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## COLLEGE: NCCC sets off on a new trail

By Jonah Bronstein  
E-mail Jonah

SANBORN — The ball is rolling for a new N-Trip.

Niagara County Community College's board of trustees approved a strategic plan Wednesday that includes an investment of more than \$376,000 over the next three years in athletics.

NCCC's plan includes the addition of men's and women's teams in three sports: lacrosse, cross country and swimming. The school also intends to increase scholarship funds for its basketball and wrestling programs, hire three full-time coaches and two support staffers, upgrade its soccer fields to accommodate lacrosse, and look into changing its nickname and logo.

College president James Klyczek said the plan helps the athletics department serve NCCC's overall mission.

"Our first priority in expanding our athletics program is to foster a sense of community among our students and to ensure that a full college experience is available to all our student athletes," Klyczek said. "Athletics hasn't received the funding necessary to ensure that a broad range of opportunities are available."

Lacrosse, a sport that has exploded in popularity among residents on the nearby Tuscarora Indian Reservation, will be the first sport added. The teams will begin play in the fall of 2009 — when the plan goes into effect — but athletics director Lee Wallace said he hopes to hire coaches by the spring so they can recruit.

Cross country will be added in 2010, and swimming teams will be formed for 2011.

"In my interactions with high school students, not having a variety of sports, especially sports played in the Western New York high schools, really puts NCCC behind in attracting future students," board member Arthur Pappas said.

Building a winning tradition in visible sports like basketball and baseball will also promote enrollment, Wallace said. In the 13-page plan presented to the board, Wallace said hiring full-time coaches is "essential" to building winning programs.

Wallace hasn't determined yet which sports he will hire full-time coaches for, but indicated that baseball will likely be addressed first.

Matt Clingersmith, a Niagara Falls native who pitched at Canisius College, has turned around the NCCC baseball program in less than two years, winning a regional championship last spring and a conference championship this fall.

"We always thought we would hire a full-time baseball coach," Wallace said. "The reason being: we have a fall season and a spring season, and the margin of off time in the middle has been slim.

"And then, with what Matt has done and the amount of publicity he's brought us, that only solidifies our belief."

One coaching position will be added each year. The plan has reserved \$135,000 for the three positions. "We're going to try and get as much out of the coaching positions as we can," said Wallace, noting that those hired will also have recruiting and assistant coach responsibilities in other sports.

Scholarship funding for men's and women's basketball and wrestling are set to increase from \$5,000 to \$10,000 per team over the next three years.

The plan will be funded by a gradual increase in the student athletic fee — to \$46 for full-time students and \$21 for part-time students — as well as anticipated enrollment increases, an athletic fund balance, new NCCC Foundation funding, and new fundraising initiatives.

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