Dr. John D. Gossett has been named by the McDowell Technical Community College Board of Trustees to succeed Dr. Bryan W. Wilson as president of McDowell Technical Community College following Wilson’s retirement on August 1st. Wilson has been with the college since 1983 and has served as president since January, 2004. Gossett will be the college’s fifth president since it was established as a standalone institution of the NC Community College System in 1967.

The announcement came during the trustees’ monthly board meeting on May 19th. The appointment was subsequently approved by the State Board of Community Colleges on May 20th.

“It is such an honor to be named as president,” said Gossett. “I offer my sincere thanks to the Board of Trustees for choosing me to lead this college, and I look forward to what the future holds for all of us. Our college is in good shape. We have faculty who care about their students and their subject areas, which is a big plus. Our staff is student-centered and very helpful. We have great relationships with our partners, such as Superintendent Mark Garrett and McDowell County Public Schools, as well as with our employers in the area. It feels like the stage is set for growth here in McDowell County.”

Gossett is currently the Vice-President for Learning and Student Services at McDowell Tech, a position he has held since December, 2012. He succeeded Shirley Brown in that role.

“I am thankful to Dr. Wilson for bringing me to McDowell Tech and introducing me to McDowell County,” Gossett stated. “I have learned so much from him in the three-and-a-half years since I started working here. As I told the Board, Dr. Wilson has done a great job here, and I plan to build on his foundation of service to students and the community.”

As an example of good community service and collaboration, Gossett cited Wilson’s initiative in working with the Manufacturer’s Pipeline Committee as one he would like to continue. “It is a perfect example of talking with our constituencies, understanding their needs and developing plans to address those needs,” Gossett continued.

Working with both new and existing businesses and industries, spotting workforce trends and educating and training students to succeed in that workforce is essential to the mission of the community college system, he said. As a result, “Economic development will continue to be a big part of what we are doing, especially in rural areas of the United States, like ours.”

Darren Waugh, Chairman of the MTCC Board of Trustees, thanked the trustees for their diligence during the selection process. “It is a long and involved process,” he said, “and it was obvious that trustees took their responsibility for choosing a new president very seriously.”

The college received 31 total applications for the position, and had 18 additional inquiries and partial applications. Following a screening process, five applicants were interviewed for the position and a thorough background investigation was completed on Gossett. Michael Lavender, Director of External Relations.
Relations, assisted the board during the screening process and completed the background investigation on Gossett.

Before coming to McDowell Tech, Gossett served as Vice-President of Student Development Services at Mayland Community College in Spruce Pine, NC, where he had been employed since 1987. During his tenure at Mayland, Gossett served in a variety of increasingly responsible roles at the college. From 1987 to 1991, he taught in the Business Department and chaired that department from 1989 to 1991. From 1991 to 1996, he served as Associate Vice-President of Academic Services, during which time he was also Title III Director from 1993 to 1998. In 1996 and 1997, Gossett filled two roles, one as Associate Vice-President of Workforce Development and Small Business Center Director, and Interim Vice-President of Academic Services. From 1997 to 2006, he was Director of Research and Planning, a role he continued until his appointment as Vice-President of Student Development Services. From 1997-2001, he was also a management team member for Avery County JobLink.

Gossett was very complimentary of his time at Mayland Community College and the people with whom he worked. “There are too many students, fellow employees and business partners to mention by name. As I look back on my time there, so many people had a positive impact on my life, and I hope I did theirs in return.”

Gossett also had praise for those under whom he served. “I am blessed to have served under so many great leaders who gave me opportunities to grow and learn. In addition to Dr. Wilson, Dr. Ken Boham, Dr. Tommy Williams, and Dr. Suzanne Owens all entrusted me with leadership responsibilities. I am very grateful for their confidence and have tried to continue their legacy of support to others. I worked with Dr. Owens the longest and appreciate her undying desire to help students. She taught me so much about leading with dignity and grace.”

In 1985, Gossett received his undergraduate degree in Business Administration, with a concentration in Marketing from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, and in 1987, he received a master of business administration degree from Appalachian State University. In 2002, he completed his doctor of education degree in Adult and Community College Education from North Carolina State University. His doctoral dissertation focused on the role of community colleges in economic development.

Certainly, Gossett is no stranger to leadership, both in education and in the public square. He has served on the Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce and the Avery Development Corporation Board, for which he was secretary in 2010 and treasurer in 2005 and 2006. He was a charter member of the Rotary Club of Avery County and Grandfather Home for Children’s Charter School, for which he was both Vice-Chair (1998) and Chair (1999-2002). In 2006, he was President of the NC Community College Planning and Research Organization (CCPRO), an organization with which he had served for several years. He has served on the Advisory Board for the State Employee’s Credit Union in Newland and directed golf tournaments for Mayland Community College Foundation during his tenure at that institution.

During his spare time, Gossett has taught for Lees McRae College and the Rural Entrepreneurship through Action Learning Summer Institute in Hilton Head, SC, and for several years, he coached soccer and T-Ball with the Avery County Recreation Department. He also served on the Little League Board of Directors in Avery County. Finally, he has been a member of several professional organizations, including the NC Community College System Instructional Administrators Association and the NC Community College Planning and Research Organization, and has given professional presentations at a variety of professional symposiums.
“Dr. Gossett will be a great president,” said Waugh. “He already knows the college and people in this community, and he has worked in almost every functional area of a community college except the finance department. He will be able to hit the ground running, and we look forward to great things.”