

SPE Center Community Outreach - Meeting Minutes

NPC representatives in Attendance:

Jeanne Swarthout, NPC President
Mark Vest, NPC Vice President of Student Services
Tamara Osborne, SPE Center Manager
Michael Colwell, Apache County Advisor
Tamara Martin, NPC Apache County Coordinator

Community Members in Attendance:

Ernest Taylor, USFS
Steve West, Springerville Town Manager
Mike Nuttall, Springerville Police Department
Siobhan Coffelt, WMRMC Child Care Director
Mike Hogan, Eagar Police Department
Winslow McNeill, WMRMC

Date: February 25th, 2015
Scheduled: 1:00 pm
Location: NPC – Springerville-Eagar Center, Room 133
940 E Maricopa St., Springerville, AZ 85938

M I N U T E S

Meeting began 1:00 pm

Overview of Campus, Programs and Services by Center Manager, Tamara Osborne

The Springerville-Eagar center has been running on site and distance courses along with NAVIT and some dual enrollment at the High School. The Biology lab has recently been completed and we are now running Biology 181 this semester. The students are enjoying the new lab and not having to travel for this course.

Summary of Current Strategic Plan by President Swarthout

President Swarthout explained that an important part of the strategic planning process is to involve community and get feedback about what is and is not working. The strategic plan is a 3 year rolling plan. The college is currently working towards changing their current plan from what is sometimes referred to as a “dream plan” to one that is more focused, targeted and simple. The new plan will highlight 2 or 3 big processes. Operational plans will always tie into the strategic planning process. The strategic plan is the basis of how NPC budgets and therefore, all budget requests must relate to the strategic plan. This is directly related to accreditation standards. The (old) strategic plan can be found on NPC’s website: <http://npc.edu/npc-strategic-plan>. President Swarthout asked community members in attendance, “How do you think your educational needs may change in Apache County?” Most agreed it was a difficult question to answer.

President Swarthout explained that the Vice President of Administration, Blaine Hatch, was unable to attend, but that he would normally address facilities and finances in this portion of the meeting. It was clarified that facilities in Apache County are managed more by the Apache County Higher Educational Advisory Committee. In Navajo County, the skills center, for example, was built recently using no bonds, but instead by the maintenance and operations fund. The college keeps a 6 month reserve and receives no capital from the state. This includes soft capital (to purchase items like computers, replacing equipment for welding, nursing, etc.). NPC has 3 revenue lines: tuition (only 14%), property tax (secondary property tax in Apache County pays for services here) and state aid (1.3 million -which has been cut increasingly over the years). NPC does receive a second line of state funding called Equalization (5.5 million). This is funding from the state that is provided to rural areas when property values are low or a good portion of the land cannot be taxed. This is more important to the NPC than other state funding. Equalization has become a target because NPC, Cochise and Eastern Arizona receive Equalization. When added together, it looks big to the state.

One problem NPC is facing is expenditure limitations. There are discussions happening at legislature on this topic as it affects all community colleges. This means the expenditure limits that were set in 1979 prevent the college from spending money, although they have it to spend. It was originally devised on student population and a national decline in student enrollment adds to the problem. A yearlong study is being requested.

Highlights in Instruction by Vice President Mark Vest

Vice President Vest explained that many community colleges have a teaching model based on Universities from the 1960's where 19 year olds attend Fall and Spring and take summer off. This model is not ideal for people interested in careers who want to finish now and begin work (often in areas such as welding, nursing, IMO, etc.). The majority of these students would prefer to attend school year round. The Department of Education is discontinuing their year round funding. This means that it used to be that there were three separate funding semesters (fall, spring and summer) and this would provide more pell funding for summer. Now, pell funding is awarded for Fall and Spring and only if there is more left over will it be applied to summer. As a way to help, NPC will be offering half price tuition rates for summer to incentive students to take summer courses. NPC will also be offering a College Bound Scholarship for High School students to take up to 7 credits per semester of general education courses for free. Many parents have expressed concerns that their child is unable to take advantage of this scholarship during the school year because of sports, after school activities or other time constraints. Another concern that has been mentioned is that NAVIT does not pay for general education courses. NPC will now offer this College Bound Scholarship for summer to help these student take advantage during summer break.

Vice President Vest went on to explain some differences from 2009 to 2013. Congress and the Department of Education were denying 17% of students for pell funding for various reasons, but over the last four years reductions in pell funding have resulted in a denial rate of 28% in 2013. The rules have changed. Student's ability to pay went down and their ability to receive pell grants went down at the same time. Additionally, there has been a 32% decline in students being paid for third party funding (such as WIA, Navajo Tribal Agencies, employers, etc.) Now students have to choose between self-pay or no school. A lot of students have completed $\frac{3}{4}$ of their credits towards completion and have to quit. NPC is offering a Finish Line Scholarship that pays for the last 12 credits for students to finish their degree. They must first apply for Pell Funding and if they do not qualify, they can then apply for the Finish Line Scholarship.

VP Vest also explained that in Navajo County, 6,000 people have left the county from 2009 to 2013. This reduces the tax base as well as the pool of skilled workers. Unemployment is still higher than the state average. In 2011, the Governor declared that the recession was over, but since 2011 Navajo County as seen an additional 6% job loss. NPC is often the first ones to feel the impact of recession and the slowest to recover from it. One way to improve the job situation is by adding highly skilled and motivated workers. Statewide, enrollment has declined, but NPC's enrollment has flattened out (or slightly increased) which means NPC is the only community college not in decline. A new focus on students who are already enrolled is in the works with the PASS (Proactive Advising for Student Success) program. The PASS program is intended to help with the dropout rate by offering support to students. This program will track students, make sure they go to class, follow up when they do not, and help identify problems before they are critical to student success. Some people are concerned students may not like all the extra attention, but many appreciate the extra help. Students are able to build a support system, which in many cases is lacking outside of the school environment. VP Vest asked the community to talk to students about why it's important and offer support.

Vice President Vest explained that this summer will be the last year NPC will be mailing out schedules. Instead, a magazine will be sent out twice a year. The magazine will have a career focus and will encourage students to come into the campuses and centers to talk with advisors and managers. The schedules will still be offered online as well. NPC has tried using post cards in the past, but noticed enrollment drop as a result. From the year 2000 to 2010 the median age changed from 26 to 33. 150 18-21 aged people have left, while the county will gain 8,000 senior citizens. This means there are older people and fewer students. Retirees are not typically the strongest supporters of education.

VP Vest mentioned 4 of the 13 students on the All-Arizona Academic team were from Apache County. Also, the Small Business Development Center nominates a business with the master award and this year's nomination went to Randy Nicoll with AZ log and Timberworks (in Eagar).

Recommendations and comments from members of the community

There was discussion around the high impact of the power plants uncertain future and its effect on the future of the communities and as well as the college. There were suggestions ranging from showing people visually (perhaps a graph) how education can impact your life and income to helping the younger generation prepare for work expectations (work ethic, interview process, etc.). Many believe the community and the college should focus on the skills and trades that started the community such as forestry, ranching and medical. The idea of creating an animal husbandry program working with vets similar to other nearby Vet Tech programs was discussed. The University of Arizona has started offering accelerated veterinary program and there may be opportunities to for on the job training. This may lead to payment for equipment at vet's offices they wouldn't otherwise be able to afford.

Others felt exploring jobs that use our natural resources would be beneficial, especially following the wildfire for forestry and pre-forestry as well as logging. Although the lack of foresters and fewer jobs in forestry make it harder to find people to fill forestry positions. It was suggested that perhaps a technician program instead of a 4 year degree would be useful as NAU only want students to take courses in Flagstaff.

Many noted that our CTE courses in fire science, police work, cosmetology, welding, IMO and nursing are doing well, because people are able to get jobs in these fields.

Others discussion alternative options NPC could explore including (chiropractic) occupational assistants, physical therapist assistants, record keeping and dental assistants. There may be possibilities to cloud in lecture and do clinical with dentists in the community.

Some discussed the need for high school students to see what possible careers are early to get excited about possible careers and rule out those that are not a fit. Community members could provide mentorships.

Meeting ended at 2:30 pm