

NCC optimistic about 'new era'

Diversification key to gaining more students

By Hon Walker
Emerald Associate Editor

The first time James Womack saw the inside of a building at Northwest Christian College was in 1961, when he was climbing through a chapel window to listen to a friend play a song on the organ.

Womack was a University student at the time, and he thought he was entering a building on the University campus. Shortly afterward, however, he became a student at NCC. Today, he is the college president.

Womack is not the only University student who has been unaware of the "other" four-year institution in southeast Eugene. In a two-block parcel adjacent to the University campus, NCC conveys a quieter, more modest attitude.

With NCC's 100th anniversary not far away, Womack said he is optimistic about a college that is rebounding from years of declining enrollment and financial struggles.

NCC has been around almost as long as its neighbor to the east. In 1895, Eugene Sander-son founded the Eugene Divinity School. Shortly afterward, the school became the Eugene Bible University.

In 1934, it became Northwest Christian College when it consolidated its services with the struggling Spokane University, said David Waggoner, vice president for student affairs. "Neither school was going to survive the Depression alone."

The NCC student body has "changed pretty radically over the past 10 years," Waggoner said. "It's the most diverse student body we've ever had in terms of religion."

Another change at NCC is the shift toward liberal arts courses and academic majors, in addition to ministerial training.

"It's a new era for us," Waggoner said. "We've never had this strong an emphasis in liberal arts." The college is offering other non-religious courses as well.

One program that was started



Photo by Mark Ylen

Northwest Christian College, nearing its 100th anniversary, is expanding its programs and offering more liberal arts classes.

last fall at NCC is an accelerated adult education course in managerial leadership, in which credit for two years of study can be completed in just over a year.

Academic Dean Song Nai Rhee said it is common for NCC students to combine ministerial training with a University degree, and in recent years NCC has expanded its own course offerings as well.

Some students may prefer the atmosphere of a smaller campus, or they may not necessarily seek an emphasis on ministerial training. "What we are trying to do is to offer a limited number of liberal arts degrees to our students," he said.

One example is the recent addition of an intercultural studies program.

Previously, NCC offered a cross-cultural ministry program

that prepared students for overseas missionary work. The intercultural studies program is for students wanting to pursue ethnic studies, while not necessarily wanting to be a missionary, he said.

The college may soon further expand its intercultural studies program, Rhee said. In addition, it offers majors in speech and communication and organizational management.

"We're not trying to become another liberal arts college," Rhee said, emphasizing that NCC remains focused on its traditional mission of offering an academic degree within a Christian education.

However, the number of students opting for a liberal arts major is growing steadily, with at least half now pursuing a liberal arts degree from NCC or

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Presented by The Institute for Science, Engineering and Public Policy. Co-sponsored by KLCC89.7FM, Portland State University Continuing Education, The Waggoner Group, Oregon Advanced Computing Institute and Oregon Public Broadcasting. Special thanks to the Eugene Hilton.