

NCTC to assist students, booster Parker Square

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Flower Mound and the surrounding area is about to have a new option for higher education.

North Central Texas College (NCTC) is in the process of opening a new campus at 1200 Parker Square in Flower Mound, giving the college five campuses throughout the area.

NCTC's main campus is in Gainesville. It also has an extension campus in Corinth, which draws many Denton County students, and Bowie and a branch campus in Graham.

But with the 32,000-square-foot Parker Square campus, which is set to open in January, administrators say it brings a much-needed option for students living south of Lewisville Lake.

"We'll be tapping into a market that we're not currently serving," said Dr. Lee Ann Nutt, vice president of instruction. "When we first started looking around years ago, we wanted to be south of the lake. The lake is a true barrier."

Administrators expect local students to pour in immediately. They say there were 522 students living in Flower Mound who attended the Corinth campus in the 2009 fall semester, 496 in the 2010 spring semester and 833 in the 2010 summer semester.

Nutt said despite a new campus, the enrollment in Corinth should still remain solid.

Prospective students can begin preparing for the 2011 spring semester as early as Oct. 18 when the Flower Mound location will be open as a temporary intake office at Suite 980 in Parker Square. There, students can get information on admissions, financial aid, tuition and the college itself. They can discuss the required testing, fill out an application and meet with counselors.

The temporary location will be open until the new facility is open January.

Once open, NCTC will have a total instructional seating capacity of 483 seats, which contains a lecture hall, 10 classrooms, two computer labs and a science lab.

NCTC will offer basic transferable classes such as English, government, math, history, biology, reading and psychology. There are expected to be at least 110 sections of courses available for the spring semester before expanding to more for the 2011 fall semester.

Classes will be available from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays.

It will also offer night courses, though the schedule will be different from its Corinth campus, which offers one three-hour class from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Flower Mound's location will offer two courses lasting an hour and a half each to provide relief for students not wishing to sit through a three-hour class.

In addition to providing options to students, Flower Mound officials say that the campus will help bolster the rest of Parker Square, which has had financial struggles. The building for the NCTC campus has never been occupied.

"The several hundred students expected to attend the Flower Mound campus beginning next January will generate significant daytime population which is a key criteria for restaurants and retailers considering new locations," said Melissa Glasgow, Flower Mound's director of economic development. "This will be a boon to Parker Square, as well as Flower Mound and southern Denton County in that it

will be a catalyst for attracting more retail and restaurant development, as well as business services entities. The facility should also help fill the void left by the closing of the fitness center and Time Warner when they moved earlier this year as part of a campus-wide consolidation. It should also be very beneficial to the existing tenants by providing more foot traffic within the development. It is our hope that NCTC will continue to grow and expand at Parker Square once they get established. They are welcomed with open arms.”

NCTC administrators said the restaurants and retail areas that do exist in Parker Square will attract students there, noting that there aren't many places to go to near the Corinth campus.

“With the amenities in Parker Square, it's already a destination,” said Rodger Boyce, assistant to the president for marketing and public relations. “In Corinth, we're kind of limited.”

Administrators also like the fact that while most of the building has been constructed, there is still minor work left to be done, which allows the school to have it built to reflect a school.

Nutt said the location is also key with Parker Square being almost equal distance from Marcus, Flower Mound and Lewisville high schools. Lewisville ISD has partnered with NCTC in the past in a dual-credit program, and Nutt said this will only strengthen the partnership.