

1.1 History of the North Carolina Community College System

Last Revised: January 2011

Policy Statement: N/A

Purpose/Definitions: Although two-year colleges supported by local public school funds have existed in North Carolina since 1928, the initial effort to establish a statewide community college system began in 1952. In that year, the Hurlburt Commission, named for its director, Dr. Allan S. Hurlburt, published The Community College Study. This study advocated the establishment of a statewide system of community colleges in North Carolina. It was not until 1957, however, during the administration of Governor Luther Hodges, that the State Legislature passed the Community College Act to support academically-oriented public junior colleges, later known as community colleges. The colleges would be supervised by the Board of Higher Education.

1957: The movement to develop community colleges in 1957 was accompanied by a vigorous effort to develop programs in industrial education. The 1957 General Assembly appropriated funds to the State Board of Education to initiate a statewide system of industrial education centers. These centers were dedicated to extending educational opportunities in industry, business, and agriculture beyond high school and to provide a better-trained workforce for the state. The General Assembly officially authorized and designated a system of vocational schools known as industrial education centers. This system was administered by the State Board of Education and local boards of education.

1959: Both the community colleges and the industrial education centers served needs for education beyond the high schools; thus, the two educational programs, even though administered by separate boards, focused their efforts on extending education opportunities beyond high school.

1961: The need for better planning resulted in Governor Terry Sanford's appointment of the Governor's Commission on Education Beyond the High School, also known as the Carlyle Commission. The Commission was charged with finding methods of expanding educational offerings at the post-high-school level. In its report to the Governor in 1962, the Commission recommended that the two types of institutions be merged into one administrative organization under the State Board of Education. Thus, all of the State's two-year higher educational needs (whether academic, technical, or vocational) could be developed under one administration – the comprehensive community college system. Students would have more choices, and they could change their goals without having to withdraw from one type of institution and apply for admission to an entirely different one.

1963: On July 1, 1963 the General Assembly, following the recommendations of the Carlyle Commission, established the Department of Community Colleges under the State Board of Education. Of the five community colleges developed under the North Carolina Board of Higher Education, three were converted into four-year state colleges and two were brought under the State Board of Education. The Department of Community Colleges was given control over 20 industrial education centers previously established by authority of the 1957 General Assembly. Since 1963, 23 community colleges, 27 technical colleges, and 8 technical institutes have been established.

1979: The General Assembly changed the state control of the System (G.S.-115D) by establishing a separate State Board of Community Colleges. The Board was appointed and organized in 1980, and met

several times with the State Board of Education. The new Board assumed full responsibility for the System on January 1, 1981. The Board's first chairperson was Duke Power company executive Carl Horn. He was succeeded in 1983 by John A. Forlines, president of the Bank of Granite, who was succeeded by William F. Simpson in 1989. In 1993, Lt. Governor Dennis A. Wicker was elected chair and served until July 1999. He was succeeded by retired community college president Dr. G. Herman Porter. Mr. James J. Woody of Roxboro served as chair from 2001 until July 2005, when Progress Energy executive Hilda Pinnix-Ragland succeeded him as chair.

Since 1979, the institutions of the North Carolina Community College System have been governed by G.S.-115D as amended. This statute also gives the State Board of Community Colleges the authority to adopt policies in keeping with the statute with respect to local institutions.

The original legislation placed the Community College System under the purview of the State Board of Education and created a State Department of Community Colleges. In the early years of the System, the State Board of Education Chair was Dallas Herring; David Bruton succeeded him in 1977.

The North Carolina Community College System has had seven presidents: I. E. Ready (1963-1970); Ben E. Fountain, Jr. (1971-1978); Larry J. Blake (1979-1982); Robert W. Scott (1983-1995); Lloyd V. Hackley (1995-1997); Martin Lancaster (1997-2008); and Scott Ralls (2008-present). Charles R. Holloman served in an acting capacity from September, 1978 to July, 1979.

In November 1987, the State Board established the Commission on the Future of the North Carolina Community College System. The 23-member panel of business, civic, and education leaders was charged with establishing a system-wide agenda for policy and action over the next 25 years. The resulting Commission on the Future report, released in 1989, outlined 33 recommendations for action and change. These recommendations have served as the foundation of the System planning process since 1989. The influence of the Commission on the Future report is evident in the 2005–2007 System Strategic Plan goals and objectives.

In 1988, the North Carolina Community College System celebrated its 25th anniversary with a highly successful series of events, including a spectacular concert at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, featuring visiting artists from the colleges. For the celebration of its 40th anniversary in 2003, the system, with the support of the North Carolina Community Colleges Foundation, created the W. Dallas Herring Leadership Development Institute.

In the fall semester of 1997, all community colleges in the North Carolina Community College System converted from the quarter system to the semester system of instruction.

Approval Authority/Monitoring Authority: Piedmont Community College's Board of Trustees has approval authority for this policy. The Director, Public Information has monitoring authority for this policy.

Procedure: N/A

Legal Citation: N.C.G.S. 115D

History: Effective April 1975; revised January 1988, October 2001, January 2011