

Scott urges college to seek excellence

By HERBERT BLAKE
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Public support is essential to the state's community colleges, their president said on Tuesday, and he challenged Western Piedmont Community College fundraisers to give more than "lip service to providing a margin of excellence."

The impact of every dollar raised is in the lives of people WPCC is able to serve, said Bob Scott, president of the state community college system and the featured speaker for the Western Piedmont Foundation's annual meeting in Morganton.

"You're motto ought to be what benefits Western Piedmont Community College benefits Burke County," said the former governor.

The foundation, comprised of community leaders, has added about \$200,000 in its 18-year existence to the federal, state and county monies WPCC has received annually.

The group's next task is to match \$2.1 million in state funds for a new learning resource center on the WPCC campus.

The Haw River native said the "margin of excellence" an average community college can attain means providing state-of-the-art equipment and facilities for students.

It's important for community college graduates to have a working knowledge of equipment before they get a job, he said.

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Photo by Herbert Blake

Former Gov. Bob Scott is pleased with WPCC building plans.
... along with WPCC president Jim Richardson (right), N.C. Rep. Ray Fletcher.

Scott encourages WPCC fundraisers

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Industry experts say job requirements are recycled every 11 years, said Scott, who added the state is seeing a restructuring of basic textile plant operations.

The demographics of the average student are making higher education "no longer the province of the young," Scott said. The median age of the state's 600,000 community college students is 29, and many are married or single parents who work, Scott said.

Updated facilities also require top-notch teachers, and community colleges must ensure quality faculties by offering career development opportunities, he said.

A problem that lingers in North Carolina's community college system is teachers are still among the lowest paid in the United States, despite some progress statewide, he said.

The state's 58 two-year institutions also must be willing to provide financial assistance as federal money for scholarships dwindles, Scott said. A \$500 scholarship is not much, he said, but could make the difference in whether a person attends college.

"A scholarship can spell the difference in the lives of many, many (people). Endowed scholarships are an investment that pay dividends for a lifetime," Scott said.

The fourth mark of excellence is a school offering its area's functionally illiterate population the opportunity to learn basic reading and

writing skills, Scott said.

Community colleges also must invest in whatever it takes to make the state's community college system above average, he said. "You're investing in human resources," Scott said.

Scott praised WPCC for serving the needs of area residents by initiating 18 new programs, including starting a literacy and general educational development program with about 10 local industries.

"That's what leadership is — making things happen," he said.

Dr. Gerald McBrayer, foundation president, cited a steady enrollment at WPCC of 2,400 students, the new literacy program, college trustee Allen Fullwood being elected to the National Association of Community College Trustees board of directors and getting \$2.1 million from the state for the learning center as some of the year's highlights.

It was reported the foundation had received \$20,000 in contributions in 1986.

Also during the meeting, foundation members re-elected their current slate of officers for another year. They are: McBrayer, president; R.T. Breeden, first vice-president; Frank C. Patton Jr., second vice-president; Thomas G. Becker, third vice-president; Shirlee Pitts, secretary; and Robert T. McGimsey, treasurer.

Former WPCC trustee Bob Byrd and Morganton banker Murray Small were elected to serve three-year terms on the foundation.