



Richardson sworn in by Sitton.

Photo by Mark Phillips

WPCC president takes oath

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By **STEPHEN HARRIS**
News Herald Staff Writer

"I, Jim A. Richardson, do solemnly swear that I will well and truly execute the duties of my office as president of Western Piedmont Community College according to the best of my skill and ability, according to law, so help me, God."

Promising a new era with decentralized decision-making, Jim Richardson repeated that oath and formally took the reins as WPCC president Friday afternoon in a 20-minute ceremony.

About 80 college staff members, trustees and well-wishers gathered in the Moore Building auditorium to see

Superior Court Judge and college trustee Claude Sitton administer the oath of office to the new president, who was hired Sept. 4.

After the formal oath and a standing ovation by the crowd, Richardson remarked, "I feel I just married a college."

In a short speech, Richardson told the crowd that "this ceremony marks a significant change in the life of Western Piedmont Community College."

"We have adjusted the total administrative structure," said the former college vice president of academic affairs, "in order to decentralize the decision-making authority (of the college)."

That pledge was in contrast to complaints registered by faculty and student groups early this year about the administration of Richardson's predecessor, Wilmon R. Droze. Droze asked last summer that his contract not be renewed.

Richardson was picked to step up to the presidency after a five-month presidential search that included 103 applicants.

"Hopefully, we are now a team in the true sense of that word, a group of professionals dedicated to a common purpose," Richardson said. "I pledge to you and to every citizen of this community my best effort in helping Western Piedmont be the best community

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WPCC inaugurates Jim Richardson

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college in this state."

The new president recited measures taken in recent months to improve the college, including adding new one-year and two-year programs, expanding the cooperative education program, accrediting the two-year nursing program and overseeing a hearing-impaired assistance program.

"Western Piedmont is widely recognized for having some of the finest educational programs in the state," Richardson said. "Together we must strive to maintain and improve our good reputation."

Richardson added that an evalua-

tion of the college is under way. Thirty-one college administrators, faculty members, staff and trustees met in a retreat last weekend in Montreat and formulated 40 objectives for the in-house study. The evaluation is to be completed next spring.

WPCC also will undergo accreditation renewal early next year.

"Our mission," Richardson said, "is to provide adults in this service area with quality, economical and convenient learning opportunities consistent with identified student and community needs."

After the ceremony, the crowd was offered coffee and cookies in the lobby. Friday night, a presidential ball was held at the Morganton Moose Lodge.