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The Press-Republican, Plattsburgh, NY, July 29, 2008

*Study doesn't recommend CCC, NCCC merge*  
By Stephen Bartlett

PLATTSBURGH — A highly awaited report does not recommend that Clinton Community and North Country Community colleges merge

**The study by the Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government doesn't rule out exploring that option in the future, but for now it recommends the institutions investigate deeper collaboration efforts.**

Reactions to the report and any impact it might have on the future of the two institutions varied greatly Monday.

Some officials felt many of the recommendations have been occurring for years, others predicted insurmountable obstacles to some ideas, and at least one was inspired by the idea of cost savings in a time when there seems to be no ceiling to rising expenses.

"I think basically what it is saying is that there could be greater collaboration between the two colleges that would have beneficial cost savings as well as continue quality education in the North Country," said State Sen. Betty Little (R-Queensbury), whose district includes Essex and Franklin counties, which sponsor NCCC, and Clinton County, the sponsor for CCC.

Little requested the study, which began in April.

### FIELD VISITS

Clinton Community is located in Plattsburgh, while NCCC has a main campus in Saranac Lake, with branch campuses in Malone and Ticonderoga.

The study included field visits, interviews and a review of fiscal and program data from the two colleges.

It did not recommend closing any of the four campuses, given the 4,467-square-mile territory the schools serve.

It stated that merger was not a "near-term option" and should be a local decision in any case.

### PROGRAM CHANGES

The report suggested that closer collaborating could expand the range of educational programs offered.

The study found that the lists of courses, degrees and certificate offerings at the colleges are shorter than those of some other community colleges in the state.

But CCC Interim President Dr. Frederick Woodward said the number of programs is not important.

"What is important is that we are serving the needs of our community, and we are absolutely doing that."

Two recent examples include Plattsburgh Aeronautical Institute, which is under development, and a new degree offering that will enable individuals to maintain the wind turbines going up locally, he said.

NCCC is also starting a wind-farm-related program.

Little sees opportunity there.

"There are new wind farms in Clinton and in Franklin counties, so why not do it together? You have video conferencing and online possibilities.

"They both have nursing programs, but at North Country you can go for one year and get an LPN and go to work. In Clinton, it is just a two-year program, so if you want an LPN, the only place you can go is BOCES."

The report noted that both colleges “have reputations for high-quality programs,” such as the wilderness recreation leadership at NCCC.

### **SHARING EXPENSES**

Another recommendation was for the schools to develop ways to share some administrative and operational services.

Little suggested “back-room collaborations” in areas such as payroll and purchasing.

“How about a combination bookstore that buys everything and has it in four locations?”

NCCC Interim President Fred Smith said such suggestions present an array of obstacles.

“State law does not allow us, as a college, to run a bookstore or things like provide food service. A separate corporation is set up on each campus to do those things, so in a very technical sense we really don’t have say over what is called the North Country Community College Association.”

The report will generate much discussion, Smith said, though he pointed out that any academic institution is going to view it with student needs in mind.

“If this leads to ways of better meeting student needs, that’s fine, and if, in the process, we reduce costs, that is also good.”

### **PRESIDENT CHOICES**

Little said both schools’ new presidents should be chosen with collaboration efforts in mind.

“From the sounds of the governor, we are really getting into tight financial situations, and we are going to have to do things differently.”

Still, Woodward said many suggestions in the study are already occurring, in as much as they can, and others don’t make sense.

For example, the report encouraged CCC to send to NCCC workers who specialize in certain trades, but Clinton doesn’t even have such employees on staff.

The report further advised making it “seamless” for students to take courses at any of the four campuses, no matter which college they are enrolled at.

“Students can transfer between campuses now,” Woodward said.

“We certainly ought to know what the other campus is doing, and we do.

“The two campuses are in discussions, have been in discussions and will continue to be in discussions.”