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Durham Tech gets perfect overall score

By Andrew Dunn

Durham Tech Community College is one of only seven schools to get a perfect overall score in a yearly report card published by the North Carolina Community College System, released this month for statistics on the 2005-2006 school year.

The rating of the 58 community colleges in the state is based on a dozen measures focusing on student success, satisfaction and graduation rates.

The performance standard is a benchmark of what the community college system expects. Any college not meeting a standard must submit an action plan for improving performance to the State Board of Community Colleges.

"The critical success factors identified by the community college system touch upon all the things community colleges should be doing to fulfill their mission completely," said Bill Ingram, chief instructional officer at Durham Tech.

Durham Tech is also one of 38 schools to receive a superior rating, meaning it met at least five performance standards the community college system deems most important, including employment rate and certification test passing rates.

That means the school will receive a few hundred thousand dollars in incentive bonuses, Ingram said.

The community college scored 100 percent in employer satisfaction rating with Durham Tech graduates, better than the system average of 97 percent.

Students transferring to UNC-system schools from Durham Tech also had a particularly high success rate, as judged by the percentage maintaining higher than a 2.0 grade-point average. After two semesters, 89.3 percent of transfers met that standard, higher than the system average of 84.2 percent.

And 98 percent of students reported satisfaction with the college, above the system average of 97 percent.

The report defines satisfied students as those who respond in a survey that "the quality of the college programs and services met or exceeded their expectations."

For Durham Tech students taking state and national certification exams, such as those for becoming a registered nurse or an emergency medical technician, 85 percent passed the first time, the system average. The performance standard is 80 percent, which was met by 41 schools. Cape Fear Community College rated highest, with a 93 percent first-time pass rate.

While overall the school was average in that regard, Durham Tech did post some high rankings.

For the real estate license exam, the school had a 80 percent pass rate, better than the system average of 69 percent. In nursing, Durham Tech had a 96 percent pass rate, while the system had an average of 89 percent.

But the college was not outstanding in everything. For students in English or math developmental courses, the school equaled the performance standard of 70 percent passing rate. The system average is 80 percent.

Ingram said the school is working on ways to improve the rate, but pointed out that students going through developmental courses end up scoring equally with those who did not require such classes.

And only 61 percent of students either graduated or planned to return, below the system average of 65 percent. Ingram attributed that to students transferring to four-year universities before they finish a course of study at Durham Tech.