

STJ Center Community Outreach - Meeting Minutes

NPC representatives in Attendance:

Jeanne Swarthout, NPC President
Mark Vest, NPC Vice President of Student Services
Nicole Ulibarri, STJ Center Manager
Tamara Martin, NPC Apache County Coordinator

Community Members in Attendance:

Roger Heap, SJHS Principal
Becky Caballero, SJHS Guidance Counselor
Shelly Finch, SJHS NAVIT Admin
Kimberly Dugdale, SJMS
Ryan Patterson, Mayor/AC Finance Director
Barry Williams, AC Schools Superintendent
Von Stradling, SRP
Jennifer Smale, NAZ Innovative Workforce Solutions

Date: October 27th, 2015
Scheduled: 9:00 am – 10:30 am
Location: NPC – St Johns Center, Room 3
65 S Third West, St Johns, AZ 85925

M I N U T E S

Meeting began 9:01 am

Introductions and Welcome from President Swarthout

President Swarthout welcomed all for attending and proposed the idea of working from a more natural dialog rather from the proposed agenda. Discussion was encouraged.

NPC Updates and Current issues by President Swarthout

President Swarthout announced upcoming retirement of VP of Administrative Services, Blaine Hatch. In addition to VP position, there are many other vacancies at the college for various reasons, including retirement that is currently being filled. The transition in the college offers opportunity to re-evaluate the way things are done and possibly make changes as needed. President Swarthout provided the group with NPC's current state financial situation. She believes there are indications from the State Capitol that community colleges should not have any further reductions to state aid, beyond what has already been cut, for the next couple of years. She explained that NPC only receives a small portion of state aid and would much prefer state aid be cut instead of any cuts to equalization. She explained that for NPC, Equalization amounts to about 5.6 million dollars and is based on property taxes. There are only 3 community colleges in Arizona that receive equalization (Eastern Arizona, Cochise and NPC).

Another issue the college is facing is the Expenditure Limit. It was explained that this was established in 1979 and has not changed. As a school, if you are close to reaching your expenditure limit, it means you can have money, but you are not able to spend it. NPC would like to see changes made at a state legislature level to correct this issue. There is an expenditure limit study committee in place to try to come up with fixes. There are 3 pieces they are working on that they would expect to alleviate the issue for about 10-15 years. Their main focus is making sure no other colleges are harmed in looking for a fix in the next session. There was some group discussion with questions including possible solutions such as running an election to change this. President Swarthout verified that yes an election could be run, but it would not truly be effective unless the actual language regarding expenditure limitations was changed.

The group along with President Swarthout and Vice President Vest also talked over the state budget cuts imposed on JTEDs (Joint Technical Education District which includes Career and Technical Education). NAVIT (Northern Arizona Vocational Institute of Technology) is the only group that has been restored in legislature. If the problem is not addressed, within 2-3 years it is possible there will no longer be any JTED. President Swarthout encouraged all industry representatives to keep pressure on the state legislature to support these programs.

Updates and Current Issues by Vice President Vest

VP Vest began by reminding the group about a grant that was introduced at the last community outreach meeting in the Spring that has changed slightly. The Original grant they anticipated using was the FIPSE grant; however this grant did not match what they wanted to do so NPC instead

applied for and was approved for a Title 3 Grant that worked much better. This grant allows High School students in their high schools to attend connected classrooms (at each participating high school) to take college level courses and receive dual enrollment credit (both high school and college credit during high school hours). VP Vest reviewed the planning process and the timeline. These courses are being planned to begin in the Fall of 2016 allowing the summer for structural work and classroom preparations. The grant funds can cover increases to bandwidth, equipment, a project director, technical support pay to support the classrooms and a full equipment refresh in the last year of the grant. One course NPC would like to offer is Math (to get high school students that might be below this math level up to date so they are ready to take college algebra right out of high school). St Johns is one of the school districts who expressed interest in this early on and will be implementing this system in the Fall.

There was group discussion regarding the increased interest many high school students have in completing with NPC. Some feel it is because they began taking courses at NPC in high school and already have their foot in the door or are familiar with NPC, while others attribute it to the economical and cost benefits. There are many scholarships the students at SJHS have been taking advantage of including the College Bound Scholarship (for high school students who meet requirements, student can receive up to 7 free AGEC college courses for free at NPC) and the All-Arizona Academic Team (NPC is allowed 2 students from each location, 18 total. This scholarship provides a full tuition waiver to any of the three Arizona state universities, ASU, NAU or U of A for up to 60 credits to complete his or her bachelor's degree). President Swarthout informed the group that studies have proven that students who attend University with an Associate Degree (transfer students with 30 credits) do better academically and have better graduation rates. VP Vest reminded everyone that St Johns has had great representation with the All-AZ Academic Team and that SJHS has used 1/3 of all College Bound funds throughout the entire college. NPC enrollment at the St Johns center is up 12% for regular enrollment. He stated he believes this success is due to the dedication of the St Johns High School Counselors and Administration.

Recommendations and comments from members of the community

President Swarthout directed the conversation to the group and inquired about their thoughts on what NPC might need to think about and focus on. Von Stradling with SRP had questions and concerns about what the above mentioned Title 3 Grant might impose when implemented based on his experiences with a previous "Get into Energy" Grant. His worry is that once you accept grant funds, there may be some "strings attached" that they may not like. Speaking of the energy grant, he explained that due to the grant one of the 4 semesters in the IMO program changed and he would be interested in changing the curriculum once the grant ends. President Swarthout explained that the grant ended on September 30th and is currently in wrap-up. She also indicated that recommendations can be made for changes to curriculum. She recommended he speak with the Chair of the Advisory Committee for IMO, Kenny Keith about his concerns and possible changes. VP Vest added that as for the Title 3 grant, it will be 5 years and they are aware they will need to evaluate once they begin and see what things work and what does not. Mr. Stradling also mentioned that SRP has hired some great new individuals at higher levels who have helped the overall company. He praised NPC for the good IMO Program.

Becky Caballero, with SJHS expressed concerns over JTED funding and questioned what would happen if it disappeared? President Swarthout explained that it also concerns NPC because it will greatly impact the adult population as well. Welding and Cosmetology (in ST Johns) need the NAVIT population for the adult students. Ryan Patterson questioned if there has been any discussion with industry to find funding? President Swarthout indicated that the community college district has not done this, as many other colleges don't have the same relationships with JTED as NPC. Many expressed this need for NPC in the communities and strong education as important to the overall town. With uncertainties in the coal power plants and possible NAVIT funding cuts, there are many problems that could potentially impact the college in the future. Some of the possible solutions and future directions education is headed involve technology. Many Universities are expanding on this through the Sun Corridor Grant, but they are bandwidth intensive and that is another issue in our region. The group was again encouraged by President Swarthout to use this awareness to influence our providers.

Meeting ended at 10:27 am