

MINUTES
State Board of Community Colleges
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Thursday, February 19, 2026

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Mr. Tom Looney, Chair	Mr. Bill McBrayer	Ms. Sarah West
Mr. John Kane, Vice Chair	Dr. Dale McInnis	
Ms. Lisa Estep	Mr. Scott Ottman	

Absent: Mr. Chaz Beasley and Mr. Geoffrey Lang

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

Dr. Jeff Cox	Ms. Jonnell Carpenter	Ms. Makel Drollinger
Dr. Kim Gold	Mr. Alex Fagg	
Ms. Amy Mast	Dr. Brian Merritt	

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Looney called the Executive Committee meeting to order at 10:30 a.m.

ROLL CALL

Ms. Amy Mast called the roll for the Executive Committee and stated there was a quorum.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Ms. Carpenter read the Ethics Awareness Statement and reminded all members of their duty to monitor conflicts of interest. No conflicts were noted

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Looney requested a motion to approve the agenda. Dr. McInnis motioned to approve, seconded by Vice Chair Kane, and approved unanimously by voice vote.

Opening Remarks and Purpose of the Executive Committee – Mr. Tom Looney, SBCC Chair

Chair Looney welcomed members and noted that this was the first Executive Committee meeting. He expressed appreciation for the board members and committee chairs, emphasizing the value of their unique skills, leadership, and commitment to the North Carolina Community College System.

Chair Looney provided opening remarks highlighting the importance of the Executive Committee in strengthening coordination among board committees and supporting alignment on major initiatives.

He noted that the committee will serve to:

- Ensure better alignment and coordination across committees
- Facilitate deeper discussions on key issues prior to full board meetings
- Support the presidential transition process
- Accelerate system-wide transformation initiatives
- Assist with the development and alignment of a new strategic plan

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Chair Looney emphasized that the system is transitioning from a period of transformation to execution and that the Executive Committee will help drive timely decision-making while maintaining transparency. He noted that meetings are open to the public and that transparency will remain a guiding principle throughout major initiatives, including the presidential search.

For Future Action

Executive Committee Charter (Attachment EXEC 01)

Chair Looney presented the proposed Executive Committee Charter for review. Members were invited to provide feedback or submit additional comments following the meeting.

The Charter will be presented for formal approval at the next Executive Committee meeting.

During discussion, staff confirmed that the meeting was being conducted as an in-person public meeting, with additional State Board members and members of the public observing remotely through the State Board meeting room.

For Information

Presidential Search Update

Chair Looney provided an update on the search for the next System President and outlined the comprehensive process being undertaken.

The Search will include:

- Development of a detailed leadership profile
- Extensive stakeholder engagement across the state
- Public posting and proactive recruitment by the search firm
- Candidate screening and evaluation
- First- and second-round interviews
- Background checks and reference verification for finalists
- Assistance with contract negotiations

The goal is to attract highly qualified candidates, including individuals who may not be actively seeking a new position.

Stakeholder Engagement

A broad stakeholder engagement strategy is being implemented, including listening sessions and feedback opportunities involving:

- State Board members
- Community college presidents
- College trustees
- Business and industry leaders
- Legislative leaders

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- Governor's Office and state officials
- System office leadership and employees
- Faculty, staff, and students
- Education partners (public and private)
- Philanthropic and Foundation Partners

Multiple formats will be used, including individual meetings, small-group discussions, large listening sessions, and an online platform for public feedback.

Presidential Role and Responsibilities

Dr. Dale McInnis presented an overview of the proposed core responsibilities of the System President, developed through collaboration with the Strategic Planning Committee and system leadership.

Key responsibilities include:

- Establishing and communicating a vision for the system
- Providing guidance and policy recommendations to the State Board
- Leading the system office and executive leadership team
- Coordinating communication with community college presidents and trustees
- Ensuring effective system-wide support for all 58 colleges
- Administering State Board Code and applicable statutes
- Maintaining strong relationships with legislative and state partners

The document was developed using references from State Board code and state statute to ensure alignment with existing governance frameworks.

Timeline

The search timeline was adjusted slightly to allow additional time for stakeholder engagement and profile development.

Key milestones include:

- Stakeholder listening sessions conducted through March
- Development of the presidential profile following stakeholder feedback
- Candidate recruitment and evaluation in the spring
- Interviews with finalists in early June
- Board approval of the selected candidate at a special meeting in June

If necessary, an interim arrangement may be used to bridge any gap between the selection and the new president's start date.

Chair Looney emphasized that North Carolina's community college system is nationally recognized and positioned to attract strong candidates due to its innovation, workforce development leadership, and

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recent philanthropic support.

System Transformation Progress

Mr. Scott Ottman provided an update on the system's modernization and transformation initiatives.

Modernization Overview

The modernization effort consists of five key components:

1. College-Based Accounting System (CBAS)
2. Common Course Library (CCL)
3. System Data Warehouse
4. Customized Training Systems
5. Banner Enterprise System deployment across all 58 colleges

CBAS Milestone

A significant milestone was achieved when the system successfully completed reconciliation for all 58 colleges for the month of January within the new Banner CBAS environment. This represents the first successful reconciliation since implementation began two years ago.

While this milestone required freezing the data set, the next reconciliation cycle will proceed without freezing data and will provide further validation of system stability.

Data Warehouse

The data warehouse initiative is currently in user acceptance testing. Nine of seventeen data pipelines have successfully passed testing. Additional technical review sessions are scheduled, including engagement with external expertise to evaluate the system's data architecture and long-term data strategy.

Common Course Library

The Common Course Library is nearing completion for course-level data, though additional work remains on program-level functionality. Completion of this component is critical, as it is required before full Banner deployment across the colleges.

Continuing Education Systems

The continuing education solution remains under evaluation through a request for proposals process. Interim solutions may be required before a long-term unified system is implemented.

Governance and Engagement

New governance structures have been established to strengthen oversight of modernization efforts, with senior leadership responsible for managing specific workstreams.

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Additional engagement initiatives include:

- Student focus groups reviewing the Banner user experience
- Faculty and staff advisory groups
- Expanded communication with system stakeholders

Recognition Initiative

Mr. Ottman proposed creating a recognition program to highlight innovation and transformational achievements across the community college system.

Legislative Update

Ms. Lisa Estep introduced the legislative update and invited Mr. Alex Fagg to provide an overview of the system's legislative priorities.

Legislative Priorities

The proposed legislative agenda aligns with previously discussed priorities and has been reviewed by multiple stakeholder groups, including the Presidents Association and the Legislative and Finance Committees.

Key priorities include:

- Continued support for Propel NC as the system's top legislative priority
- Salary increases for community college employees
- Expanded funding and flexibility for Apprenticeship NC programs

These initiatives are designed to strengthen workforce development, enhance system capacity, and support faculty and staff.

The agenda will be presented to the Trustees Association Executive Committee for further review and endorsement.

Legislative Outreach

System leadership continues to maintain strong communication with General Assembly members and other partners in preparation for the upcoming legislative short session.

Project Kitty Hawk Update

Ms. Sarah West introduced the discussion regarding the partnership with Project Kitty Hawk and thanked Dr. Brian Merritt for his collaboration in preparing the briefing memo.

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Background

Dr. Merritt explained that Project Kitty Hawk was established in November 2021 through a \$97 million investment intended to expand online learning opportunities through partnerships with universities in the UNC System. The initiative focuses on creating flexible, online bachelor's degree pathways for adult learners, including individuals who previously stopped out of higher education.

Project Kitty Hawk functions as a non-profit education technology partner, assisting institutions in moving existing degree programs into online formats. Services include:

- Instructional design
- Student success coaching
- Program marketing
- Operational support

The initiative currently partners with four UNC institutions:

- Appalachian State University
- North Carolina Central University
- East Carolina University
- North Carolina A&T State University

These institutions collectively offer 19 online programs, serving approximately 3,000 students, primarily adult learners returning to complete degrees.

Community College Engagement

Five North Carolina community colleges are currently engaged in discussions regarding potential articulation agreements with Project Kitty Hawk programs. The objective is to ensure students completing Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degrees can transfer into relevant online bachelor's degree programs without losing academic credit.

Committee members discussed the importance of:

- Maximizing credit transfer for AAS graduates
- Creating accessible pathways to four-year degrees
- Capturing market share from for-profit online institutions
- Ensuring affordability for community college students

Tuition Considerations

Dr. Merritt noted that Project Kitty Hawk programs operate as self-support programs and therefore charge tuition rates that differ from traditional UNC tuition structures. While tuition is generally higher, some university fees charged to traditional students are not assessed for Project Kitty Hawk participants.

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Students enrolled in these programs are now eligible for federal financial aid, which addressed an earlier concern when the program was first introduced.

Committee members raised several considerations:

- The need to ensure affordable transfer pathways for community college students.
- Clarification that articulation agreements may require updates or modifications to existing agreements between colleges and universities.
- Questions regarding the overall investment relative to the current student participation levels.

It was also noted that Project Kitty Hawk leadership indicated that implementing tuition discounts or pricing adjustments may require legislative action or additional financial aid sources.

Next Steps

The Programs and Student Success Committee proposed forming a working group to further explore system-level collaboration with the UNC System regarding Project Kitty Hawk.

Committee members expressed support for continuing the exploration with the understanding that:

- Discussions would remain exploratory.
- Findings would be reported back through the Programs and Student Success Committee.
- The Executive Committee will remain informed of progress.

Credit for Prior Learning Initiative

Ms. West also announced that the North Carolina Community College System was selected to participate in a national Credit for Prior Learning policy initiative led by organizations including:

- The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL)
- RAND Corporation
- The Strada Education Network

The initiative will provide technical assistance and support to strengthen policies that award academic credit for:

- Workforce training
- Military experience
- Verified experiential learning

Participation in this initiative recognizes the system's leadership in advancing innovative pathways for adult learners.

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Committee Chair Roundtable

Finance Committee, Ms. Lisa Estep, Chair

Ms. Lisa Estep reported that the Finance Committee will begin incorporating federal funding updates into its regular reports.

This effort will:

- Provide greater transparency regarding federal funding streams
- Track federal funding allocations received by the system
- Identify potential changes in federal budget priorities that may affect community colleges

The goal is to ensure board members have a clearer understanding of federal funding sources and their impact on the system.

Personnel Committee, Mr. Bill McBrayer, Chair

Mr. Bill McBrayer reported that there were no personnel matters requiring discussion in open session. Any personnel issues would be addressed in closed session if necessary.

Strategic Planning Committee, Dr. Dale McInnis, Chair

Dr. Dale McInnis provided an update on the development of the 2026–2029 Strategic Plan.

Key points included:

- Initial planning work is nearing completion.
- The remainder of the current year will focus on executing and evaluating the goals within the existing strategic plan.
- Several major reports are being prepared to inform policy and planning.

Upcoming reports include:

Enrollment Analysis - A report supporting advocacy efforts related to Propel will be presented in the upcoming meeting cycle.

Workforce Recruitment and Retention - A systemwide report on recruitment and retention of personnel across community colleges and the system office will be presented later in the year.

Strategic Plan Completion - The current strategic plan will be fully evaluated and finalized during the summer months. Following the appointment of a new system president, work will begin on the implementation details and operational strategies of the new plan.

Dr. McInnis emphasized that many strategic plan priorities will intersect with other board committees and will require continued collaboration across committees.

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Chair Looney declared the meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Rehbein
Recording Secretary