



SENATE BILL 991: Community College Workforce Readiness Act.

2025-2026 General Assembly

Committee:	Senate Education/Higher Education.	If Date:	May 13, 2026
	favorable, re-refer to Appropriations/Base Budget		
Introduced by:	Sens. Lee, Overcash, Barnes	Prepared by:	Samantha Yarborough
Analysis of:	First Edition		Committee Counsel

OVERVIEW: *Senate Bill 991 would do the following:*

- *Expand the North Carolina Community Colleges System training program for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and appropriate \$3,850,000 in recurring funds beginning with the 2026-2027 fiscal year.*
- *Require ApprenticeshipNC to report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on a plan to expedite apprenticeship candidates entering the teaching profession.*
- *Expand access to digital credentials in all community colleges by appropriating \$4,913,100 in nonrecurring funds for the 2026-2027 fiscal year.*

CURRENT LAW: G.S. 115D-10.21 requires the State Board of Community Colleges (SBCC) to establish a community college training program for up to 15 community colleges that provides opportunities for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) to earn credentials that lead to increased employment outcomes.

G.S. 115D-30.5 establishes the Career and College Promise Program (CCP) for qualified high school students to take community college courses without the payment of tuition.

Section 8A.15 of S.L. 2023-134, as amended by Section 3J.21 of S.L. 2024-57, required the Community Colleges System Office to conduct a digital credential pilot program. Cape Fear Community College and Randolph Community College participated in the pilot.

BILL ANALYSIS: **Part I** would allow the SBCC to expand the community college training program for individuals with IDD to up to 25 community colleges.

This Part would appropriate \$3,850,000 in recurring funds for the program, to be used as follows:

- \$640,000 to create 2 new positions to engage with business and industry partners and expand the CCP pathways and pre-apprenticeships for individuals with IDD.
- Up to \$810,000 for marketing evaluation, online resources, professional development, and infrastructure support.
- Any remaining funds for expanding the program to additional community colleges. Each participating community college would receive \$194,000.

Part II would require ApprenticeshipNC to report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by no later than March 15, 2027, on a plan to expedite apprenticeship candidates entering the teaching profession. ApprenticeshipNC would develop the plan in collaboration with the Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina (UNC), the SBCC, the Department of Public Instruction, Teach NC,

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and in ApprenticeshipNC's discretion, approved educator preparation programs, local school administrative units, and existing apprenticeship programs.

The plan should address at least the following:

- Options for an accelerated transition pathway allowing high school students to earn college credits leading to a teaching license while participating in experiential learning in the classroom.
- Maximizing usage and transferability of CCP college transfer pathways, community college coursework, online or asynchronous coursework at a constituent institution of UNC, and enrollment in a degree program while serving as a teacher assistant or apprentice in a public school unit.
- Any legislative changes or appropriations necessary to implement the plan.

Part III would appropriate \$4,913,100 in nonrecurring funds to the Community Colleges System Office to expand access to digital credentials in all community colleges. These funds would be used to pay for the implementation of the expansion and the selection of a Credential Management System vendor that meets the following criteria:

- Can issue, manage, and verify digital credentials across widely adopted open standards.
- Supports secure, persistent communication channels for authenticated peer-to-peer interactions.
- Meets or exceeds National Institute Standards and Technology Identity Assurance Level 3 standards.
- Operates as a network appliance in the State's controlled cloud environment.
- Includes a noncustodial digital wallet where individuals maintain sole control of their credentials.
- Includes configurable, standards-based workflows that extend agency processes directly to credential holders.
- Incorporates advanced capabilities for workforce matching, including artificial intelligence driven analysis to align verified credentials with employment opportunities.
- Includes trust and verification systems anchored using blockchain-based mechanisms that do not store any personally identifiable information or credential data on-chain.

The funds appropriated for the expansion would not revert and would remain available until the end of the 2027-2028 fiscal year.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Senate Bill 991 would become effective July 1, 2026.