Northland Pioneer College

Office of the President

May 23, 2003

Dr. Barbara Pollard Taylor
Assistant Director for Process Integrity
Higher Learning Commission
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
30 North LaSalle Street, Suite 2400
Chicago, IL 60602-2504

Dear Dr. Taylor:

Please find enclosed Northland Pioneer College's progress report on technology and facilities. The report is required June 30, 2003.

Two supporting documents are also enclosed.

Thank you for your assistance with this matter, and please don't hesitate to call if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Gary Passer
President

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NORTHLAND PIONEER COLLEGE PROGRESS REPORT

Submitted to the

Higher Learning Commission

Northland Central Association of Colleges and Schools

May 28, 2003

Introduction

Following the October 18-20, 1999 Higher Learning Commission site visit, the team submitted a "Report of Visit to Northland Pioneer College." In Section VII, "Team Recommendation and Rationale" (page 59), two technology concerns were identified. They were:

1. "Low quality of audio programming at some sites."
2. "Incomplete implementation of technology, resulting in discrepancies in access to technology by students and staff and diminished capacity of communication among the distant locations."

The report also identified seven concerns with physical facilities:

1. "Litigation pending concerning the Holbrook campus" (page 59).
2. "...A pending agreement with the Navajo Nation regarding use of a facility to continue the college's programs...." (page 60).
3. The NCA team concurs with the following statement regarding staff and students at the Keams Canyon Center (page 25) ".....there is feeling that they are currently in a second-class facility".
4. Whiteriver Center is discussed (page 25) as being "...located in a former middle school [that] is small...A run-down property adjacent to the parking lot detracts from the image of the site."
5. Safety concerns at the Springerville/Eagar Center are discussed (page 57), "...including the entrance to the parking lot and the potential fire hazard posed by the accumulation of stubble next to the buildings."

6. "The environmental and space conditions of the photography lab at the White Mountain Campus," are mentioned on page 57.
7. Finally, the team suggested that the college should look into the testing of students, which was assigned to library functions without adequate space.

In order to address these concerns, the team requested that a progress report be submitted by June 30, 2003 to "review the development of physical facilities and technology implementation" (page 60).

This progress report will describe the college's achievements in both areas. Part I will address technology-related issues, and Part II will address concerns regarding physical facilities. A five-year technology development plan follows the body of this report, as does a current capital project development plan.

The College has resolved both of the technology-related issues and six of the seven facilities-related points, as demonstrated in the body of this document. Although progress has been made toward the resolution of Item 7 regarding student testing, ongoing efforts continue to remedy the problem completely at all campuses and centers. As noted in the college's annual operational plan, a complete solution is anticipated by the end of the current fiscal year.

Part I: Resolution of Technology Related Issues

A. Improvement of Audio Course Technology to Address "Low Quality Audio Programming at Some Sites"

In addition to an interactive television distance learning system and Internet-based instruction, Northland Pioneer College utilizes a networked audio distance learning system to distribute classes to campuses and centers. System components consist of an audio bridge or main control unit located on the Painted Desert Campus in Holbrook, and remote audio units located in campus/center audio classrooms. From any remote site, participants call or connect to the audio bridge to join the class conference. The instructor, who may be located at any site, can conduct

lectures and communicate with students. Students can interact with the instructor and classmates in other audio classrooms.

As noted in the 1999 site visit report, audio course equipment at some sites did not provide a good level of audio clarity and would periodically lose connectivity to the audio bridge. Poor audio clarity and loss of connectivity for these sites resulted in students having difficulty in adequately comprehending class lectures and participating in discussions.

In order to resolve these difficulties, the college replaced the older remote analog audio components with new digital conferencing units during fiscal year 2000-01. New audio technology was implemented at St. Johns, Springerville, Whiteriver, Hopi and Kayenta Centers. New digital units were also implemented in audio classrooms at the Painted Desert Campus in Holbrook and the Silver Creek Campus in Snowflake. These newer units were already in place in other campus audio classrooms connected to the system.

The new digital audio classroom equipment provides an improvement in audio clarity through the following functionality. The units are equipped with higher quality speakers and more sensitive microphones, enabling a significant increase in the overall volume of the audio signal. Conversion of the analog signal to digital transmission enables the filtering of line noise and other disruptive sound such as telephone line hum. Digital transmission supported by the newer audio class units also provides a more stable connection, thereby decreasing loss of transmission.

In addition to improving the audio signal quality and decreasing loss of connectivity, the newer units provide the following additional features. First, the ability for instructors to connect to the system from a telephone that is not on the NPC telephone network decreases the need to cancel classes when bad weather or other emergencies prevent instructors from coming to a campus or center. Second, the ability to add components such as additional microphones and other equipment to the system easily accommodates students with special needs. And third, the ability to disconnect and replace any remote classroom equipment without disrupting the other remote classroom sites on that conference allows for continuity of lectures and discussions.

As well as making significant improvements in the audio distance learning technology, the College used grant money from the Department of Education Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education (FIPSE) to implement and improve other technology components at Hopi, Whiteriver and Kayenta. Within the three-year grant project (1999 – 2002,) the College implemented interactive video classroom equipment and networked computers in labs and library areas at these centers.

B. Completion of Technology to Address "Discrepancies in Access to Technology by Students and Staff and Diminished Capacity for Communication Among Distant Locations"

The College utilizes an extensive Wide Area Network (WAN) to deliver instruction, student services and administrative operations to four campuses, six centers, the District Office and a Community Education Center adjacent to the new location for the Holbrook Painted Desert Campus. Central site technology is located at the Holbrook campus and remote technology is located at each of the other locations. The 1999 report, Institutional Challenges section (page 55) noted that "The College has not moved aggressively enough to complete the Wide Area Network (WAN) and the Local Area Networks (LANs), to determine the appropriate computer operating system, and to provide e-mail and Internet access for instruction and administration."

At the time of the site evaluation, the Kayenta and Hopi Centers, were not connected to the College WAN, resulting in the inability to deliver distance learning service, Internet access and online administrative functions to these locations. However, in May 2000 networking technology, data circuits, the interactive television system, telephones, audio equipment and computer equipment were fully implemented and functional at both locations. With the completion of connectivity for these sites, all campus and center locations are now connected to the college WAN, and the college has resolved the issue of "discrepancies in access to technology by students and staff and diminished capacity for communication among the distant locations" as stated in the HLC report.

In addition to completing the WAN, conduit and data cabling were conjoined to several campus buildings, connecting these facilities to the campus local area network (LAN) during fiscal year 2000-01. These specific modular structures located on the Silver Creek Campus at Snowflake, the White Mountain Campus at Show Low and the Painted Desert Campus at Holbrook housed staff and/or computer work areas but were not connected to the data LAN during the time of the 1999 site visit. At this time, all permanent buildings and temporary modular structures, with computers or other technology requiring network functionality, are fully connected to the respective campus LAN.

Some of these re-wired temporary modular structures have been scheduled to be vacated or have been vacated with the completion of new permanent buildings or remodeling of permanent buildings on the White Mountain and Silver Creek Campuses. More will be vacated in Summer 2003 with the completion of new buildings on the Painted Desert and Silver Creek Campuses. The college will be moving temporary modular structures from campus locations to the Whiteriver and Kayenta Centers within the next few months. Once these modular units have been set up, the need for network connectivity for each structure will be evaluated. Those modular units that are specified to house computer or other network technology will be connected, via fiber, to the respective LAN.

In order to improve the process for managing computer technology, NPC has established a standard operating system for computers. Microsoft NT based software, including NT 2000 and XP, has been implemented on existing computers and is purchased as standard software on all new computers. It should be noted that the college maintains three computers with Macintosh operating systems for administrative use, and approximately fifteen units with Windows 95 or 98 for specific academic functions. However, the NT based operating system is standard on approximately nine hundred computers at NPC locations and will be implemented on all new computers purchased by the college.

In 1999, some NPC staff members were unable to use network functions such as e-mail. They lacked network connectivity, adequate computers or training. Students located at the Hopi and Kayenta Centers were also unable to access online resources. At this time, all full-time staff and

faculty, as well as some part-time staff and temporary employees, have e-mail accounts and office or work area computers capable of connecting to the network and the Internet. In addition, students at all campuses and centers have access to networked computers for utilizing digital resources and communicating with NPC faculty and staff. The college also provides online access, from a home computer with modem, to library, instructional and student service resources and services via the World Wide Web.

The college recognizes that providing access to network technology including e-mail, Internet browsing and other academic and administrative online resources should be combined with specific training activities for staff and students. During the past three years, library staff members have conducted over two hundred computer orientation and training sessions for students. For staff, training sessions for using e-mail and the Internet are offered at campus locations three to four times each semester. Individual training sessions are also provided for those who are unable attend group sessions.

As well as completing the college-wide network infrastructure, during the last three years, the college has invested approximately $500,000 in Title III Grant funding for enhancing WAN and LAN components, increasing the bandwidth or number of T1 data circuits, and developing new distance learning resources/services. Successful implementation of these activities and continuation of new grant projects in the remaining two years of the funding period directly respond to an "inconsistent quality of learning . . . among distant locations" as noted in the NCA report (page 59). For example, students at remote centers now have comprehensive access to online library research articles, the library book catalog, ASSET testing, financial aid documents, and registration services, just to name a few.

C. Summary of Part I: Resolution of Technology Related Issues

Through improvement of the audio distance learning system, completion of network technology for all campuses and centers, standardization of the computer operating system software, and focused technology training, NPC has responded to the concerns noted in the team report. The following points summarize significant progress in technology areas of concern:

- Completion of the college WAN linking the Hopi and Kayenta Centers enabling access to distance learning, administrative and student services, Internet research, e-mail communication, and other academic networking functions for students, staff and community members at these locations;
- Improvement in the audio teaching system, the interactive television system and Internet-based resources and services through enhancement or replacement of computers and system components in the audio, video and computer lab classrooms;
- Implementation of a standard computer operating system on the majority of college computer workstations enabling technicians to link computers to the college WAN and to more efficiently provide maintenance and support.

Since the HLC site visit, NPC has increased the number of computers connected to the network from approximately 320 in 1999 to approximately 930 in 2003. Staff/faculty e-mail accounts have increased from about 102 in 1999 to over 300 in 2003, and faculty use computer technology to develop WEB-based instruction, enhance lectures with computer presentations and communicate with students and colleagues. The number of faculty using technology -- including interactive video, interactive audio and the Internet -- to teach has increased from 47 in 1999-00 to 65 in 2002-03 and the number of students enrolled in courses delivered via technology has increased from 2879 to 5415 during this same period.

Administrative transactions have also changed dramatically since 1999. To list a few, official announcements, information releases and other college-wide documents were distributed on hard copy in 1999, while the prevalent method in 2003 is group e-mail distribution. Paper and pencil methods of completing ASSET or placement testing have been replaced by online testing which streamlines the process for guiding students to appropriate course scheduling. In preparing reports and other official documents and files, such as this report, staff members work with digital attachments more frequently than printing out and sending back and forth multiple copies through less efficient campus mail, as was common in 1999.

The comprehensive implementation of networking and distance learning technology at all campuses and centers, and the continuing improvement of such technology over the past three years has contributed to establishing an equitable quality of learning environments for students at all locations and an improvement in communication within the college community despite significant geographical distances.

Part II: Resolution of Physical Facilities Related Issues

A. Construction of a New Learning Center and Relocation of a Campus to Address "Litigation Pending Concerning the Holbrook Campus"

The 24,000 square-foot Learning Center on the Painted Desert Campus in Holbrook was permanently closed for safety reasons in January 1998. Problems associated with unstable soil conditions resulted in a structurally defective building. The College initiated litigation against the architect, contractor, and soils engineer.

During the months of June and July 2000, out-of-court settlements were successfully concluded with each of the litigants. The architect of the failed building paid $928,000, the contractor contributed $900,000, and the soils engineer settled for $895,000. In December 2000 the College contracted with an architectural firm to begin planning and design work for a new facility. Property and improvements, identified in 1998 as a potential new location for the Painted Desert Campus, were included in the development plans and studies.

Following a comprehensive evaluation of the feasibility and suitability of relocating the Painted Desert Campus, a new building proposal was initiated through the design review process in October 2001. A 29,000 square foot replacement building has been planned to restore the same function and service as the original failed building, including classrooms, student services, faculty offices and a library. Involvement and input were secured from all potential users of the replacement building.

There has been a high level of support from students, faculty, staff and community members for the construction of the facility at the new site, which will be more centrally located within the City of Holbrook, and therefore more visible and accessible. All constituent groups consider relocation of the campus to be a positive move for the College and an enhancement to the community.

In April 2002, bids for construction of the new building and demolition of the failed building were obtained. In May 2002 a contract was awarded for this work totaling $2,914,000 with a completion date scheduled for July 2003. Additional land with improvements, adjoining the newly designated campus, was procured from the City of Holbrook in conjunction with approval for construction of the replacement building.

The additional acreage, along with the existing Community Education Center at that same location, will provide ample space for future development of the campus. Other existing buildings on site will be remodeled to house additional campus and district support services at a cost significantly less than new construction. The entire Painted Desert Campus is scheduled for relocation to this new site.

B. Establishment of a New Kayenta Facility to Address the "Pending Agreement with the Navajo Nation Regarding Use of a Facility to Continue the College's Programs"

Beginning with the Fall 2000 semester, the College developed a new Kayenta facility in conjunction with the Kayenta Unified School District, through a lease of 1,400 square feet of classroom and office space, for a nominal fee. Additional classroom space is rented on an as-needed basis each semester. Dine College terminated Kayenta services in 2002 as a result of declining support from the community. Improvements in delivery of instruction, student services and access to technology, and a continuing presence in the community have reinforced the positive relationships with Native American constituencies and strengthened the College's position for future development plans. Although no outcome has yet been defined in the specific plans for an educational consortium, the College has had ongoing discussions with the school district and the community.

An investigation into the feasibility of participating with Kayenta Township Commission in the occupancy of a planned Kayenta Social Services Building was instigated in January 2002. While this option would have provided an increased presence and an affirmative outreach to the local government, it was not a cost-effective approach and has been eliminated as an option.

Services and facilities are available to many Native Americans residing in the Navajo Nation through a variety of avenues. The College currently provides facilities in collaboration with other entities in Chinle, Greasewood, Rock Point, Round Rock, Ganado, Window Rock and Sanders.

C. Construction of New Center Facilities to Address Concerns with the Hopi (Keams Canyon) and Whiteriver Centers

Facility improvements continue to be a high priority at all College campuses and centers. Specific reference was made in the 1999 NCA site visit report regarding inferior facilities in Keams Canyon on the Hopi reservation (page 35) and in Whiteriver on the Fort Apache reservation (page 17). The College has constructed new buildings to replace the inferior facilities in both communities. The improved facilities have allowed the College to continue to offer full programs, containing classrooms, student services, faculty offices and libraries. At the same time, these facilities have enhanced the College's image and contributed to its effectiveness.

The Hopi Center, a 9,500 square foot facility located near Hopi High School in Polacca, (approximately 15 miles from the old building at Keams Canyon) was completed in October 2000 for a total cost of $1,500,000. Because of its proximity to the high school, the new center location promotes post-secondary education to graduating high school seniors and facilitates dual enrollment. The new location is also more accessible to the villages of the Hopi Reservation than was the old site at Keams Canyon. It is also fully accessible to students with special needs. The old, two-story antiquated structure was not accessible, and because of its age and original construction, could not be refitted to provide access. The Whiteriver Center was completed in

October 2001. The 8,500 square foot building was built for $1,600,000 and is located in a highly visible location in Whiteriver. It is also fully accessible and equipped with completely updated technology. Landscaping improvements have been added in both locations.

D. Facilities Modifications to Address Safety Concerns at The Springerville/Eagar Center

Safety concerns at the Springerville/Eager Center, as noted in the Report (page 57), were addressed by the development of an additional entrance to the parking area. The grounds have also been enhanced and the potential fire hazard, posed by stubble around the buildings, has been eliminated through regular maintenance and the addition of gravel. A modular building designed as a science classroom is scheduled for relocation from the Silver Creek Campus in Snowflake to the Springerville/Eager Center during the summer of 2003.

E. Addition of a Modular Structure to Address "The Environmental and Space Conditions of the Photography Lab at the White Mountain Campus"

A specific reference was made in the 1999 site visit report concerning "the environmental and space conditions of the photography lab at the White Mountain Campus." (page 57). A modular building adjacent to the photography laboratory was assigned to the program in January 2001. The building had previously been used to house activities that were moved to the newly constructed Aspen Center. Addition of this building to the program has eliminated the space concerns noted in the report. The environmental concerns about air exchange capacity will be remedied by a minor reconfiguration and renovation of the existing laboratory facilities scheduled to be completed by July 2003.

F. Construction of Testing Facilities to Address Concerns Regarding Student Testing

A concern was noted in the site visit report (page 26), "Students are being tested in open lobby areas near the library entrances and service desks." Testing facilities have been designed and constructed in all new library facilities, including the Hopi Center, the Whiteriver Center, and the Painted Desert Campus in Holbrook. The testing facilities are separate rooms, with a glass wall facing the library staff that supervises the testing activities.

To ensure adequate monitoring of students in the libraries, the College has employed use of closed circuit cameras, which can be viewed by staff from the main library desks. In addition, the library is currently seeking additional staff positions. The budget for temporary help has been increased by approximately 30%; temporary help staff has also been increased by approximately 30% within the library system. Temporary help staff members are typically people who have previous library experience and are trained in all library operations.

A concept for the addition of a confined testing area in an existing building was implemented in the library located on the White Mountain Campus in Show Low. A glass-walled room was added on the library side of the wall abutting the Learning Center lobby. The room is fully visible to library staff for monitoring. Initial response to this approach indicates that this area may not be an appropriate testing environment. Sound and activity from the lobby and the library continue to disturb some students taking tests. The College is evaluating other locations in the library that are removed from the major activity zone. It is a priority of the Institutional Planning Committee to ensure that adequate testing facilities will be in place at all campus and center locations by the close of this fiscal year.

G. Other Facility Developments

Several other projects have been completed on the White Mountain Campus in Show Low. The Aspen Center, a newly constructed 12,000 square-foot classroom facility, was occupied in October 2000. It provides additional classrooms, offices, art studios, and a small art gallery at a total cost of $2,200,000. Major modifications were made to the multipurpose building on the White Mountain Campus during the summer of 2001. The primary purpose of the building was changed from a general use area to an enlarged laboratory for cosmetology courses. The facility was operational in September 2001.

Another existing building, the Goldwater Center was extensively remodeled to provide a GED testing center, a Small Business Development Center, and a bookstore in addition to improved faculty offices. The renovation cost $517,000 and was completed in January 2002. The result of

each of these projects has been the reduced dependency on modular buildings. Two modular units were refurbished and relocated to the Whiteriver Center in 2002 to augment the newly constructed facility there. The recent construction activities on the White Mountain Campus have been enhanced by the completion of additional landscaping and parking improvements throughout the campus.

A new 8,300 square-foot facility on the Little Colorado Campus in Winslow was occupied in August 2001. The Blunk Health Science Center houses nursing and science programs and was made possible, in part, by a gift of properties from Winslow residents Burley and Josephine Blunk. The construction cost for this facility totaled $1,500,000. This additional building allowed for the replacement of four modular buildings and for the expansion of health science related programs in Winslow.

The Silver Creek Campus in Snowflake has been able to eliminate all modular buildings on the campus with the complete remodel of a multipurpose building and the construction in progress of a performing arts center. The multipurpose building, which had previously been used for performing arts instruction, practice and performances, was targeted for renovation as plans were finalized for the construction of a new performing arts center on campus. The building now provides general and science classroom space in addition to faculty offices, student related services, and storage. The construction was completed in January 2003 at a cost of $517,000. The new 23,000 square-foot performing arts center is scheduled to be completed in August 2003 and will include instruction space designed for music and drama programs. A "black box" performance area will be highly adaptable and provide for a variety of presentation arrangements accommodating audiences of up to six hundred. The building will cost approximately $3,000,000.

H. Summary of Part II: Resolution of Physical Facility Related Issues

In demolishing its structurally unsound Painted Desert Learning Center, constructing a new learning center, and ultimately relocating the entire Painted Desert Campus to a more accessible and visible central location, NPC has responded to HLC concerns regarding the Painted Desert

Campus in Holbrook. Through a lease agreement for use of classroom and office space at a new center facility at Kayenta, and subsequent improvements in instructional delivery and access to student services and technology, NPC has responded to HLC concerns regarding the Kayenta Center. The construction of new facilities on the Hopi Reservation at Polacca and the White Mountain Apache Reservation at Whiteriver has addressed concerns regarding the inferior facilities that served these communities in 1999. Safety and overall maintenance of the Springerville/Eagar Center has also been addressed. The environmental and space conditions of the photography lab at the White Mountain Campus have been augmented and improved, per suggestion by the HLC team, by the addition of an adjacent modular building. While issues regarding student testing have been partly resolved through the construction of separate testing facilities in new College buildings, challenges remain at some existing facilities.

III. Conclusion

A combination of prudent allocation of college funds and comprehensive efforts in seeking and securing outside funding has allowed for the expansion and improvement of technological access. Now *all* college campuses and centers are interconnected, and both students and staff have access to high-quality audio, video, Internet and e-mail connectivity, which has improved instruction and communication throughout the 21,000 square mile service area.

Careful planning employing a combination of cost-effective remodeling and new construction has allowed NPC to operationalize ten new, permanent facilities in the past four years. Progress in the past four years in the areas of facilities and technology improvement has allowed the College to reduce its dependency on temporary modular buildings, expand its educational and student service offerings, and offer a new and brighter image and presence to the communities it serves.