

LEGISLATIVE BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

A JOINT COMMITTEE OF THE PENNSYLVANIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Report on the Establishment of the Northern Pennsylvania Regional College

Conducted Pursuant to Act 2014-126
and Act 2016-86

December 2022



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REPORT SUMMARY



Objectives and Scope

- ❖ *Identify the services provided by the Northern Pennsylvania Regional College and provide demographic and program data.*
- ❖ *Analyze and present data on the success of the Northern Pennsylvania Regional College to serve the populations identified in the rural regional college plan approved by the Secretary of Education including student progress and economic and workforce development measures.*

Scope

This study covers fiscal and academic years 2017-18 through 2020-21.

Report Overview

Article XVII-E.1 of Act 2014-126 [Repealed], and subsequently Article XIX-G of Act 2016-86, provide for the establishment, operation, administration, and funding of a rural regional college (RRC) in a multicounty rural area that is underserved by comprehensive community college education and workforce development. Both acts also direct the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee (LBFC) to review the success of the RRC in satisfying the goals set forth in the RRC plan approved by the Secretary of Education and the needs of the multicounty area the RRC was established to serve.

The LBFC was required to submit an interim report to the General Assembly by June 30, 2018, and the final report by June 30, 2022. Act 2022-55 amended the date of the final report to December 31, 2022. As the now named Northern Pennsylvania Regional College (NPRC) plan was only approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) in May 2017, the data required for the interim report was not available. Instead, we prepared a brief report updating the General Assembly on the progress that had been made through 2018.¹ See Appendix A for a copy of the relevant section of Act 2016-86, as amended.

The NPRC was originally affiliated with Gannon University but became independent in spring 2020. Therefore, we only have a relatively brief period to review its activities, and that period includes the initial COVID-19 lockdowns and the impact they had on the NPRC as an educational institution. Therefore, we are not able to assess success in meeting the overall goals of its plan but do report on the progress of the college in key areas since academic year 2017.

NPRC Progress Since Our 2018 Report

Since our last report, the NPRC moved forward with establishing its independence and continues its progress toward accreditation. Its initial timelines and goals, however, have not been met as the initial plan was delayed along with funding as detailed in our 2018 report. For example, while the Rural Regional College plan was submitted to the Department

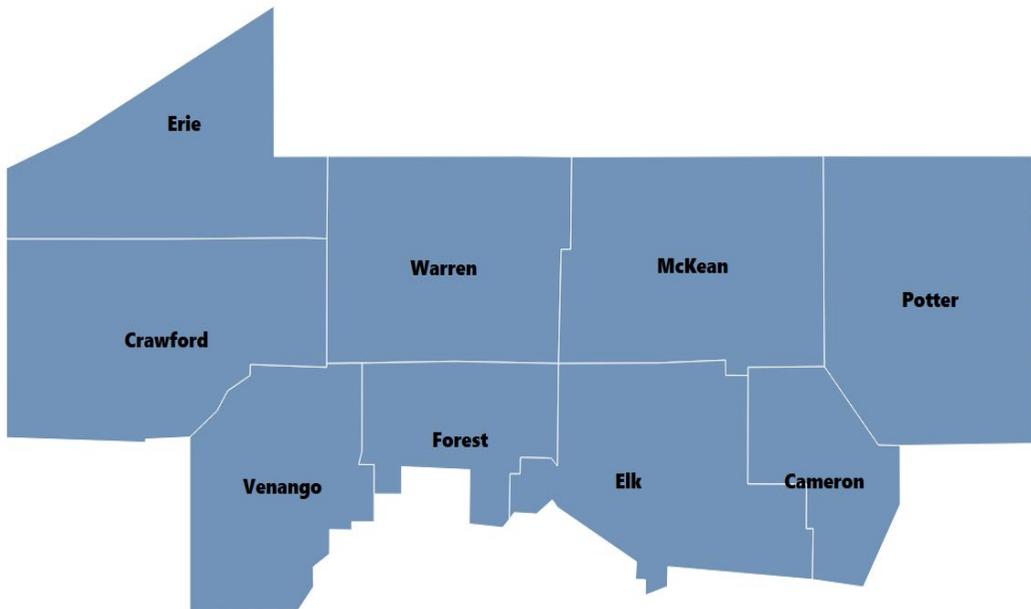
¹ <http://lbfc.legis.state.pa.us/Resources/Documents/Reports/626.pdf>

of Education in December of 2016 as was the goal, PDE approved the plan two months after anticipated in May 2017, and NPRC began operating independent of Gannon in January 2020, instead of the summer of 2018 date originally planned for.

The NPRC was established to serve the residents primarily from nine northern tier counties shown in the map below. During the time of this review, NPRC offered academic and workforce courses at 25 instructional locations throughout this region. As stated in its plan, approved by the PDE:

The mission of the Rural Regional College of Northern Pennsylvania is to provide affordable and accessible education opportunities to the underserved populace of this area by collaborating with local educational and administrative agencies, utilizing an innovative delivery model that is responsive to economic needs, and providing training which leads to family sustaining careers.

In addition, to “meeting the students where they are,” the NPRC also offers both academic (credit-bearing) and workforce development (non-credit-bearing) courses for individuals seeking specific job market skills or further academic attainment.



NPRC Student Demographics

One of our objectives for this report was to review demographic data for NPRC students, both those pursuing a more academic education and those attending workforce development (WFD) courses. We include the demographics for academic year 2017-18 through fall 2021.

From fall 2017 through fall 2019 when NPRC and Gannon were in partnership, the school served 510 degree-seeking and non-degree seeking academic students. From spring 2020 through fall of 2021, 379 academic students were attending NPRC.

Of those academic students, during academic year 2020-21, the last full academic year contained in this review:

- 75 percent of students were female;
- 62 percent of students were 29 years of age or younger;
- 87 percent of students were white;
- 64 percent were first-generation college students; and
- 62 percent were from Elk, Erie, and Warren Counties.

Of students enrolled in non-credit-bearing courses offered through workforce development courses:²

- 65 percent were female;
- 38 percent were 29 years of age or younger; and
- 69 percent were white.

Revenues and Expenditures

NPRC's revenues come from tuition, the PA Department of Education, grants, donations, and other miscellaneous sources. Expenditures are for both program and support services.

Total revenues and expenditures for the years reviewed for this report are as follows:

	FY 2017-18	FY 2018-19	FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21
Total Revenues	\$2,321,868	\$3,116,394	\$4,975,536	\$6,853,924
Total Expenditures	\$2,062,050	\$3,346,644	\$4,402,612	\$5,235,270

² Demographic information for WFD students is more limited because this data was not collected until the implementation of online registration through NPRC's Student Information System during fall of 2019 for courses beginning in spring 2020.

Courses and Faculty

Courses are taught at many locations throughout the NPRC region. Additionally, in the spring 2020 term, all courses became temporarily remote, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with most students returning to location-based attendance in fall 2021 and a return to normal operations at all locations for all students and instruction. The flexibility of these options contributes to NPRC's goals of accessibility to all populations and innovative delivery.

NPRC had an average of 13 instructors per academic term who taught an average of 51 credit hours per term. As of fall 2021, NPRC had 16 faculty members, six of whom, including the Dean of Curriculum and Instruction, were full-time. Those full-time faculty members taught 46 of the total 83 credit hours during that term.

A total of 92 different courses were offered at NPRC. Of those, 31 of which were offered through the Gannon-NPRC partnership and discontinued once NPRC began offering its independent curriculum with 61 different courses. A majority of courses have 20 or fewer students enrolled in a term, with only 13 courses being composed of greater than 20 students in a term over the review period.

Dual Enrollment. Dual enrollment allows a high school student to take courses at both the high school and college levels at the same time. NPRC has agreements with seven school districts which were formed after the Gannon-NPRC pilot program was discontinued; however, dual enrollment declined in recent academic terms.

NPRC Evaluation. NPRC prepares two self-evaluative documents for each of its academic credit bearing programs. The Academic Program Reviews (APR) are conducted annually to assess a program's viability, adequacy, and efficacy in alignment with the mission of the school.

NPRC also prepared Accreditation Readiness Reports (ARR) for each of its program areas, including workforce development. These reports are prepared, by request of the institutional accreditor, as part of NPRC's application for candidacy for accreditation and will cease once the college becomes a candidate for accreditation. Upon achieving candidacy, NPRC will begin the self-study process toward achievement of full accreditation within five years, followed by participation in the accrediting agency's multi-year accreditation cycle.

Articulation Agreements

The NPRC has articulation agreements, signed in July 2022, with the Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania (CU), the integrated universities of Bloomsburg, Lock Haven, and Mansfield. This provides transferability of NPRC credits to CU universities and guarantees transfer opportunities as follows:

- Associate of Arts in Liberal Studies to Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies;
- Associate of Arts in Social Sciences to Bachelor of Science in Social Work;
- Associate of Science in Business Administration to Bachelor of Science in Business Administration; and
- Associate of Science in Criminal Justice to Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice.

NPRC has a similar arrangement with the University of Pittsburgh-Titusville, allowing nursing students needing to complete general education foundational courses to take instruction through NPRC and then enter the Pitt-Titusville Nursing Program.

NPRC Graduates

NPRC has graduated 41 (20 from Gannon University/NPRC and 21 from NPRC) students since 2014. According to NPRC graduate survey responses from the 21 who graduated from NPRC, five are pursuing nursing degrees at the University of Pittsburgh – Titusville, and one is pursuing a four-year degree at another institution. Students have also earned various certifications at NPRC.

In addition, about half of the graduates were employed within three months of graduation or pursuing a degree at another institution and about the same number were employed a year after graduation or pursuing a degree at another institution. The majority of graduates responding to a follow-up survey from NPRC indicated that the college met their academic and employment development needs.

NPRC Workforce Development

The NPRC offers sponsored and customized workforce development (WFD) programs. Sponsored courses are open to the public with either

an employer enrolling and paying for courses or self-pay by an individual. Since 2018, when WFD courses were initiated, 75 company-sponsored enrollees and 283 self-paid enrollees have participated in these WFD courses. Customized courses are developed for a specific employer and only that employer's employees may enroll; since 2018, 266 enrollees have participated in customized WFD courses. A total of 34 employers, including four fire departments, have enrolled, and paid for employees to attend these courses. Several of the employers have used both sponsored and customized courses for their employees.

The employers we spoke with were satisfied with the services offered by NPRC, the flexibility of scheduling courses and course locations. Several of the employers had used other entities for employee training but found NPRC to be more cost-effective for the training needed by the employer.

In fall 2021, NPRC opened its Education and Training Center in Erie County. The facility combines traditional classroom space, along with industry-specific laboratory space for training in nurse aide, science, precision machining, and other technical fields. The NPRC WFD program is in a transition and, in an effort to be more flexible and provide more hands-on training opportunities, is reportedly considering using mobile equipment in addition to this facility.

Accreditation

Accreditation is important to students in ensuring college standards and allowing colleges to award federal and state grants and loans to enrolled students. Accreditation also ensures credits and degrees are recognized as having the rigor, quality, and relevance common to all accredited colleges.

Accreditation is a multistep, peer-reviewed process. Once a proposal for a college is legislatively approved, a Board of Trustees must be established that develops the plan and framework for the college. Once approved by the PA Department of Education (PDE), the college must complete a second comprehensive application to PDE to be authorized as a degree-granting institution in Pennsylvania. After that, a college may begin the accreditation application process.

In October 2020, NPRC's Accreditation Readiness Report was submitted for review by a peer review team assigned by the accrediting agency. The feedback cycle was completed in April 2021, and NPRC submitted an Accreditation Readiness Report Update 1 in September 2021. The institution is awaiting a peer review team visit from its institutional accreditors. No further update on NPRC's accreditation status is available.

Recommendation

We recommend the General Assembly consider directing the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to conduct a study of the Northern Pennsylvania Regional College in five years to determine whether the college has met its plan goals and become an accredited college. Given that this study was conducted when the college had been independent for a relatively short period of time, and while it was still working toward accreditation and operating during the COVID-19 pandemic, we believe another review may be useful to the General Assembly.

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SECTION I OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY



Why we conducted this study...

- ❖ *Act 2016-86 directed the LBFC to conduct an interim study (released in 2018) and a final study of certain aspects of the rural community college established pursuant to the act. This is the final study under that act.*
- ❖ *The Act directs the LBFC to report on student demographics, student progress and workforce development measures.*

Article XVII-E.1 of Act 2014-126 [Repealed], and subsequently Article XIX-G of Act 2016-86, provide for the establishment, operation, administration, and funding of a rural regional college (RRC) in a multicounty rural area that is underserved in terms of comprehensive community college education and workforce development. Both Acts also direct the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee (LBFC) to review the success of the RRC in satisfying the goals set forth in the RRC plan approved by the Secretary of Education and the needs of the multicounty area the RRC was established to serve.

The LBFC was required to submit an interim report to the General Assembly by June 30, 2018, and the final report by June 30, 2022. The interim report was released in June 2018. This is the final report under the act. Act 2022-55 amended the submission date of the final report to December 31, 2022. See Appendix A for a copy of the relevant section of Act 2016-86, as amended.

Objectives

Our objectives for this study were as follows:

1. Identify the services provided by the Northern Pennsylvania Regional College and provide demographic and program data.
2. Analyze and present data on the success of the Northern Pennsylvania Regional College to serve the populations identified in the rural regional college plan approved by the Secretary of Education including student progress and economic and workforce development measures.

Scope

Our study primarily covered fiscal and academic years 2017-18 through 2020-21. In some areas our scope extended through the spring 2022 term. We note this in those sections of the report.

Methodology

To identify demographic and program data, we reviewed data from both Gannon University and the Northern Pennsylvania Regional College (NPRC). We reviewed the plan for the NPRC submitted to and approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Education in 2017 to identify the goals of the college and to review its progress in meeting those goals. We reviewed student evaluations related to NPRC services as well as graduate follow-up conducted by NPRC to identify whether its graduates pursued academics at other institutions or were employed.

With respect to NPRC fiscal information, we obtained and reviewed both revenue and expenditure reports from FY 2017-18 to FY 2020-21, the period of our review. We did not independently audit the financial information; therefore, we cannot express an opinion or any form of assurance on the accuracy of the financial statements. We believe the information used in this report to be accurate and complete as it was presented to us.

For the workforce development program, we reviewed data from NPRC on the public and customized courses, including the number of employer-paid and self-paid enrollees. We contacted employers who used public and customized courses for employee training to gain an understanding of their satisfaction with the program. We also spoke with representatives of PA CareerLink and the PA Northwest Workforce Development Board.

We reviewed the four articulation agreements and related documents between NPRC and the Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania regarding degrees in Interdisciplinary Studies, Social Work, Business Administration, and Criminal Justice. We reviewed the articulation agreement between NPRC and the University of Pittsburgh-Titusville regarding the nursing program. We also reviewed the seven agreements between NPRC and school districts regarding provision of dual enrollment classes.

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge and appreciate the excellent cooperation we received from NPRC President Susan Snelick, Melinda Saunders, NPRC Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs, Lori McNeal, NPRC Registrar, and NPRC staff. We also thank the company representatives and other stakeholders who spoke with us about their experience with NPRC.

Important Note

This report was developed by the staff of the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee, including Rick Jones, Counsel, Anne Witkonis, Analyst, and Amy Hockenberry, Analyst. The release of this report should not be construed as an indication that the Committee as a whole, or its individual members, necessarily concur with the report's findings, conclusions, or recommendations.

Any questions or comments regarding the contents of this report should be directed to the following:

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SECTION II BACKGROUND INFORMATION



Fast Facts...

- *NPRC was established to serve primarily a nine-county rural area in northwestern Pennsylvania.*
- *NPRC in partnership with Gannon University began a pilot project in 2014.*
- *The regional college plan was approved by the Secretary of Education in May 2017.*
- *In January 2020 NPRC began operating independent of Gannon University.*
- *In September 2021 NPRC's Accreditation Readiness Report Update 1 was submitted for review by an assigned peer review team and the college currently awaits its peer review team visit.*

Article XVII-E.1 of Act 2014-126 [repealed] and subsequently Article XIX-G of Act 2016-86, as amended, direct the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee (LBFC) to review the success of the rural regional college (RRC) in satisfying the goals set forth in the RRC's plan, approved by the Secretary of Education and in satisfying the needs of the multicounty area that the rural regional college was established to serve.³ This section sets forth an overview of the background regarding the establishment of the regional college and its progress to date.

The Establishment of the Northern Pennsylvania Regional College

Article XVII-E.1 of Act 2014-126 [repealed] and subsequently Article XIX-G of Act 2016-86, as amended, established an RRC in Pennsylvania as "a public institution of higher education which is established in a rural area and operated in accordance with the provisions of this article as a college which provides up to a two-year, postsecondary education not to exceed the level of an associate of arts or sciences degree, and which is active in work force development."

Under these acts, the Secretary of Education was to work with a nonprofit organization in identifying a service region, appoint a board of trustees for the RRC, and designate counties to be served by the RRC. Within one year of its initial meeting, the board of trustees was to submit to the Secretary a proposed plan for the RRC for Secretary approval within 60 days.

The Education Consortium of Upper Allegheny (ECUA) had been established in 2009 to deliver open admissions and low-cost, high-quality community and technical education and training opportunities to a rural regional area that was underserved by a community college program, including workforce development, and was selected to assist in the RRC process.⁴ The ECUA, through a partnership with Gannon University, provided two Associate Degree programs—Interdisciplinary Studies and Business Administration—across an eleven-county rural area of northcentral and northwestern Pennsylvania through a combination of traditional classrooms and the use of live interactive television technology. The

³ The LBFC is required to submit an interim report to the General Assembly by June 30, 2018, and the final report by June 30, 2022. Act 2022-55 amended the date of the final report to December 31, 2022.

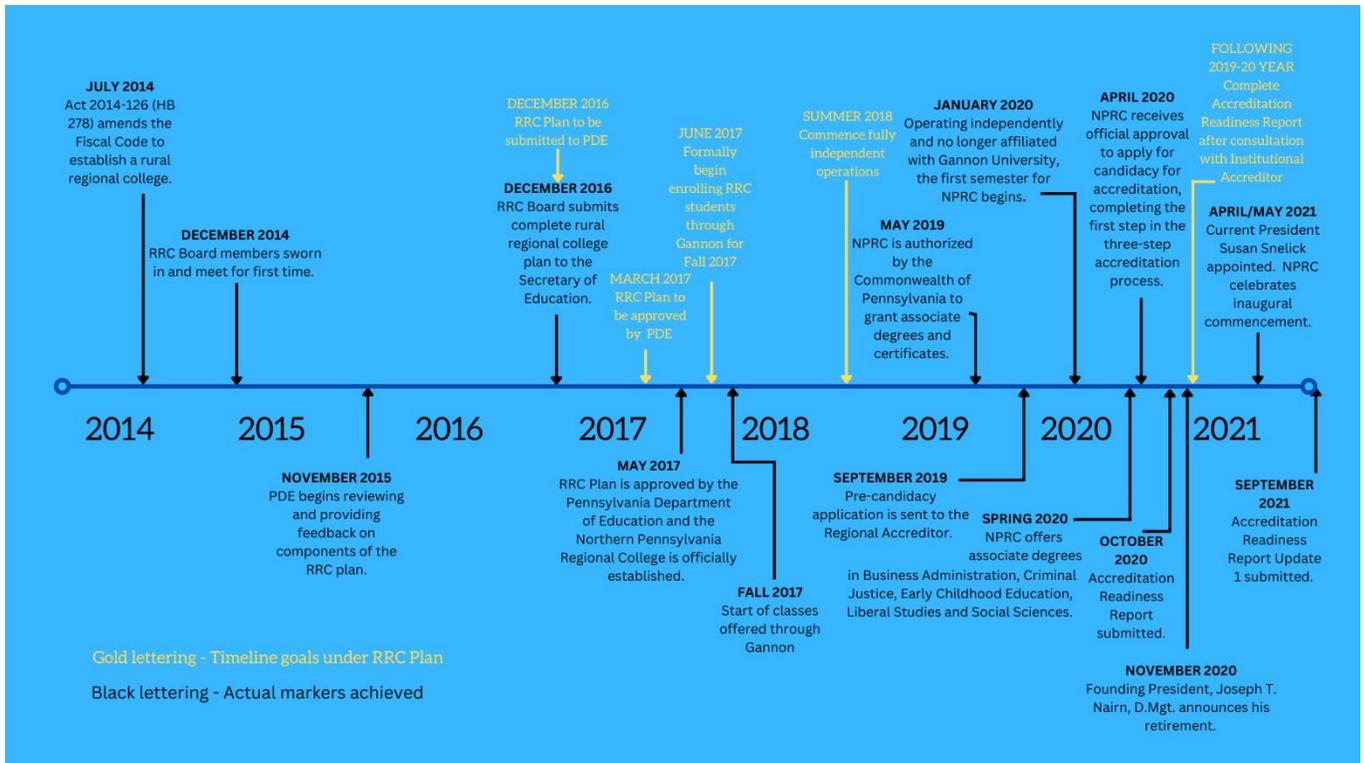
⁴ In July 2021, the Erie Community College began operations. Prior to this, there was no community college in this northern region.

Pennsylvania Secretary of Education, in consultation with ECUA, designated nine contiguous counties—Cameron, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, McKean, Potter, Venango and Warren—to be served by the establishment of an RRC. The RRC Board of Trustees submitted its complete RRC plan to the Secretary of Education for review in December 2016, and after making recommended adjustments, the plan was approved, and the Northern Pennsylvania Regional College (NPRC) was established on May 25, 2017.

Additional information detailing the history of the establishment of the NPRC may be found in the 2018 LBFC report at:

<http://lbfc.legis.state.pa.us/Resources/Documents/Reports/626.pdf>

Timeline

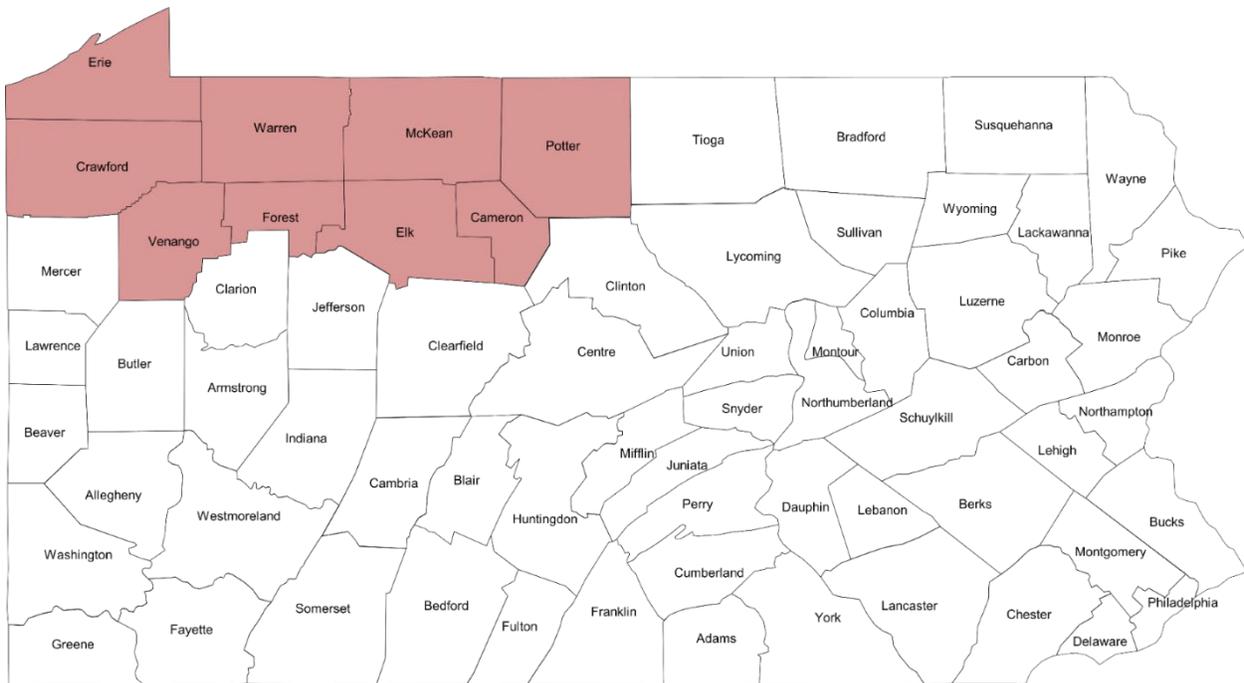


Location

NPRC's service area, shown in Exhibit 1, covers Cameron, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, McKean, Potter, Venango, and Warren Counties. Students can attend classes in any of 25 instructional sites throughout that nine-county service area. Aggregating students across the region allows them to stay in their home communities while keeping class sizes reasonable. Each instructional site is proctored to ensure academic integrity. NPRC has partnered with regional educational facilities and invested in live, interactive video technology to give students a classroom experience without requiring them to leave their communities or contend with long commutes.

Exhibit 1

Designated Area of the Northern Pennsylvania Regional College



Source: Developed by LBFC staff from the Rural Regional College Plan.

Students Served

NPRC offers eligible high school juniors and seniors the opportunity to take dual enrollment classes to start their college education, with programs offered outside of school hours. NPRC also assists adult learners with affordable, outside-of-work hours education. NPRC's Student Engagement Specialists work with adult learners to individualize an educational plan that seeks to align with their career goals. NPRC also works with business owners who are interested in investing in their employees through their workforce development programming.

Progress Toward Accreditation

Accreditation is important to students in that it provides assurance that the college meets standards for excellence as established by a nationally recognized accreditor through review by accredited peer institutions. Additionally, accredited institutions are eligible to complete the processes necessary for approval to award federal and state grants and loans to enrolled students, and students have assurance that the credits and degrees they earn are recognized as having the rigor, quality, and relevance common to all accredited colleges.

Accreditation is a multistep, peer-reviewed process that all colleges must complete. Once a proposal for a college is legislatively approved, a Board of Trustees must be established that develops the plan and framework for the college. Once approved by the PA Department of Education (PDE), the college must complete a second comprehensive application to PDE to be authorized as a degree-granting institution in Pennsylvania. After that approval, a college may begin the accreditation application process.

The accreditation process involves the following multi-year steps:

Pre-candidacy. Institutions must complete a comprehensive application for pre-candidacy that includes data on curriculum, finances, student outcomes, and other institutional processes.

Candidacy. To apply for candidacy, institutions must have enrolled students as well as graduates of its own programs, complete a second application, and host a peer review site visit. Once candidacy is approved, the college may complete the process required for approval to award federal grants and loans.

Once candidacy is established, the institution has a maximum of five years to achieve full accreditation (per federal guidelines). During this

timeframe, the institution must complete a comprehensive self-study demonstrating all functions and programs meet quality standards and requirements for affiliation, are regularly evaluated to ensure continuous improvement, and host a second peer review site visit.

Accreditation. Once accredited, institutions are regularly revisited by peer review teams on an eight-year cycle involving comprehensive self-studies and site visits. To maintain accreditation, colleges are required to demonstrate their commitment to continual improvement through assessment of all policies, procedures, and practices.

Status. In September 2019, NPRC's pre-candidacy application was sent to the regional accreditor and in April 2020, NPRC received official approval to apply for candidacy for accreditation. In October 2020, NPRC submitted its Accreditation Readiness Report for review by an assigned peer review team. After completing the related feedback loop and as requested by the accrediting agency, NPRC submitted its Accreditation Readiness Report Update 1 in September 2021 and currently awaits its peer review team's visit.

Partnering with Other Institutions

The NPRC has four articulation agreements, signed in July 2022, with the Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania (CU), the integrated universities of Bloomsburg, Lock Haven, and Mansfield. NPRC's website explains that articulation agreements "are designed to create a transfer experience that is seamless for a student moving from a community college or similar institution to a four-year program or institution." It outlines transfer policies and establishes an educational partnership where one institution agrees to accept specific credits that were completed satisfactorily at a different institution. Generally, articulation agreements document a pathway between two or more colleges or universities and their academic programs. Colleges and universities publish articulation agreements after reviewing the curriculum and the level of instruction then agreeing on how courses completed at a community college, for instance, will satisfy course requirements at the future four-year institution.

The arrangement between NPRC and CU provides for the transferability of certain NPRC credits to CU universities and guarantees transfer opportunities for NPRC associate degrees into four CU undergraduate curricula with no credit loss for qualifying students. The four-degree programs addressed in the agreements are:

- Associate of Arts in Liberal Studies to Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies;

- Associate of Arts in Social Sciences to Bachelor of Science in Social Work;
- Associate of Science in Business Administration to Bachelor of Science in Business Administration; and
- Associate of Science in Criminal Justice to Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice.

NPRC also has an articulation arrangement with the University of Pittsburgh-Titusville (Pitt-Titusville). For nursing students who need to complete general education foundational courses, NPRC offers affordable site-based instruction designed to meet Pitt-Titusville's prerequisites. Therefore, as a part of the Pitt-Titusville Hub, prospective students who have already applied with Pitt-Titusville and received their letter of acceptance into the nursing program can reach out to the NPRC admissions for their next steps in the enrollment process. Under the articulation agreement between NPRC and Pitt-Titusville, eligible students may successfully enter the Pitt-Titusville Nursing Program upon completion of their General Education Certificate at NPRC.

Dual enrollment allows a high school student to take courses at both the high school and college levels at the same time. NPRC has signed agreements with the following school districts regarding dual enrollment:

- Corry
- Crawford Central
- Girard
- Otto-Eldred
- St. Marys
- Union City
- Warren County

And NPRC is working to finalize dual enrollment agreements with the following school districts and career centers:

- Austin Area School District
- Erie Public Schools
- Forest Area
- Erie County Technical Schools (prior learning credit agreement)
- Warren Career Center (prior learning credit agreement).

Current Board of Trustees

The NPRC Board of Trustees is comprised of professionals and businesspeople from across northwestern Pennsylvania dedicated to seeing that

education and opportunity are available to all citizens of the region, regardless of location. The Board of Trustees meets to advise and guide NPRC in meeting its mission of accessibility and affordability and provides an avenue of feedback for businesses, industries, government, and community organizations to the college. See Exhibit 2 for the current membership of the NPRC Board of Trustees. The Board meets monthly and board members serve staggered three-year terms.

Exhibit 2

Current Members of the NPRC Board of Trustees

Position	Name	Location
Chair	Kate Brock	St. Marys, PA
Vice Chair	Amanda Hetrick	Tionesta, PA
Secretary	Henri (Hank) LeMeur	Warren, PA
Member	Jamie Evans	Port Allegheny, PA
Member	Dr. Adrienne Dixon	Erie, PA
Member	Robert Esch	Bradford, PA
Member	Mario Fontanazza	Oil City, PA
Member	Kimberly Rees	Austin, PA
Member	Greg Mahon	Harrisburg, PA
Member	Amy Shields	Kane, PA
Member	Duane Vicini	Warren, PA
Member	Holli Wolfe	Titusville, PA
Member Emeritus	Hon. Mary Jo White	Oil City, PA

Source: Developed by LBFC staff from information provided by NPRC staff as of August 2022.

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SECTION III NPRC STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS



Fast Facts

- ❖ *The majority of academic students at NPRC are between the ages of 18 and 29.*
- ❖ *The majority of academic students are female, representing about three quarters of the students in the most recent academic year reviewed.*
- ❖ *The majority of academic students are first generation college students.*

One of our objectives was to review demographic data for NPRC students, both those pursuing a more academic education and those attending workforce development courses. We include the demographics for academic years (AY) 2017-18 through fall 2021. NPRC became independent of Gannon University in spring 2020.

At the time the plan for the college was developed, the demographic trends of the region showed an aging population and one that experienced higher poverty than the state average. According to the 2020 U.S. Census, the nine-county region remains behind the rest of the state in median household income, with median household income in the region ranging from \$40,342 to \$54,961 compared to a statewide median household income of \$63,627. The population of this region declined since 2010 while the statewide population has had a marginal increase. Eight of the nine counties have a poverty rate higher than the statewide average poverty rate of 10.9 percent.

Academic Student Demographics

Exhibit 3 shows, by academic term, a general overview of the number of students, those seeking degrees, the number of courses taught, and total credit hours for the review period.

Exhibit 3

Students/Degree Seekers/Courses/Credit Hours Fall 2017 to Fall 2021

Gannon/NRPC	Head Count	Degree Seekers	Non-Degree Seekers	Total Courses	Total Credit Hours
Fall 2017	44	22	22	79	224
Spring 2018	29	16	13	55	165
Summer 2018	87	14	73	115	345
Fall 2018	67	26	41	145	392
Spring 2019	78	35	43	170	510
Summer 2019	116	32	84	190	570
Fall 2019	89	51	38	240	652

Exhibit 3 Continued

NPRC	Head Count	Degree Seekers	Non-Degree Seekers	Total Courses	Total Credit Hours
Spring 2020	60	49	11	154	449
Summer 2020	41	38	3	74	214
Fall 2020	70	64	6	226	617
Spring 2021	88	82	6	279	791
Summer 2021	44	42	2	64	187
Fall 2021	76	58	18	189	539

Source: Developed by LBFC staff with data provided by NPRC.

In our 2018 report, we presented NPRC enrollment projections. Exhibit 4 compares those projections with actual enrollment numbers. In two of the academic years shown, the enrollment exceeded the projection, however, in AY 2020-21, actual enrollment was significantly lower than projected.

Exhibit 4

**Projected versus Actual Enrollments
 AYs 2018-19 to 2020-21**

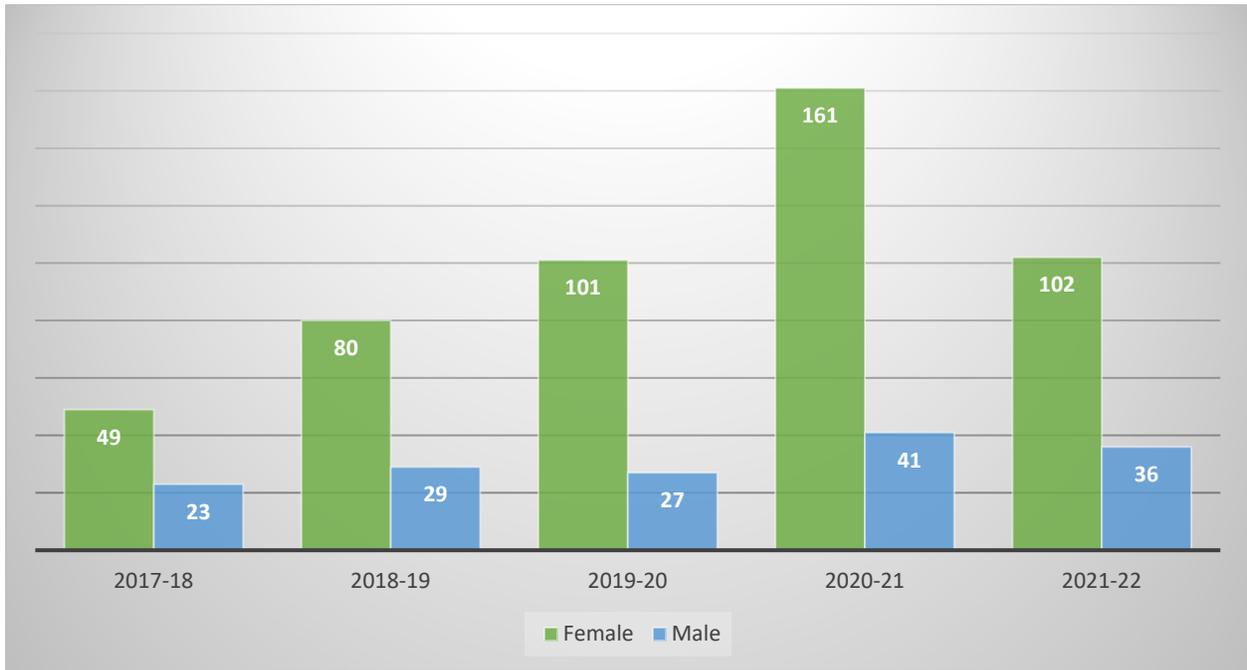
Academic Year	Projected Enrollment	Actual Enrollment	Projected Associate Degree	Degree Seeking Students
2018-2019	80	261	40	93
2019-2020	160	190	80	136
2020-2021	300	202	180	188

Source: Developed by LBFC staff with data provided by NPRC.

Based on the headcounts above in Exhibit 3, Exhibit 5 shows the number of students by gender.

Exhibit 5

Female Students attend NPRC in Greater Numbers
AYs 2017-18 to 2021-22

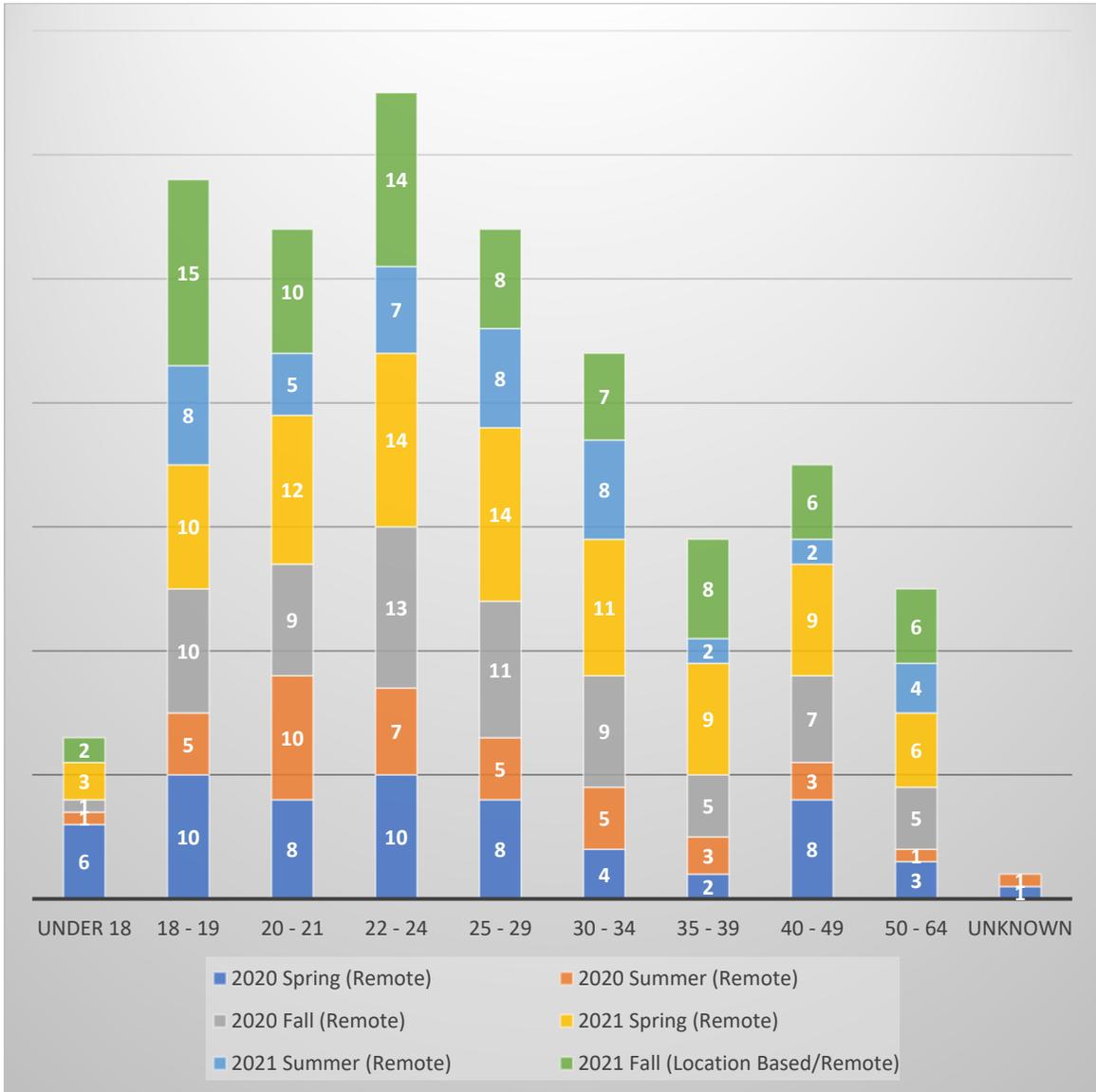


Source: Developed by LBFC staff with data provided by NPRC.

Students at NPRC have been a wide range of ages, as shown in Exhibit 6. The majority of students are between the ages of 18 and 29.

Exhibit 6

**Age of Students Attending NPRC
 Spring 2020 to Fall 2021**

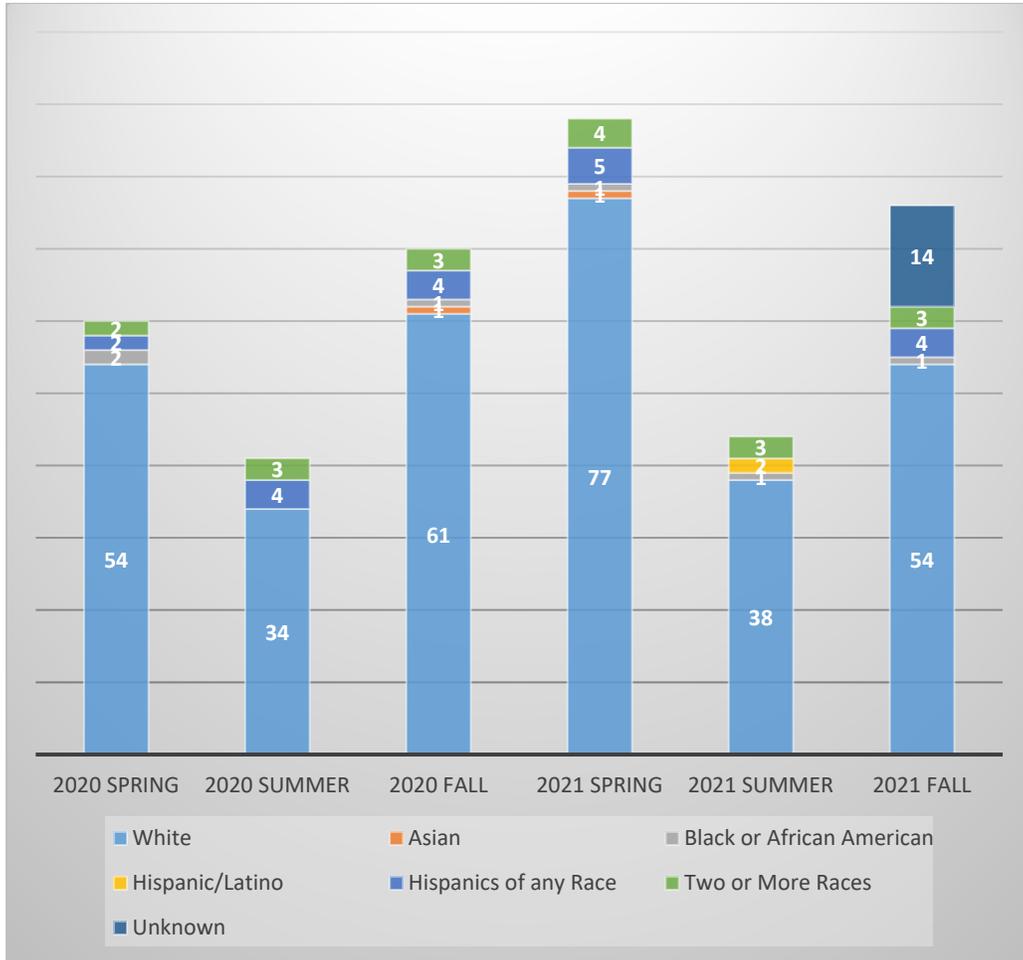


Source: Developed by LBFC staff with data provided by NPRC.

Exhibit 7 below shows the race of NPRC students, by academic term, from spring 2020 when NPRC became independent, through fall 2021. For AYs 2017-18 through fall 2019, when NPRC was affiliated with Gannon, limited race data was collected and maintained.

Exhibit 7

**Race of Students Attending NPRC
 Spring 2020 to Fall 2021**



Source: Developed by LBFC staff with data provided by NPRC.

As shown on Exhibit 8, most students attending NPRC are from the nine counties that the school was intended to serve. Two students from Mercer County attended during AY 2020-21 and one student each from Mercer and Lawrence Counties attended during AY 2021-22; those two counties are outside of the identified service area of NPRC.

Exhibit 8

Most NPRC Students are From Erie and Warren Counties
AY 2017-18 to Fall 2021

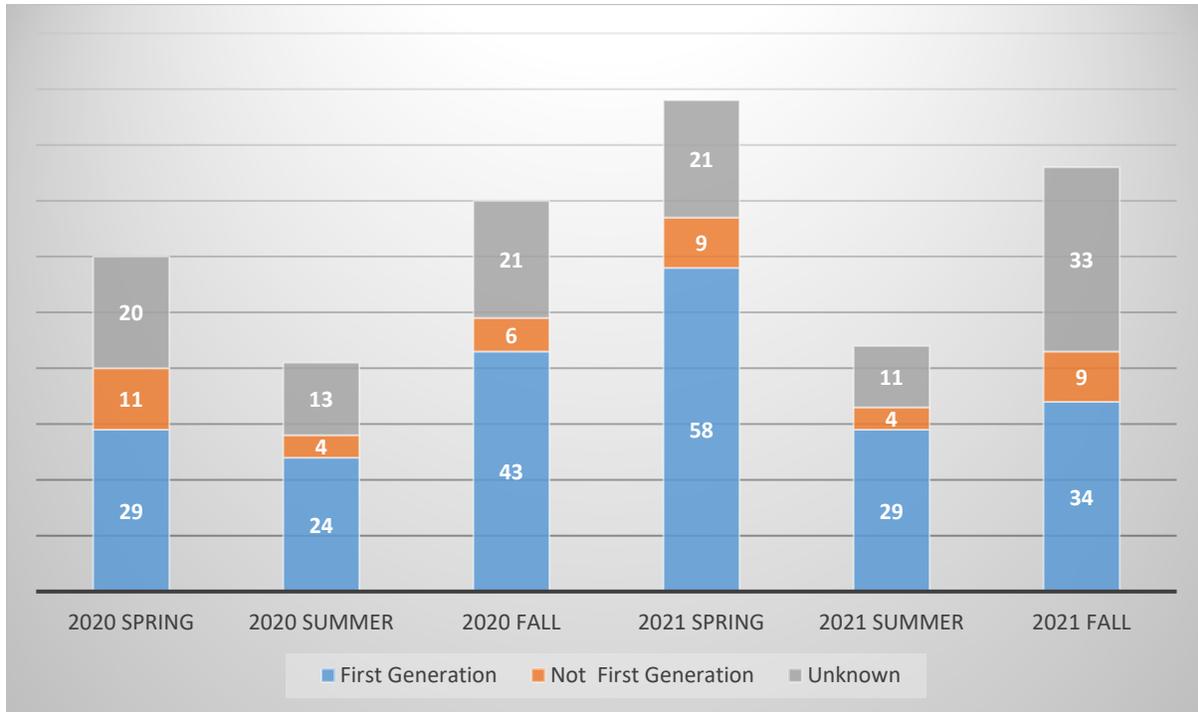
	2017-18 Gannon	2018-19 Gannon	2019-20 Gannon	2019-20 NPRC	2020-21 NPRC	2021-22 NPRC (Fall)	Total
Cameron	2	-	-	2	4	2	10
Crawford	18	2	9	14	24	16	104
Elk	16	24	14	11	40	8	113
Erie	41	77	23	23	48	18	230
Forest	8	11	8	7	12	6	52
Lawrence	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
McKean	6	22	5	10	20	5	68
Mercer	-	-	-	-	2	1	3
Potter	22	29	8	5	7	2	73
Venango	-	5	5	2	8	5	25
Warren	41	67	17	27	37	12	201
Total	154	258	89	101	202	76	880

Source: Developed by LBFC staff with data provided by NPRC.

Additionally, many of NPRC's students are the first generation of their families to attend an institution of higher learning. Exhibit 9 shows the number of first-generation students attending NPRC during the five years of our review. During AYs 2017-18 and 2018-19 of the Gannon/NPRC pilot there were two first generation students attending the college.

Exhibit 9

**Many NPRC Students are First-Generation Higher Education Attendees
Spring 2020 to Fall 2021**



Source: Developed by LBFC staff with data provided by NPRC.

Of all students attending NPRC during the period of our review, 136 of them attended two academic years in a row. Over half of the students who enrolled for at least one academic term in AY 2019-20 continued their enrollment during at least one academic term in AY 2020-21, resulting in a retention rate of 62 percent.

As a regional institution with students attending more sporadically, NPRC defines a retained student as one who attends any term in an academic year and then returns any term in the following academic year. This differs from other institutions of higher learning. The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System⁵ definition of retention is having a first-time (student who earned no college credit hours after earning a high school diploma or its equivalent), full-time (student enrolled in 12 or more credit hours) student who enrolls in fall of an academic year and continues enrollment in fall of the next academic year.

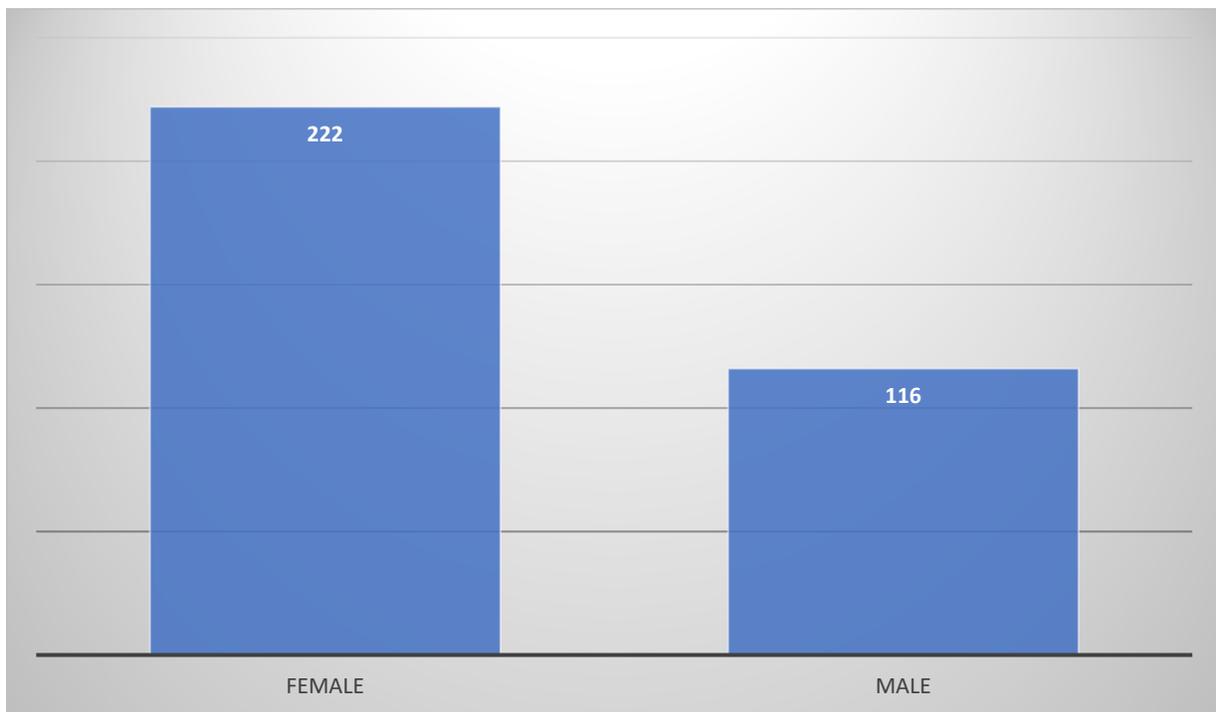
⁵ The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System is a system of interrelated surveys conducted annually by the National Center for Education Statistics, a part of the Institute for Education Sciences within the United States Department of Education.

Workforce Development (WFD) Demographics

Demographic information for WFD students is more limited. This data was not collected until the implementation of an online registration form through NPRC's Student Information System during fall 2019 for courses beginning in spring 2020. Exhibit 10 shows that there are almost double the number of female students than male in WFD courses.

Exhibit 10

More Females Are Enrolled in WFD Courses than Men Spring 2020 to Fall 2021

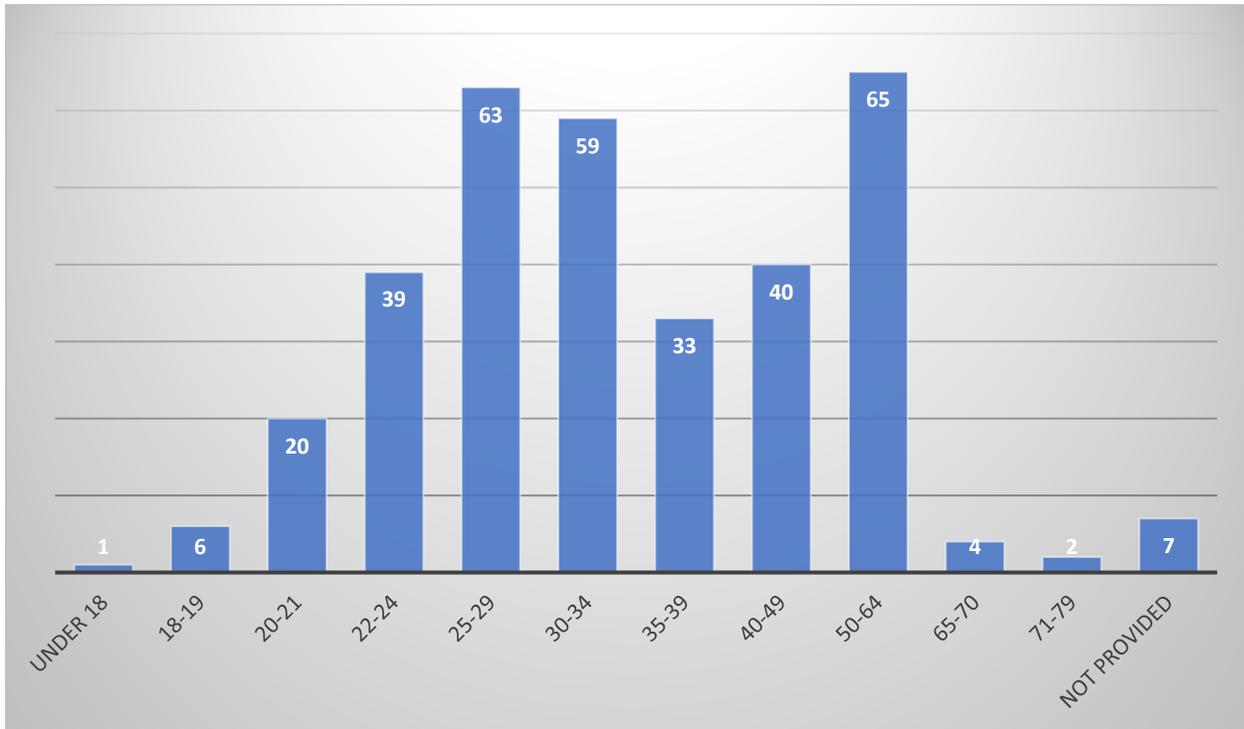


Source: Developed by LBFC staff with data provided by NPRC.

The two largest age cohorts to attend WFD courses are the 25 to 29 range and the 50 to 64 range, as shown in Exhibit 11.

Exhibit 11

**Age of Students Enrolled in WFD Courses
Spring 2020 to Fall 2021**

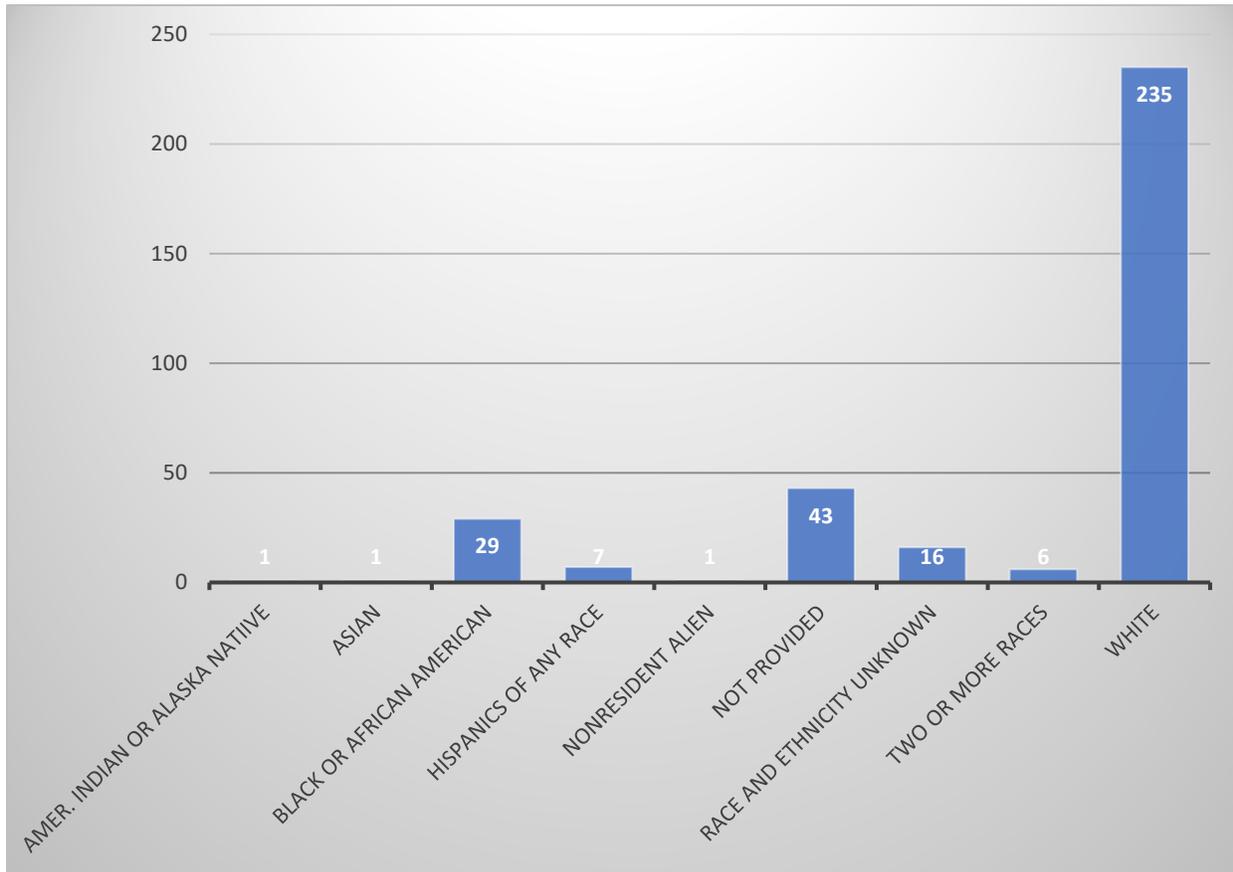


Source: Developed by LBFC staff with data provided by NPRC.

Exhibit 12 shows the race of those students enrolled in WFD courses at NPRC.

Exhibit 12

**Race of Students Enrolled in WFD Courses
Spring 2020 to Fall 2021**



Source: Developed by LBFC staff with data provided by NPRC.

SECTION IV NPRC COMPLIANCE WITH PLAN GOALS



Fast Facts...

- ❖ *NPRC was established to provide affordable and accessible educational opportunities to the underserved populace in a nine-county area.*
- ❖ *NPRC has made progress toward meeting the goals of its approved plan since our 2018 report.*
- ❖ *Almost all students attending NPRC are from the nine-county area.*
- ❖ *Twenty-nine students have graduated from NPRC during our review period.*

Overview

As discussed earlier in this report, the NPRC was established to provide affordable and accessible educational opportunities to the underserved populace in a nine-county area of the state by collaborating with local educational and administrative agencies, using a delivery model that is responsive to economic needs, and providing training which leads to family-sustaining careers. The plan for the NPRC, approved by the PA Department of Education (PDE), laid out goals for the college including:

- Accessibility to all populations;
- Industry recognized, stackable credentials and employer-driven technical and academic programming;
- Innovative curriculum;
- Innovative delivery that is based on cooperative and meaningful connections with existing capacity; and
- An academic and administrative framework that is flexible and responsive.

In this section we identify the progress the college has made in meeting those goals from AY 2017-18 as the NPRC/Gannon University Pilot (Pilot), through fall 2021.

NPRC became independent in spring 2020, shortly before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to the pandemic, NPRC transitioned to remote delivery of instruction and encouraged all faculty and staff to work from home beginning Monday, March 16, 2020. Classes continued to be held on the same days and times as scheduled, but most instructors and students participated from their homes. NPRC evaluated the situation on an ongoing basis and issued updates to the students and faculty, making the decision to continue remotely each term. For those students with technology difficulties, NPRC distributed 30 laptops and 22 hotspots to support remote learning. Classes remained remote through the end of 2020.

For the 2021 spring and summer terms, most classes continued to be offered remotely, however, for those programs and classes where in-person

training was required, and for students whose internet access was unable to fully support their classroom experiences, some on-site classes were provided. In-person learning was phased in for the fall 2021 term, opening ten locations to students. Students without an open location within 30 miles were given the option to request remote learning for this term only. NPRC returned to live attendance at all 25 instructional locations in spring 2022 and discontinued remote attendance as an option.

Overall, we found that NPRC provides services to the nine-county area by offering opportunities for two-year degrees, certifications, and workforce development and training as presented in its approved plan. The agreements with other institutions have allowed students to transfer to those institutions to complete their academic studies. In addition, both students and employers are generally satisfied with the workforce development services through NPRC.

We also found that due to the short time NPRC has operated as an independent college, we cannot offer an opinion on whether, at this time, NPRC is successful in meeting the goals of its plan.

A. Revenues and Expenditures

We present both revenues and expenditures for the period of our review. We did not independently audit the financial information; therefore, we do not express an opinion or any form of assurance on the accuracy of the financial statements.

Revenues

Total revenues for the period reviewed in this study were \$17.3 million. Exhibit 13 shows all revenues from FYs 2017-18 through 2020-21.

Exhibit 13

NPRC Revenues
FYs 2017-18 to 2020-2021

Revenue Source	FY 2017-18	FY 2018-19	FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21
PA Department of Education	\$2,143,723	\$2,840,238	\$4,159,313	\$6,364,636
Grants	-	27,982	138,468	142,500
Donations	97,092 ^a	975	815	5,106
Academic Tuition and Workforce Development Enrollment	78,135	246,204	332,217	341,545
Miscellaneous	2,918	995	344,723	137
TOTAL	\$2,321,868	\$3,116,394	\$4,975,536	\$6,853,924

^a Prior to PDE accepting NPRC's plan, the Education Consortium of Upper Allegheny (ECUA) conducted a pilot program with a partner university and in many ways, served as a predecessor of NPRC. During the period prior to FY 2017-18, ECUA had acquired numerous equipment and software assets used in conducting the pilot program. In late 2017, ECUA transferred equipment, software, warranties, and other equipment-related assets to NPRC; the value of those assets was recorded as a donation totaling \$72,092.

Source: Developed by LBFC staff from information provided by NPRC.

Tuition revenues are based on cost per credit.⁶ Exhibit 14 shows the cost per credit for the period of review. Although NPRC is not classified as a community college, tuition costs for Pennsylvania's 15 community colleges are presented in Appendix B for comparative purposes.

Exhibit 14

Cost per Credit*
AY 2017-18 to Spring 2022

	Gannon/ NRPC Pilot AY 2017-18	Gannon/ NRPC Pilot AY 2018-19	Gannon/ NRPC Pilot Fall 2019	NPRC Spring/ Summer 2020	NPRC AY 2020- 21	NPRC Fall 2021/ Spring 2022
Residential Tuition	\$180	\$185	\$185	\$185	\$185	\$185
Residential Dual Enrollment	60	60	60	60	60	60

⁶ According to NPRC's website, students are encouraged to apply for institutional aid. Aid is awarded to degree seeking students based on financial need. Aid awarded can be 25, 50, 75, or 100 percent of tuition. Additionally, vouchers for textbooks and course materials may also be awarded.

Exhibit 14 Continued

	Gannon/ NRPC Pilot	Gannon/ NRPC Pilot	Gannon/ NRPC Pilot	NPRC	NPRC	NPRC
	AY 2017-18	AY 2018-19	Fall 2019	Spring/ Summer 2020	AY 2020- 21	Fall 2021/ Spring 2022
Non-residential Tuition	-	-	-	200	200	200
Non-residential Dual Enrollment	-	-	-	100	100	100
Out of State Tuition	-	-	-	370	370	370
Out of State Dual Enrollment	-	-	-	-	100	100
Audit	50	50	50	50	50	50

*Additional fees of \$18 per credit hour of enrollment with a cap of \$100 were charged for residential and nonresidential students from AY 2017-18 through AY 2021-22.

Source: Developed by LBFC staff with data provided by NPRC.

Miscellaneous revenues include interest income, textbook sales, employee reimbursements for COBRA payments, and a forgivable Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan in FY 2019-20. For the fiscal years shown above, these total amounts were:

- \$2,548 in interest income;
- \$2,245 in textbook sales;
- \$888 in employee reimbursements;
- \$342,956 from the PPP loan.

Expenditures

Total expenditures for the review period were \$15.0 million. Exhibit 15 shows all expenditures from FYs 2017-18 through 2020-21. Program Costs consist of all instructional and academic support costs, including student services. Institutional Support Costs include administrative and fundraising costs.

Exhibit 15

NPRC Expenditures
FYs 2017-18 to 2020-2021

Expenditure Category	FY 2017-18	FY 2018-19	FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21
Program Services	\$1,176,360	\$1,546,245	\$2,313,118	\$3,987,963
Supporting Services:	-	-	-	-
Management & General	844,044	1,767,962	2,063,335	1,173,026
Fundraising	41,646	32,437	26,159	74,281
TOTAL	2,062,050	3,346,644	4,402,612	5,235,270

Source: Developed by LBFC staff from information provided by NPRC.

B. Courses and Faculty

NPRC’s mission is to provide affordable and accessible post-secondary education to the residents of northern Pennsylvania. NPRC’s values are as follows:

- Lifelong and organizational learning by encouraging and fostering continuous learning and intellectual curiosity among all those served by the College;
- Compassion by providing and maintaining a welcoming and understanding environment that embraces the diversity of our students and meet their needs, regardless of age, experience, ability, and background;
- Inspiration by striving to empower those served and equip them with curiosity, hope, and courage;
- Integrity through authentic, honest, reliable, and responsible service, while holding fast to its mission;
- Innovation through its uniquely adaptive delivery model and organizational structure in order to best serve students and overcome logistical and educational barriers;
- Community by growing connections, promoting engagement, and fulfilling community goals within each community and instills this value in its students and employees.⁷

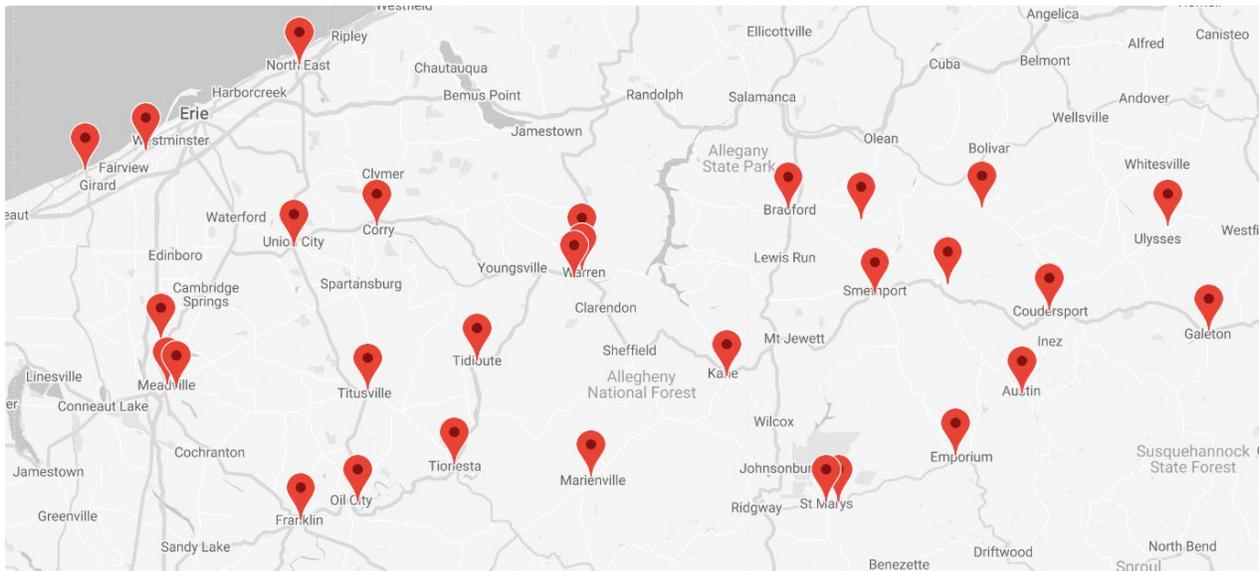
⁷ NPRC website (<https://regionalcollegepa.org/mission-and-identity/>).

Courses have been taught at many locations throughout the NPRC region, as shown in Exhibit 16. In an effort to serve its designated population, NPRC offers distance learning at various locations throughout the nine-county area, contributing to NPRC's goal of innovative delivery of education. For the period reviewed, there were 25 distance learning locations.

Additionally, in the 2020 spring term, as noted above, all courses became remote due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with some location-based courses resuming in fall 2021. The flexibility of these options contributes to NPRC's goals of accessibility to all populations and innovative delivery.

Exhibit 16

NPRC Instructional Locations: Academic and Workforce Development*



Note/* Since the period reviewed in this report, NPRC has added an instructional location in Franklin and a second instructional location in Meadville.

Source: Northern Pennsylvania Regional College.

Exhibit 17 shows each satellite location and how many courses were offered in each location, by academic term.

Exhibit 17

**Academic Student Enrollment by Instructional Location
 Fall 2017 to Fall 2021**

Gannon/NRPC Pilot

	Fall 2017	Spring 2018	Summer 2018	Fall 2018	Spring 2019	Summer 2019	Fall 2019
Austin	-	-	-	-	-	6	-
Bradford	-	-	-	-	1	1	-
Corry	-	-	-	3	3	2	10
Coudersport	7	5	9	6	7	6	8
Emporium	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
Erie	2	-	6	9	6	5	11
Galeton	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Girard	1	3	23	5	9	12	1
Kane	2	1	-	-	3	3	2
Marienville	-	1	1	3	2	-	-
Meadville	6	6	4	7	6	-	4
Northeast	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Northern Potter	-	-	-	1	2	-	-
Oil City	-	-	-	-	-	5	6
Oswayo Valley	1	-	-	-	1	-	1
Otto-Eldred	-	-	-	-	-	5	2
Port Allegany	-	-	1	3	3	2	-
Saegertown	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Smethport	2	-	-	-	1	-	-
St. Marys	4	3	9	2	5	17	11
Tidioute	7	1	12	10	6	14	3
Tionesta	2	2	2	1	1	4	6
Titusville	-	-	2	1	2	5	3
Union City	-	-	6	5	8	10	2
Warren	8	7	6	11	12	14	15
Total	42	29	83	67	78	113	89

Exhibit 17 Continued

NPRC						
NPRC	Spring 2020	Summer 2020	Fall 2020	Spring 2021	Summer 2021	Fall 2021
Austin	-	1	-	1	-	-
Bradford	1	-	-	3	3	1
Corry	6	5	8	13	2	5
Coudersport	2	1	3	-	-	1
Emporium	1	1	1	1	2	2
Erie	6	5	9	9	6	12
Galeton	-	-	-	2	-	-
Girard	-	-	-	2	-	1
Kane	1	1	2	1	-	1
Marienville	-	-	-	-	-	-
Meadville	1	1	3	2	1	3
Northeast	1	-	-	1	-	-
Northern Potter	-	-	-	1	2	1
Oil City	1	1	2	1	1	1
Oswayo Valley	4	-	1	-	-	-
Otto-Eldred	4	3	3	3	3	3
Port Allegany	-	-	-	-	-	-
Saegertown	-	1	1	1	1	-
Smethport	-	-	-	-	-	-
St. Marys	7	4	13	18	8	8
Tidioute	1	-	1	1	-	1
Tionesta	5	2	5	4	3	2
Titusville	5	6	7	13	3	21
Union City	1	1	1	-	-	-
Warren	17	8	10	13	8	10
Total	60	41	70	88	43	76

Source: Developed by LBFC staff with data provided by NPRC.

A total of 60 instructors have taught courses at NPRC over the five years included in this review. Exhibit 18 shows the number of instructors who taught for each academic term and the total number of credit hours they taught.

Exhibit 18

**Number of Instructors and Credit Hours Taught
Fall 2017 to Fall 2021**

Term	Number of Instructors	Credit Hours Taught
Fall 2017	8	26
Spring 2018	9	33
Summer 2018	8	24
Fall 2018	15	50
Spring 2019	15	54
Summer 2019	16	54
Fall 2019	10	43
Spring 2020	18	69
Summer 2020	11	36
Fall 2020	17	67
Spring 2021	21	91
Summer 2021	10	35
Fall 2021	16	83

Source: Developed by LBFC staff with data provided by NPRC.

As of fall 2021, NPRC had 16 faculty members, six of whom, including the Dean of Curriculum and Instruction, were full-time. Those full-time faculty members taught 46 of the total 83 credit hours during that term. Full-time faculty are contracted to work a 37.5-hour work week year-round, teaching 30 credit hours per year or conducting equivalent-assigned academic support work.⁸ Part-time faculty teach a maximum of 9 credit hours in a term.

⁸ Equivalent-assigned academic support work includes activities such as program development, mentoring of part-time faculty, resource development, participation in fellowship opportunities, projects in collaboration with other college departments, professional development activities leading to additional certification or a higher degree, curriculum redesign, new course development, lab preparation, and supervision of field placements, capstones, and internships.

A total of 92 different courses were offered at NPRC. Of those courses, 31 were offered through the Gannon/NPRC partnership and discontinued once NPRC began offering its independent curriculum with 61 courses (See Appendix C for a complete course listing). Courses are offered in the following disciplines:

- Accounting
- Biology
- Business
- Computer Information Systems
- Criminal Justice
- Early Childhood Education
- Economics
- English
- Fine Arts
- History
- Industrial Manufacturing Technology
- Industrial Technology
- Mathematics
- Philosophy
- Political Science
- Psychology
- Religion
- Sociology
- Social work
- Speech
- Theology

A majority of courses have 20 or fewer students enrolled in a term with only 13 courses having greater than 20 students enrolled in a term over the review period. Exhibit 19 shows the number of courses per academic term and both actual and average course sizes.

Exhibit 19

**Number of Classes Offered and Course Size
 Fall 2017 to Fall 2021**

Term	Number of Courses	Courses with 20 and Fewer Students	Courses with More Than 20 Students	Average Course Enrollment
Fall 2017	9	9	0	9
Spring 2018	11	11	0	5
Summer 2018	8	5	3	15
Fall 2018	14	12	2	11
Spring 2019	14	11	3	13
Summer 2019	16	12	4	12
Fall 2019	11	8	3	16
Spring 2020	24	23	0	6
Summer 2020	13	13	0	6
Fall 2020	24	24	0	5

Exhibit 19 Continued

Term	Number of Courses	Courses with 20 and Fewer Students	Courses with More Than 20 Students	Average Course Enrollment
Spring 2021	32	32	0	9
Summer 2021	12	12	0	5
Fall 2021	29	28	1	7

Source: Developed by LBFC staff with data provided by NPRC.

Dual Enrollment

Dual enrollment allows a high school student to take courses at both the high school and college levels at the same time. NPRC has agreements with seven different school districts and is in the process of developing agreements with additional districts and career centers. Exhibit 20 shows that NPRC has had fewer dual enrollment students in recent academic terms. An NPRC official speculated that this could be due to, in addition to any COVID-19 affects, concerns about the transferability of credits as prior to NPRC’s independence, students were receiving Gannon University credits and students may be hesitant as NPRC is not yet accredited.

Exhibit 20

**Number of Dual Enrollment Students and Credit Hours Taken
 Fall 2017 to Fall 2021**

Term	Number of Dual Enrollment Students	Credit Hours Taken
Fall 2017	18	72
Spring 2018	12	51
Summer 2018	58	222
Fall 2018	37	134
Spring 2019	40	186
Summer 2019	74	318
Fall 2019	28	117
Spring 2020	8	42
Summer 2020	2	15
Fall 2020	2	9
Spring 2021	4	12
Summer 2021	2	6
Fall 2021	1	7

Source: Developed by LBFC staff with data provided by NPRC.

In our 2018 report, we presented NPRC projections for the number of students who were expected to be dually enrolled. Exhibit 21 shows those projections with the actual number of dual enrollment students. As shown, after AY 2018-19 actual dual enrollment declined significantly.

Exhibit 21

Projected Versus Actual Dual Enrollment Students
AYs 2018-19 to 2020-21

Academic Year	Projected Dual Enrollment	Actual Dual Enrollment
2018-2019	40	75
2019-2020	80	38
2020-2021	120	8

Source: Developed by LBFC staff with data provided by NPRC.

NPRC Evaluation

NPRC prepares two self-evaluative documents for each of its academic credit bearing programs. The Academic Program Reviews (APR) are conducted annually to assess a program’s viability, adequacy, and efficacy in alignment with the mission of the school. APRs include the following:

1. Program mission or purpose describes the mission and/or purpose of the program and how it supports the school’s mission;
2. Assessment of program goals with student learning outcomes describes the program’s goals for students, how they are assessed, measurement of success, and plans for improvement;
3. Assessment of how the program’s practices and/or goals align and support the school’s strategic plan;
4. Efficiency/effectiveness data measures: these include measures such as admissions, enrollments, and placement rates;
5. Career outlook;
6. Program SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis;
7. Review of the previous year’s program goals, practices, and recommendations;
8. Goals for next year; and
9. Recommendations for continuous improvement.

APRs are reviewed by the Vice President of Academics and Student Affairs, and a summary is presented to Faculty Academic Council and Academic Affairs Council, after which an executive summary and recommendation are forwarded to the Board of Trustees.

NPRC also prepared Accreditation Readiness Reports (ARR) for each of its program areas, including workforce development. These reports are prepared, by request of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), for part of NPRC's accreditation process and will cease when the school becomes accredited by MSCHE. See Section II of this report for additional information regarding NPRC accreditation. These reports contain similar information as the Academic Program Reviews.

C. Student Success

During the review period, from fall 2017 through fall 2019, eight students graduated from the Pilot program,⁹ and from spring 2020 through fall 2021, 21 students graduated from NPRC. The NPRC graduates earned the following degrees:

- Associates of Applied Science in Early Childhood Education
- Associates of Science in Business Administration
- Associates of Arts in Liberal Studies
- Certificates in General Studies

To determine whether NPRC and the Pilot program had met the needs of the students enrolled in the institutions, LBFC sought information on the number of graduates from the two-year program who were employed within three months and one year after graduation or had sought additional academic opportunities.

As shown on Exhibit 22, eight students graduated from the Pilot program (fall 2017- fall 2019) and 21 students graduated from NPRC after it became an independent institution (spring 2020). Of those 21 graduates, eight of them graduated with both associates degrees and certificates in general studies.¹⁰

Three months after graduation from the Pilot program, three of the graduates were employed, one was not employed, and the employment status of four was unknown. After one year, four graduates were employed, and the employment status of four was unknown. One of the graduates was pursuing a four-year degree at another institution while employed by a K-12 educational entity within NPRC's service region.

⁹ An additional 12 students graduated from the Pilot program between summer 2014 and summer 2017. Three months after graduation, five graduates were employed, three were not employed and the status of four was unknown. One year after graduation, six graduates were employed, one was not employed and the status of five was unknown.

¹⁰ Of these 21 students, eight of them started and completed their courses of education at NPRC; one student completed study in one term, two completed study in two terms, four finished in five terms and one student completed study in nine terms. The remaining 13 students had transfer credits when they started at NPRC.

Exhibit 22

**Graduates by Program
Fall 2017 to Fall 2021**

Gannon/ NRPC	AA Interdiscipli- nary Studies	AA Liberal Studies	AA Social Sciences	AS Business Administra- tion	AS Criminal Justice	AAS Applied Technol- ogy	AAS Early Child- hood Educa- tion	Certificate in General Studies	Degrees Conferred	No. Gradu- ates
Fall 2017	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	4	4
Spring 2018	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	1
Fall 2019	1	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	3	3
Total	2	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	9	8
NPRC										
Spring 2020	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Summer 2020	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1
Fall 2020	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	2	4	2
Spring 2021	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	12	14	12
Summer 2021	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	3	2
Fall 2021	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	3	6	3
Total	0	2	0	7	0	0	1	19	29	21
TOTAL	2	2	0	14	0	0	1	19	38	29

Source: Developed by LBFC staff with data provided by NPRC.

Three months after graduation from NPRC, seven graduates were employed, one graduate was not employed, and the employment status of eight was unknown with an additional five graduates attending nursing school. One year after graduation from NPRC, three were employed, one was not employed, the employment status of 12 was unknown or cited as not applicable, and five of the NPRC graduates were attending nursing school.¹¹

In the NPRC survey of graduates, of the 12 graduates responding, five were attending nursing school, one graduate transferred to a four-year institution, and the others did not specify their transfer status. Half of the respondents indicated that they chose NPRC in order to transfer to another institution to complete their academic careers and the other half chose NPRC to prepare for entering the job market or to obtain a promotion in a current position.

Students have also earned various certifications at NPRC which include those for certified clinical medical assistant, dental assistant clinical certification, emergency medical responder, emergency medical technician, and hazardous materials awareness. As shown on Exhibit 23, from fall 2019 to spring 2021, students and passing rates for certifications were as follows:

Exhibit 23

**Certification Passing Rates
 Fall 2019 to Spring 2021**

Term	Certification	Students Certified	Students Enrolled	Percent Passing
2019 Fall	Emergency Medical Responder	1	4	25
2020 Spring	Emergency Medical Technician	3	8	38
2021 Spring	Certified Clinical Medical Assistant	5	5	100
2021 Spring	Emergency Medical Technician	2	6	33
2021 Spring	Dental Assistant Clinical Certification	4	5	80 ^a
2021 Fall	Dental Assistant Clinical Certification	4	5	80 ^a

^a A minimum age requirement of 18 prohibited remaining enrolled student in each term from completing certification process.

Source: Developed by LBFC staff with data provided by NPRC.

¹¹ Through an agreement with the University of Pittsburgh at the Pitt-Titusville Hub, participating students who complete NPRC's 30-credit hour Certificate in General Studies and meet overall and specific grade point average requirements are granted direct admission with a guaranteed position in the nursing program offered at the Pitt-Titusville Hub.

NPRC has limited data regarding those students certified as child development associates (CDA). NPRC is only notified of student certification if the student submits a CDA certificate to the school for prior learning credit into the Early Childhood Education program, which includes six credits toward an associate degree. Exhibit 24 includes other specific early childhood education licensure and certifications.

Exhibit 24

**Early Childhood Education Certifications and Licensure
Fall 2016 to Spring 2022**

Certification/License	Number of Students
Act 114 Fingerprinting Clearance	24
Act 126 Mandated Reporter Training	23
Act 33 Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance	24
Act 34 Criminal History Clearance	24
Act 82 Arrest/Conviction Report and Certification Form	19
Child Development Associate	3
Health and Safety Basics	5
Many Faces of Autism	2
National Crime Information Center/ National Sex Offender Registry (NSOR)	24
STARS 101	5
STARS 102	5
Total	158

Source: Developed by LBFC staff with data provided by NPRC.

Students from eight counties have participated in commercial driver's license training offered within four counties of NPRC's nine-county service region. However, because the training is provided by a third-party partner, PA Pride, LLC, NPRC does not have access to information regarding students' certification.

NPRC Student Surveys

NPRC uses a four-part Student Experience Survey to evaluate the services provided by the college to the students. This survey was distributed to students for responses in four parts (fall 2020, spring 2021, fall 2021, and spring 2022).¹² Students were able to complete these surveys during class time and technical assistance was available during this designated time.

¹² As currently configured, one part is administered each term which may not capture the same students' experiences as students do not always attend consecutive terms or years. Reportedly, consideration is being given to administering two parts of the survey in each of two terms in order to receive feedback on the full mix of questions/categories from a majority of the students.

The surveys address various aspects of the college. The fall 2020 survey addressed, for example, the application process, registration, and orientation. The spring 2021 survey addressed, for example, billing, financial aid and technology. In fall 2021 the topics included the college catalog, the use of Desire2Learn (NPRC's learning management system used by students and instructors), and library services. The spring 2022 survey covered topics including career services, facilities, and financial aid. We reviewed the student responses to the surveys and found that, in general, the responses were positive with the students indicating the services met their needs.¹³

Credit Course Evaluations are completed between the last date to withdraw from the course and the last date of the term, including summer term. We reviewed the student responses for spring 2020 through summer 2021 and found that, in general, the students were satisfied with course content and instruction. We also reviewed student responses to similar surveys conducted for the pilot program in academic years 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20 (fall). Again, students were generally satisfied with course content and instruction.

D. Workforce Development

Another goal for establishing the NPRC was to provide workforce development training to enable individuals to prepare for employment in an industry or for ongoing training for current employees. As stated above, half of the NPRC graduates responding to a post-graduation survey indicated that they attended NPRC to prepare to enter the job market or to obtain a promotion.

Workforce Development (WFD) Course Services

To address workforce development needs, the NPRC offers sponsored and customized workforce development courses. Sponsored courses are open to the public with either an employer enrolling and paying for courses for their employees or individuals from the public enrolling and self-paying. Sponsored courses are open to enrollment by anyone age 16 (with parental permission) or older. From the summer 2018 through fall 2021,¹⁴ 29 employers have enrolled and paid for their employees to complete courses in, for example, blueprint reading, metallurgy, and medical technician training. In that period, 75 employees completed sponsored courses and 283 other enrollees were self-paid. See Appendix D for a list of workforce development courses offered by NPRC.

¹³ NPRC also surveys graduates. See page 35 above for those results.

¹⁴ Although the NPRC became independent in the spring of 2020, the college began offering workforce development courses in Fall 2018 in collaboration with the Pennsylvania College of Technology.

Customized courses are developed by NPRC to meet the specific needs of an employer. These courses are only offered to the employees of the company for which the courses are developed. From fall 2018 through fall 2021, seven companies used this service for courses including precision machining, machining and metal fabrication, and supervisory skills training. In that period, 266 employees completed customized courses.

Exhibit 25 shows the courses and students enrolled in sponsored (which are also open to the public) and customized workforce development courses from summer 2018 through fall 2021

Exhibit 25

Workforce Development Courses and Enrollees*
Summer 2018 to Fall 2021

Term and Courses	Enrollees
2018 Summer	35
Blueprint Reading I	16
Fundamentals of GD & T	19
2018 Fall	29
Intro To American Manufacturing	13
PLC I	13
Problem Solving	3
2019 Spring	176
Blueprint Reading	35
Careers in Healthcare	13
Exploring Careers in Electrical	13
Industrial Math Workshop	30
Intro to Project Management	12
Machining & Metal Fabrication	13
Measuring Tools Workshop	30
Precision Machining*	30
2019 Fall	45
Basic Precision Machine	6
Emergency Medical Responder	4
Intro Powder Metal I	6
Supervisory Skills	29
2020 Spring	98
CDL Class A Program	6
CDL Tanker & Hazmat	4
Child Development Associate Preparation	67
Emergency Medical Technician	8

Exhibit 25 Continued

Term and Courses	Enrollees
2020 Spring	98
Intro Powder Metal II	13
2020 Summer	12
CDL Class A Program	4
CDL Tanker & Hazmat	7
Communication Lineman Technician	1
2020 Fall	40
CDL Class A Program	2
CDL Tanker & Hazmat	3
Child Development Associate Preparation	15
School-Age Professional Credential Preparation	20
2021 Spring	97
CDL Tanker & Hazmat	4
Child Development Associate Preparation	59
Clinical Medical Assistant	5
CNC Lathe Program	1
Dental Assistant	5
Emergency Medical Technician	6
Metallurgy	2
School-Age Professional Credential Preparation	15
2021 Summer	17
CDL Tanker & Hazmat	9
Child Development Associate Preparation	8
2021 Fall	75
CDL Tanker & Hazmat	3
Child Development Associate Preparation	11
Crane Operator Certification	1
Customized for Bett's Industries	33
Dental Assistant	5
G M Code CNC Programming	7
PA Basic Life Support Protocols 2021	8
Supervision & Leadership	7
Total	624

*/Note: Includes sponsored (which are also open to the public) and customized courses. Enrollment includes employer-paid and self-paid enrollees.

Source: Provided by NPRC.

As shown in Exhibit 26, from spring 2020 through summer 2021, there were no customized courses offered and few employer-paid enrollees attending sponsored workforce development courses. An official for NPRC attributes this to the restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic (and staff working remotely), limited outreach to the employer community, and limited capacity to meet employer needs during that time.

As workforce development is becoming more of a focus of the college, the workforce development function is in transition with a goal of conducting more outreach to employers, focusing on better understanding the needs of the employers, and being flexible with its offerings. This includes changing course schedules to allow courses to be completed in a shorter time period. According to an NPRC official, the school is considering using mobile equipment for WFD that would allow more flexibility in the locations of hands-on training.

Exhibit 26

**Workforce Development Course Enrollments by Type
 Summer 2018 to Fall 2021**

Term	Company Sponsored – Employer Paid	Work Force Development - Self-pay	Customized	Total
Summer 2018	35	-	-	35
Fall 2018	14	2	13	29
Spring 2019	5	-	171	176
Summer 2019	-	-	-	-
Fall 2019	-	10	35	45
Spring 2020	18	80	-	98
Summer 2020	-	12	-	12
Fall 2020	-	40	-	40
Spring 2021	3	94	-	97
Summer 2021	-	17	-	17
Fall 2021	-	28	47	75
Total	75	283	266	624

Source: Developed by LBFC staff with data provided by NPRC.

Within its workforce development program, NPRC offers courses in the following areas to prepare students for certification:

- Child Development Associate Preparation;
- Commercial Driver’s License (CDL);
- Emergency Medical Services (EMS)/Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)/Emergency Medical Responder (EMR).

NPRC has issued six certifications to students through its Pennsylvania State Fire Commissioner Educational Training Agency (ETA) authorization. NPRC also offers emergency medical services training in basic life support protocols at four different locations and, free of charge, a PA Basic Life Support Protocol Update course required for all PA Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel.

Education and Training Center. In fall 2021, NPRC opened its Education and Training Center in Erie County. The facility includes traditional classrooms and industry-specific lab space. The Center expanded classroom space and hands-on learning opportunities by 18 classrooms. This facility has industry-specific laboratory space for training in precision machining and industrial maintenance. The Center includes 14 general classrooms equipped with video technology. NPRC is in the process of hiring instructors for the industry-specific labs.

Employers Using NPRC Workforce Development Training

Although the workforce development training is offered to companies throughout Pennsylvania, during this period the majority of the participants were from Erie, Elk, Warren, Clearfield and Crawford Counties.

We spoke with representatives of several of the employers who have used the sponsored and customized workforce development services of NPRC. All stated that they found the courses useful and the cost reasonable.¹⁵ The flexibility both in scheduling the sessions, as well as in the components of the sessions, was important and influenced the companies' use of the services.

The flexibility of scheduling allowed for the various shifts of employees to attend training with limited schedule changes for the employers. One of the representatives noted that other training his company has used was more "canned" whereas with NPRC, his company was able to have components specific to that company incorporated into the training. This company has used both the sponsored and the customized training courses, sending employees to a total of five different courses. Prior to the WFD courses offered by NPRC, these companies used, among others, a mix of online, other technical institutions, and in-house training.

We also spoke with a provider of services for court-involved youth.¹⁶ In the last 10 years, the provider has shifted programing to WFD and has

¹⁵ The cost of a customized course is based on the cost of the instructor, textbooks, travel, and course plan development for that course. An administration fee is also added.

¹⁶ Court-involved youth include youth who have been determined to be delinquent by a court.

partnered with PA CareerLink®, etc., to fund these programs.¹⁷ Prior to NPRC, this organization did not use other entities for this training. According to the official we spoke with, many of their youth need basic training, e.g., how to read a ruler. They viewed this as an opportunity for youths to get an understanding of the next level of education, whether trade school or college. They indicated that the training gave the students a better understanding of what to expect in other college courses should they pursue them. They also noted that the youth they serve tend to have challenges, and it is difficult to know what might spark an interest that might affect their future endeavors. The official would use NPRC for WFD in the future, as prior to COVID-19, the plan was to continue to build on the initial courses.

As part of its services for workforce development, the Commonwealth has established regional workforce development boards that fund PA CareerLink® staff. Funds for those services are tied to an occupation list and a high priority occupation list in each region. To receive funding for a program, the program must support an occupation on one of those lists. As shown below, several NPRC academic and workforce development courses are on that list and can be funded through PA CareerLink®.¹⁸

The following academic programs are eligible for funding by PA Career Link:

- Associate of Science in Business Administration
- Associate of Applied Science in Early Childhood Education
- Associate of Applied Science in Applied Technology
- Associate of Arts in Criminal Justice
- Associate of Arts in Social Science

The following workforce development programs are eligible for funding by PA Career Link:

- Child Development Associate Preparation
- Commercial Driver's License Class A
- Commercial Driver's License Class A Oil and Gas Safety
- Commercial Driver's License Class A Tanker and Hazmat
- Emergency Medical Technician

¹⁷ Launched in July 2012, PA CareerLink® is a collaborative project between multiple agencies to provide career services to Pennsylvania employers, potential employees, and others. PA CareerLink® is operated under the direction of the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry.

¹⁸ An official of one of the regional workforce development boards stated that one of the benefits of the NPRC's low tuition rate is it allows individuals who may have had difficulty in another academic setting to improve their transcripts to access financial aid.

APPENDICES



Appendix A - Act 2016-86, as Amended by Act 2022-55 – 24 P.S. §1916-G Legislative Budget and Finance Committee Report Re- quirements

PUBLIC SCHOOL CODE OF 1949 - OMNIBUS AMENDMENTS

Act of Jul. 13, 2016, P.L. 716, No. 86

Cl. 24

Session of 2016
No. 2016-86

HB 1606

ARTICLE XIX-6

RURAL REGIONAL COLLEGE FOR UNDERSERVED COUNTIES

Section 1916-G. Reports.

The Legislative Budget and Finance Committee shall prepare and submit to the General Assembly written interim and final reports evaluating the operation of this article. The interim report shall be submitted by June 30, 2018, and the final report shall be submitted by [June 30, 2022] December 31, 2022. Each report shall include, but may not be limited to, the following:

(1) A review of the success of the rural regional college established under this article in satisfying the goals set forth in the rural regional college plan approved by the secretary and in satisfying the needs of the multicounty area the rural regional college was established to serve.

(2) Demographic and program data, including the following:

(i) Numbers of full-time and part-time faculty and student enrollments, in total and within curricular areas.

(ii) Dual enrollment participation.

(iii) Credit hours taught by faculty.

(iv) Distance learning courses offered.
(v) Articulation agreements with higher education institutions.

(vi) Lists of courses with fewer than 20 students.

(vii) Lists of courses with more than 50 students.

Where available, student data shall be disaggregated by categories, including gender, race and age.

(3) Student progress and achievement measures, including the following:

(i) Retention rates related to student goals.

(ii) Graduation and completion rates after two, three and four years.

(iii) Passing rates on certification and licensure examinations.

(iv) Number of students employed within one year of program completion.

(v) Placement into additional education or employment in the student's field of study.

Where available, data shall be disaggregated by categories, including gender, race and age.

(4) Economic and work force development measures, including:

(i) Employer satisfaction.

(ii) Customized job training offerings.

(iii) Employment status.

(iv) Numbers of businesses and organizations served.

(5) Recommendations for future legislation.

Appendix B - Cost Per Credit at Pennsylvania Community Colleges: AY 2021-22

Community colleges in Pennsylvania are sponsored, either by a county or school district, or multiple school districts. They are funded by the sponsor, student tuition, and the state. NPRC is not a community college, but a two-year public regional degree-granting institution of higher education. Sponsored tuition rates are for those students living within the sponsoring county or school district, which would compare to residents of NPRC's nine counties. The cost per credit in the exhibit below reflect only the per credit hour tuition rates assessed.

NPRC's per credit costs are:

- Resident: \$185
- Non-resident: \$200
- Out of State: \$370

Community College	Sponsored	Non-Sponsored	Out-of State
Allegheny	\$118	\$236	\$254
Beaver	170	340	510
Bucks	165	330	495
Butler	120	223	323
Delaware	125	250	375
Erie	160	320	480
Harrisburg	184	227	272
Lehigh Carbon	122	244	366
Luzerne	134	268	402
Montgomery	144	288	432
Northampton	116	232	348
PA Highlands	155	222	339
Philadelphia	159	318	477
Reading	140	280	315
Westmoreland	133	266	399

Source: Developed by LBFC staff with data from the PA Commission for Community Colleges website.

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Appendix C – Courses Offered at NPRC*

- ❖ Accounting I
- ❖ Accounting II
- ❖ Algebra and College Reasoning Strategies
- ❖ Basic Sociology^a
- ❖ Business and Professional Communication
- ❖ Business Foundations
- ❖ Business Law
- ❖ Business Technology I
- ❖ Business Technology II
- ❖ Child Development
- ❖ Child Development; Birth-Age 5^a
- ❖ Child Development K-4th
- ❖ College Algebra
- ❖ College Composition^a
- ❖ College Reading and Success Strategies
- ❖ College Writing and Success Strategies
- ❖ Concepts and Methods of Language and Literacy
- ❖ Concepts and Methods: Mathematical and Scientific Thinking
- ❖ Correctional Process^a
- ❖ Corrections
- ❖ Co-Teaching in the Early Childhood Classroom
- ❖ Creative and Expressive Arts
- ❖ Criminal Justice Ethics
- ❖ Criminal Law and Procedure
- ❖ Criminological Theory^a
- ❖ Criminology
- ❖ Critical Analysis and Composition
- ❖ Cyber Crime and Society
- ❖ Early Childhood Overview^a
- ❖ Early Language & Literacy Development
- ❖ Environmental Biology
- ❖ Environmental Issues
- ❖ Family Involvement and Collaboration
- ❖ First-Year Seminar^a
- ❖ Foundations of Math
- ❖ Foundations of Teaching^a
- ❖ Foundations of the Business Enterprise^a
- ❖ Foundations of Theology and Christian Morality^a
- ❖ History Without Borders
- ❖ Human Behavior and the Social Environment I
- ❖ Human Behavior and the Social Environment II
- ❖ Human Biology
- ❖ Human Biology Lab
- ❖ Human Development
- ❖ Humanities Through the Arts
- ❖ Hydraulics and Pneumatics
- ❖ Industrial Safety
- ❖ Instructional and Classroom Design for Early Childhood Curricula
- ❖ Instructional Design and the Early Childhood Classroom^a
- ❖ Integrated Curriculum for Early Childhood Education
- ❖ Interpersonal Communication
- ❖ Introduction to Criminal Justice
- ❖ Introduction to Early Childhood Education
- ❖ Introduction to Music^a
- ❖ Introduction to Philosophy
- ❖ Introduction to Psychology
- ❖ Introduction to Sacred Scripture^a
- ❖ Introduction to Social Work
- ❖ Introduction to Sociology
- ❖ Macroeconomics
- ❖ Management Theory and Practice^a
- ❖ Marketing in the Global Environment^a
- ❖ Math and College Reasoning Strategies
- ❖ Meeting Learning Needs for Children with Exceptionalities
- ❖ Microeconomics
- ❖ Music Appreciation
- ❖ Philosophy of Ethical Responsibility^a
- ❖ Philosophy of Knowledge^a

- ❖ PLC and Robotics
- ❖ Police Function
- ❖ Principles of Accounting I^a
- ❖ Principles of Accounting II^a
- ❖ Principles of Macroeconomics^a
- ❖ Principles of Management
- ❖ Principles of Marketing
- ❖ Principles of Microeconomics^a
- ❖ Psychological Statistics
- ❖ Psychology of Human Development^a
- ❖ Psychology of Learning and Teaching
- ❖ Public Speaking^a
- ❖ Quality Care Environments for Infants and Toddlers
- ❖ Quantitative Reasoning
- ❖ Service Learning^a
- ❖ Social and Emotional Growth of Infants and Toddlers
- ❖ Special Education Overview^a
- ❖ Special Topics in Psychology^a
- ❖ The Bible: An Introduction^a
- ❖ The Protestant Tradition^a
- ❖ U.S. Government and Politics
- ❖ World Religions
- ❖ Writing I
- ❖ Writing II

^a These courses were offered during the Gannon-NPRC Pilot program only.

Source: Developed by LBFC staff with data provided by NPRC.

Appendix D – Workforce Development Courses

Applied Academics

Industrial Mathematics
Technical Writing

Child Development Associate

Child Development Associate Prep 1
Child Development Associate Prep 2

Commercial Truck Driver

CDL Class A
CDL Class A Tanker & Hazmat
CDL Class A Oil and Gas Safety

Emergency Medical Services

Emergency Medical Responder
Emergency Medical Technician
Emergency Medical Continuing Ed.

Fire Services

Introduction to Fire Service
Fire Ground Support
Exterior Firefighter
Interior Firefighter
Advanced Firefighter

Human Services

Residential Child & Youth Care Prof

Industrial Maintenance

Math for Electricians
Blueprint Reading – Electricians
Industrial Electricity
Commercial & Industrial Electricity
Motor Control I
Motor Control II
Programmable Logic Controllers
Programmable Logic Controllers II
Hydraulics
Pneumatics

Medical

Medical Law and Ethics
Medical Administrative Practices I
Medical Administrative Practices II
Medical Assistant Clinical Skills I

Medical Assistant Clinical Skills II
Medical Assistant Laboratory Skills
Medical Assistant Externship
Pathophysiology & Pharmacology
Medical Terminology I
Medical Terminology II
Anatomy & Physiology I
Anatomy & Physiology II
Nurse Aide

Operational Excellence

Op Excellence Foundation
Value Stream Management
Kata: A Cont. Improv Process
Process Mapping & Improvement

Precision Machining

Machine Shop I
Machine Shop II
Precision Milling
Precision Turning
Blueprint Reading I
Blueprint Reading II
G- and M-Code CNC Programming
CNC Mill Programming
CNC Lathe Programming
Metallurgy
Powder Metal
Materials, Compaction & Sintering
Secondary Ops and Quality Practices
Cont. Improvement in Powder Metals

Quality Management Systems

Creating a Quality Culture
Prob Solving & Root Cause Analysis
Basic Statistics and Process Control
Process Auditing

Supervision and Leadership

Supervision & Leadership

Tourism & Hospitality Management

Guest Service Gold
Front Desk Representative
Restaurant Server

Guestroom Attendant
Hospitality Supervisory Skills

Wastewater Treatment

Wastewater Treatment I
Wastewater Treatment II

Source: Northern Pennsylvania Regional College Workforce Development 2021-2022 Course Catalog.

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Appendix E – Northern Pennsylvania Regional College Response



300 Second Ave. Suite 500
Warren, PA 16365
814-230-9010

October 27, 2022

Patricia A. Berger, Executive Director
Legislative Budget and Finance Committee
P.O. Box 8737
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17105-8737
717-783-1600
lbfcinfo@palbfc.us

Dear Executive Director Berger:

Northern Pennsylvania Regional College is proud to tell the story of its development as a two-year public open-admission institution of higher learning authorized by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to grant associate degrees and certificates and offer noncredit workforce development training. We are pleased to share our gratitude to the Legislative Budget Finance Committee, the College's recent successes, and our requests for consideration of minor changes to Article XIX-G of Act 2016-86.

The many stories of our students illustrate the College's success in meeting its mission. In May 2022, numbered among its graduates, NPRC celebrated the achievements of a single mother balancing parenting and work responsibilities while completing her associate degree in social sciences to grow within her career, a young man in his early 20's planning to launch his career in Criminal Justice, and a traditional female student transferring her Associate in Business Administration in pursuit of a Bachelor's degree at a neighboring university.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide recommendations for legislative changes to the Public-School Code 1949 Act 14, Article XIX – G Rural Regional College for underserved counties. The Rural Regional College has experienced tremendous growth and gained valuable experience since the passage of the legislation. Areas which have been identified for consideration are as follows:

Section 19 – 1905 – G - Designation and board of trustees (6) The board of trustees shall establish an advisory council of presidents, or their designees, from institutions with postsecondary education programs within the region designated under section 1904-G(a)(2). The advisory council shall meet quarterly to

discuss employer and work force needs, new educational offerings and general coordination of service and facilities. One advisory council member representing a community college and one advisory council member that is a president of a college or university shall serve as cochairmen.

The administration has upheld this expectation by hosting quarterly meetings inviting the presidents from all institutions with postsecondary education programs within the region. The attendance has never been consistent, with many institutions either choosing not to participate or sending a representative in their place. While attempts have been made to develop an agenda cooperatively, promoting fruitful conversation, in the end, substantive results were minimal. This expectation provided initial opportunities for building relationships with administrators of other institutions of higher education. As these relationships have strengthened and articulation agreements develop, the need for these quarterly meetings has waned. The College's recommendation is to eliminate the legislative requirement as stated.

Section 19 – 1907 – G – Powers and duties of board of trustees (a)(3) To appoint and fix the salary of a chief financial officer of the rural regional college.

During the formation of the Rural Regional College, this expectation had merit. Common practice across most institutions of higher education is that the board of trustees appoints and sets the salary of the president. The president then maintains responsibility for appointing and setting the salaries of all staff and faculty. Accreditation standards related to governing boards include the expectation for the board to play a basic policy-making role in financial affairs to ensure integrity and strong financial management. This may include a timely review of audited financial statements and/or other documents related to the fiscal viability of the institution. However, the standards do not provide guidance that the board should appoint the CFO. Therefore, the College's recommendation is to eliminate the legislative requirement as stated.

Section 19 – 1907 – G – Powers and duties of board of (a)(11) To work with the president in the appointment of all faculty and staff necessary for the rural regional college's operation, to affix their compensation and benefits and to manage all personnel matters.

During the formation of the Rural Regional College, this expectation had merit. Common practice across most institutions of higher education is that the board of trustees appoints and sets the salary of the president. The president then maintains responsibility for appointing and setting the salaries of all staff and faculty. This common practice aligns with the standards of accreditation which provide guidance that the Chief Executive Officer has the authority and autonomy required to fulfill the responsibilities of the position, including developing and implementing institutional plans, staffing the organization, identifying, and allocating resources, and directing the institution toward attaining the goals and objectives set forth in its mission. Thus, the College's recommendation is to eliminate the legislative requirement as stated.

The College's future is bright. NPRC's team is currently finalizing comprehensive articulation agreements with Pennsylvania Western University and University of Pittsburgh at Bradford to provide its students with additional transfer opportunities. An applicant for candidacy for accreditation, the College looks forward to its accrediting agency's peer review team visit scheduled for November 14-15, 2022, and completion of the resulting feedback cycle. NPRC's Department of Workforce Development course offerings and enrollment have begun to increase significantly, with the College providing 32 training opportunities between January and August 2022, in areas such as Emergency Medical Technology, Leadership and Supervisory Skills Training, and Childhood Development Associate (CDA). These courses have realized 386 enrollees, preparing additional skilled workers for critical areas to regional businesses and industries.

We extend our sincerest thanks to the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee (LBFC) for sharing their time and expertise in preparing the Report on the Establishment of the Northern Pennsylvania Regional College. We acknowledge and appreciate the excellence and professionalism of the resulting report and agree that it accurately and thoroughly reflects the progress of the College for the reporting interval.

Sincerely,



Susan R. Snelick
President