Opportunity knocking for FHS students

College offers technical, other courses

By MOLLY WILLIAMSON
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Whether students move on to college or into the job market, Frankfort High School administration said it wanted to make sure its students were as prepared as possible for what lies ahead.

"We determined a large percentage of the students who leave Frankfort High School, about 80 percent, attend college," said Principal Paul Christy. "We realized we were doing a tremendous disservice to that 20 percent that knows (college) is not what it wants to do. We wanted to provide an opportunity for some sort of postsecondary education by getting them into a vocational/technical school."

So Frankfort High is partnering this year with the Anderson County branch of the Bluegrass Community and Technical College District, one of 16 college districts in Kentucky Community and Technical College System.

As part of the college's Opportunity College program, students can now take as many courses as they want at Anderson County for $80 a course, said Jim Kerley, president and chief executive officer of Bluegrass Community and Technical College. Typically courses cost $300.

"This gives them the opportunity to get a jump on their college education and the motivation to start thinking about college early," Kerley said. "They learn they

See **CLASSES,** A3

Classes (Continued from Page A1)

can do college-level work. They can save a lot of money and many times can earn enough credits to enter college as a second-semester freshman."

Frankfort's pilot student is senior Lynley Cracraft, who will begin an algebra course Aug. 23 at Anderson County. She will earn both high school and college credit for the course.

"I'm planning on going to (the University of Kentucky) or (Lexington Community College) and I thought it would be easier to transfer credits from (Anderson County) to those schools, because they are all linked together," said Cracraft, who wants to study to be a dental hygienist.

She said she already took all the math courses available at Frankfort High and said she can boost both her college and high school transcripts with the classes at Anderson County.

Next semester, she plans to take an English course so she will have some of her core courses completed before she starts college.

"I am really excited because it allows me to go ahead and start working toward my degree," Cracraft said. "It makes it easier on me for when I get to college and it saves us some money, too."

Christy wants to "hit recruitment a little harder next semester" for the vocational and technical courses. He said the school did not have time to get the word out about Opportunity College before students scheduled the courses, so he expects more students to attend Anderson County next semester.

"Maybe we will only get one or two this year (to take courses), but we've gotta start somewhere," Christy said. "Our goal will be to double that number next year and then the next year. This is a great opportunity that anyone can take advantage of."

Even those who are planning to attend a four-year college can take courses to prepare them for their majors, Christy said. For example, Frankfort High does not offer computer-aided drafting or architectural design or drawing classes, which are vital for engineering courses.

Those interested in the medical field can get a jump start on their profession by taking basic courses at Anderson County.

"They can begin taking them as electives here, but are already working toward a two- or four-year degree," Christy said. "It gives students a tremendous head start."

Now that Frankfort High School has changed its schedule to provide a 90-minute period immediately following almost an hour-long lunch, students can use that additional time to travel to and from Anderson County and take a course, Christy said.

If the student is only able to take a course during another period of the day, Christy said the guidance staff will work with the student to make it possible.

Currently, students must provide their own transportation, but Christy hopes soon to have enough participation that the district can provide some transportation.

The Bluegrass Community and Technical College District works with all the high schools in its district to promote Opportunity College, Kerley said. Credits transfer to any Kentucky public university.

Since Bluegrass Community and Technical College is a consolidation of Central Kentucky Technical College, which included Anderson County Community and Technical College, and Lexington Community College, the district can provide a wide variety of courses from strictly core academics to career and technical courses dealing with computers, carpentry, automotive, dental hygiene and cosmetology in addition to many other career fields.

"We are excited about the program and excited about the possibility of working with Frankfort students and the community as a whole," Kerley said.

Opportunity College began last year, but this is the first year for the reduced tuition rate. Kerley said school has not begun yet, but he expects enrollment to increase because of the lower tuition.

"We did not want students from families without a lot of money to be deprived of going to college," Kerley said. "We wanted to give them an equal chance and this was our way of doing that. This was something we think we needed to do. This will help motivate students to bridge into college."

Frankfort High School will continue to work with Kentucky State University and Midway College to offer dual credit programs, Christy said. For example, about five students are at KSU this semester and Midway will come in second semester and offer a dual credit psychology course.