



# RISE Up Training and Credentialing Program Report

## Year 2 REPORT

As Required by Section 6.8.(c) of Session Law 2021-180  
Amended by Section 6.1.(a) of Session Law 2022-74  
Further amended by Section 6.8 of Session Law 2023-134

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**Background:**

Session Law 2021-180 Section 6.8.(a) established the RISE Up Training and Credentialing Program for Cooperative Innovative High Schools. The provision directed the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) Office to collaborate with the North Carolina Retail Merchants Association (NCRMA) and Retail Consumer Alliance Foundation (RCA) to implement the RISE Up credentialing program for the 2021-2022 fiscal year to teach foundational skills to students attending Cooperative Innovative High Schools (CIHS).

The RISE Up curriculum was developed by the National Retail Federation (NRF) Foundation and was originally hosted by the Penn Foster platform that has since transition in 2023 to Kaleidoscope Learning. Students who complete the program will earn industry credentials in the following areas: retail industry fundamentals, customer service/sales, inventory management/profitability, supply chain warehouse/inventory, and logistics.

In June 2022, the NC Retail Merchants Association requested a technical budget correction (HB 103) which expanded RISE Up language to extend the opportunity to any student attending or enrolled in a North Carolina Community College.

In October 2023, the program language was further revised in HB 259, section 6.8, the 2023-2024 Appropriations Act. This provision was drafted with the agreement of the NC Community College System, the NC Retail Merchants Association and Retail Consumer Alliance Foundation. As a result, eligibility for enrollment is expanded to any individual that meets the requirements for the program. The language also moves the administration of the program to the Retail Consumer Alliance Foundation. The courses remain available for students enrolled in the NC Community College System and NC Cooperative Innovative High Schools.

**State Funding and Budget Allocation Timeline:**

- Funding for this project was made available from a nonrecurring General Fund appropriation in the 2021 Appropriations Act (Session Law 2021-180).
- At its January 21, 2022, meeting the State Board of Community Colleges (SBCC) approved SBCC item FC 07 for \$250,000 from the state funds allocation for the establishment of the RISE Up training program.
- In February 2022, Lenoir Community College (LCC) was identified as the lead college for the RISE Up training program.
- On March 21, 2022, NCCCS issued an allocation memo to LCC which included \$250,000 to fund the RISE Up training program. This granted LCC access to purchase the training modules to be distributed to students attending and/or enrolled in a community college statewide upon request.

- On May 18, 2022, purchase order quotes for each course were sent to LCC from Penn Foster.
- On June 20, 2022, LCC issued a check to Penn Foster in the amount of \$249,724.80.
- On June 27, 2022, Penn Foster accounting confirmed that a check for \$249,724.80 was applied to the invoice from Lenoir CC.
- On July 11, 2022, HB 103: 2022 Appropriations Act became law (Session Law 2022-74) and broadened who could use and access the credentials.
- On October 3, 2023, HB 259: 2023 Appropriations Act became law (Session Law 2023-134), broadening access to the credentials and changing the administration of the program to the Retail Consumer Alliance Foundation (RCA).

### **Outreach and Marketing**

- NCCCS, Lenoir Community College, the NC Retail Merchants Association, and the Retail Consumer Alliance Foundation began meeting in 2022 and have had continued to have regular calls and email communication to develop and distribute marketing materials as well as a communication plan for schools and students for the RISE Up credentials. Originally, the marketing materials were designed for CIHS students which were named specifically as the target group of students in the original legislative allocation. Following the technical correction in HB 103 (S.L. 2022-74) , the marketing materials address any students enrolled in or attending a community college in North Carolina.
- The NRF Foundation's RISE Up program underwent a transition from the Penn Foster platform to Kaleidoscope learning in the summer of 2023. The NRF, NCRMA, RCA and NCCCS partners continued communication on credentialing opportunities throughout the transition. Once Kaleidoscope Learning was fully operational, RCA was onboarded during September/October to administer the program and grant requests for credentials that were previously housed with Lenoir Community College.
- On October 18, 2023, the Retail Consumer Alliance Foundation was provided full functionality to begin granting requests from eligible participants for RISE Up credentials.
- An informational webinar with the NCCCS Career Pathways program has been scheduled for November 2023. The webinar will include information about the program and access through Retail Consumer Alliance Foundation (RCA) and Kaleidoscope Learning.

## **Program Outcomes Year 2:**

As of August 2023, and the program platform transfer, the credentials allocated for each of the program was as follows:

- Customer Service and Sales: 75
- Business of Retail: 75
- Retail Industry Fundamentals: 59
- Warehouse, Inventory and Logistics: 70

Including all four courses, 279 credentials have been allocated to date. The different colleges and organizations that accessed these credentials included: Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute, College of The Albemarle, Western Piedmont Community College, Guilford Technical Community College, and Surf, Wind and Fire, an NCRMA retailer.

RISE Up is primarily an online learning program which was covered by the appropriation. However, as the project was implemented, it was discovered that many correctional facilities do not have the means to allow for online learning and the appropriation did not include additional dollars for hard copy materials. Requests for hard copy materials were fulfilled through in-kind donations by the NRF Foundation as outlined below:

- \$14,215 in materials
- 3 entities (Pasquotank Correctional Facility, Guilford Technical Community College, and Richmond Community College)
- Enough materials for 155 individual learners (100 at Pasquotank, 25 at Guilford Technical Community College, 30 at Richmond Community College)

The Retail Consumer Alliance Foundation (RCA) obtained administrative access to the new Kaleidoscope platform and the remaining appropriated credentials in October 2023. RCA has already received additional requests for credentials, with fifty (50) of the “Retail Industry Fundamentals” credentials allocated to the College of The Albemarle on October 19, 2023.

## **Conclusion:**

With the transition to the new Kaleidoscope platform and change in administrator to the Retail Consumer Alliance Foundation (RCA), program access is expected to expand which will allow additional credentials to be earned.