



## **STAKEHOLDER UPDATE**

January 29, 2020

A status update on Northern Pennsylvania Regional College, a two-year associate degree-granting institution supported by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. NPRC proudly serves students in Cameron, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, McKean, Potter, Warren, and Venango Counties.

Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs

On December 13, Northern Pennsylvania Regional College appointed Dr. Linda M. Fleming of Erie, PA, as the Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs. Fleming will lead the college's academic and workforce development departments, guide the development of new degree programs, and serve the college to advance regional accreditation efforts.

Please contact Dr. Fleming at 814.230.9010 with any questions or needs related to these areas.

Regional Accreditation and NPRC Explained

Students, counselors, and families are often confused by the concept of accreditation, what it is, what it means, and how institutions achieve regional accreditation. The following outlines the steps required to achieve regional accreditation and the benefits to students, families, and institutions.

The process to become an accredited institution is a multistep, peer-reviewed process that all colleges must complete. In the case of NPRC, once the college was approved legislatively, the Board of Trustees developed the plan and framework for the college to be approved by the PA Department of Education. Once the plan was approved in May 2017, the college completed a second application to PDE for degree-granting status. After degree granting approval was received May 28, 2019, the college began what will be a multi-year, accreditation process.

Application for accreditation is comprised of three parts: pre-candidacy, candidacy, and accreditation. At each stage, institutions must complete comprehensive applications that include data on curriculum, finances, student outcomes, program assessment, and other institutional processes.

While the pre-candidacy application is a paper application, to apply for candidacy, institutions must submit a second, more comprehensive application and host a peer-review site visit from the accrediting body. Once candidacy is established, the institution has a maximum of five years to achieve full accreditation. Institutions approved as candidates may participate in State and Federal financial aid programs such as Pell Grants, PHEAA grants, Stafford Loans, and other sources of tuition assistance. To achieve full accreditation, the institution must complete a thorough self-study to demonstrate that all functions and programs meet quality standards and are regularly evaluated to ensure continuous improvement and host a second peer review site visit.

All new institutions are held to the same process of seeking authorization and must demonstrate success at all stages. There are no shortcuts in the process, nor does approval in one stage guarantee success in the next stages. Accredited institutions are regularly revisited by peer review teams on an eight-year cycle involving comprehensive self-studies and a Mid-Point Peer Review.

NPRC has been invited to participate in a pre-candidacy information session which means the first step of the process has been approved. In February, NPRC staff will meet with accreditation staff to prepare for a site visit and accreditation readiness review to apply for candidacy.

Once the college achieves full accreditation, any student who graduated from the college during the time the college was in the candidacy phase, will be able to say they graduated from an accredited institution. That means, that if NPRC gets candidacy in June, students who graduate in August 2020 and beyond will have graduated from an accredited institution once NPRC receives full accreditation status. And, if NPRC gets candidacy in November, students who graduate in December and beyond will be considered to have graduated from accredited institution once NPRC receives full accreditation status.

For all students, and especially dual enrollment students, this means that while the college is seeking accreditation, any credits earned are not going to be immediately considered coming from an accredited institution. It may take several years for the college to achieve full accreditation.

Transferability of credits is determined by the receiving institution. Many institutions do not accept credits as transfer from institutions that are not accredited. Students who want to attend a college other than NPRC and want to take classes at NPRC during high school, should speak with the college they wish to attend. They may be asked to provide a course description and/or syllabus to the institution as part of the evaluation.

Reasons why high school students would take NPRC classes prior to the college achieving accreditation:

- They want to take NPRC classes for the experience of taking a college class
- They plan to attend NPRC after high school

#### Regional Library Partnership Established

Access to resources that libraries provide, such as digital databases, research librarians, and other print or media sources, are important tools for college student success. Northern Pennsylvania Regional College, and the Warren Public Library Association, entered into an agreement to provide all NPRC students additional tools and support to complete coursework.

Resources available through online access with the Warren Public Library will include e-book titles, digital research databases focused on specific subject areas, physical books, and resources, and the opportunity for students to speak with a librarian in person or online for assistance. In addition to the collaborative library agreement, as with all residents of Pennsylvania, students can register for access to the online *Power Library* that is provided by the state. This resource provides access to additional e-books and digital research databases.

Alongside the tools and support available for students, library personnel and staff will be valuable connections for faculty. The library staff will introduce faculty to the resources available to provide

instruction on their use and integration into their coursework. NPRC and the Warren Public Library will work together to expand and tailor their collection in response to the needs of the College.

Benjamin Blood, an English Instructor for NPRC, stated, "Utilizing our local and state library resources is integral to helping NPRC become a part of the fabric of the communities we serve. The services provided to our students and faculty will strengthen our ability to offer quality education and support our students on their higher education journey." Kelli Knapp, Director and District Administrator of the Warren Library Association, added, "We are looking forward to providing services to students and faculty in such a vast area." She went on to say, "There is no precedent in the state of Pennsylvania for a partnership like this and we are excited to collaborate on such a unique opportunity."

All NPRC students, regardless of home county, will benefit from this partnership.

NPRC's [spring schedule](#) includes 25 different academic courses offered at 28 locations across the nine-county service area.

For information about [Workforce Development classes](#) being offered this spring, please connect to the following link.