

## EAST MISSISSIPPI COMMUNITY COLLEGE: FALL ENROLLMENT UP NEARLY 26 PERCENT

East Mississippi Community College was braced for crowds at registration this fall, but reality surpassed even the most optimistic expectations – as EMCC posted an enrollment increase of nearly 26 percent over last year.

EMCC President Dr. Rick Young attributes the response to two factors: “First, our economy is still struggling to recover from a recession. In this kind of environment, when businesses are forced to downsize, you see people returning to community colleges for classes and training to improve their chances of transitioning into a new job.”

The second factor was a district-wide tuition guarantee program.

“It may seem like a strange time for our college to offer tuition guarantee. EMCC is in the same economic fix as many of the people we serve. Just as many households are looking for ways to cut back on expenses, EMCC is adjusting to a 5 percent state budget cut, the second in as many years,” Young said.

“But this is no time for EMCC to do less, because it’s during bad times that people need affordable education options the most.”

### ■ EMCC faculty, staff reflect on registration

EMCC serves students at two main campuses, Golden Triangle/Mayhew and Scooba, and four branch locations, Columbus Air Force Base, the West Point-Clay County Center, Macon and Naval Air Station Meridian. Last year, EMCC’s fall enrollment was 4,176. Preliminary numbers for fall of this year show an enrollment of 5,257 – an increase of more than 1,000 students.

The biggest group of students, more than 3,800, enrolled for fall classes at EMCC’s commuter campus in Mayhew.

“Registration at the Golden Triangle campus was just unbelievable. I have to say the biggest ‘kudos’ go to our financial aid staff. They had students lined up from the time the doors opened in the morning until after 9 o’clock each night, and then stayed even later to catch up on the paperwork,” said Cindy Johnson, EMCC’s Tech Prep coordinator.

“I met one lady who had been waiting in line to help her nephew register. With so many students doing the same thing, it had taken most of the day, but she still had her sense of humor. She laughed and said she was going to write a book about the experience called ‘Mayhem in Mayhew.’”

Linda Gates, district director of Job Placement and Work-based Learning, has seen enrollment grow by more 500 percent during her years with the college.



“When I began working at EMCC 14 years ago, we only had about 1,000 college credit students district-wide. So it is mind-boggling to see how many students we have now at our campuses and branch locations,” Gates said. “When I see the students in the halls, I want to say to them, ‘You’ve made a wise decision, so hang in there.’”

The story was the same at EMCC’s residential campus in Scooba, where enrollment exceeded 1,000 students for the first time, and at the college’s branch location at Columbus Air Force Base, where enrollment jumped by more than 50 students.

“Each member of our small staff had duties to carry out to make registration as smooth as possible for students, and that sometimes meant wearing more than one hat,” said Patricia Locke, an English instructor at EMCC’s Columbus Air Force Base branch.

“It was so impressive how the Visitor’s Center at the base worked extra hard to get students through the gate without trouble or wasted time. One of the special favors we did to reciprocate was to advance any military student in uniform to the front of the line, so they could register quickly and report back to duty.”

### ■ Online registration coming soon to EMCC ... Lion Country

EMCC’s district is made up of Lowndes, Clay, Oktibbeha, Noxubee, Kemper and Lauderdale counties. But the college draws students from throughout East Mississippi and West Alabama. Statistics show the highest numbers of fall 2009 students, in descending order, came from these counties: Lowndes, Oktibbeha, Clay, Noxubee, Webster, Lauderdale, Kemper, Monroe, Winston and Chickasaw.

Dr. Young said EMCC is working to streamline the registration process for a larger student body.

“We had some long lines this fall, especially at the Golden Triangle campus. I want to thank our students for their patience as our staff worked to accommodate everyone,” Young said.

“A new information management system at EMCC should be ready to handle online registration very soon, and that will go a long way to alleviate the need to be physically present and stand in long lines to register. In addition, several of our faculty and staff have made some excellent suggestions about how to make the process easier for students who register in person.”

For more information, call EMCC recruiter Michael Black at (662) 243-1974 or visit [www.eastms.edu](http://www.eastms.edu).