



Brownell

In his final annual report as president of Rowan-Cabarrus Community College, Dr. Richard Brownell encouraged school leaders to not lose focus of their mission and to adapt to funding cuts.

Brownell, who has served as president of RCCC for 30 years, will retire at the end of the month.

He gave his annual report Monday afternoon. The N.C. Research Campus in Kannapolis will surely bring opportunities for RCCC, Brownell said. "However, we cannot focus so intently on the research campus ... that we lose sight of our primary mission, which is to meet the workforce and economic development needs of our region, as well as the post-secondary educational needs of our citizens," he said.

Brownell also talked about money and how the state doesn't dish out enough of it. "State allocations always trail enrollment growth, and there are never enough resources to keep up with the ever-changing demands of the region and technology. ... RCCC will continue to challenge administrators and staff to do more with less," he said.

Lower enrollment during the 2006-07 school year meant less funding this year. The school's enrollment boost during the fall 2007 semester likely means a brighter financial outlook next school year, said Robert Keeney, chief financial officer and vice president of finance and technical services.

Regardless, state funding for the school's two campuses is inadequate, Keeney said.

But good things have happened at RCCC in the past year, he said. Technology got a facelift, for one. Technology, though, also brings financial concerns.

"We've done more and more and more with computer technology, and it costs a lot of money," Keeney said.

Last year, 35 more classrooms at RCCC got technology tools, such as projectors and computers, said Tim Foley, vice president of academic programs. Now, 130 of the school's 164 classrooms and labs are outfitted with instructional technology, he said.

And despite budget shortfalls, RCCC plans to offer new degree programs, Foley said.

Last year, the school got the go-ahead to offer an associate's-in-science degree. This fall, RCCC will offer an associate's program in air conditioning, heating and refrigeration.

RCCC also hopes to offer an associate's degree in mechanical engineering technology starting in the fall, Foley said.

As for continuing-education programs at RCCC, the research campus might help shape what the school will offer.

RCCC leaders are looking at future certificate programs that would help people get jobs in Kannapolis, said Jeanie Moore, vice president of continuing education.

"I suspect those will evolve over time," Moore said.

The looks of RCCC's north campus in Salisbury are evolving, too. Construction bids for a new building will likely go out this fall, said Jerry Chandler, vice president of administration, human resources and college advancement.

The new building will provide extra space for programs such as basic law enforcement training and the Early College, which is set to open in August.

Grant money is becoming ever-more important for RCCC and its projects, Chandler said. Grants help stretch "already-scarce dollars," he said.

Chandler, who will serve as the school's interim president while the RCCC board of trustees chooses a new leader, applauded Brownell and his service. "He's been the best mentor I've ever had," Chandler said.

Brownell, who seemed to get emotional during his address, told school leaders RCCC will keep succeeding.

"While this is my last official report, I will continue to love this college," Brownell said.

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