

Official: Community colleges vital

American Association
of Community Colleges
head speaks at Western
Piedmont

By **SHARON McBRAYER**
News Herald Staff Writer

MORGANTON – In an appearance at Western Piedmont Community College Thursday, American Association of Community Colleges President and Chief Executive Officer Dr. George R. Boggs told educators that community colleges will continue to play an important role in educating diverse age groups and populations.

Boggs said nationally over 1,200 public and private community colleges serve 10 million students each semester.

He spoke of the significant role community colleges play in provid-

ing communities with a prepared workforce and his belief that community colleges should and do provide education to the most diverse range of the population.

Dr. Jim Richardson, president of Western Piedmont Community College, agreed, saying, "We are training leaders today that will lead in a totally different world than we've been use to."

To reinforce that statement, Boggs told the story of Dr. Craig Venter, founder and CEO of Celera, the company that helped map the Human Genome Project.

According to Boggs, Venter performed poorly in high school, was drafted to Vietnam and worked there as a medic. Venter then decided to become a doctor but was not accepted to a university so he began his formal education at a community college.

However, according to Boggs, 28 percent of students attending

community colleges already have a four-year degree.

WPCC's Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences Dr. Carolyn West agreed, saying, "We've had masters level licensed clinicians who go through the substance abuse program because their university program didn't include substance abuse programs."

Boggs said there were challenges, however, to access to higher education through community colleges, the main one being cost.

"Fifty percent of students are in a situation of financial need," he said. "The cost of an education needs to be kept as low as possible." In order to help students defer the cost of an education, Boggs said the Bush administration has pledged to expand Pell grants by \$6 billion over the next five years.

He said education at the community

See **COLLEGES** / Page 11A

Colleges

Continued from Page One
college level should be accessible and affordable to any individual who desires an education. S a

Nichols, president of WPCC Foundation, echoed Boggs, saying, "Access should be the number one priority, making the learning opportunity available in our community."

According to Boggs, the mission of the American Association of Community Colleges is to "Build a nation of learners by building America's community colleges."