

# The Herald-Sun

## **NCCU seeks more, better students**

By Neil Offen  
noffen@heraldsun.com; 419-6646

DURHAM -- N.C. Central University doesn't just want more students. It wants better students.

One way to get them, university administrators said Tuesday, is to increase the number of community college transfers and expand NCCU's online distance education profile.

"Growth is not just about how large we can get," Chancellor Nelms told the school's Board of Trustees. "We want to be strategic in our growth. We want students that are better prepared and more likely to graduate."

To that end, the university has significantly increased its online offerings and programs, said Kimberly Phifer-McGhee, the director of distance education.

"We are both offering more courses online and more sections of classes students really need online," Phifer-McGhee said.

The university has developed online programs in, among other areas, computer information systems and geospatial sciences. There are new courses in heredity and society, advanced psychology, chemistry and business computer applications, among many more.

Seventy-seven percent of general education courses are now offered online, with a goal of reaching 100 percent by the next academic year, administrators said.

The university now has 830 unduplicated online students and online student credit hours have risen from 17,978 a year ago to 19,178 now, with a projection that by the next academic year it will be more than 20,000.

The expansion has been successful, Phifer-McGhee said. A fall student survey found that 93 percent of those who had taken online courses at NCCU would take another one at the school.

"Ten years from now," predicted Nelms, "I think we'll be seeing half of our students online and half on campus."

Those on-campus students will include an increasing number of students transferring from community colleges.

NCCU's new Office of Transfer Services is "actively recruiting high-performing transfer students," said Tenita Philyaw-Rogers, the director of the office.

The number of transfer students from local two-year schools from rose 81 to 135 over the last three years and increased over all from 298 to 451.

The increase, said Philyaw-Rogers, is because of a "comprehensive strategic plan" that includes more community college visitation days, helping transfer students integrate into campus life at NCCU and increases in scholarship money for the transfer students.

"All these pieces fit together," Nelms explained. "We're not just seeing more people come through the door. By bringing in these students, both online and through transfers, we want to make N.C. Central a more competitive and responsive university."