

Changes forecast for college

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The large size of the university and community college systems in North Carolina are a credit to the state, a Florida professor said Wednesday, but economic pressures may force changes in the future.

Lou Bender, former president of the Pennsylvania community college system and author of three books on community colleges, said budget cuts in education combined with the flight of students from private colleges may place a demand on public institutions of higher learning that cannot be met.

Director of the Institute of Higher Learning at Florida State University, Bender said that Florida community colleges have begun restricting enrollment because they cannot handle the students.

Bender is in Morganton conducting workshops for the staff of Western Piedmont Community College. WPCC President Jim Richardson called Bender a nationally-known authority on community colleges. "He is to community colleges what Reggie Jackson is to baseball," said WPCC President Jim Richardson.

Funded by a federal grant, the workshops are being held for division directors, deans and vice presidents



Lou Bender

at the college. On Wednesday, Bender spoke on administrative skills and time management. Today, he will instruct the college staff on legal issues in colleges and how to rewrite the college's policy manual.

The size and quality of the state's universities and colleges exceed what one might expect from a state the size of North Carolina, the Florida professor said Wednesday after a workshop.

"That is a tribute to the state that they have committed so much to education," he said.

He called North Carolina's system among the top 10 in the state, with the potential of entering the top three of California, Florida and Texas.

But that status may be difficult to maintain.

The low tuition of community colleges — which is \$39 a quarter at WPCC — is expected attract more students as financial aid for students is reduced. Larger enrollments will require more state funds.

"The question is whether the (state) legislature really wants to carry out the concept to provide education to as many as seek education," Bender said. The community colleges have an "open door" policy that admits any student who can meet academic requirements.

At Miami Dade Junior College in Florida, Bender said demand has forced officials to limit enrollment on a first-come, first-serve basis. Studies show such a policy, or any move to limit enrollments, tend to exclude the disadvantaged student.

Tighter economic times may force North Carolina to examine the overlapping services provided by its large number of universities and colleges. "North Carolina has far too many

units," he said.

Another idea that has been tried elsewhere is to make the large universities senior institutions concentrating on junior and senior classes and post-graduate work, with junior and community colleges concentrating on the freshman and sophomore years.

Bender also said there was a great deal of concern over the need for remediation by college students. The Florida professor pointed to the University of Texas, where one-third of all entering students needed some remediation work on high school subjects or skills. Over 50 percent of all college students are deficient in some area, he added.

For community colleges in the coming years, the emphasis should become centered on teaching middle management personnel, or technicians and "paraprofessionals."

"We tend to think of a two-tier manpower structure — the professional and the worker," he explained. "Now, we are finding we see a three-tier structure, with a new middle management to tie theory and practice together."

Associate degrees offered by community colleges will be a key for the middle manpower levels, he added.