NEW RIVER NOW THIRD LARGEST COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE IN WEST VIRGINIA

[BECKLEY, WV] New River Community and Technical College has experienced phenomenal growth in recent years and is now the third largest community and technical college in the state, according to a report issued by the West Virginia Council for Community and Technical College Education on April 15.

Enrollment at the college has increased more than 60 percent in the last three years. According to the report, New River’s full time equivalent (FTE) enrollment in the fall of 2009 was 1,707, placing it third behind WVU at Parkersburg and just slightly behind Pierpont Community and Technical College in Fairmont.

New River was created by the legislature in 2003 by combining the community and technical college components of Bluefield State College and Glenville State College. The college serves a nine-county area including Fayette, Greenbrier, Mercer, Monroe, Nicholas, Pocahontas, Raleigh, Summers, and Webster Counties. Headquartered in Beckley, New River has five campuses: Beckley, Raleigh County (Beaver), Greenbrier Valley (Lewisburg), Mercer County (Princeton) and Nicholas County (Summersville).

President Ted D. Spring said, “New River is clearly filling a critical need for affordable post-secondary education in our nine-county service area. Our enrollment this spring is also at an all-time high, so it very possible that figures reported at the close of the year will indicate that New River has become the second largest community and technical college in the state.”
Spring is quick to point out that New River has been positioning itself to meet the current and future training needs of employers in the region. He expects enrollment to continue to grow and expects it to surpass 6,000 credit students in years to come.

Spring added that the enrollment figure does not reflect the thousands of individuals served through New River’s Office of Workforce Education.

“Our workforce efforts are taking off,” said Bill Loope, vice president for Institutional Advancement and Workforce Education. “We are committed to developing training programs to help employers in our region meet their needs for highly skilled workers.”

“We offer programs and courses to provide our students with marketable skills to put people to work so they can earn wages to care for their families and their futures. Our tuition is among the lowest among all the colleges in our nine-county region, and our courses transfer to our four-year college partners. Students and parents are realizing the financial advantages of attending New River.” Spring said.

Spring acknowledges that the growth, while very exciting, presents challenges both in terms of finding space to accommodate new students and providing services to students with a very lean staff. New River’s headcount is actually approaching 3,000 students. FTE numbers are determined by a formula that calculates how many full-time students are represented by the number of credit hours being taken by both full-and part-time students. The FTE number is always less than the actual students attending classes, he explained.

“We have 107 full-time employees--including faculty, administration and staff--to serve all those students. Although we have added a number of positions over the past year to perform functions that were previously managed by our parent institution, we are still challenged to meet the needs of our students in terms of academic advising, developmental education and other services that are critical to student success,” Spring commented.

The need for more and better instructional facilities is another concern that is being addressed through a facilities master plan that includes new campuses in Raleigh and Mercer County, expansion of the Nicholas County Campus, renovation of a building on the Greenbrier Valley Campus and construction of technology training centers on the Nicholas and Greenbrier Valley Campuses. The first phase of the plan is already underway with the construction of a new administration and classroom building for the Raleigh County Campus, which is scheduled to break ground early next year, and renovation of a building on the Greenbrier Valley Campus for the Fine Arts program. That project will begin later this year with completion anticipated in the spring of 2011.
“These are important first steps, but we are still sorely lacking the facilities to offer the kinds of technical training programs that are at the core of our mission as a technical college,” Spring said. “We are pursuing every possible avenue to insure that New River’s students have the support they need and the facilities they require to train for good paying jobs.”

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