

**University of North Carolina System and the North Carolina Community College System:  
Joint Legislative Priorities for 2019-21**

Closer collaboration between the UNC System and North Carolina Community College System is expanding educational opportunity and increasing the return on taxpayer investments in our state. The number of transfer students from community colleges to UNC institutions has reached an all-time high, as have transfer student graduation rates, thanks in large part to the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement (CAA). New co-admission agreements between NCCCS institutions and local universities will help more students earn a high-quality associate degree that sets them up for success as they pursue a four-year degree.

Current efforts have laid the groundwork for further progress. The North Carolina Student Aid Study Group convened a group of leaders from across the two systems to identify opportunities to simplify state grant programs and align them with student success goals.

As a result of this close collaboration, NCCCS and UNC have identified four joint legislative priorities.

**1. Summer Scholarships for UNC and NCCCS Students**

*Request for 2019-20: \$10 million (R)      (UNC: \$7m/NCCCS: \$3m)*

*Request for 2020-21: \$12 million (R)      (UNC: \$8m/NCCCS: \$4m)*

The North Carolina Student Aid Study Group identified summer scholarships as a key tool to increase student success and reduce time to degree in both the UNC and community college systems. Traditionally, state financial aid programs have not been available in the summer, limiting students' ability to afford summer courses. In summer 2018, the State Education Assistance Authority (NCSEAA) made \$2.8 million in UNC Need-Based Grant funding available which helped nearly 4,000 UNC students pay for summer school. Financial aid officers targeted funds to students who were within a course or two of earning the 30 credits necessary to stay on track to graduate in four years. The results were promising: by the end of the summer, more than 77% of grantees had met or exceeded the 30-credit benchmark.

The UNC and NC Community College System request dedicated funding for summer scholarships to help more students complete a degree in a timely fashion. Funds will be targeted to students who can use summer courses to stay on track or accelerate their path to timely completion. NCSEAA will disburse the summer scholarships to UNC and NCCCS institutions based upon guidance from the governing boards and Presidents of each system.

**2. Transfer Student Scholarships**

*Request: \$4 million (R)*

The North Carolina Student Aid Study Group also recommended reforms to increase transfer student success. Research indicates that students who complete their college transfer associate degree before transferring to a four-year university are significantly more likely to complete a bachelor's degree.

In North Carolina, completion of certain associate degrees activates the terms of the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement (CAA), which assures admission to a UNC institution and enables transfer students to enter with junior standing. However, less than one-third of NCCCS transfers arrived at UNC having completed an AA or AS degree.

In order to encourage students to complete an associate degree before transferring, the UNC and North Carolina Community College Systems request funding to provide students with a one-time scholarship upon transfer to a UNC institution after earning an eligible associate degree covered by the CAA.

### ***3. Improve Credit Transfer for Community College and Military-affiliated Students***

*Request: \$150,000 (R), \$200,000 (NR)*

Together, the UNC and North Carolina Community College systems have worked to streamline credit transfer across institutions and to grant veterans credit for their military experience. A comprehensive statewide agreement for alignment and articulation of general education courses, as well as a governing body— Transfer Advisory Committee (TAC)—was created to oversee transfer practices across all 4-year UNC institutions. In addition, in response to a 2014 law (S.L. 2014-67), the systems created a Military Credit Advisory Council (MCAC) and convened panels of faculty experts to develop shared standards for the uniform granting and transferring of course credits for military training and occupational experience to veteran students enrolled in North Carolina universities and community colleges.

These two committees require funding to maximize reach, expand scope, and tackle other issues that may prevent seamless pathways for students. TAC has identified the need for site reviews, convening of key NCCCS and UNC faculty and staff around new initiatives, and support for the creation of several new pathways programs. In 2019-20, MCAC's goals are to complete the initial phase of military credit evaluation and create a searchable database of military credit equivalencies.

### ***4. Expand the Availability of Open Educational Resources (OER)***

*Request: \$300,000 (R)*

According to national data, the price of college textbooks has significantly outstripped the rate of inflation, and college students now spend an average of \$500 to \$600 per year on books.

In response, a national movement has emerged to create Open Educational Resources (OER)--digital textbooks and other course materials that are available to all at little or no cost. Groups of expert faculty identify materials that align with commonly taught courses, curate those books and articles, and make them available to other faculty that teach the same course. Assigning OER textbooks across a number of introductory courses can save students millions of dollars in textbook costs.

The requested funding would help curate and catalyze adoption of high-quality OER materials for the most commonly taught courses across the UNC and community college systems, with priority given to those courses that universally transfer under the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement.