Enrollment is up; budget is cut

At the same time that Beaufort County Community College is seeing record enrollment for its fall semester, the college is faced with cuts in its budget brought about by declines in the state's economy.

According to preliminary enrollment figures, BCCC has 1,918 students enrolled for the fall 2009 semester, nearly an 11 percent increase and some 188 students more than the then-record-breaking fall 2008 semester.

Since the fall 2007 semester, BCCC has seen a 23 percent increase in enrollment. At the same time, however, BCCC has seen a drop in appropriations from the state as lawmakers struggled to balance the state budget.

Of the community college's approximately $18.3 million budget, most, about $10.9 million comes from state funds. The remainder comes from county appropriations and federal financial aid.

As a result of reductions in appropriations by state lawmakers and executive orders, BCCC received $10.9 million for the 2009-2010 fiscal year, down from $11 million in the 2008-2009 fiscal year and virtually the same amount of funding as in fiscal year 2007-2008 when there were 363 fewer students on campus.

Meanwhile, school officials have already been informed they will have to return at least some of current fiscal year appropriations because of continued declines in the state's economy.

"We are definitely trying to do more with less," said BCCC President David McLawhorn. "We are starting this year with essentially the budget we had three years ago but with a 23 percent increase in students.

"But it's important for our students and the general public to know that because of the dedication of our faculty and staff, our students are still going to receive the best instruction and services that our faculty and staff are capable of providing," he said.

Enrollment is up in almost every program at the college — including business, industrial technology, allied health and college transfer programs, according to Wesley Beddard, BCCC dean of instruction.

To compensate, the college added classes throughout registration in areas where sections were filled and "a significant number" of full-time faculty are teaching additional classes this semester to meet student demand, he said.

"We have raised class caps as much as feasible," Beddard said. "And since funds to hire additional faculty are not available, three deans are teaching classes this year."

The greatest enrollment increases have been seen in the college's basic law enforcement, computer programming, criminal justice, medical office administration and welding programs, according to college enrollment figures.

SEE BUDGET, PAGE 2