



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

AUDIT OF THE INFORMATION SYSTEMS

GENERAL CONTROLS

STANLY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

SEPTEMBER 2007

OFFICE OF THE STATE AUDITOR

LESLIE MERRITT, JR., CPA, CFP

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AUDITOR'S TRANSMITTAL

The Honorable Michael F. Easley, Governor
Members of the North Carolina General Assembly
The Board of Directors of Stanly Community College
Dr. Michael R. Taylor, President

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We have completed our audit of Stanly Community College. This audit was conducted during the period from June 12, 2007, through July 20, 2007. The audit was conducted in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* and *Information Systems Audit Standards*.

The primary objective of this audit was to evaluate information systems (IS) general controls at Stanly Community College. The scope of our IS general controls audit included general security, access controls, systems software, physical security, and disaster recovery. Other IS general control topics were reviewed as considered necessary.

This report contains an executive summary and audit results which detail the areas where Stanly Community College has performed satisfactorily relevant to our audit scope, where improvements should be made, and where further study is necessary.

We wish to express our appreciation to the staff of Stanly Community College for the courtesy, cooperation and assistance provided to us during this audit.

North Carolina General Statutes require the State Auditor to make audit reports available to the public. Copies of audit reports issued by the Office of the State Auditor may be obtained through one of the options listed in the back of this report.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Leslie W. Merritt, Jr.".

Leslie Merritt, Jr., CPA, CFP
State Auditor

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We conducted an Information Systems (IS) audit at the Stanly Community College from June 12, 2007, through July 20, 2007. The primary objective of this audit was to evaluate the IS general controls in place during that period. Based on our objective, we report the following conclusions:

General security involves the establishment of a reasonable security program that addresses the general security of information resources. Stanly Community College has established a reasonable security program that addresses the general security of information resources. We did identify a significant weakness in general security during our audit. *See Audit Finding 1, IT Security Policies and Procedures.*

The **access control** environment consists of access control software and information security policies and procedures. We found several weaknesses in access controls. Due to the sensitive nature of the conditions found in these weaknesses, we have conveyed these findings to management in a separate letter pursuant to the provision of North Carolina G.S. 147-64.6(c)(18).

Systems software is the collection of programs that drive the computer. The selection of systems software should be properly approved and the software should be maintained by the computer center. *We did not identify any significant weaknesses in systems software during our audit.*

Physical security primarily involves the inspection of the agency's computer center for the controls that should reasonably secure the operations of the computer center from foreseeable and preventable threats from fire, water, electrical problems, and vandalism. *We did not identify any significant weaknesses in physical security during our audit.*

A complete **disaster recovery** plan that is tested periodically is necessary to enable Stanly Community College to recover from an extended business interruption due to the destruction of the computer center or other Stanly Community College assets. Our audit did note a weakness in disaster recovery. *See Audit Finding 2, Resumption of Computer Systems.*

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AUDIT OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

OBJECTIVES

Under the *North Carolina General Statutes* 147-64.6, the State Auditor is responsible for examining and evaluating the adequacy of operating and administrative procedures and practices, systems of accounting, and other elements of State agencies. IS general control audits are examinations of controls which effect the overall organization and operation of the IS function. This IS audit was designed to ascertain the effectiveness of general controls at Stanly Community College.

SCOPE

General controls govern the operation and management of computer processing activities. The scope of our IS general controls audit was to review general security issues, access controls, systems software, physical security, and disaster recovery which directly affect Stanly Community College's computing operations. Other IS general control topics were reviewed as considered necessary.

METHODOLOGY

We audited policies and procedures, interviewed key administrators and other personnel, examined system configurations, toured the computer facility, tested on-line system controls, reviewed appropriate technical literature, reviewed computer generated reports, and used security evaluation software in our audit of general controls. We conducted our audit in accordance with the standards applicable to performance audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States and *Information Systems Audit Standards* issued by the Information Systems Audit and Control Association.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Stanly Community College, located in Albemarle, North Carolina, was founded December 1971. Stanly Community College receives its accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in 1974 to award Associate in Arts, Associate in Science, Associate in Applied Science, diploma and certificates. The College also offers college transfer credits, occupational and vocational education, and training. The mission of Stanly Community College is to provide programs and instruction to prepare individuals for a competitive global marketplace and changing work force needs.

The IT division of Stanly Community College is referred to as the Technology Support Department. Then Chief Technical Officer, who reports directly to the College President, heads the Technology Support Department of Stanly Community College. The mission of the Technology Support Department is to support Stanly Community College's overall mission statement. The function of the Technology Support Department is to identify, promote, facilitate, and maintain technology resources and information systems applicable to the College's instructional and administrative processes. The department supports these objectives through appropriate access, infrastructure, security, maintenance, and training for campus, community, and global instructional and administrative information resources.

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AUDIT RESULTS AND AUDITEE RESPONSES

The following audit results reflect the areas where Stanly Community College has performed satisfactorily and where recommendations have been made for improvement.

GENERAL SECURITY ISSUES

General security issues involve the maintenance of a sound security management structure. A sound security management structure should include a method of classifying and establishing ownership of resources, proper segregation of duties, a security organization and resources, policies regarding access to the computer systems and a security education program.

AUDIT FINDING 1: IT SECURITY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Stanly Community College has not adopted formal information technology (IT) standards to help them address all critical areas of their IT security environment. The following critical policies and procedures were not addressed in their security program:

- Stanly Community College does not monitor its current system configuration against an approved baseline for system security that will assist the college in identifying unauthorized changes to the system. Without a baseline configuration for securing the critical operating system, the operating system may not be secure from commonly known vulnerabilities.

Stanly Community College should assume full responsibility for developing a framework policy, which establishes the organization's overall approach to security and internal control. The policy should comply with overall business objectives and be aimed at decreasing risks through preventive measures, timely identification of irregularities, limitation of losses and timely restoration.

Recommendation: Stanly Community College should develop an approved baseline for system security. North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) is in the process of developing a baseline configuration that is scheduled for completion in July 2007. Stanly Community College should use the completed NCCCS baseline as a guideline for minimum security configurations, and document any differences between the College's baseline and the NCCCS baseline. Stanly Community College should develop procedures to monitor their system configuration against the College's developed baseline settings to detect any unauthorized changes to the system.

Auditee's Response: Stanly Community College concurs with the finding. At the beginning of August 2007, Stanly Community College received a baseline from the North Carolina Community College System and is currently implementing the plan. We anticipate having the baseline fully implemented by 30 November 2007.

AUDIT RESULTS AND AUDITEE RESPONSES (CONTINUED)

ACCESS CONTROLS

The most important information security safeguard that Stanly Community College has is its access controls. The access controls environment consists of Stanly Community College's access control software and information security policies and procedures. An individual or a group with responsibility for security administration should develop information security policies, perform account administration functions and establish procedures to monitor and report any security violations. We noted a number of weaknesses in access controls. Due to the sensitive nature of the conditions found in the weaknesses, we have conveyed these findings to management in a separate letter pursuant to the provision of North Carolina G.S. 147-64.6(c)(18).

SYSTEMS SOFTWARE

Systems software is the collection of programs that the computer center uses to run the computer and support the application systems. This software includes the operating system, utility programs, compilers, database management systems and other programs. The systems programmers have responsibility for the installation and testing of upgrades to the system software when received. Systems software changes should be properly documented and approved. *Our audit did not identify any significant weaknesses in system software.*

PHYSICAL SECURITY

Controls over physical security are designed to protect a computer center from service interruptions resulting from fire, water, electrical problems, vandalism, and other causes. The physical security controls ensure that the computer service center is reasonably secure from foreseeable and preventable threats to its physical continuity. *Our audit did not identify any significant weakness in physical security.*

DISASTER RECOVERY

Disasters such as fire and flood can destroy a computer service center and leave its users without computer processing support. Without computer processing, many College services would grind to a halt. To reduce this risk, computer service centers develop disaster recovery plans. Disaster recovery procedures should be tested periodically to ensure the recoverability of the data center.

AUDIT FINDING 2: RESUMPTION OF COMPUTER SYSTEMS

Stanly Community College has a disaster recovery plan to ensure the resumption of computer systems during adverse circumstances. However, the disaster recovery plan is incomplete. The plan does not include the following critical components:

AUDIT RESULTS AND AUDITEE RESPONSES (CONCLUDED)

- Alternate user department procedures to manage their workloads until processing resumes.
- An inventory of equipment, special stock and arrangements to acquire replacement equipment.
- A test of the Disaster Recovery has not been performed on a yearly basis.
- The Disaster Recovery Plan is not located in an offsite storage location

In the event of a disaster, the aforementioned components are necessary to ensure the proper recovery of the computer resources. Also, a disaster recovery plan should be tested to ensure that the plan is effective. Management should ensure that a written plan is developed and maintained in accordance with the overall framework for restoring critical information services in the event of a major failure. The disaster recovery plan should minimize the effect of disruptions. Procedures should require that the plan be reviewed and revised annually or when significant changes to the College's operation occur.

Recommendation: Stanly Community College should include all the aforementioned critical components in their plan and should test the plan at least on a yearly basis.

Auditee's Response: Stanly Community College concurs with the above findings. Stanly Community College has purchased identical hardware to be setup offsite (at the Crutchfield Center) in case of a College disaster (this will allow Stanly Community College to perform a real test of the Disaster Recovery Plan and be prepared in case of a system disaster). The additional equipment is anticipated being functional by the end November. The Disaster Recovery plan is now located at an offsite location (Crutchfield Center in the data fire safe). Stanly Community College's administration has been and is continuing to further refine departmental procedures relating to a system failure.

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