

# PressRepublican.com

## PRESS-REPUBLICAN

**The Press-Republican, Plattsburgh, NY, August 6, 2008**

*EDITORIAL: The questions on merger are answered*

It comes as no surprise that a study into the wisdom of the two local community colleges either merging or at least sharing some services ruled out the former, for now. Making one college for an area the size of the state of Connecticut takes the word “community” out of community college.

**The Rockefeller Institute of Government, the research arm of the State University of New York, did the study. Conducted over the past several months, it concludes that, for now, anyway, outright merger is not prudent. It did not rule out that option as conceivably practical sometime in the future.**

The institute conducted the study at the request of Sen. Betty Little (R-Queensbury), who has been one of the State Legislature’s most ardent advocates of reducing the cost of government by consolidating services. She didn’t publicly advocate a college merger. In fact, she asked for the study only in response to a request from the Essex County Board of Supervisors, which co-sponsors North Country Community College.

A merger between NCCC and Clinton Community College might have some advantages, but, on the face of it, it has more drawbacks than appeal.

Each college was developed to respond to the needs of its individual counties. Clinton County’s needs don’t exactly mirror Essex’s and Franklin’s.

In recent years, Clinton Community College has tried to develop programs to meet an expected em-

ployment need based on aircraft companies migrating to PARC. That would not be a priority for NCCC.

NCCC has its own agenda. Its sponsoring counties rebuffed a request to move the main, Saranac Lake, campus into larger, more commodious quarters, instead promising to help renovate or expand what is already there. Plans for that effort are just now beginning to form.

The timing for discussion of consolidation or cooperation was ideal, as both colleges are being overseen by interim presidents. That, of course, doesn’t say anything about the advisability of merger. But, as the study suggests, there are probably areas that would be ripe for a sharing of services. For example, perhaps certain courses offered on one campus could be made available to the other through electronic distance learning.

The faculties and staffs of both colleges had reacted with skepticism and some trepidation when the study was first undertaken, we’re told, fearing for their jobs. The outcome of the study not only doesn’t suggest a loss of jobs, however, it seems to underscore the importance of keeping programs that are there. The questions have been asked and answered, with the result that the importance of retaining two campuses has been certified.

All anyone who had advocated such a study wanted to know was whether some degree of collaboration between the two colleges was a good idea. Now we know: Greater collaboration is a good idea; outright merger is not.