

Quick Information on UNM Higher Learning Commission Site Visit

April 24-25 UNM Albuquerque Campus
April 24 UNM-Los Alamos and UNM-Valencia

Why does accreditation matter?

Universities must be accredited by a reputable accrediting body on a regular basis to assure the value of the credit and degrees offered and to remain eligible for federal and state funding, including financial aid. The majority of UNM students rely on financial aid, university researchers rely on federal grants, and the public relies on the educational quality delivered by UNM, including degrees conferred. UNM is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission.

How was UNM's 2023 "Argument" (Report) for the HLC developed?

UNM relied on multiple sub-committees and a governance team to develop the 2019 argument/report. Since the 2023 argument/report came only four years after this effort, the Office of the Provost coordinated development of the report by requesting new and updated information from specific stakeholders across the university (including Office for Academic Personnel, Office of Assessment and Academic Program Review, Center for Teaching and Learning, Office of the Vice President for Research, UNM School of Medicine, Shared Fiscal Services, Office of the VP for Equity and Inclusion, Division of Enrollment Management, ...). The argument/report was then reviewed by the Provost's leadership team and Office of the President for accuracy. Thousands of pages of supporting evidence (reports, budget documentation, website information, etc.) were provided to the HLC as links to key words in the argument/report.

HLC Visiting Team Members

- Dr. John Campbell, Associate Professor, West Virginia University (**Chair of the Review Team**)
- Dr. Claudia Petrescu, Vice Provost for Graduate Education & Dean of the Graduate School, Kansas State University
- Dr. Karen Zunkel, Executive Director of Institutional Research, Iowa State University of Science and Technology
- Dr. Paul Tikalsky, Dean, Oklahoma State University (**Reviewer for Los Alamos**)
- Dr. Michael Seymour, President, Alexandria Technical & Community College (**Reviewer for Valencia**)

HLC Lunch with Board of Regents

11:45 - 1:00 p.m. - Monday, April 24 in the Cherry/Silver Room, SUB

Open Forums: all in PAÍS 2120 Co-op Room (PAÍS is the new white building located on the southeast end of Yale Mall, along Redondo)

Forum 1 (Criteria 1 & 2) - Monday, April 24 from 9:15-10:30 a.m. Mission and Integrity

Forum 2 (Criteria 3 & 4) - Monday, April 24 from 2:15-3:00 p.m. Teaching and Learning

Forum 3 (Criterion 5) - Tuesday, April 25 from 9:30 to 10:15 a.m. Finances and Planning

Drop-In Session with HLC Review Team Chair

Monday, April 24 10:45-11:30 a.m. Scholes Hall Room 101

Areas of Special Focus

- Governance
- Financial Controls / Audit
- Budget Planning
- Strategic Enrollment Modeling and Management
- Online Learning
- Campus Safety

2040 Mission Statement, endorsed February 14, 2023 and now in the Regents’ Policy Manual, the University Administrative Policies and Procedures Manual and the Faculty Handbook:

As the state’s premier institution of higher learning and provider of health care, The University of New Mexico promotes discovery, generates intellectual and cultural contributions, honors academic values, and fosters an educated, healthy, and economically vigorous New Mexico.

UNM’s overall argument (stated in President Stokes’ cover letter to the HLC):

“By resolving concerns identified during the 2019 HLC affirmation of accreditation, by learning from our pandemic experience, and **by building improved and transparent systems**, UNM has set itself up to achieve UNM 2040: Opportunity Defined. This new strategic framework equips UNM with a new university mission, vision, and a set of five ambitious goals: Advance New Mexico, improve Student Experience and Educational Innovation, foster Inclusive Excellence, incorporate Sustainability, and act for our stakeholders as One University. Teams across UNM’s seven campuses are hard at work following our 2040 vision to “be a global leader in realizing human potential, addressing critical community challenges, and demonstrating the power of inclusive diversity.”

Special Focus Context

- **Governance:**
Concern: Past HLC accreditation visits have flagged BoR involvement in the daily management of the university, revolving executive leadership, challenges with shared

governance. In 2019, UNM was moved from the 10-year Open Pathway (accreditation every ten years) to regular monitoring and review, largely because of concerns about governance.

Response: Demonstrate that the BoR has had strong leadership since 2019, benefits from development activities to strengthen performance of its role, relies on an ethics sub-committee, and understands that daily management of the university is not its role. See: https://accreditation.unm.edu/docs/2021-unm-focus-visit-report_08-09-2021_final.pdf. See: *Argument 1B*, pg. 7 (pdf pg. 9) and *Argument 2*, pg. 20 (pdf pg. 22).

- **Financial Controls / Audit:**

Concern: Fiscal Mismanagement in the Department of Athletics and lack of complete independence of audit, prior to 2019, led to flagging at the 2019 visit.

Response: UNM demonstrated through two interim reports to the HLC that proper procedures for accounting and fiscal management, independent audit, and responsible budgeting at been applied and institutionalized in the Department of Athletics. See: https://accreditation.unm.edu/docs/2021-unm-focus-visit-report_08-09-2021_final.pdf. See *Argument 5*.

- **Budget Planning**

Concern: UNM relies on incremental budgeting and had not engaged in multi-year forecasting with sufficient contingency planning around possible declines in state funding or enrollment, leading to mid-year rescissions.

Response: UNM engages the Budget Leadership Team in careful consideration of budget scenarios. UNM has institutionalized multi-year forecasting and planning, no longer relies on mid-year rescissions to address budget shortfalls and has healthy reserves. Input from Multi-Year Planning efforts are integrated into the UNM Combined Enterprise 10-Year Plan and Main Campus Core Financial Plan, this plan is utilized to make informed decisions around all financial planning efforts. See *Argument 5B*, p. 85 (pdf p. 87).

- **Strategic Enrollment Modeling and Management**

Concern: All U.S. higher education institutions anticipate an enrollment decline around 2025 when a demographic drop-off (sometimes referred to as an enrollment “cliff”) in the total number of U.S. high school graduates will occur.

Response: UNM VP Dan Garcia has a well-developed enrollment strategy that has reliably yielded a healthy incoming first-year class from a broad recruitment funnel. As we continue to rely on this now mature and successful strategy, we will also strengthen enrollment by improving our retention and strengthening transfer student support.

While international student enrollment declined between 2016 and 2021, new relationships with international recruitment specialists will shore up enrollment in this area. See *Argument 5C*, p. 93 (pdf p. 95).

- **Online Learning**

Concern: All U.S. higher education institutions rapidly expanded online learning during the pandemic, of necessity. This rapid expansion opens concerns about whether online learning meets quality standards comparable to face-to-face learning and whether an institution is engaged in innovative use of online learning to reach students (including non-traditional students) effectively.

Response: UNM requires all instructors teaching online courses to take a Regular and Substantive Interaction (RASI) training and strongly encourages instructors to take a six-week Evidence Based Practices for Teaching Online (EBPTO) offered by the Center for Teaching and Learning. For classes that students take fully online, instructors work with course designers to make sure that the classes on the learning management system Canvas are accessible, engaging, and offer regular and substantive interaction. Accelerated Online Programs benefit from dedicated designers and meet specific standards. Online courses are regularly reviewed for quality by independent review teams. Online standards and programming are coordinated by UNM Online in collaboration with the Center for Teaching and Learning and in compliance with NC-SARA. See *Argument 3C* pg.56 (pdf pg. 58).

- **Campus Safety**

Concern: The Higher Learning Commission survey to UNM students in early 2023 yielded numerous comments about campus safety. UNM is an urban campus situated at the nexus of several high crime areas in Albuquerque.

Response: UNM takes this concern very seriously and is embarked upon implementation and continuous improvement of a Campus Safety Plan. Specific recent actions taken include increasing security camera capacity to enable 1428 campus views, improvements to Code Blue Network (blue light safety phone towers, etc.), opening of an additional police substation in the Student Union Building, strengthening the Campus Assessment Response Education team (including threat assessment), increased security lighting, expanded building access control, expansion of community policing model, and improvements to campus emergency notification system. See *Argument* pg. 94 (pdf pg. 96).

UNM 2040: Opportunity Defined and comprehensive studies of all aspects of university life conducted with faculty, staff, student and community input have laid the groundwork for our next phase of improvement and service to the peoples of New Mexico, the region, and the country.

Questions: contact Joseph Suilmann at suilmann@unm.edu or Pamela Cheek at pcheek@unm.edu.