

College receives accreditation

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For a quarter of a century, Western Piedmont Community College (WPCC) has been accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), the same group who accredits Duke University and Wake Forest University.

Receiving word less than a week ago, the community college is accredited for 10 more years and with several commendations.

A process of helping institutions improve through a systematic program of evaluation, accreditation assures not only that an institution meets minimum standards, but also that it demonstrates a commitment to providing quality education programs, according to college officials.

In April of 1993, WPCC completed a two year

study which was part of the SACS reaffirmation process.

At that time, a team of professional educators and education administrators from across the Southeast visited the college to review the prepared report and to make recommendations and suggestions.

Based on what they saw in the report and after talking with WPCC officials, SACS representatives made 16 recommendations to the college.

The visiting committee recommended for WPCC:

- To expand its statement of purpose to more fully address all components of its purpose and to represent with greater specificity the official posture and practice of the institution.

- To institute a policy requiring that the mission statement published in any college prepared document

Please turn to Page Nine

Continued from Page One

read exactly as approved by the Board of Trustees.

- To formulate educational goals consistent with the institution's purpose.

- To develop procedures for evaluating the extent to which the institution's goals were being achieved and that the results of these evaluations be used to improve institutional programs, services, and operations.

- To regularly evaluate the institutional research function of the college.

- To examine all official publications for inconsistencies involving the number of credits which must be completed at the college for graduation.

- To assign in each curricular area in which a major in a degree program is offered, responsibility for course and program oversight and coordination, as well as for curriculum development and review, to a full-time faculty member with appropriate credentials who has primary teaching assignment in the program area.

- To take steps to assure the goals and requirements of each course and the nature of the course content be identified in all course syllabi.

- To make the goals and requirements for each course clearly understood and consistently delivered.

- To ensure all part-time faculty members teaching courses for credit meet the same requirements for professional experience and scholarly preparation as their full-time counterparts teaching in the same disciplines.

- To review its contract with the Burke Cosmetology Academy for educational services and programs to be consistent with the purpose, policies, and procedures of the institution and in compliance with the criteria.

- To evaluate its policies for allocation of computing resources and for balancing the services provided among the user groups.

- To develop and publish procedures to gather information about student needs in order to demonstrate that student service programs are consistent with students needs and the purposes of the institution.

- To provide the organizational structure and resource necessary to conduct an effective program of academic advising.

- To broadly distribute the recently adopted statement on the jurisdiction, disciplinary responsibilities, and disciplinary procedures of the student court.

- To take every effort to secure additional space to alleviate (overcrowding and lack of space).

WPCC President Jim Richardson said the college has already cleared most of the recommendations.

"Where SACS made 16 recommendations to Western Piedmont, the norm is many more than that," said Richardson.

"The fact that Western Piedmont received so few is a strong commendation of the quality of our institution."

The SACS committee also recognized WPCC by giving them eight commendations.

"It is also unusual for any institution to receive more than one or two commendations by the visiting committee, Richardson said."

"Virtually every aspect of Western Piedmont was recognized with a specific commendation in our committee's report."

SACS commended WPCC on the following:

- The development and implementation of the dynamic planning system known as "Perpetual Planning."

"Having been in place for more than 10 years, this system has stood the test of time as an effective planning mechanism," the SACS committee told WPCC.

- The commitment and dedication to the massive task of remedia-

tion in the undergraduate program.

- The involvement of the undergraduate programs in the community, business, and industry in the curricular decisions for technical and occupational programs.

"Its use of task forces and advisory committees to develop needed programs and to keep curricular content current in existing programs is outstanding," the SACS committee said.

- The division of continuing education for their commitment to adult and continuing education, quality programming, creative, energetic community networking and effective program assessment.

- The student development services for attempting to create an institution where students have a significant role in institutional decision making.

- The maintenance and custodial staff for the well maintained and well kept appearance of the buildings and grounds.

Established in 1895, SACS is one of six regional accrediting bodies in the United States and covers 11 southern states from Virginia through Texas, as well as American schools in Latin America.