NMJC cuts evening class costs
Tuition for night classes cut in half; more classes offered

DENISE MARQUEZ NEWS-SUN
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Aspiring students wanting to expand their education, but who can’t fit classes into their work schedule, may be able to squeeze in a class or two thanks to New Mexico Junior College vamping up its evening class program.

Beginning in the fall semester, NMJC will reduce tuition for its evening classes by 50 percent and will be offering a larger curriculum.

During Thursday’s NMJC board meeting, board members approved the reduction in tuition for all classes that begin after 5 p.m. Tuition will be reduced, but class fees will remain the same.

Larry Sanderson, NMJC director of institutional effectiveness and college relations, said pumping extra effort into NMJC’s evening classes will overall increase enrollment, but also help students who are working and cannot attend NMJC day courses.

“The majority of our students fall between 25-29 (years old) male and female and are working,” he said.

“The pressure on those students to balance work, family and school become even more so ... and many of them go to night school. We have an opportunity if we want to grow and expand enrollment and to better meet the needs of our working adult students. If we can increase offerings we can bring back those students to campus.”

Sanderson said the college has seen a significant decrease in evening class attendance and classes offered in the past seven years.

“If you’ve been around this campus for a long time you may remember back 10 years ago night school here was a big activity,” he said. “There’s a lot of reasons that changed. We backed into slowly escalating reduction in our night offerings.”

“We’re doing about 2,000 or 2,200 credits each semester,” Sanderson continued. “Clovis Community College does 8,000 — four times the enrollment in the evening the we have. Every college in our region has a robust night program.”

Between fall 2006 and fall 2013 the number of evening sections declined from 106 to 70 and student enrollment dropped more than 30 percent, Sanderson said.

College officials plan to focus on expanding business classes in the evening during the 2014 fall semester.

“The first place that we’re beefing up is in the business program,” Sanderson said. “We know from the business community that’s what they want. We were told by business leaders, ‘I will send my workers out there and I will pay for their tuition, but I’m not going to do it during work hours.’ This semester the emphasis is on the business program. We’re going to have to go through program to program each semester.”

Ron Black, NMJC board member, said he would like to see the campus more lively during the evening hours.

“This is something that we need to do for sure,” he said. “If you have been around as long as I have all you have to do is drive around the parking lot at night and you don’t have nearly as a robust of a night college as we used to have. In an economy like ours when everybody is working I think there is potentially more people looking for the chance to take a class or two at night. We need to get our night school going again.”
Sanderson said NMJC will offer the 50 percent reduction of tuition for one year and possibly more depending on enrollment numbers.

“We’re asking that you do this for a one year period — fall and spring — with the expectation that if it’s working we may come back for a second year,” he said. “The financial impact on this is not huge. Yes, there will be some daytime people bargain hunting and going to night classes, but that’s fine. It’s possible we’re better meeting their needs anyway. It will pick up new students and some existing students.”

“It’s going to take a year to know if we’ll have some impact on this and potentially two or three,” Sanderson continued. “If it’s working three to four years from now, we’d like to see this place lit up again at night and as active as it is during the day.”

*Denise Marquez can be reached at 391-5437 or at reporter@hobb snews.com.*