

# TCC campus in Portsmouth will have plenty of amenities

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## PORTSMOUTH

The new Portsmouth campus of Tidewater Community College, with red-brick buildings flanking a tree-dotted grassy quadrangle, will scream "college." And that's how school officials want it.



It's a visual sign of the changes on all four TCC campuses, where more students are choosing the two-year school to start their work toward a bachelor's degree that would be finished at a four-year college or university.

Those students increasingly "want all the bells and whistles of the full collegiate experience," whether they're at TCC, Old Dominion University or the University of Virginia, said TCC President Deborah DiCroce.

Friday morning's drizzle stopped long enough for a line of notables, including Gov. Timothy M. Kaine, to dump pails of dirt from the current Portsmouth campus onto the new campus already under construction near Victory Boulevard and Greenwood Drive, ceremonially breaking ground for the project.

The new 35-acre campus, a \$60 million expenditure by the state, the city of Portsmouth, the city's public

schools and the Beazley Foundation, is expected to open by January 2010. It will feature four buildings to start, including a nursing school equipped with state-of-the-art human-patient simulators that blink, breathe and talk to students.

The current Portsmouth campus, actually located across the line in northeastern Suffolk, was the first of the four TCC campuses when it opened in 1968.

TCC is the largest college in Hampton Roads, with almost 39,000 students, full- and part-time. It still serves those seeking direct workplace skills, but more than half of those declaring their intentions are enrolled in programs aimed at transferring to four-year schools. So are more than half of the graduates.

In the past decade, the average age of a TCC student has dropped from 30 to 27, and more than half the



SOURCES: TCC, ESRI, Tele Atlas VP

students now are traditional college age: 18 to 24.

"You can see it at graduation, when they march across the stage," DiCroce said. "I mean, they're younger."

They're drawn, officials say, by the lower tuition and fees - \$2,404 on average, compared with the Virginia four-year-school average of \$7,083, according to the State Council of Higher Education - and transfer agreements with other state schools.

That's what drew Alban Selamaj of Virginia Beach. He wanted to start

his college life closer to home to save money.

He intends to transfer to Old Dominion to study business.

"If I was to go to ODU or U.Va. right now, I would feel confident," he said.

Among the major construction projects planned: student centers at all four campuses - a first for community colleges in Virginia - albeit with day-care centers to serve students with families.

Racks of school sweat shirts and caps at TCC's new MacArthur Center bookstore foster the traditional college spirit and engagement that often translates into academic success, DiCroce said.

"It's not just fluff or PR," DiCroce said. "I mean, it's real; it matters."

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