

Navajo County Community College District Governing Board Work Session Minutes

March 19, 2024 – 12:40 p.m.
Painted Desert Campus, Tiponi Community Center
2251 East Navajo Boulevard, Holbrook, Arizona

Governing Board Member Present: Ms. Kristine Laughter; Mr. Frank Lucero; Mr. Everett Robinson; Mr. Derrick Leslie; Ms. Rosabel Sekayumtewa.

Governing Board Member Absent:

Others Present: President Chato Hazelbaker; Farah Bughio; Director Betsy Wilson; Director Judy Yip-Reyes.

Agenda Item 1: Call to Order

Chair Robinson called the meeting to order at 12:40 p.m.

Agenda Item 2: Adoption of Agenda

Mr. Leslie moved to adopt the agenda as presented. Mr. Lucero seconded the motion. The motion carried upon a roll-call vote with Mr. Lucero, Chair Robinson, Mr. Leslie, Ms. Laughter and Ms. Sekayumtewa voting in favor. There were no votes against.

Agenda Item 3: Discussion

3.A. Strategic Plan 2025-2030

President Hazelbaker gave an introduction to the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan and the desire for community feedback in creating this plan.

Director Wilson moderated while Director Yip-Reyes took notes.

Director Wilson explained the need for feedback from the community which will be sought through a series of predetermined questions decided upon by the Leadership Council.

Director Wilson asked, ‘how familiar are you with the college?’

Ms. Laughter responded that she was a student and has been familiar with the college for 35 or 37 years. She stated that she became even more familiar with the college as a Board Member.

Chair Robinson responded that he was also an Alumnus of NPC, as well as a former employee for 25 plus years.

Ms. Sekayumtewa responded that she was a previous employee of NPC in different roles. She stated that it has been awhile and needs an update.



Mr. Lucero responded that he was present when the college was voted on and has seen a lot of changes. He expressed his concern in the follow through of plans and moving programs and courses to Show Low.

Mr. Leslie responded that he is more familiar with the financial aid section of the college due to his former role.

Director Wilson asked, ‘what do you think the role of community colleges are in the community’?

Ms. Sekayumptewa responded that community colleges are important for creating a strong foundation in workforce in order to build community infrastructure. Ms. Sekayumptewa further expressed that not all students want to go to college, some would like to start careers and community colleges are important for this.

Ms. Laughter responded that she saw community colleges as stepping stones to higher education in providing a pathway to four-year universities all the way to Ph.D. programs.

Mr. Leslie responded that he saw community colleges as important to the community in three different ways. He stated that the first was empowering community members to reach their level of sufficiency. He stated that the second was impacting the community in terms of jobs and economic growth. Mr. Leslie stated that the third was to help students achieve their educational goals whether obtaining certificates or planning to transition to a four-year college.

Mr. Lucero responded that he has only seen the community college system in one other country where the focus was learning a technical trade. Mr. Lucero stated that there was a need for community colleges to offer more technical training at more campuses and centers.

Ms. Laughter shared a story about her daughter’s input regarding her high school only preparing students for manufacturing jobs and not for higher education. Ms. Laughter stated that NPC needs to provide the support for students who want to go to college but aren’t receiving the assistance to do so in high school. She further stated the importance of different academic advisors to help guide students.

Director Wilson clarified that Ms. Laughter was suggesting that the role of community colleges was to help students choose a direction and then help support them. Ms. Laughter responded that students need to know that they can come to advisors and that there are many options, not just one path, available to them.

Ms. Sekayumptewa stated that there was a real need for healthcare providers on reservations. She shared there is a village in Alaska that did not have dental care and that a program was created to train individuals from this village to be dental therapists to assist in this need. Ms. Sekayumptewa continued that while there are new healthcare facilities being built on reservations there is a lack of trained staff to assist with healthcare needs. She emphasized the need for dental assistance.



Director Wilson clarified that Ms. Sekayumptewa was suggesting that the role of community colleges was to serve as a catalyst of healthcare and other needed training.

Ms. Sekayumptewa responded that she does believe this is the role of community colleges. Ms. Sekayumptewa further stated that there was not enough effort from the college in seeking out the needs of Tribal Nations when it came to educational offerings.

Ms. Laughter responded to Ms. Sekayumptewa that the Navajo Nation Human Resources division was conducting meetings with near-by colleges, including NPC, regarding the needs of the Tribe. This is partially in attempt to fill vacant positions and ensuring that individuals are properly trained for these positions while also building a workforce.

Chair Robinson responded that he saw community colleges as a bridge between secondary school and the workforce or universities. He further stated that the role of community colleges was to take students at whatever level they were and raise them up to their desired level of achievement and in doing so, encouraging life-long learning in individuals.

Director Wilson asked Chair Robinson how important he thought it was to assist students in reaching the pre-college level regardless of where they were. Chair Robinson responded that he thought it was very important and added that someone at a fifth-grade reading level may have a difficult time with any level of employment. Chair Robinson further stated that it was the role of community colleges to assist students who have otherwise been failed by the K-12 system.

Director Wilson asked, ‘what are your priorities and what are the community priorities over the next 3 to 5 years and how does NPC fit into that’?

Ms. Sekayumptewa responded that she would like to see another center built in Dilkon or White Cone. She further stated the desire for residential housing for students who have excessive commutes to attend classes.

Director Wilson re-stated the question and asked if there were further responses.

Mr. Leslie responded that having short-term certificates programs was very important to assist students for the ever-changing landscape of industry and the workforce. He further stated that all communities want a safe and healthier community and that it was NPC’s role to create and modify programs that allow students to obtain certificates to aid in this goal.

Director Wilson clarified that Mr. Leslie was speaking to preparation for change and the kinds of things that make communities safe and healthy. Mr. Leslie responded yes.

Ms. Laughter responded that her priorities for the college are advocating for students who are coming from first generation homes or homes in which no one has graduated from high school. She stated that these students should have assistance from the advisement stage all the way to graduation. Ms. Laughter also stated that she would like to see more courses around entrepreneurship. She stated that as far as the community, students should be supported



regardless of where they are in life or how old. She stated that economic development was also important, as was looking ahead to see how we can build and grow our communities. Ms. Laughter expressed the need for surveys with our students and community members.

Chair Robinson responded that NPC's sustainability was important. He noted the significant decrease in State aid and the increase in community burden for assisting with funding through taxes. Chair Robinson noted some issues including the need for major industry in the region, abiding by the State constitution to allow for higher education as freely as possible and still being able to fund the college. Chair Robinson noted the importance of working with different segments of the community and where NPC can offer assistance, including vacancies on the Navajo Nation. Chair Robinson further stated that communities need to tell NPC what the needs are and NPC needs to find ways to fill those needs.

Director Wilson asked Chair Robinson if he was suggesting bringing industry to the region that is not currently here to improve the tax base. Chair Robinson confirmed that was his suggestion.

Mr. Lucero responded that those who are from this area who leave to pursue higher education do not return. Director Wilson clarified that Mr. Lucero was suggesting a need to keep these individuals in the area. Mr. Lucero responded that it is hard to make a living in the area and the need for economic development.

Director Wilson asked, 'if there was a concept of driving economic development, as well as, supporting it'?

Ms. Sekayumtewa reiterated Mr. Lucero's point that the individuals who have higher degrees have all moved away. Ms. Sekayumtewa further stated that Holbrook has lost a lot of industry and that there needs to be regrowth in the area. Ms. Sekayumtewa asked if there was a culinary program as this could aid in regrowth. Chair Robinson responded that there use to be a culinary program at the Silver Creek Campus.

Derrick Leslie responded that listening to local business to align programs and assist the community in bringing in more jobs would be helpful. Mr. Leslie suggested that NPC might need a separate department of economic development.

Director Wilson asked 'what are NPC's strengths'?

Chair Robinson responded NPC employees. Director Wilson asked in what way. Chair Robinson responded that the employees are very dedicated, student focused, educated and motivated to be in this area.

Ms. Laughter responded that the size of the district and diversity of the people were a strength. Ms. Laughter added that local individuals should be trained for needed positions instead of seeking people to move here.



Director Wilson clarified that a rich cultural diversity, and ambitiously covering a large geographic area are strengths.

Mr. Lucero responded that dual enrollment in NAVIT was a strength. Mr. Lucero shared a story about an individual's success due to dual enrollment.

Mr. Leslie responded low tuition rates were a strength, as well as flexibility in allowing students to work while also going to school. Additionally, offering programs that allow students to enter the workforce faster and NPC's persistence with economic development are strengths.

Director Wilson asked, 'what are some areas that NPC can improve'?

Ms. Sekayumptewa responded that visibility is important, including outreach, education about what NPC offers.

Director Wilson asked where visibility was lacking. Ms. Sekayumptewa responded there was a need to educate parents about the different professions that could be started at NPC. Ms. Sekayumptewa shared her own story related to her response.

Director Wilson reiterated the responses from each Board Member.

Ms. Laughter shared her experience taking classes at NPC when she was younger. Ms. Laughter continued that it is important to show young local students the value of receiving education at NPC and staying locally instead of wanting to move away. Ms. Laughter continued that stories are very valuable in assisting students in this goal.

Ms. Sekayumptewa responded that seeking graduate students to tell their success story could aid in this.

Mr. Leslie addressed the third question and responded that one of his priorities is the legal and policy mandates of the state and accreditation. Mr. Leslie continued that the college having a proximity to home is a strength. Mr. Leslie stated that small class sizes were also a strength. Mr. Leslie said that NPC had limited options in terms of courses and that NPC needed to do a better job at personalizing the experience for students with an emphasis on staying local. Mr. Leslie continued that NPC needed to give regular updates to local government and stakeholders.

Chair Robinson responded that NPC is moving in the right direction in terms of economic development, noting the creation of a development office to help with coordination and taking grants, alternative finance and revenue sources. He continued that NPC was increasing outreach to students through early childhood.

Ms. Laughter responded that in addition to low tuition students should be encouraged to attend NPC due to the quality of education.



Director Wilson responded that she shares this aspect of quality of education with students. She then shared a personal story of attending community college.

Ms. Sekayumptewa expressed a desire to bring the athletics program back.

Mr. Lucero responded that advisors need to tailor programs so that students aren't taking unnecessary classes. Mr. Lucero continued that he would like to see the courses and programs spread out throughout the campuses and centers.

Director Wilson asked, 'are there groups within the community that NPC is not serving well'?

Mr. Lucero responded that he did not believe NPC was failing anyone but that K-12 was failing students.

Chair Robinson responded that getting seniors on campus would be helpful. Mr. Lucero said that his wife used to take lots of classes but stopped due to them all being offered in Show Low. Chair Robinson responded that many classes were dropped because the State was no longer funding them.

Ms. Laughter responded that expanding Kid's College at centers or creating a day camp would be a great way to inform parents of NPC and get younger people interested.

Mr. Leslie responded that he agreed with Ms. Laughter in getting parents involved and interested. Mr. Leslie continued that NPC needed to better target undecided students, which could be achieved through targeted marketing.

Ms. Sekayumptewa stated that she liked Ms. Laughter's idea. She continued by asking if empty buildings in more rural areas could serve as a location for Kid's College.

Director Wilson asked, 'what do you see as key priorities for NPC for the next 3-5 years'?

Ms. Sekayumptewa responded that recruitment needed to be a priority.

Mr. Lucero responded that sustainability was a priority for NPC. Director Wilson asked in what way. Mr. Lucero responded that he meant staying alive as a college. Director Wilson asked if he meant funding streams. Mr. Lucero responded, no, just monitoring so the college didn't end up in a financial hole. Mr. Lucero reiterated that courses needed to be offered at more NPC locations.

Mr. Lucero added that the problem with recruitment was that there wasn't housing for students and thus recruitment needed to stay relatively local. Director Wilson responded that it had been expressed by others that there were many local individuals who had not been reached.



Ms. Laughter shared a story of a young man from Phoenix who attended the nursing program in Winslow because of the quality of the program. Mr. Lucero responded that individuals from Flagstaff attend the nursing school in Winslow.

Ms. Sekayumptewa asked if the students in the NAVIT program were enrolled at NPC. Director Wilson responded that they were.

Ms. Sekayumptewa expressed the need for residential housing. Ms. Laughter responded that there is a need to ask and understand how and where students are living and how they get transportation to NPC campuses and centers for their classes.

Mr. Lucero shared a story about a friend with regards to living and commuting.

Chair Robinson responded that NPC needed to adjust programs to meet community needs.

Mr. Lucero asked if NPC had a basic wiring course.

Mr. Leslie responded that sustainable growth with the community in mind was a priority for the next 3-5 years.

Ms. Sekayumptewa suggested having mobile units for programs that could travel to different NPC locations. Chair Robinson responded that he had acquired information on mobile units for CTE programs while attending a conference. Chair Robinson included that NPC is looking into the possibility of mobile units for certain programs and has had this capability in the past.

Chair Robinson and Mr. Lucero had an exchange about the amount of cosmetology students in Show Low. President Hazelbaker clarified that there are plans for cosmetology in other locations.

Mr. Lucero asked if it was possible to rotate a program. President Hazelbaker responded that it was possible.

Director Wilson summed up some key points in the discussion.

Ms. Laughter suggested that NPC work with businesses to renovate empty buildings in Holbrook to help revitalize the area.

Mr. Leslie responded that there needs to be more emphasis on NPC being a neighbor to all areas within the district, which includes getting feedback on how NPC can help within these communities. Mr. Leslie then had to leave at 2:28 p.m. due to another engagement.

Ms. Sekayumptewa asked if NPC had reached out to Tribal and local communities to ask how NPC could be of assistance. Ms. Sekayumptewa brought up a planned solar farm in Indian Wells and seeing if NPC can partner with the company developing this solar farm to provide training.



President Hazelbaker responded that NPC had contact with the company and there may be an opportunity for NPC to be involved.

Agenda Item 4: Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:33 p.m. upon a motion by Mr. Leslie and a second by Ms. Laughter. The motion carried upon a roll-call vote with Mr. Lucero, Chair Robinson and Ms. Sekayumptewa and Ms. Laughter voting in favor. There were no votes against.

Respectfully submitted,



Farah Bughio
Recording Secretary to the Board

APPROVED

