



N.C. CENTER FOR
PUBLIC POLICY
RESEARCH

From The Center Out

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N.C. CENTER SPONSORS FORUM ON THE FUTURE OF N.C.'s COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Scott Ralls, who will become the next President of the N.C. Community College System on May 1, and three other top leaders discussed the future of community colleges in North Carolina at the Center's biennial forum on February 6 in Cary. Ralls, who is currently the President of Craven Community College in New Bern, was joined by Hilda Pinnix-Ragland, the Chair of the State Board of Community Colleges and an executive with



Pictured left to right: Scott Ralls, Hilda Pinnix-Ragland, Patricia Skinner, and Tony Zeiss

Progress Energy; Patricia Skinner, President of Gaston College in Dallas and President of the N.C. Association of Community College Presidents; and Tony Zeiss, President of Central Piedmont Community College in Charlotte, the largest of the 58 community colleges in North Carolina. Rob Boisvert of Time Warner Cable's News 14 Carolina channel in Charlotte served as moderator. Our event was co-sponsored by the N.C. Cable Telecommunications Association and Time Warner Cable.

The community colleges serve one of every six adult citizens in the state's population of 8.8 million. The speakers explored the future of community colleges, their role in meeting work force shortages and in job training for economic development, and key issues facing the system – from low faculty salaries to large enrollment increases to immigration to governance.

In connection with this event, the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research also is conducting a study of the major issues facing the state's community college system. Highlights of the Center's forthcoming research include:

Changing Demographics – The 58 community colleges serve 801,676 students. Twenty-eight percent of the students are part-time, and 72 percent are full-time. Their average age is 28. Fifty-three percent are women, and 64 percent are white. The average cost of in-state tuition and fees for community college students in North Carolina is \$1,330, and 21 percent of the students receive financial aid. Many of the students are older, employed, first-generation college students, low-income, or have dependent children.

Work Force Shortages – Community colleges play an important role in helping to address work force shortages, especially in the fields of nursing and teaching. North Carolina is projected to have a shortage of 9,000 nurses by 2015 and almost 18,000 by 2020. Sixty-eight percent of the registered nursing graduates in North Carolina are trained at the state's community colleges.

North Carolina also is experiencing a shortage of public school teachers. A previous Center study found that the state will need about 11,000 new teachers a year to meet a shortage caused by a rapidly increasing school-age population, by efforts to reduce class size, and by high teacher turnover. Yet, all 16 state public universities combined now are only producing 3,969 teachers a year, so the community colleges must play an increasing role in meeting this shortage.

Programs from A to V – From aquaculture in the East to viticulture, or winemaking, in the West, the community college system provides a variety of educational programs. All 58 community colleges in North Carolina now offer distance learning courses. Between 1999-2000 and 2005-06, distance learning registrations increased by almost 400 percent.

Student Financial Aid – Because tuition and fees represent a smaller percentage of the total cost of attending community colleges than four-year institutions, community college students often are perceived as being less in need of financial aid than other students. However, of the 268,421 students enrolled in curriculum instruction courses, 57 percent receive some financial aid.

Faculty Salaries – The average full-time community college faculty member earns about \$41,000, ranking North Carolina 46th among the 50 states. By contrast, the average full-time faculty member in the UNC System is paid about \$81,000, ranking North Carolina 13th in the nation for public university faculty pay. Public universities educate about 200,000 students, while community colleges educate more than 800,000 students each year.

State Funding Formulas – The funding formula that supports the community college system contains significant flaws. First, the current formula allocates money per Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) student based on the prior year's enrollment. The Center says this formula is ill-suited for periods of rapid enrollment growth when the system must serve students for whom no state dollars are provided. The funding formula also fails to account for differences in program costs, it does not provide resources to start or expand new programs, and it inadequately addresses equipment and facility needs. Limited resources have forced the elimination of 98 programs with expensive equipment needs.

The Community College Act creating a 58-campus system became law in 1963. Since then, community colleges in North Carolina have played four primary roles: work force training, preparation for transfers to a four-year college, remediation, and economic development. Dallas Herring, the architect of the system and Chairman of the North Carolina State Board of Education for more than 20 years, summarized the mission of community colleges, saying, "We must take the people where they are and carry them as far as they can go." Former Governor Luther Hodges thought the system might someday enroll as many as 50,000 students annually. Current System President Martin Lancaster laughs in reflecting on Hodges' prediction and says, "He was only off by about 750,000."

"If you ask what is the key issue facing North Carolina today, I think perhaps it's North Carolina's transition economy," says Ran Coble, director of the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research. "We're moving away from the old economy of tobacco, textiles, and furniture and toward a new economy of pharmaceuticals, telecommunications, biotechnology, banking and financial services, and who knows what else. And which educational system is most key to dealing with this economic transition, with work force shortages and with job training – and retraining – at this time in our state's history? It's the community colleges."

This was the seventh public event the Center has co-sponsored with the N.C. Cable Telecommunications Association and Time Warner Cable since 1996. Five of the programs have won national cable TV awards.

The program titled "The Future of Community Colleges in North Carolina" was videotaped and is now being shown on cable TV stations across the state. Time Warner in **Charlotte** is airing the program on Wednesdays and Fridays from 9 to 10 p.m. Time Warner Cable's Channel 24 in the **Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill** area is airing the program on Tuesdays at 3 p.m., Thursdays at 8 p.m., Fridays at 8 p.m., and Saturdays at 1 p.m. Time Warner Cable's Channel 58 in **Greensboro** is airing the program every Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday from 7 to 8 p.m. Time Warner's **Newport** affiliate is airing the program on Channel 10 at 6 p.m. And, **Wilmington's** cable Channel 4 is airing the program every Wednesday from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m.

LATEST RANKINGS OF LEGISLATORS' EFFECTIVENESS REFLECT CHANGES IN THE STATE HOUSE

The changing dynamics of the 2007 state House of Representatives and the relative stability of the state Senate are reflected in the new rankings of legislators' effectiveness from the Center, released on April 10. A new Speaker of the House and new committee chairs helped some legislators rise in effectiveness, while problems with ethics, the end of a coalition across party lines, and time spent campaigning for higher office caused some to drop in effectiveness. The Center's effectiveness rankings are based on responses to surveys from the legislators themselves, registered lobbyists, and the news media who cover state government. The Center also released rankings of legislators' attendance and roll call voting participation.

The Center said that the changes in rankings of legislators' effectiveness in the House are a result of Representative Joe Hackney's becoming Speaker of the House, new committee chairs, and new Republican leaders as well. Hackney jumped from third place in 2005 to the number one spot for the 2007 session. The Speaker of the House has been ranked as the most effective member of the N.C. House 14 of the 16 times the Center has conducted the effectiveness survey.



Biggest Jumps in Effectiveness

Seven members of the 120-member N.C. House of Representatives made gains of 20 positions or more in their effectiveness rankings – four Democrats and three Republicans. Democrats hold a 68-52 majority in the House.

Rep. Melanie Goodwin (D-Richmond) made the biggest leap in effectiveness in the House, moving up 42 positions from 73rd in 2005 to 31st in 2007. Additional jumps of 20 or more positions were made by Representatives Grier Martin (D-Wake, up 38 spots); Pricey Harrison (D-Guilford, up 34); Skip Stam (R-Wake, up 32); Dale Folwell (R-Forsyth, up 31); Earl Jones (D-Guilford, up 26); Leo Daughtry (R-Johnston, up 25); and Maggie Jeffus (D-Guilford, up 20). Goodwin, Martin, Harrison, Jones, and Jeffus all gained important new posts as committee chairs under the new Speaker. Harrison also was a leader in passing the state's new renewable energy bill. Stam and Folwell attained new leadership positions within the Republican Caucus, and Folwell gained passage of a bill to change the age at which children start school. Daughtry was Majority Leader when the Republicans held a majority in the House from 1995 to 1999.

Major gains by second-term legislators and high rankings by freshmen historically also are useful forecasts for future effectiveness in the legislature, said the Center. Big jumps in effectiveness by sophomores in the House were posted by Representatives Fred Steen (R-Rowan), who moved up 19 positions to 79th, and by Nelson Dollar (R-Wake), who also moved up 19 positions to 91st. The highest-ranked freshman lawmaker in the House this year is Ty Harrell (D-Wake) at 52nd.

Biggest Declines Due to Ethical Lapses, the End of a Coalition, and Runs for Higher Office

For the first time, the Center asked respondents to the survey to consider each legislator's ethics when ranking effectiveness. The Center says the biggest declines in the rankings appear to be related to ethical lapses and allegations of impropriety. By far, the most precipitous decline in rankings was posted by Thomas Wright (D-New Hanover), who dropped 106 spots from 13th in 2005 to 119th in 2007 – the lowest ranking possible this session. Wright was expelled from the House by a vote of 109-5 by his colleagues on March 20th for failing to report campaign donations, misappropriating money intended for a nonprofit, and using his power as a legislator to pressure a state employee to write a fraudulent grant letter. This is the first expulsion from the House in 128 years. By contrast, the chair and vice-chair of the special legislative committee that investigated Wright – Rick Glazier (D-Cumberland), who ranked 4th, and Skip Stam (R-Wake), who ranked 10th – made their first appearance in the top 10 in effectiveness.

Additionally, Rep. Mary McAllister (D-Cumberland) saw her ranking drop 12 places to 99th in 2007. In September 2007, she was found to have received repayment for campaign loans she did not make and ordered to pay a \$16,294 fine by the State Board of Elections.

The House Republican Caucus showed significant shifts in this session's rankings. In 2003-04, the Caucus was bitterly divided over some of its members' participation in a coalition across party lines that installed Co-Speakers (one

Democrat and one Republican) and passed both a budget and a redistricting plan. Three Republican members who were part of the Republicans' coalition with Democrats in previous sessions saw their rankings decline this year – Debbie Clary (R-Cleveland) ranked 48th, Julia Howard (R-Davie) ranked 29th, and Danny McComas (R-New Hanover) ranked 42nd.

Another group of legislators saw their rankings drop as they engaged in campaigns for higher office. For example, Sen. Fred Smith (R-Johnston) dropped seven spots to 38th of 50 Senators as he runs for the Republican nomination for Governor, and Rep. Beverly Earle dropped 41 spots to 53rd of 120 Representatives as she ran for Mayor of Charlotte last year.

Six New Faces in the House Top 10, Only One New in the Senate Top 10

There are six new faces in the top 10 in effectiveness in the House. The biggest mover among them is Rep. Skip Stam (R-Wake), who moved up 32 spots to 10th. Others who moved into the top 10 include Appropriations Committee Senior Chair Mickey Michaux (D-Durham) at 6th, Education Appropriations Co-Chair Rick Glazier (D-Cumberland) at 4th, and new Majority Leader Hugh Holliman (D-Davidson) at 3rd. The other new faces in the top 10 in the House are Representatives Deborah Ross (D-Wake) at 7th and Dan Blue (D-Wake) at 8th. Blue is a former Speaker of the House who returned to the legislature after a four-year hiatus. Rounding out the top 10 are Representatives Bill Owens Jr. (D-Pasquotank) at 2nd, Jim Crawford Jr. (D-Granville) at 5th, and Pryor Gibson III (D-Anson) at 9th.

By contrast, the top 10 in effectiveness in the Senate have only one new face among them – Sen. Bill Purcell (D-Scotland). President Pro-Tem Marc Basnight (D-Dare) is again ranked 1st for a record-shattering eighth time.

The highest-ranked first-term Senator is Sen. Pete Brunstetter (R-Forsyth) at 28th, who was appointed to fill a vacancy in May 2006. The Senator who made the biggest gain in effectiveness is Sen. John Snow (D-Cherokee), who moved up 10 spots to 22nd.

Legislators with Perfect Attendance Records

This marks the fourth time the Center has tabulated attendance and roll call voting participation rankings, using official records from the General Assembly. The Center praised the dedication of most legislators for their attendance during the session last year. Forty of the 50 members of the Senate and 103 of the 120 members of the House attended more than 90 percent of the days in session. Center director Ran Coble said, "That's an impressive attendance record for part-time legislators who have full-time jobs back home, and many have to drive a great distance every week."

The Center compiles the three sets of rankings to give citizens different ways to evaluate the performance of their legislators. Coble said, "The rankings of attendance and voting participation tell citizens how often their legislator was there to represent them. The effectiveness rankings tell citizens how effective their legislator was when he or she was there. The surveys hold a mirror up to the legislature, and the rankings are the reflection." In odd-numbered years, the Center publishes two additional evaluations of legislative performance. *Article II*, the Center's guide to the legislature, includes data on how many bills each legislator got passed out of the total he or she introduced. The guide also includes all members' votes on what legislators said were the 12 most important bills of the session. The Center thus publishes five different legislative performance indicators – effectiveness, attendance, voting participation, success in getting bills passed, and votes on the most significant bills in the last session.

How the Effectiveness Rankings Are Done

The Center's effectiveness rankings are based on surveys completed by the legislators themselves, by registered lobbyists who are based in North Carolina and who regularly work in the General Assembly, and by capital news reporters. These three groups were asked to rate each legislator's effectiveness on the basis of participation in committee work, skill at guiding bills through committees and in floor debates, and general knowledge or expertise in special fields. The respondents also were asked to consider the respect that legislators command from their peers, his or her ethics (a new criterion this year) the political power they hold (by virtue of office, longevity, or personal skills), their ability to sway the opinions of fellow legislators, and their aptitude for the overall legislative process.

The new effectiveness rankings are available from the Center for \$10. A set of publications including *Article II: A Guide to the 2007-2008 N.C. Legislature* (\$25), the effectiveness rankings (\$10), and rankings of the most influential lobbyists (\$10, to be released in August) is available for \$40. To order, write the Center at P.O. Box 430, Raleigh, NC 27602, call (919) 832-2839, fax (919) 832-2847, or order by email from tbromley@nccppr.org.

Special Thanks to Our Foundation and Corporate Contributors

The Center recognizes and thanks **The Hillsdale Fund, The Park Foundation,** and the **Mission Healthcare Foundation** for their recent grants. The Hillsdale Fund made a \$25,000 grant in support of our research on issues affecting the aging in N.C. The Park Foundation made a \$15,000 grant for general operating support. The Mission Healthcare Foundation made a \$10,000 grant in support of our research on issues affecting the aging. We express our sincere appreciation for these grants.

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**North Carolina Center for
Public Policy Research, Inc.**
5 West Hargett St., Suite 701
P. O. Box 430
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Tel: (919) 832-2839
Fax: (919) 832-2847
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