



YAVAPAI-APACHE NATION

Executive Office

Chairwoman Jane Russell-Winiecki

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March 7, 2017

Mr. Ray Sigafoos, Board Chair
Yavapai College District Governing Board
c/o Ms. Karen Jones, Executive Assistant
Yavapai College
Prescott Campus, Building 32, Room 203
1100 E. Sheldon Street
Prescott, AZ 86301

Re: Yavapai-Apache Nation Tribal Council – Expression of Concern

Dear Mr. Sigafoos and District Governing Board Members:

I write on behalf of the Yavapai-Apache Nation and its Tribal Council to express our concerns about the governance, administration, planning and programming of Yavapai College in relation to meeting the educational needs of Verde Valley Residents and, particularly, the members of the Yavapai-Apache Nation.

The Yavapai-Apache Nation is the largest employer in the Verde Valley and is now approaching completion of a new 125-room, “four-diamond” quality hotel as an addition to our Cliff Castle Casino near Camp Verde. In addition to employing our tribal members, the Casino also employs many members of the non-Indian communities throughout the Verde Valley. Our Nation is comprised of five (5) tribal communities in the Verde Valley: Tunlii, Middle Verde, Rimrock, Camp Verde and Clarkdale. As such, we are spread throughout the Valley with over 2,500 tribal members who call the Nation home. As such, the Nation has a large stake in the continued economic development of the Verde Valley and it is imperative that we meet the growing needs of our communities for post-secondary educational services and workforce development programs. It is with a view of working with you to adequately meet the needs of our communities that I write to you today.

We have watched the College’s growth over recent years with great interest. When the 10-year development plan for Yavapai College was approved by the District Governing Board (the “Board”) in late 2013, we joined other Verde Valley residents in noting with concern the plan’s intent to expend the

bulk of development funds on campuses and programming in the Prescott and Prescott Valley area, without a similar level of development and spending dedicated to the Verde Valley. In addition to the closure of the Sedona Campus, which the Plan called for, we took specific note of the significant investment in new facilities planned for the Prescott area campuses, with no corresponding plan for investment in Verde Valley facilities and programming.

In 2014, we were heartened when the Board undertook the very welcomed and forward-looking step of establishing a Board Advisory Committee to assist in identifying and addressing the specific educational needs of Verde Valley communities, including those of the Yavapai-Apache Nation. The Committee was composed of representatives from Verde Valley cities and towns as well as a representative of the Nation. The Tribal Council enthusiastically appointed our Department of Education Director, Lisa Sandoval, to represent the Nation on the Committee. We looked forward to the development of improved educational services for the Nation and the Verde Valley. We observed the diligent and extensive work of this committee over a two-year period in developing recommendations for the Board's consideration. Then unexpectedly in late 2016, without notice or opportunity for public comment, the Board abruptly suspended the work of the Board Advisory Committee and took no further action on the Committee's numerous recommendations. Losing this local voice and the deliberative process for providing input to the Board has been a negative development for the Verde Valley generally, and it is certainly deemed so by the Nation.

In the Fall of 2016 the Yavapai Apache Nation hosted an "Arizona Town Hall" sponsored by the Verde Valley Forum to take up the subject of Post-Secondary Education in the Verde Valley. The Town Hall initiative grew out of the continuing concerns of local residents about adequately serving the educational needs of Verde Valley communities. The two-day event drew full participation from a wide cross section of Verde Valley residents numbering approximately 100 individuals. The results of the Town Hall included the establishment of five specific goals to be pursued post-forum by Verde Valley residents. These results were published by the Forum in October 2016, and presented to the Board. The Forum recommendations highlight the priority placed by our communities on improving the local post-secondary education system.

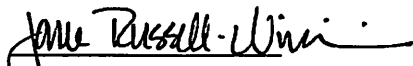
A continuing concern of our Tribal Council is insuring that the level of post-secondary educational opportunities offered locally are commensurate with the funding provided through local property tax levies. The Nation owns numerous properties throughout the Verde Valley, all of which we pay property taxes on. We note that the Board has shown no reluctance to raise property tax levies and tuition in recent years and continues to execute its plans for capital investment in facilities, including sports and performance facilities, in the Prescott region. Therefore, our interest is in insuring that an appropriate level of funding is provided for the development of Verde Valley facilities and programming so that the needs of our communities are adequately served. We are not convinced that this is happening now.

The Yavapai-Apache Nation Tribal Council believes that quality educational resources and opportunities should be broadly available to all of the County's citizens, whether they live at the County seat in Prescott or here in the Verde Valley. A lack of quality higher educational opportunities here in the Verde Valley will inevitably contribute to lower educational achievement on the part of our children,

and overall to a decline in sustainable economic development and the jobs that such development brings. Overall, diminished educational spending will produce a diminished quality of life for our community members.

Our objective in writing to you today is to put our concerns on the record in the hope that we can begin a constructive dialogue and exchange of ideas with the Board about the plans and objectives of Yavapai College and the extent to which these plans and objectives include meeting the growing needs of our Verde Valley communities. We believe this matter is of the utmost urgency because the capital investment program of the College, as approved by the Board, is moving ahead without a proper level of consideration for the needs of Verde Valley communities, including those of the Yavapai-Apache Nation.

Sincerely,


Jane Russell-Winiecki
Chairwoman

cc: Yavapai College District Governing Board Members:

Mr. Ray Sigafos, District 1 and Board Chair (Email: ray.sigafos@yc.edu)
Ms. Deb McCasland, District 2 (Email: deb.mccasland@yc.edu)
Dr. Connie Harris, District 3 (Email: connie.harris@yc.edu)
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