

**PROGRESS REPORT:
DEVELOPING A PLAN TO IMPLEMENT A UNIFORM SYSTEM
OF GRANTING COURSE CREDITS FOR MILITARY TRAINING
TO STUDENTS ENROLLED IN CONSTITUENT INSTITUTIONS OF
THE NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM AND
THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA**

Progress Report to the:
Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee,
Co-chairs of the House Homeland Security, Military, and Veterans Affairs
Committee, &
Co-chairs of the Legislative Research Commission Study Committee on Civilian
Credit for Military Training

As Required by
Section 3 of Session Law 2014-67 (SB 761)

On behalf of the North Carolina State Board of Community Colleges and the Board of Governors of the University of North Carolina, we are pleased to report to you on the progress that our systems have made on developing a plan as required by Section 3 of S.L. 2017-67 (SB 761), Credit for Military Training. Our systems share a commitment to serving students and prospective students who have received military training, to providing clear and consistent information to our constituents about credit that military service members and veterans can receive in certificate and degree programs across our systems, and to assuring that such credit can transfer to other programs where relevant.

To assure that we are working efficiently, productively and collaboratively towards a plan, we identified several important steps to follow in the planning process. These included convening a planning group, identifying best practices, and surveying current practice in our systems.

Convening a planning group. We held two teleconferences between senior academic affairs staff at the NC Community College System (NCCCS) and UNC General Administration (UNCGA) to identify critical issues to be included in the plan and to insure a shared understanding of the goals and objectives of our work together. We also identified a leadership group composed of senior leaders and faculty within both the North Carolina Community College and University of North Carolina systems. We have convened that leadership group via teleconference to review existing practice, identify the necessary components of a uniform system as required by SB 761, and discuss critical aspects of implementation. The leadership group affirmed its commitment to the shared vision as described above, and affirmed its commitment to meet the deadlines and the goals set forth in SB 761.

Additionally, the NCCCS State Board approved \$150,000 targeted specifically for development of a system-wide plan to standardize processes for Prior Learning Assessment and Competency-Based Education. Fayetteville Technical Community College will serve as the lead institution in developing Credit for Prior Learning Assessments and Competency Based Education models consistent with and supportive of the goals, direction, and competencies developed through all current NCCCS initiatives including North Carolina's Comprehensive Articulation Agreement.

Identifying best practices. We have worked with staff within our system offices to identify best practices of higher education systems throughout the nation with regard to the process of awarding credit for military training as well as systems for making the credit award process clear and accessible to students and prospective students. It is important that any credit award process developed include an ongoing review of practices established by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), a national organization focused on linking learning and work. We have also received confirmation from the American Council on Education (ACE)'s Military Evaluations Program, one of the largest evaluators of military training for recommendations of college credit, that their representatives are willing to come to North Carolina and meet with

the leadership group and campus faculty to share more about their practices. Finally, we contacted representatives from the Multi-State Collaborative on Military Credit and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS) to learn best practices from their organizations.

Surveying current practice in our systems. Finally, we have identified the institutions within our systems that have implemented uniform procedures for awarding substantial credit for prior learning and credit for military training programs so that we can leverage their experience for the benefit of our two systems. We have also identified faculty members within our two systems who serve as evaluators for the ACE Military Evaluations Program who can assist faculty throughout our systems in understanding the rigor of the evaluation process. Finally, leaders from the North Carolina Community College System have developed a survey tool that can be used at all constituent institutions of the North Carolina Community College System and the University of North Carolina to identify the existing diplomas, certificates, or degree programs that currently award credit for military training and to document the review processes used by college and university faculty to award such credit.

Further, in the meetings between academic affairs staff at NCCCS and UNCGA and in the leadership group, we identified topics and issues that we believe to be critical to address in the plan that will be submitted to you by January 1, 2015. These include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Defining the process for system-wide faculty review and award of credit using ACE recommendations and Service members Opportunity Colleges (SOC) recommendations, as well as defining a process for faculty review when ACE or SOC recommendations do not exist;
- Defining a process to share decisions for award of credit at an individual institution across the relevant system(s), to facilitate review and adoption of the award of credit where appropriate at other institutions;
- Identifying articulation agreements that are or may be affected by the award of credit for military training and reviewing the impact of such credit on the articulation agreements;
- Identifying links between credits awarded at the community college level and degrees at the university level that will maximize transfer of credits, so that these links can be clearly communicated to students and prospective students;
- Assuring that faculty are well-informed about the ACE and SOC review process and are encouraged to participate in those review processes, and recognizing those faculty who are participating in those reviews;

- Addressing concerns regarding regional or specialty accreditors' policies on awarding of credit for prior learning and on transferability of that credit;
- Identifying and addressing concerns regarding the financing of education for service members and veterans (e.g., how VA benefits can be used to support educational activities);
- Developing a process that will assure that information about available credit for military training is up-to-date; and,
- Developing and sharing resources that will allow easily accessible and understandable information about the credit that a service member or veteran may receive in the diploma, certificate, or degree programs at NCCCS or UNC institutions, by service branch, MOS, dates of service, and skill level.

As a result of this broad-based initial collaboration, and building upon the existing policies and practices at our constituent campuses, we have established a solid foundation from which to develop a detailed and actionable plan. In addition, this plan will be consistent with the goals of the UNC Strategic Directions Plan as well as the 2012-2014 review of the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement (CAA). The 2014 CAA review was grounded in targeted communication among university and community college faculty teams. These deliberate conversations resulted in new and enhanced partnerships among institutions as well as among academic programs and disciplines. Building on these successes, a similar process will be followed in the development of this plan for implementing a uniform system of granting course credits for military training for students in both of our systems. Our shared commitment to this goal, our ability to benefit from the experience of national leaders in the area of prior learning assessment and military credit, and the expertise within our own systems will greatly facilitate this work.