of coursework into full-time-equivalent units. It takes 16.5 credit hours to equal one educational unit, according to the formula.³ For more information on program funding, see "Key Issues Facing the N.C. Community College System: Enrollment Trends, Faculty Compensation, Funding Formulas, and Strategic Planning" by John Quinterno, pp. 207–21).

A study conducted by Hockaday-Hunter & Associates for the N.C. Community College System in 2005 examined the funding formula and its implications for the addition of new and often expensive courses in fields such as allied health. The study was in response to concerns expressed by some community college presidents that a combination

of increased student enrollment and adoption of high-cost programs on some campuses was causing an inequitable distribution of state funds.⁴ In his presentation on the 2006–07 Consensus Expansion Budget Request, System President Martin Lancaster said the study recommended that the state allocate \$11 million for a reserve fund to be used to offset enrollment growth exceeding 3.2 percent of full-time enrollment. The General Assembly approved a \$2 million fund for this purpose in 2005–06.⁵ Lancaster says, “One of the largest—and fastest-growing—sectors of our economy is health care—and our programs prepare huge percentages of the nurses, technicians and assistants who staff our hospitals, doctors’ offices and nursing homes. Allied health programs are very expensive and, according to [this] independent study, very much in need of weighted funding to grow.”⁶

Among new programs added in the system in recent years were biotechnology, polysomnography (the study of sleep), computer simulation and game development, agricultural biotechnology, and positron emission tomography (a nuclear medicine im-

aging technique which produces a three-dimensional image or map of functional processes in the body), the system’s Frazelle says. These additions reflect the growth of the job market in fields such as health sciences and technology.

—Renee Elder Goldsmith

Footnotes

¹ *Curriculum Procedures Reference Manual*, N.C. Community College System, § 15, p. 3. Accessed Nov. 8, 2007, on the Internet at http://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/programs/reference_manual.htm

² *A Matter of Facts: The North Carolina Community College System Fact Book 2007*, North Carolina Community College System, Raleigh, N.C., p. 48. On the Internet at <http://www.ncccs.cc.nc.us/Publications/docs/Publications/fb2007.pdf>

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Jeff Hockaday and Donnie Hunter of Hockaday-Hunter & Associates, *Community College Funding Formula Study*, N.C. Community College System, Raleigh, N.C., 2005, p. 2.

⁵ Martin Lancaster, *The Costs of Change: (Re)educating North Carolina’s Workforce*, a slideshow on the 2006–2007 Consensus Expansion Budget Request, N.C. Community College System, Raleigh, N.C. On the Internet at http://www.ncccs.cc.nc.us/External_Affairs/Presentations/new0607budget.ppt

⁶ *Ibid.*

Table 3. 2006 Median and Mean Hourly Wages for the 10 Fastest-Growing Occupations in North Carolina, by Percentage Change

Occupation	Hourly Wage	
	Median	Mean
Personal and home care aides	\$8.35	\$8.54
Home health aides	8.73	8.97
Medical assistants	12.43	12.54
Dental assistants	15.67	15.96
All occupations	13.45	17.08
Physical therapist assistants	20.33	20.63
Dental hygienists	29.23	28.51
Network systems and data communications analysts	30.28	31.17
Biomedical engineers	32.98	34.35
Physicians assistants	35.54	36.04
Computer software engineers	40.89	42.00

Notes: Minimum wage in North Carolina is \$6.15 per hour.

Minimum Wage Laws in the States—January 1, 2008, U.S. Department of Labor’s Employment Standards Administration Wage and Hour Division, Washington, D.C. Accessed Jan. 30, 2008, on the Internet at <http://www.dol.gov/esa/minwage/america.htm#NorthCarolina>

A living wage for one person in North Carolina is \$7.71 per hour.

Living Wage Calculator, Living Wage Project, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pa. Accessed Jan. 30, 2008, on the Internet at <http://www.livingwage.geog.psu.edu/results.php?location=27>

Source: *State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates*, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Division of Occupational Employment Statistics, Washington, D.C., May 2006. On the Internet at http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nc.htm

““ *The typical distance learner is a working parent with job and family responsibilities.* ””

from 200,000 to 300,000 students. An integral mechanism for accommodating such an influx of students will be online and distance learning.²¹ Consequently, in June 2007, UNC’s system leaders launched the University of North Carolina Online, meant to promote the more than 90 existing online degree programs on a single site: <http://online.northcarolina.edu/>. The UNC system has been monitoring student online education enrollment, which has grown by more than 10 percent annually over the last 10 years and now reaches 25,000 UNC students. According to President Bowles, the UNC system intends to “market the hell out of this.”²²

Likewise, since 1997, the N.C. Community College System has sought to expand its distance education curricula. (See Table 4, p. 117.) In 1999, the entire system offered a total of only 10 online classes. By 2007, most individual community college campuses offered more than 100 online classes each. In 2006, the community college system’s distance learning registration count was more than 200,000 students. The increase in online course offerings results from both increased demand from prospective students and technological innovations. According to the N.C. Community College System’s distance learning coordinator, Linda Nelms, the online curricula serve nontraditional students. “Every day, I get an e-mail or telephone call from students looking for courses or information about programs that are available online. It’s being driven not only by the student but by the need to offer alternative programs.”

In addition to individual course offerings, some community colleges are crafting entire degree programs via online distance learning, such as Guilford Technical Community College’s associate of arts degree. According to Amy Brown, coordinator of distance learning at Guilford Tech, “[Distance learning] is very popular because you can work the classes into your schedule more easily. You can do them on your timetable. You don’t have to ask to get off work to come to class, and you don’t have to find child care.”



**Table 4. Distance Learning
in the N.C. Community College System**

Curriculum Distance Learning Registration

Year	1999–00	2000–01	2001–02	2002–03	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06
Distance Learning Registration	40,392	60,742	90,337	121,356	155,556	182,249	201,626
Rate of Growth	51.31%	50.38%	48.72%	34.34%	28.18%	17.16%	10.64%

Occupation and Continuing Education Distance Learning Registration

Year				2002–03	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06
Number of Students				16,300	18,389	26,452	25,950
Rate of Growth				n/a	12.82%	43.85%	-2.30%

Source: A Matter of Facts: The North Carolina Community College System Fact Book 2007, North Carolina Community College System, Raleigh, N.C., May 2007, p. 31. On the Internet at <http://www.ncccs.cc.nc.us/Publications/docs/Publications/fb2007.pdf>

The system employs a myriad of technological mechanisms for online education, including three-dimensional virtual reality imaging and two-way video conferencing. System President Martin Lancaster says, “An incredible new tool for enhancing teaching in public schools, community colleges, and universities—both online and traditional face-to-face—will be the Learning Objects Repository (LOR), which the community college system developed but which can be used by our sister institutions. The LOR will be a repository of learning objects which can be dropped into an online course or used in the classroom to enhance the lecture. These objects can be visuals of various kinds—video clips, charts, or graphs. By adding them, you get away from stale, text-only online instruction or stale, lecture-only classroom presentations.”

Nelms stipulates that the online curriculum does not forfeit quality education for convenience. “There was always reluctance from some individuals regarding the distance learning because there was concern about the ability to offer the same quality and resources to the students. That has been one of the guiding goals of distance learning in the community college system—to ensure that whatever method the student chooses to obtain their education is a quality one. Whether it’s face-to-face or by distance, that student receives a high level of quality in their education,” Nelms says.²³

The N.C. Community College System approaches distance learning as a collaborative effort between the 58 campuses. Jennifer Frazelle, director of program services for the N.C. Community College System, says distance learning is a priority for the community college system. “We have developed a virtual learning community, basically a library of virtual learning courses,” Frazelle says. “This is especially helpful to smaller colleges that might not have the opportunity to develop a particular program themselves.” The Virtual Learning Community provides hardware, software, content,



"The lecture hall is very large and my seat is far back. I feel like I'm in a distance-learning program."

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and training to instructors and administrators across the state. This approach results in an estimated 50 to 65 percent reduction in costs to the system as compared to the purchase of software and other materials by each campus individually.²⁴

Alisa Chapman, assistant vice president for university-school programs at UNC General Administration, says, "The way the UNC system defines distance learning is not necessarily online," Chapman says. "In many instances, but not in all cases, those last two years are being offered by our university [system through on-site instruction] on community college campuses. Some may be offered at a local high school at night."

Distance learning often comes into play when a specific community college program has statewide impact. Such is the case with the utility lineman program at Nash Community College in Rocky Mount that trains workers for utility companies, says Hilda Pinnix-Ragland, Chair of the State Board of Community Colleges and vice president of northern region energy delivery services for Progress Energy in Raleigh. "Nash Community College has the flagship program for linemen, and we [at Progress Energy]

rely on the community college system to train our linemen," Pinnix-Ragland says. "Because most of our students actually work, and many cannot get to Nash County to attend classes, they also have the option of taking the course online."

Program and Course Transfers to the UNC System

“Cooperation between the N.C. Community College System and the University of North Carolina system is on the rise, facilitating the transfer of credits for students from the former system to the latter.”

Cooperation between the N.C. Community College System and the University of North Carolina system is on the rise, facilitating the transfer of credits for students from the former system to the latter. In a cover letter to President Bowles and President Lancaster transmitting the final report on *Staying a Step Ahead: Higher Education Transforming North Carolina's Economy*, Alceste Pappas (president of the Pappas Consulting Group, based in Stamford, Connecticut) wrote:

A remarkable collaboration between the President of the University of North Carolina [Erskine Bowles] and the President of the North Carolina Community College System [Martin Lancaster] emerged in January [2006]. A joint UNC-NCCCS Cabinet has been formulated and has started meeting on a quarterly basis to enable both systems to work more seamlessly for the benefit of students in both sectors and to formulate higher education policy that will address the educational, workforce and economic development needs of the state.²⁵

1. 2+2 Programs

In 2004, the community colleges began working with the University of North Carolina system to develop four-year degree programs, with the first two years of coursework centered at a community college and the next two years on a University of North Carolina campus.²⁶ Known as 2+2 programs, these programs may involve online coursework as well as face-to-face instruction, says Chapman. Some 2+2 programs allow students to complete a four-year degree without leaving their community

college campus, while others anticipate an actual transfer from a community college to a four-year college or university. For more information on specific 2+2 programs, including the Appalachian Learning Alliance and Wachovia Partnership East, see “Help Wanted: Community Colleges’ Role in Meeting Work Force Shortages” by John Manuel, pp. 136–82.

The 2+2 approach relies on the establishment of a pre-major program which serves as a blueprint for community college students based on the degree they intend to pursue, Chapman says. “If you wanted to be an elementary education teacher and you are a community college student, you would need to take the pre-major list of courses at the community college for elementary education. You should be able to get that information from the counselor—either your community college counselor or a transfer advisory counselor at the UNC system.”

Bill Fortney, head of the engineering technology program at Lenoir Community College in Kinston, describes the 2+2 program at Lenoir as a pathway students may follow as they work toward a four-year degree in engineering technology. Students who complete the two-year pre-engineering technology program at Lenoir are qualified to transfer to North Carolina State University to finish their degree. Fortney says the program “lays out the progression so there’s no guesswork regarding which courses will be needed for transfer to the university.... Our transfer numbers are pretty low; only six or seven a year actually transfer. But I think that’s great. That’s six or seven students in Lenoir County who have an opportunity they never otherwise would have had.”

Fortney has seen some students start with only the most basic math skills, do well, and end up with an engineering career. “One Greenville construction worker came here and started with developmental math, which is a high-school level course. Now he’s a civil engineer working in the state. All a student needs is the ability and the heart to do the work. We can meet them where they are and start from there.”

2. The Comprehensive Articulation Agreement

The Comprehensive Articulation Agreement (CAA) between the University of North Carolina System and the North Carolina Community College System governs the transfer of credits between public two-year colleges and the UNC System. Approved in 1997 by the UNC Board of Governors and the State Board of Community Colleges, the agreement identifies which and under what circumstances community college courses



**Erskine Bowles and
Martin Lancaster**

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Scan Warts

Student in machine shop at Wake Technical Community College

may be transferred for credit to the UNC system. Twenty-three of North Carolina's 36 private colleges and universities have agreed to honor the terms of the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement for community college transfer students.²⁷

Critical to the development of the agreement was the adoption of the semester calendar by the community colleges, along with a common course numbering system.²⁸ "English 111 is supposed to be the same at all our campuses, so there is consistency in offerings," N.C. Community College System President Lancaster says. "That is something we did as part of reengineering our whole program to implement the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement."

The agreement was jointly developed by faculty and administrators of the community college system and the UNC system based on a proposed transfer plan approved by both governing boards in 1996. The agreement also complements the strategic directions adopted by the University of North Carolina Board of Governors to "expand access to higher education for both traditional and non-traditional students through...uniform policies for the transfer of credit from community colleges to constituent institutions...development of electronic information systems on transfer policies, off-campus instruction, and distance education...[and] increased collaboration with other education sectors."²⁹ As part of the agreement, 44 semester hour credits of general education core courses were identified that, once completed with a grade of 'C' or higher, constitute a block of general education credits that may be transferred as a unit from community colleges to UNC campuses. These courses include humanities/fine arts, social and behavioral sciences, natural sciences, mathematics, and English composition.³⁰

The agreement also enables North Carolina community college graduates holding associate in arts or science degrees to enter UNC universities with status as a junior, if standard admissions requirements are met. However, this status is not typically extended to students who have earned an associate in applied science or associate in fine arts, which require fewer general education core courses at community colleges.

For students holding two-year degrees in applied science, the college system relies on individual “bilateral agreements” between colleges and specific universities to facilitate transfers to baccalaureate degree programs at university campuses. Students earning an associate in fine arts may transfer all their courses to a four-year school, but the receiving university has the option of deciding whether to count those credits as general education, major, or elective credits.³¹

Dennis King, vice president of student services at Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College and co-chair of the Transfer Advisory Committee, explains, “We [Asheville-Buncombe Tech] have a program here called ‘early childhood education’ which is an applied science program. These are not transferable programs to the university system as a whole. Some universities do offer four-year degrees in areas like early childhood education. They want to get hold of our two-year students to finish their degree with them. So a university that has those kind of programs may want to set up a bilateral agreement... between the two institutions. It is not statewide the way the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement is. It is simply a document written [between a community college and a university]... only to cover the one field—for example, early childhood education.”

Kelly Pipes, an institutional effectiveness officer in the Office of Instruction for Wilkes Community College in Wilkesboro, believes that the CAA, though a sound foundation, needs to be built up further. Pipes says, “I see this as an area where major progress has been made over the years but that still needs serious attention. There are far too many core classes that will not transfer to certain universities [as core credit hours, and are instead classified as elective credit hours]... despite the instructor being properly accredited and the classes covering the same content. The state should be concerned when the same institutions will not give transfer credit for the same community college courses for which other state institutions will give credit.”

Likewise, Chris Robinson, director of Wilkes Community College’s satellite campus in Mount Jefferson, the Ashe Center, gives another reason to expand the articulation agreement and 2+2 programming, saying, “The expansion of [the 2+2 program and articulation agreement] helps us, especially in rural communities, to keep a professional work force. Engineers, for example, are hard to find, and usually stay in the area where they receive their initial education. Expanding 2+2 programs, particularly online programs, puts rural areas on more equal footing in keeping the professional expertise needed to keep the economy growing.”

Some of the problems with the CAA relate specifically to the state’s need to produce more teachers. System President Martin Lancaster indicates that the greatest problem with transfer in preparing public school teachers is in the applied science area. The UNC system will not allow community college applied science courses to transfer as university credits because community college applied science instructors are not required to have a master’s degree.

President Lancaster also indicates that while 2+2 programs are progressing well, alternative licensure and lateral entry program agreements for teachers have been problematic. Lateral entry programs have had a low retention rate and have been met with resistance from the UNC system. Central Piedmont Community College approached the System office about developing an alternative teacher licensure program. However, a study conducted by the State Board of Education recommended that community colleges not be allowed to pursue alternative licensure. Lancaster suggests that the state look at high-need areas by subject and geographic area and pilot alternative licensure programs in those areas.

Central Piedmont Community College boasts the largest student body of any higher education institution in North Carolina, with approximately 70,000 students in 2007. According to Dr. Tony Zeiss, the college’s president, 40 percent of its students are enrolled in college credit courses. Zeiss says that while the lateral entry teaching program permits students to complete their first two years before transferring to

a university to complete their training, the UNC system campuses are not expanding capacity quickly enough to satisfy student demand or work force shortages. Zeiss recounts a lateral entry program crafted by the community colleges in which students could take courses online for the low cost of \$125 per course, as compared with \$625 per course in the UNC system. Zeiss says the UNC system killed the program, and the community colleges lost their authorization. Zeiss contrasts this scenario with that in Florida, where community colleges are granted the power to award 4-year degrees in high-need areas. Lancaster says, “Many of these limitations and impediments to community college lateral entry programs were removed by legislative action in 2007.”

According to Scott Ralls, president of Craven Community College and President-elect of the community college system, the “college transfer role” is one of the N.C. Community College System’s four primary roles, along with the “remediation role,” “contract for customized training role,” and “community service role.” Ralls says that the college-transfer role should incorporate more rigorous programs in order to adequately prepare students for university studies.

MGT of America, a consulting group that issued a report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee of the General Assembly of North Carolina in 2004 regarding the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement (CAA), found both strengths and weaknesses regarding the articulation agreement’s implementation.³² On a positive note, MGT said the agreement has succeeded in providing greater standardization of the transfer process and offering students a definite curricular path to follow. The report determined that the agreement has been effective in ensuring that students who successfully complete the 44-hour general education core and/or receive an associate in arts or associate in science degree from a community college will be able to transfer to a UNC institution. As evidence of the agreement’s success, it was credited with bolstering the numbers of students making the transition from North Carolina community colleges to UNC campuses. For instance, that number rose from 5,349 in 1999–2000 to 6,806 in 2002–03.³³ And, in just the fall semester of the 2005–06 school year, that number was 6,251.³⁴

However, some significant weaknesses in the process were also noted. “The most revealing finding from our research evaluating the CAA is the low level of student awareness of the existence of the agreement and its provisions,” the MGT report stated. “More than half of the surveyed community college students who are enrolled in transfer degree programs or surveyed university students who have successfully transferred from community colleges were not aware of the CAA. Without basic knowledge of the CAA, students cannot plan their course work effectively or efficiently in preparation for transfer to a four-year institution.”³⁵

The report also noted problems in transferring the general education core block from community colleges to universities, with students being required to “repeat courses or take additional courses to fulfill requirements at the receiving UNC institution.” The report recommended that all students who successfully complete an associate in arts or associate in science degree at one of the community colleges in North Carolina should be *guaranteed admission* to an institution within the University of North Carolina system. This requirement would put such students on equal footing with those who started as freshman at UNC institutions and who automatically rise to junior status once sufficient credits are earned. The UNC system has since adopted this recommendation.³⁶

In addition, the report found, “The special circumstances surrounding transfer agreements for associate in applied science programs, which are not designed for transfer, require bilateral rather than statewide articulation. Special circumstances include the different accreditation criteria for faculty in transfer and non-transfer programs, the different general education requirements for transfer and non-transfer programs, and the workforce preparedness mission of the technical/community college AAS programs.”³⁷ East Carolina University and Western Carolina University are



**Student at
Wake Technical
Community
College**

actively pursuing effective strategies to make possible the transfer of the associate in applied science degree.

Since the 2004 report was issued, several steps have been taken to improve the transition of community college graduates into UNC institutions, says Robert Kanoy, senior associate vice president for academic and student affairs at UNC-General Administration. The Comprehensive Articulation Agreement has incorporated a Transfer Assured Admissions Policy for North Carolina community college students moving into their junior year at a university campus. Provisions of the policy are spelled out in the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement and on the College Foundation of North Carolina website to help inform students at the point that they are applying to college.³⁸ A community college graduate is assured of admission to at least one of the 16 UNC campuses under the following circumstances:

- The student must hold an Associate in Arts or Associate in Science degree.
- The student must have an overall GPA of at least 2.0 on a 4.0 scale, as calculated by the college from which he or she graduated, and a grade of “C” or better in all core courses.
- The student must be academically eligible for re-admission to the last institution attended.
- The student must meet all application requirements at the receiving institution, including the submission of all required documentation by stated deadlines.³⁹

According to Dennis King of Asheville-Buncombe Tech, the Transfer Assured Admissions Policy is a “tremendous selling point” to students. “So, we can tell the community college graduate that if he stays with us and he gets a diploma, even if he graduates with a 2.0 average, he is admissible to continue his education at some campus in the university system. I think that’s a tremendous selling point to our students.

All you got to do is stay in college, persist, and graduate, and you will be able to get your bachelor's degree by going to the university campus.”

However, the policy does not guarantee admission to a specific campus, program, or major within UNC, Kanoy says. “We don’t use the word guarantee because it may be interpreted as guaranteeing a student a spot at whatever institution they choose.” Nonetheless, four of 16 UNC schools grant automatic admission to students who meet the requirements—UNC-Charlotte, UNC-Pembroke, Elizabeth City State University, and East Carolina University. Students holding degrees other than an associate in science and associate in arts do not fall under the Transfer Assured Admissions Policy, although students may meet the requirements for transfer through other means, including bilateral agreements in which a specific public university agrees to accept qualified graduates from a specific community college program.

Kanoy says that automatic admission is not granted by all UNC campuses for a reason. “Basically, it is a supply and demand issue which leads to different campuses having to have different levels of selectivity. UNC-Chapel Hill has more applications than any campus and ends up denying admissions to more students than any other campus. In the late 1990s, we started the “focused-growth initiative” where we actually had campuses that were not at full capacity and the state supported efforts to help those campuses grow more quickly than our others. And, you also have to consider the infrastructure issues for our other campuses that are at capacity.

“In working with colleagues in other states, the term guarantee was often misinterpreted that it would guarantee admission to the senior institution of your choice. If you look at the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement, it was very careful to point out that the agreement did not guarantee admission to a certain campus or a certain program of study or major. Just as the community colleges have caps on certain programs, e.g., nursing, we also have caps in certain majors or professional schools. And, we do not control all the admissions criteria. For example, the State Board of Education has a policy that teacher education students must have a minimum GPA of

**English class at
Wake Technical
Community
College**



Sam Watts

2.5 and pass the Praxis I test to be admitted to a teacher education program in North Carolina. So, we may be able to admit a transfer student onto a campus, yet not admit them to a professional degree program,” Kanoy says.

Dennis King says another enhancement has been made to the agreement since its initial formation regarding the transfer of individual courses. King explains, “For a student who attends Asheville High School and in his senior year passes...one class with us [Asheville-Buncombe Tech] and gets a university-transferable course, there was a question as to whether that course was automatically covered under the agreement... Now, as long as the course is transferable, it is guaranteed to be transferable to the university even if the student never attends community college after high school.”

Dean Sprinkle, vice president of instruction and student services at Wilkes Community College in Wilkesboro, identifies another major weakness in the credit transfer process among the 58 community college campuses and, by extension, between the community college system and UNC system. Sprinkle says, “I see the future of [community colleges in North Carolina] as folks piecing programs together from multiple institutions. I think this overlaps with regional accrediting as a challenge, since current agreements require that a specified percentage of the credits are required to be taken at the degree-granting institution.” As a solution, Sprinkle says, “There may need to be a state or regional authority for degree-granting credits.” In this way, students seeking an associate’s degree, either as an end in itself or as a component of a 2+2 program, could acquire the necessary credits from various institutions, thus facilitating the attainment of both two- and four-year degrees.

Dennis King agrees with Sprinkle. King says, “Universities are steeped in tradition that goes back hundreds of years, and they are slow to respond to change. They still have policies that are ineffectual for the 21st century. One of those policies at most universities is that at least half the degree needs to be done there. That worked real nicely back in the 1950s when people didn’t move around, before the day of distance learning, and before the day of high school dual enrollment. But today we are so much more mobile as a society.”

King offers the example of a student who, while a senior at Asheville High School, takes two classes at Asheville-Buncombe Tech. He also takes another two courses through the Learn and Earn online program at Fayetteville Tech and Wake Tech. Upon high school graduation, the student enrolls in a private university in Tennessee and completes 6 credit hours there before deciding to transfer to a public university. Although the student has earned 12 credit hours from four institutions, a UNC campus’s “native student policy” will require the student to complete 50 percent of his degree at that particular campus in order to earn a degree. King says, “We have students that are so mobile today that they carry credits from so many institutions that the “native student policy” has become unrealistic. It’s anachronistic. It’s out of date. I would say before too long it’s going to change. You get institutions like the University of Phoenix [which offers online degree programs] who are going to eat somebody’s lunch. They’re going to take the kind of student that I just mentioned and say, “We’ll take every credit that you’ve earned at five or six different places and we’ll roll them all together, and if you get 15 more credits here, we’ll give you a University of Phoenix degree.”

Meanwhile, the UNC system insists that 50 percent of a student’s degree be completed on their campuses. King says, “So then you’ve got a guy who sits down with a piece of paper in front of him, and he says, ‘I’ve already earned 90 credits in all these other experiences. University of Phoenix is saying 15 more credits and I’ve got a degree, and a university in North Carolina, an outstanding school, is saying I’ve got to do 70 credits there because I’m going to lose all these other credits because of their native student rule.’ Now, that student is going to be smart enough to say, “I’m going to get my degree from the University of Phoenix.”

King notes that UNC representatives respond by insisting that although a student must complete 50 percent of his or her degree on campus, the cost per course will be significantly less than that of the University of Phoenix. However, King explains, “It’s not going to cost you more if they [the University of Phoenix] are only going to require you to take 15 more credits whereas the local university here wants you to go back and start at the 50 percent point and move on. I think that the kind of rule that you’ve mentioned [the native student policy], because of the old rule of supply and demand, is going to get shot down because of the University of Phoenix and others that are ready, willing, and able to work with the mobile student of the 21st century.”

“ *The biggest complaint we hear back from our transfers is the culture shock once they arrive on the receiving institution’s campus. They are stunned and overwhelmed by the sheer size and bureaucracy of the campuses. We are working toward establishing transfer student networks, orientations, and so on to try to ease the acclimation process.* ”

THOMAS GOULD, ASSOCIATE DEAN OF ARTS,
SCIENCES, AND UNIVERSITY TRANSFER AT DURHAM
TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND PRESIDENT OF
THE COLLEGE TRANSFER PROGRAM ASSOCIATION

King mentions another area of improvement needed for the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement: community college student counseling. King explains, “First-year students come to the community college and say, ‘Well, I don’t know what I want to major in at the university.’ If that persists through their two years with us, then they may graduate and actually be admissible to the university but may not be ready for a major. You can think about a major as complex as chemistry. A student goes to the university and had very good grades with us at the community college. Then he wants to major in chemistry, but he hasn’t had the right mixture of courses at the community college. He’s not ready for a major in chemistry, and that’s where the student will still use some time by having to catch up. So, one of the improvements that we’ve got to do at our level is make the student more aware that he’s got to make a decision about what he’s going to major in at the university—not late but early. That kind of advising is something which is missing presently. We don’t have the staff at the community college level to really deal with those issues as fast and as thoroughly as we would like to. That’s something that’s got to be worked out so that articulation can be as smooth as possible.”

King reports that some progress has been made in this area. King says, “Up until recently, the only people the agreement pertained to were people from the N.C. Community College System and the North Carolina university system and a few private schools that have signed on to the document... Any work done anyplace else, such as at a community college in Florida or at Yale or Harvard, anyplace else, would negate the articulation agreement. I didn’t think that was a very good idea, and we have got that worked out now so that a student can transfer into the agreement as much as 14 credits—that would be four three-credit hour classes—and perhaps some labs from any regionally accredited university. I think that is a tremendous enhancement—particularly in this day and age when so many of our students are mobile. They move from institution to institution and state to state.”

Thomas Gould serves both as the associate dean of arts, sciences, and university transfer at Durham Technical Community College and as president of the College Transfer Program Association, North Carolina’s largest organization of transfer professionals, which boasts more than 250 members from the community college system, the UNC system, and private colleges and universities. Gould views the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement as a largely successful collaborative effort. Gould says, “The Comprehensive Articulation Agreement between the community college and UNC systems is a unique and groundbreaking document and nothing less than the very foundation upon which the “seamless education” initiative is built.” Moreover, Gould says the agreement serves as a pathway to success for North Carolina’s students and as a model for other states crafting their own articulation agreements. According to Gould, one of the agreement’s primary benefits is that “it has fostered a productive and truly collaborative working relationship between the two systems.”

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This working relationship in turn has fostered additional partnerships, including both the previously mentioned bilateral agreements, as well as the Transfer Advisory Committee of which Dennis King is co-chair. Gould says, “The state Transfer Advisory Committee has done an exceptional job as caretakers of the CAA. They continue to address the issues surrounding transfer and work diligently to resolve any problems and remove any obstacles blocking the path to a smooth transition.”

Among the issues and obstacles faced by those navigating the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement are the understandings of students, faculty, and staff of the protections and limitations of the agreement. Specifically, Gould says, “Students on the community college campuses need a greater awareness of what the agreement means to them. We have just received approval from the Transfer Advisory Committee to develop a transferable one-credit hour course on College Transfer Success, that we hope will go a long way in defining the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement for students.” The course will offer instruction in fundamental academic skills such as critical thinking and written and verbal communication and will help students developing a strategic plan for transfer, including understanding the benefits of the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement. Gould says that admissions and transfer staff at colleges and universities also need assistance in understanding the agreement. To that end, Gould says, “The Transfer Advisory Committee holds yearly training/information sessions to address this problem, but we still have the occasional students who are not being awarded all the credit they have earned.”

A resolution incorporated into the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement in November 2007 allows the transfer of courses on a course-by-course basis. The resolution allows students who complete a community college course designated for college transfer with a grade of “C” or better to receive credit for that course at a four-year institution. The receiving institution retains the ability to determine whether the credit will count as general education, major, or elective credit. According to Lancaster, “This will be a tremendous boost to transfer. Now a student will not have to complete that associate’s degree to transfer their credits. This is big, big, big!”

Gould concludes, “The biggest complaint we hear back from our transfers is the culture shock once they arrive on the receiving institution’s campus. They are stunned and overwhelmed by the sheer size and bureaucracy of the campuses. We are working toward establishing transfer student networks, orientations, and so on to try to ease the acclimation process.”

Student Services

Student services are a growing part of North Carolina community college campuses. These services include registration and academic counseling, basic skills and General Equivalency Diploma (GED) assistance, career planning, financial aid, grants and scholarships, transfer information, and student records.⁴⁰ The community college system spent \$66.7 million on student support programs during 2005–06, including \$1.87 million on child care.⁴¹ This is an area that is expected to grow with the needs of the student population, according to the administration’s presentation to the General Assembly on the 2006–07 budget: “The needs in student services and support are particularly urgent—first, because many community college students require a lot of support, and second, because these areas have suffered disproportionately in budget cuts in the recent past.”

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2006–07 BUDGET PRESENTATION TO
THE N.C. GENERAL ASSEMBLY BY THE
N.C. COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

First Impressions

During their first three weeks of classes, students at 22 community colleges reported the following:

41% said they had never used academic-planning services in the first few weeks.

40% said “friends, family, or other students” were their primary source for academic advising during their first three weeks of college.

29% said a financial-aid staff member had helped them analyze their needs.

20% said they “strongly agreed” with the statement, “The very first time I came to this college, I felt welcome.”

23% of students needed developmental classes in reading, writing, and math.

— 2007 NATIONAL
SURVEY OF ENTERING
STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

President Lancaster says, “Here’s what community college students look like in this country—and North Carolina’s numbers aren’t far off: 29 percent have incomes below \$20,000, 41 percent are first-generation college students, 33 percent are parents, and 54 percent work full-time in addition to taking classes; 47 percent of African-Americans, 56 percent of Hispanics, and 47 percent of Native Americans who attend college go to community college, and 9 percent have a disability. These are students who need hands-on attention. Financial aid and student services have lost staff members and been forced to cut back on training and professional development—all during a time when laid-off industrial workers have flooded our colleges, many new students with limited English proficiency have arrived, and low-income students eager to take advantage of generous new scholarship programs have come looking for help.”⁴²

Lancaster says, “Student services such as counseling, tutoring, and child care services are key to student success, but the General Assembly actually cut these services during the 1990 to 1991 recession and they have never given us back all the positions we lost. We have gotten a little increase back, but not much. Until these services are boosted *dramatically*, the student success we’re capable of and which the students deserve will never happen. We are criticized for the low number of completers, but the fact of the matter is that only a small percentage of our stop-outs and drop-outs leave for *academic* reasons. They are *not* flunk-outs. They just need more help to stay in and persist to a certificate, diploma, or degree. Just because a staff person doesn’t teach doesn’t mean that they aren’t important to the educational program.”

According to Jennifer Haygood with the fiscal research division of the General Assembly, student services are funded through what is called the “Institutional Support” formula, which provides funding for both student support services and general college administration. Colleges have flexibility regarding how they use the funds. Haygood provides a history of budget actions taken with regard to that formula since 1990:

- 1991: Cut \$8,303,831—Changed administrative and instructional support allotment ratios from per 100 FTE to per 110 FTE.
- 1993: Cut \$1,563,777—Reduced the formula allotment for senior administrators and administrators of programs from a ratio per 110 FTE to one based on every 125 FTE.
- 1993: Added \$1,000,000—Funded additional counselor positions.
- 1994: Added \$6,016,047—Funded additional counseling and support personnel, including career development specialists, academic advisors, financial aid specialists, placement directors, employment counselors, disabled services directors, and clerical support.
- 1999: Added \$8,000,000—Provided additional support positions so that funds that community colleges had been transferring from the formula salary line could be significantly reduced. The State Board ensured that at least one additional financial aid counselor would be distributed to each college.
- 2003: Cut \$9,727,663—Adjusted the administrative formula.
- 2005: Added \$3,557,430—Provided one position in the base allotment for administration for additional financial aid staff at each college.

Haygood summarizes, “If you take an \$8 million cut in one year, it will take more than \$8 million to ‘restore’ that cut in future years due to enrollment growth and legislative salary increases. Even if you take that into account, it appears that it isn’t the cut in the 1990–91 recession that the community colleges haven’t had restored; rather, it is the cut in 2003 that has not been fully restored.”

Kennon Briggs, vice president of business and finance for the community college system, concludes, “Both the President and Ms. Haygood are factually correct.”

Conclusion

Surry Community College in Dobson is going to be home to the North Carolina Viticulture/Enology Center (enology is the study of wine and winemaking). In addition to operating as a teaching laboratory and wine industry demonstration model, the commercially-bonded winery will cultivate high-quality, student-made wines. The Viticulture/Enology Center also will boast classrooms, instructors’ offices, a resource library, outdoor “crush pad” for initial processing of grapes, and a climate-controlled wine cellar and barrel room. The center will have space for seminars, conventions, and conferences for the North Carolina wine industry. Moreover, the four-acre campus vineyard will afford students the opportunity to grow, harvest, and process 14 varieties of vinifera, hybrid, and native American grapes in an environment aimed at work force preparation.

Currently, Surry Community College offers degrees, diplomas, and certificates in viticulture/enology through curriculum classes, with some available online. Continuing education courses are offered through a series of workshops, seminars, and demonstrations. In doing so, the college attracts national and international experts on the most innovative technology within the wine industry. According to college officials, “The North Carolina wine industry has left its infancy. It is now ready for significant growth and recognition.”⁴³





Gill Giese is the lead instructor for the current viticulture/enology program. He says in fall 2007 there were between 40 and 50 students enrolled in the viticulture/enology program at Surry, but only about a dozen were degree-seeking. “Most are entrepreneurial,” Giese says. “Almost all my students work. A few don’t work in the industry now but have aspirations to start their own vineyard.”

“The program here was started in 1999 and was first housed in the science department. Now we are under business and technology.” The campus includes a vineyard and a bonded winery with a 2,500 gallon capacity. Giese says, “We produce 400 to 1,000 cases a year. Students make the wine and market it. Under the direction of enology instructor Molly Kelly, Surry Community College

wines took gold, silver, and bronze medals this year at the State Fair.”

Dana Acker, originally from Mt. Airy but now a winemaker at Buck Shoals in Hamptonville, says of his decision to enroll in Surry’s viticulture/enology program, “What prompted me to do it was, basically, starvation. I had worked close to 20 years in the computer end of textiles. Then all of that went out of the country, and I was laid off. I looked for work for about six months and didn’t find anything.”

Acker says he was interested in beer making after having experimented successfully with an at-home brewery. “But I didn’t think it was feasible to open a brew pub in my home town,” he says. “With the wine industry moving into our area, that seemed like something reasonable to do. I believe I was the first person to go back to school and major in viticulture and enology on a North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) grant in the country. The paperwork didn’t even exist. I had to go to several wineries and ask questions.”

Acker’s work paid off. He says, “I spent half my time working in the vineyard and half working in the winery. Through an internship, I got paid to work in the campus winery. I graduated in May 2005 and got a job as an assistant winemaker at Old North State Winery and then was offered the job of winemaker. After they went out of business, I got the job as lead winemaker at Buck Shoals.”

Acker does not regret his decision to go into viticulture. “At this stage of my life, I couldn’t envision doing anything else,” Acker says. “The training I got at Surry was so valuable. I’ve managed to stay employed. After I graduated, I went right to work. When I came out of the program, I felt confident in handling any situation that might come up in a winery. It’s not just theoretical knowledge; you are doing a lot of hands-on at the same time. I felt quite prepared.”

Acker believes that Surry’s viticulture program has helped Mt. Airy overcome the loss of manufacturing jobs. Acker says, “Mt. Airy at one time was thriving because everybody worked in the textiles or furniture industries. The mills worked the majority of the population; the rest were in tobacco farming. Then there was the crackdown on tobacco. A lot of people quit farming tobacco, and all the mills shut down.” Acker continues, “Economically, this area has been hit hard. The only bright spot is the wine industry. That’s allowed some of the land to go back into agriculture production, which is nice. And it’s providing jobs for people who have lost jobs.”

Acker also sees viticulture as a resource for the state as a whole. Acker says, “North Carolina now is something like fifth-largest in the U.S. for wine tourism, with

California first.⁴⁴ We're seeing new wineries open every year and new vineyards being planted." According to Acker, both N.C. State University and Appalachian State University are trying to get four-year viticulture programs going.

Surry's viticulture program is one of many community college programs meeting employment needs in North Carolina. Scanning the list of student completions by programs for 2005–06, you get a sense of the job needs across our state and of the faces of the work force trained by the community colleges. Systemwide, 3,167 students obtained their associate's degree in arts; 1,975 completed the associate's degree in nursing leading to the registered nurse credential; 1,207 completed medical office administration; 1,030 completed business administration; 716 completed practical nursing; 655 completed information systems; 540 completed basic law enforcement training; 395 completed truck driver training; and 121 completed electronics engineering technology. And, yes, one completed aquaculture technology, and four completed viticulture and enology technology.⁴⁵ From A to V, community colleges are offering programs to meet the needs of students, employers, and the state.

Recommendations

To ease credit transfers between community colleges and public and private colleges and universities, to help community college programs adapt to the new opportunities provided by distance education, and to increase North Carolina's college-going rates, the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research makes the following recommendations:

(1) The University of North Carolina System and the N.C. Community College System should work together to continue to expand enrollment in the 2+2 programs with the goal of increasing the number of 18 to 24-year-olds enrolled in college in North Carolina from 30 percent in 2006 to 41 percent (the college-going rate of the top five states) by 2012.⁴⁶

Access to higher education is key to economic growth in our state, and yet tuition on UNC campuses has risen in nine of the last 10 years, with proposals for increases for at least three more years. By contrast, the community college system has an open door policy and much lower tuition costs. With 80 percent of new jobs requiring some postsecondary education, continued expansion of the 2+2 programs is a central component of state policies that encourage access to higher education in North Carolina.

Access to higher education also is key to economic growth in our nation. The U.S. rapidly is losing its once dominant portion of the world's population of college students. Thirty years ago, the U.S. boasted 30 percent of all college students. By 2006, that percentage had decreased to 14 percent and continues to drop as students in other nations increasingly pursue college education.⁴⁷ According to the National Collaborative for Higher Education Policy, "If current national trends continue, the proportion of American workers with high school diplomas and college degrees is expected to decline over the next 15 years, making today's young Americans the first generation to be on track to have lower educational attainment than the previous generation."⁴⁸

The U.S. now ranks 16th out of 27 developed nations in the proportion of students who complete college certificate or degree programs.⁴⁹ Among those in North Carolina's young adult work force, only 34 percent have an associate's degree or higher.⁵⁰ Out of those in North Carolina's work force aged 25 to 54, almost two-thirds lack any postsecondary credential.⁵¹

According to the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, this downward shift in national educational attainment will result in declining economic

prosperity, with an estimated 2 percent decrease in annual U.S. per capita income between 2000 and 2020. By contrast, over the previous 20-year period, 1980–2000, the U.S. experienced a 41 percent increase in per capita income.⁵²

North Carolina likely will experience similar economic ramifications for low educational attainment. By 2012, 24 percent more jobs in the state will require some postsecondary education.⁵³ Today, those with a bachelor's degree in North Carolina earn \$18,000 more annually than a high school dropout, and those with an associate's degree earn \$11,900 more.⁵⁴ Moreover, the new job market will be tailored to those with some postsecondary education. While more than 13 percent of jobs created in North Carolina over the next 10 years will require an associate's degree, 25 percent will require at least a four-year degree.⁵⁵

While any postsecondary attainment will improve one's economic prosperity in the new job market—both within North Carolina and nationally—those with four-year degrees will fare even better. In order to facilitate economic prosperity for the state through an increase in four-year degree attainment, the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research recommends that the University of North Carolina System and the N.C. Community College System continue to expand enrollment in the 2+2 programs.⁵⁶

The recently adopted rule championed by UNC System President Erskine Bowles and N.C. Community College System President Martin Lancaster, which permits the transfer of individual courses from community colleges to four-year universities, is an important step in the effort to expand articulation enrollment. Future efforts should specifically target those occupations projected to be the fastest growing in North Carolina *by percentage change* between 2004 and 2014: medical assistants, biomedical engineers, physicians assistants, network systems and data communications analysts, personal and home care aides, home health aides, dental hygienists, dental assistants, physical therapist assistants, and computer software engineers, see Table 3 on p. 115. For more information, see Table 2 on p. 151 in “Help Wanted: Community Colleges’ Role in Meeting Work Force Shortages” by John Manuel.⁵⁷ If state policymakers find that other occupations offer more promise for employment and above average income, this initial list could be modified. The goal is to use the 2+2 programs to increase college-going rates in fields that will lead to employment in higher-paying jobs.

(2) The North Carolina General Assembly should expand funding for student services staff in the community college system.

Student services are vital to the performance of America's community college students, 89 percent of whom qualify as “nontraditional.” Sixty-one percent of community college students in the U.S. are part-time, 57 percent work more than 20 hours per week, 34 percent spend 11 or more hours per week caring for dependents, and 21 percent spend between six and 20 hours per week commuting to and from class.⁵⁸

The challenges faced by the non-traditional student lead to poor completion rates, and this condition is exacerbated by a lack of student services. Only 48 percent of North Carolina's first-year community college students returned for their second year, as compared with 80 percent in the UNC system.⁵⁹ While 46 percent of non-traditional community college students leave in their first year, 62 percent leave without a degree within three years. By contrast, 19 percent of “traditional” community college students leave without a degree within three years.⁶⁰ For non-traditional students with two or more risk factors, the community college completion rate is less than 15 percent—a stark contrast to the 57 percent of traditional students.⁶¹

President Lancaster says, “Until these services are boosted *dramatically*, the student success we're capable of and which the students deserve will never happen.”

(3) Given the trend towards distance learning and the mobility of students in North Carolina, the N.C. General Assembly should create a legislative study commission to study and facilitate distance learning and report to the 2009–10 N.C. General Assembly. Among other topics, the study commission should work with accrediting agencies, the UNC System, and the N.C. Community College System to study the possibility of creating a new state or regional authority that could serve as a repository for credits and grant degrees. This would allow students seeking an associate’s degree—either as an end in itself or as a component of a 2+2 program—to acquire the necessary credits from various institutions, thus facilitating the attainment of both two- and four-year degrees.

Distance learning courses are offered at all 58 community colleges in North Carolina. Between 1999–2000 and 2005–06, the growth in curriculum distance learning registrations was almost 400 percent. In 1999–2000, there were 40,392 curriculum distance learning registrations, but by 2005–06, there were 201,626 registrations. In 2005–06, the number of occupational and continuing education distance learning course registrations was 25,950. (See Table 4.)

Traditionally, the “native student policy” has required a specified percentage of credits to be taken at the degree-granting institution. For instance, UNC requires that 50 percent of the credits required for a degree be taken at the degree-granting institution. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), the regional accrediting body for North Carolina, requires students at community colleges to take 25 percent of credits required for a degree to be taken at the degree-granting institution. These policies hinder the community college system in serving the needs of the new mobile student, and it prevents the system from competing with for-profit institutions such as the University of Phoenix, which grants distance learning degrees.

Dr. Delores Parker, vice president for academic and student services for the N.C. Community College System, correctly points out some threshold problems in creating such an authority. She says that current accreditation requirements would not allow for such an authority, either regionally or statewide. Discussing the idea of *the system* holding credits for students and having degree-granting authority, Parker says, “Number one—we are not a degree-granting institution. Number two—we don’t have the staff. I really don’t see this being feasible for the system. You would have to have registrars here. And the system office is not designed to do that. For the system to act as a repository for credits, we would need to dramatically increase staff and technology. Out of the 800,000 students enrolled each year, 250,000 are transfers, many of which are reverse-transfers from four-year institutions back to community colleges to complete community college programs, including associate’s degrees leading to transfer back to the four-year institution. Students move around a lot now. It’s an enormous job. The [idea of a state repository for credits] is intriguing. We could work with an organization that had the staff and other resources to act as a repository for credits. The organization would have to be well-researched and well-funded. I would be supportive of that. Absolutely.”

Bruce Vandal at the Education Commission of the States says this is a novel idea, but suggests that it might be compared to virtual universities and whether they should be accredited. North Carolina has created new authorities before to adapt to changing needs, such as the State Education Assistance Authority, State Ports Authority, and the N.C. Turnpike Authority.

A legislative study commission can study whether the authority concept is the best way to meet the needs of students who want access to an online degree program through the N.C. Community College System. The overall goal for the commission should be to help community college programs adapt to the new opportunities provided by distance learning and increase college-going rates in North Carolina.

Footnotes

¹ *A Matter of Facts: The North Carolina Community College System Fact Book 2007*, North Carolina Community College System, Raleigh, N.C., p. 22. On the Internet at <http://www.ncccs.cc.nc.us/Publications/docs/Publications/fb2007.pdf> For an in-depth analysis of curriculum students by program area, curriculum type, and average age, from fall 2001–02 to fall 2004–05, see *Data Trends and Briefings*, N.C. Community College System, Planning, Accountability, Research & Evaluation, Sept. 18, 2006. On the Internet at http://www.ncccs.cc.nc.us/Reports/docs/data_trends_and_briefings/Data_Trends_9_18_06.pdf

² *Ibid.* See also *Staying a Step Ahead: Higher Education Transforming North Carolina's Economy*, Interim Report to the North Carolina General Assembly Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, as authorized by House Bill 1264, Pappas Consulting Group, Stamford, Conn., May 11, 2005, p. 101. On the Internet at http://www.ncccs.cc.nc.us/External_Affairs/docs/interimreport.pdf

³ *Overview of the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement Between the University of North Carolina and the North Carolina Community College System*, MGT of America, Austin, Tex., Aug. 16, 2004, p. C-1.

⁴ Data provided by Keith Brown, associate vice president for planning, accountability, research, and evaluation at the N.C. Community College System.

⁵ *Educational Catalog*, N.C. Community College System, Raleigh, N.C., Sept. 21, 2007, § 3 on certificate and diploma programs, p. 12. On the Internet at http://www.ncccs.cc.nc.us/Programs/education_catalog.htm

⁶ *Fact Book 2007*, note 1 above, pp. 60 and 78.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 41. See also Office of State Budget and Management (OSBM), *The Community College New and Expanded Industry Training Management Study*, as directed by § 8.7 of N.C. Session Law 2006–66, Apr. 2007. On the Internet at <http://www.ncleg.net/documents/sites/committees/JLEOC/Reports%20Received/2007%20>

[Reports%20Received/New%20and%20Expanding%20Industry%20Training%20Report.pdf](http://www.ncleg.net/documents/sites/committees/JLEOC/Reports%20Received/New%20and%20Expanding%20Industry%20Training%20Report.pdf)

¹¹ *New and Expanding Industry Training and Customized Industry Training—Trends and Statistics 2006–2007*, N.C. Community College System, Raleigh, N.C., Aug. 2007, p. 23. On the Internet at http://www.ncccs.cc.nc.us/Business_and_Industry/reports.htm

¹² *Fact Book 2007*, note 1 above, p. 38.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

¹⁵ Pat Fahy, *Workforce Development in the State of North Carolina: An Overview*, National Center on Education and the Economy, Washington, D.C., June 2005, p. 14. On the Internet at http://www.skillscommission.org/pdf/Staff%20Papers/North_Carolina_Workforce.pdf

¹⁶ *Fact Book 2007*, note 1 above, p. 51.

¹⁷ N.C. Gen. Stat. § 115D-39.

¹⁸ N.C. Gen. Stat. § 115D-5(a).

¹⁹ *Educational Catalog*, note 5 above, pp. 2–3.

²⁰ *Fact Book 2007*, note 1 above, p. 31.

²¹ Mark Zimmerman, “A chance to grow,” *Chapel Hill News*, Chapel Hill, N.C., July 15, 2007, p. A1.

²² Tim Simmons and Jane Stancill, “UNC to push online degrees,” *The News & Observer*, Raleigh, N.C., June 3, 2007, p. A1.

²³ As quoted in Nick Zulovich, “Students Flocking to Distance Learning Programs,” *NC Magazine*, North Carolina Chamber, Raleigh, N.C., Oct. 2007, p. 46.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

²⁵ *Staying a Step Ahead: Higher Education Transforming North Carolina's Economy*, Final Interim Report to the North Carolina General Assembly Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, as authorized by House Bill 1264, Pappas Consulting Group, Stamford, Conn., July 21, 2006, p. 1 of cover letter. On the Internet at http://intranet.northcarolina.edu/docs/econ_transform/Pappas_Core.pdf

²⁶ *Report by the UNC and N.C. Community College Systems*

**Automotive
shop students
at Wake
Technical
Community
College**



Scam Watts

to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee of the General Assembly on Existing and New 2+2 Programs Between UNC and N.C. Community College System, Raleigh, N.C., Feb. 2006, pp. 2 and 11.

²⁷ Concurring private colleges and universities include: Barton College, Belmont Abbey College, Bennett College, Brevard College, Campbell University, Catawba College, Chowan College, Gardner-Webb University, Johnson C. Smith University, Livingstone College, Louisburg College, Mars Hill College, Montreat College, Mount Olive College, North Carolina Wesleyan College, Peace College, Pfeiffer University, Queens University of Charlotte, St. Andrews Presbyterian College, Saint Augustine's College, Shaw University, Warren Wilson College, and Wingate University.

²⁸ *Overview of the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement Between the University of North Carolina and the North Carolina Community College System*, note 3 above, p. iv.

²⁹ *Comprehensive Articulation Agreement Between the University of North Carolina and the North Carolina Community College System*, 2004 ed. revised, p. 2.

³⁰ *Comprehensive Articulation Agreement Between the University of North Carolina and the North Carolina Community College System*, 2002 ed., p. 5.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

³² *Overview of the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement Between the University of North Carolina and the North Carolina Community College System*, note 3 above.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 4-3.

³⁴ *Statistical Abstract of Higher Education 2005–06*, The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, N.C., May 2006, p. 57. On the Internet at <http://www.northcarolina.edu/content.php/assessment/reports/previousabs.htm>

³⁵ *Overview of the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement Between the University of North Carolina and the North Carolina Community College System*, note 3 above, p. 7-4.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 7–11.

³⁷ *Comprehensive Articulation Agreement Between the University of North Carolina and the North Carolina Community College System*, 2002 ed., note 30 above, p. 3.

³⁸ Transfer Assured Admissions Policy, College Foundation of North Carolina. On the Internet at <http://secure.ncmentor.org/Planning/TAAP/>

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Student Support Services*, N.C. Community College System, Raleigh, N.C. On the Internet at <http://www.ncccs.cc.nc.us/studentSupportServices.htm>

⁴¹ *Fact Book 2007*, note 1 above, p. 51.

⁴² Martin Lancaster, *The Costs of Change: (Re)educating North Carolina's Workforce*, a slideshow on the 2006–2007 Consensus Expansion Budget Request, N.C. Community College System, Raleigh, N.C. On the Internet at www.nc-net.info/resourceexchange/ReEducatingNCWorkforce.ppt

⁴³ “North Carolina Viticulture/Enology Center & Surry Community College: Workforce Development Partnership,” *NC Magazine*, North Carolina Chamber, Raleigh, N.C., Oct. 2007, p. 47.

⁴⁴ According to the Travel Industry Association, “The top 15 destinations for food-related travel visited by the respondents (in order) include: California (14%), Florida (10%), New York (7%), Texas (6%), North Carolina (4%), Georgia (4%), Louisiana (3%), Illinois (3%), Nevada (3%), Pennsylvania (3%), Washington (3%), Hawaii (3%), Michigan (2%), Arizona (2%), Virginia (2%).” *Comprehensive Culinary Travel Survey Provides Insights on Food and Wine Travelers*, Press Release from Travel Industry Association, Gourmet, and International Culinary Tourism Association, New York, N.Y., Feb. 14, 2007. Provided by Evelyn Law, N.C. Wine and Grape Council.

⁴⁵ *Fact Book 2007*, note 1 above, pp. 66–70.

⁴⁶ *Measuring Up 2006: The State Report Card on Higher Education—North Carolina*, The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, San Jose, Cal., 2006, p. 7. On the Internet at <http://www.measuringup.highereducation.org/docs/2006/statereports/NC06.pdf>

⁴⁷ *Tough Choices or Tough Times*, National Center on Education and the Economy's New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, Washington, D.C., 2006, p. 16.

⁴⁸ Gordon K. Davies, *Setting a Public Agenda for Higher Education in the States: Lessons Learned from the National Collaborative for Higher Education Policy*, National Collaborative for Higher Education Policy (The Education Commission of the States, The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, and The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems), Dec. 2006, p. 18. On the Internet at http://www.highereducation.org/reports/public_agenda/public_agenda.pdf

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁵⁰ *Graduation Pays: The Economic Case for High School Redesign in N.C.*, National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Washington, D.C., 2006. On the Internet at <http://www.nga.org/portal/site/nga/menuitem.9123e83a1f6786440ddcbeeb501010a0/?vgnxtoid=56cde9b7d9e1a010VgnVCM1000010a1010aRCRD>

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⁵³ *Graduation Pays*, note 50 above.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ North Carolina Commission on Workforce Development, *State of the North Carolina Workforce: An Assessment of the State's Labor Force Demand and Supply 2007–2017*, N.C. Department of Commerce, Raleigh, N.C., 2007, pp. 23 and 44. On the Internet at <http://www.nccommerce.com/en/WorkforceServices/FindInformationForWorkforceProfessionals/PlansPoliciesandReports/#Resource3>

⁵⁶ *Report by the UNC and N.C. Community College Systems to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee of the General Assembly on Existing and New 2+2 Programs Between UNC and N.C. Community College System*, note 26 above, pp. 2 and 11.

⁵⁷ *North Carolina Occupational Trends, Projections 2004–2014*, N.C. Employment Security Commission, Raleigh, N.C. Accessed Oct. 1, 2007 on the Internet at <http://eslmi23.esc.state.nc.us/projections/EmpByMajIndGr.p.asp?areatype=01&area=000037&PeriodID=07&version=&OccGroup=&whichMethod=&socCode=>

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⁶¹ *Adult Learners in Higher Education*, note 52 above, p. 9.