

System leader visits WPCC

By **JOHN CALLAHAM**
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The president of the North Carolina Community College System made a brief visit to Western Piedmont Community College on Tuesday, talking mostly to staff members about their plans for the future.

Martin Lancaster, a former U.S. representative and a former assistant secretary to the Army, became the state community college president in July 1997 and has been trying to tour all 58 colleges.

On Tuesday, Lancaster met with a number of WPCC trustee members for lunch before meeting with staff and faculty members at Moore Auditorium.

Lancaster said he was very pleased with the way WPCC and the other state colleges have handled the re-engineering of the curriculum in the last school year.

That process changed the college's schedule from a quarter to a semester system.

Lancaster said normally attendance rates drop about 10 percent when such a change is brought upon a college, but in North Carolina the reverse was true.

"We actually experienced modest growth in attendance," Lancaster said. "That is unheard of in every other state."

Lancaster said there are still goals to be met by the community colleges in the state. One of those goals is to improve technology and equipment in the schools.

Lancaster said some schools are still using metal lathes, when most industries are using computer-added machines for their work.

Another concern is retaining good faculty members and staying competitive. Many faculty

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members are being lost to both the public schools and industry, and Lancaster would like to see community colleges have the resources to keep good personnel.

Population increases also are a

concern for Lancaster as the colleges try to handle more and more students. "The echo-boom generation is about to hit," he said.

It also does not look likely that the state will help fund new capital building projects, according to Lancaster.

WPCC would like a new training facility to expand its offerings to businesses, but Lancaster said the state legislature has the opinion that new building projects are a local concern.

"The level of legislative support is very low," he said.