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3/8/2006

Discussions continue on proposed technical community college

► **Tech center director Rod Tarr discusses the subject with the school's Joint Committee.**

By SHEILA BOUGHNER-BLAIR
Staff writer

Discussions continue about a proposed technical community college for northwestern Pennsylvania, Venango Technology Center director Rod Tarr told the center's Joint Committee Monday.

The proposed technical community college would serve Erie, Crawford, Warren, Mercer, Venango, Forest and Clarion counties with programs offering certificate or associate degrees in such areas as welding technology, automotive technology, building construction technology

and machine tool technology, Tarr said.

The courses would be offered at career and technical schools throughout the region, thus utilizing "hundreds of millions of dollars of facilities, technological equipment and staff" already on hand and would be similar to the secondary programs already offered at the schools.

"This community college concept is not being considered to compete with any existing post-secondary programs," he said.

The programs would offer "an affordable college entry pathway" to students, some of whom might decide to pursue further studies at local post-secondary institutions offering bachelor's degrees, he said.

He pointed to a number of

"false starts in the area of technical education" in the region.

"It seems as though the market is not quite large enough in each separate county to support these specific kinds of programs," he said. "However, if you combine the training assets . . . and market potential of the populations of the seven counties involved in the initial planning, it just might work."

He cautioned that the idea is still in the planning stages.

Most of the career and technical schools in the region do not offer academic courses, so that part of the mix would have to be addressed, Tarr said.

"We haven't signed anything yet," he said. "But I think it would be an advantage to the area and an advantage to adults in the area."