

III. Funding request to expand and accelerate Competency Based Education (CBE) and Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) efforts system-wide: curriculum/faculty development workshops, and pilot launch of courses and programs....Chuck Gross and Michelle Solér

**Situation:** A current GA-funded campus-focused RFP requests additional funding to expand CBE/PLA degree program migration among high-demand academic degree offerings aimed at adults with some college or at adults with successful work experience who need a degree credential to advance.

**Background:** Strategic Directions champions the connections between UNC system students and NC employers. It also underscores the need to serve NC's military population. Competency Based Education (CBE) and Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) reimagine education as a just-in-time student-focused system of degree attainment that would better connect students with employment opportunities. CBE shows promise for reducing costs, increasing degree completion rates, expanding access, and ensuring graduates have the skills to work in a modern, globally-connected workplace. 8,500 to 9,000 soldiers separate from Ft Bragg annually, a number that will rise to 11,000 in the coming years. Adult and military students would benefit from the CBE/PLA hybrid approach, which would allow many to progress at a faster pace. Both adult professional and military training/work experience may well translate to academic course work; many military veterans have completed extensive formal training in health care and allied health professions. Very limited funds are currently available to design and launch CBE programs. Plans for a system-wide workshop and summit may reveal additional opportunities and campus interest. Nationally, large awards and investments of \$1 million plus have seeded CBE program launches at Northern Arizona and University of Wisconsin (UWFlex). NCCCS is also working under a Lumina grant to launch a CBE degree program for Information Technology, 2017.

**Assessment:**

- Converting high-quality, academically rigorous, semester-based programs into competency-based programs and incorporating prior learning assessment requires a massive overhaul to curriculum, business processes, student supports, and technology systems.
- WSSU's Master's in Healthcare Administration is ready to move forward with this effort, expecting enrollments of 50 new nationwide students per year beginning 2017. The Master's of Healthcare Administration is also offered by Western Governor's University (WGU). The WGU model employs a mentor for each student who stays with the student for the tenure of the student's time to degree. WGU employs student mentors as full-time employees with benefits for \$55K per year. These are critical to student success and would be replicated in the WSSU program.
- Costs: To migrate this program to a CBE format will require new course creation of 15 courses, produced around self-paced competency

achievement instead of semester-based courses at a cost of \$50K in the current academic year. CBE/PLA consultants for a system-wide CBE Summit and summer workshops scheduled for May-June 2016 will cost approximately \$35K. Curriculum and instructional technology start-up costs will require investments close to \$100K in AY 2016-17, prior to enrollments and revenue generation.

- General Administration will develop new business processes for CBE academic program development from this pilot.

**Action:** UNC GA requests additional CBE/PLA program launch funds for AY2016-17.