

WPCC facing faculty cutback

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Western Piedmont Community College faculty members presented objections Tuesday to recently proposed options for dealing with a projected reduction in faculty size.

The college faces a possible loss of state funding next year for five to eight full-time teaching positions because students are registering for fewer courses per quarter than in previous years.

A report outlining possible ways of dealing with the cutback went to the college board of trustees last

month from Dean of Curriculum Programs Harold P. Olsen.

Three supplementary reports by faculty groups were presented to the trustees Tuesday night by Faculty Senate Chairperson Ruth Thomas, Tenurial Faculty Chairman Larry Clark and Nursing Department Faculty Chairperson Marlene Rosenkoetter. Major concerns raised centered around possible replacement of full-time professional instructors by part-time employees, loss of educational leave for professional development and loss of program quality.

A trend from full-time to part-time student

enrollment has led to a 10-percent reduction in the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) students for the college. FTE production determines funding for the college's teaching staff.

Olsen's options include ways of decreasing summer teaching staff, increasing part-time instructional staff and decreasing full-time, reducing educational leave, reducing the number of 12-month contracts awarded and seeking more local funds for teaching positions.

The Olsen report was described by Acting President of the college H.D. Moretz as a series of

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options—"some, none or any of which might be adopted by the board as a means to reduce expenses of the college." Information from other sources was welcomed, he said, in arriving at an intelligent decision."

Olsen's proposal called for a "need for institutional flexibility in staffing so that new programs can be initiated" in the future.

Replacement of full-time personnel with less expensive part-time personnel would not be accepted well by faculty members, both Faculty Senate Chairperson Ruth Thomas and Tenurial Faculty Chairman Larry Clark told the board. Part-time personnel would not have the time needed to maintain a quality program of instruction, they argued, and would place greater administrative burdens on full-time faculty members.

"The teaching faculty would welcome," Mrs. Thomas said, "a new upgraded (salary) nine-month contract and separate pro-rated contract for summer

based on need." Total elimination of summer employment for some faculty, she said, would be inappropriate, since instructors came to WPCC with expectations of 12-month employment.

Mrs. Thomas and Clark noted that this had been proposed by the faculty several years ago.

A reduction in full-time staff would also have a negative effect on teaching workloads, which Mrs. Thomas described in the Senate report as already "unreasonable and academically unsound" at 18 hours or better. The 18-hour average was first a one-year experiment that gradually became practice. While "too high," Acting President H.D. Moretz said, the number was similar to that at other community colleges.

Changing positions from full-time to part-time, Mrs. Thomas said, "would involve the administration and board of trustees in litigation detrimental to the image of the college."

Reduction in paid educational leave would not be welcomed Mrs. Thomas said, but stricter guidelines to make it more meaningful and to reduce abuses of the benefit would be accepted by the faculty.

The faculty suggested an emphasis on long-range planning as opposed to crisis management, but board members said some crisis management, by necessity, would be involved in dealing with any loss of staff next year.

Clark and Mrs. Thomas pointed out the impact staff reduction would have on related departments and support programs such as student advisement, curriculum development, scheduling and student activities.

Mrs. Rosenkoetter noted that the nursing department was trying to obtain accreditation by the American Nurses Association. Reductions in staff and students would affect this as well as the department's ability to meet nursing needs in the community and maintain program standards, she said.

"Any change in the staffing of teaching positions should be predicated upon an assessment of program needs," Clark said in the Tenurial Faculty report, which described staff as "confused, frustrated...demoralized and angry over recent proposals and past experiences."