

## 2001 NCCCAEA Fall Conference

Mark your calendar for **October 17 - 19** and join us for the NCCCAEA Fall Conference to be held at the Sheraton Imperial Hotel in the Research Triangle Park. This year's theme "**Change + Challenge = Opportunity**" is appropriate and promises an excellent array of topics and workshops for everyone.

The Conference Planning Committee has done an exceptional job developing a number of exciting workshops designed to improve effective work strategies for managers at all levels. Dr. Tony Zeiss, President at Central Piedmont Community College will keynote our opening session Wednesday afternoon. In addition, a roundtable discussion of Community College Presidents and Senior Continuing Education Officers is planned.

I would like to thank the Fall Conference Planning Committee for their hard work. The members are Angela Locklear (Robeson CC), Debra Harlow (Piedmont CC), Ryanee Whithurst (College of the Albermarle), Todd Morris (South Piedmont CC), Lorraine Thielmann (Guilford TCC), Debbie Harris (Wayne CC), Brenda Moore (Martin CC), Renita Allen (James Sprunt CC), Paul Koehnke (Central Piedmont CC), Linda Williams (College of the Albermarle), Chuck Barham and Peggy Graham (System Office). Check out our new web site for Fall Conference updates at <http://www.flee-tech.com/ncccaea/> I am looking forward to seeing you at the Fall Conference!

*Submitted by Clarence Smith, Conference Planning Committee Chairman*

## An Inspirational GED Story from Gaston College

The General Educational Development degree, or GED, has long been considered a stepchild to the high school diploma in the world of scholastic aptitude.

But for some such as Lashelle White, a high school dropout and single mom, a GED can be the best alternative.

White and others like her face an uphill climb, says Allen Chambers, director of Life Skills at Gaston College, which oversees the GED program at Gaston County sites.

"Anybody who doesn't finish by December 31 has to start over," he said. "And those who work with GED students know they're not going to get people through in time." While the high school diploma may not carry the cachet of a college degree, it remains a necessity for those seeking employment in a technology-driven society, Chambers said.

"A lot of it these days has to do with economics," he said. "There was a time when, frankly, having a GED wasn't important, but an increasing number of people are coming back because they have to have it for a job."

Shawn Austin, 23, is one of those people.

Told two months before graduation that he wouldn't march with his class at Hunter Huss High School because of excessive absences, Austin dropped out, and took a job at a local manufacturing plant.

"I told my company that I was in the process of getting my GED, and they told me to take my time," Austin said. "But I'll be finished way before the deadline because I only have one test to go."

The GED tests cover five academic areas, including writing, social studies, science, literature and math. Worldwide, nearly 861,000 adults completed one or more sections of the GED in 2000, the second-highest number since 1996.

"Based on our past experience, we are predicting a significant increase in the number of adults taking the test before the December 2001 end date to the 1988 Series GED tests," said Joan Auchter, executive director of the General Education Development Testing Service. "This increase reflects previous increases before announced changes in either the GED tests or in the score requirements for passing the tests."

Developed by the federal government in 1942 to validate the high school-level skills of service men and women returning from World War II, the GED has now come full circle, as more people recognize its value in an increasingly competitive job market.

"I've met textile workers making \$50,000 a year who didn't have a high school diploma and came from families where hard work was valued and they didn't need an education to get a job," said Chambers. "But not anymore."

Jennifer Thornburg said she learned that lesson the hard way. "I married young, and thought I didn't need school," said Thornburg, 22, who has been in the process of getting her GED since 1999. "But I've learned you can't depend on nothing but your education."

Coupled with the new standards, many people are being forced to pursue GEDs because of welfare-to-work initiatives, and an increased focus on academic standards, Chambers said.

"The test is falling in line with what's happening in public schools, where there is an emphasis on quantifying results," said Chambers, who saw 4,000 GED seekers come through the doors at Gaston College last year. "The government wants to make sure that people leave federal programs ready to work."

The new test includes name changes for two sections, Writing Skills, now renamed Language Arts, Writing, and Interpreting Literature and the Arts, now called Language Arts, Reading. Other changes include a section on Business Communications, which emphasizes writing letters, memos, reports and filling out applications. Another exposes students to a "practical document" such as a voter's guide or tax form.

Judged against the academic performance of graduating high school seniors, the success of most seeking the GED can be based on where they stopped their education, "It depends on the ability and attitude of the student," said Ryna, who has taught in the GED program for 10 years.

"You have to have a good rapport with them, be flexible and take them where they are. They all want to do good." The math section will call for using a calculator, which Chambers says might present problems for instructors as well.

"More people will tell you the new test is going to be harder," he said. "but the GED people just say it's going to be different." You can reach Calvin Carter at 704-869-1833.

*The Gaston Gazette (July, 2001)*