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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

March 30, 2004

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Community college used state-paid technology staff for private purposes, Auditor Campbell says

RALEIGH _ The president of Blue Ridge Community College used his state-paid technology staff to provide computer services to private organizations, including some services that were available from private businesses, State Auditor Ralph Campbell said in an investigative audit released Tuesday.

Auditors found, for instance, that the community college provided about 159 hours of technical support in May 2003 for the Immaculate Baking Company for the baking of the "World's Biggest Cookie." The promotional event included a live webcast that required the community college technical staff to route data through the college computers to the Internet.

The community college Dean for Technology and Development signed an agreement in 2002 to develop an Internet website for the Hendersonville Chamber of Commerce; and the college has provided technical support for the National Technical Honor Society. Auditors said providing technical services to private organizations for fees could violate state laws that bar government agencies from selling merchandise or services in competition with private citizens.

Auditors also questioned an offer made by the college president at a Rotary Club meeting to provide technical services from the college for a Rotary Club website in exchange for donations to the Blue Ride Community College Educational Foundation. Equipment purchased for the community college by the Foundation, a separate legal entity, was not accounted for properly, investigators said.

"This is a point we make over and over again, but apparently it bears repeating," Campbell said. "State-paid time and state equipment must not be used for private purposes or private benefit. The money to support these technical services at Blue Ridge Community College comes from the taxpayers, who expect that those services will benefit the college and its students, not private organizations or in competition with private business."



The report is available on-line at <http://www.ncauditor.net/EPSEWEB/EDSreportdetail.asp?RepNum=INV-2004-0267>.

Copies of the report may be obtained at the office's web site at www.ncauditor.net. Printed copies of the report can be obtained by filing a request under the Audits section of the web site or by calling the Office of the State Auditor at 919-807-7500.

