

# State's Approval Given For 2-Year Community College

The State Board of Education yesterday gave preliminary approval to Burke County's application for a comprehensive community college.

The action, coming at the board's January meeting in Raleigh, gives Burke the opportunity to obtain one of five institutions which the State plans to authorize this biennium to start a system of community colleges authorized by the 1963 General Assembly.

Climaxing a county-wide movement begun early in 1962, the preliminary approval represents the go-ahead signal for a special election in which Burke voters will be asked to approve a bond issue for the county's share of construction costs and authorize the county to pay its part of maintenance expense amounting to 15 per cent or less of annual operating expenditures.

The Board of County Commissioners is expected to meet immediately to set in motion legal machinery for the necessary election.

Final approval by the State Board of Education will come only after a favorable vote by Burke citizens, after which the college would be chartered, a local board of trustees appointed, a president elected and architects chosen to get construction under way.

The State board's Department of Community Colleges, of which Dr. I. E. Ready is director, announced the decision selecting Burke as the logical site for a community college to serve students in the upper Catawba River valley. As a commuting or drive-in college, it would be expected to draw its largest enrollment from Burke, Caldwell and McDowell counties and smaller numbers from other adjoining counties.

The board, meeting as a community college committee with John M. Reynolds of Asheville as its chairman, approved Burke's application during the morning session, and the action was formally ratified during a general session in the afternoon. Dr. Dallas Herring of Rose Hill is chairman of the State Board of Education which was given responsibility for administering the community college system.

Burke becomes the fourth North Carolina county to be given preliminary approval for a community college. Only two of them — Moore and Rockingham counties — have held elections, and both approved local financing by overwhelming vote. The third, Columbus County (Whiteville), is yet to hold its election.

Burke's application was widely supported throughout the county by municipal and county officials, business and industrial leaders, all three school boards, civic clubs, Chamber of Commerce and other groups.

A quick survey of reaction to the approval announcement showed general elation.

Dr. E. W. Phifer Jr., Morganton surgeon who is chairman of a county-wide steering committee, said he was pleased that approval was received without further delay.

"We hope the election can be held as soon as possible," he said.

Paul S. Cash, 1963 president of the Chamber of Commerce, hailed the State's approval as an opportunity for progressive Burke County to obtain a college as one of the most important possible additions to its resources. A community college, with its diversified offering of academic, technical and vocational instruction, will make a contribution to both the economic and cultural life of the county that will grow in the years ahead.

At the same meeting, the board authorized for Caldwell County an industrial education center and technical institute "specializing in but not limited to courses for the furniture industry."

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Caldwell had sought a community college and received the first two of the three steps toward a college.

The community college includes college parallel or academic work in addition to technical institute and industrial education center units.

John M. Reynolds of Asheville, chairman of the community college committee, noted that in not approving a college for Caldwell, "we're not closing the door to the establishment of a community college in Caldwell County. If the demand in this county at a later time justifies, a community college can be created."

Surry County, along with Burke, was approved as meeting the requirements for a community college. This brings to five the number of colleges approved — Moore, Rockingham, Columbus, Burke and Surry. Only Moore and Rockingham have held the necessary elections.

Proposed as a site for a college is a 150-acre tract owned by the N. C. School for the Deaf, with Interstate 40 forming its southern boundary and U.S. 64 on its west. Directors of the School for the Deaf passed a resolution September 13 agreeing to sell the tract, no longer needed since farming operations were discontinued, as the site for a community college and for no other purpose.

In August, county commissioners by unanimous vote endorsed the community college movement and promised to call a special election, after conferring with the steering committee, as soon as the State gave preliminary approval.

The State will pay 65 per cent of the cost of operating a community college, tuition fees of \$120 per student annually are expected to provide 20 per cent, with the remaining 15 per cent or less to be borne by the county.

State officials estimate the county's share will be from \$35,000 to \$50,000 annually. A five-cent tax levy, it was felt, would provide well over the needed amount, and the full levy would probably not be required until the college grew far above its initial size. However, it is proposed that the five-cent rate be voted on to insure provision for future growth, although it would not be needed in full now.

Construction of a college plant is estimated to cost approximately \$1 million. The original community college law made the physical facilities a local responsibility, but the General Assembly later approved a contingency appropriation of \$2,500,000 to allow the State to pay up to \$500,000 each toward the construction costs of the first few colleges, provided there is a general fund surplus at the end of this fiscal year as is expected.

The proposal is that voters approve a bond issue up to \$1 million, although it's likely that only about half of that amount will actually be needed from the county. If a lesser amount were approved, if an unexpected development would leave no general fund surplus for the State at the end of this fiscal year, or if bids should run slightly above forecasts, it would be necessary to return to voters in a second election to ask for a supplementary bond authorization.

Dr. Phifer said the steering committee had been especially impressed with the enthusiastic support and encouragement received from school superintendents, principals and teachers throughout the county and even in neighboring counties.

One reason, he said, is that they know the large number of able students now unable to go to college because of cost but who would be able to drive daily to a community college where the annual tuition is only \$120 and total payments, including laboratory and other fees should be under \$200.

They are aware also that a community college will be able to offer "something for everybody." For the students who may want to go to another college or university for the final two years of study, there is the two-year college parallel course of a quality comparable to the better state-supported colleges. Because community colleges will be accredited, credits will be acceptable on transfer by other institutions. A student in the academic department will receive an associate in arts certificate, like the best junior colleges in the country.

A second division offers a two-year course in the technologies, offering an associate in applied science certificate. This is comparable to two-year technical institutes being operated in the State.

A one-year vocation or trade department will offer specialized instruction like that available in present industrial education centers.

Adult classes and short courses, tailored to meet the special needs of the area, will round out the comprehensive community college offerings.