

## **Local Northland Pioneer College Kayenta Center Hosts a Community Outreach Roundtable** by Malcolm Benally

KAYENTA, AZ – The Northland Pioneer College Kayenta Center Community Outreach manager, Lorraine Benally facilitated a roundtable meeting with many local and neighboring community stakeholders on Thursday, October 27, 2011 at the Kayenta Town Hall meeting room from 10:00 am to 11:30 am. In attendance to provide all the updated information were NPC President Dr. Jeanne Swarthout and Mark West, Vice President. At least 15 people were attendance for the meeting.

Located throughout Navajo and Apache Counties, Northland Pioneer College has four campuses in Show Low, Winslow, Holbrook, and Snowflake. NPC also has five community centers in Kayenta, Hopi Center, St Johns, Spingerville, and Whiteriver, AZ.

The Kayenta Center Manager Lorraine Benally announced that there are currently 79 students enrolled at the Kayenta Center. Lorraine has been with the center for over 14 years, beginning her employment at NPC as a student advisor and later became the Center Manager. “Ever since I came on board, student service has always been our number one priority,” she says. “This will continue to be the case with us, even with the pending state budget cuts. For a lot of our students, financial aid has become more rigorous. But, there is a lot of interest in our Certified Nurse Assistant (CAN) Program and in our Elementary Education program. However, for most of these programs we mainly have a pre-requisite program for our students.” So, at this point, Northland Pioneer College is seen more as a stepping ground to get into a four year university. The college continues to have dialogue with area universities like Arizona State University and Northern Arizona University to make sure that the credit hours to transfer completed pre-requisite classes for the students meets all expectations and is smooth.

The college said its strongest programs are for Certified Nurse’s Assistant, Elementary Education, GED diploma, and Early Childhood. In fact, the certification program for early childhood can allow a person the necessary certifications to run a day care center from home. A lot of these pre-requisite programs are available to Veterans, Food Stamp recipients, and parents on the Navajo Nation Program for Self-Reliance.

After a lively conversation, President Dr. Jeanne Swarthout talked about the Northland Pioneer College Strategic Plan, which “is a result of input from community outreach meetings, needs assessment meetings, and many college activities devoted to planning for the future. It is a complex conversation that puts community concerns and needs on the table. After we assess all these needs, we create partnerships within the community so we can do what we can to best meet our student’s educational needs,” she said. The college has been working on its strategic plan in three year increments, to respond quicker to changes in the state budget process.

Two meeting participants, a local Registered Nurse who has close ties to students through her work, says students ask her all the time how she got her degree as an RN. “So, I know the interest is there,” said the community health nurse for the Kayenta Service Unit. Afterwards, the Regional Director of Diné College said that although it’s great that a lot of students have an interest in nursing, she said the pre-requisites, math, and science classes are rigorous. “We need to build the facilities here,” she said. “It’s

been my experience in Tuba City, that if you build a nice facility, the students will come. The nursing program is definitely a program that we can develop. Right now, a lot of our students are having trouble with the required classes. But, if we build on the programs ourselves, it will be easier to track the student's progress," she said.

Then Jonathan Nez, the Supervisor of the Navajo County Board of Directors from District I and Navajo Nation Council Delegate said he had wanted to see the college provide technical assistance to the Kayenta Public Library. "Right now, the library is getting ready to open, but it is located in a used, single wide trailer. This is a place where students go to get on the public access computers to look for opportunities. And right here in Kayenta, with all the capital improvement projects going on, we have potential for many to find jobs in construction, teaching, and in the health field in the next three to five years," he said. The dialogue turned to building a facility locally to address the needs of limited class rooms and lab space.

Andre Cordero, Kayenta Town Manager said, "We need to work together hand in hand to make this happen. I personally think this is a worthwhile project. We have land that we could be set aside, but my main question is: can it remain operational once the building is up and running? Do you have a capital budget for a building that will address your needs here in town?" he asked.

Dr. Swarhout said, "Yes. We're ok with our budget right now. The money is there. We just need a place to build permanently," she said.

Other areas of discussion included putting more services in for Veterans in the NPC Three Year Strategic Plan, instruction for construction management, math tutoring, heavy equipment operators, community planning, the need for science labs, and technology driven classes. By 11:30 am, the meeting was moved over to the Kayenta Center to provide time also for a Student Focus Group.