

College tightens belt; program, 6 jobs cut

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In a new effort at belt tightening, Western Piedmont Community College will eliminate one academic program and will cut six faculty and staff positions next fall.

College officials have declined to name the people to be released, saying the employees asked not to be identified. But The News Herald has learned that one of the faculty members is the president of the teachers' union at the college, Dennis Brockland.

George Fouts, vice president of academic affairs at WPCC, confirmed today that Brockland, a criminal justice instructor, was one of the instructors to be released. But Fouts denied that Brockland's union affiliation had any part in the decision.

The cuts are the first major policy action of new Western Piedmont Community College President Jim Richardson, hired Sept. 4 after serving a year as a vice president and as interim head. College officials described the changes as keeping with recent moves to improve occupational and industrial training programs.

Richardson announced the cuts Monday night. The action came at the conclusion of a six-month college evaluation, which studied the usefulness of all college programs. The evaluation was a major goal in Richardson's first year.

With a booklet that had "confidential" stamped in red letters on it, Richardson reviewed the evaluation results with college trustees behind closed doors for almost an hour Monday during a special trustees' meeting. Trustees had studied the evaluation for a week. The evaluation booklet included enrollment trends, information on expenses, placement results and employment trends and

prospects.

Instructors to be released were told of the evaluation's recommendation before the Monday meeting. They were to be formally notified by letter today.

College officials described faculty reaction as "reasonable."

But one college staff member said the news today of the official cutbacks was disturbing. "People are pretty upset," she said. "There are only six (employees to be released), but there are people who have been here a long time. And, they're (college administrators) are cutting us to the bare bones."

Brockland said reaction has been minimal. "They seem to be apathetic right now," he said.

According to the new WPCC plans, the college's mental health program will be phased out by the end of the 1982-83 academic year. That program, which trained technicians primarily for Broughton Hospital, had 29 students last fall. Also, two tenured instructors who taught those students will be released.

Three non-teaching positions will be eliminated: the coordinator of evening activities, one position in student services and the audio-visual coordinator in the college library.

The released people will be given special consideration for other jobs that open at WPCC, college officials said.

A period of expansion and experiment in education has come to an end, the WPCC President Richardson said after the meeting Monday night, and the college will have to make better use of existing funds in the face of budget cuts on the federal and state governmental level. WPCC will place more emphasis on training students for employment and on college courses paying for themselves, col-

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lege officials said.

"And we will not stop here, either," Richardson added, hinting at still more cuts in the future.

When asked what effect the changes will have on students, Richardson said it will have "no impact whatsoever ... our overall quality will not be affected."

Upon emerging from the closed session Monday, Richardson said the cuts will not diminish services, but would rather shift resources to more needed areas.

"Because of the depressed economy, and because our funding has not kept up with inflation, we've had to look at every program," Richardson said.

Also, the college has placed two other academic programs on probation: auto mechanics and fire science. If the programs do not show an increase in enrollment in the coming year, Richardson said, cuts also will be made in those departments.

In addition to the cuts, many other departments will be asked to make austerity moves. Richardson said department expenses, such as travel and equipment, will be cut. Also, instructors may be given larger classes and may be asked to teach more classes at night. And, more part-time instructors will be used. Part-time in-

structors cost less because the college does not have to provide employee benefits.

The college will ask for greater productivity from its instructors, will increase training of instructors and will attempt to prevent more students from dropping out.

Two other administrative positions, the college planning director and the personnel director, will be examined, Richardson added, and athletics will be examined after another year.

Not all of the changes are budget cuts. The college may expand in other areas. The WPCC president said a planner for classes for local industry will be added, and others may be included.

Also, Richardson announced the \$65,000 hearing-impaired program, which hires tutors and pays for other special assistance to deaf students, will be continued even if the college has to use its own funds. Most of the cost of the program was paid with federal funds this year.

WPCC will expand its business skills lab and will increase its computer science program.

"Anything you pick up and read," Richardson explained, "you are seeing cutbacks." Pointing to Duke University's elimination of education and nursing programs, the WPCC president said, "We are not immune. We've got to be more cost efficient. We've got to put dollars to needs."