



Greetings, history buffs...as we approach the Fall 2009 semester 45th day, we're still hovering around a 20% increase from Fall 2008...pretty good, but, as you will see below, not a record. (Of course, the overall numbers were a lot smaller back in 1983.)

*Apologies for cutting the story short....couldn't find page SW-3!*

## South Mountain CC records highest enrollment increase

**By Larry Samson**  
The Phoenix Gazette

South Mountain Community College had the county's highest percentage increase in enrollment this semester. It did it by becoming more of a *community* college.

SMCC, the newest and smallest of the seven Maricopa Community Colleges' campuses, recorded a 14 percent enrollment increase over last semester's projections. Maricopa Tech — which moved into a larger facility — reported an 11 percent increase and Phoenix College a 9 percent increase with the remaining colleges up 5 percent to 8 percent.

This semester's enrollment represents a 37 percent increase over the same time last year, according to Admissions Director Jim Galbraith, bringing SMCC's head count to 1,800.

When the school started in 1980-81 with portable buildings and satellite sites, it had 728 students.

While the school, at 7050 S. 24th St., has picked up some East Valley students due to crowded or closed classes at Mesa Community College, "the vast majority" of the increase is local, Galbraith said.

"We're tapping so much of the local resources ... (the outer-area increases) are not having that much of an impact," he said.

Galbraith said as many as half of SMCC's students are in the "developmental mode." Those are students enrolled in English-as-a-Second-Language courses or taking reading or writing courses to "bring them into the mainstream of society," he said.

He attributed the high percentage of remedial-type students to the socio-economic character of the area as well as the national economic climate. During periods of high employment, junior-college enrollment traditionally increases, as people go after new job and self-improvement skills.

More and more, "this is the place where the dream develops," for local residents. Whether they're looking for a high school equivalency degree to improve their grammar or starting a four-year degree program, area residents are coming to SMCC, Galbraith said.

Enrollment also is up because the college is retaining more of its students, the admissions director said. Continuing students accounted for 41 percent of last year's enrollment, but make up 52 percent of this semester's student body.

Galbraith attributed the higher retention rate to the school's more actively pursued "early alert" program to identify and assist students having problems.

The most remarkable thing about SMCC's growth is it has continued despite a severe shortage in student financial aid.

According to Reyes Medrano, SMCC's financial aid director, at least 75 percent of the school's students meet federal-aid requirements. But because of SMCC's new-school status, there is a low ceiling on the federal aid the college can receive.

Financial problems are a major reason for SMCC students dropping out of school, according to a college study. Twenty-one percent of last spring's dropouts cited money problems as their reason for quitting school with transportation and other money-related problems adding to that figure.

Standard federal procedure, Medrano said, is to hold aid to new schools to \$5,000 per program. Because of SMCC's special needs, school officials appealed to federal officials last year and got "a bit of an increase."

School-administered financial aid is available through four sources:

- The Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG). This year, SMCC received about \$14,000, which Medrano said is enough to serve 12 students "at the most."

- The work/study program which hires students for on-campus jobs. Students normally get jobs of

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