

# CVCC's High Numbers Bring More Opportunities



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The sluggish economic times have no bearing on Catawba Valley Community College as enrollment numbers continue to rise.

CVCC administration anticipates the total number of students enrolled for the fall semester, which started Aug. 17, to be about 5,600, which is a 13 percent increase from fall 2008, according to CVCC President Dr. Garrett Hinshaw. He added the college has seen a 38 percent increase since 2000.

Hinshaw said there are a lot of factors that led to the rise in enrollment.

"Any time the economy takes a downturn, community colleges see larger enrollment," Hinshaw said. "We also changed our marketing to get more graduates from community high schools."

New marketing techniques include hiring liaisons to work with high schools in Catawba and Alexander counties. Another strategy is using campaigns with recent CVCC graduates by telling their story and why they chose to attend CVCC.

"It has increased our presence in (high schools) and the awareness of the programs at CVCC," Hinshaw said.

CVCC saw an increase in enrollment through other high school programs. In the concurrent enrollment program, where high school students take college class while still attending high school, enrollment increased to 400 students. Challenger High School, which has classes on CVCC campus, also increased to 400 students.

"We had a 100 percent increase in those programs," said Hinshaw, who added both programs had about 200 students each enrolled last year.

Despite the record numbers and a cut in state funding, Hinshaw said CVCC's staff does not see this as a problem, but instead with a wide-range of opportunities.

"It created a lot of opportunities for us, not problems," he said. "We haven't been able to add staffing or instructional positions to keep up with the level of growth. We had to change how we process students and our deadlines for financial aid. We were allowed to increase the cap somewhat in courses to add more students."

On average, there are 25 students per class. However, Hinshaw said there are certain programs that will not allow the maximum to reach 25 students.

"We have some classes that are much bigger and others much smaller," said Hinshaw.

Because of funding from county commissioners, Hinshaw said the college able to add more parking spaces. While students might have to walk farther to class, they are able to park on campus. He added CVCC does have a shuttle service plan set in case parking becomes an issue, but for now, he said everything is going smoothly.

"We are not focused on what we don't have, but what we do have and focused on the students on campus," he said. "We provide the most we can with what we have. We will have to work smarter and more efficiently."

From now through 2010, Hinshaw said CVCC is working on a number of large projects to enhance the college. They include the finished construction of the assimilated hospital; renovation of an existing building for a new student center; and the renovation for a new research and development initiative program.

"We will continue engaging our students," Hinshaw said. "We will take every angle we can to ensure our students have a high level of experience at Catawba Valley Community College."

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