

# Position Regarding Four-Year Degrees



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In Navajo and Apache Counties

Northland Pioneer College District Governing Board

Given the recent meetings and public coverage of the concept of a four-year college facility in the Show Low area, the District Governing Board of Northland Pioneer College (NPC) wishes to make its position clear. The Governing Board and the entire staff of NPC support the availability and accessibility of Bachelor degree options in Navajo and Apache counties. However, there are economical and productive ways to make this happen; there are also ways in which the taxpayers of both counties would incur additional tax burdens. We believe that we must continue to work to bring Bachelor degree options to the entire region in ways that do not incur additional loss of financial resources to our population while bringing the economic benefits of Bachelor degree availability.

**At the present time, three options are being discussed regionally:**

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**Option A:** *To fund and build a four year college in the White Mountains area.*

- This option requires a substantial investment on the part of the communities to be served by way of additional property taxes and bonding to build, furnish and staff new facilities, the majority of which simply replicate those already in existence at NPC.
- It would provide only limited local, highly specific Bachelor degree options, during face-to-face class time, and require a relatively large student population needed for upper division classes to support the operation of the facility.
- It would require extensive new tax revenues for land purchase, building construction, capital equipment and staffing as well as ongoing new tax revenues needed for regular operation, staffing and maintenance.
- New accreditation would be required together with additional Arizona statutory changes.
- Additionally, it would be in competition with our existing three nationally recognized public state universities.

**For these reasons, the Northland Pioneer College District Governing Board does not support Option A at this time.**

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**Option B:** *To work toward a limited number of four-year degrees to be delivered at the local community college.*

- This option would also provide only a limited number of local Bachelor degree options, but with greater accessibility via distance education throughout the service area rather than in one location.
- It would also require statutory changes at the Arizona legislature to allow a community college to deliver any Bachelor degree program.
- It would additionally require Arizona statutory changes regarding community college funding, as the costs of upper division courses are higher than lower division ones.
- Finally, it would require lengthy and expensive processes of changing the community college accreditation status.

**For these reasons, the Northland Pioneer College District Governing Board does not support Option B at this time.**

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**Option C: *To continue to forge joint degree program partnerships with the three public state universities that allow community college students to acquire upper division credits at local two-year (or possibly three-year) facilities.***

In light of the current willingness of the three state universities to expand degree program partnerships, this method offers the following advantages:

- Minimizes the costs to students and taxpayers.
- Builds on existing NPC infrastructure and staffing.
- Places a high value on using the network infrastructure of NPC to bring high quality (Higher Learning Commission-acclaimed) courses and teaching for the Bachelor degree directly to the total regional communities.
- Provides for the efficient use of resources already funded and constructed.
- Gives Bachelor degree accessibility via distance education throughout the entire service area rather than in one location.
- Over time, will likely provide a larger variety of Bachelor degree options for students.
- Does not require statutory changes for either funding or accreditation for institutions in partnerships.

***Northland Pioneer College continues to support ongoing efforts to enhance the availability of Bachelor degree programs for the citizens of Navajo and Apache counties. However, given the present economic and statutory realities facing our region and the entire state of Arizona, coupled with the willingness of the three state universities to expand degree program partnerships, the District Governing Board and staff of NPC believe strongly that a Community College+University Distance Education Partnership (Option C) is the best choice for our students and the communities we serve.***

*Approved by the Navajo County Community College District Governing Board on October 19, 2010.*