



## Rowan Cabarrus Community College officials foresee financial relief

By Justin Vick

[jvick@independenttribune.com](mailto:jvick@independenttribune.com)

Tuesday, August 28, 2007

SALISBURY - Enrollment increases at Rowan-Cabarrus Community College this fall may provide some much-needed financial relief as the school works toward regrouping from a projected \$600,000 budget shortfall.

RCCC experienced record-enrollment increases from 2003 to 2005 as laid-off Pillowtexas employees took courses in hopes of re-entering the work force. The local economy began to rebound, prompting enrollment to level off last year.

And because state funding is tied to the previous year's enrollment, RCCC has had to scrutinize its spending since February.

Several strategies have been used to minimize the shortfall, including restricting supplies and travel, combining courses, increasing class sizes and tightening the part-time hiring budget.

"We are very encouraged that this year's initial deficit has been adequately addressed, and the spring semester will be far more manageable," President Richard Brownell told RCCC trustees Monday.

Brownell said many of his faculty members have been heavily involved in college-wide efforts over the last couple of years to improve instruction. With much of that planning completed, full-time faculty can return to teaching regular course loads, which would put less burden on hiring part-time and adjunct instructors.

As a result, the college is projected to fund 26 fewer part-time faculty positions this year, according to Robert Keeney, RCCC's chief financial officer.

It won't be certain how many part-time instructors will need to be hired until after Wednesday's drop/add deadline, Brownell said.

Numbers from fall registration are making the 2008-09 budget outlook far more promising, Brownell told trustees.

Enrollment has increased by an equivalent of 314 full-time students, or 17 percent, from last fall. RCCC needed a bit more than 200 to ensure it would receive funding next year at least level with what it received this year, Brownell said.

"Barring a major decline in spring semester enrollment, we have met this goal," he said.

RCCC could also be eligible to receive a share of \$2 million in a state reserve fund if it can maintain a 5 percent increase in fulltime equivalent students. The size of that share would depend on how many other community colleges fulfill that goal.

Brownell said this was the first bit of good news he's delivered to trustees regarding the budget in several weeks.

In other business, the board announced it was enlisting in a consulting search firm to find a successor for Brownell, who recently announced his intent to retire as president in June 2008.

The search committee has narrowed its list of consulting firms to three potential suitors: National Search and Education Associates of Cary; Coleman Lew & Associates of Charlotte; and Gold Hill Associates of Asheville.

Hiring a consulting firm will help RCCC move forward to determine the best way to gain input from staff and the community, said trustee Pat Fulcher.

Trustees also granted administrators permission to seek approval from the North Carolina Community College System to offer two associate degree programs in biotechnology.