

Pandemic hurts GTCC enrollment

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GUILFORD COUNTY — The coronavirus pandemic has taken its toll on attendance at Guilford Technical Community College.

Enrollment has been markedly lower since the fall semester of last year at the community college, which has offered a mix of in-person and remote instruction since the onset of the pandemic.

Summer attendance last year reached 7,937, off nearly 25% from 10,547 students in the summer of 2019.

Fall semester attendance last year totaled 16,427 students, down nearly 14% from 19,055 students in the fall of 2019.

For the current spring semester, enrollment so far stands at 11,585, down nearly 29% from the enrollment of 16,301 students for the spring semester of last year.

The current spring attendance could change since enrollment is open until May 15.

"Because continuing education courses are short-term, flexible opportunities, courses and enrollment periods for these courses continue to be offered through May 2021," said GTCC spokeswoman Erin McCloskey.

The community college has adjusted to the pandemic, McCloskey told The High Point Enterprise.

"Although the pandemic has impacted our ability to offer in-person courses at full capacity, GTCC has adapted courses, where possible, to be offered in a hybrid and/or online format to continue meeting the needs of our community," she said.

Normally, enrollment levels at state community colleges affect the level of state funding for a school, with lower attendance translating into fewer dollars.

The N.C. Community College System has made an employee salary increase and funding for budget stabilization due to enrollment decreases across the state as its top two funding priorities for this year's N.C. General Assembly session.

GTCC President Anthony Clarke said GTCC officials will seek to sustain a budget to meet its needs.

"We are closely monitoring the budget situation as a result of the drop in enrollment due to the pandemic," Clarke told The Enterprise.

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