

# STJ Center Community Outreach - Meeting Minutes

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## NPC representatives in Attendance:

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

## Community Members in Attendance:

Ed Burgoyne, SJUSD Superintendent  
Kimberly Dugdale, STUSD  
Dan Brown, St Johns Police Chief  
Jen Smale, WIA  
Delwin Wengert, Apache County Manager  
Larry Von Stradling, SRP

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Date: February 25th, 2015  
Scheduled: 9:00 am  
Location: NPC – St. Johns Center, Room 1  
65 S Third West, St. Johns, AZ 85936

## M I N U T E S

Meeting began 9:03 am

### *Overview of Campus, Programs and Services by Center Manager, Nicole Ulibarri*

The center is currently running a variety of courses including TLC (The Learning Cornerstone Courses), English, and business courses live. Additionally, the center offers many other general education and business courses online and through our distance learning offerings. For CTE (Career and Technical Education), we are offering Welding, Cosmetology and Industrial Maintenance Operations (IMO) courses that are all doing great. The center also partners with SJHS for dual enrollment and NAVIT courses.

### *Summary of Current Strategic Plan by President Swarthout*

President Swarthout explained that an important part of the strategic planning process is to involve community and get feedback about what is and is not working. The strategic plan is a 3 year rolling plan. The college is currently working towards changing their current plan from what is sometimes referred to as a “dream plan” to one that is more focused, targeted and simple. Operational plans will always tie into the strategic planning process. The strategic plan is the basis of how NPC budgets and therefore, all budget requests must relate to the strategic plan. This is directly related to accreditation standards. The (old) strategic plan can be found on NPC’s website: <http://npc.edu/npc-strategic-plan>. President Swarthout asked community members in attendance, “How do you think your educational needs may change in Apache County?” Most agreed it was a difficult question to answer.

President Swarthout explained that the Vice President of Administration, Blaine Hatch, was unable to attend, but that he would normally address facilities and finances in this portion of the meeting. It was clarified that facilities in Apache County are managed more by the Apache County Higher Educational Advisory Committee. In Navajo County, the skills center, for example, was built recently using no bonds, but instead by the maintenance and operations fund. The college keeps a 6 month reserve and receives no capital from the state. This includes soft capital (to purchase items like computers, replacing equipment for welding, nursing, etc.). NPC has 3 revenue lines: tuition (small portion), property tax (secondary property tax in Apache County pays for services here) and state aid (which has been cut increasingly over the years). NPC does receive a second line of state funding called Equalization. This is funding from the state that is provided to rural areas based on property tax revenue and is more important to the NPC than other state funding. One problem NPC is facing is expenditure limitations. There are discussions happening at legislature on this topic as it affects all community colleges. This means the expenditure limits that were set in 1979 prevent the college from spending money, although they have it to spend. It was originally devised on student population and a national decline in student enrollment adds to the problem. A yearlong study is being requested.

## *Highlights in Instruction by Vice President Mark Vest*

Vice President Vest explained that many community colleges have a teaching model based on Universities from the 1960's where 19 year olds attend Fall and Spring and take summer off. This model is not ideal for people interested in careers who want to finish now and begin work (often in areas such as welding, nursing, IMO, etc.). The majority of these students would prefer to attend school year round. The Department of Education is discontinuing their year round funding. This means that it used to be that there were three separate funding semesters (fall, spring and summer) and this would provide more pell funding for summer. Now, pell funding is awarded for Fall and Spring and only if there is more left over will it be applied to summer. As a way to help, NPC will be offering half price tuition rates for summer to incentive students to take summer courses. NPC will also be offering a College Bound Scholarship for High School students to take up to 7 credits per semester of general education courses for free. Many parents have expressed concerns that their child is unable to take advantage of this scholarship during the school year because of sports, after school activities or other time constraints. Another concern that has been mentioned is that NAVIT does not pay for general education courses. NPC will now offer this College Bound Scholarship for summer to help these student take advantage during summer break.

Vice President Vest went on to explain some differences from 2009 to 2013. Congress and the Department of Education were denying 17% of students for pell funding for various reasons, but over the last four years reductions in pell funding have resulted in a denial rate of 28% in 2013. The rules have changed. Additionally, there has been a 32% decline in students being paid for third party funding (such as WIA, Navajo Tribal Agencies, employers, etc.) Now students have to choose between self-pay or no school. A lot of students have completed  $\frac{3}{4}$  of their credits towards completion and have to quit. NPC is offering a Finish Line Scholarship that pays for the last 12 credits for students to finish their degree. They must first apply for Pell Funding and if they do not qualify, they can then apply for the Finish Line Scholarship.

VP Vest also explained that in Navajo County, 6,000 people have left the county from 2009 to 2013. This reduces the tax base as well as the pool of skilled workers. Unemployment is still higher than the state average. In 2011, the Governor declared that the recession was over, but since 2011 Navajo County has seen an additional 6% job loss. One way to improve the job situation is by adding highly skilled and motivated workers. Statewide, enrollment has declined, but NPC's enrollment has flattened out (or slightly increased) which means NPC is the only community college not in decline. A new focus on students who are already enrolled is in the works with the PASS (Proactive Advising for Student Success) program. The PASS program is intended to help with the dropout rate by offering support to students. This program will track students, make sure they go to class, follow up when they do not, and help identify problems before they are critical to student success. Some people are concerned students may not like all the extra attention, but many appreciate the extra help. Students are able to build a support system, which in many cases is lacking outside of the school environment. VP Vest asked the community to talk to students about why it's important and offer support.

Vice President Vest explained that this summer will be the last year NPC will be mailing out schedules. Instead, a magazine will be sent out twice a year. The magazine will have a career focus and will encourage students to come into the campuses and centers to talk with advisors and managers. The schedules will still be offered online as well. NPC has tried using post cards in the past, but noticed enrollment drop as a result. From the year 2000 to 2010 the median age changed from 26 to 33. This means there are older people and fewer students. Retirees are not typically the strongest supporters of education. President Swarthout asked those in attendance, "what would you like to see changed?" in regards to possible economic threats and aspirations for education in the future?

## *Recommendations and comments from members of the community*

There was discussion around the high impact of the power plants uncertain future and its effect on the future of the communities and as well as the college. Assessed valuations have gone up in value because of the power plants (70% of tax base). Although TEP is pushing for transition to 40-50 design life with the EPA instead of a shutdown in 2020, there is no definite answer on this at this point. Many community members feel the 2020 shut down is not realistic as there is nothing to replace the lost power. Some feel NPC needs to help students recognize where opportunities are. It was asked what changes NPC saw when the paper mill closed in Snowflake? It was explained that

the county population and school districts declined. It effected enrollment and the tax base as well as a reduced high school population. NPC didn't adjust their courses. Many noted that if the power plants closed, it would change the landscape of the two counties tremendously. Some have seen an increase in activity with 4FRI in the forestry fields as well as future opportunities with Pot Ash and Kinder Morgan. NPC can be ready with programs to help people get jobs in these fields.

There was discussion around the possibility of entrepreneurial degrees. The Small Business Development center can do more and faster with non-credit training and helping develop a plan. NPC also offers business courses.

Discussion around the school districts participation with NPC led to the suggestion that the best thing community members can do for the college would be to spread the word on the scholarships to help students take advantage of these options. Another member noted that the AAS to BAS from NPC to ASU was exciting and was surprised it was not being promoted more. This program allows students to pursue BAS degrees online after receiving their AAS at NPC while working. Many feel that trades are more lucrative in this community and "job ready" programs are very important. It was suggested NPC should advertise these transferable online degrees more as they are applicable to those working in trades as well.

NPC's NATC (Northeast Arizona Training Center, "Training Emergency Professionals for Public Service") program was praised. It was believed that this is a successful program led very well by Stuart Bishop and that they have noticed people coming from other parts of the state to attend. There was conversation regarding the possibilities for shared revenue grants the college could possibly pursue. Prop 202 allows for partnerships that could help with things such as law, education and healthcare. It could also help replace computers. Apache County is half tribal land and could qualify. It was recommended that NPC look into these grants for shared revenue to partner with other tribal groups.

The group collectively brainstormed ways to increase parent involvement with high school students as well as how to help these rural communities understand the value of higher education. Talk about the upcoming summer with *Kids College* explained how it works and why it is needed. It has been discovered that kids in the 3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grade will make conclusions about themselves and this age, including if they intend to go to college. The idea is to get kids on campus and help them change the perception of college to something they can do. NPC needs instructors and community members to spread the word.

Meeting adjourned at 10:43 am.