



NC Community Colleges
Hope • Opportunity • Jobs

Dr. R. Scott Ralls, President

PRESS RELEASE

200 West Jones Street ■ Raleigh, North Carolina 27603 ■ www.nccommunitycolleges.edu

RELEASE DATE: February 20, 2009

CONTACT: Megen George georgem@nccommunitycolleges.edu

PHONE: (919) 807-6962

State Board of Community Colleges Voices Support for Budget Priorities

Lieutenant Governor, State Treasurer Sworn In; Small Business Centers Recognized for Excellence

RALEIGH – Budget priorities outlined by the North Carolina Community College System received overwhelming support during the meeting of the State Board of Community Colleges today. Dr. Stuart Fountain, board member from Greensboro applauded the community colleges for emphasizing their core mission, adding, “It’s a courageous move so our decision makers can understand our mission and protect what our community colleges are all about.”

In outlining the System’s budget priorities during Thursday’s committee meetings, Dr. R. Scott Ralls and other senior staff presented the following three items as both budget priorities and areas to protect from budget reductions:

- **Maintaining current per student funding:** Reductions in per student funding affect all colleges, all programs and all full-time students across North Carolina as per student funding supports student needs as well as faculty and staff salaries at NC Community Colleges.
- **Holding on to equipment and technology funding:** Current equipment funding enables community colleges to replace equipment and technology only once every decade. Students who need 21st century training and education cannot afford further reductions.
- **Jumpstarting jobs through health and technical education programs:** Community colleges can have the greatest impact on job recovery by enhancing and expanding healthcare and technical education programs. To accomplish this, community colleges need increased, not diminished, resources for healthcare programs that cost 50 percent more and for technical education training that requires expensive equipment.

Several board members expressed their support for the priority areas, and in his report on behalf of the NC Association of Community College Presidents, Dr. Stephen Scott, Association

President and President of Wake Technical Community College, said “There is support among community college presidents for protecting core funding for our schools. While the colleges are facing not only state but also local budget cuts, the presidents are on board with the approach of protecting our per student funding.”

Board Chair, Hilda Pinnix-Ragland expressed support and said, “During difficult economic times North Carolinians turn to their community colleges for the training and education they need for job opportunities.” She went on to issue a challenge to her fellow board members to voluntarily forgo their per-diem when travelling to future State Board meetings.

Three Small Business Centers received awards for excellence in service. They included Coastal Community College in Onslow County and SBC Director Anne Shaw, Wake Technical Community College and SBC Director Ken Dillo, Cleveland Community College and SBC Director Bee Strain. The Cleveland Center was also named the statewide winner of the Small Business Center of Excellence Award. The Small Business Center Network is the community colleges’ sole program dedicated specifically to increasing the number and success rate of small businesses throughout North Carolina.

Last year, the system’s 58 Small Business Centers helped start 385 businesses that created or retained 3,119 jobs, all at a cost of less than \$2,000 per job.

The State Board welcomed new members, Lieutenant Governor Walter Dalton and State Treasurer Janet Cowell. The two were sworn in by Chief Justice Sarah Parker.

Treasurer Cowell presented information to the Board regarding the status of the state’s Escheats Fund that supports financial aid for both community college and university students. Treasurer Cowell noted that, this year, the fund will transfer \$210.5 million from the fund's principal to support various scholarship programs. The fund earned only \$31.5 million in interest last year, meaning that the aid payments are tapping into the fund’s principal reducing the amount of funds available for future financial aid.

“At some point, we have to look for a more sustainable means of funding financial aid for the community college and UNC systems,” Cowell said. “In this economy, the need for financial aid is only going to increase, not go away.”

In addition, the State Board approved the hiring of Dr. Kerry L. Youngblood as the new president of Carteret Community College to replace retiring president Dr. Joseph T. Barwick. Youngblood of Fruita, Colorado, earned his Ph.D. in community college leadership from Colorado State University in 2006. He began his professional career as a certified welder in Stillwater, OK, and has served for a number of years in the Colorado higher educational system, most recently functioning as the President/CEO of Western Colorado Community College, a branch of Mesa State College.

President R. Scott Ralls also referenced the current financial climate in his report to the State Board, suggesting change may be necessary in order to emerge from the economic crisis.

“One thing we know about America, and it is certainly the case for North Carolina, is that while we may be down, we will get back up,” adding North Carolina Community Colleges would be doing a lot of the heavy lifting. While the economic news may seem overwhelming at times, Ralls encouraged board members to visit the website www.nccreatingsuccess.org to read about the student successes that are a result of the education and training that can be found at North Carolina Community Colleges.

In other business, the State Board approved the final Administrative Code changes for the customized training programs instituted in the fall of 2008, and approved a lease agreement between Rowan-Cabarrus Community College and Castle & Cooke, a Kannapolis-based real estate firm working on the Kannapolis Research Campus. The State Board also approved 14 new continuing education courses focusing on Energy Occupations including sustainable development, green consumerism, and alternative fuels technology.

###