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what we can do is create a remediation center here at Ouachita Technical College for only a third of the cost for our local people and for a person to do it over a period of time. After meeting the remediation requirements, if they don't want to stay here locally, then they can drive to Henderson (State University in Arkadelphia). They will be able to go over there and take college level courses."

Eliminating the need to commute to other institutions for the remediation program will save expenses for students, Hopkins said.

"We need to try to do our part here to make sure local people don't have to drive a long way to get remediation."

The associate degree program that will be offered at Ouachita Technical College will also

offer an at-home educational opportunity. Hopkins said in North Carolina and South Carolina, where the technical college concept was first developed, "one person in seven will have taken a course at a technical college in the course of a year."

The aspect of local input and control is another advantage to the transition, Hopkins said.

"A local board, businesses and the people of the community will now have input in what courses are offered and how the money is appropriated."

Hopkins discussed the timing of the decision to convert from a vo-tech to a technical college at this time.

"It became obvious to me, after listening to the plans to merge other vo-tech schools with nearby colleges, if we did not move Ouachita Vo-Tech, they would eventually merge us with Henderson

State University or Garland County Community College."

Hopkins said he met with the vo-tech's advisory board to discuss the change.

"After it was determined we would lose our local autonomy, in all likelihood, our best option, to ensure we keep a continuing institution that responds to local needs, not those dictated from Arkadelphia or Hot Springs, our only choice was to try and move in with this new group of technical colleges."

Hopkins predicted the changes will stimulate the growth of enrollment and facilities.

Ouachita Vo-Tech Director Earl Clevenger, who attended Wednesday's Rotary meeting, said the staff at Ouachita "is very excited about the changes." Clevenger told Hopkins, "If you will get us the money, we will meet the requirements."