STATE BOARD OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES
Adult Learner Pilot Project
FY 2021-22

Request: The State Board of Community Colleges is requested to approve the allocation of $2,000,000 state funds to support the Expansion of Adult Learner Pilot Programs. Funding for this program is included in the FY 2021-22 State Budget. The purpose of the Expansion of the Adult Learner Pilot Program is to target adult learners to return to higher education to gain new skills, advance in the workplace, and fulfill their goals of completing a degree or credential.

Strategic Plan Reference:
Theme: Student Interest and Access
Goal #1: Increase the percentage of North Carolinians, particularly within underserved populations, pursuing and easily accessing education or training through North Carolina community colleges.
- Objective 1.1: Improve the understanding and perceived value of educational opportunities, including lifelong learning, offered by community colleges.
  - Strategy 1.1.3: Reconnect former community college students to education and training opportunities that foster continued educational and career growth

Background:
Section 6.10 of SB 105 (the 2021 Appropriations Act) provides $2,000,000 for the expansion of Adult Learner Pilot Programs. The bill states that:

the System Office shall allocate funds to expand five pilot initiatives at community colleges targeting adult learners to return to higher education to gain new skills, advance in the workplace, and fulfill their goals of completing a degree or credential. The pilot programs include the NC Reconnect program and other programs that focus on at least the following categories of adult learners:
(1) Students who are age 25 years or older.
(2) Students with varying education levels, including no high school diploma or equivalent or some community college credentials or postsecondary degree.
(3) Students who have started postsecondary programs but dropped out before completion in the last five years.
(4) Nontraditional students, including part-time students, parents, or students with limited scheduling options due to work or other responsibilities.
The funds may be used to expand the pilots to other community college campuses and at the existing community college pilot sites for marketing and outreach, as well as for enrollment of students into the programs, particularly for students who have dropped out of postsecondary degree or credential programs prior to completion

The NC Reconnect program mentioned in the bill started in Spring 2021 with five community

colleges and will expand to include a total of 10 colleges in Winter/Spring 2022. The program has focused on increasing the enrollment of adult learners, in particular returning adults. It has been financial supported by John M. Belk Endowment and coordinated in partnership with myFutureNC, NC State's Belk Center, and the NCCCS Office. NC Reconnect has consisted of four primary components: 1) identification of students that are close to completing a credential using the Finish First NC tool developed by Wake Tech, 2) outreach to previously enrolled students by InsideTrack (a non-profit organization specializing in student recruitment and retention), 3) a coordinated marketing campaign, "Better Skills, Better jobs", and 4) mini-grants to each participating college of up to $125,000.

Rationale:
To maximize the impact of these funds in the time available, staff recommend a three-part strategy. First, provide additional funding in the form of $50,000 grants to the 10 colleges in the NC Reconnect program. These institutions have a demonstrated commitment to increasing the number of adult learners they are enrolling and are already working with the John M. Belk Endowment, InsideTrack and other partners on a spring/summer enrollment campaign. Allowable uses for these funds include marketing, outreach, and enrollment efforts for adult learners as described in legislation.

Second, staff recommend including colleges that are participating in the REACH (Racial Equity for Adult Credentials in Higher Education) Collaborative, a grant-funded effort to increase the completion rates of adult learners from communities of color in high-value, short-term credential programs. All colleges in the REACH Collaborative have been contacted and all but one signed on to participate in the Adult Learner Pilot. Staff recommend adding Wake Tech to this group as well because they have already worked with InsideTrack on similar recruitment efforts and are able to provide technical assistance to all colleges in the group in using the Finish First tool to identify some-college-no-credential students for targeted recruitment. Each of these colleges will receive a $25,000 grant to support marketing, outreach, and enrollment efforts for adult learners as described in legislation. This group includes 19 colleges.

Third, staff recommend granting $1,050,000 to Wake Tech to enter into a contract with InsideTrack on behalf of the 19 colleges not already working with InsideTrack. InsideTrack would in turn provide personalized recruitment services for identified students on behalf of each participating college. Wake Tech will also provide support for colleges to use the Finish First NC tool to help identify the students they want to recruit.

Table 1: Adult Learner Pilot Project Allocation

College	Allocation
A-B Tech CC	$25,000
Alamance CC	$25,000
Blue Ridge CC	$50,000
Caldwell CCT&I	$50,000
Cape Fear CC	$25,000
Carteret CC	$25,000
Central Carolina CC	$50,000
Central Piedmont CC	$25,000
College of The Albemarle	$25,000
Davidson Davie CC	$25,000
Durham Tech CC	$50,000
Fayetteville Tech CC	$50,000
Forsyth Tech CC	$50,000
Gaston College	$25,000
Guilford Tech CC	$25,000
Isothermal CC	$25,000
Lenoir CC	$50,000
McDowell Tech CC	$25,000
Nash CC	$25,000
Pitt CC	$50,000
Roanoke-Chowan CC	$25,000
Robeson CC	$25,000
Rowan-Cabarrus CC	$25,000
Sandhills CC	$25,000
South Piedmont CC	$25,000
Vance Granville CC	$50,000
Wake Tech CC	$1,050,000
Wilkes CC	$50,000
Wilson CC	$25,000
TOTAL	$2,000,000

Fund Source and Availability: Funding is available from the 2021 Appropriations Act (S.L. 2021-180) and is available for the period January 1, 2022, through June 30, 2022.

Contact:
Patrick Crane
Vice President of Strategic Initiatives