

Parsons

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The ethics commission cited Parsons, but he told them he would "do it again."

Parsons and other college officials have come into conflict several times.

Parsons taught anatomy and physiology at the college from 1990-93 before the board decided not to renew his contract. Rhoads said Parsons was dismissed because he "lied about things that were going on at the college," including that the school was controlled by a "Democratic political machine."

Parsons sued the college for violating his first amendment rights, saying he had been dismissed because he ran for public office as a Republican. However, U.S. District Judge H. Franklin Waters dismissed the complaint in June 1994.

In 1996, Parsons was elected to a four-year term on the board, which he began serving in January 1997.

Fellow board members are irked by Parsons' holding news conferences to air his grievances.

Board Chairman Dick Trammel said the ethics commission ruling showed that — contrary to Parson's claims — the board is made up of people with integrity. He would like to concentrate on running the college rather than addressing Parson's accusations.

"It's just hard for this board to continue to fight criticism and nega-

tivism. I want to get positive again. I want to get on with the business of the college, which is dealing with the needs of the students," he said.

Trammel and Trustee Eva Lena Mayo said board members agreed to eliminate Jones' position to free money for hiring more full-time faculty members. Also, the board agreed by consensus to consolidate other positions.

Mayo said Jones has been treated fairly and that his position is no longer needed.

"Our concerns as a board — and my concern — is to try to do what's best for the college. Right now we are in need of adding full-time teachers," and the board couldn't do that without eliminating positions, she said.

Rhoads said the board followed the law in deciding to eliminate Jones' position.

Public boards are allowed to discuss personnel matters in private "executive sessions" to protect the rights of employees, Rhoads said. But the board must vote publicly if its members make a decision affecting the employee's employment, according to state law.

However, Rhoads said the board voted publicly in May to approve the budget, which did not include funding for Jones' full salary

"I don't think there had to be a separate vote on that. The overall vote on the budget took care of it," he said.

Rhoads said each employee works on a yearly contract.

his guns, gun parts and other items. That charge carries a maximum See **KEHOE**, Page 7B

Deputies found the body of Eleanor Staats, 53, of 1754 Case St.

College trustee to play maverick role again

BY JENNIFER PINKERTON
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

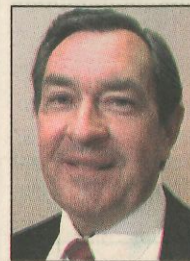
ROGERS — A community college trustee cited in June for releasing confidential information he learned in a closed board meeting is keeping his word to "do it again."

Jim Parsons, a trustee of Northwest Arkansas Community College in Rogers, scheduled a news conference for today to release documents he said will shed light on what he calls the unfair dismissal of a college administrator.

The news conference is Parsons' latest response to a board decision to eliminate the job of Louis B. "Bucky" Jones, the president's assistant. The board agreed by consensus to cut Jones' position and approved a budget in May that funded Jones' salary only through September.

Contacted at work Tuesday, Jones declined comment.

The Arkansas Ethics Commission cited Parsons with a "letter of caution" June 19 for telling news reporters about a private discussion



Jim Parsons

trustees had about Jones' job in December 1997.

After that meeting, Parsons held a press conference to say the board discussed whether to de-

eliminate his position even though Jones had been cleared of earlier allegations of sexual harassment. Parsons said he believed board members including himself had violated the state Freedom of Information Act because they didn't vote publicly on the matter.

Fellow board members contradicted Parsons' account of what was discussed and filed a complaint against Parsons. The college's attorney, George Rhoads, also asked the Benton County prosecutor to consider criminal charges.

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State prison board wants more control over vo-tech offerings

BY EMMETT GEORGE
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

DERMOTT — After making GEDs mandatory for those prisoners who have not completed their high school education, the state prison board would now like to make vocational education more popular among inmates.

The Board of Correction and Community Punishment has decided it wants to study ways to improve and exercise greater control over vocational-technical programs offered at state prisons. The board met Thursday morning at the Delta Regional Unit at Dermott.

About 300 inmates are enrolled in vocational training courses at the Varner, Tucker and Newport units.

The prison system operates its own school district, hiring teachers and holding classes much like any other district. But it has no comparable system to control vocational education, which is provided by outside agencies.

Board members were cool to recommendations presented by Dr. James Selman, a consultant from Auburn, Ala., but they did not disregard his ideas outright.

Selman's most controversial

recommendation was to form a statewide coordinating committee to help set policy and plan vocational training at the units.

Besides prison officials, the committee could include representatives from such agencies as the Youth Services Division of the Department of Human Services and the Department of Workforce Training, Selman said.

Board member Dr. Mary Parker of Little Rock said the board would not relinquish control over such things as curriculum development and the "nitty-gritty" operational aspects of the programs al-

though she said she could accept a committee that was advisory in nature.

"I am really reluctant to go out and create these little bodies that will meet a couple of times and then go away because our problems won't go away," Parker said.

"This is not meant to be a threat to your board," Selman said.

The key to satisfactory vocational training, Selman said, is providing inmates with "saleable job skills" that will enable them to get jobs and stay out of prison. Inmates will be attracted to the

courses if they are convinced "it is a way out of prison," he said.

Board member Janis Walmsley of Batesville said, "We don't see the budget requests. We don't have a clue as to what's going to be asked for for vocational education [for the prison system]."

Board members would like to be involved at the legislative stage and would probably lend their support for budget requests to support vocational programs earmarked for the prisons, she said.

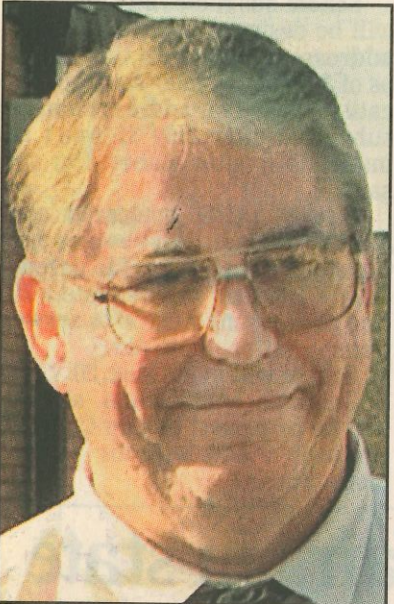
Walmsley applauded the inclusion of vocational programs at the Ronald McPherson Detention Fa-

cility at Newport, where the state's women prisoners are housed, but was concerned that courses are not being offered at the Scott Grimes Detention Facility for men next-door. Both of the privately operated prisons opened in January.

Board Chairman Randall Williams of Hot Springs said board members would like to have additional time to study Selman's report and gather more information on vocational training in time for the next board meeting, which is scheduled for Aug. 20 at the Post Prison Transfer Board office in Little Rock.

11 July 98 AR Dem-Gaz

College chief says firing unjust; he'll fight it



George McCormick

BY SANDY DAVIS
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

FORREST CITY — The president of East Arkansas Community College said Friday that he plans to fight what he says is an attempt by the college board to fire him.

"I am going to hire an attorney and do what I have to do," said George McCormick, who has been president of the college since February 1995.

"The board has already voted to fire me because I cooperated with a federal and state investigation of the college," McCormick said during a telephone interview Friday. "The board is mad at me because they ordered me not to cooperate with the investigation and I did."

In late February, FBI and state police investigators seized truckloads of documents from the Forrest City two-year community col-

lege after executing a search warrant Feb. 24. They seized financial aid records, teacher payroll records, student enrollment records, and even teachers' grading books, among other records.

The investigators seemed particularly interested in enrollment records and the possibility that not all students listed actually had attended the school. State funding to the school is based on enrollment.

Frank Morledge, attorney for the board, said Friday McCormick's claim that he has been fired is "absolutely not true."

"The board evaluated Mr. McCormick at a June meeting. There were sufficient concerns raised in the evaluation for the board to set a hearing regarding his employment," Morledge said.

The hearing will be held Thursday.

McCormick said that Morledge wrote him a letter in June notifying the college president of the evaluation and that the board planned to hold a hearing to discuss his employment.

He said Morledge sent him a copy of the evaluation and "accidentally sent me a written vote" that showed the board voted 8 to 1 at the June meeting to dismiss him.

"The whole hearing is a farce if there has already been a formal written vote before I've even had a chance to defend myself," McCormick said.

Morledge said that he sent McCormick a copy of the evaluation, which included the page containing the vote.

"That wasn't an accident," Morledge said of sending the copy of the vote to McCormick. "That

was part of the evaluation, so I sent it to him."

Morledge said the board compiled the evaluation during an executive session at the June meeting.

The college's attorney said he wasn't permitted to attend the executive session and did not know what the board discussed.

"And I absolutely can't tell you what's in the evaluation," Morledge said, adding that he had seen the document. "That's a personnel issue."

McCormick said the state and federal investigation began in December 1997 when FBI agents and state officials came to him asking questions about enrollment irregularities at the college. The governor's office has also participated in the investigation.

"They're looking at enrollment
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...two counts of illegal possession of stolen property, one count of switched license plates and one count of aggravated resisting arrest by flight.

McCormick

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fraud, wire and mail fraud — where the college either electronically or through the mail asked for funding from the state for students that weren't attending classes," McCormick said. "They're also looking at whether teachers who were working part time were getting paid for working full time."

He said the FBI was also investigating "academic fraud" where students were given grades they didn't deserve or credit for classes they never attended.

McCormick has said state Rep. Pat Flanagan, D-Forrest City, and his ex-wife, Jauwiece McGuire, were included in the investigation. Flanagan taught part time at the college until 1994, Flanagan said Friday. McGuire is a music teacher at the college.

McCormick has said that the couple's three children have been students at the college since the summer after they each completed the eighth grade.

"Both parents have taught these kids," McCormick said. "At one time, all three of the children were enrolled in a class taught by Jauwiece, but never attended the class."

McGuire has denied any wrongdoing in the matter. Flanagan has also said he did nothing wrong while a teacher at the college.

Flanagan said Friday that he did not know the board was planning to fire McCormick.

"It couldn't have happened to a nicer guy," Flanagan said. "I think he fooled a lot of people in the media with his outlandish accusations. He intimidated anyone who stood up to him. I always thought he would run his horse into the ground and it sounds like that's what happened."

The college listed its enrollment at 1,391 in the 1997 fall semester.

Left is Aaron Polk and sitting is David Hamrick, two of the three Muskateers trying to figure out what happened to the third, Shane Moore.

Feb 25, 1998

OTC board looks at adult education program's fate

By BRANDI MILBURN
Daily Record Staff Writer

Adult Education handicaps and possible solution were discussed by the Ouachita Technical College Board of Trustees Tuesday evening, along with nothing but positive things about OTC and its future.

Jan Robertson, adult education instructor, reported to the board about the condition of the Adult Education building on Harris street. The building

is 2,000 square feet with over 500 students. Through a self evaluation many problems were discovered and remedied the best they possibly could, Robertson said.

The entrance was not handicapped accessible and a ramp has been added. The ramp though is raised at too high an angle and those in wheelchairs still need assistance to move up the ramp safely, she said.

The bathroom is still not handicapped accessible and it is unknown if it can be remod-

eled to have wider doors and side bars due to the small amount of space available, said Robertson.

Robertson recommended the building be more accessible though she did not know what else could be done to provide that. They also need better utilization of space and storage areas.

The best way to solve this would be to have a new bigger building which is not feasible

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in the budget. One way to solve this problem would be to collaborate with other agencies to share rent and utilities on a new building, Robertson suggested.

Other adult education programs in the state have already done so by collaborating with the Job Training Partnership Act, Department of Human service, Literacy council, colleges and employment security division, she said.

OTC President Dr. Ken Martin had asked at the previous meeting for permission to talk to local agencies and gather more information on this possibility.

He said he has been in phone contact with JTPA and they are extremely interested in being involved. He also contacted the employment security division and was told they couldn't help.

Trustee LaNoire Dawkins-Leeper said she was concerned with people losing their jobs or being demoted if those agencies combine.

Rhonda Strouiding of Adult Education said, "We are not wanting to go under anyone else's umbrella, but just to have a roommate to help with the expenses."

Martin added, "The building has been sold out from under us ... We have one year to find a home for Adult Education."

Each agency would be responsible for their own area in this "One Stop Shop," Trustee Pete Paladino said.

In other business, Martin brought up the question of adding a Child Care Program to OTC for the students.

Surveys have shown interest in day care by students.

A grant is possible but would not provide enough money to run a program. The only way to build a building large enough would be through collaboration with other agencies such as Central Arkansas Development Council's Head Start child

November 7, 1998

Hankins one of 23 Arkansas All-Stars

Writing about her most memorable educational experience at Ouachita Technical College in Malvern resulted in a prize-winning essay for Laurie Hankins. In her essay, Hankins recalls that she almost withdrew from Ouachita Tech during the spring semester of 1998 when she had to assume responsibility for her mother's health care just three weeks before final exams. When the long hours spent in the hospital and lack of sleep began to overwhelm her, it was the encouragement of her fellow students and college instructors that got Hankins through the semester.

"Without all the support from friends and faculty, I would not have been able to continue," said Hankins. "Even the college librarians urged me to hang tough. I know other students have had to withstand similar trials. I



Laurie Hankins

hope they had friends to persuade them not to quit on their dream." Hankins finished the semester with a 3.52 grade point average in Medical Transcription.

Laurie Hankins is just one

of 23 outstanding students selected to the first Arkansas Two-Year Colleges' Academic All-Star Team. Each winner receives a \$500 scholarship and was honored at the Arkansas Association of Two-Year Colleges' Annual Fall Conference on Oct. 18-20 in Hot Springs.

The All-Star scholarship program rewards student excellence in academics and leadership. Entrants must have a cumulative grade point average of 3.25 or higher, a minimum of 12 credit hours toward an Associate degree, and expect to be enrolled in the same college through the spring semester of 1999.

Eligible students submitted a 500-word essay describing their most memorable educational experience. One winner was selected from each of the 23 two-year colleges around the state.

