



NC Community Colleges  
Hope • Opportunity • Jobs

Dr. R. Scott Ralls, President

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **State Board Hears Summary of Governor's Budget Recommendations**

#### *Enrollment at NC Community Colleges at All-Time High*

RALEIGH – The State Board of Community Colleges today heard a summary of Governor Beverly Perdue's budget recommendations for the 2009-11 biennium while also receiving numbers on record enrollment across the 58 community colleges.

President R. Scott Ralls told the board that the Governor's budget demonstrates her understanding of the role that North Carolina community colleges play during tough times, illustrated by the 15,000 new students who have enrolled in the colleges since the fall.

Ralls said the additional students were equivalent to adding the largest community college, Central Piedmont, or the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, to the system but without extra funds. However, Ralls noted that the Governor's budget would set aside \$3 million in enrollment reserves to begin to meet the financial costs of a growing student body. Ralls said this is the first time a governor's budget has recommended recurring funding of that kind.

Other budget items included increased funding for healthcare programs, technical education and equipment while reductions were slated for multi-campus funds, off-campus centers and library books and materials among other categories.

"While we all know we could use additional dollars, we can't lose sight of how well we've fared in the Governor's budget," said Chair Hilda Pinnix-Ragland. "We can only stretch our dollars so far, but the Governor's emphasis on education is very welcomed."

During the meeting the State Board approved the Projected Lottery Payment Schedule, increasing the financial aid floor by \$600, and they expanded eligibility for the NC Community College Grant Program, providing crucial financial support to non-traditional students.

Ralls made note of the changes in his [President's Report](#) which focused on access and opportunity as "the basic formula for community college success." Ralls said that community colleges were increasing student access through growing enrollments and enhanced financial aid. However, he contrasted the improvement in access with the system's critical need to improve student opportunity through updated equipment and technology.

"Many of our students who have come to us through increased access are receiving training and education on out-dated and often obsolete equipment," Ralls said. "This raises questions not only about the quality of opportunities we're able to offer our students, but also questions about their future employability and the level of skills needed by their future employers. We're increasing student access; now, we must continue to improve student opportunities."

In other business, the State Board approved a revised state plan related to Basic Skills. The new plan will extend through 2010 and would revise target performance measures. The plan goes to the governor before heading to the US Department of Education on April 1<sup>st</sup>. The Board also approved a change in wording in rules related to Courses and Standards in Curriculum Programs, and a memorandum of understanding with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction for a Career Guide.

The board received a brief summary from Policy Chair Dr. Stuart Fountain on the oral preliminary report presented to his committee yesterday by JBL Associates, the consultant hired by the Board to examine issues related to the admission of undocumented students. Dr. Fountain noted that the consultants' presentation included information on the cost of student verification and on how other states have responded to the admission question. The Policy Committee will receive the consultants' final report at their April 16 meeting.

The next meeting of the State Board of Community Colleges will take place on the campus of Randolph Community College April 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>.

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