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## OTC board approves new degree programs

By AMY PARTAIN  
Staff Writer

The Ouachita Technical College Board of Trustees approved two new degree programs and elected officers at its monthly meeting Tuesday.

The board was scheduled to review the sales tax ordinances that will go before the city council next month. However, Sen. George Hopkins, who is drafting the ordinances, does not have them completed.

The board unanimously approved pro-

posals for an associate of applied science degree in transportation technology and an associate of arts degree.

The degree proposals will now go before the state Department of Higher Education for approval. The department's next meeting is Friday.

Provided the degree programs are approved, OTC would offer degrees in four primary categories. Several degrees are offered in each category depending on a student's course of study.

Dr. Susan Azbell, vice president for

instruction and student affairs, said they are hoping to add more soon, including a degree in computer information systems and one in environmental safety.

Board member Dewey Stiles voiced his concern over the tougher curriculum that has been adopted since the institution changed from a vocational-technical school to a technical college.

"I wonder if the criteria standards are too high for some individuals and they will be told they cannot take certain

courses," Stiles said.

Azbell said that the curriculum is tougher now. "This is a college now, it has to be tougher," she said. "The work places are saying they need what technical colleges can offer."

Azbell said it will still be possible for students to come in and take one course to upgrade their skills. She said it is set up so that students can take up to 12 hours in a specialized area without taking other courses in that program.

Stiles said he was afraid that the col-

lege was setting standards to prevent employees who had been working in certain areas for years from upgrading services. Azbell said the new curriculum enhances their opportunities by providing training in specialized areas.

Stiles said some people have approached him and are concerned that OTC is becoming a liberal arts college. "Some are afraid the vocational-technical programs will be eliminated or will

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be so tough normal people can't do it," he said.

Azbell said it is the industries that are placing higher requirements on employees not OTC. "The courses are harder, if they weren't we would be offering courses that are outdated," she said.

Dr. Ken Martin, president of OTC, agreed that employers now

require more from their employees. "A person who can't do math, science or who can't read can't work on cars anymore," he said. "Our mission clearly states that we are training people to go forth and be productive in their fields."

It is the college's responsibility, Azbell said, to offer programs that have the highest placement rates. She said the purpose of the Center for Workforce Excellence is to fill the needs of all people, even if the expertise they need is 30 years old.

Azbell told the board that there has been a 16 percent increase in enrollment over the

fall 1993 semester. The enrollment increase this spring over last spring was 53 percent. She said currently there are 353 enrolled in college credit courses at OTC.

June Prince, NCA coordinator for OTC, told the board about North Central Accreditation review committee's recommendation for candidacy and about the national recognition OTC's self-study has received.

George McClure Jr. was re-elected chairman of the board, LaNoire Dawkins Leeper was re-elected secretary and Jim Ferguson was elected vice chairman.



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that OTC students can continue to be eligible for financial aid. She said for the students to receive financial aid the college had to be certified by some organization after the college's certification as a vocational-technical college ran out.

OTC will also now be able to take over the general education requirements from Henderson State University. HSU now offers some general education courses on the OTC campus.

With the candidacy status in place, OTC will be able to offer these core classes and they will be transferable to any four-year college or university in the state, Prince said.

Dr. Ken Martin, president of OTC, said he fully intends to take over the general education courses in the summer.

"We have signed the amended contract with Henderson and plan to hit it off starting this summer," he said.

Prince said with the candidacy status in place there is also a

chance that some of the technical courses offered could be transferable to other institutions. She said this would be done on a course-by-course basis with each institution.

Receiving candidacy status puts OTC in a better position to receive accreditation, Prince said, but it does not guarantee the college will receive accreditation in the future.

"We are feeling really proud of ourselves," she said. "When we started, the state saw us as least likely to come up to par and we have surpassed that. We are looked at by other technical colleges as being the leading institution in the state."

Prince said the next step for the college will be to start the self-study process over. This second self-study will be due in 1995. She said the college will have to decide if they want the 1995 visit from the NCA evaluation team to be a continued candidacy visit or an accreditation visit.

The college has until 1997 to become accredited, according to the act that created technical colleges in the state.

Martin said he is going on the assumption that the 1995 will be

for accreditation.

"We have been hoping that if we get the local support we are looking for and get our new facility in place we would go for accreditation on the next visit," Martin said. "But we really can't make that decision for another year yet."

He said it will take between 16 and 18 months to put the new self-study together. Martin said basically they are having to go back to "square one" in the self-study process.

Prince said the study requires the institution to evaluate "where you are, where you are going and how you are going to get there."

OTC's first self-study has received national recognition, she said.

The college only marginally met one of the NCA criteria with the evaluation team noting that OTC needed additional funding and more long range plans.

Martin said OTC will not get accreditation in the future if they only marginally meet the criteria.

"They will take a little closer look at us if we go for accreditation," he said. "We can't be marginal in anything and receive accreditation."

# OTC earns NCA candidacy status

By AMY PARTAIN  
Staff Writer

Ouachita Technical College received notification by telephone this morning that they have been approved for candidacy status by North Central Association, June Prince, NCA coordinator at OTC, said.

OTC will receive official notification from NCA through a formal letter, she said.

The full commission granted OTC the status after a recent meeting of the full commission of the NCA. An NCA evaluation team and an NCA review committee had both recommended that OTC be granted candidacy status.

Prince said candidacy status does not mean the college is now accredited. "It is a pre-accreditation status," she said. "We are being invited to try to become a fully accredited member."

Receiving candidacy status does entitle the college to some new perks, Prince said. The college can now claim affiliation with NCA, she said.

"Candidacy status is like getting the 'Good Housekeeping' Seal of Approval," she said. "Now we will be recognized by other institutions as a quality institution."

Another plus, Prince said, is

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