

State Board of Community Colleges
System-Wide CRM Discussion
March 2026

Purpose:

This item provides an overview of customer relationship management (CRM) adoption, usage, and System-level support across North Carolina's 58 community colleges. A companion presentation will summarize findings from a February 2026 system-wide survey, outline current investments and support structures, highlight early results, and present options for the System's CRM strategy going forward.

Strategic Plan Reference:

This item supports the goals outlined in the North Carolina Community College System Strategic Plan, including:

- Goal 2: Enrollment
- Goal 3: Student Success
- Goal 4: Economic and Workforce Development

Background/Rationale:***Strategic Marketing & Communications Plan***

In 2024, the System Office developed a Strategic Marketing & Communications Plan in collaboration with community college presidents, public information officers, State Board representatives, key partners, current students, and the System team. The plan established a five-year framework to increase enrollment and change perceptions of North Carolina's community colleges through targeted outreach, consistent messaging, and a step-by-step model guiding prospective students from interest to enrollment.

The plan established detailed student journey maps for each audience – traditional students, adult learners, parents and guardians, educators, and businesses – with CRM-driven automation, lead scoring, and outreach sequences at each stage. It recommended best practices for CRM implementation including objective-setting, data management and migration standards, training and support structures. The plan also introduced the Community Workforce Development Assessment (CWDA), a data tool designed to align marketing campaigns with regional workforce needs, ensuring that CRM-driven outreach is strategically targeted rather than generic.

Current CRM Landscape

In February 2026, a system-wide survey was conducted to assess CRM adoption, usage, challenges, and support needs across North Carolina's community colleges. Key findings include:

- Approximately 85% of colleges are using a CRM in some capacity; however, nearly 40% describe their implementation as partial or limited in scope
- Element451 is the most widely used CRM across the state, with colleges accessing it through direct contracts (45%), the System-wide convenience contract (31%), or a System-sponsored cohort (24%)
- CRM usage is strongest in recruitment, enrollment, and marketing communications. Many institutions reported improved student engagement, more efficient processes, and enrollment growth as measurable outcomes

- Advanced capabilities – such as predictive analytics, risk identification, and retention automation – are currently underutilized across the System

The most consistent challenges identified were capacity constraints, data integration complexity with student information systems, training gaps, significant cost variation and implementation challenges. The accompanying presentation will detail these findings, early results and potential next steps for discussion.

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