

State budget cuts hit dual enrollment program

By Rebecca Bunch
Staff Writer

Economics. Communications. History. Psychology.

If you're a John A. Holmes student hoping to take a college-level course at COA's Edenton campus this year that falls into one of these categories, you shouldn't have a problem.

On the other hand, if you were hoping to take course that falls elsewhere in the education curriculum, you're out of luck - for this year, anyway.

In a budget-slashing move, state legislators cut the funds normally used to offer college-level courses to high schoolers, a move that many educators believe has helped cut the dropout rate in North Carolina.

Offering the four categories of studies listed above was a last-minute compromise to avoid doing away with the plan entirely, said Lynn Hurdle-Winslow, dean of Edenton's COA campus.

She said the change left counselors scrambling to help students interested in

signing up.

Dr. Allen Smith, superintendent of the Edenton-Chowan Schools, concurred with Winslow's assessment of the situation.

He said only a strongly proactive response by the guidance counselors at Holmes blunted the impact of the change.

Smith added that with the growing popularity of online

courses, he expected that it would only become more of a challenge in the future for schools like Holmes, which works with COA and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNC-G) to provide those opportunities.

Tuition is free for the courses; books are paid for by the Edenton-Chowan Schools.

Prior to the budget cuts, Hurdle-Winslow said, the dual enrollment program, as it is known, provided "a wide open opportunity" for students to take virtually any course that interested them.

Faced with a sinking economy, though, legislators decided to eliminate dual enrollment dollars except for those academic courses that focused on science or math.

"Then they said that Learn and Earn online [economics, communications, history and psychology], they would support," Hurdle-Winslow said.

While not generally held face to face, the electronic classroom sessions allow elective credit for students.

Unlike academic courses, all technical and vocational offerings are still available

for college credit. These include such courses as electrical, HVAC, culinary and automotive.

The automotive courses are taught at Holmes, the others at COA.

And Hurdle-Winslow said the results of the cuts are already being felt on campus.

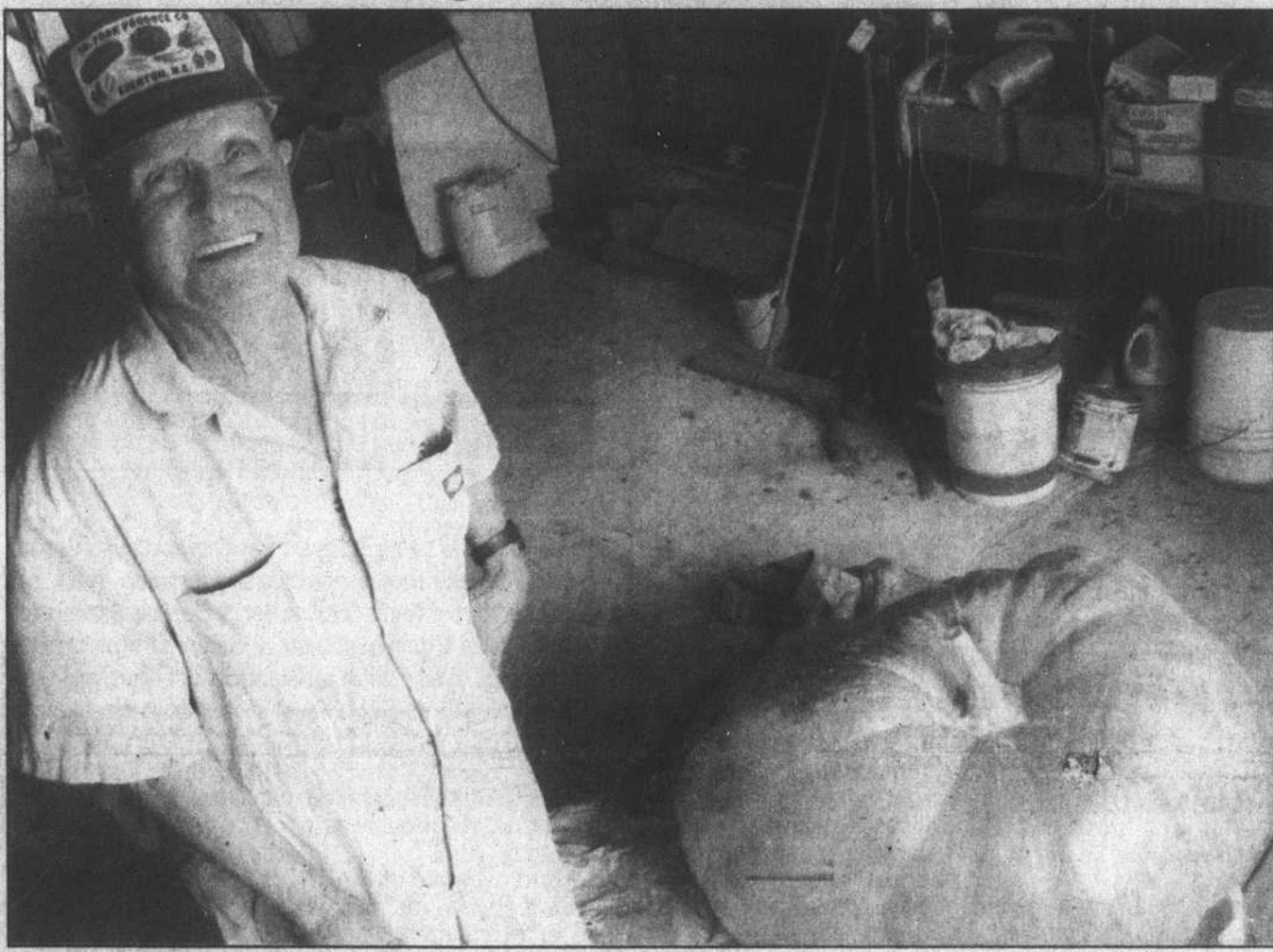
"Enrollment among our adult students is up, I think due to the economy and job layoffs," she said, "but high school enrollment in courses we offer is down."

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Allen

The great pumpkin



EARLINE WHITE/CHOWAN HERALD

Thomas Cecil Nixon, Sr. of Rocky Hock grew a 325 pound pumpkin. When asked how he grew such a large pumpkin, Nixon said, "Well, I went out here and I grubbed me up a little place near the garden, after I grubbed up that little place, I put me a soaker hose in the ground. I kept one end of the soaker hose up out of the ground with a stob so I could run another hose to it and hook on to it. After the plants came up I picked out this pumpkin and picked all the rest off the plant so this one could grow by itself. I watered it twice a day four tanks of water twice a day. Then I sprayed it to keep the bugs and stuff like that off it; two different kinds of spray. I planted the seeds the 1st of June. I could probably have got more pounds on it, if I left there another month, but I was scared it rained so much it might rot."

Town, county to work together for growth

By Earline White
Managing Editor

Meeting for the first time since questioning of the Edenton-Chowan Development Corporation's viability came to light months ago, leaders of the town and county met in a private, two hour meeting last week.

"Finger pointing and backbiting" between the town and county has ceased since, according to commission chairman Eddy Goodwin.

Goodwin who in a county meeting days prior said that he had no interest in the county continuing to fund the ECDC, said "months ago when the crisis hit no one knew where the money was... now they do? We [the commission] are responsible for the county's money. That's my main concern."

The county pulled its share of annual funding from the decade-old entity in July. The two commissioners who sat on the board on behalf of the county were told by Goodwin they no longer needed to attend ECDC board meetings "until the smoke clears."

The town threw the ECDC a lifeline last month, voting

to continue its annual \$36,000 appropriation. The vote was 3-1.

A statement posted jointly on the town and county Web sites last week said the two had agreed to hire an independent consultant, paid for with grant money, to recommend how a development entity might be set up.

Plans initiated by the town to have a peer review by the Sanford Holshouser Economic Development Consulting group from Raleigh were struck down.

"The county prefers not to use Sanford Holshouser because of the firm's prior representation and association with the Northeast Commission," Town Manager Anne Marie Knighton said in an e-mail.

"I have asked Electricities for recommendations of other firms or entities that we could consider to do the analysis. Peter [Rascoe] and I will also check with other entities such as the Institute of Government, the N.C. League of Municipalities and the N.C. Association of Counties," Knighton said.

In the meantime, the town's contribution for ECDC will be used for loan payments and property taxes for the agency.

The future of the ECDC as it has been known is uncertain.



Goodwin

Sales tax collections are down

Final sales tax figures for 2008-09 show a 30 percent decrease in collections for Chowan County.

Sales tax collections for the year were down area-wide and statewide. The numbers recently were sent to counties by the state.

The figures for April, May and June of this year - part of the previous (2008-09) fiscal year - were not available until this most recent report.

Chowan County Manager Peter Rascoe explained the county already had revised the sales tax revenue estimates during the past fiscal year and noted the final figures were close to the county's revised

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Food pantry needs donations

Food Pantry Director Ray Wells has an urgent message for the community - Help!

"We are out of pretty much everything," Wells said Thursday.

Wells said that during the month of August, the Pantry helped feed 215 families in the community, 30 of them for the first time.

"Except for the month of December, when we prepare and distribute baskets for families, that is an all-time high distribution for us," he added.

And donations are down from the same time a year ago, he said.

"That is no surprise based on the economy, and the high unemployment rate here," Wells noted.

The Pantry, located on North Broad Street beside the Clothes Closet, is open Monday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings from 9 a.m. until 11:15 a.m.

Tax-deductible donations to the Pantry may be mailed to PO Box 643, Edenton, NC 27932.

For more information, call (252) 482-2504.



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Glory Morris, center, with Farmer's Foods stands with, from left, George Grother with Change for America and Edenton Food Pantry director Ray Wells as Morris gives a kick start to the Change For America food drive to support the local pantry which runs this week. Donate at Farmer's Foods.

State jobless rate decreases in August

Raleigh - North Carolina's unemployment rate decreased to 10.8 percent in August, according to statistics released Sept. 18 by the N.C. Employment Security Commission.

"A small loss in the labor force led to the decrease in the rate," said ESC Chairman Moses Carey, Jr. "Much like previous months, we have not experienced a lot of change in the labor force one way or the other. These small changes have resulted in slight decreases throughout the past months."

"However, we are still dealing with a high unemployment rate and continue to assist our customers throughout the state during these tough economic times."

Seasonally adjusted employment decreased by 8,330 workers to 4,031,573. Unemployment decreased by 6,534

workers, to 488,974. Since this time last year, unemployment has increased by 189,252 people. Employment is down by 217,761 workers since August 2008. The state rate in August 2008 was 6.6 percent.

Seasonally adjusted, total non-farm industry employment, as gathered through the monthly establishment survey, increased by 7,000 jobs over the past month and has decreased by 214,000 since August 2008 - to 3,916,600. The largest over-the-month increase occurred in Government (+20,100). The largest decrease was in Trade, Transportation and Utilities (-4,400).

The next unemployment update is scheduled for Friday, Sept. 25, when the county unemployment rates for the month of August will be released.

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