

New BCC Aquaculture Program Will Train Graduates To Help Feed World

BY SUSAN USHER

A new aquaculture technology program that will be offered at Brunswick Community College beginning this fall will be unique in North Carolina and one of only a handful of two-year programs nationwide.

Approved last Friday by the State Board of Community Colleges, the two-year fish farming curriculum will provide students with hands-on practical experience in fish and shellfish production, as well as a broad general education background emphasizing math, science and problem-solving.

Students will produce a fish crop from broodfish to foodfish, assuming responsibility for all phases of production, farm management and product marketing.

Graduates will receive an associate of applied science degree in aquaculture technology and will be qualified to manage private commercial fish farms, government hatcheries and other jobs in aquaculture such as aquarium tank attendant, fish hatchery worker or supervisor, shellfish bed worker, farming supervisor or grower, or soft shell crabber, among others.

BCC President W. Michael Reaves said he anticipates the program will attract students from Brunswick County and well beyond. Local students are expected to include fish farmers and recent high school students, including those enrolled in the aquaculture program at South Brunswick High School or in the countywide Tech Prep curriculum, which provides a strong background in math, science and communications skills.

"Hopefully we will have a lot of people coming in from all across the region and the state. I think we will also draw international students because of the popularity of aquaculture in places such as Central America and China.

"I want us not to be limited to North Carolina in this program," said Reaves. "It's a critical area for the world, what with overfishing of resources, pollution and such."

The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization projects there will be a 20 percent shortfall in the global fish supply by the year 2000, when worldwide demand is expected to reach 248 billion pounds compared to production of only 200 billion pounds. In the United States alone, demand for fish in the 1990s is predicted to increase as much as 30 percent.

"I feel like this could add another means for local farmers to do something on their existing land, an added source of revenue," said BCC Trustee Jamie Milliken, chairman of the college board's aquaculture technology program committee.

Milliken is excited about the program's possibilities, especially over the North Carolina Information Highway, which he described as "a great calling card for the program." Reaves anticipates broadcasting and receiving long-distance classroom courses.

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—Jamie Milliken, BCC Trustee

Milliken regrets that he probably won't be a trustee when the program, "his baby," starts in September. His appointment from former Gov. Jim Martin ends in June and Milliken doesn't anticipate being reappointed by the Hunt administration.

He also looks forward to a hoped-for student transfer relationship with N.C. State University, which offers a four-year aquaculture program.

One thing Milliken said he would prefer not to see happen in the local program is development of fish production ponds on the BCC campus itself. "There are too many other things available, and it's too expensive."

The aquaculture technology program will offer a continuing education option for high school students enrolled in the Tech Prep engineering/industrial/agricultural component.

While the program is expected to serve only about 12 full-time students this fall, it anticipates an annual freshman class of about 20 students in each subsequent year, drawn from recent high school graduates and persons already employed in aquaculture seeking technical training.

Program advisory committee chairperson Doug Holland of Brunswick Aquafarms at Funston, said the first classes students will take will be general education courses in biology, chemistry, composition and precalculus (or prerequisite math courses) that qualify for transfer to a four-year college or university.

Initially BCC will provide field experiences by arrangements with local commercial aquaculture operations, such as Brunswick Aquafarms, and the facilities of the nationally recognized aquaculture program at South Brunswick High School. Plans are to attempt to revive and revise a languishing federal Economic Development Administration grant application for funds that would support expansion of the program and possibly construction of a BCC-owned training facility and/or ponds.

Holland said that since the program is intended to serve the whole state it will eventually offer training in working with a variety of freshwater and saltwater species, including catfish, crawfish, hybrid striped bass, trout, shellfish and clams.

He anticipates increased interest in the future in marine aquaculture "due to the all the hullabaloo here" about the drop in the oyster harvest in

recent years because of the parasite Dermo. "An alternative might be aquaculture," said Holland, who is also president of the N.C. Aquaculture Association.

The program aims to fill a need for trained workers with technical skills now sorely lacking industrywide.

"We have a problem in the industry in North Carolina and nationwide. We use completely untrained, unskilled farm workers for labor and then jump to master's degree professionals to do the technical stuff, and they're as rare as hen's teeth."

"The market indicates there will be a sufficient number of jobs in the state to keep this program running," Holland said.

Aquaculture production is currently valued at between \$10 million and \$12 million in North Carolina and is on the rise.

Presently Holland estimates the number of commercial-size catfish farms at about 45, with a "great many more" operating on a smaller scale; approximately 200 acres of water for hybrid striped bass production spread across 10 or 12 farms, 12 to 15 crawfish farms, anywhere from 85 to 135 trout farms ranging from small to large commercial ventures, a number of clam producers, including one at Harker's Island that is much larger than the others. In addition there are more than 300 shellfish leaseholders in North Carolina.

At present only two people hold such leases for Brunswick County waters; they were banned by special local legislation.

Holland expects existing fish farmers to be one source of students.

"A lot of catfish farmers have a rude awakening," he said, "when they find out they can't just dig a pond and stock it."

While the program will initially be offered as a two-year, degree program for full-time students, Holland anticipates BCC eventually offering a certificate program aimed at current industry employees who cannot take two years away to earn a degree, but need technical training and are willing to enroll in an 11-week course during their slack winter season.

Beginning Spanish Offered At BCC

Beginning level Spanish classes will be offered through Brunswick Community College starting Monday, Feb. 7.

After registration Monday between 6:30 p.m. and 9:30 p.m., the class will begin Tuesday, Feb. 8 at the same time and continue for 11 weeks under the instruction of Paul Hernandez. The class will meet on the college's main campus north of Supply on U.S. 17 Business.

Cost is \$35 per person. For more information or to register in advance call Stuart Callari at 754-6922.



BCC PHOTO BY ANNE MARIE BELLAMY

1920 Census Available

Gwen Causey of Supply, immediate past president of the Brunswick County Historical Society, is shown using the microfilm reader in the Brunswick Community College Learning Resource Center to examine data from microfilm reels of the 1920 U.S. Census (for selected North Carolina counties) donated by the society. Census data on microfilm is part of the library's extensive genealogical research collection, which is open to the public. Also contributing to the census donation was Edgar Keal of Wilmington, a society member. Winter quarter hours for the library are 8 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday. The library is located upstairs in the Administration Building on BCC's main campus on U.S. 17 Business north of Supply.

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BCC: Faulty Record-Keeping Led To Non-Renewal Of Page's Contract

BY SUSAN USHER

In its answer to a lawsuit filed by a former business instructor, Brunswick Community College states that Jane H. Page of Southport was not "terminated" but that her contract was not renewed because Page failed to comply with BCC policies relating to class attendance records.

The decision "in no way was based upon her exercise of her constitutional privileges," as her suit contends, it states.

The decision to not offer Page a contract for 1993-94 came on the recommendation of Vice President for Instruction Johnnie Simpson on the basis of records audits that "revealed serious inaccuracies in class attendance records." Those inaccuracies, the answer continues, "were numerous" and resulted in "findings of non-compliance" in administration of federally funded programs that require affirmative action by the college, placing BCC "in jeopardy and resulting in possible repayment of Federal funds and imposition of further liabilities and sanctions, in-

cluding penalties affecting students' class credits."

In September Page filed a lawsuit against the college claiming she had been wrongfully dismissed and seeking a temporary restraining order and preliminary and permanent injunctions requiring the college to reinstate her.

Page had been employed by the college "continuously" since Sept. 1, 1987, under contract to work 40 hours a week for nine months, according to her complaint.

BCC described Page as having been hired year-to-year by annual contract for a nine-month or 10-month period, and for a 35-hour, not 40-hour week, and that she was not eligible for tenure.

In an Aug. 23, 1993 letter, BCC President Michael Reaves informed Page that she would not be offered an employment contract for the 1993-94 academic year, citing no reason for the action.

At the time her contract was renewed Page's name was listed in the

1993 fall quarter schedule as instructor of three courses.

Page alleged in the suit that she was "denied due process" prior to her termination in that she was told no grievance procedure was available to her and did not receive any advance warnings that her performance had been unsatisfactory. The suit stated she had received "exemplary" performance evaluations and had not been subject to any prior disciplinary actions.

She is seeking damages in excess of \$10,000 on the grounds that the college's actions constitute a breach of contract.

Since filing the original complaint, Page has amended it to include a fifth claim for relief, that the decision not to renew her contract was motivated by her "exercise of constitutionally protected First Amendment freedoms..." a claim BCC denies.

Prior to her dismissal the suit states that Page was and "outspoken critic of the Administration" at BCC and "known, among students and

faculty... as an outspoken advocate of student/faculty rights."

In the BCC response the college states that Page was subject to the personnel policy procedures spelled out in the faculty/staff handbook only while employed under an agreement of employment. She was notified that her contract would not be renewed after her existing contract had expired on May 31. According to the answer that contract includes the provision that "The employee understands that the employer assumes no obligation, whatsoever, to continue his/her employment beyond the expiration date of the Agreement."

Therefore, "procedures for dismissal, suspension or termination included in the personnel policy of Brunswick Community College were not applicable, inasmuch as the action taken was not a dismissal, suspension or termination," but a non-renewal of contract.

Neither the request for injunctions or the case itself are scheduled for hearing.

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