

Northland Pioneer College  
Community Outreach, Painted Desert Campus

## November 10, 2016

## Northland Pioneer College, Painted Desert Campus in Holbrook hosted the Campus’s 7th annual community outreach meeting on November 10, 2016 at the Tiponi Community Center.

**Attendees**: Rickey Jackson – NPC Dean of Arts and Sciences, Debra McGinty – NPC Dean of Nursing and Allied Health, Kathy McPherson – Campus Manager at the Painted Desert Campus, Jill Sartain – Assistant to the Campus Manger at the Painted Desert Campus, Otto Walters – Arizona Department of Public Safety, Jim Molesa – Chief Deputy for Navajo County Sheriff’s Department, Brad Traver – Superintendent at Petrified Forest National Park, Diana Bitsui – Center Director at Holbrook Headstart, and Jason Whiting – Navajo County District 3 Supervisor

Meeting Minutes

## Welcome

Kathy McPherson welcomed everyone to the Painted Desert Campus Community Outreach and thanked them for taking time out of their busy schedules to attend. She then turned the meeting over to Dean Jackson who asked everyone to introduce who they are and what organization they represent.

After introductions, Dean Jackson explained why President Swarthout and other NPC executive team members would not be in attendance. He stated that they decided to switch up these meetings and have deans and student services represent the college this year. Dean Jackson said that in looking back at old community outreach minutes, there were a lot of questions asked about classes or why certain classes are being offered. Deans are the ones who schedule classes, so they are better able to answer those types of questions. Dean Jackson also explained that the community outreach committee thought having a different group run these meetings might provide a different view of the college and bring out new information.

## College News and Challenges

Dean Jackson shared that President Swarthout announced her retirement, which will be June 2018. He stated that this gives NPC time to find a good replacement for her, which will be difficult because she has brought stability to NPC and we have really appreciated her leadership.

Something else that Dean Jackson thought should be noted is NPC’s strong enrollment. In the last 5 years there has been a decline in enrollment nationwide for community colleges, about 16 percent since 2011. However, Dean Jackson stated that NPC has stayed pretty stable and has had points of increase over the years. He said this speaks to the support of local communities for NPC and the faith they have in this institution.

Dean Jackson brought up the fairly new TALON project, which is a technology Title 3 grant for non-tribal native serving institutions. It allows NPC to utilize touch screens and broadcast to high school locations – Shonto, Hopi, Red Mesa, Winslow, Joseph City, Holbrook, Snowflake, Blue Ridge, Saint Johns, and Springville. It is a five year grant and over the next couple years NPC will look to expand to even more high schools. TALON allows NPC to offer college credit to high school students. It is duel enrollment but NPC faculty are teaching the courses over an AV system. Dean Jackson said the reason for the grant is to encourage students to get a degree; when students take 2 classes or 6 credits of college credit while they are in high school, the percentage increases for them to achieve a degree. NPC has always had to offer classes utilizing the AV system because of the huge distance between locations and small populations in certain areas. It’s expensive but it is how NPC can meet its mission. Dean McGinty commented on the advanced technology that is used in these classes. It uses two cameras, one that follows the teachers while the other focuses on the class and even allows the teacher to scan the class and zoom in on specific students. Dean Jackson said we will probably see this delivery model more and more over the next couple years. Right now TALON is a pilot so we will see if it is successful. Mr. Traver asked what will happen at the end of the five year grant. Dean Jackson stated that they have been very upfront with the superintendents of the school districts that NPC is going to need their help if they want to keep the program; there is going to have to be some cost sharing. Right now NPC offers duel enrollment to high school students at no cost; NPC does not collect any tuition from them. There will be ongoing conversation with the school districts. It is NPC’s hope that this will increase the number of graduates.

Dean Jackson then spoke about one of the main issues effecting NPC right now; declining property tax. He stated that because of major industry infrastructure, such as things closing up in Snowflake though the years and one of the units at Cholla Power Plant closing, it has really impacted our property taxes, which means we have less money to work with. This is a challenge NPC is facing.

A second challenge Dean Jackson said NPC faces, is finding faculty that want to be here. Dean Jackson stated that while we have a very talented group of faculty, when a position opens and we do job searches it is a challenge; “we have had people turn around once they get close to Holbrook and Winslow”. Finding the right fit is a challenge. NPC has to find someone that enjoys the lifestyle and pace of Northern Arizona and also the diversity one finds in these communities. He said some other reasons finding teachers have been a challenge, for example in ECD, is because getting those that are interested qualified is difficult and public service does not pay well. Dean Jackson stated that they have begun partnering with the school districts more to recruit and hire.

Dean McGinty then went on to say that finding faculty is a primary focus of Nursing and Allied Health right now. She is looking for the best and most experienced instructors in each specialty. Within the RN program she tries to find someone with OB and labor delivery experience, ICU and Telemetry experience, and Pediatric experience, so that she can place the most qualified person in front of a class. Medical assistant and Pharmacy Tech programs also need experienced instructors. Dean McGinty stated her staff understands that wherever they are in clinical settings with students; they are always interviewing for qualified faculty. She said that even with the challenge of competing with salary there are those who seem to gravitate towards teaching and when we find them it is amazing.

## Open Discussion

Dean McGinty and Jackson started the open discussion by asking the community outreach attendees what they thought of NPC graduates that they come in contact with. Are they well qualified for positions in their areas and what can NPC do to better prepare them for the work force?

Mr. Traver of the Petrified Forest stated that he has worked with President Swarthout for many years and would love to hire locally, but unfortunately they do not have that authority right now and must advertise nationally for permanent positions. However, they have found ways to partner with NPC, such as an internship they set up with their IT program where they could have someone come out and shadow IT personnel or other areas. Mr. Traver stated that he would love the park to be an outside classroom for NPC, whether a field school or just needing to get a class out to look at plants and animals. He also stated that Petrified Forest now has distance learning capabilities so they could also broadcast into classrooms. Mr. Traver says Petrified Forest also had employees who have been adjunct faculty at NPC. He would love to continue those relationships and expand on them if we can. He hopes one day they can fill some of their positions locally with NPC graduates. Rickey Jackson mentioned that NPC should have a new course on the books by this time next year about dinosaurs, and he is sure NPC could work out something with Petrified Forest for that class.

Chief Deputy Molesa on behalf of Sheriff Clark wanted to share their appreciation for the relationship with NPC. The sheriff’s office through the county has a huge relationship with NPC, especially though NATC where NPC sponsors their academy, training their reginal officers. Chief Deputy Molesa states that it is a huge benefit to have men and women training so close to home instead of going to Phoenix because they get to stay near family and they are more likely to keep them. There is also the cost benefit for the county. Police officers in Arizona have to have 40 hours of continual training a year and because of the facility at NPC, with the shooting range and classrooms, they are able to do a lot of things locally which saves the county a tremendous amount of money. Chief Deputy Molesa also mentioned their problems attracting nurses to the medical staff at the jail, but through NPC and the county manager’s office they were able to set up internships with nursing students. He states that correctional nursing is a little different than a regular nursing setting but it gives students the opportunity to come and practice the skills they are learning in a different environment and it is free labor for them. Chief Deputy Molesa said from an administrative point, what he would like to see from NPC is some sort of Administrative Justice Program. He feels this would tremendously benefit the area and retain people who work in public service. Chief Deputy Molesa needs his employees to learn administrative tactics such as budgeting, personnel issues, and the inner workings of city and county governments. NPC provides the basics to becoming a police officer but Chief Deputy Molesa also wants them to be able to gain the tools they need to grow in their law enforcement careers and become a police administrator.

Chief Deputy Molesa also mentioned that they just graduated a deputy from NPC’s paramedic program which is something the Sherriff is looking at expanding. He stated that the Sheriff’s Office relationship with NPC is invaluable and they see nothing but opportunity for growth.

Otto Walters stated that DPS really appreciates the academy and although they don’t put any cadets through it, many of the troopers are adjunct faculty at the academy. The facilities, with the shooting range, defensive tactics building, and the driving range are all very important features that really help them out. Otto Walters stated that he works with the men and women coming out of the academy on a daily basis and there is no comparison with the other academies. They are a lot more hands on and in better physical condition when they come out. He also stated that Stuart Bishop is the perfect guy for that job and is very committed. Otto Walters also commented on how many of the younger generation he knows have done NPC’s welding and other vocational courses and are now out working and doing very well.

Diana Bitsui, Center Director at Holbrook Headstart, stated that NACOG and NPC do have a partnership and Headstart does get a lot of support as far as their staff coming in to get their CDA or helping them with their AA degree. Frequently parents will become interested in early childhood and they send them to NPC and in the past have worked very close with Claude Endfield and now Betsy Peck. Miss Bitsui also stated that they encourage their student’s parents to come get their GED. Later in the meeting Dean Jackson mentioned to Diana Bitsui that the GED test has become very difficult to pass and is stopping a lot of people from moving forward. However, the Board of Education in the next year will be putting through an alternative pathway to high school graduation in which a person would take a set of courses that would satisfy a high school diploma and substitute the GED.

Jason Whiting, Navajo County Supervisor, said the one thing he hears consistently though out the community is the partnerships that are enjoyed. Mr. Whiting stated that when NPC sees a need, they fill a need. NPC has been a great partner to a lot of the industries around here, such as the power plant and hospital. He stated that the hospital is now the largest employer in Navajo County and the nursing program has been very important to them.

Dean Jackson asked the group what programs the community might find valuable that NPC doesn’t offer and how NPC can be a better partner? He also asked what NPC can do to reach out to employers to help them free up time for employees to take classes.

Chief Deputy Molesa stated that there is only so much NPC can do as far as scheduling; the individual has to set a goal and then they will make the time.

Otto Walters asked if we have thought about teaching a CDL class. He stated that there is nothing local offered; everyone has to go to Phoenix. A lot of places require a CDL and he feels it could be a class that would help those wanting to stay local with ADOT, BNSF, truck driving, etc. get a job. Dean Jackson responded that this would fall under Dean Belknap’s area of Career and Technical Education but that he would check with her to see if it is a possibility.

Dean McGinty stated that Nursing and Allied Health would love to offer even more programs, but they need more room. She said that they had previously been looking at a Dental Assistant program but it was very expensive, so it is still sitting on the shelf. Chief Deputy Molesa asked about offering Radiology. Dean McGinty said that would be a capital intensive program but with a great partnership or hand me down equipment it is something NPC could look at, they would just need to work with other people.

Dean McGinty shared with the group that NPC is currently in between systems for placement testing and one thing faculty on various committees have been discussing is grit, a non-cognitive assessment of students to find out their commitment level, how they respond to stress, how they adapt, what kind of motivation they have. She stated that many thought it would be nice to know more about a student beyond their GPA and cognitive test score. Chief Deputy Molesa said that training and competing with salaries is a huge obstacle for the Sheriff’s Office. They constantly have to ask themselves if they want to spend thousands of dollars to send someone to the police academy with the possibility of them not sticking around very long. Chief Deputy Molesa said that if there was a tool that could identify their “grit” or commitment level, it would be huge in his field. Dean Jackson said that NPC has been using the compass test but NPC needed to find a different way to place students, so now we will be using a multi-system which considers high school GPA or asset test scores and non-cognitive testing. Dean Jackson goes on to say that looking at data, even for local high school graduates, there has been a decrease in reading levels. NPC is seeing more and more people come to the college with deficiencies in the area of reading. He states that NPC realized that if we are going to help people we need a different way to place them and we need to place them in courses where they can be successful and also give them the support they need. Chief Deputy Molesa says that by the time a person gets to the academy they need to already know how to read and write. He states that reports are a big part of their job and students wanting to go into law enforcement need to at least have the basics and be able to construct proper sentences, which some of them don’t. Dean McGinty says that the importance of writing is not lost on NPC, as NPC incorporates a philosophy of writing across the curriculum. Chief Deputy Molesa states that he has sent several employees to a basic writing class at Rio Salado and wants to know if NPC offers something similar. Dean Jackson states that NPC offers several beginning literacy classes that focus on enhancing reading and writing skills and then several college level writing classes, such as technical writing.

Dean Jackson then moved the discussion towards creating pathways for students and stackable credentials. He gave Headstart the example of having people get their CDA, but then encouraging them to continue on and have the CDA be a stepping stone to an associate’s degree. Dean Jackson stated that the nursing department does a really good job at moving the nursing and medical assistant students into the field but some of our other areas don’t do as good of a job. Dean McGinty said that from an advisory standpoint, one of the top ten questions asked is, “how long is it going to take me to complete this degree”. She stated that this is a major concern for students so it is important that NPC has courses line up to help students check off their course listing so that they complete within a reasonable period of time. Dean Jackson stated that NPC needs to help students focus a little more which NPC has really been working on with our student retention and completion initiative project.

Chief Deputy Molesa stated that one of the discussions they have been having at the County is about the realization that Cholla Power Plant is going to be gone in 5 years. He stated that as one of the larger employers in this area the county is concerned about how it will adapt and he wanted to know how NPC sees its role in this environment. Dean Jackson stated that he thinks being active in partnering and looking at different industries will help. The mechatronics program was designed to help people go into the power plant industry but that is not the only industry it trains for. Dean Jackson said he believes it can attract other entities to come. NPC wants to get the word out that this is a unique program and can bring industry in based on the fact that we are able to train up a workforce. He also said in his area, general education, they want to make sure students are leaving with ability to think critically and make important decisions. Dean Jackson said Cholla does impact NPC financially and if it does close completely and doesn’t get replaced with something, the college will look differently, but NPC is looking into it.

Dean Jackson asked the attendees if there was anything else they would like to discuss and with no other comments he thanked everyone for coming and ended the meeting.

Minutes prepared by:

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