

WPCC to offer professional crafts program

Western Piedmont Community College will offer a new Associate Degree program this fall. "Professional Crafts: Clay" is designed to prepare individuals for employment as professional potters or in pottery-related fields.

Using traditional and contemporary concepts, course work will provide students with technical knowledge, design skills and marketing and business essentials.

Raymond Goodfellow, WPCC instructor and coordinator of the art department says, "The program will meet the needs of many students in the region. Only two other programs like it exist in the state."

Western North Carolina is traditionally a center for production of pottery, weaving, crafts, furniture-making and textiles. These businesses originated out of cottage

industries. There is a strong interest in the area for crafts, and the Historic Morganton Festival is known to be one of the biggest craft-promoting festivals in the state.

The development of Western Piedmont's new program, "Professional Crafts - Clay" is a way of revisiting the heritage of western North Carolina in its production of crafts.

An organization that exists to promote crafts is Handmade in America. It is a state-funded project in cooperation with private corporations that pushes crafts as a means of promoting tourism.

"Handmade in America brought to our attention the rich heritage and tradition of crafts in this part of the state and the economic contributions to the state economy made by

crafts," says Goodfellow.

The total direct economic contribution of the craft industry in Western North Carolina was estimated to be approximately \$122 million to the regional economy.

The 820 retailers of crafts account for \$71 million, or 58 percent, of the total contribution. The next major economic contribution was made by 739 professional producers (approximately \$26 million) followed by 3,369 second income producers (approximately \$23 million).

"Professional Crafts - Pottery," a two-year program, will cover course work that includes development of basic and advanced throwing skills with an emphasis on form and design.

Marketing procedures will be

stressed as well. Students will work in a hands-on, studio environment. Graduates will be able to open and operate their own pottery business, work for existing pottery businesses, or transfer to a four-year degree program.

For more information on this program, contact Raymond Goodfellow, 438-6199; TDD/438-6066.