

WPCC will offer Internet courses

By JOHN CALLAHAM
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Taking a college course will become a lot easier for some students in Burke County in August as Western Piedmont Community College begins its Distance Learning program.

The program will allow students who have a personal computer at home to take a number of classes and earn credit at WPCC through the Internet.

Jim Burnett, the dean of Student Services at the college, said that the concept of taking WPCC courses at home is nothing new. "We have taught telecourses for a while where

students pick up a video here and watch them at home," he said.

Now, however, students don't need to even come to the campus at all or even meet face to face with their teacher to take certain courses.

Burnett said having students take classes on the Internet has some advantages. "That is one less classroom you have to have," he said.

Another advantage is the instructors can give more attention to each student through e-mail and chat room conferences.

In fact, Burnett said, "Instructors have to do more work because of the individual work."

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Currently, the distance learning program is confined to only a few classes, with the paralegal program at WPCC being offered online.

"The entire paralegal program can now be done on the Internet," said Burnett. In addition, an introduction to computer science class is also offered by WPCC on the Internet this fall.

The program has been organized with the help of the Southern Regional Education Board, which is helping a number of colleges throughout the Southeast to offer courses on the Internet.

Students who wish to take the

college's online courses must have a high school diploma or GED and take all prerequisite courses.

Although students from outside the state can take the online courses at the college, they will still have to pay an out-of-state tuition fee. In-state students must have proof of a one-year residency in the state to qualify for the in-state tuition.

Even filling out the forms for taking the online courses can be found on the WPCC web site at <http://www.wpcc.nc.us>. A special computer program must be used to view and fill out the online forms, which are then printed out by the applicant and sent through the mail.