

ARTICLE 46

Community Colleges

by Robert P. Joyce

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EACH YEAR, ONE North Carolinian in ten goes to school in the state’s community college system. The fifty-eight campuses serve nearly 800,000 students at an annual operating cost exceeding one billion dollars. That cost is shared by the state and counties in much the same way that the costs of running the public elementary and secondary schools are shared—the state pays the bulk of the expense of providing the educational programs (over \$800 million in 2005–6) and the counties pay most of the expense of providing and maintaining facilities (plus about \$150 million in operating funds in that year). As with the public schools, in the community college system the operating authority and decision-making power are shared by the state (chiefly through the State Board of Community Colleges) and local government (chiefly through the local community college board of trustees).

Brief History

Both The University of North Carolina and the system of free public schools are provided for by the North Carolina Constitution and both have roots that reach back to the nineteenth century and earlier. The community college system, by contrast, is not mentioned in the constitution and is strictly a creation of the General Assembly in the twentieth century.

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In 1927, Buncombe County Junior College opened as the state's first tuition-free public junior college. Shortly afterward, the Asheville board of education started the College of the City of Asheville, also tuition-free, open to any high school graduate in the city. Because of the financial difficulties faced after the Great Depression, the two colleges merged, in effect, into Biltmore Junior College. Under the names Biltmore College and then Asheville-Biltmore College, the institution remained the sole public junior college in North Carolina until 1946.

With the end of World War II, North Carolina was flooded with former GIs eager for higher education, along with the regular complement of new eighteen- and nineteen-year-olds. Existing campuses, such as the one at Chapel Hill, were filled past overflowing. In response, the extension division of The University of North Carolina opened twelve off-campus freshman centers around the state in the fall of 1946. Most of the centers closed when the wave of students passed, but local taxpayers took up responsibility for two: Wilmington College (destined to become The University of North Carolina at Wilmington) and Charlotte College (later The University of North Carolina at Charlotte) joined Asheville-Biltmore College (later The University of North Carolina at Asheville) as public junior colleges.

About this time, the notion of "community college" was gaining its first acceptance nationally through the 1947 report of the Truman Commission, more formally known as the President's Commission on Higher Education. In 1950 the state superintendent of public instruction authorized a study of North Carolina's need for community colleges. In 1952 the resulting report, adopting the philosophy of the Truman Commission report, called for the creation of a system of tuition-free institutions designed to meet all the post-secondary-school needs of the community, including both academic preparation and practical vocational and technical training.

In 1957, the General Assembly passed the state's first Community College Act, but it did not create the community college that was envisioned by the Truman Commission or by the North Carolina study at all. Instead, the act provided funds for public junior colleges—that is, the institutions at Asheville, Wilmington, and Charlotte—to offer a freshman and sophomore curriculum in liberal arts and sciences. The vocational, technical, and adult education aspects of their curricula faded away.

As the public junior colleges moved away from vocational training, the General Assembly appropriated half a million dollars to create industrial education centers devoted entirely to vocational training, under the auspices of the State Board of Education. Soon the Burlington center enrolled 2,400 students, and by 1963 a total of twenty centers enrolled 34,000 students statewide. To serve the needs of their vocational students, the industrial education centers began offering liberal arts courses in English, mathematics, and the like.

The duplication of effort between the public junior colleges and the industrial education centers motivated Governor Terry Sanford to set up the Governor's Commission on Education beyond the High School in 1961, which called for the creation of "community colleges" offering not only freshman and sophomore college-level courses, like the public junior colleges, but also technical, vocational, and adult education courses for both college and noncollege students. Instead of expanding the 1957 version of public junior colleges into true community colleges, North Carolina started from a base of noncollege, industrial education centers and, in effect, transformed them into a community college system. The General Assembly's Omnibus Higher Education Act of 1963—codified at G.S. Chapter 115A, and since replaced by Chapter 115D—authorized the community college system that exists today. Within five years the system comprised fifty institutions. Through the 1970s eight more were added, with the last, now known as Brunswick Community College, joining the system in 1978.

Education Philosophy

The education philosophy of the community college system embraces four elements that distinguish it from more traditional academic institutions of higher education: the "open door," low tuition, convenience of location, and a comprehensive curriculum.

- **The "open door."** The notion is that the institution is available to anyone who wishes to take advantage of the opportunities it presents, without rigorous entrance obstacles. The North Carolina Administrative Code provides that "[e]ach college shall maintain an open-door admission policy to all applicants who are high school graduates or who are at least 18 years of age" (24 NCAC 2C.0301). To carry out this mission, the community college system offers three types of instruction. First, in "curriculum" programs, the colleges grant certificates, diplomas, or associate degrees, designed to prepare individuals for entry-level technical positions in business and industry (such as nursing and computer technology) and college transfer programs designed to prepare individuals to move to the junior-year level of study at four-year universities. Second, in "continuing

education” programs, students are not seeking academic credit, but are furthering their occupational or academic goals through nondegree courses (such as adult literacy, high school diploma equivalency, or English-as-a-second-language). Third, colleges cooperate with local industries to provide specialized training, often targeting the economic development of the community. In any particular program—nursing, for example—a community college may impose entrance requirements. The general philosophy, however, is that the college will offer educational opportunities for all adults who wish to pursue them.

- **Low tuition.** Expense should, to the fullest extent possible, provide no barrier to a community college education. In 2005, in-state tuition for North Carolina residents was \$608 per semester.
- **Convenience of location.** North Carolina’s community colleges are not residence colleges like the campuses of The University of North Carolina. The vast majority of students live at home—many of them working to support families.
- **A comprehensive curriculum.** These colleges provide educational opportunities for all adults, at whatever educational level the adults may be. Course offerings range from rigorous health technology programs to basic literacy training. Academics and technical and vocation training coexist in the same broadly based institution.

Relationship with the Public Schools and The University of North Carolina

Of particular concern to a community college are (1) its relationship with the public schools in its area and (2) its relationship to The University of North Carolina.

Relationship with the Public Schools

Community colleges have deep and historical links to the public schools. The vocational education centers from which the community colleges grew were established as parts of the public school system under the State Board of Education. The community college system operated under the State Board of Education from its creation until 1980. Also, local boards of education elect members to the board of trustees for each community college.

Generally speaking, however, the community colleges do not exist to serve public school students; high school students have been encouraged to stay in their high schools until graduation. Today, that is changing somewhat. Two distinct ways in which high school students have been permitted to enroll in courses in a community college are being joined by a more expansive third way.

The first is termed “dual enrollment” (see 23 NCAC 2C.0305). A particular high school student may be admitted to courses at the community college, to be taken concurrently with courses at the high school, upon the approval of the president of the college and the superintendent of schools. Admission is on a space-available basis and must not displace adult students. Once admitted, the student earns credit at the community college like any other student. Dual enrollment is an individualized case-by-case matter and requires no approval at the state level.

The second involves a more formalized program of cooperation between a community college and the local public school system to offer enhanced educational opportunities for high school students that would not otherwise be available to them. Such programs of cooperation are commonly known as “Huskins Bill” programs, after the statutory provision authorizing them [see G.S. 115D-20(4)]. A Huskins Bill program, in contrast to individualized dual enrollment, will involve the enrollment of a number of local high school students in one or more courses offered by the community college. It requires a formal agreement between the school system and the college and approval by the State Board of Community Colleges.

The third is the newest and most expansive. Community colleges and local boards of education cooperate in the creation of special high schools, typically physically located on the community college campus. High school students take some courses offered by the school board and other courses offered by the community college. These programs go by the names “early college high school” or “middle college high school.” In many of the programs, a student enters as a ninth-grader and attends the school for five years, earning simultaneously a high school diploma and a college associate’s degree. Some of these joint high school–college programs have a unique focus, such as health care. In 2006, sixteen such early college or middle college high school programs were operating in cooperation with North Carolina community colleges, enrolling about 1,500 students. The number of programs and students was expected to rise quickly in the coming few years.

Relationship with the University

All fifty-eight community colleges offer college transfer programs in the liberal arts and sciences, but the General Assembly has required (in G.S. 115D-4.1) that “[a]ddition of the college transfer program shall not decrease [the community college’s] ability to provide programs within its basic mission of vocational and technical training and basic academic education.” Nonetheless, community colleges are quite reasonably concerned about the ability of their college transfer students to gain admission to four-year institutions and to gain credit for the work undertaken at the community college.

To address that concern, community colleges over the years worked out agreements—termed *articulation agreements*—with four-year colleges that spelled out how course credits would transfer when a community college student gained admission to the four-year college. In time, the welter of such agreements exceeded 300. The complexity of that arrangement provided the impetus for the creation of the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement between the community college system and the university in 1997, detailing how credits will transfer from community college transfer programs to any of the sixteen campuses of the university—Asheville, Boone, Chapel Hill, Charlotte, Cullowhee, Durham, Elizabeth City, Fayetteville, two in Greensboro, Greenville, Pembroke, Raleigh, Wilmington, and two in Winston-Salem. In general, no community college transfer student is guaranteed admission to any UNC institution; the admission decision is made by the UNC institution on a student-by-student basis. Once admitted, however, the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement governs the transfer of course and grade credit.

The individual community colleges are still free to enter into individual agreements with private four-year colleges to spell out how course and grade credits will transfer between the community college and the private college. A number of private colleges simply follow the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement.

State Governance Structure

The Omnibus Higher Education Act of 1963, creating the community college system, placed the Department of Community Colleges and the individual institutions under the State Board of Education. The community colleges were an adjunct of the state’s public schools, providing thirteenth and fourteenth grades, in a sense. But in 1979 the General Assembly established the State Board of Community Colleges and transferred the department under its control. This transfer was made with the enactment of Chapter 115D of the General Statutes to replace Chapter 115A. The transfer to the new State Board of Community Colleges became effective July 1, 1980. In 1999, the General Assembly changed the name of the Department of Community Colleges to the North Carolina Community College System Office.

State Board of Community Colleges

The State Board of Community Colleges has broad authority over the operations of the community college system and the individual institutions. Since its creation, however, it has exercised its powers with restraint, granting flexibility to the colleges.

Appointment

The State Board of Community Colleges consists of twenty-one members. The lieutenant governor and the state treasurer are *ex officio* members. The remaining members serve six-year terms. The governor appoints ten members, four from the state at large and one each from the six regions of the community college trustees’ association. The General Assembly elects eight members, four each by the House of Representatives and the Senate. The president of the North Carolina Comprehensive Community College Student Government Association serves as a nonvoting member (see G.S. 115D-2.1).

Powers and Duties

The General Assembly has by statute granted power over the community college system very broadly to the State Board, providing in G.S. 115D-5(a) that

[t]he State Board of Community Colleges may adopt and execute such policies, regulations and standards concerning the establishment, administration, and operation of institutions as the State Board may deem necessary to insure the quality of educational programs, to promote the systematic meeting of educational needs of the State, and to provide for the equitable distribution of State and federal funds to the several institutions.

In addition to this broad and general grant of authority, the State Board is authorized to approve the budget of individual colleges, approve building sites, approve building plans, approve the selection of the president for a college, establish and enforce financial accounting procedures, approve a college's adoption of a college transfer program, set pay scales for community college employee salaries, remove local community college trustees, set tuition and fees, and, if necessary, withdraw state financial support from a college if the local county or counties fail to provide adequate support.

The State Board has been reserved in exercising the broad authority over individual colleges granted to it by the General Assembly. It has, in fact, adopted a rule (found in 23 NCAC 1A.0003) specifying that “[a]ll power and authority vested by law in the State Board which related to the internal administration, regulation, and governance of any individual college . . . are hereby delegated to the board of trustees of such college.” At the same time, mindful of its ultimate responsibility, the State Board has also adopted a rule [found in 23 NCAC 1A.0003(b)(3)] stating that “[t]he State Board reserves the right to rescind any power or authority as it deems necessary.”

Creation of New Community Colleges

By 1978, the community college system had grown to fifty-eight institutions, its current number. Establishment of new colleges is subject to the approval of the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the State Board.

System Office and the State President

The System Office is defined by the statutes as a principal administrative department of state government under the direction of the State Board of Community Colleges. Chief among its duties are the allocation of state funds to the individual colleges on an equitable and lawful basis and the financial accounting oversight.

The State Board elects a president of the North Carolina System of Community Colleges to act as chief administrative officer of the System Office. The president's salary is fixed by the State Board from funds appropriated by the General Assembly. Neither the statutes nor the administrative code provisions spell out specific duties of the president.

Local Governance Structure

Each community college is governed—under the authority of the State Board of Community Colleges—by a local board of trustees and is administered by a president, employed by the board of trustees.

Local Board of Trustees

Appointment

Each community college board of trustees is composed of four different sets of members. In the first group are four trustees elected by the board of education of the public school administrative unit located in the administrative area of the college. If there are two or more school units in the administrative area, the four trustees are elected jointly by all the local boards, with each board having one vote. In the second group are four trustees elected by the county commissioners of the county in which the college is located. If the administrative area of the college consists of two or more counties, the trustees are to be elected jointly by all the boards, with each board having one vote. (If a community college has established a satellite campus in another county, the commissioners of that county may elect an additional two members to the board of trustees, if the board of trustees agrees.) Only one trustee elected in this group may himself or herself be a county commissioner. In the third group are four trustees appointed by the governor. In the fourth group is the president of the student government, as an *ex officio*, nonvoting member. All trustees except the student government president serve four-year terms and must be residents of the administrative area of the college (see G.S. 115D-12). No one who has been employed full-time by a community college within the past five years may serve as a trustee and no spouse or child of a current employee may.

A trustee may be removed from office in one of two ways. First, the board of trustees may declare a seat vacant if a member misses three consecutive scheduled meetings without excuse or fails to participate in the trustee orientation program sponsored by the trustees' association. Second, if the State Board has reason to believe that a trustee is not capable of discharging the duties of the office, or is not discharging them, or is guilty of immoral or disreputable conduct, the State Board may bring the matter to the attention of the local board of trustees. The trustees may then investigate and hold a hearing and, by two-thirds vote, find the charges to be true and declare the seat vacant (see G.S. 115D-19).

Powers and Duties

The broadest grant of authority to the local community college board of trustees comes from the State Board, which has provided by rule (found in 23 NCAC 1A.0003) that “[a]ll power and authority vested by law in the State Board which related to the internal administration, regulation, and governance of any individual college . . . are hereby delegated to the board of trustees of such college.” In addition, specific statutory grants of authority empower the board of trustees to do the following things:

- purchase and hold title to land, easements, and rights-of-way
- sell, exchange, or lease real and personal property
- acquire land by condemnation
- elect a president (subject to the approval of the State Board)
- employ employees (or delegate the employment authority to the president)
- adopt rules and regulations for the disciplining of students
- enter into contracts
- sue and be sued
- adopt rules for the use of campus streets, alleys, and driveways, including setting speed limits
- purchase liability insurance and thereby waive sovereign immunity

These grants of authority are found variously in G.S. 115D-14, -15, -20, and -21. In addition, the trustees are authorized by statute to “exercise such other rights and privileges as may be necessary for the management and administration of the institution,” and to “perform such other acts and do such other things as may be necessary or proper for the exercise of the foregoing specific powers, including the adoption and enforcement of all reasonable rules, regulations, and bylaws for the government and operation of the institution” (G.S. 115D-14).

Service Areas, Administrative Areas, and Alternative Trustee Selection

The State Board assigns to each community college a *service area* for providing educational and training services (see NCAC 2C.0107). A college may offer services in an area assigned to another college only by written agreement between the colleges. Community college service areas are not student attendance zones; any citizen of the state may enroll in any community college in the state. (See Table 46.1 for the system’s service areas.)

The college’s service area may be exactly coterminous with its *administrative area*—the county or counties that are directly responsible for providing financial support for the college. Or the service area may be broader. A college may establish a satellite campus in a county that is not in the administrative area—with the approval of the commissioners of that county—and that county must accept the maintenance and utility costs of the satellite campus [by G.S. 115D-32(d)].

If a college’s administrative area includes two or more counties, the boards of commissioners of all the counties may establish the terms for providing the financial support of the college by contract, and they may provide for an alternative structure for the selection of trustees. The contract is subject to approval by the State Board.

College President

The president of the community college is selected by the board of trustees “for such term and under such conditions as the trustees may fix” [G.S. 115D-20(1)]. The selection is subject to the approval of the State Board. The trustees may delegate as much administrative authority to the president as they deem prudent. Two statutory provisions provide explicitly for significant delegation. The first one authorizes the board of trustees to delegate to the president the authority to make hiring decisions for all college personnel [G.S. 115D-20(2)]. The second one authorizes the board of trustees to delegate to the president the authority to transfer moneys from one appropriation to another within the same fund [G.S. 115D-58(c)].

Financial Responsibility for Community Colleges

The state and the counties served by a community college share the duty of paying for the college. By statute, the state pays for salaries and other costs of administration, instructional services, and support services (called *current operations expenses*). The state pays for furniture, equipment, and library books, and, when the appropriations are made by the General Assembly, provides matching funds (to be paired with local funds) to buy land and to construct buildings

Table 46.1. Institution—Service Area, see Special Provisions (1–7)

Alamance CC— <i>Alamance (3)</i>	Mayland CC— <i>Avery, Mitchell, Yancey</i>
Asheville-Buncombe CC— <i>Buncombe, Madison</i>	McDowell CC— <i>McDowell</i>
Beaufort County CC— <i>Beaufort, Hyde, Tyrrell, Washington (7)</i>	Mitchell CC— <i>Iredell (4,5)</i>
Bladen CC— <i>Bladen</i>	Montgomery CC— <i>Montgomery</i>
Blue Ridge CC— <i>Henderson, Transylvania</i>	Nash CC— <i>Nash</i>
Brunswick CC— <i>Brunswick</i>	Pamlico CC— <i>Pamlico</i>
Caldwell CC and TI— <i>Caldwell, Watauga</i>	Piedmont CC— <i>Caswell, Person (3)</i>
Cape Fear CC— <i>New Hanover, Pender</i>	Pitt CC— <i>Pitt</i>
Carteret CC— <i>Carteret</i>	Randolph CC— <i>Randolph</i>
Catawba Valley CC— <i>Alexander, Catawba (5)</i>	Richmond CC— <i>Richmond, Scotland</i>
Central Carolina CC— <i>Chatham, Harnett, Lee</i>	Roanoke-Chowan CC— <i>Bertie (Townships of Colerain, Mitchells, Roxobel, Snakebite, Whites, and Woodville). Hertford, Northampton (Townships of Jackson, Kirby, Rich Square, Roanoke, and Wiccacanee) (1)</i>
Central Piedmont CC— <i>Mecklenburg</i>	Robeson CC— <i>Robeson</i>
Cleveland CC— <i>Cleveland</i>	Rockingham CC— <i>Rockingham (3)</i>
Coastal Carolina CC— <i>Onslow</i>	Rowan-Cabarrus CC— <i>Cabarrus, Rowan (2)</i>
College of the Albemarle— <i>Camden, Chowan, Currituck, Dare</i>	Sampson CC— <i>Sampson</i>
Gates, Pasquotank, Perquimans	Sandhills CC— <i>Hole, Moore</i>
Craven CC— <i>Craven</i>	South Piedmont CC— <i>Anson, Union (6)</i>
Davidson CC— <i>Davidson, Davie (4)</i>	Southeastern CC— <i>Columbus</i>
Durham CC— <i>Durham, Orange</i>	Southwestern CC— <i>Jackson, Macon, Swain</i>
Edgecombe CC— <i>Edgecombe</i>	Stanly CC— <i>Stanly (2)</i>
Fayetteville TCC— <i>Cumberland</i>	Surry CC— <i>Surry, Yadkin</i>
Forsyth TCC— <i>Forsyth, Stokes</i>	Tri-County CC— <i>Cherokee, Clay, Graham</i>
Gaston College— <i>Gaston, Lincoln</i>	Vance-Granville CC— <i>Vance, Franklin, Granville, Warren</i>
Guilford TCC— <i>Guilford</i>	Wake TCC— <i>Wake</i>
Halifax CC— <i>Halifax, North Hampton (Townships of Gaston, Occoneechee, Pleasant Hill, and Seaboard)</i>	Wayne CC— <i>Wayne</i>
Haywood CC— <i>Haywood</i>	Western Piedmont CC— <i>Burke</i>
Isothermal CC— <i>Polk, Rutherford</i>	Wilkes CC— <i>Alleghany, Ashe, Wilkes</i>
James Sprunt CC— <i>Duplin</i>	Wilson TCC— <i>Wilson</i>
Johnston CC— <i>Johnston</i>	
Lenoir CC— <i>Greene, Lenoir, Jones</i>	
Martin CC— <i>Bertie (Townships of Indian Woods, Merry Hill), Martin, Washington (1,7)</i>	

SPECIAL PROVISIONS

1. Bertie County is divided between Roanoke-Chowan CC and Martin CC as stated in the service area assignments. In the case of offering courses within the town or township of Windsor, Martin CC has exclusive authority for offering curriculum and adult basic education courses, and both Martin CC and Roanoke-Chowan CC are authorized to offer other continuing education courses.
2. Cabarrus County is assigned to Rowan-Cabarrus CC, which is authorized to offer all courses.
3. Caswell County is assigned to Piedmont CC which is authorized to offer all courses in Caswell County.
4. Davie County is assigned to Davidson County CC, which is authorized to offer all courses in Davie County.
5. Catawba Valley CC is authorized to continue offering the furniture training program at the Iredell Prison Unit. This exception shall be re-examined periodically by the State President with his findings reported to the State Board.
6. South Piedmont CC is a multicampus community college authorized to serve Anson and Union Counties.
7. Martin CC is authorized to offer in Washington County all adult basic education, adult high school/GED, fire training and emergency medical training and in-plant training.

Source: Curriculum Procedures Reference Manual, Oct. 1, 2004, North Carolina Community College System, referenced 5/10/07 at http://www.ncccs.cc.nc.us/programs/reference_manual.htm

(collectively called the *plant fund*). The counties served by community colleges must pay for maintenance and repairs to buildings and equipment, rent, utilities, costs of custodians, insurance, and legal fees. In addition, acquisition of land, erection and alteration of buildings, purchase and maintenance of vehicles, and maintenance of grounds are local responsibilities (see G.S. 115D-31 and -32).

The State Appropriation

The total state appropriation for the operations of the System Office and the individual institutions for 2005–06 was \$788 million (SL 2005-276). The General Assembly bases its appropriation (in part) and the System Office in turn bases its allocation of the appropriation to the individual colleges (in part) on the concept of the FTE, which stands for “full-time equivalent.” An FTE is a statistical picture of a “typical” student. This hypothetical student spends sixteen hours in class each week of each semester, totaling 256 hours per semester, and 512 hours for a full school year [see 23 NCAC 1A.0001(4)]. Two students who attend eight hours each over the forty-four weeks of the school year together count as one FTE. If a college should (in a very unlikely event) offer a one-hour course that was attended by 512 people, that crowd together would generate one FTE.

Because the amount of money appropriated by the General Assembly varies from year to year, the appropriation-per-FTE also varies and the actual dollar amount paid to each college per FTE varies. If the General Assembly fails to increase its appropriation in a proportion corresponding to enrollment increases, then the colleges do not receive FTE funding at the previous level. About 90 percent of state funds that make their way to the individual colleges are apportioned according to FTE. Other funds are provided for particular projects or are apportioned in other ways.

The County Appropriation

While the state, through appropriations by the General Assembly disbursed by the System Office, provides the overwhelming majority of the funds needed by community colleges for operating expenses, the counties in the administrative area of a community college provide the appropriations that permit the college to do the following:

- acquire land
- erect and alter buildings
- maintain buildings and grounds
- purchase and maintain vehicles
- acquire and maintain equipment necessary for the upkeep of buildings and grounds
- purchase furniture and equipment that is not provided by state funds for administrative and instructional purposes
- pay the salaries of custodians and maintenance workers; pay for fuel, water, power, and telephones
- rent land and buildings
- pay for insurance for buildings and their contents, motor vehicles, workers’ compensation for employees paid by county funds, and other necessary insurance
- pay tort claims that result from the negligence of employees
- pay the cost of bonding employees for the protection of local funds and property
- pay legal fees in connection with local administration and operation of the college

Two statutory provisions make state funds available in particular circumstances to assist counties with these expenses. The first applies to community colleges whose service areas include three or more counties [G.S. 115D-31(a)(3)]. A formula found in the statute provides matching state funds to help the host county, in recognition of the fact that students from other counties are benefiting from expenses borne by the host county. The second, similarly, makes some state funds available for the operation of physical facilities for colleges where more than 50 percent of the enrollment at the main campus is composed of out-of-county students (G.S. 115D-31.2).

The Role of the Commissioners

The college board of trustees is required by statute to submit its proposed budget for the upcoming year to the county commissioners by May 15 each year, or a later date to which the commissioners may agree. By July 1 (or a later date agreeable to the board of trustees, but in no event later than September 1), the commissioners determine the amount of county revenue to be appropriated to the community college for the budget year. The statute permits—but does not require—the commissioners to allocate all or part of an appropriation by purpose, function, or project, within guidelines provided by the State Board of Community Colleges through its uniform budget manual. Some counties

combine all their appropriations into one lump, while others make one appropriation for current operations and one for plant maintenance and operation. If the commissioners allocate their appropriation by purpose, the board of trustees is bound by the allocation (see G.S. 115D-55).

The Role of the State Board

The State Board of Community Colleges, through its staff in the System Office, sets budgetary and accounting guidelines for the community colleges. As an example, the format for the budget request that the trustees submit to the commissioners is set by the State Board.

Once the college receives notification of the commissioners' appropriation, it must submit its entire budget to the State Board for that board to approve the budget's provisions with respect to the spending of state funds (see G.S. 115D-55).

If the State Board should determine that the appropriations made by the county commissioners are not sufficient to provide the required local financial support of a college, the State Board may withdraw or withhold state financial or administrative support (see G.S. 115D-6).

Adoption of the Budget and Amendments

Once the State Board has approved the budget, the trustees adopt a budget resolution, authorizing expenditure of the money available to it. The resolution must comply with the approvals of the State Board and the allocation of the county commissioners.

Consistent with rules adopted by the State Board, the trustees may amend the budget resolution during the year, or they may authorize the president to transfer moneys from one appropriation to another within the same budget fund.

The chief limitation on budget amendments concerns funds allocated by the county commissioners to certain purposes. To change the budget resolution concerning such funds, the trustees must obtain the commissioners' approval, if the amendment increases or decreases the amount of the appropriation allocated to the purpose by 25 percent or more. (The commissioners may reduce this threshold to as low as 10 percent.)

Additional Resources

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