

COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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not yet changed the curriculum, it has changed the classroom dynamic.

"Anytime you have a diverse classroom, it adds to the intellectual stimulation of the class," Lancaster said.

"You have 47-year-olds and 17-year-olds in the same class. The older students bring life experience that enriches the classroom."

Hovey said he has enjoyed classes with older students because they are more focused.

"The classes are quieter than they would ordinarily be," Hovey said. "The older students are more serious about their studies."

Many community college officials agree that there has been an increase in younger students, yet they say that due

to the poor economy, there has been a recent influx of older students.

Larry Caudill, dean of student services at Wilkes Community College, said the recent setbacks in the economy have influenced the student profile.

"Recently we've seen a large increase in the older student population because of a decrease in plant employment," Caudill said.

"There are more people unemployed. We've seen an increase (in the average student age) because of that."

Caudill explained that the overall enrollment has soared due to the influx of older and younger students.

"We are seeing both trends," he said. "There is a large transfer group of students that wanted to go on to the university system, but (the universities) are having to turn away more students. ... We are getting the spillover from them and from unemployment."

Enrollment in the community college system increased by about 14,000 full-time students this year, about twice the total of the increase in the UNC system.

Whitehurst said that although there has been a short-term growth trend of older students, he believes the increase in younger students will be the more consistent trend.

Caudill explained that the increased enrollment has caused class size to increase as well. "We are having to put more students in each classroom," he said. "There has been a large increase in the number of large classes. We've historically tried to keep class size small."

Lancaster emphasized that community colleges are facing significant financial needs in addition to class size problems. He said that with the relatively low salaries, the system has difficulties

attracting and maintaining faculty.

"The greatest challenge is that we are grossly underfunded," Lancaster said. "(The teachers) are the worst paid in the country."

But Whitehurst said the increased enrollment has expanded the role of the community college system in the state's educational system and has strengthened the partnership with the UNC system.

Whitehurst said, "It has given community colleges a larger role in provision of services of the state and increased the necessity to develop a strong partnership with public schools and universities."

The State & National Editor can be reached at stntdesk@unc.edu.

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By Lindsey White

■ **Board of Aldermen Renews Pine Street Debate** ■
By Nate DeGraff

ROAD

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Department of Transportation.

Mary Beck, senior vice president of planning and program development at UNC Hospitals, said the purpose of the meeting was to inform residents about plans to conduct a roadway study and receive suggestions on it.

"It takes several years to conduct a study, and we believe the time is right to ask for options now," Beck said. "We recognize that a lot of input would be required from everyone."

Beck said one of the main reasons for expanding the road is to improve access for hospital staff, patients and emergency vehicles.

"Our staff has complained vehemently about traffic congestion in the area," she said. "People come in all day long, and they get caught up in traffic."

Beck said alleviating traffic congestion is a key aspect in the recruitment and retention of nurses and other health care workers because fewer traffic problems make the area more attractive.

But residents said widening the road would attract more traffic and create

additional roadway problems.

"It seems to me that you're just encouraging more traffic (in the area)," said Lexie Simpson, of 3 Penick Lane.

Charles Murphy, a resident of South Columbia Street, said he thinks trying to find parking near UNC Hospitals is a bigger challenge than fighting road congestion. "Traffic isn't the problem - parking," he said.

Beck acknowledged parking as an issue but re-emphasized that hospital officials would research various traffic-related issues through the study with the NCDOT.

"I'm the last person to say that parking isn't a problem," she said. "What we're asking here is a study; we're not saying the road absolutely has to be widened."

Beck assured residents that UNC officials plan to incorporate resident comments and criticisms in the roadway study. The findings will be presented to Moeser and the town.

"What I plan to do is summarize what I've heard and kind of make a list of the issues."

The City Editor can be reached at citydesk@unc.edu.

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