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NATIONAL PARK COMMUNITY COLLEGE: AN OVERVIEW

National Park Community College at Hot Springs (NPCC) was created through legislation in the spring of 2003 and officially began operation on July 1, 2003. NPCC represents a merger of Garland County Community College (GCCC), and Quapaw Technical Institute (QTI), both of which began offering post-secondary coursework to the citizens of Garland County in 1973. In 1975, Garland County Community College was granted candidacy status by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (The Higher Learning Commission, 30 North LaSalle Street, Suite 2400, Chicago, Illinois 60602-2504, phone 312-263-0456) and attained full accreditation in 1981. Quapaw Technical Institute received candidacy status with the North Central Association in 1993 and received full accreditation in May, 1994. Quapaw Technical Institute carries a dual accreditation, also being recognized by the Council on Occupational Education (COE, 41 Perimeter Center East, NE, Suite 640, Atlanta, Georgia 30346, phone 800-917-2081) with candidacy status in 2002 and full accreditation in February, 2003. This merger of the two campuses, located on adjoining acreage, offers the opportunity to enhance services and postsecondary educational offerings to the service area. The NPCC campus is located on a 119-acre site in Garland County outside the city limits of Hot Springs National Park, Arkansas. The city is part of the oldest national park in the United States. The College is coordinated by the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board and is governed directly by a locally elected Board of Trustees.

NPCC offers the following degrees: Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, Associate of Liberal Studies, Associate of Arts in Teaching and Associate of Applied Science. In addition, the College also offers diploma and certificate programs, occupational education, Adult Education, and Community Service/Continuing Education/Workforce Development.

Garland County Economic Profile

The Greater Hot Springs Area Chamber of Commerce describes the economy of the area as a "four-legged stool" which includes manufacturing, hospitality and tourism, health services, and the retirement community. Median earnings for male full-time year-round workers were \$28,117 and \$20,421 for females. The number of families living at or below the poverty level was 10.5% (US Census Bureau, State and Quick Facts).

Population Profile and Demographic Trends

The 2000 census shows the population of Garland County to be 88,068, a 15% increase from the 1990 census. Eighty-nine percent (89%) of county residents are white; 8% are Black or African American; and other minorities represent about 4% of the population. The proportion of Hispanic people living in Garland County tripled, from 1% in 1990 to 3% of the population in 2000. According to the 2000 census, 26.8% of the county's residents are under 18 years old. Garland County is known as a retirement center: 5.7% of county residents are 60 to 64, 11.4% are between 65 and 74, and 9.8% are 75 or over. This retirement population directly influences health care needs in the community.

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Education in the County

There are seven public school districts and ten private/church schools within Garland County. Approximately 12,944 students were enrolled in public schools during the 2001-2002 school year. The Arkansas School for Mathematics and Sciences, a state-run high school for gifted and talented students, is also located in Hot Springs, drawing academically gifted students from across the state.

High school graduation rates for public schools in Garland County ranged from 73% to 94% of their senior class. College remediation rates (based on placement scores on the ACT/SAT/Compass tests) ranged from a low of 32% to 61% of graduating seniors (Arkansas State Government).

Approximately 900 students graduated from county high schools in May 2002, with 297 graduates enrolled at the College for the fall 2002 semester. Of those 2002 high school graduates enrolled at the College, 76 students are pursuing the Associate of Arts/Science transfer degree; 64 students are undecided; 46 students are enrolled in the Associate of Science in Nursing; 38 are pursuing Associate of Applied Science, and 22 students are pursuing an associate degree in a health science field.

At the present time, John Brown University, a private liberal arts college, and the University of Arkansas, a public four-year university, offer Bachelor's degrees through weekend and night programs on NPCC's campus. In the last few years, there has been increasing opportunity for students to earn bachelor's degrees through on-line distance education by public and proprietary institutions.

The 2002 Census reported that 78.3% of the residents 25 years of age and older in Garland County are high school graduates, (Compared to 75.3% in the state) and 18% of residents over age 25 had earned a bachelor's degree or higher (compared to 16.7% in the state). In Garland, Pike and Montgomery counties (NPCC primary service area), more than one-fourth (27%) of residents lack a high school diploma, and over 11% of residents 25 years or older report less than a 9th grade education, compared to 9.4% within the state and 8% for the U.S. (US Census Bureau, State and County QuickFacts).

Nationally, Dr. George Boggs, President of American Association of Community College (AACN) predicted that, of the 16% growth in college-age population in the next 16 years, 80% will be people of color (Boggs, 2002). Office of Institutional Research at NPCC reports that Arkansas will experience a slight growth in college-age population, though not approaching what is expected nationally. Nevertheless Arkansas's college enrollments will include an increasing proportion of people of color. It is expected that NPCC will follow the Arkansas growth pattern.

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Regional Labor Market

According to the US Census, Garland County is classified as follows:

Classification of the Workforce	Percentage employed
Management, professional or related services	27.7%
Service sector	19.3%
Sales and office occupations	24.9%
Construction, extraction and maintenance	12.4%
Production, transportation and material moving	14.5%

More specifically, Miller and Tran reported the Garland County employment sectors as follows:

Employment Sectors	Percentages employed
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting and mining	1.9%
Construction	10.0%
Manufacturing	12.1%
Wholesale trade	2.8%
Retail trade	14.0%
Transportation, warehousing, and public utilities	4.2%
Information	1.5%
Finance, insurance and real estate	5.0%
Professional, scientific, management including administrative and waste management	6.4%
Education, health and social services	21.3%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	12.3%
Other services except public administration	5.7%
Public administration	2.5%

*10.0% of the above categories could also be classified as government

In Garland County, all of the above job sectors with the exception of mining showed an increase in new jobs over the last ten years. The service sector is the largest sector of the Arkansas economy, providing nearly one-fourth of the jobs in Arkansas. Combined, the service and trade sectors provide for over one-half (54%) of all jobs in Arkansas. A larger proportion of jobs in Garland County are in government, trade, construction and service as compared to the State average (Miller and Tran, 2002). Of particular importance to the College are the number of service jobs in the county related to health care and tourism.

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Workforce Information

The Garland County labor force has remained essentially constant since the mid 1990's. The 2000 census data reported that there were 34,325 Garland County residents who were employed, and 1,400 unemployed.

The annual unemployment rate for the county was 5.4% in 2002, compared to 4% in 2000, 5.25% in 1998 and 5% in 1995. Unemployment rates in Garland County were at or above the State and national averages in the early 1990s, but have remained at state and national average since 1995. In Garland, Pike and Montgomery counties (NPCC primary service area), official unemployment rates have historically exceeded state and national averages. From July 2000 to July 2002, more than 600 jobs in the college's service area were lost because of layoffs or closings, primarily in the timber, manufacturing, and grocery industries (Governor's Dislocated Workers Taskforce, October 14, 2002).

Support for Economic Development

Businesses and industries that locate in Garland County find various services to assist them. Professional development, individualized training programs, and customized technology training seminars are a few of the services offered through the Workforce Training Division of the College.

Partnerships with the Arkansas Career Centers, the Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce, Arkansas Department of Economic Development, and Workforce Investment Act Programs provide assistance to employees and future employees in a variety of training areas to meet the needs of area business and industry.

EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF THE SERVICE AREA

Educational Needs of Employers

In preparation for developing the Strategic Plan, focus groups that reflected a cross section of external constituents, met to gather information for the future needs of the community. Four questions were asked 1) What changes are likely to occur in your business over the next 4 years? 2) What factors are causing the changes? 3) How does the College need to adapt and plan for changes? 4) What are implications of change for future programming? Nominal group techniques were employed to identify recurring themes in the data collected. Themes that occurred throughout all focus groups were as follows:

- Technology
- Communication Issues
- Marketing
- Retraining
- Financial Considerations
- Need for Increase in Diversity

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Educational Needs of Students

Annual student surveys (Faces of the Future) have been administered over the last several years at the College. The sample population of 300 to 350 provides a 95 percent level of confidence for a school of 2,500 to 3,000 enrollment. The sample population includes evening and daytime classes, occupational/vocational and general education classes. Following the annual student survey in the fall of 2002, a student focus group was held with a cross section of student representatives to supplement the data collected in the survey. Data analysis reveals that the most popular reason to attend the College was preparation to transfer to a four-year school or job-related opportunities. Additional considerations for selection of the College were access, cost, and reputation of the programs. The majority of students (ranging from 55% to 83%) were satisfied with services and academics at the College. Specific needs were identified as

- Flexible scheduling to include increased day and time selections, electives in the summer, more consistent offering of courses listed, and higher level math and natural sciences
- Interest in upper level educational opportunities
- Need for additional group study areas and expanded tutoring services
- Increased use of technology, especially with use of software in sciences (note: 71% of students were satisfied with computer access and 19% were neutral.).

Students enrolled in non-credit curricula, including Community Service/Continuing Education/Workforce Development (CSCE/Workforce Development), indicated that they would highly recommend College seminars and courses to co-workers and friends. Instructor evaluations are distributed and collected after each class or course, and copies of each are filed to provide longitudinal data on student satisfaction. Each semester, the evaluations are summarized according to how students ranked the instructor's ability and the course content on a scale from 1 to 4 (1 is poor; 2 is fair, 3 is good and 4 is excellent). On the whole, students ranked CSCE/Workforce Development instructors either excellent or good on knowledge of subject matter, style of presentation, ability to stimulate interest in the subject, skill in demonstration and discussion methods, and genuine interest in students. Content, on the whole, was also ranked excellent or good on usefulness of information, organization of course, extent to which subject was covered, how well the books and handouts enhanced the presentation, and the relevance to their job.

Interest in alternative methods of instructional delivery has been surveyed for the last three years. In 1999, 64% of the students indicated interest in this area, and this number has increased to 69% in 2001. Student enrollment in the on-line courses offered through CSCE/Workforce Development area has increased from 59 students (1,416 total contact hours) in 1997-1998 to 138 students (3,312 contact hours) in 2001-2002. Students at the college report having slightly less access to e-mail and Web access than the national average.

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Educational Needs Expressed by Local High Schools

A focus group including representatives from the area high schools met during the fall of 2002 to discuss changes occurring in public school education and their impact on the College. Several issues facing the high schools were discussed, including increased calls for accountability, teacher licensure, technology issues, financial issues, and the increased number of Hispanic students enrolling in public schools. The number one issue discussed was the implication of the Supreme Court's "Lakeview" Decision and its impact on school funding. This ruling found Arkansas' method of distributing funds for K-12 districts unconstitutional in that it did not provide for "adequate or equitable" opportunities for all students.

The superintendents and principals agreed that the high schools and the College have a good working relationship. They also encouraged the College to continue to respond to the individual needs of each school district.

The attendees encouraged the College to actively recruit students in teacher education programs by promoting the Associate of Arts in Teaching (AAT) degree. They also indicated that the merger would improve the image of technical programs and increase the number of high school students attending these programs.

The public school officials encouraged the College to develop joint programs, such as Hospitality, with the high schools. This would allow students, both high school and college enrolled, to attend college-level classes in the high school facilities. They suggested that distance education or joint programs would be helpful and emphasized that any program/degree/certificate offered by the College should be relevant and have career opportunities for students.

Summary

Data from the External Stakeholder, Internal Stakeholder and Media review; the North Central Self-Study and the Evaluator's Report of a Visit from November 5-7, 2001; and the Annual Reports from the focus areas of the current Long-Range Plan (On reserve in the Library: Strategic Planning Data Collection Fall 2002) were analyzed to generate the College Planning Assumptions and initiatives with action items for the future which form the core of the College Strategic Plan. The College, recognizing the needs of the community and the impact of future funding, has identified priority issues for the upcoming years based on a wide range of internal and external constituents.

GARLAND COUNTY STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Student enrollment for the Fall of 2001 was 2,439. During the 2001-2002 academic year, there were 1,832 unduplicated degree-seeking students and 2,525 students CSCE/Workforce Development programs. Females represented 69% of those in curriculum programs. During the past five years, enrollment has grown 65%, with a jump of 24% in unduplicated headcount during the last year. Minority students

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comprised 11.8% of total enrollment for Fall 2001 and 10.6 % of Fall 2002. This is compared to an 11.1% minority rate in the service area. Seventy-six percent of our student body is employed and 79% receive financial aid, with 43% being need-based. Non-credit offerings, including continuing education and customized Workforce Development increased by 9%, for the FY 2001-2002; however, the number of students served and number of contact hours decreased slightly – 17% and 11%, respectively – probably because of the sluggish economy. (Footnote: Fall of 2003, student enrollment is 3,107 and there are approximately 2,000 unduplicated degree or certificate seeking students. Females represent approximately 66 % of those in curriculum programs. Minority students compromise 11.3 % of total enrollment for Fall of 2003. There are 195 students in the high school technical programs. FY 2002-03 there were 79 online classes and 86 online students, and a total of 5,847 students in Community Services/Continuing Education/Workforce training. FY 2002-2003, Adult Education reported 1,654 students served, and 330 students have been served from July 1 through August, 2003.)

FACULTY CHARACTERISTICS

Fall of 2002, there were 150 faculty at GCCC with 57 employed full-time – 37 female and 20 male. The average age of the full-time faculty is 53 years with 55% reporting their employment as more than 10 years and 17% reporting that they have employed more than 17 years. Fall of 2002, there were 27 full-time faculty at Quapaw Technical Institute – 14 female and 13 male. The average age is 45 with 37% reporting over 10 years of employment with QTI, and 7% reporting that they have been employed more than 17 years. (Footnote: Fall of 2003, there are 174 faculty at NPCC with 94 of these being full-time – 56 female and 38 male. The average age of the full-time faculty is 47 years.)

Interim Mission Statement (adopted Spring, 2003)

- ❖ National Park Community College values student success and teaching excellence, and recognizes the necessity of lifelong learning. As a comprehensive community college, NPCC provides accessible, affordable educational opportunities including
 - Comprehensive general education and associate degree programs for students planning to transfer to four-year colleges and universities;
 - Technical and professional programs to prepare students for the world of work;
 - Supplemental and developmental education to enhance student success;
 - Workforce training to meet the needs of local business and industry;
 - Community service and continuing education programs for all citizens.

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HISTORY OF PLANNING AT GCCC

Prior to 1994, the administrative team (college president and deans) was responsible for long-range planning activities. At that time, a committee that represented all members of the College – including administration, faculty and staff – was appointed and charged to develop a Long-Range Plan. Since that time, two plans have been produced.

Following the 2001 NCA site visit, the Long-Range Planning Committee's efforts focused on meeting the evaluators' recommendations that the College "should document the existence of a comprehensive planning process that utilizes research and data in environmental scanning, the development of planning assumptions that include consideration of external and internal environments, strategic and operational considerations, and a well-developed planning cycle" (Kinney, Lindroth, Fitzmaris, Schlecht, 2001).

In defining the planning process, the Committee conducted a review of literature to differentiate between long-range plans and strategic plans. In defining the process to be used, the Committee examined the following questions:

1. What was the best timing for the planning cycle – 2 years, – 3 years, – 5 years?
2. How would the yearly planning and budgeting process complement or interface with the strategic planning cycle?
3. What kind of reporting did the Committee and the College desire?
4. How would the College develop a planning cycle that would not only detail the process, but also include a logical and workable timetable for activities to take place?

With these considerations in mind, the Committee developed a systematic, comprehensive planning process and presented the plan to the Board of Trustees and the College Community. Further work was done to provide an outline of activities to be undertaken throughout the process. Copies of the Strategic Planning Process and the outline are found in Appendix One.

The Committee operated from the premise that "the environmental scan and evaluation process are combined with the conventional long-range planning processes to produce six stages of strategic planning:

1. environmental scanning;
2. evaluation of issues;
3. forecasting;
4. goal setting;
5. implementation; and
6. monitoring"(Cornell Cooperative Extension, 2001).

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During this time the Long-Range Planning Committee recommended changing its name to Strategic Planning Committee to more accurately reflect its work. Evaluation was undertaken to determine the types of data that were already being collected (Appendix Two). The Strategic Planning Committee opted for the use of SWOT analysis and reviewed data that would help determine strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Input from the six Focus Committees that report to the Strategic Planning Committee, e.g. Enrollment Management Committee, Technology Committee, and Building and Land Use Committee was sought, and these committees generated far-reaching requests for data. It quickly became apparent that certain limitations would be needed to make data collection and analysis feasible. Therefore, two assumptions were made by the Committee: 1) not all of the data requested by the Focus Committees could be collected, given time and resource constraints; and 2) the three major areas for environmental scanning/data collection were identified as external stakeholders, internal stakeholders and media review. Working groups for each of the major areas were established. Each working group designed methodology, collected data, and reported to the Strategic Planning Committee during the spring, summer and fall of 2002.

The working group defined external stakeholders as those groups outside of the College Community that had a vested interest in the graduates or students who were enrolled in College programs. The research design followed an established protocol of questions to selected focus groups. These groups included program advisory councils associated with specific instructional programs at the College, representatives from the African-American community, representatives from the Hispanic community, and county K-12 Superintendents. Because of the potential merger of GCCC and QTI, advisory councils were expanded to include members from both schools. Advisory Council groups included Business, Nursing, Medical Laboratory, Radiography, and Health Information Technology. After querying each focus group, primary themes were identified using nominal group techniques. Recurring themes or priority items for these groups were then identified and reported to the Strategic Planning Committee.

Internal stakeholder groups included students, College employees and members of the Boards of Trustees. The strategies formulated to obtain environmental scanning data from these groups included the following methods: 1) surveys and assessments, 2) trend analysis, 3) focus groups, 4) enrollment management completion and recommendation reports, 5) matriculation rates, and 6) state and national benchmarks. Student data fields considered were age, gender and ethnicity, grade point average, and retention rates. Student queries focused on ratings of academic quality and delivery, comprehensiveness of support services, usefulness of technology, and customization of the physical environment. The employee data fields were differentiated into faculty (F), classified (C), non-classified (N), and administration (A). The employee queries included instructional technology, technology for administrative purposes, facilities, creating a learning environment, enrollment management/retention and marketing, assessment of student learning, staff development, and communication/college unity. Major themes from each of these groups were identified, prioritized and used in developing the SWOT analysis and the strategic initiatives.

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A five-person subcommittee conducted the media review that examined media sources for a designated two-week period and created a database of all potentially relevant topics. To develop the database, each person completed worksheets covering the medium, a topical summary of articles, programs, etc., and potential long-term implications. The following media outlets were reviewed as the group scanned for recurrent themes:

- local and state newspapers
- state and national television news coverage
- news coverage on radio stations
- periodicals relevant to postsecondary education and its areas of discipline
- the Internet

In January of 2003, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) were identified from the data related to the External Stakeholders, Internal Stakeholders (including the attitude measures and the achievement measures) and Media review; the North Central Self-Study and the Evaluator's Report of a Visit from November 5-7, 2001; and the Annual Reports from the focus areas of the current Long-Range Plan. In addition, College Planning Assumptions were generated. Strengths and weaknesses were defined in relation to the internal operations of the College, and opportunities and threats were related to the external environment. A small working group from the Strategic Planning Committee conducted this activity and then submitted the Planning Assumptions and SWOT to the full Committee for further analysis. The next prioritizing activity was conducted off campus during an intensive, full-day retreat and included administration from GCCC, QTI, the Boards of Trustees and the Strategic Planning Committee. This activity generated strategic initiatives and action items. Finally, College-wide open forums were held to communicate the SWOT analysis and seek feedback regarding Strategic Initiatives and action items for the new plan.

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College Planning Assumptions

1. The College is a financially sound institution.
2. The College Community is well aware of the greater competition for public resources.
3. The College Community values low, affordable tuition rates as well as financial aid and scholarship opportunities for all eligible students.
4. The College Community recognizes students' needs, abilities and talents; their high expectations; and their need to be accountable and responsible for their learning.
5. The College Community recognizes the vast diversity in the college readiness of a large proportion of entering students, which impacts student attrition.
6. The College Community is committed to defining and creating a Learning College/Learning Focused Organization.
7. The College Community values professional development opportunities for faculty and staff in order to fulfill its mission.
8. The College Community is committed to strategic planning and student outcomes assessment.
9. The College offers a locale with room to grow; the college community shares an on-going commitment to secure private funding for necessary facilities.
10. The College Community is committed to reinventing organizational policies, procedures, programs and services that reflect a growing, emerging institution.
11. The College Community is resolute in acquiring infrastructure to support technological needs and capitalize on technology for teaching and learning, student services, and marketing.
12. The College Community is dedicated to expanding upon the excellent partnerships it shares with external constituents.
13. The College Community is committed to intensifying diversity in its hiring and recruitment processes.
14. The College Community anticipates that the merger of GCCC and Quapaw Technical Institute will enhance its ability to serve students across the organization.

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INITIATIVES

I. INCREASE THE COMMITMENT TO THE LEARNING COLLEGE

Action Items:

- A. Build consensus on definition of Learning College
- B. Update college mission
- C. Institutionalize student outcomes assessment as a central element in evaluating and enhancing student learning
- D. Develop and implement a systematic plan to enhance student retention/completion
 - 1. Address diversity issues (faculty/staff and student body)
 - 2. Incorporate enrollment management (general plan) i.e.: registration process retention, attrition, recruitment of special populations
- E. Develop and implement a comprehensive Staff Development Program

II. DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TO MAXIMIZE USE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES.

Action Items:

- A. Review and revise the current campus master plan
 - 1. Identify and review existing facilities
 - 2. Address critical facility needs (relate those to funding availability)
 - 3. Plan for growth
- B. Review and revise the organizations model
 - 1. Identify existing human resources and develop a plan to maximize effectiveness and efficiency
 - 2. Review and revise current institutional policies
- C. Review current program offerings and identify needs for new programs
- D. Create a comprehensive marketing plan

III. ENHANCE / MAXIMIZE TECHNOLOGY USE

Action Items:

- A. Create a plan to enhance the use of technology in the classroom

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- B. Provide a variety of alternative delivery methods for instruction
 - 1. Web-based
 - 2. Telecourses
 - 3. Compressed Video
 - 4. CD ROM / Web Enhanced
- C. Provide access to technology-based services for students
- D. Develop enhanced administrative technology for faculty and staff
- E. Enhance marketing through the use of technology

IV. SEEK TO DEVELOP ALTERNATE FUNDING SOURCES

Action Item:

- A. The College will increase grant funding
 - 1. Federal
 - 2. State
 - 3. Private
- B. Increase the contributions to the Foundation
 - 1. Corporations
 - 2. Individuals
 - 3. Other organizations and foundations
- C. Create a process to ensure tracking of all contributions