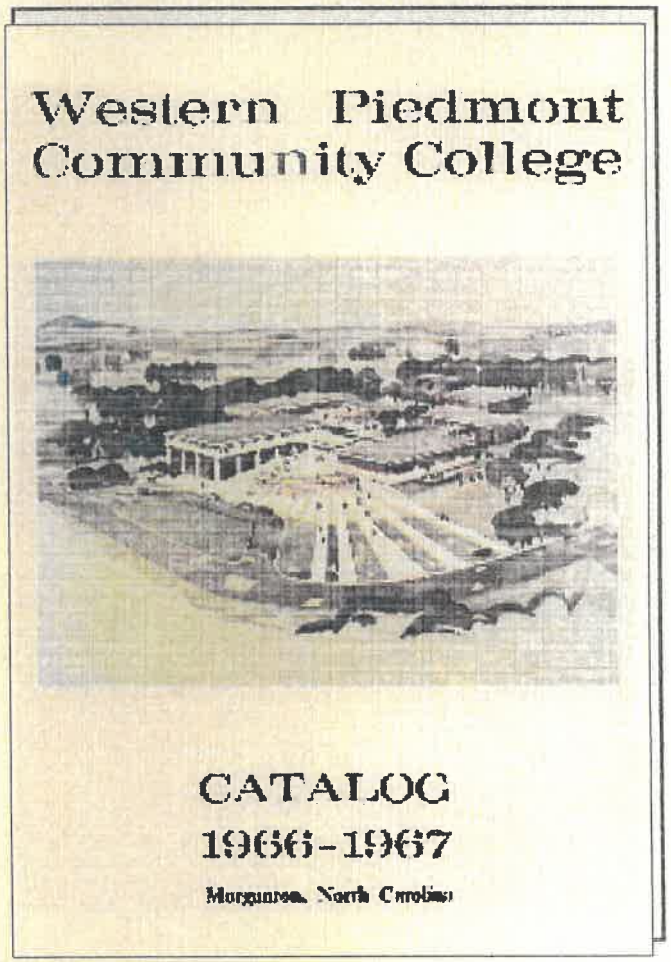
Author's Notes & Comments

This project came about in October of 2005 as a result of the anticipated arrival of a new president at Western Piedmont Community College. Perhaps such an event on a college campus brings about reflection and a desire to remember the past. Whatever the reason, given an assignment to write a history of anything is a challenge - but when given only a few months in which to research 40-plus years, the result by necessity must be brief. Therefore, this short chronological history of Western Piedmont Community College is only a prelude to a more complete story that should be told in conjunction with the College's 50th anniversary in 2014. Hopefully, *A Brief History 1964-2005* will serve the new president as well as new employees, trustees and volunteers in their efforts to continue the marvelous heritage of Western Piedmont Community College.

In addition to this narrative history, an attempt was made to document a part of the College's oral history by interviewing several retired and current recipients of Western Piedmont Foundation's awards for outstanding faculty, staff and alumni. This unedited video also included retiring President Jim Richardson at his home on December 5, 2005. Gratitude is due to WPCC's audiovisual technicians Tim Pittman and Sherry McCracken for the hours of digital video produced. An appreciative "thank-you" is also extended to Cyndie Callaway and others in her office, Dereama Coffin, Susan Keller and Jim Burnett for providing the necessary background materials.

Larry R. Clark
WPCC Dean Emeritus
January 2006



A Brief History 1964 - 2005
by Larry R. Clark

Western Piedmont Community College
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Larry R. Clark

January 2006
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Preface

During our lives, it is rare that we have an opportunity to work on an outstanding enterprise. Western Piedmont Community College was such a project and I am honored to have been a part of this effort since its founding. Thanks to the hard work of many Burke County citizens our community college was established. Over these many years the College prospered due to the constant dedication of its staff, faculty, students, administrators and trustees. This is a story that should make all of Burke County feel proud.

As Western Piedmont begins to think about its 50th anniversary in 2014, this seems to be an appropriate time to remember and to document a brief history of this great accomplishment. While the following pages only highlight the past, it contains an important message - challenges can be overcome when enough people work together to achieve a common goal. The benefits this brings to the lives of students and to the well-being of Burke County becomes almost limitless.

Hopefully, this publication will provide new trustees and College employees with a perspective on what Western Piedmont Community College tried to become, some of the things it achieved, and what it seeks to be in the future.

Robert P. Carr
Trustee 1964 – 2006

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Founding of A College: April 2, 1964	**1**
Formative Years 1967 - 1980	**8**
A New Decade 1981 -1990	**14**
The 20th Century Ends: 1991 - 2000	**24**
Epilogue: A New Century 2001 – 2005	**31**

Author's Notes & Comments

community colleges got to divide a $600 million slice of the pie. From this, Western Piedmont received $3.8 million for a proposed new facility for health science programs, plus $800,000 for repairs to existing facilities. The health science building, however, is only one of a multitude of possible campus construction projects on the drawing board at the College.

In 2001, Western Piedmont acquired 200 acres of adjacent state property from Broughton Hospital. This land, and its buildings, have now evolved into the East Campus where a new Continuing Education building was opened in 2003. Other possibilities for this land include an emergency services training facility, a conference center at the Old North Colony building and a multipurpose complex suitable for specialized workforce training and public events. Once completed, the East Campus will provide more possibilities for Continuing Education as well as unique support to several associate degree programs and opportunities for Burke County's future economic development. For example, public event promoters could use these facilities for boat or RV shows, animal sales or competitions, and outdoor variety entertainment that could attract thousands of visitors to Burke County.

Another significant area of progress over the past few years has been successful attempts at bringing other higher education opportunities into Burke County in partnership with regional public and private senior colleges and universities. The goal is to eventually provide Western Piedmont graduates convenient access to both baccalaureate and master degree programs offered on the Morganton campus. Currently Lees McRae College, Appalachian State University and Western Carolina University utilize campus classrooms and laboratories for upper division courses in business, social work, criminal justice, child development and education. Within this context, a proposed Health Science and Higher Education Center will attract even more baccalaureate and master degree programs to Western Piedmont in the future. Success with these projects, as in times past, will demand the concerted support of many dedicated Burke County citizens.

As of this writing, Western Piedmont Community College staff, faculty and students have continued to excel in their efforts to provide outstanding educational programs and services to Burke County. This observation was most recently confirmed (again) in 2003 when a

SACS reaffirmation committee report offered a special commendation to faculty and staff for their "constant and continued focus on the student." This opinion has also been confirmed in the most recent N. C. Community College System performance measures, which indicate that 98% of those graduates surveyed were satisfied with the overall quality of Western Piedmont's programs and services and, furthermore, some 96% of employers were satisfied with the quality of its graduates.

While these last sentences may end this brief history of Western Piedmont Community College, it is not the end of the story. With such a superb heritage and outstanding legacy, one can only guess as to what future generations of students, faculty and staff will accomplish. An event to keep before us, however, is the all to soon arrival of Western Piedmont Community College's 50th anniversary on April 2, 2014.

The Founding of A College: April 2, 1964

What is the aim and purpose of this College as it concerns these students and future students? We know that the educational philosophy of the community college movement is grounded in the premise that in some way and to a varying degree the human mind has the innate ability to learn - and that everyone should have the opportunity to learn all he is willing and able to learn....

Dr. E. W. Phifer, Jr.
Chairman of the Board of Trustees
Convocation of the College Address (1966)

Establishing a new educational enterprise is a daunting task where all the complex component parts of students, faculty, staff, administrators, facilities and instructional resources must mesh together into a coherent whole. An effort of this magnitude most often begins with a vision proposed by an individual or small group that has the fortitude to stay the course, jump through all the hoops and dodge the barriers that hinder success. As you may expect, the founding of Western Piedmont Community College is such a story.

Following many years of debate among North Carolina educators and politicians, the Governor's Commission On Education Beyond the High School recommended in 1962 the establishment of a Department of Community Colleges under the State Board of Public Instruction. Appointed by Governor Terry Sanford and chaired by Irvin E. Carlyle, the basic idea was to consolidate a hodgepodge of state supported junior colleges and Industrial Education Centers into a viable post high school two-year education system. These intriguing debates and reports in the state capitol did not go unnoticed in Burke County.

As early as January of 1962, Dr. Edward W. Phifer, Jr., a local surgeon and then president of the Morganton Kiwanis Club, appointed a special committee chaired by Dr. J. B. Helms to develop a proposal and strategy that would bring a college to Burke County. In March the Morganton Chamber of Commerce conducted countywide meetings with civic club presidents in order to develop broad-based support for an organized

campaign. High school students were surveyed and letters of support were accepted from agencies, employers and municipalities across the county. Over 1,200 state employees signed an unsolicited petition in favor of the proposed college. W. Stanley Moore, editor of the *Morganton News Herald*, placed the full power of the press into service. Also in March, a Burke County delegation comprised of Dr. Phifer, Dr. Helms, W. Stanley Moore and Dan R. Simpson appeared before the N.C. General Assembly in support of a community college bill.

During the summer of 1963, the legislature enacted the needed General Statute (along with the infamous "food tax") and accepted College of the Albemarle and Central Piedmont Community College as the state's first "community colleges." Shortly thereafter the N.C. Community College System (NCCCS) appeared with Dr. I. E. Ready as its first president. While the Carlyle Commission report ranked Burke County first in need of a public community college, no one expected this vision of a local college to come so quickly.

Burke County's formal request was hand delivered to the State Board of Public Education in November with a plan to locate the campus in Morganton, the county seat, on land to be purchased from the N. C. School for the Deaf, a 132 acre site at the intersection of Interstate 40 and Burkemont Avenue. Local enthusiasm ran so high that everyone assumed the best and stated that "Once the college has been established, it is the intention of this Steering Committee to request that the trustees allow them to organize a Founder's Association made up of the many active supporters of the college movement." While this goal was not immediately realized, Western Piedmont Foundation Inc. would be established in 1967 as one of the first support organizations within the NCCCS. W. W. Couch was elected as its first president.

In January of 1964 the State Board of Education accepted the Burke County plan, contingent upon approval of a local $1 million construction bond and a tax levy for continued maintenance of the future campus. With a long history of resistance to any type of tax, hundreds of Burke volunteers conducted an aggressive campaign to identify supporters and, if necessary, register them for the upcoming vote. Assistance with absentee ballots was offered – as well as free rides to the polls. Dozens of letters appeared in the *Morganton News Herald* and the *Valdese News* espousing the benefits of a community college.

On March 21, 1964, Burke County citizens approved by a margin of 17:1 in favor the required construction bond as well as a 5 cents per $100 tax levy - the highest level of support for a community college of any similar vote taken in North Carolina. Less than two weeks following this memorable day, on April 2, 1964, the yet to be named college received its state charter. This original charter actually established a tri-county service area including Burke, McDowell and Caldwell counties. State legislators at this time considered such partnerships to be a wise solution for limited funds and tended to follow this pattern with other counties. This idea, however, did not survive very long as most counties began to lobby for their own local community college.

At its first meeting on June 1, 1964, the Burke County college Board of Trustees elected Dr. E. W. Phifer, Jr., chairman and W. Stanley Moore vice chairman. Other Trustees in attendance were Rev. Clement Hahn, C. Maurice Hill, Frank C. Patton, E. P. Dameron, Eugene White, Ben Hoffmeyer, Thad Poteat, Earl Spencer, Dr. C. L. Walton and Robert P. Carr. By October the Trustees had selected Dr. Herbert F. Stallworth as the first president of the college. It was only now that they could turn attention to finding an appropriate name. Following weeks of discussion (and the rejection of such names as "Burke County College" and "College of the New South") this fledging dream for an institution of higher education received an official name - Western Piedmont Community College.

From its inception, WPCC (which was quickly accepted as an abbreviated name) never quite followed the example of its sister institutions within the N. C. Community System as the Burke County college was established as a "comprehensive" community college when most others chose to become "technical institutes." Encouraged by federal grants to create a national system of community based two-year colleges, WPCC was born at the forefront of this movement to serve a region's need for both traditional freshman and sophomore college courses, and, on the same campus, training in technical and vocational job skills. At its peak, during the late 1960s, on average, a new community college was established in the United States each week. Western Piedmont Community College was thus founded in the midst of this great American experiment in post high school education.

A community college was seen as "the peoples college," fully egalitarian and democratic by allowing open admissions (an "Open- Door") to any adult who could benefit from appropriate formal classroom studies or technical skills training. Tuition cost was free in many states and minimal in others. Books, fees and other costs were to be as low as possible. Faculty were selected first as teachers, then as student advisors and curriculum specialists. Lacking campus dormitories, community college students remained at home and continued to work in their communities; therefore the system was designed to be within an easy commute for most students. With a strong belief in these goals, President Stallworth and WPCC's Board of Trustees formulated a mission based upon these principles.

In January of 1965, President Stallworth presented his vision to Trustees in "The Prospectus for WPCC." This document outlined an education philosophy that most definitely was not your traditional classroom lecture and student-as-note-taker approach. Stallworth constantly preached a pedagogy to all who would listen that innovation, experimentation and democracy in the classroom were, collectively, the only means to prepare students for life's challenges. Students were to be Junior Colleagues, while faculty and professional staff were Senior Colleagues. Staff, faculty and students would, together, master the necessary knowledge and skills for success. The Open-Door, Stallworth believed, was a practical philosophy to be implemented throughout Western Piedmont Community College. In addition, its campus must become a "modern collegiate learning center" with the most current instructional technology and innovative teaching methods available.

Stallworth's basic ideas were formalized by Trustees into a directive that required the President "to continually approach the problem of organization and administration creatively and experimentally" and further required each faculty member to write – in detail and in behavioral terms – the basic skills and knowledge required for each course taught. Ideally, faculty could be hired three months before teaching began to allow sufficient time for each Senior Colleague to prepare their classroom "Teaching Documents" and "Student Documents." In support of this approach to classroom instruction, Stallworth would later invite the founder of "behavioral specified course objectives," Dr. Paul Postlewaite of Purdue University, to WPCC for a series of faculty workshops.

In another domain, Western Piedmont Community College instituted an innovative student grading system that included the traditional A, B, C, I and W - but did not permit a grade of D or F. A news article published in the *Charlotte Observer* at the time described WPCC as "The College Where No One Fails." While this headline seemed rather dramatic, it was close to the truth. Students who experienced difficulty with a course were allowed to accept an "Incomplete," continue their studies outside the classroom with make-up assignments and eventually complete all requirements in the Student Document. On the other hand, students likely to fail a course or unable to continue their studies were given a "Withdrawal" that carried no penalty. The basic premise behind this grading system was that students needed to earn a "C" or better grade to succeed and, likewise, should not be penalized for their initial attempts to pass a difficult course. This bold experiment was eventually dropped as senior colleges in North Carolina and elsewhere questioned the system and internal administrative difficulties developed with tracking the "I" and "W" students over the additional academic terms.

With the employment of H. D. Moretz in 1965 as Director of Adult Education and Community Services, WPCC offered its first classes in literacy education and adult high school completion scattered here and there across the county. Over 200 students enrolled that year and continuing education became a popular pastime in Burke County. Shortly thereafter the College's administrative team was completed with Dr. Gordon C. Blank as Dean of Instruction, J. Paul Bagley as Dean of Student Personnel Services and Harold Olsen as Director of Technical-Vocational Education. Administrative offices were located in the vacant Central Elementary School building on South Green Street in downtown Morganton. Throughout the summer of 1966, faculty and staff arrived to assume their respective duties and to prepare for the College's first academic year. Among the earliest were Jim Cates, Larry Clark, Tom Eller, Jack Huss, and Lenada Williams. On one special day Dr. B. Lamar Johnson, a leader in the national community college movement, visited Burke County to chat with staff and faculty. Based upon his findings, Western Piedmont Community College was later described in his book, *Islands of Innovation,* as a significant innovator of two-year college education in the United States.

With growing excitement, everyone looked forward to student registration. The College came another step closer with the publication of

its first academic catalog, a small book of 103 pages that included a colorful, artistic rendering of the proposed campus on its cover. Inside, curriculum students could select from six college transfer associate degrees, eight technical associate degrees and three vocational diplomas. Student Services encouraged extracurricular opportunities in yet to be created clubs - a Student Government Association as well as male intercollegiate competitions in basketball, track and baseball. The new college would have a mascot, the "Pioneer," with colors of Columbia blue and silver. This catalog could not, of course, anticipate the many unexpected opportunities awaiting students - such as the annual "Turkey Tip-off" basketball games played between students and faculty/staff, impromptu snow parties on the hill or the occasional Talent Show. State tuition that first year was $40 per quarter for full-time associate degree students, $30 for technical and vocational students. All students paid a $6 activity fee each quarter and purchased their own books. For many years thereafter, a typical full-time student could attend an academic year for less than $200.

Fall quarter registration was held on September 7, 1966, with classes beginning the next day wherever space could be found, e.g. Calvary Baptist Church and even the basement of a local A&P grocery store. By the end of that first day, Registrar Jack Ross reported a total of 300 plus curriculum students enrolled, including 50 in College Parallel courses, 30 in Nursing and 35 in Technical Business programs. Following the "drop/add" period several days later, the College enrolled a grand total of 417 students. Later that afternoon, WPCC employees, students, parents and public officials attended a Convocation of the College to hear Dr. Phifer and President Stallworth explain the vision held for Western Piedmont Community College. That evening, a reception was held at the Morganton Community House for teaching faculty. The *Morganton News Herald* proudly proclaimed on its front-page "WPCC Opens Many Doors To Its Students" and recognized the College's 34 full-time employees with an inside full-page photo display. With the arrival of these first students Western Piedmont Community College was born as a place to teach, a place to learn and a place to dream dreams.

On a cold and windy fall day, November 15, 1966, a ground breaking ceremony was held at the Burkemont Avenue site with Governor Terry Sanford turning a spade of dirt for construction of the College's first building (eventually W. Stanley Moore Hall). The dedication and hard

work of Burke County's visionaries, volunteers and voters had succeeded. Western Piedmont Community College was now truly Burke County's college and, perhaps not unexpectedly, rapidly gaining a reputation within North Carolina - and the nation - as a somewhat radical "island of innovation" where new ideas were encouraged and students were the top priority. This was also the beginning of an educational legacy begun by Dr. Herbert F. Stallworth - and faithfully continued by succeeding generations of Western Piedmont Community College students, faculty, staff and trustees.

Formative Years 1967 to 1980

However inadequate and imprecise the educational gauge is, our best collective judgment, coupled with the judgment of many others outside the institution, leads us to the inescapable conclusion that Western Piedmont is generally recognized as being a first-rate, quality community college which is fulfilling its responsibilities with a reasonably high degree of effectiveness.

President Gordon Blank
Status Report to Trustees (1970)

The summer of 1967 became an eventful time for WPCC. In a brief ceremony at the Central Elementary School campus, eight vocational students received the first official certificates awarded by Western Piedmont Community College - and President Stallworth announced his resignation to accept the position of president at the yet to be constructed College of the Mainland Junior College in Texas City, Texas. For Dr. Stallworth this was an irresistible challenge and he would carry with him the principles upon which Western Piedmont Community College had been founded. During the next year, Stallworth became instrumental in organizing the national League for Innovation And Experimentation In Community Colleges, today an international consortium (www.league.org) of over 800 two-year colleges dedicated to the improvement of adult education. In seeking his replacement, the Board of Trustees neither debated long nor looked far afield - and in August appointed the College's Dean of Instruction, Dr. Gordon C. Blank, as WPCC's second president.

During the Spring of 1968 faculty, staff and students eagerly loaded cars and pickup trucks for the long anticipated move to three new buildings on Burkemont Avenue and a permanent campus. Building A, as it was officially listed and later named Moore Hall, was the centerpiece with administrative, faculty and staff offices, the library and a few classrooms. In keeping with the College's mission to be innovative, Building A included a large "teaching auditorium" designed with state-of-the-art audiovisual equipment for multimedia instruction and television broadcast. It was jokingly rumored that this facility contained enough

wire to go to the moon and back. The first associate degree students (89) would graduate here in June. Building B (later Patton Hall) housed business and science programs while a smaller building C/D provided campus utilities and included barely enough space for Shirley Smith and his automotive shop program.

Another major undertaking for WPCC faculty and staff during these first two years (along with developing degree programs and courses, advising students and teaching classes) was to conduct a campus-wide "self-study" for accreditation from the Commission On Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). The self-study required a detailed assessment of all phases of campus operations: Business Office and budgets, Student Services and student placement procedures, buildings and grounds, administration and trustees, the Library, faculty credentials and student graduation requirements. In support of this effort, a Faculty Senate was created along with a system of standing College committees to improve campus operations and to discuss academic standards and policies. This time-consuming process produced a massive report for the SACS Visitation Committee and filled a small room with its supporting documentation. Following the Committee's three-day inspection and favorable report, Western Piedmont Community College received full accreditation in December 1968 - the earliest date possible for a newly established institution. While the Committee did leave WPCC with eleven recommendations for further study - these few items offered no serious problem for this exuberant, young community college.

Dedication ceremonies for the new campus were held on the front steps of the campus on May 4, 1969, with Governor Terry Sanford as principle speaker. This belated event allowed time for several finishing touches to the buildings and for some much needed landscaping - weekend projects which included President Blank and a hard working crew of faculty, staff and student volunteers. It was at this time that the sunken plaza between the two main buildings earned a nickname: "the Blank hole." The Central Elementary School in downtown Morganton continued to be used by the College for several years as continuing education offices and classrooms.

The decade of the 1970s proved to be a period of further expansion and general prosperity for the community college movement within the United States. Student enrollments were rapidly becoming as diverse as

public school populations with increasing numbers of women, minorities and those with special academic needs. Continuation of the war in Vietnam also resulted in many more veterans taking advantage of a revitalized G. I. Bill. With millions of students now enrolled across America, Congressional lawmakers realized that the "peoples colleges" had become a huge and popular success. Federal dollars soon followed as the National Vocational Student Loan and College Work-Study were made available to two-year college students. The Title III Higher Education Act offered millions of dollars as grants to developing community colleges. Within North Carolina, the state's community college system expanded to over 50 institutions under the leadership of Dr. Ben Fountain and saw enrollments increase to more than 400,000 students.

By the end of academic year 1969-1970, Western Piedmont Community College had graduated a total of 379 degree and diploma students. With the beginning of Fall Quarter, 1970, WPCC's headcount enrollments grew to over 4,000 students with 1,000 in curriculum programs and 3,000 in continuing education. More than 80 full-time employees now dealt with the growing complexities of creating a truly comprehensive community college - which included teaching state prison inmates at a local corrections facility. The campus Library reached a magic mark of 20,000 volumes as discussions began about the need for more space to house an expanded learning resources center. A second phase of construction permitted Building E to open its classrooms and laboratories in 1971 as an addition to Patton Hall. Construction of the lake, tennis courts and firing range soon followed. New vocational and engineering shops and laboratories appeared later with the completion of Building F. As a side note, the faculty in this area received the nickname "F Troop," in reference to a popular television show of the day.

In his annual "Status Report to the Board of Trustees," President Blank indicated "In general, it is felt that 1970-71 has been a successful year in the development and growth of Western Piedmont Community College and that an auspicious start has been made for the coming year." In fact, President Blank's initiatives engaged the attention of faculty and staff for much of the remaining decade. Although earlier than required, another SACS self-study was begun to identify specific campus strengths, weaknesses and needs. As a result, a significant college-wide effort was soon underway to improve the Guided Studies curriculum for academically challenged students.

Other changes were also on the horizon. Student Services implemented an innovative summer student orientation program with peer counselors, the college bookstore was expanded (eventually named "The Book Cellar" thanks to English instructor John Whitener) and a contract vendor provided limited food services in the west lounge of Moore Hall. The College Choir continued to perform and the Social Sciences Department began its popular "Fall Speakers Forum" to highlight a major national issue of the year. Natural Sciences initiated a physics revitalization project in conjunction with UNC-Chapel Hill while other federal grants permitted the hiring of several additional technical and vocational faculty. On election day, 1972, Morganton cable subscribers witnessed the first live television broadcast in Burke County from "Election Headquarters" at the Morganton Recreation Center, compliments of WPCC's Audio-Visual Department and the expertise of technician Buddy Noles.

All that happens on a college campus is not necessarily by carefully thought-out plans - and on one occasion at least, Lady Luck stepped in to significantly influence WPCC's future. At some point after the inauguration of Governor Jim Holshouser in 1973, the first Republican governor in North Carolina since the late 1860s Reconstruction Era, President Blank received a telephone call from the Governor's Office to inform him that Western Piedmont Community College would be the recipient of $1 million for new construction. Evidently, living in Burke County with its second largest number of state employees in North Carolina has its rewards. Staff and faculty quickly agreed that a multipurpose student services building was an immediate need. While providing much appreciated space for staff offices, the blueprints also included a cafeteria, bookstore and student activity room. In August 1977, staff and students moved into the new Student Services facility which, some years later, was named Hildebrand Hall in honor of Abby and Johny Hildebrand, lifelong Burke County educators and benefactors to the College.

In July of 1978 President Gordon Blank publicly announced his resignation to accept the position of president at Adirondack Community College in Queensbury, New York. Dr. Blank would eventually retire from the New York system, sell his house, buy a seaworthy sail boat and ply the eastern seaboard with his wife Joan. The Board of Trustees appointed Dean of the College H. D. Moretz as acting president and began a national search for a replacement. The following summer, Board

Chairman Dr. Edward Phifer, Jr., announced that Dr. Wilmon H. Droze, an academic dean from Texas Women's University would become WPCC's third president.

President Droze believed a close working relationship between the College and community was essential to WPCC's continued development. Under his leadership community service became a major goal with an active campaign to inform the public about the College's many opportunities. As some said, "town and gown" would merge to better serve the needs of Burke County. Class schedules were extended throughout the day and evening to better accommodate working students and an experiment with Saturday classes attempted. In 1980, Continuing Education offered the first satellite-based telecommunications courses in Burke County. The Visiting Artist Program was expanded along with the introduction of a new college transfer program in the fine arts. Following five years of work, the College's Nursing department received its National League of Nursing accreditation to join a small elite of two-year nursing programs certified in the United States.

Further efforts at community outreach included updating the College's employment Affirmative Action Plan and wanting all buildings handicapped accessible in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Student Services organized student athletes to participate in Burke County's Industrial Sports Leagues and WPCC joined the community college Western Tarheel Athletic Conference with a revitalized inter-collegiate, athletic program that eventually included basketball, golf, track, tennis and canoeing for both men and women.

The following year a Machinist Program was added to the curriculum and a new vocational-technical facility (Building H) was occupied by health sciences, drafting, law enforcement and fire science - finishing the original campus construction plan. In October, 1981, while gathered on the "Breeze Way" between Moore Hall and Building B, President Droze officially named the natural sciences and business facility for Frank C. Patton, Jr. In this context, it should be noted that within a few months of this event trustees John H. Carson and Ray Childers died from illness. Trustees Stanly W. Moore and Dr. Phifer had passed away the previous year. Another significant change for WPCC occurred shortly thereafter when President Droze announced his resignation to accept a position as Director of the Georgia Agrirama Living History Museum in Tifton.

Trustees then appointed Dr. Jim A. Richardson, Vice President for Academic Affairs, as acting president.

The decade of the 1970s ended with Western Piedmont Community College poised for even greater accomplishments. While yet only a teenager among North Carolina's institutions of higher education, the College had achieved its rightful place within Burke County and North Carolina. WPCC had now awarded 673 college transfer degrees, 1,738 technical degrees and 314 vocational diplomas to a total of 2,725 graduates. The Library acquired more than 30,000 volumes to support 35 associate degree programs, four one-year vocational diploma programs and three occupational certificates. In 1980, more than $360,000 in educational grants, scholarships and loans were distributed to 475 students. With an annual budget now approaching $4 million, total student headcount enrollments climbed to over 10,000. With some 60% of all students being Burke County residents, this remarkable success could be translated into educational services provided to one of every six adults in Burke County.

A NEW DECADE 1981 - 1990

As Western Piedmont Community College celebrated its twentieth anniversary this year, the College experienced a great deal of pride in remembering two decades of outstanding service to Burke County and North Carolina. Let us not forget the contributions of those community and College leaders who worked here before us and pledge anew to build for the future. Western Piedmont's students deserve our best efforts.

President Jim A. Richardson
Biennial Report 1982 - 1984

The 1980s witnessed some rough times for community colleges across the nation with a double whammy of economic recession and reduced state funding. This twin set of circumstances often created an anomaly unique to the two-year college where deep recessions produced thousands of displaced workers who sought out a community college for state-of-the-art skills training - or possibly a new career - and yet these new students found many campuses crowded for space and short on resources. Designed for a quick response to changing local educational and training needs, the community college survived these challenges and by the end of the decade 1,200 public two-year colleges across the nation served more than eight million curriculum and continuing education adults. In fact, during this decade almost 45% of all United States postsecondary students were enrolled in a community college.

Significant changes also occurred in North Carolina as the State Board of Community Colleges (SBCC) replaced the State Board of Public Instruction and former Governor Bob Scott began his 12-year tenure as president of the N.C. Community College System (NCCCS). In an effort to permit students to more easily transfer credits among its members, the SBCC mandated "curriculum reengineering" to develop common, statewide degree and diploma standards. At the same time, the SBCC authorized the development of a systemwide computer accounting and reporting network. As federal Pell grants became available to most part-time two-year college students, the NCCCS also adjusted to an expanding, diverse student population where the number of part-time students grew rapidly as the number of full-time students

plateaued. This situation often created a "budget crunch" on campuses as state funding lagged behind these enrollment changes. Another problem for the NCCCS came with a state funding formula based upon a statistical "full-time equivalent enrollment" and not an actual student headcount. While demand for student advisement, testing, record keeping and all other resources increased, the actual number of support personnel and faculty positions remained the same.

Only diligent attention to these national and state issues - as well as the establishment of four new community colleges in counties adjacent to Burke County - allowed WPCC to continue expanding its educational programs and services during the decade of the 1980s. While keenly aware of these challenges, the Board of Trustees in September of 1981 appointed Dr. Jim A. Richardson as the fourth president of the College. Before joining Western Piedmont as Vice President for Academic Affairs a year earlier, Richardson was employed at the Department of Community Colleges in Raleigh as Director of Planning and program assessment. It is not surprising, therefore, that Richardson immediately focused attention on the College's educational programs and management style.

Since only two occupational programs had been added to Western Piedmont's catalog during the previous ten years, faculty and staff soon implemented eight new technical degrees and two vocational diplomas related to local business and industry needs. Within the next five years a prodigious total of 18 new curriculum programs would be added. The College's technical curriculum was significantly expanded with degrees in Manufacturing Engineering, Industrial Management, and Manufacturing Resources Planning. The inclusion of Interior Design and Cosmetology offered students new opportunities while a new Horticulture Program grew quickly with the addition of a classroom greenhouse constructed by the College's maintenance staff.

These new curriculum programs also prompted related changes in other campus services. A five-year federal grant permitted the opening of a Cooperative Education Office that provided selected students on-the-job training in local businesses and government agencies while a special state grant permitted the development of a Hearing Impaired Project for high school seniors at the N. C. School for the Deaf located adjacent to the campus. The Human Resources Development program for pre-

employment training was relocated to a more convenient site in downtown Morganton, a vacant county building designated for many years as "Courthouse Square." Back on campus the Learning Lab, with its one-on-one assistance for continuing education and curriculum students, experienced overcrowding as adults of all ages sharpened their study skills.

During this same period, plans were well underway to experiment with a branch campus in eastern Burke County, the "East Burke Center," located in Hildebran. This small facility, however, closed within a few years due to low demand and competition from the recently created community colleges in Hickory and Lenior. After the Department of Community Colleges approved the purchase of two PRIME computers for administrative and accounting purposes, Western Piedmont held its first computerized registration in September of 1983 as 3,659 curriculum students enrolled - the highest number ever in the College's history. In and amongst all this activity, on December 12, 1983, WPCC received its reaffirmation of accreditation from the Commission On Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

By this time the College's curriculum division had granted over 3,000 degrees and diplomas while Continuing Education had awarded over 60,000 certificates. More than 3,500 adults earned their high school diploma, or its equivalent, through Continuing Education - resulting in this program becoming the largest "high school" in Burke County. President Richardson would later report to Trustees that "The credit for such accomplishments is clearly due to the commitment of students, faculty and staff in working for a common cause; but also reflects an outstanding contribution by hundreds of individuals who certainly believe in Western Piedmont Community College." On April 2, 1984, the College paused briefly to celebrate its 20th anniversary and to invite former presidents Stallworth, Blank and Droze to join the birthday party of cake and punch. Several months later some 15,000 persons viewed the Burke County 4th of July Fireworks Celebration on campus, an annual event for several years cosponsored by the Student Government Association, Burke Chamber of Commerce and area businesses. This well earned moment of celebration and reflection was good - but everyone knew that there was much more work to be done.

With a renewed emphasis on creating a truly "comprehensive" community college, Western Piedmont actively searched for government and foundation grants to purchase state-of-the-art instructional equipment and to provide additional student support services. In fact, over an eleven year period WPCC received more than $10 million in public and private grants or donations that helped to improve both classroom instruction and operations. Beginning in 1983, a three-year federal Title III Developing Institutions Grant funded Western Piedmont's first "microcomputer" laboratory in the Business Technologies Division with a grand total of ten Zenith desktop computers.

This "age of computers" soon produced new associate degrees in Business Computer Programming (taught with a Honeywell, "Honeypot," punch-card Colbal language computer), Computer Engineering Technology and Computer Operations. Additional occupational programs followed in Banking & Finance and Retail & Service Operations with programs in Real Estate and Paralegal to come some years later. Western Piedmont's Drafting Program expanded rapidly with the installation of a Medusa computer that displayed graphic architectural renderings. The first instructional computer to appear on campus arrived in 1980 when Harold Olsen, Dean of Instruction, purchased an Apple IIe for instructors to examine. In subsequent years this Apple IIe could be found in the Office of Planning & Research.

Success in one area seemed to breed success in another as granting agencies recognized that Western Piedmont's staff and faculty were eager to face a challenge and competent to see a well designed project through to completion. This reputation explains, in part, why Criminal Justice received a two-year DCC grant to develop a statewide law enforcement model curriculum and the Continuing Education Division initiated an innovative computer assisted literacy project for at-risk students. A multiyear federal grant hired a Sex Equity Counselor to promote the recruitment of women (and men) into nontraditional college majors; e.g. women into engineering and men into nursing. Before this decade ended, external grants also permitted the Library to purchase a computerized Bibliofile reference program and Student Services to install a DISCOVER system to assist students in planning their future career. Selected as one of ten colleges nationwide, Western Piedmont's Student Services staff eventually received an invitation to participate in the development of a national model student tracking system.

As N. C. Department of Corrections facilities expanded in Burke County, Western Piedmont began to seek additional ways to serve inmates at Foothills Correctional Institution and Burke Youth Center. Continuing Education expanded its Adult Basic Education literacy offerings and, eventually, a Light Construction curriculum was moved onsite. Later, a federal Criminal Offenders Grant permitted other special educational projects for these inmates. A state grant eventually allowed horticulture classes to be offered at these correctional facilities along with a few selected college transfer courses. The first inmate associate degrees, however, would not be awarded until 1997. Another potential population became available when the N.C. Board of Public Instruction permitted high school students between the ages of 16-18 to enroll in selected college courses while still enrolled in high school. An increasing number of Burke County public school students would take advantage of this "concurrent enrollment" opportunity.

In other campus projects, federal and state grants permitted a cooperative physics project with Freedom and East Burke high schools; the purchase of industry-standard chemistry laboratory equipment for the Natural Sciences Division, the opening of a Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) Service Center at Courthouse Square and the opening of a Small Business Center in downtown Morganton at the Burke County Chamber of Commerce. Following an intensive campus survey of dropouts in the Nursing Program, a three-year federal grant of $378,000 provided financial stipends to those students in need and allowed them to remain in the nursing program to complete their degree. This project found that something as simple as needing a baby-sitter or a set of new tires could cause a nursing student to dropout of the program. At the same time, several county hospitals (Grace, Valdese and McDowell) pledged $75,000 a year to fund an additional instructor's position to increase the number admitted into each freshman nursing class.

In the Spring of 1985, Building J was opened to Welding, Light Construction, Computer Engineering, Industrial Maintenance and related vocational shop classes. The successful completion of "J" became the first noteworthy fundraising project for a revitalized Western Piedmont Foundation, Inc., when $86,000 in private and corporate donations obtained $141,000 in matching funds from Burke County Commissioners. Hereafter, Western Piedmont Foundation would conduct Annual Giving Campaigns to develop continuing support for campus

projects not normally funded by county, state or federal agencies. An important outcome of these efforts was the creation in 1988 of the Burke Collegiate Scholars project. Where no family member had ever attended college and the student showed academic promise, the Foundation would guarantee 14 Burke County fifth grade students a two-year scholarship to attend Western Piedmont upon their graduation from high school. The Burke Collegiate Scholars program also provided students and their families career workshops and "enrichment experiences." Sometime later Western Piedmont Foundation also established "Making It To The Top," a minority recruitment project directed toward Burke County high school seniors.

A joint project between Western Piedmont Community College, the City of Morganton and Burke County Commissioners permitted the College to assume management responsibilities for the recently constructed Morganton-Burke Senior Center on North Green Street. College staff also designed a variety of educational programs and services for Burke County's senior citizens and soon obtained certification from the National Council On Aging for its efficient operation. A corporate donation of 30 PLATO computers permitted further expansion of literacy instruction at the Senior Center through Continuing Education's basic education program. In 1990 the College received a $22,000 grant from the Western Piedmont Council of Governments to expand Senior Center services.

During his first year as president, Dr. Richardson established an Office of Planning & Research 1) to comply with new SACS standards, the first regional accrediting agency to require the measurement of "institutional effectiveness," 2) to periodically evaluate all degree and diploma programs and 3) to create a management team that systemically identified current needs, set priorities and anticipated future directions for the College. A Planning Council (which included the President, Vice Presidents and Division Deans) met quarterly in half-day workshops to discuss campus issues and to approve specific activities ("objectives") required to accomplish a major goal, e.g. be it a new curriculum program or a master campus plan. Strategies and new ideas were periodically solicited from faculty, staff, students, trustees and community leaders. At its peak, Western Piedmont's Planning Council documented the completion of more than 100 objectives each year that had a significant impact on classroom instruction and/or campus

operations. Due to these efforts, Western Piedmont was invited in 1985 to participate in the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation Third Century Project "to identify characteristics of a healthy college." In addition, administrative staff and trustees were regularly invited to speak before state, regional and national professional conferences about the College's "perpetual planning system."

Creating and maintaining a truly comprehensive community college is a daunting task under the best of circumstances; but maintaining balance and quality across all segments of an institution is much more challenging. The most important contributors in these efforts are, of course, the organization's employees. For this reason alone, faculty and staff were encouraged to participate in state, regional and national workshops and, on occasion, special state and Western Piedmont Foundation grants allowed an employee to enroll in job related activities or attend a conference. A basic goal of these efforts was to keep Western Piedmont's staff and faculty on the cutting-edge of developments in education.

This investment in employee talents and skills paid-off many times over. The Human Resources Office implemented an Employee Wellness Program and began a comprehensive annual assessment of employee performance. That same year, Western Piedmont Foundation presented the first Excellence In Teaching Award to biology instructor Ruby Pharr. A few years later, the Foundation presented its first Outstanding Staff Member Award to Humanities and Social Sciences secretary Dorothy A. Whitener and the first Alumnus of the Year Award to local business executive Lou Lovelace.

Western Piedmont's successes did not go unnoticed elsewhere as the Department of Community Colleges selected Western Piedmont to participate in a Research Triangle Institute study on college administration and governance. Faculty were pleased with a UNC-Chapel Hill report that indicated that Western Piedmont associate degree graduates entering the N.C. university system performed significantly better than transfers from 4-year and 2-year private colleges. In 1986, the College was invited to join the Western Five Consortium, a faculty development project including five community and technical colleges in the region.

One of the most exciting building projects at Western Piedmont Community College began in 1986 when the Board of Trustees approved a Western Piedmont Foundation "Blueprint for PROGRESS" proposal to raise $4 million for the construction of a library and learning resources center. Since 1980 Western Piedmont's student enrollments had increased by over 30% and yet the College ranked 54th lowest among the 58 state community colleges in useable square feet of academic space per student. The College Library, during this period of growth, somehow survived in its original location in Moore Hall with no room for expansion.

The new Learning Resources Center of 46,000 square feet would house the Library along with audiovisual services, a drama studio, Community Room and several much needed classrooms. Eventually named for long-term benefactors Dr. Edward W. Phifer, Jr., and his wife Mary Adaire, the Blueprint for PROGRESS campaign ran so smoothly that within an astonishing eight months $1.3 million in local private and corporate donations, plus $2.7 million in special state funding, allowed construction bids to be announced. Phifer Learning Resources Center was dedicated in August of 1990 to great fanfare as many people from across Burke County received recognition for their outstanding contributions. With an eye toward the future, all those present were later invited to witness the placement of a Time Capsule on the back portico with instructions to be opened April 2, 2014, for Western Piedmont Community College's 50th anniversary.

The icing to this cake, so to speak, followed in October as hundreds of people once again gathered at Phifer Learning Resources Center to dedicate a new addition with the Senator Sam J. Ervin, Jr., Library. Nationally known as chairman of the Watergate Committee that investigated a White House cover-up of illegal campaign tactics, Senator Ervin practiced law locally for thirty years, served three terms in the N. C. General Assembly and then six years as a N. C. Supreme Court judge before his appointment in 1954 to the U.S. Senate. Following his death in 1985, family and friends considered creating a museum at his home on Lenior Street, Morganton, but soon thought of another idea - move the Senator's home library to Phifer Learning Resources Center and recreate his office just as he left it. Today, "Senator Sam's Office" stands as a memorial to this native son of Burke and his dedication to the founding principles of the American Constitution. To further honor the Senator,

Western Piedmont Foundation supports an annual public "Constitutional Issues Forum" organized by the Humanities and Social Sciences Division.

The decade of the 1980s came to a close on a very high note as the College celebrated its 25th anniversary on April 2, 1989, with honored guest, profound speeches and a 25 foot-long birthday cake prepared by students in a Continuing Education cake decorating class. This anniversary's motto, "Founded On Tradition - Dedicated To Change," was an appropriate statement to commemorate the outstanding accomplishments of both current and past students, staff and faculty. From a beginning with only 400 students, 30 full-time employees, 18 curriculum programs and an operating budget of less than $2 million; Western Piedmont Community College could now claim to be a comprehensive institution of higher education with over 10,000 students attending annually, more than 80 full-time employees, 74 curriculum programs and a total budget of $11 million. In addition to these impressive numbers, almost $500,000 was now available each year for student scholarships, grants, and loans. In its brief twenty-five years, Western Piedmont had awarded over 3,500 degrees, conferred almost 5,000 high school diplomas and issued more than 75,000 Continuing Education certificates. What a record! What a great gift to the people of Burke County.

And then, as if to say "you ain't seen nothin' yet," President Richardson announced the creation of a community task force to develop a "Visions of the Future: 2001" report for the College's Board of Trustees. Over the next eight months and some fifty plus meetings, the five committees comprised of seven members each researched and studied Program Quality, Student Services, Economic Development, Organization Effectiveness and College Funding to determine the priority directions for Western Piedmont Community College during the coming decade.

Under the guidance of Dr. Edward Beam, the recently retired president of Caldwell CC & TI, Visions of the Future included surveys of local management in industry, interviews with students and Burke County citizens, faculty and staff surveys as well as a review of current Southern Association of Colleges and Schools requirements and DCC's recent Commission On the Future report. The College's Visions of the Future report presented to the Trustees in June of 1990 contained 33

recommendations that included issues related to student retention, monitoring student academic progress, expanding contacts with local employers, continued cooperation with Burke County schools, maintaining up-to-date educational programs and, as always, funding for new facilities. Soon afterwards, plans were implemented to secure county bond funds for additional classrooms. The defeat of this local bond referendum in 1994 was a grave disappointment to everyone attached to Western Piedmont and required many years of waiting before a new classroom building could be opened.

The 20th Century Ends: 1991 - 2000

In the midst of growth, expansion and pioneering of new opportunities for students and the community, Western Piedmont has maintained and broadened its reputation for delivering high quality education. Although 24th in size among the 58 community colleges in North Carolina, WPCC ranks 1st for the percentage of local high school graduates who attend, 1st for the percentage of full-time faculty members with at least a master's degree, and 3rd highest in services utilized by the local population.

President Jim A. Richardson
Biennial Report 1996-1998

The last decade of the 21st century was in some respects a period of boom or bust, depending upon where you were situated. Of course there was a war - Operation Desert Storm initiated by President George Bush and the United Nations to liberate Kuwait after Saddam Hussein's invasion. But this little war only lasted 100 hours before that objective was achieved. The world also witnessed an amazing event when the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the "Evil Empire" once challenged by President Reagan, literally changed almost overnight into a conglomerate of small independent states. Governor Bill Clinton came from behind in the presidential races to defeat President Bush and ushered in an economic and stock market expansion that lasted for some eight years. A bit ironically, perhaps, this decade ended with the election of George W. Bush as president - and the appearance of economic stagnation and a stock market decline that lasted three years. As we now know, none of these world and national events - not even the Y2K scare - prepared us for what was yet to come at the beginning of a new century.

While the community college movement of the 1960s gained its initial boost from students eager to transfer into a traditional university, the Peoples Colleges of the 1990s reflected a national trend toward a greater need for two-year technical degrees and workforce training. Western Piedmont actually experienced a reversal in student enrollments by this time that found 75% of students enrolled in occupational programs and only 25% who sought a college transfer degree. Somewhat surprisingly, a concurrent change happened on university campuses when they

discovered this bounty of two-year technical degree graduates. Senior colleges and universities across the nation designed what became known as "2+2 bachelor degree programs" that allowed community college technical degree graduates to transfer credits toward a four-year degree with a requirement of two additional years of general education studies. These monumental changes in higher education were, once again, a reaffirmation of American egalitarian democracy.

Western Piedmont Community College did not rest on its laurels during the 1990s. Its educational opportunities were enhanced for both students and employers within the region. Staff and faculty continued to work on the 33 Visions of the Future recommendations along with a series of management workshops conducted by Dr. Steve Eason to fine-tune annual employee evaluations and professional growth. At one point during this decade over 16,000 individuals attended Western Piedmont in an academic year - which translated into 1 of 5 adult Burke County residents - the 2nd highest rank within the NCCCS in percentage of enrollment to county population above 18 years of age. Western Piedmont faculty consistently ranked near the top among North Carolina community colleges for earned Master's degrees or higher and, with a continuing emphasis on maintaining a comprehensive and current curriculum, they would add nine new associate degrees and several vocational diplomas (and "options") to the catalog.

With the addition of Focused Industrial Training (FIT) in 1990, state development funds became available for new or expanding Burke County industries to conduct onsite training for a "world class workforce." At the same time, Continuing Education received special funding from DCC to establish a Workplace Literacy program. Eventually, these projects provided more than $500,000 in state funds to Burke businesses and industries for training and educational services. In the following year, N.C. REAL Enterprises selected WPCC's Small Business Center as a location to promote rural incubated enterprises. In 1991, the federal Carl D. Perkins Vocational Act brought in $126,000 for state-of-the-art equipment and instructional resources for certain occupational fields. This new funding source encouraged the College to develop new curriculum degree programs that included Microcomputer Technician, Civil Engineering, Public Administration, Water & Wastewater Technology and Medical Assisting. Additional degree

programs soon followed in Therapeutic Recreation and Geriatric Assistant.

Western Piedmont realized for many years that an increasing number of single parents experienced problems fitting their childcare needs into a demanding class schedule which, occasionally, forced the parent to dropout or "stopout." Eventually, the College's Master Campus Plan would include the construction of a daycare center on campus - but with that dream years away, the College applied for and received a two-year state grant for an experimental childcare center to be open daily in a rented building on the N. C. School for the Deaf campus. WPCC students were allowed to leave children there without charge while attending day or evening classes. Although this experimental childcare center provided a much appreciated service to those in need, actual usage was low and did not support continued funding.

Once again, just like clockwork - every ten years - Western Piedmont Community College faculty and staff rolled-up their sleeves and repeated a now common routine: 18 months of self-study, dozens of reports written, boxes of documentation collected and, finally, a hearty welcome to the Visitation Committee from the Commission On Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. This time, however, was different - in fact, very different. Western Piedmont always expected to perform well during these SACS' visits but in 1993 the College performed exceptionally well. Where two or three SACS committee commendations are considered rare, Western Piedmont's faculty, staff, students and trustees received eight! Where most Visitation Committees leave a college with 40 or more recommendations that must be addressed in a follow-up report, Western Piedmont received only 16 recommendations! The 1993 faculty/staff self-study and SACS report remains an extraordinary compliment for all employees, students, trustees and volunteers who have at any time in its history contributed their time and talents to WPCC.

Public colleges are constantly tested in many ways. Regional accreditation is one way. External program certifications are another. Student graduation rates and student success on entering a university or gaining employment are also good measures. Western Piedmont has consistently scored above average in each of these areas. In rare moments, however, a college's total capacity, its organization and the

skill of its staff and faculty, may be tested to the limit when called upon to provide services beyond the expected. This situation arose at Western Piedmont Community College in 1994 when a local manufacturing plant affiliated with Sara Lee Corp announced the immediate closing of their Morganton location. As a result, over 500 employees lost their jobs. Western Piedmont quickly joined with state agencies and Sara Lee executives to develop retraining strategies for these workers that not only included unemployment benefits but also provided career counseling and placement testing for the College's varied educational and training programs. Many of these displaced workers took advantage of this opportunity and in the College's graduation class of 1997 some 65 former Sara Lee employees proudly crossed the stage with a degree or diploma in hand - and a chance for a renewed life and, in some cases, a new career.

During this decade North Carolina endured an unprecedented exodus of textile and furniture jobs to overseas locations. This economic catastrophe, along with normal enrollment increases, caused the N.C. Community College System to experience tremendous growth statewide. With funding formulas always a year (or more) behind campus needs - and no funding for new construction - the General Assembly in 1992 authorized a $250 million statewide bond referendum for construction in higher education. The state bond passed easily (Burke County voted 3:1 in favor) and Western Piedmont ultimately received a $3.2 million share. It was these state funds, along with $900,000 from Burke's County Commissioners and private donations, that allowed Western Piedmont to finally plan for its much needed expansion of classrooms and laboratories. However, it would take five long years before the Robert P. Carr technologies center was dedicated and opened, a facility of 42,000 square feet designed to serve over 20 business and occupational programs with state-of-the-art instructional resources. Carr was honored as a founding member of WPCC's Board of Trustees and continues today to serve the Board as the longest appointed trustee within the state's community college system.

It was also during the early 1990s that private donations and county funds permitted the construction of an office complex to C, F and H vocational buildings (Breeden Hall) and an addition to the campus greenhouses (Rostan Horticulture Center). As state and local funds became available later, major upgrades to Moore Hall also became

possible. These much needed renovations provided 5,500 square feet of additional classrooms and offices - along with an expanded Learning Lab. Once completed, the Learning Lab held a gala open house and celebrated the 50th anniversary of the national General Education Diploma (GED) program for adult high school completion. In the following year, Lewis McCamey Brown was recognized as the 6,000th WPCC graduate to successfully complete the high school equivalent diploma.

Significant advancements in technology occurred during the decade with an unrelenting speed that forced many faculty to constantly update curricula and evaluate teaching methods. Community colleges are especially sensitive to such changes - although equipment funds usually arrived years after these technologies appear on the market. Telecommunications was one system that became a hot topic for higher education, since it appeared that many more students could be taught (at a reduced cost) via dial-up courses, the Internet or satellite television. A few American colleges in fact designed their "delivery systems" and degrees around such new technologies (the so-called "campus without walls"). Within North Carolina, colleges were encouraged to offer "Distant Learning" classes for nontraditional, off-campus students who needed to remain at home and required flexible scheduling. In its first year at Western Piedmont, these distant learning courses enrolled 40 students. In the following year, more than 500 students were enrolled - and thereafter WPCC ranked among the top NCCCS campuses in Distance Learning enrollments. The first cable "telecourse" on campus, however, came in the 1970s with Arthur Clarke's famous PBS televised production of "Civilizations," offered by the Social Sciences Department for Burke County teachers seeking certification renewal credits.

Following several arduous years, College faculty and staff completed the DCC mandated "reengineering" for all campus curriculum programs. Community college students across North Carolina from Manteo to Murphy could now expect to transfer credits to like programs on other NCCCS campuses. With this dramatic change, Western Piedmont also changed its academic year to a semester system which was traditional among senior colleges and universities. In another domain, the N.C. Community College System once again encouraged closer cooperation between community colleges and their local high schools as the State Board of Public Instruction initiated a revision of traditional high school

vocational offerings with a project known as TechPrep. A basic idea in this plan was to more closely match certain high school curricula with similar vocational programs offered on a local community college campus. Western Piedmont applied for and received a State Board of Public Instruction grant to coordinate TechPrep at Freedom and East Burke high schools.

Since its inception, the N. C. Community College System has sought ways to keep each member campus within a set of parameters - not only for budgeting purposes but also for program consistency. While some people call this a necessity, others characterize these state mandates as meddling in local issues. Whatever the reason, the System Office instituted a series of "performance measures" over the years that Western Piedmont has consistently met or surpassed. For example, Western Piedmont graduates in those Associate in Science degree programs requiring professional or state certification (such as Basic Law Enforcement Training (BLET), Emergency Medical Technician, Medical Laboratory Technician and Nursing) rank near the top in passing their certification examinations. In 1996 BLET graduates at Western Piedmont set a new state record with an average pass rate of 90.4% on their comprehensive examination. Such performance measures are now considered to be public information to be printed as a Performance Report in college catalogs.

As this decade came to a close, the U.S. Congress enacted several assistance programs for community college students - such as Hope Scholarships specifically designed to encourage adults to enroll and complete a two-year degree. Likewise, the Workforce Investment Act changed the federal government's role in job training and vocational rehabilitation to provide more personalized instruction and to offer a One-Stop Career Center on campus. WPCC's Educational Talent Search, another federal funded program, identified financially needy Burke County students in grades 6-12 with academic potential as first generation college students. This innovative project at Western Piedmont became one of ten finalists featured at the 1998 Community College's Futures Assembly in Orlando, Florida. This is also the year in which the first two Burke Collegiate Scholars, selected in the fifth grade, graduated with a Western Piedmont associate degree.

By the year 2000, Western Piedmont's budgets had increased to $14 million with some 12,000 students enrolled annually and a total of 7,000 high school diploma and GED graduates. Although more than $10 million in student financial aid was distributed during this decade, instate tuition had now increased to $375 per semester for full-time students. Where a 1964 student could expect to pay less than $200 per academic year (including textbooks), the typical instate curriculum student at the end of the 20th century anticipated a tuition cost of $750 per academic year - plus an additional $400 for textbooks and fees.

Epilogue: A New Century 2001 - 2005

I hope that Western Piedmont Community College continues to prosper, and it will as long as public support continues as it has in the past. I believe that the next important direction for higher education is toward more individualized community education. People increasingly need quick access to skills and knowledge for both work and personal reasons.

President Jim A. Richardson
The News Herald, May 22, 2005

The world really got a bad start into this new century. So far, its hallmark includes mostly political, economic, religious and social upheavals due to wars and natural disasters. With the ink not yet dry on the old, the world became increasing aware of growing discontent among certain Islamic radicals who were willing to organize paramilitary bands to espouse their "religious" message. The reality of their challenge to world order arrived in the United States on September 11, 2001, with attacks in New York City and Washington, D. C. Led by the United States, an invasion of Afghanistan quickly removed its theocratic Taleban government and destroyed Osama bin Laden's *al-Qaeda* training camps.

The following year, President Bush declared that Saddam Hussein was producing weapons of mass destruction that threatened world peace - and the Second Persian Gulf War came in the Spring of 2003. As if these wars were not enough to unsettle the world, Mother Nature brought another form of destruction for millions of people with the deadliest Tsunami on record wrecking havoc along the Indian Ocean coastline, severe earthquakes striking Pakistan and the largest number of Caribbean hurricanes on record slamming the region and southern United States. Since we continue to live in the shadow of these historic events, their full impact on the world (and our lives) has yet to be fully realized.

During these years Western Piedmont continued to be blessed. In 2000, the N. C. General Assembly authorized an astounding $3 billion construction bond referendum for higher education to support new construction and repairs to older state buildings. While the greater portion of these monies went to the N. C. University System,