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SCCC/ATS President Dr. Duane Dunn talks about the service Pam Perkins provided as his administrative assistant Monday at a retirement ceremony. L&T photo/Robert Pierce

202 years of service between them

By ROBERT PIERCE

• Leader & Times

Nine employees are saying goodbye to Seward County Community College/Area Technical School after more than 200 years of combined service.

Monday, the school honored the workers with a retirement reception, and SCCC/ATS President

Dr. Duane Dunn said having many of the employees putting in 20 years or more at the institution means a couple of things.

“One is we have a really great core of very dedicated employees that want to stay here,” he said. “It’s really a part of their lives and certainly an important part of the community. The other side of that, as we watch people retire, is just an indicator of the move of the baby boomer generation through the workforce.”

That means increasing retirement, and that is something Dunn said college officials are becoming increasingly aware of.

“It’s bittersweet,” he said. “I’m really happy for them to be retiring, but it’s tough for the college to lose that kind of history as well.”

SCCC/ATS has already begun filling some of the positions left vacant by the retirees, something Dunn said will be a tough task.

“You can fill that position, but it’s getting their knowledge base to build to that level with experience,” he said.

Among the retirees are longtime public relations director Andrea Yoxall, who has been with the college since 1980, and Pam Perkins, who has served as the administrative assistant to the school’s president and board of trustees for the last 25 years.

Dunn said with that kind of experience on board, particularly with a job such as Perkins’s, this makes training new employees a little tougher.

“Just knowing all the ins and outs of what goes on with the board of trustees and the president’s office, you don’t learn that instantly,” he said. “It just changes.”

Today's working environment has become more transitional, and Dunn said this means the likelihood of seeing another group of employees staying with the college for this amount of time is slim.

"We are a transitional society anymore, so it is more difficult for people to stay in that same job," he said. "We have other employees that have been here for over 30 years, but we know as new people come in, it's more and more difficult to get them to stay that long. That's not unique to us. I think that's just the nature of the workforce anymore."

In addition to filling some of the vacated positions, SCCC/ATS is likewise looking at reconfiguring some of the jobs left behind by the retirees. This, Dunn said, forces college officials to rethink some of the responsibilities of those jobs.

SCCC started as a college in 1969, and with only 45 years of history, many of the employees honored Monday have seen much of that story. Dunn pointed out one such example of that.

"Al Pittendrigh's been through every nook and cranny of the building," he said. "When he maintains it year after year, it's just like your house. It'll take some time for the people to build that same level of knowledge and experience."

Dunn said this puts the retirees of the Liberal school in a unique light.

"It is different because of that history and that knowledge base, and as we see with retirement, we're going to see more and more over a period of time," he said.

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