

ADVANCEMENT SECTION

REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT

TO

University of New Mexico
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FOR

The Higher Learning Commission

A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

EVALUATION TEAM

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I. Overall Observations about the Organization

As the comprehensive, urban public university and only one of two flagship, very high research universities in the United States federally designated as an Hispanic Serving Institution, the University of New Mexico has a great story to tell. With nearly half of all baccalaureate student enrollment, and as the only provider of professional education for law, medicine, architecture and pharmacy in the state, UNM is a recognized asset to the future of New Mexico.

As team members traversed the campus, visited Colleges, ate with students, and participated in extensive interviews across the main and branch campuses, the Consultant-Evaluators noted the high regard with which learning, research and community service is integrated into the fiber of the institution. Students reported being pleased with how accessible their professors were. The interaction of faculty and students was visible not only in the classroom setting, but also informally in shared learning spaces, in the Student Union and outdoors. Transfer students reported on the ease of transferring credit and the decision to transfer into a more rigorous program at UNM. Students told of the support structures available to enable them to be the first in their family to earn a degree. During the individual College visits, team members witnessed media releases, student and faculty awards, and repeated evidence of external recognition of learning at UNM. In contrast to the frequent negative press, these stories are poignant and pervasive, providing strong evidence that the core foundation of higher education at UNM is present and functioning well.

These values are evident also on the branch campuses that were visited: Taos and Gallup. At those campuses the sense of community is immediate and very positive. Although their respective missions are different in some ways from that of the Albuquerque campus, there is evident pride on both campuses in its respective mission and a broadly shared commitment to its fulfillment.

II. Consultations of the Team

A. Topic One: Governance

Evidence of the academic engagement and solid examples of assessment of learning, demonstrates the commitment of UNM's academic community that has persevered through inconsistent leadership for two decades. Examples of the positive and numerous interactions of students and faculty affirmed the connection between faculty and students. Steps are underway by the President and staff to include greater campus representation in standing Cabinet and Executive meetings. The President and Executive Officers of UNM also are encouraged to step into the residence halls, student union, and classrooms to demonstrate a willingness to connect with the students and

faculty they serve. An improved perception of administrative engagement across campus will enhance and personalize the multitude of media messaging via blogs and webinars. In a world of information overload, effective messaging requires a personal connection with a purposeful meaning. The University Relations team is strongly encouraged to work with deans, faculty, students, and the campus communities to identify and celebrate the testimonies, success stories and the multitude of examples of student achievement.

The tradition of lay leadership in American higher education is a long and respected tradition. In public higher education today board members are critical to assuring financial and political support for the university. Board members all seek to share their considerable personal and career successes with the university, and they take their fiduciary obligations seriously. The fiduciary role of a board goes beyond concern for its budget and relationship to the executive and legislative branches, it includes concern for the academic enterprise. Each governing board must find the correct calibration to fulfill its role through policy development rather than management. The roles of the President and Provost, the faculty and members of the governing board are complementary but they are not the same. Successful shared governance requires that each participant value the role to be played by others. This is most likely to occur through increased shared understanding. The consensus of the members of the HLC team is that the governing board and members of the executive team might take the recent criticism and concerns expressed by faculty and turn it to a beneficial discussion about the respective contributions of the participants in shared governance.

Because it appeared during the visit that the culture of the Board of Regents may differ in some ways from standard understandings of best practice, the Board might benefit considerably from broader acquaintance with widely shared understandings of effective board operations and assumptions. There are many sources of educational programming for boards. Both the American Council on Education and the Association of Governing Boards offers occasional opportunities for board member orientation and education. The Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges provides institutes for presidents and boards (one is being held June 9, 2009 in Aspen). The Association also holds a national conference and should be an invaluable resource for UNM. Members of the UNM board should consider regular participation in such professional development opportunities with Regents and Trustees across the country.

An accreditation visit provides opportunities for campus constituents to reflect on past and current practices. The HLC team recommends that activities be integrated on and between the UNM campuses, moving beyond unidirectional communication flows and that opening up dialogue between groups that is critical to any higher education institution's successful governance. Faculty have actively participated in conflict resolution training, and, in similar fashion, members of the Board and the staff of the President's Office are encouraged to pursue similar training. Equally, it is suggested that the university appoint a full-time ombudsman to mediate conflicts arising between

various constituents on campus. Open and honest communication is critical not only within the university, but must also be extended from UNM to local community citizens to establish and maintain credibility and trust. For example, citizens living near the north golf course apparently feel that they were misled by the university in the loss of former green space for north campus expansion. The citizen group was sufficiently concerned that they made a concerted effort to attend a community forum to express their concern.

As the largest higher education institution in the state and major academic and economic leader, UNM is encouraged to take and an active leadership role in the state's future. Activities such as NM Higher Education Department's review of the status of contingent faculty or the deployment of a statewide course management system and telecommunications infrastructure are examples of areas for UNM's unique expertise and vested interests. It is also noted that, perhaps due to facets of a small state or close relative proximity to the State Capitol, faculty and staff have historically solicited their legislators for support of individual projects or interests. These non-UNM sanctioned requests may present conflicting messages to legislators and dilute or circumvent institutional goals. As UNM's strategic goals are articulated across campus, it is important to develop and reinforce appropriate institutional channels of official legislative communiqué.

B. Topic Two: Diversity and Special Emphasis

It is clear that UNM values diversity in its student body and is concerned that all students succeed. The fact that they asked for a Special Emphasis focused on "equitable access to undergraduate, graduate and professional education programs at UNM across all population groups in the state and to achieve equitable outcomes (success) for all students," (UNM self-study and HLC agreement) speaks volumes for the University.

UNM has a long history of attracting large numbers of under-represented students, particularly at the undergraduate level, in part because of the demographics of the state, which has a large Hispanic and Native American population. Students of color, however, have not historically fared as well as their counterparts in terms of graduation rates and pursuing graduate and professional degrees. To address these issues UNM requested and was approved for a special emphasis as part of this comprehensive review. They identified the following areas to study and act on: preparation and recruitment, enrollment and curricular management, student support and success efforts, faculty and support for community/state initiatives. In our consultant role, we offer several recommendations regarding the University's efforts on enhancing student success.

UNM has taken steps to work with public schools to help prepare students for success in college. Model programs such as the New Mexico Cyber Academy and supporting initiatives such as increasing high school graduation requirements enhance UNM's efforts to help better prepare students. The next step the University should seriously consider is reviewing its admissions standards. As the flagship University, UNM is in a unique position to help dictate what courses and preparation level high school students should strive for in order to be admitted to UNM. Higher admission standards will likely result in higher retention and graduation rates. Given enough lead time both schools and students will meet the challenge. Additionally, the main campus should take advantage of the success the Branch Campuses have had in recruiting students of color by ensuring that a larger number of these students transfer to the main campus. The Gallup campus, with 80% of its students being Native American, provides an excellent opportunity to increase the numbers at the main campus.

Enrollment and Curricula Management provides additional opportunities for UNM to help students succeed. While the University has achieved some milestones in the recruitment of Hispanics and Native Americans, the team heard from African-American students that less attention was paid to them. Efforts should also focus on recruitment and retention of African-American students at both the undergraduate and graduate level. Students report lack of concern for recruitment of African American students unless they are in Athletics, where they represent 67% of UNM's football players or 21.5% of UNM's intercollegiate student athlete population. Utilization of African-American graduate students in recruitment initiatives, on brochures and media sites can be a good strategy as well as outreach to targeted schools, counselors and parents where there is a viable African-American enrollment. Culture-based retention efforts generally produce positive outcomes for targeted recruitment and through faculty, staff and peer mentoring. The Ethnic Program Directors can be helpful in addressing this initiative since personal outreach and contact with both applicants and their parents are crucial when recruiting African-American students.

There is an amazing array of resources at UNM to support student success, but outreach to students about these programs is passive. Conspicuously absent is orientation of graduate students, which should be inclusive of diversity. There is a perception among students of color that they and international students are competing for a small pool of funds. Strategic collaboration between the Admissions office and VPEI is needed for better utilization of students of color and international students in the recruiting processes. A grant fund could help make the dream of international study abroad a reality for socially and economically challenged students. Clarification regarding the roles of the Vice President of Equity and Inclusion (VPEI) and the HSC Vice President for Diversity, communication channels between the two offices and coordination between the two offices would be beneficial to the institution.

The team also heard from students who felt that some faculty could benefit from sensitivity training. Two students quoted one professor as stating "this is not an ESL class, are you sure you belong here." Workshops for faculty might be useful here.

UNM has several programs to help with their "Student Support and Success Efforts," including the College Enrichment Program. However, as stated before, there is a serious need for additional advisors to handle student needs. This is particularly important at an institution with such a large number of first generation students.

A major component in providing for student success is the faculty. While efforts have been made to develop a Diversity Plan, the office is understaffed for effective implementation, including outreach needs, e.g. networking opportunities diverse affinity groups. The hiring of the VPEI should help considerably if the Office is provided the resources needed. Because this office cuts horizontally across the UNM, collaboration with Deans and Departments to provide incentives regarding faculty recruitment and retention is advised. Efforts directed at recruiting and retaining minority faculty have made some progress over the last five years, but have not yet yielded the desired results. For example, the presence of more African American faculty is one way to retain African American students. There is cognitive dissonance between opportunity for hiring and diversity. It might be helpful to develop a strong faculty mentoring program and to monitor the facial diversity of executive, faculty and non-competitive hires. UNM may wish to establish a Presidential advisory council on Equity and Inclusion jointly chaired by the VPEI and an African American faculty member. Another option is to develop a faculty and staff leadership forum on diversity, including information on negotiating the cultural climate and student support services. Additionally, some universities have found that knowledgeable and respected consultants can provide workshops for Faculty Search Committees on enhancing the identification of potential under-represented faculty. Furthermore, the University may consider a "grow your own" model similar to the one funded by the State of New Mexico a few years ago which permitted Universities to send talented students out-of-state to complete doctoral programs. In return for financial assistance during their doctoral program, students would return to tenure-track positions at their original university.

The Diversity Report Card, developed by the Office for Equity and Inclusion, is a great start. Monitoring success in the areas mentioned is essential. An aspiration for the University may be to achieve a student profile of the university that reflects the population in the state.

Although teaching loads at the branch campuses reflect many necessities, a strategic vision of their importance might give greater attention to the importance of faculty development for regional campus faculty. No less important than main campus faculty, regional campus faculty must be given opportunity for intellectual growth if they are to remain vital and effective instructors. Especially for tenure-track and tenured faculty,

provision for periodic course relief and for development opportunities would help to ensure dynamic and well-informed teaching.

C. Topic Three: Academics and Advising

Commendably, UNM has adopted student learning goals based on the AAC&U initiative: Liberal Education, America's Promise (LEAP). However, the university might build more effectively on this commitment by making information about these goals more widely known, by seeking a more thorough alignment between its general education curriculum and these goals, and by making certain that the assessment that is conducted is well suited to determine the accomplishment of these goals. The team recommends that the Provost clearly designate an organizational structure for leadership of general education. Specifically, UNM might look to its successful framework for Program Outcomes Assessment as a model for developing an effective general education assessment process.

As acknowledged by UNM in the self-study, faculty members whose primary responsibility is teaching may be under-rewarded on average compared to those with significant research assignments. Further, the self-study suggests that some faculty may be reluctant to participate in service and engagement activities because it is undervalued in the tenure process. It is recommended that UNM develop or revise faculty performance standards used in the performance evaluation process to determine rewards (i.e., compensation, promotion and tenure) such that incentives for effective teaching and service are clearly evident. Such standards may vary across academic disciplines and units.

The status of academic advising at UNM, particularly in the seriously understaffed University College, remains problematic. The Provost and her Provost's Committee on Advising are well-positioned to assume leadership on this issue. NACADA is an excellent resource for outlining multiple avenues for effective academic advising structures. Additionally, University Colleges at many universities have addressed stressors similar to those experienced at UNM and could provide useful consultation and advice.

NMEL and OSET units are notably skilled in instructional design and pedagogy. This expertise may be channeled into a series of online faculty development courses. An example might be the creation of an Online Teaching Scholars program focused on fundamental strategies for effective teaching. Lead by a group of recognized teaching faculty, the online professional development may be a way to connect or mentor new or adjunct faculty regardless of location. Topics such as Learning Styles and Strategies, Syllabus Design, Understanding Assessment, Rubrics, Advising, Writing Effective Test Questions, Scholarship of Learning, and Grantwriting may comprise a professional development certificate. This blended format with online content delivery and interactive discussions would provide a means to connect main and regional campus

faculty and create links among disciplines. An online program with a “teaching emphasis” may also be valuable in a blended format for Graduate Teaching Assistants who are engaged in undergraduate teaching.

The University Library is a central academic component at any university. The University Library at UNM is consistently cited as a campus gem and is also consistently described as woefully underfunded. Virtually all university libraries are experiencing financial stress, and national organizations could be resources for exploring options for improving the current fiscal situation at UNM. Identifying strategies for rectifying the ongoing, long-term disintegration of library funding would be advantageous for UNM as it pursues AAU membership.

The organization realizes that in times of tight budget constraints, such as those currently evident, the part of their mission that seems to suffer the most is outreach. There is no structure in place to coordinate outreach activities at a university level. Bringing many of the outreach programs together in a coordinated manner could help with efficiency, assessment and subsequent prioritization of resources deployed. Often, the same people are called upon for assistance with numerous different outreach projects. The university has not been successful in providing the foundation for a rewards structure for outreach scholarship and service. Coordinated planning oversight for engagement, with clear signals of its importance through appropriate incentives and rewards, could benefit UNM's outreach mission.

While the branch campus missions are historically and statutorily determined, a commitment on the part of UNM to serve the evolving educational needs of New Mexico suggests the importance of periodic needs assessments in the branch campus service areas. As other states have discovered, some areas may have a durable need for the delivery of on-site baccalaureate education to place-bound students. Addressing this need might contribute significantly to the economic development of the state. As an aside, the team observes that the university's branch campuses are in a number of respects no longer “branches” at all, but institutions founded and developed to serve the UNM mission within their respective regions in distinctive ways. A shift in nomenclature, from “main and branch” to UNM-Albuquerque, UNM-Taos, etc. could recognize this evolution and contribute to system-wide morale.

D. Topic Four: Technology

UNM appears decentralized in its deployment of technologies and management of technology infrastructure. With the hiring of a new CIO, a critical step in organizing, managing and visioning campus technologies is taking place. Server farms, course management systems, student email are among the various systems that need attention and coordination. Economies of scale in aggregate purchasing and collaborations with other state or regional agencies offer potential cost savings and/or

expanded capabilities.

Students cited the need for greater access to computers. It is suggested that an assessment of the usage and availability of student computer labs or computer check-out needs to be conducted. The assessment may include demand at all lab locations as well as investigate the demand for leasing or borrowing laptops for more flexible use across UNM's wireless network.

A database system for collecting, storing, and accessing assessment documents is needed. To be most effective, assessment documents must be shared with many people to gather input, and require multiple revisions; without such a system, accessing and improving documents becomes problematic and may increase information security concerns.

As faculty expand the use of instructional technologies through course management tools, electronic gradebooks, clickers, online content enhancements, and a host of emerging technologies, UNM will need to identify how it can serve the demand. Currently OSET and NMEL each provide instructional design assistance. While OSET is reported to be focused more on "pedagogy" and serves the main campus, NMEL is also engaged in pedagogy for online learning that serves Extended University. There is overlap of services and both units are located on the Albuquerque campus. Faculty who have used NMEL often continue to go there for on-campus instructional technology support even after their courses have been developed. As demand increases and the lines of online, virtual and on-campus blur, neither unit will be able to fully address the instructional technology needs with existing staff.

UNM may consider creating a Faculty Commons or a Digital Support Center that melds support staff into a centralized space for ALL faculty. This technology-robust space includes drop-in support; places to test technologies (virtual environments, emerging software and hardware), collaborative work space for faculty, as well as more structured and scheduled instructional technology and design support. The combined synergies of the instructional support units create a center of consequence for campus growth in teaching and learning. The Educause April 2009 edition explores Learning Spaces and offers ideas for facilities design and planning. As technology becomes more integrated in instruction on-campus, at branch campuses and online, so should the staff support. Collaboratively, the multiple support units can expand faculty support through online and blended tutorials, workshops, and consulting to serve all faculty and students regardless of location.

III. Recognition of Significant Accomplishments, Progress,

While, the 1999 HLC Team Report cited declining facilities, by the 2009 visit the campus facilities were vastly improved structurally, with attention to the cultural and architectural style of the Southwest. Additionally, the main library building was subjected to consecutive flood and fire damage, and remodeling of this structure took

place during this time. In UNM's effort to consistently embrace the pueblo style architecture for the majority of buildings across the main campus, the Team suggests that particular attention be rendered to the placement of building signage – both in the front and back entrances to facilitate building identification.

Accolades from the team and from faculty are extended to the instructional designers in NMEL. UNM's online course development reflects attention to Quality Matters and Sloan-C standards in instructional pedagogy. The talented and dedicated instructional design staff creates courses that are academically and visually engaging for the online learner, which is particularly critical for the diverse Extended University student population. Multiple technologies are incorporated – including wikis, podcasts, graphics, animations – to enhance learning. NMEL staff invests much time in course design and go the extra mile to assist faculty in course development and teaching. The staff is exceptional in their dedication to the faculty and student support - working many after hours and weekends to assist faculty when launching a new course or at the beginning of a new term. The caliber of online courses meets or exceeds national quality standards. UNM should submit courses to Sloan-C, WCET or other award competitions for recognition of instructional design efforts.

The Health Science Center grant and contracts awards in 2008 totaled \$134 million. The School of Medicine was awarded 91% of the grant dollars in FY 2008. The college of Nursing was awarded a Robert Wood Johnson grant for \$4.8 million to increase the number and diversity of nurses with health policy knowledge.

A UNM College of Pharmacy student has been named vice chair of the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) Student Forum Executive Committee. The ASHP Student Forum Committee is comprised of five students appointed by the ASHP president. Also, in the School of Pharmacy two fourth year students placed in the top 10 out of 97 pharmacy schools in the AHSP.

In conclusion, sometimes when looking outward for ideas, we fail to look inward. UNM College of Law deserves special recognition for their attention to the recruitment, preparation and retention of Native Americans. These factors alone are noteworthy, however what truly speaks to the College of Law's commitment to Native Americans is the integration of Native American law and legal issues into the curriculum. The College of Law has implemented successful strategies to integrate the curriculum and enrollment that should serve as a beacon to the UNM campus, state and nation.