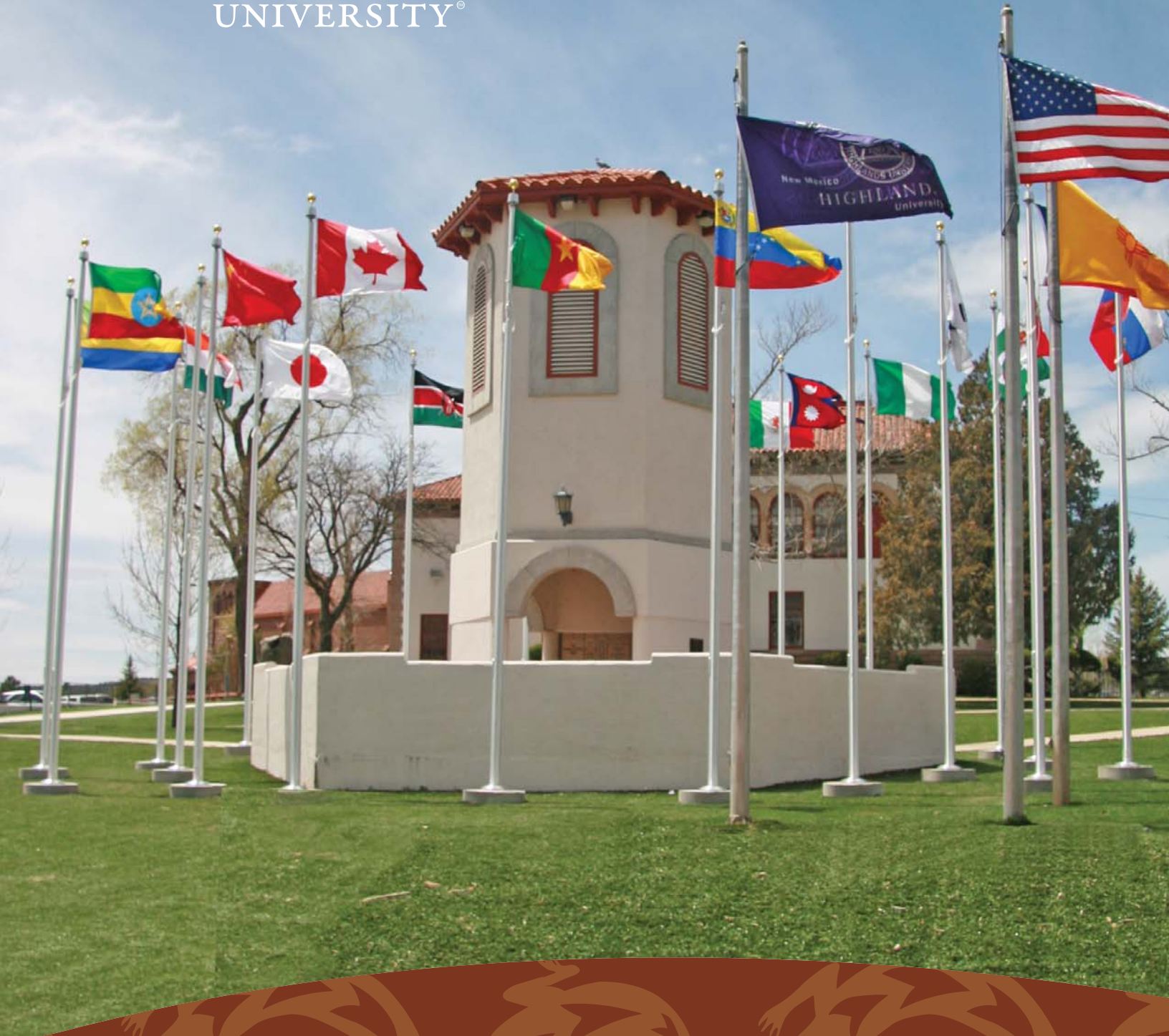




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New Mexico Highlands University Self-Study Report



NEW MEXICO HIGHLANDS UNIVERSITY®

## SELF-STUDY REPORT

This report was compiled by New Mexico Highlands University for the The Higher Learning Commission,  
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## Introduction

New Mexico Highlands University (the University) is one of six four-year universities in New Mexico, and the only one in the northern half of the state. The main campus is located in Las Vegas in San Miguel County. NMHU has off-campus centers in Santa Fe, Rio Rancho, Roswell, Farmington and Raton (the Centers) as well as distance learning and off-campus learning programs. The University is currently organized into two colleges and three schools: the College of Science and Mathematics, the College of Humanities and Fine Arts, the School of Business, the School of Education, and the School of Social Work. The University has 28 bachelor's degree programs and 14 master's programs. It is classified as a Carnegie Master's/large institution, reflecting the large number of master's degrees granted ([NMHU Fact Book, 2008-2009](#)).

Highlands prides itself on affordability and accessibility. We are an open-enrollment institution with an extensive scholarship program which, in conjunction with state scholarship programs, ensures that any first-time freshman is eligible to receive a tuition scholarship. Even with recent tuition increases, NMHU still offers the lowest tuition of any of the six public universities in New Mexico. Highlands has a long history of serving first-generation, low-income college students. More than half of our first-time freshmen each year are classified as first generation, low income, or both.

With a student body that is 50.3% Hispanic, Highlands is a federally recognized Hispanic Serving Institution. Highlands is regularly ranked by Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education among the top institutions in the nation for Hispanic students. In the latest ranking NMHU was 43<sup>rd</sup> in the nation in raw numbers of Hispanic students granted master's degrees ([Hispanic Outlook on Higher Education](#)). If viewed as a percentage of all students granted master's degrees, Highlands is in the top ten institutions nationwide.

## History and Future

New Mexico Highlands University was established as a normal school in 1893 by the Territorial Legislature of New Mexico. The school was established to train teachers for the public schools in the towns and villages of the region. In 1941 the institution's name was changed to New Mexico Highlands University to reflect the addition of graduate programs. Early presidents of the institution included Edgar Lee Hewett, the noted American anthropologist.

Highlands' ethnically diverse student body is central to its mission and identity. The 1960s and 1970s saw the Highlands campus serve as a center for political activism by Hispanic college students, resulting in the appointment of Frank Angel as president in 1971. Dr. Angel was the first native-born Hispanic president of a four-year institution of higher learning in the United States. In 1986 Highlands was one of 18 institutions that founded the [Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities](#) (HACU). Highlands worked with the other members of HACU to secure the first federal recognition of and funding for Hispanic Serving Institutions in the early 1990s.

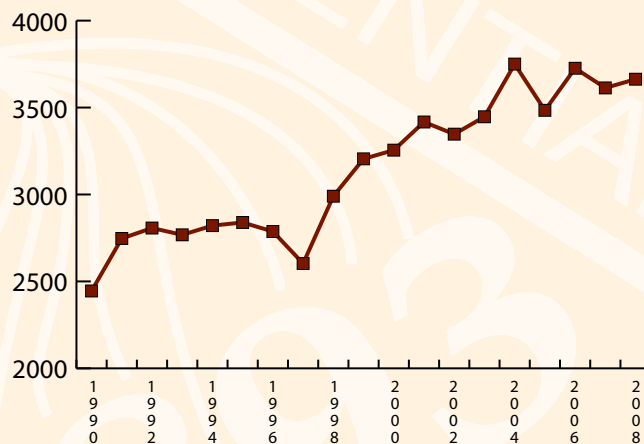
The main campus is located in Las Vegas, New Mexico, which was founded in 1835 as a land grant community. Many families in the region trace their ancestry to those original Hispanic settlers. Las Vegas is rich in history. It was a major stop on the Santa Fe Trail and, after 1879, the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad. Las Vegas has

more than 900 buildings on the National Register of Historic Places, more than any other community west of the Mississippi River. (For a virtual tour of the historic buildings of Las Vegas, visit the [Las Vegas Citizens Committee for Historic Preservation](#)).

While our historical focus on providing a quality university education to underserved populations and the communities of Northern New Mexico will always be a defining characteristic of the Highlands identity, the University is experiencing a period of rapid change. These changes will affect all aspects of the University, and will be addressed throughout the Self-Study.

- Changes in demographics

End-of-Term Fall Total Enrollments 1990 to 2008



As can be seen in the chart above, NMHU has been experiencing enrollment increases since our last accreditation visit. However, those increases have not come from within our traditional service population of high school graduates from Northern New Mexico.

Las Vegas is the largest town in the northeast corner of the state and the county seat of San Miguel County. According to 2006 figures, the city and county populations are 13,889 and 29,325, respectively, and approximately 80% of the population identifies as Hispanic. San Miguel County is very rural, with a population density of only 6.4 people per square mile.

While New Mexico as a whole grew faster than the nation from 2000 to 2006 (7.5% vs. 6.4%) the same is not true for Las Vegas or San Miguel County, both of which saw population losses during that time period. This trend of population loss can also be seen in the other counties in northeastern New Mexico, the traditional base for first-time freshmen at Highlands. In contrast, Bernalillo County and San Juan County (sites of two of the NMHU Centers) saw large population increases during that period.

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) 2008 report "[Knocking at the College Door](#)" projects that New Mexico is in a period of "stable production" of high school graduates. Our neighboring states are all in a period of expansion, with the expansion in Utah, Texas, and Arizona labeled "explosive". The report also projects a 54% increase in Hispanic high school graduates

**Las Vegas has more buildings on the National Register of Historic Places than any other town west of the Mississippi.**

## Comparative Population Trends, 2000/2006

	2000	2006	% change	% Hispanic	% Native American
Las Vegas	14,565	13,889	-2.7%	82.9%	
San Miguel County	30,126	29,325	-4.6%	76.75%	2.3%
San Juan County	113,801	126,473	11.1%	16.96%	38.2%
Bernalillo County	556,678	615,099	10.5%	44.92%	4.8%
New Mexico	1,819,046	1,954,599	7.5%	44.03%	9.8%
United States	281,421,906	299,398,485	6.4%	14.80%	1.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 Population Estimates, Census 2000

nationwide and a 7% increase in American Indian high school graduates. These data, along with the census figures, strongly suggest that enrollment increases at NMHU will continue to shift away from our historical service population of high school graduates from northeastern New Mexico.

- Increasing importance of transfer students in our undergraduate enrollments

New Mexico as a whole, and NMHU in particular, are just beginning to understand the highly mobile nature of our higher education students. More than one third of our first-time freshmen will transfer to another institution in New Mexico. This mobility is reflected in the fact that only a minority of our baccalaureate degree recipients began at NMHU as first-time freshmen. In addition, the undergraduate degree programs at all of our off-campus Centers are designed, in cooperation with local community colleges, specifically for transfer students. NMHU is still working on understanding and responding to the specific educational and support needs of our transfer students.

- The role of the Centers

The Rio Rancho Center opened in 1995. The Farmington Center

opened in conjunction with San Juan Community College in 1996. That year the Santa Fe Center, in conjunction with Northern New Mexico Community College, also opened. In a little more than a decade, our Centers have come to play an important role in our upper-division undergraduate and graduate programs. Unfortunately, our communication, administrative, and support processes between the Centers and the main campus were not sufficiently developed to reflect this increased role. An important aspect of the Self-Study was to focus on and improve these processes and relationships. These efforts will be discussed in Criterion One of this report.

- Increased emphasis on graduate education

Although Highlands has offered graduate programs since 1941, it is only in the past 20 years that our graduate programs have begun to rival our undergraduate programs in enrollments. Twenty years ago, graduate students made up about 20% of our student body. Today that number is more than 40%. This emphasis on graduate education is one of the ways in which Highlands differs significantly from our sister institutions, Western New Mexico University and Eastern New Mexico University. It is also reflected in our research productivity, and the fact that Highlands receives almost double the research funding received by WNMU or ENMU.

## Changes In Key Administrative Positions Since Last Accredited

Date	President	Board of Regents Chair
NCA accreditation visit, 2000	Selimo Rael	Joe Romero
December, 2000		Elmer Salazar
August, 2001	Jim Fries (Interim)	
July, 2002	Sharon Caballero	
January, 2003		John Loehr
June, 2003		Toney Anaya
July, 2004	Manny Aragon	
February, 2005		Javier Gonzales
July, 2006	Manual Pacheco (Interim)	
January, 2007	Jim Fries	
March, 2009		Leveo Sanchez



- Leadership changes

In addition to these changes, Highlands has experienced an unprecedented number of changes in key leadership positions during the past decade. In fact, since 1990 NMHU has had six presidents and six chairs of the Board of Regents. This rapid and almost continual change in leadership and direction significantly impeded our ability to develop a comprehensive and university-wide plan for addressing the changes summarized above. We now appear to be in a period of stable leadership, and a significant goal for the University is to capitalize upon this stability by engaging in a period of assessment and development.

- Collective bargaining agreement

The approval of the collective bargaining agreement between the Highlands administration and the NMHU Faculty Association was another major change at the University in the past decade. As the first collective bargaining agreement representing faculty at a four-year institution in New Mexico, this event marked a major change in our governance structures. The agreement, and the ways in which we believe it has strengthened the university, is discussed in Criterion One.

## Accreditation History

Highlands was first accredited by the North Central Association in 1926. It was later evaluated and accredited in 1932 and 1937. It has retained its accreditation since then, with its last full accreditation visit in the fall of 2000.

The 2000 accreditation visit occurred during a time of upheaval for the University. Although overall enrollments had been increasing, this was mainly due to increases at the Centers, and the main campus in Las Vegas was experiencing enrollment decreases. The role of the Centers was not yet understood, and the enrollment decreases on the main campus were causing widespread concern. The University had just begun implementation of the Banner system in the spring of 1999, and the system was not yet effectively providing accurate data to all units. The University was experiencing a budget crisis, at least partly due to a dearth of accurate financial data and the lack of a chief financial officer separate from the president. Finally, all these issues were resulting in public and sometimes acrimonious disagreements between members of the Board of Regents and the University's administration.

As a result of the 2000 accreditation visit, the NCA evaluation team found that NMHU had met the General Institutional Requirements, and that the "preponderance of evidence" was in favor of continuing accreditation. However, they also identified areas of significant concern that required further review and evaluation. NMHU was given eight benchmarks which were to be addressed in a one-year monitoring report and a three-year focus visit. Those benchmarks (as written in the NCA Report of a Visit- September 26-27, 2000) are listed below.

### 1) Regents-administration relationships

1-year monitoring report (2001): Evidence of a halt to the open hostility, a halt to direct newspaper attacks on each other or the institution, and clear evidence of some degree of stabilization of the relationships and first steps toward building a working understanding of the roles and responsibilities of Regents and administration. The team recognizes the free-speech rights of individuals, but it also recognizes that these are modified when one

undertakes the obligation of trustees and officers to avoid actions detrimental to the institutions they have a duty to advance.

3-year focus visit (2004): A clear, stable, and workable relationship should be demonstrated to exist.

### 2) Finances and financial monitoring

1-year monitoring report (2001): Evidence that no unexpected deficits in the overall campus budget have occurred, that monitoring of specific units' accounts has been effective, that financial reports for the Regents, CHE and on-campus units have been produced both on-time and without the need for significant corrections, that safeguards against unit over-runs are workable and effective, and that the planned hiring of a Vice President for Finance/Controller, who oversees financial administration, has occurred.

3-year focus visit (2004): Evidence that the 1-year benchmarks continue to be met and that the financial projections of the 5-year plan of 1999 have either been met or that the plan has been formally updated and the new projections are met.

### 3) Financial and administrative computer systems

1-year monitoring report (2001): Evidence that computer system users' functional use of the new system continues to improve with assistance of Computer Network Services and that all units have reliable and timely access to information about their budgets and budget balances.

3-year focus visit (2004): Evidence that 1-year benchmarks continue to be met and that the campus now relies fully and confidently on the new system (computer and administrative), has functional reporting from the new system, and has made the most important policy changes shown to be necessary or prudent, as indicated by the data flowing from the new system.

### 4) Enrollment and enrollment management

1-year monitoring report (2001): Evidence that enrollments on the Las Vegas campus have stabilized or, at a minimum, that in each class the loss from fall '00 to fall '01 is no more than 50% of the fall '99-fall '00 loss (comparing separately freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors, unclassified undergrads – if such a group is used, and grad students), while off-campus enrollments continue to rise. In addition, evidence that a structure for an integrated approach to enrollment-related issues has been established and that a structure to create a long-range plan, integrated with the campus strategic plan, for enrollment management has also been established.

3-year focus visit (2004): Evidence that enrollments on Las Vegas campus are at least equal to the previous fall in each class and that enrollments off-campus continue to rise, that an integrated enrollment management system and plan exist and that the plan is being implemented through an appropriate structure. In addition, evidence that enrollments meet those in the 5-year plan of 1999 and that the plan has been formally updated and the new projections are met.

### 5) Integrated strategic planning

3-year focus visit (2004): Evidence that a broadly-participatory planning process, including external and internal constituencies and internal and external sources of information, has been established

**NMHU's collective bargaining agreement is the first of any four-year institution in New Mexico.**



and is becoming institutionalized, that the process has produced at least a preliminary product, and that these plans are beginning to be used as a framework for decision-making, including budgetary and enrollment management decision-making. To the team, “broadly participatory” includes, but goes beyond circulation of documents for comment and requires inclusion of more than token or administratively-selected representation of constituencies on planning groups.

6) Governance structures

3-year focus visit (2004): Evidence that the recently-revived faculty governance structure, as well as student governance, continue to be active and to play an increasingly effective role in those parts of the affairs of the institution that are properly within their purview.

7) Institutional Research

3-year focus visit (2004): Evidence that a permanent, budgeted structure with a specific charge has been established, is collecting and analyzing data, including for example data on enrollments, admissions, and assessment of programs, and the data is available and is being used in decision-making. In addition, evidence that this data either includes or is being coordinated with appropriate financial data for planning and decision-making.

8) Assessment of student learning

3-year focus visit (2004): Evidence of a permanent structure has in the 3-year period been effective in helping units understand, implement, and refine their assessment plans and that a majority of the units have made progress in these respects and in using the resulting data to make program improvements.

Highlands filed a monitoring report on January 4, 2002 addressing the first four areas. The NCA staff analysis of the monitoring report noted that NMHU had made “significant progress” in the four areas covered by the report. A focus visit from the Higher Learning Commission in March of 2004 addressed all eight areas. The focus visit occurred just after the adoption of a new strategic plan for the University and the Board of Regents had just announced that the contract of President Caballero would not be renewed. The HLC team “found that in each area progress has occurred in purposeful and effective ways” and that “the team was impressed with the improvements and effort of the University community to address the Commission’s concerns.” However, the team also noted that the progress was “by no means uniform among the areas.”

The team recommended that a monitoring report be filed by July 1, 2006 in the area of Regent-administrative relations. It also recommended the filing of progress reports in the areas of governance structures and institutional research (by July 1, 2007).

The monitoring report on Regent-administrative relations, filed on July 11, 2006, came just after the Board of Regents placed President Manny Aragon on administrative leave on June 27. One month later President Aragon resigned, and Manual Pacheco was appointed interim president. The HLC staff found no evidence that benchmarks in this area had been met and recommended that the next comprehensive visit be rescheduled for 2008-2009. It also called for a progress report on institutional leadership to be filed on July 1, 2007, at the same time as the progress reports on governance structures and

institutional research. All three of these progress reports were accepted by the HLC with no further reports required. As a result of the progress documented in these reports, the next comprehensive visit was re-scheduled for the fall of 2009.

## The Self-Study Process

Highlands has experienced numerous challenges in the past decade including a growing population of graduate students, fluctuations in undergraduate student enrollments, the development of four Centers, a serious budget crisis at the beginning of the decade, and an unprecedented number of changes in administration. We are now in a period of financial stability, enrollment increases, and strong administrative leadership. We utilized the self-study process as a catalyst for reviewing our mission and strategic plan and ensuring that all aspects of the University are working cooperatively and effectively to meet our common goals. Specifically, we established the following goals for the self-study process:

Proceed in tandem with a process to review the University’s mission and strategic plan, to ensure the development of a shared identity and clearly understood common goals throughout the University community.

- 1) Ensure that appropriate policies, procedures and strong communication links are in place to support all units of the University as we work to implement our strategic plan.
- 2) Develop a shared commitment to effective assessment and data-based decision making, particularly in the assessment of student learning, through the regular collection, analysis, and distribution of information relevant to our strategic plan.
- 3) Identify challenges the University is facing, or is likely to face in the future, and develop plans to address those challenges creatively and effectively.
- 4) Document our strengths and successes, then communicate and celebrate those successes with our constituencies.

Highlands plays a very special role in Northern New Mexico and in the state. Citizens throughout the state, not only our students and alumni, feel an emotional connection with NMHU due to its unique focus on providing a quality university education to traditionally underserved populations, and our focus on supporting and celebrating the unique cultures and traditions of Northern New Mexico. Because of this, the audience for our self-study reaches beyond the University community and our direct constituents to include essentially the whole state of New Mexico.

The self-study process was designed to be open, inclusive, and generative, involving widespread participation across the University, extensive communication with all our constituencies, and resulting in the generation of creative solutions to the challenges facing NMHU. The process was directed by the Self-Study Steering Committee and implemented through five criterion work groups.

The process began with the appointment by President Fries of the self-study coordinator and the Steering Committee in the summer of 2007. Several meetings during the summer with the president and vice president for academic affairs helped to generate our goals for the self-study, and a general plan for how we wished to proceed. In August of

2007, at the beginning of the fall semester, a workshop was conducted with all faculty and staff, introducing the Steering Committee and explaining the purpose and process of the self-study. At that time, all faculty and staff were invited to complete a survey exploring their ideas regarding the University's strengths and weaknesses, opportunities for growth, and their goals for the self-study process. They were also invited to serve on the five criterion work groups.

A visit was scheduled for September of 2007 with Karen Solomon, the HLC staff liaison for Highlands. Meetings were scheduled with the Center directors, administration, Faculty Senate, Student Senate leadership, and Faculty Association leadership to discuss the accreditation process and answer questions.

Also during the fall and early spring, the newly formed Office for Institutional Effectiveness and Research (OIER) produced a number of reports focused on retention at the University. The implementation of the Banner system, starting in the spring of 1999, meant that there was a wealth of information available that had not been previously analyzed. In addition, for the first time NMHU participated in a national survey of first-time freshmen. The OIER generated reports on the composition of our student body, particularly undergraduate students who began as first-time freshmen and transfer students, our undergraduate degree recipients, the effectiveness of our scholarship programs, our Early Alert system, and our First Year Experience program.

A key aspect of the self-study process was our decision to apply for participation in the Higher Learning Commission's Academy for

the Assessment of Student Learning. The coordinated, ongoing, appropriate assessment of student learning objectives is widely recognized as a long-standing challenge for Highlands and the Self-Study Steering Committee viewed participation in the Academy as an exciting opportunity to creatively address this challenge. NMHU applied for membership in the Academy in the fall of 2007 and began participation in the summer of 2008.

## Organization of the Self-Study

This report is organized according to the Five Criterion for Accreditation outlined in the Higher Learning Commission's [Handbook of Accreditation](#). We have made every effort to have all supporting documents referenced in the Self-Study available in electronic form. As a result, almost every piece of supporting evidence is linked directly to this report. Generally, when a program or agency is presented as a hyperlink, the link is to that program or agency's Web site. Documents cited in the report are linked directly to the document. All supporting evidence is also available in hard copy in the Self-Study Resource Room on the third floor of Donnelly Library. In a few cases digital forms of supporting documents were not available. Those instances have been noted, and hard copies are available in the Resource Room.

Throughout the Self-Study we have attempted to go beyond reporting facts and figures to give the reader an understanding of what those data mean to the people who make up the Highlands community. Their stories are told in the "People Behind the Data" boxes interspersed throughout this report.







## Criterion One: Mission and Integrity

### Introduction

One result of Highlands' recent turbulent history was a lack of coherent understanding of, and support for, the University's mission. Recognizing this confusion as a serious problem, the University is currently in the process of re-establishing its identity. In this chapter we will discuss our current mission statement (developed in 2003), and its reflection in the operations of the University. We will also describe the development of our new mission, vision, and goals, which are expected to be formally adopted in the fall of 2009. Finally, we will discuss how the University has demonstrated institutional integrity throughout this period of rapid change.

### Core Component 1a *The mission documents are clear and articulate publicly the organization's commitments.*

In 2003, after an extensive effort by faculty, staff, administration, students, and community members, a new mission statement was produced and presented to the NMHU Board of Regents. The mission statement was approved and replaced the previous mission statement, which was established in 1996. The 2003 mission statement consists of an introductory summary paragraph followed by a more in-depth description of the mission ([NMHU Strategic Plan, 2003-2008](#)).

*New Mexico Highlands University is a diverse comprehensive quality university serving the global community by integrating education, research, public service, and economic development, while celebrating our distinctive Northern New Mexico cultures and traditions. We*

*achieve this through a university-wide commitment to quality student-centered education, recognition of the growing importance of the Spanish language to our nation's interests, and an acknowledgement to our many responsibilities to residents of Northern New Mexico as the principal educational institution in the region.*

*As a student-centered, publicly supported, regionally based, comprehensive university offering programs in liberal arts, sciences, and professional disciplines the University brings together students from distinctive cultural, socioeconomic, linguistic, geographic, religious, and educational backgrounds.*

*New Mexico Highlands University is committed to programs that focus on its multiethnic student body with special emphasis on the rich heritage of Hispanic and Native American cultures that are distinctive to the State of New Mexico and particularly to Northern New Mexico. The University clearly perceives that its success depends upon an appreciation of the region's cultural and linguistic identities. By reinforcing cultural identity and encouraging the use of these assets, the University seeks to empower students and the region's ethnic populations to achieve full involvement in the activities of society.*

*The University emphasizes graduate and professional programs, and a balanced curriculum that promotes undergraduate study that is firmly grounded in the liberal arts and sciences, emphasizes excellence in teaching and individual attention to students, and prepares students for lifelong learning, for graduate and professional schools, and for present and future occupations. The University remains true to its legacy of emphasis on teacher preparation, interdisciplinary programs involving the Hispanic world, and programs that contribute to meeting social needs. In essence, there is an emphasis on developing broadly literate citizens and leaders, educated in analytical and*

*critical thought and in the appreciation of the arts and sciences. In addition, through collaborative arrangements with other campuses, research agencies, government agencies, and the corporate world, the University aspires to develop and deliver new models for baccalaureate and graduate programs in additional programs such as engineering, forestry management, watershed management, bilingual programs in the professional schools, and programs that clearly acknowledge that a university that fully takes advantage of, and prepares students for, creative application of technology to improve the quality of life, is a university that will prosper, grow, and be relevant.*

The 2003 mission statement was viewed by many in the University and community as lacking clarity. In addition, the strategic plan stated, “The vision of New Mexico Highlands University is to become the premier Hispanic Serving Institution in the country, providing an unrivaled quality education in a welcoming, multicultural-oriented setting.” (NMHU Strategic Plan, pg 2, emphasis in original). While the plan also went on to emphasize the multicultural nature of the university, and our commitment to students, staff and faculty from all ethnic backgrounds, the focus on “Hispanic serving” in the vision and plan felt exclusionary to many of our constituents.

This perception resulted in the University revisiting our mission and vision in the context of the larger goal of developing a new strategic plan. This process was initiated in January 2009, when President Fries appointed a 16-member Strategic Planning Steering Committee (SPSC) that was charged with drafting new vision and mission statements. The SPSC was also charged with developing a list of goals and objectives that reflected the contents of the draft mission statement, which would then form the basis for the strategic plan. Committee members were selected from all university constituencies, as well as the community and NMHU Foundation. A series of public forums were held throughout the month of March 2009 during which interested university and community members provided feedback on the draft vision statement, mission statement, and objectives. The SPSC continued to meet throughout the summer. During Faculty Development Week, held August 10 through August 15, 2009, the Strategic Plan was presented to staff and faculty. Once the fall semester began, individual SPSC members met with each of the campus units to initiate the unit-specific mission statements and action steps. There is a SPSC Web site in which all of the SPSC’s activities, as well as succeeding drafts of the evolving Strategic Plan, are posted. The SPSC’s goal is to have the plan in place and approved by the NMHU Board of Regents early in the 2009 fall semester. The unit-specific plans will be developed over the course of the fall semester.

**Core Component 1b** *In its mission documents, the organization recognizes the diversity of its learners, other constituencies, and the greater society it serves.*

The New Mexico Highlands University mission statement clearly identifies the diversity of the academic community and its inestimable value as one of the hallmarks of the University.

*New Mexico Highlands University is committed to programs that focus on its multiethnic student body with special emphasis on the rich heritage of Hispanic and Native American cultures that are*

*distinctive to the State of New Mexico and particularly to Northern New Mexico. The University clearly perceives that its success depends upon an appreciation of the region’s cultural and linguistic identities. By reinforcing cultural identity and encouraging the use of these assets, the University seeks to empower students and the region’s ethnic populations to achieve full involvement in the activities of society.*

The New Mexico Highlands University mission statement also cites the importance of undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs in providing a broad range of accessible educational opportunities to the people of Northern New Mexico.

*The University emphasizes graduate and professional programs, and a balanced curriculum that promotes undergraduate study that is firmly grounded in the liberal arts and sciences, emphasizes excellence in teaching and individual attention to students, and prepares students for lifelong learning, for graduate and professional schools, and for present and future occupations.*

In 1893, the Territorial Legislature of New Mexico established New Mexico Normal School with the mandate to train teachers to serve the Northern New Mexico area. Although New Mexico Normal School became New Mexico Highlands University in 1941, the focus on teacher preparation has remained a priority.

*The University remains true to its legacy of emphasis on teacher preparation, interdisciplinary programs involving the Hispanic world, and programs that contribute to meeting social needs.*

While maintaining a high quality teacher education program, New Mexico Highlands University’s mission also includes language that emphasizes the importance of innovation and educating students to take advantage of the ever-changing world of technology.

*In addition, through collaborative arrangements with other campuses, research agencies, government agencies, and the corporate world, the University aspires to develop and deliver new models for baccalaureate and graduate programs in additional programs such as engineering, forestry management, watershed management, bilingual programs in the professional schools, and programs that clearly acknowledge that a university that fully takes advantage of, and prepares students for, creative application of technology to improve the quality of life, is a university that will prosper, grow, and be relevant.*

#### **Access, Affordability, Diversity, and Support**

Fundamental to the Highlands mission is the commitment to providing a university education to historically underserved populations. This goal, which was the main purpose of establishing Highlands more than 110 years ago, has only gained in importance during the past century and is now recognized not only as a vital need for our state, but for our country as a whole.

As evidence of our commitment to this goal, Highlands is dedicated to maintaining an unprecedented level of access through open enrollment at the undergraduate level, extremely low tuition, high levels of scholarship programs and recruitment and support of diverse populations.

*Highlands is proud to be an open enrollment institution.* At the undergraduate level this means that a prospective student need only demonstrate the attainment of a high school diploma or GED to be

**‘NMHU has been working for a decade to keep fees and tuition extremely low for all students.’**



### Tuition and Fees at Four-Year Public Institutions in the Western United States

		2008-09	1998-99	% change from 07-08	% change from 98-99
NMHU	resident undergraduate	\$2,688	\$2,688	6.8%	58.0%
	non-resident undergraduate	\$4,032	\$7,041	6.8%	-42.7%
	resident graduate	\$2,880	\$1,815	9.0%	58.7%
	non-resident graduate	\$4,234	\$7,467	6.4%	-43.3%
New Mexico Average (UNM and NMSU)	resident undergraduate	\$4,796	\$2,295	6.3%	109.0%
	non-resident undergraduate	\$15,225	\$8,057	4.6%	89.0%
	resident graduate	\$5,192	\$2,495	5.9%	108.1%
	non-resident graduate	\$15,624	\$8,283	4.4%	88.6%
New Mexico Average (other institutions)	resident undergraduate	\$3,454	\$1,839	6.5%	87.8%
	non-resident undergraduate	\$9,546	\$6,675	5.8%	43.0%
	resident graduate	\$3,688	\$1,968	7.0%	87.4%
	non-resident graduate	\$9,928	\$6,950	5.8%	42.9%
WICHE Average	resident undergraduate	\$5,094	\$2,568	6.3%	98.4%
	non-resident undergraduate	\$15,447	\$8,871	5.1%	74.1%
	resident graduate	\$6,666	\$3,178	8.7%	109.8%
	non-resident graduate	\$16,710	\$9,633	5.8%	73.5%

enrolled at NMHU ([Undergraduate Catalog, pg. 12](#)). Testing is used solely for the purpose of placement in support programs and developmental courses, not for admission decisions.

At the graduate level this means that no graduate program at NMHU requires applicants to take the Graduate Record Examination. Essentially the only requirements for regular admission to graduate programs at NMHU are a 3.0 undergraduate GPA in the relevant program of study and demonstrated interest and ability in the area of study. Even applicants with undergraduate GPAs below 3.0 can be admitted on a provisional basis, with a recommendation from the department ([Graduate Catalog, pg. 11](#)).

Keeping higher education affordable is a priority for our state, but it is also a major challenge. According to the National Center for Public Policy in Higher Education, New Mexico's "poor and working-class families must devote 28% of their income, even after aid, to pay for costs at two-year colleges." The center gave New Mexico an "F" on affordability in its [2008 Report Card on Higher Education](#). Of course, the center also gave an "F" to 48 other states.

NMHU is dedicated to improving this situation, and we are proud of our accomplishments. The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) report "[Tuition and Fees in Public Higher Education in the West, 2008-2009](#)" demonstrates that *Highlands University has the lowest tuition and fees of ANY public,*

*four-year institution in the Western United States.* This includes all four categories of tuition: undergraduate resident, undergraduate non-resident, graduate resident and graduate non-resident. The WICHE data are summarized in the table below.

These data demonstrate that NMHU has been working for a decade to keep fees and tuition extremely low for all students. Our increases during the past decade are among the very lowest in the region, and, in the case of non-resident students, Highlands is the only institution in the region to have actually decreased tuition and fees. The benefits of this decade long policy were demonstrated in the past year, when Highlands was able to implement tuition and fee increases slightly higher than those of our sister institutions in the state and region while still maintaining our status as the most affordable university in the Western United States.

Highlands is working to ensure that prospective students are informed about our low tuition through our "[Save Our Piggies](#)" campaign. The campaign brings attention to the plight of the ceramic piggy bank, millions of which are destroyed each year as students and their families struggle to pay for the high cost of college.

To supplement our commitment to low tuition and fees, Highlands has an extensive undergraduate scholarship program which ensures that any first-time, full-time freshmen can receive a tuition scholarship for at least their first semester (see [freshmen in-state scholarships](#)

## The People Behind the Data

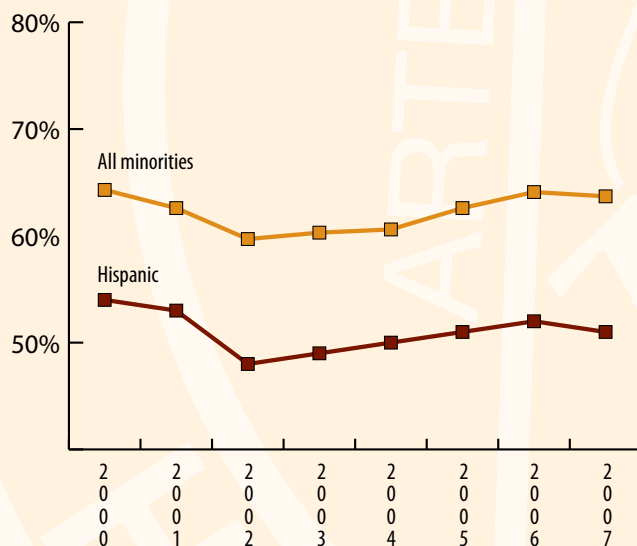
*Rey Martinez, Professor of Social Work*

"I am not a first generation college grad but had an experience that changed my life forever. I was seven years old when my dad decided he wanted to get a college degree. The six of us moved to a two-room dorm at Adams State College. For years I watched my dad stress out over trying to earn his degree. He could not speak English very well nor did he know how to type. My mom was a high school dropout—she wanted to help him but could not. For dinner we ate wild rabbits that she trapped down by the river.

"My dad finally graduated and got a job teaching Spanish at Durango High School! I'm honored to be a university professor and work very hard in the classroom to ensure that every student in my class has the tools to succeed. (Not every student earns a passing grade, but it is not due a lack of effort or availability on my part). I remain highly committed to any student choosing to better themselves and/or their family through higher education."

and [out-of-state scholarships](#)). These scholarships include the AIM for the Lottery scholarship and the HOPE scholarship, institutional tuition scholarships for first-time freshmen with absolutely no academic, income, or resident requirements. The students need only apply to receive one of the scholarships.

**Ethnicity of Student Body, Fall Terms**



Coupled with the New Mexico State Lottery Scholarship program, this means that *ANY graduate from a New Mexico high school who immediately enters college can potentially attend Highlands for four years completely tuition free*. This generous scholarship program also means that 92.9% of the first-time, full-time freshmen cohort of fall 2008 received some sort of tuition scholarship.

Highlands maintains open access and extreme affordability because we understand these efforts are central to our core mission of recruiting and retaining historically underserved populations. At Highlands, that specifically means low-income, first-generation college students, particularly those from ethnic minority groups. For the past ten years,

we have maintained a student body that is consistently 50% Hispanic with an additional 10% from other ethnic minority groups.

In addition, the following points illustrate our success in recruiting and retaining diverse populations:

- Of those first-time, full-time freshmen in the fall of 2008 who reported family income, 51.4% come from families with incomes below \$45,000, and 17.9% come from families with incomes below the 2008 federal poverty thresholds.
- Data from the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) suggest that approximately 50% of first-time freshmen in the fall of 2008 are first-generation college students.
- The number of international students in the student body has increased from 1.3% in fall 2000 to 3.4% in the fall of 2007.
- The number of African American students in the student body has increased from 2.6% in the fall of 2000 to 4.2% in the fall of 2007.

Providing Native American students access to a university education is of particular concern in New Mexico. The Highlands student body has remained at about 7% Native American for the past decade; however the University is continuing efforts to increase those numbers. In February of 2009, President Fries and leaders from 23 Native American tribes signed an agreement to promote higher education opportunities for Native American students at Highlands (this agreement will be covered in detail in Criterion Five).

Programs focused on the support, recruitment and retention of diverse student populations at Highlands include:

- [Student Support Services](#)
- [Accessibility Services](#)
- [Native American Student Services](#)
- [Academic Support Services](#)
- International Education Center

As one indicator of our success with underserved populations, *New Mexico Highlands University is regularly named one of the top 100 schools in the country in the number of masters degrees awarded to Hispanic students*. These ratings are done by *Hispanic Outlook Magazine* based upon IPEDS data. Its [latest rating has Highlands](#)

at number 43, higher than schools such as Texas A & M, Florida State University, the University of Arizona, and Berkley. This ranking is particularly impressive given that it is based upon the raw number of master's degrees awarded to Hispanic students, meaning that the majority of the schools on the list (perhaps all) have student enrollments much larger than NMHU.

In addition to our diverse student body, Highlands is also proud of the diversity evident in our faculty and staff. Twenty-seven percent of our full-time faculty and 73% of our staff are Hispanic. Of the tenure-track faculty for which we have data, 41% are first-generation college students. A few are first-generation high school students. Three of our five deans and all three of our vice presidents are the first in their families to earn a college degree. Our faculty vividly understands the importance of earning a college degree.

### **Core Component 1c** *Understanding and support for the mission pervade the organization.*

We are in the process of developing a new mission statement at Highlands. One of interesting aspects of this process has been the recognition that there is widespread agreement regarding the core values and historical purpose of our institution. This understanding of

our core values is reflected throughout our programs and documented throughout this Self-Study. In particular, we have a clear understanding of how to achieve our mission. As stated in the 2003 mission statement, *"We achieve this through a university-wide commitment to quality student-centered education..."* Throughout this report we will give examples of this commitment. A few of those examples include:

- Learning Communities

Learning communities provide first-year college freshmen with an opportunity to attend themed core courses. Many of the same students will attend these themed courses, which will result in a cohort of students that will form a learning community (see Criterion Three).

- Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) initiatives

Highlands recognizes a special obligation to support the development of students in the STEM fields (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). Some of these initiatives are designed to increase the level of academic preparedness of high school graduates in New Mexico, and their commitment to college (see Criterion Five). Others are designed to support students in the STEM fields while at Highlands (see Criterion Four).



#### **The People Behind the Data**

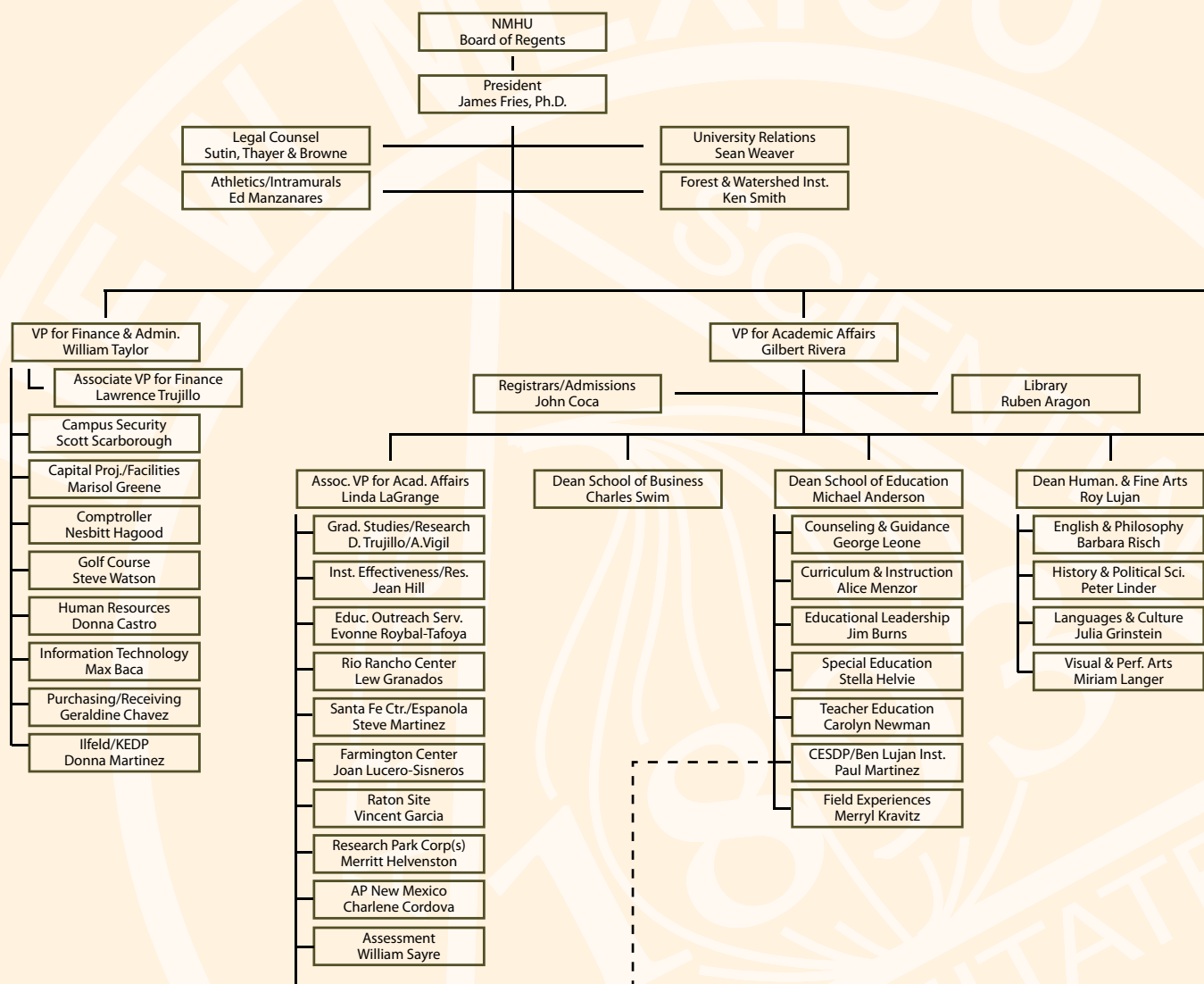
*Carlos Martinez*

When New Mexico Highlands University math instructor Carlos Martinez was star gazing as a child from his home in Sapello, he never dreamed that one day he would discover an asteroid and get to officially name it the Sapello asteroid.

Martinez is a fourth-generation Sapello resident who earned his bachelor's degree with a double math/physics major from Highlands. At Highlands he was working as an assistant on an asteroid project with professor Bill Ryan. Later, while in graduate school at the University of New Mexico, Martinez and Ryan, now a New Mexico Tech professor, discovered the Sapello asteroid. Both are named on official International Astronomical Union documents for the asteroid.

"Usually new asteroids are discovered by robotic telescopes," Martinez said. "We discovered the Sapello asteroid in a different way. We used a 1.8 meter research-grade telescope and an astronomy analysis software program with images in time series that detect movement. Knowing that you help discover something new that no one has seen before and then naming it is very cool."

"We are very proud of Carlos and are absolutely lucky to have him come back to Highlands as a math instructor," said David Olivas, chair of the Computer and Mathematical Sciences Department at Highlands. "He's an accomplished mathematician and is willing to teach introductory as well as advanced math. His students relate well to him."



### Core Component 1d *The organization's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the organization to fulfill its mission.*

New Mexico Highlands University is overseen by its Board of Regents, which is composed of five members, one of whom is a New Mexico Highlands University student, appointed by the governor of the state of New Mexico. The New Mexico Higher Education Department provides oversight for all of New Mexico's state-supported postsecondary institutions. The Board of Regents functions in accordance with the Regents Policy Guide.

The New Mexico Highlands University administrative structure is illustrated in the above organizational chart.

### President's Cabinet and Advisory Council

Communication and decision making is facilitated at NMHU through the use of two informal groups, the President's Cabinet and President's Advisory Council. The Cabinet meets twice a month, and the Advisory Council meets once a month. Some of these meetings are joint meetings of the Cabinet and Advisory Council.

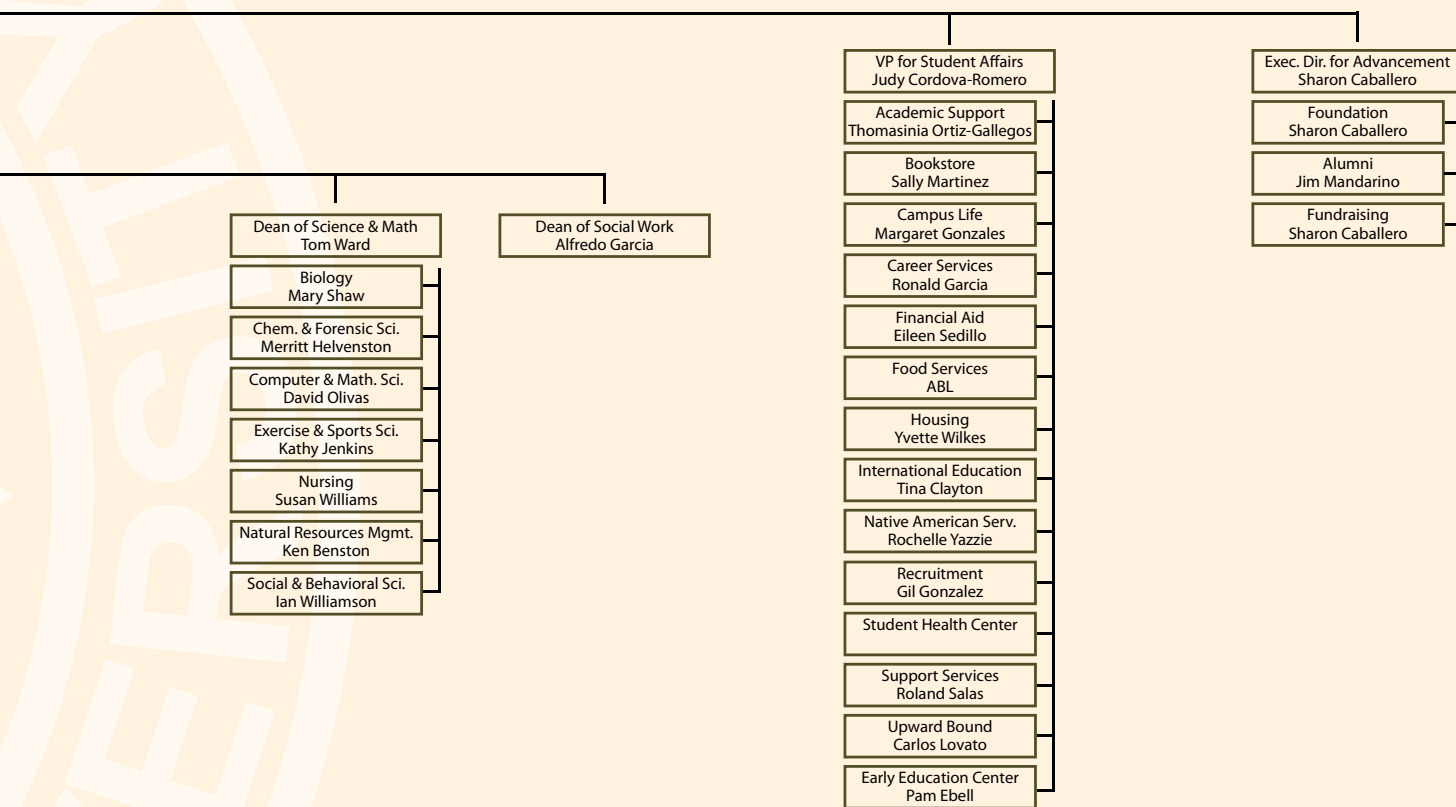
The President's Cabinet consists of the following representatives:

- Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Vice President for Student Affairs
- Vice President for Finance and Administration
- Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Associate Vice President for Finance



# New Mexico Highlands University

## Organizational Chart



- Dean of the College of Humanities and Fine Arts
- Dean of the College of Science and Mathematics
- Dean of the School of Business
- Dean of the School of Education
- Dean of the School of Social Work
- Director of Athletics
- Director of University Relations
- Director of Information and Technology Services
- Director of Capital Projects and Facilities
- Executive Director for Advancement

- Director of Human Resources
- Comptroller
- Others as needed

The President's Advisory Council includes the Vice Presidents and the following:

- Chair of the Faculty Senate
- President of the Student Senate
- President of the Graduate Student Senate
- President of the Staff Advisory Council
- Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs
- Director of University Relations

### The Deans' Council

The Deans' Council meets once a month with all of the Center directors in order to facilitate the transfer of academic programs and scheduling information between main campus and the Centers. The council is chaired by the associate vice president of academic affairs. This vice president is specifically charged with the responsibility for ensuring effective communication and smooth implementation of policies between the Centers and the main campus. Since this council was formed the Center directors report that there has been a definite improvement in communication.

The council includes the following members:

- Dean of the College of Humanities and Fine Arts
- Dean of the College of Science and Mathematics
- Dean of the School of Business
- Dean of the School of Education
- Dean of the School of Social Work
- Rio Rancho Center Director
- Farmington Center Director
- Santa Fe/Espanola Center Director
- Raton Center Director
- Director of Educational Outreach Services

### The NMHU Faculty Senate

The New Mexico Highlands University faculty has assumed the responsibility for framing "policies and standards that maintain the fundamental academic integrity of the University and that promote the academic interests and needs of the faculty" (Faculty Constitution, Section IV of the [Faculty Handbook](#)). Specifically, the faculty has, subject to the authority of the Board of Regents, the right and primary responsibility to review and initiate recommendations in regard to the following (from the Faculty Constitution, Section IV of the Faculty Handbook):

- Reevaluation and formulation of institutional aims.
- Creation of new colleges, schools, and departments or divisions.
- Major curricular changes.
- Maintenance of climate of academic freedom.
- Maintenance of standards and procedures of accountability concerning professional faculty ethics and responsibilities.
- The identification, recognition, and honoring of qualified recipients of honorary degrees, subject to the approval of the vice president for academic affairs and the president.
- Maintenance of requirements for admission and graduation, and the promotion of an optimal learning environment throughout the University by the establishment of standards concerning grading, appeals of grades, class attendance, examinations, academic honesty, student honors and awards, and for the approval of candidates for degrees.
- Influence on regulations affecting student life and activities.
- Actions on plans for the study of educational concerns.

The Faculty Senate exercises these responsibilities through a system of committees including the Academic Affairs Committee, Faculty Research Committee, Faculty Affairs Committee, Faculty Grievance and Reconciliation Committee, Student Affairs Committee, and Outcomes Assessment Committee, among others. During the 2008-2009 academic year the Faculty Senate began a process of revising the Faculty Handbook and committee structure to reflect both the division of responsibilities with the Faculty Association and the reorganization of the academic departments.

### The New Mexico Highlands University Faculty Association

The NMHU Faculty Association (NMHUF) is the legally recognized collective bargaining unit for tenured and tenure-track faculty at NMHU. This is the organization holding primary responsibility for working with the administration on issues of faculty salary, benefits, and working conditions. The NMHUF is associated in a collaborative relationship with both the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) of New Mexico and the National Education Association (NEA) of New Mexico. The unit was first recognized at NMHU in 1997; however, shortly after that time, then-Governor Gary Johnson allowed the New Mexico collective bargaining law to expire.

The Highlands administration chose not to recognize the unit in the absence of the collective bargaining law. The law was renewed in July of 2003. The NMHU administration required that the NMHUF re-establish itself as the recognized bargaining unit through a formal vote of the unit's members. The vote was held in November of 2005. Of the tenured and tenure-track faculty, 92% participated in the vote and 90% of those voting supported unionization.

The first collective bargaining agreement was reached in May of 2008 and represents the first collective bargaining agreement representing faculty at any New Mexico university. The success of this advancement in shared governance is demonstrated by the joint effort of both faculty and administrative members of the bargaining teams in achieving significant salary increases for NMHU faculty in this contract. The [Collective Bargaining Agreement](#) can be viewed on the NMHU Web site.

### The NMHU Staff Advisory Senate

During the 2007-2008 academic year, a group of NMHU staff members began working with the administration to develop a constitution and by-laws for our first New Mexico Highlands University Staff Advisory Senate. Those documents were presented for public comment during the spring of 2009 and a series of forums were held with the University staff. The organization was officially recognized at the April, 2009 meeting of the Board of Regents and elections were held in June of 2009.

We consider the formation of the Staff Advisory Senate to be a major improvement in our governance structures. Highlands had 333 non-administrative staff members in the 2007-2008 academic year. These individuals hold a wealth of knowledge and skills vital to the University and have had no formal process for providing input into university decision making. The Staff Advisory Senate will provide that formal process.

The NMHU Staff Advisory Senate serves as a source of input regarding issues and decisions of the University as they relate to the staff. The Senate reports to the University president and the Staff Advisory Senate president serves on the President's Advisory Council. In

**For the first time in its history, Highlands now has an association for its emeritus and retired faculty.**

addition, the Senate promotes the general well being of NMHU by assisting the University in achieving its goals.

The Staff Advisory Senate:

- Works in collaboration with the Office of Human Resources to establish two-way communication and address matters of concern identified by the Staff Advisory Senate or the administration.
- Studies problems, concerns, welfare and working conditions of the staff.
- Calls to the attention of the administration, other university organizations, and individuals, matters of concern as they relate to the staff.
- Cooperates with the Faculty and Student Senates in the formulation of recommendations concerning matters relating to the staff, faculty, and students.

The Staff Advisory Senate represents regular part/full-time non-faculty staff at the main campus in Las Vegas and its Centers across New Mexico. The Senate is composed of 12 elected representatives from each of the following membership groups:

- Administrative/Professional;
- Clerical;
- Technical/Skilled; and
- Maintenance

**Associated Students of New Mexico Highlands University (ASNMHU)**

The ASNMHU was established “in order to effectively organize the student body to assume the duties and responsibilities of self-government and to define students’ rights, individually and collectively, within the University community” ([ASNMHU Constitution Preamble](#)).

**Association of Graduate Students (AGS) of New Mexico Highlands University**

The AGS was established during the 2007-2008 academic year in order to recognize and give voice to the increasing population of graduate students at NMHU ([Association of Graduate Students Constitution](#)).

Clearly, student participation in governance of the University is critical to our mission and the ASNMHU and AGS play a central role in shared governance.

**Association of Emeritus and Retired Faculty of New Mexico Highlands University**

For the first time in its 116-year history, Highlands now has an association for its emeritus and retired faculty. The association formally approved its [bylaws](#) in April of 2009. The association will ensure that retired faculty members have the opportunity for continued association with former colleagues and with current faculty and administrators at Highlands. It will also offer a much needed avenue for retired faculty to have involvement in current university initiatives and activities. Our emeritus and retired faculty members have a wealth of expertise and experience. The formation of this association will help to ensure that expertise is not lost to the University.

## Academic Unit Reorganization

During the 2007-2008 academic year, the vice president for academic affairs established a committee of faculty members to investigate the possibility of reorganizing the academic units to increase efficiency, communication, and innovative collaborations. During the summer of 2008 the reorganization took place.

The College of Arts and Sciences was reorganized into two colleges: The College of Humanities and Fine Arts and the College of Science and Mathematics. Although this division resulted in an additional dean’s position, it reduced the number of associate dean and department chair positions.

The School of Education was previously organized into two departments, Department of Education and Department of Exercise and Sports Sciences (ESS). The dean of the School of Education also served as the chair of the Department of Education, whereas the ESS faculty elected a chair of ESS. The faculty of ESS requested that their department be moved to the College of Science and Mathematics. The move would facilitate course and grant writing collaboration between ESS and Life Sciences, specifically the newly established Department of Nursing. To provide faculty leadership and to facilitate communication between students and faculty on the main campus and at the Centers, the remaining programs in the SOE were organized into five departments and department chairpersons were appointed. The five departments are Counseling and Guidance, Curriculum and Instruction, Educational Leadership, Special Education, and Teacher Education.

## Core Component 1e *The organization upholds and protects its integrity.*

The primary methods for ensuring an institution’s integrity are the communication and implementation of clear policies and procedures that reflect the mission of the institution, and following those policies and procedures. At NMHU, policies designed to reflect the mission and uphold the institution’s integrity can be found throughout the organization. Many of these policies were referenced in components 1c and 1d, many are linked to appropriate pages on the NMHU Web site, and all can be found in our [online resource room](#).

In addition to appropriate policies that are consistently followed, NMHU demonstrates our commitment to institutional integrity in three ways: institutional transparency, how we handle internal questions regarding integrity, and how we handle external questions regarding integrity. Each of these issues is addressed below.

### Institutional Transparency

A fundamental aspect of institutional integrity is transparency. In order for constituents to judge an institution’s integrity two things must take place: 1) its mission, plans, and policies must be clearly stated, and 2) sufficient data regarding its performance must be publicly available to ensure that a reasonable assessment of the institution’s success in meeting that mission can be performed. The mission and data regarding the institution’s success at achieving that mission must both be freely available in order for institutional integrity to be assessed. Highlands has made it a priority to provide that information to our constituents.

Transparency is so important, particularly in a democracy, we, as citizens, have passed numerous laws and regulations regarding the



issue. At Highlands we recognize the importance of those laws and regulations and take pride in ensuring that they are met. These include such actions as university-wide compliance with the Open Meetings Act. NMHU has made a particular effort to place public documents on its Web site, as well as in Donnelly Library. As examples, the approved minutes of Board of Regents' meetings are now on the Web site, as are the NMHU audit reports. Highlands also provides information to the public via the yearly publication of the Institutional Snapshot (required by the Higher Learning Commission), the New Mexico Council of University Presidents' Performance Effectiveness Reports, and the NMHU Fact Book.

In addition to these required reports, Highlands also provides a wealth of information through the publication of our outcomes assessment reports, and data on enrollments, degrees awarded, and graduation and retention rates. We also provide access to a number of other institutional reports, as well as state and federal reports, via our online resource room. Finally, as part of our participation in the Voluntary System of Accountability, Highlands is publishing our annual College Portrait, which provides participating institutions a standardized format for presenting information to prospective students, their parents, and other constituents.

### Internal Questions Regarding Institutional Integrity

One of the most important avenues for promoting institutional integrity is to ensure that we have clear policies and procedures, that the policies are publicly available and that all members of the University community are educated regarding those policies, and that the policies are adhered to. The majority of those policies and procedures can be found in online documents via the University web site, and have been collected for the purposes of this Self Study at <http://www.nmhu.edu/FacultyStaff/institutionalresearch/policymanuals.aspx>.

Student complaints, appeals, and grievances are addressed as promptly as possible. If the complaints are not of an academic nature, the Office of Student Affairs handles their disposition. Academic appeals are reviewed by the associate vice president for academic affairs who either makes a decision or forwards the appeal to the Academic Affairs Undergraduate (or Graduate) Committee. After the Committee has made its recommendation, and if the appellant is not satisfied with the recommendation, he or she has the opportunity to appear in person before the Committee to appeal the recommendation. The final decision is made by the vice president of academic affairs, with consideration of the Committee's recommendation. Details regarding this policy can be viewed by visiting the following link: <http://www.nmhu.edu/Currentstudents/studenthandbook.aspx#Grievance>.

### External Questions Regarding Institutional Integrity

Perhaps the clearest test of any university's commitment to its mission and integrity is demonstrated by how the institution reacts when its integrity is questioned. That happened to Highlands when the administration was placed on the censure list of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) in June of 2006 ([AAUP Report of the 92<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting, 2006](#)). Under the direction of President Fries, the administration made it a priority to address the AAUP concerns. As a result, Highlands was removed from the AAUP censure list just one year later, in June of 2007; the shortest period of time that any university has remained on the list ([AAUP Report of](#)

[the 93<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting, 2007](#)).

This major accomplishment could only have been achieved through strong shared governance. The specific faculty personnel cases, which concerned the AAUP, have been successfully resolved. The concerns that remained involved policy changes to the Faculty Handbook and the Regents' "Procedures for Dismissal of a Tenured Faculty Member or Dismissal of Other Full-time Faculty During Their Appointment Term." This meant that the administration, Board of Regents, and Faculty Senate all needed to work quickly to achieve consensus regarding the proposed changes. In addition, since Highlands was at that time involved in negotiating our first ever collective bargaining contract with tenured/tenure-track faculty, the Faculty Association was involved in the discussions to ensure that the proposed changes would match expectations for the proposed contract.

The changes to the Faculty Handbook were designed to specifically ensure the right of tenured/tenure-track faculty members to appeal administrative decisions to deny reappointment on the basis of violations of academic freedom, procedural guidelines, or impermissible discrimination. The changes to the Regents' policies clarified that faculty members could appeal administrative decisions to deny reappointment to the Board of Regents. The changes also specified procedural guidelines for the revocation of contracts of full-time, non tenure-track faculty during the term of the contract. The changes were approved unanimously by the Highlands' Faculty in a General Faculty Meeting (April 23, 2007 minutes) and by the Board of Regents (May 11, 2007).

## Opportunities for Improvement

The strengthening of our governance structures and improvements to institutional integrity discussed in this section represent a major accomplishment since our last accreditation visit. These accomplishments, along with our increased enrollments, sound fiscal standing, and salary increases have resulted in greatly improved morale in the Highlands' community. We are well along in the process of adopting a mission, vision, and goals with University-wide support. These will then form the basis of our new Strategic Plan. The challenge will then be to ensure that plan becomes a guiding document in the day-to-day operations of the University. In order to meet this challenge, the following action steps will be implemented:

- **Develop unit-specific strategic plans:** When first undertaking the development of the new Strategic Plan, the Strategic Plan Steering Committee (SPSC) members came to the conclusion that to be of any real use, the Strategic Plan had to be fairly specific with regard to individual campus units. Yet, to include that degree of specificity in the University-wide document would result in an inordinately lengthy document. The SPSC members decided that a better course of action was to have each individual unit use the University-wide Strategic Plan as a template for the development of the unit's plan, which would include a mission statement, vision statement, goals, objectives, and action steps.
- **Ensure university-wide assessment and adherence to Strategic Plan:** A key component of these unit-specific plans will be the inclusion of an assessment plan. The University's director of assessment is to meet with each of the units to ensure that their action steps are measurable and that their assessment plan will provide the data necessary for informed decision making. It is this assessment



process that will be the means for identifying areas for improvement. Once identified, the unit-specific plans can be updated to reflect new action steps designed to address the areas in need of improvement.

- **Strengthening of governance structures:** The Strategic Plan can only be implemented through appropriate governance structures. Governance will be continually improved through the

alignment of the Faculty Handbook (the purview of the Faculty Senate), and the Collective Bargaining Agreement (negotiated between the New Mexico Highlands University Faculty Association and the Administration). Additionally, continued and improved communication will occur between the Faculty Senate, the Faculty Association, the Student Senate and the newly formed Staff Senate.





## Criterion Two: Preparing for the Future.

*The organization's allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.*

### Introduction

Our society is changing rapidly. The fast pace of technological development, environmental challenges, the current economic crisis, and the still poorly understood pressures of globalization all point to an exciting but uncertain future. Higher education must play a central role in preparing our citizens to meet these challenges. The specific challenges facing Highlands include: population and demographic shifts that effect our pool of potential students; workforce and economic trends in the state and nation for which our students must be prepared; the pressing need to increase collaboration with other institutions of higher learning; financial considerations and funding issues within the state; and the evolving role of technology in higher education. This section discusses these issues and how Highlands is effectively managing these challenges.

### Core Component 2a *The organization realistically prepares for a future shaped by multiple societal and economic trends.*

As a regional comprehensive university, the economic and demographic trends that we are most responsive to are the ones that affect our state and region. Currently, the major trends we must address are 1) the state's demographics; 2) the national economic recession

and the corresponding effects on the state budget; 3) the relatively low percentage of New Mexicans who are engaged in postsecondary education; and 4) current and projected shortages of qualified workers in specific sectors of the state's workforce.

#### New Mexico Demographics

New Mexico is the first "minority-majority" state in the country, meaning that the Hispanic population now exceeds 44% of the total, and the combined Hispanic and Native American population exceeds 53%. Over 36% of the population speaks a language other than English in their homes. New Mexico also has a relatively poor population. In 2007 the median income of New Mexican households was \$41,509 compared to \$50,740 for the nation as a whole. In addition, 17.9% of New Mexicans were living below the federal poverty line in 2007, compared to 13% of the population nationwide ([U.S. Census Bureau](#)).

These are the demographics that are the heart of the Highlands' mission. We serve populations which have traditionally been underserved in higher education, specifically Hispanic and Native American communities. We also serve as a means of educational and economic advancement for the state, by providing an affordable, accessible university education for families currently struggling with below average incomes and above average poverty rates.

#### The National Economic Recession and the New Mexico State Budget

At the time of this writing, New Mexico has been affected less by the national recession than have other states. This is due, in part, to some unique aspects of our state's economy and budget structure. Overall, the state's economy is somewhat more stable than many others' because of the federal government's significant role in the economy. Federal



spending generally is independent of business cycle fluctuations. As a result, revenues from broad based taxes on personal income and consumption normally tend to be relatively less volatile than in other states. On the other hand, the state's revenue mix includes a number of volatile revenue sources including the Corporate Income Tax as well as taxes, rents and royalties on the state's natural resources, primarily oil and natural gas. Market prices for oil and gas are very volatile, making it difficult to forecast state revenue accurately. States are required to have balanced budgets, and in New Mexico that requirement is enshrined in the state constitution. To help ensure a balanced budget in an unpredictable revenue environment, New Mexico maintains relatively large reserve accounts, which can be drawn upon in the event that revenues fall below forecast. (For an overview of these issues, see the first chapter of "[The Fiscal Structure of New Mexico](#)," a New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee report). The existence of significant reserve fund balances has allowed New Mexico to weather the national recession without having to adopt some of the crippling budget measures taken by other states.

Despite some of the unique aspects of its economy and budget structure, New Mexico is not immune to the ups and downs of the business cycle, and the state is experiencing a significant shortfall in projected revenues. On August 14, 2009 the State's Departments of Finance and Administration and Taxation and Revenue reported the latest economic and revenue forecasts to the Legislative Finance Committee. The picture was grim. The national economy had weakened more than expected and the New Mexico economy has followed the downward trajectory. Consequently, the state's revenue position has weakened considerably. The overall revenue weakening is largely attributable to weaknesses in the broad based income and consumption taxes. The state's budget gap in FY09 is comparable to that of other states' but New Mexico's high reserve balances—13% of spending at the start of fiscal year—put it in a relatively better position. Still, the new revenue forecast shows a \$428 budget deficit for FY10. The deficit will have to be closed by some combination of reduced reserve levels and spending cuts as there does not seem to be much interest in increasing taxes. The magnitude of budget reductions will be determined in a special session of the legislature. The governor has indicated that he will request government agencies to reduce their budgets by an additional three percent this year. Whether educational institutions will also be required to absorb that large a reduction remains uncertain. But, while the magnitude of budget reductions for the education sector is unclear, it is safe to bet that they will not be insignificant because of the prominent share of the state budget dedicated to education. Indeed, funding for education, including higher education, constitutes the largest proportion of the state's general fund—about 60 percent of the total. Higher education alone receives about 15 percent of the general fund budget ([Legislative Finance Committee General Fund Finance Facts](#)). The role that these funds play in the NMHU budget will be discussed in component 2b.

#### Postsecondary Education Attainment in New Mexico

Only 30% of 18-24 year olds in New Mexico are enrolled in college, compared to up to 44% in other states ([New Mexico Higher Education Annual Report, 2008](#)). In addition, the number of graduating high school seniors in the state of New Mexico is projected to remain flat for the foreseeable future, in contrast to our neighboring states that are projected to see increases in high school

graduates ([WICHE, 2008](#)). This results in a limited pool of high school graduates who could potentially attend college. This has the potential to impact Highlands at all levels of the University and has resulted in major strategic changes as the University seeks new pools of potential students.

#### The New Mexico Workforce

Although New Mexico is a poor state, it has a relatively high rate of employment. Between 2003-2007 New Mexico's average unemployment state ranking went from 38<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup>. In October of 2008, New Mexico's unemployment rate was 4.4%, up from 3.1% in October of 2007, but still much lower than the national rate of 6.5%. Job growth, while declining since June of 2006, was still in positive numbers (barely) in October of 2008 while most of the rest of the states and the nation as a whole posted job losses. New Mexico is projected to sustain job losses in 2009, as the recession deepens in our state, but we are still expected to do better than most other states ([State of New Mexico Workforce Report, 2009](#)).

But there are concerns about the quality of those jobs. About 70% of New Mexico jobs do not require more than a high school diploma. The majority of New Mexico's jobs are in service industries and are relatively poorly paid. This results in a situation where, in 2007, 1.7% of full-time workers in the state still fell below the federal poverty guidelines ([State of New Mexico Workforce Report, 2009](#)).

This reality results in a situation where most New Mexicans who want to work full-time can do so, but the majority of them will be working in relatively poorly paid jobs which require a minimal education. In order to change this situation, the state must do two things: increase the number of New Mexicans who receive a post-baccalaureate education and increase the number of highly skilled, highly paid jobs in the state. This link between educational attainment and high tech jobs was emphasized in a [December 2008 presentation](#) by William Flores, former Deputy Director of the New Mexico Higher Education Department. The correlations between high education and high income (0.57) and between high education and high-tech employment (0.76) at the state level are clear (see the presentation for these charts). In both cases, New Mexico clusters among the states with the lowest educational attainment, lowest income, and lowest percentage of high tech jobs. Dr. Flores proposed several ways in which higher education in New Mexico could help strengthen New Mexico's economy, including producing more graduates in the high need areas of teaching, nursing, social work, STEM, film and digital arts.

#### NM Higher Education Department and NMHU Response to Trends

Higher education in New Mexico has undergone numerous changes during the past several years in response to these changing demographics. When Governor Bill Richardson was elected in 2002, he elevated the state's Commission on Higher Education (CHE) to a state department and created the [Higher Education Department](#) (HED), with a cabinet secretary position to run the department. He did this to increase the focus on educational issues such as resident participation in higher education and institutional accountability in the state, and to increase communication and coordination with the Public Education Department (PED).

Lack of participation in higher education in the state creates workforce

gaps for the state that make it difficult to attract new and innovative industry, increase the economic base and ultimately improve the standard of living within New Mexico. To combat these problems and to increase the level of higher educational attainment by New Mexico citizens, the New Mexico Higher Education Department is in the process of developing a new strategic plan. While the plan is not complete at the time of this writing, the HED has specified the following [five areas of focus](#):

1. Increase degree attainment and student success
2. Expand access to postsecondary education through partnerships
3. Make postsecondary education affordable for all
4. Prepare students and develop academic programs to meet workforce needs
5. Improve Department efficiency and effectiveness

Highlands addresses these statewide issues through continual innovation in its academic programs and curricula. Highlands' efforts toward the first goal, "increase degree attainment and student success," are addressed in several chapters of this Self Study. Our efforts to help "increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the HED" are addressed under core component 2c in this chapter. Highlands' responses to the remaining three HED focus areas will be addressed now.

#### *Expand access to postsecondary education through partnerships*

Starting in the 1990s, Highlands has put increasing emphasis on serving time- and place-bound students in such population centers as Rio Rancho, Farmington, and Santa Fe, New Mexico. The University gradually repositioned its identity from a regional stand-alone university recruiting students to one location, toward a more responsive institution of higher learning striving to meet education needs of New Mexicans across the northern half of the state. As "Northern New Mexico's University," Highlands actively seeks collaborations with community colleges and other institutions to provide education and services throughout its service area.

In order to manage these changes, Highlands revised its vision statements to reflect its broader viewpoint: "New Mexico Highlands University recognizes it has the responsibility to take a major, visionary leadership role in forging a more efficient and effective method for delivering desperately needed higher education to a far greater number of Northern New Mexicans...." ([NMHU Strategic Plan 2003](#)).

In an effort to meet these goals, NMHU has actively sought partnerships throughout Northern New Mexico over the last twelve years. These partnerships began as an effort to meet state goals of increasing the number of Hispanic and Native American students who pursue higher education, to increase six-year graduation rates for all New Mexico students, and to increase transfer rates from community colleges to four-year institutions.

One of our most important efforts to meet the educational needs of our constituents has been through the development of our Centers and other distance education sites. The Centers are designed to work closely with local community colleges to develop baccalaureate degree-completion programs in education, business, social work, and, at some Centers, criminal justice and psychology. These programs are guided by articulation agreements that are designed to allow students to complete their general education requirements at the community

college and, in some cases, begin their major program of study. Students then complete the requirements for the baccalaureate degree at the NMHU Centers. Consortium agreements between Highlands and the community colleges allow students to be concurrently enrolled and receive financial aid for courses taken at both institutions.

The majority of the programs offered by the Centers are undergraduate and graduate degrees in education, business, and social work. In addition to the full degree programs, most of the Centers serve as distance education sites, and a variety of courses in various disciplines that originate on main campus are offered via ITV or through the Internet.

The [Highlands Rio Rancho Center](#) was established by the NMHU Board of Regents in 1997. The Center is a collaboration with Central New Mexico Community College. The Rio Rancho Center offers bachelor's degrees in business administration, elementary education, special education and social work. Master's degrees in business administration, education, and social work are also offered.

The [Highlands Santa Fe Center](#) was established by the NMHU Board of Regents in partnership with Santa Fe Community College ([articulation agreement with SFCC](#)). The Santa Fe Center offers bachelor's degrees in business administration, special education, elementary education, and early childhood education. It offers master's degrees in business administration and education.

The [Highlands Farmington Center](#) was established by the Board of Regents in 1996. The Farmington Center works in partnership with San Juan College ([articulation agreement with San Juan College](#)) and has an articulation agreement with Diné College ([articulation agreement with Diné College](#)). Diné College is the first tribally controlled college in the United States and is located on the Navajo Reservation in Tsaile, Arizona. In addition to undergraduate and graduate programs in business, education and social work, the Farmington Center also offers undergraduate degrees in psychology and criminal justice studies.

The [Highlands Roswell Center](#) works in partnership with Eastern New Mexico University in Roswell. It offers the only accredited master of social work program in southeastern New Mexico. While the Center began by offering both graduate and undergraduate degrees in social work, the undergraduate program has been discontinued and currently the master in social work program is the only program offered at NMHU Roswell. Courses are offered in the evening and on weekends to accommodate working students.

The [Highlands Raton Center](#) is our newest Center, established by the Board of Regents in 2008. The Center is different from our other centers in that it is not closely affiliated with a two-year school. In addition to undergraduate and graduate degrees from the professional schools, and numerous ITV courses, the Center also emphasizes dual-credit courses for local high school students.

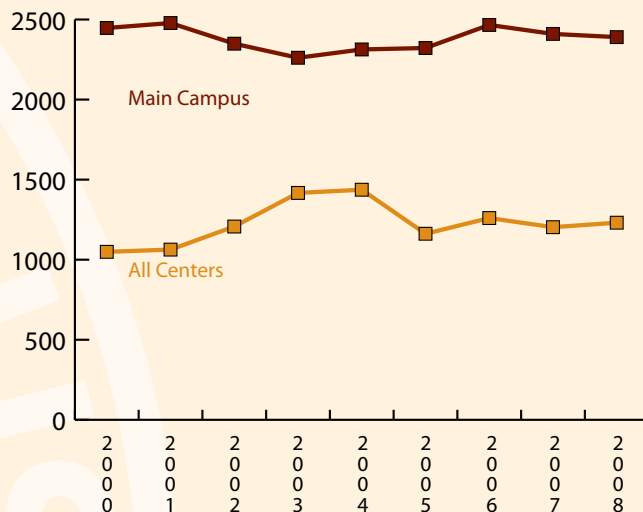
The Centers have played an important role in Highlands' enrollments during the last decade. From fall 2000 to fall 2003, NMHU saw a decrease in main campus enrollments that was thankfully mirrored by an increase in enrollments at our Centers, so that overall enrollments did not significantly decline. Since 2003, we have seen increases in main campus enrollments, along with variable enrollments at the Centers. Since that time the percentage of our total headcount and the percentage of student credit hour production originating from the



Centers has remained at about 30%.

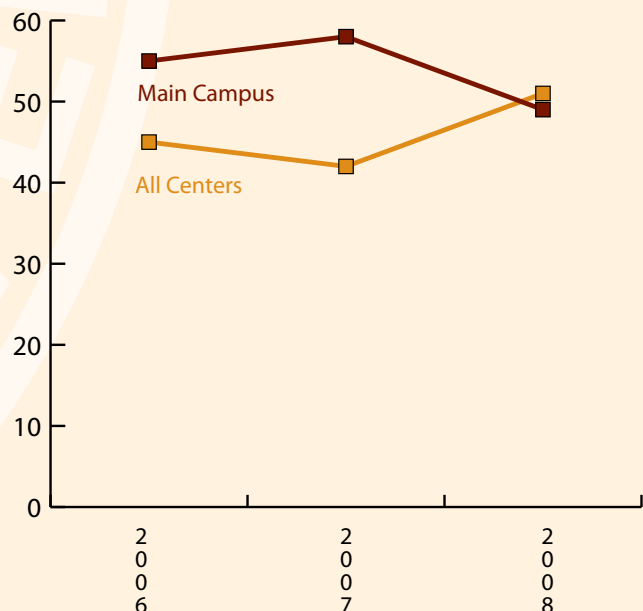
The following charts are based upon fall census date data.

**Total Fall Headcount at Main Campus and Centers**



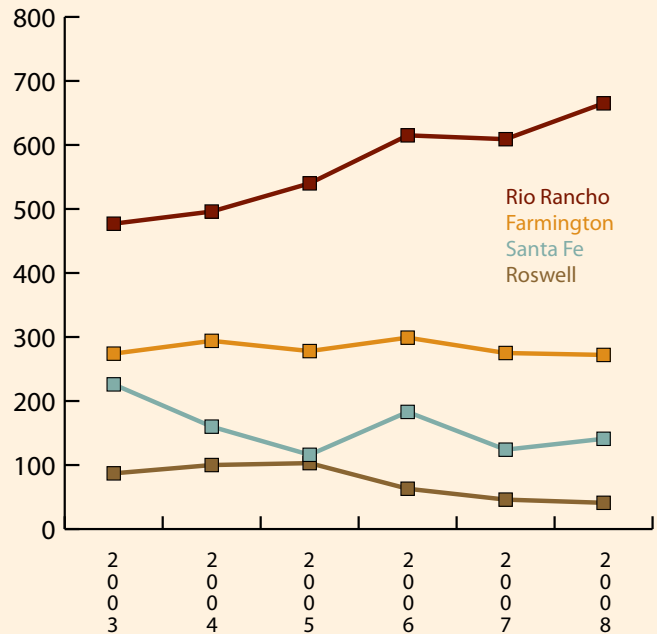
While the total headcount trends have been stable, the percentage of graduate students associated with the Centers has been more variable. Currently, about 50% of our graduate students are associated with the Centers.

**Percentage of Graduate Fall Headcount at Main Campus and Centers**



Enrollment at the individual Centers has been quite variable. Enrollment at the Rio Rancho center has continued to increase, while enrollment at the other centers has fluctuated. The Raton Center is not included in the following chart since it just opened in 2008.

**Fall Headcount by Center 2003-2008**



The success of the Centers is documented not just by overall enrollments, but also by the outcomes of their students. The Centers are designed specifically to allow place-bound New Mexico residents with an associate's degree from a New Mexico community college to seamlessly extend their education to a baccalaureate degree. By all measures, the Centers are accomplishing this goal. Over 90% of students at the Centers transfer from other New Mexico institutions and close to 60% have associate degrees ([Transfer Students at NMHU, 2000 to 2007](#)). In addition, students at the Centers have an undergraduate graduation rate of around 67%, higher than the graduation rate for transfer students on the main campus (about 56%) and more than double the graduation rate of first-time freshmen ([Graduation Rates by Campus](#)).

The success of the Centers in serving place-bound students is perhaps best illustrated by the Farmington Center, which has a particular focus on serving the Native American populations of the Four-Corners area. In the fall of 2008, there were 100 Native American students enrolled at the Farmington Center; 57 undergraduates and 43 graduates. This equals 37% of the total enrollment at the Farmington Center meaning that the Center, if it were a stand-alone campus, would easily qualify for status as a Native American serving institution.

Centers modify schedules and offer specific types and levels of classes according to student needs. For example, the Rio Rancho Center found that education students are generally practicing teachers, and offers shortened classes (eight weeks) and intersession classes to meet their

constituent's needs. Student teaching placement procedures were also modified to meet the needs of that educational community. Through a market analysis, the School of Business administration realized that most graduate MBA students were working adults who needed evening classes and access to online curriculum, and restructured its MBA program for these students. As a result, the MBA program grew from just twenty five students in 1999 to over 200 students in 2008.

During the past two years the University administration completed several assessments regarding Highlands' presence in different cities in Northern New Mexico, most notably in Farmington and Santa Fe. In 2008, a needs analysis was completed for the Farmington area that confirmed that Highlands could significantly expand in Farmington, and planning is underway to find suitable space in that area for the expansion. In addition, the University undertook an initiative during the last year to purchase the College of Santa Fe, a private school in Santa Fe in a serious financial situation. The purchase would have given Highlands a very visible campus and presence in the center of Santa Fe; however, the plan was ultimately unsuccessful. Currently the administration is seeking alternative space in Santa Fe in which to expand its presence and offerings.

#### *Make postsecondary education affordable for all*

As documented in Criterion One, Highlands has worked hard to remain an affordable institution and currently has the lowest tuition and fees of any public 4-year institution in the Western United States. Highland's tuition rates as a percentage of its peer institutions' rates declined from 67% to 52%

during the last eleven years. Part of this decline was a result of a series of discussions that the University engaged in during 2000-2003 involving tuition rates and their impact on our students. Because the University Regents have been very reluctant to raise tuition rates, non-resident tuition declined from 101 percent to 31 percent of peer institutions. This decline coincided with a significant increase in the number of international students applying to our programs during the past several years.

#### *Prepare students and develop academic programs to meet workforce needs*

Academic programs throughout the University are responsive to

employment trends and the needs of New Mexico. Demonstrated need for a program, both in terms of student interest and job growth data, is a required part of any proposal for a new program at the University. In addition, faculty members are continually evaluating the specifics of their program curriculum to ensure they are providing their students with appropriate skills, training, and experience. Three examples of this responsiveness are presented below. One is the new Nursing Program, the other is an aggressive expansion of a well-established program, the Media Arts Program and the third is the re-establishment of the Software Development Program. All provide examples of the use of partnerships to strengthen our academic programs and expand the opportunities available to our students.

An excellent example of Highlands' commitment to meeting state workforce needs through the utilization of academic partnerships is our Registered Nurse to Bachelor of Nursing Degree Completion Program (RN-BSN). New Mexico has had a documented shortage of nurses for years, and projections indicate that the shortage will only increase. One of the reasons for this shortage is a deficit of nursing programs in the state. Qualified applicants to nursing programs of all types were being turned away, or placed on wait lists. Starting in FY04 through FY09 the state dedicated \$16.5 million in supplemental funding to post-secondary institutions in New Mexico to enhance nursing programs. A specific goal of the funding was to dramatically increase the number of BSN programs in the state. Another goal was to increase the number of nurses qualified to teach in nursing programs ([New Mexico Nursing Program Development](#)).

As a result of this funding, Highlands developed a RN-BSN program. The program is specifically for students who already have an associate's degree in nursing and a valid RN license. The program is designed to allow nurses who want to continue their education to do so without leaving their homes and jobs. As with all new program proposals at Highlands, these documented state needs were cited as part of the [nursing program proposal](#) to the NMHU Academic Affairs Committee, which resulted in the approval of the program. A [revision](#) of the original curriculum was approved by the Academic Affairs Committee in the fall of 2007. A few additional changes were made to the curriculum at the [November 5, 2008 Academic Affairs Committee](#) meeting.

## The People Behind the Data

### *Emily Torres*

New Mexico Highlands University's R.N. to B.S.N. program helped Emily Torres become excited again about her career of more than two decades. Emily is a nurse at Holy Cross Hospital in Taos. She will be in the first group of students to graduate from the program this fall 2009.

"I've been a nurse for 23 years and was getting a little burned out," Torres said. "This program has revitalized me and given me hope for the future. I want to continue with the program and earn my master's degree so I can eventually teach."

"Emily is a classic example of what we're trying to accomplish through the RN to BSN program," said Susan Williams, program director. "We're taking talented, bright local nurses like Emily and helping them return to school to complete their bachelor's degree. She is typical of our many non-traditional, adult students."

## The People Behind the Data

*Stacy Romero*

Stacy Romero was born in El Pueblo in the Valley area of San Miguel County. She is a West Las Vegas High School graduate and attended Highlands on a Zia scholarship. She is the first in her family to complete college. While at Highlands Stacy participated in the Performing Arts Club and the Mariachi group, “Vaqueros de las Sierra.”

She is also a Media Arts major and her face lights up when she talks about the University’s Media Arts Program. “I love to learn and media arts was a technical challenge for me,” Stacy said. “I started in fine arts and that background helped me understand the artistic concepts in media arts.”

Stacy said the highlight of her education in media arts was this spring when she participated in the new Program for Interactive Cultural Technology or PICT. Media Arts interns created key multimedia elements for “Fashioning New Mexico,” one of the inaugural exhibits for the New Mexico History Museum. Stacy helped design the color palate for the exhibit, as well as the interactive vignette for corsets that employed a mannequin. She even learned how to design and sew clothing for the historic vignette, including a dress, chemise and pantaloons.

“It was quite a journey from our first presentation to New Mexico History Museum staff to actually installing our exhibit,” Stacy said. “It was really valuable to learn how to work with a client like the museum. It took so much collaboration to bring the exhibit to life.”

The program was developed in close cooperation with the nursing program at Luna Community College ([letter of support from LCC](#)). This allows graduates of the Luna RN program to seamlessly integrate their associate nursing degree with the BSN. In addition, the program utilizes resources at Luna, such as a specialized nursing laboratory, allowing the program to be offered with a minimum of new resources at NMHU. Since nursing programs are resource-intensive, and expensive to establish, this was a key part of the program proposal.

The program began in 2007 and will graduate its first nine students in December of 2009. The program has [applied for accreditation](#) from the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Accreditation (CCNA). They have made their site visit, and the report of the site visit was positive, stating that all standards were met. The CCNA Board will meet in October, 2009 to make a final decision about accrediting the program.

While not a new program, the Media Arts Program has been intensifying its efforts to provide skilled artists and designers for the film and media technology industries. Employment opportunities in these areas are expected to grow as a result of the governor’s commitment to bring these industries to New Mexico.

Media Arts is one of the most successful programs in the College of Humanities and Fine Arts. With over 45 currently declared majors, and 12 graduate students, New Mexico Highlands University media arts students are in high demand (all 2008 graduates are currently employed in the field). The PICT program (Intensive Program in Interactive Cultural Technology) is run through the [Center for Cultural Technology](#), a collaboration between New Mexico Highlands University and the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs. The program involves paid professional internships at an amazing array of sites, including the Bradbury Science Museum at Los Alamos National Laboratory, Carlsbad Museum & Art Center, City of Las Vegas Museum, Georgia O’Keeffe Museum, New Mexico Arts, New Mexico Museum of Natural History & Science, Office

of Archaeological Studies, Office of the State Historian, Palace Press, Palace of the Governors/New Mexico History Museum, Santa Fe Institute, and SITE Santa Fe.

Students completed numerous multi-media projects for several major museums across the state, the 50th anniversary exhibit for the Santa Fe Opera, and the Palace of the Governors. They have also assisted Site Santa Fe with their biennial program, and are currently working with the Smithsonian. Media Arts projects consistently receive rave reviews.

Several of the projects developed by media arts students are viewable online, including [“Emergence: A New View of Life’s Origin”](#). This Web site is a replica of a traveling exhibition that was produced for the Santa Fe Institute, an international center for complexity science. The exhibit was on display at the National Science Foundation in Washington, DC during February 2008.

Beginning in the fall 2009, the University is also reviving its Software Development Program which began in 2004 but was suspended in 2005. This program was developed in response to industry needs identified through a [market analysis](#) completed in 2003. This program will provide paid apprenticeships for students and operates on the principle that students learn by doing. Students will be assigned to development projects, working side by side with master developers who bear the primary responsibility for delivering the required software. In the course of these assignments, students will discover the need for specific competencies. They will acquire these competencies via a mix of focused academic tutorials and professional mentorship. They will then demonstrate their mastery of the new competencies in their contributions to the success of the development project. Professional mentors will assist students who are learning to develop enterprise software for specific business applications. The program is designed as an interdisciplinary program that will give students both programming and enterprise software development expertise.



Faculty salaries for this program will be partially supported through an endowment fund originally established for the University by the Los Alamos National Labs (LANL). The endowment is intended to assist with faculty salaries in software and hardware development and other areas of computer science. LANL has pledged to donate \$100,000 per year for seven years to the fund. They have made donations for two years so far. In addition, the State of New Mexico has contributed \$500,000 in matching funds to the endowment.

#### The Use of Technology in Course Delivery

Technology advances have reverberated throughout all aspects of higher education as with other aspects of modern life. Universities must be able to provide high quality, technologically cutting-edge education in all disciplines that they offer, to increasingly technosavvy and geographically dispersed students. For regional institutions, technology advances provide increased opportunities to reach place-bound students outside of their main campus area. Highlands strives to take advantage of the opportunities.

As for all universities, it is a challenge at Highlands to maintain up-to-date knowledge of and strategic use of technology given budget constraints and the continual need to upgrade infrastructure and train faculty and staff on new systems. Beginning in 1999, Highlands expanded into the delivery of online courses in order to reach place-bound students. The School of Business was the first program to offer online courses, and purchased the University's first license for WebCT. Subsequently the University's Educational Outreach Services unit took over the management of the distance education platform, WebCT, organizing and centralizing infrastructure maintenance, technology training, and help desk functions. For the first few years Highlands' struggled to standardize technology training and infrastructure to provide a seamless transition to technology-based courses for both students and faculty. Often students and faculty had to work through the first week of the semester to make sure that all students had the appropriate settings on their personal computers and could log in to the course.

However, during the last five years Highlands has significantly improved classroom and distance education technology through a number of initiatives, most notably the Title V grant. The intent of Title V is to ensure that Highlands' entire student base, wherever they are, have equal access to classes, course information and services. In addition to delivering education through technology, traditional student support services are also delivered through distance education, such as faculty advisement, registration, financial aid, bookstore services, and Donnelly Library resources.

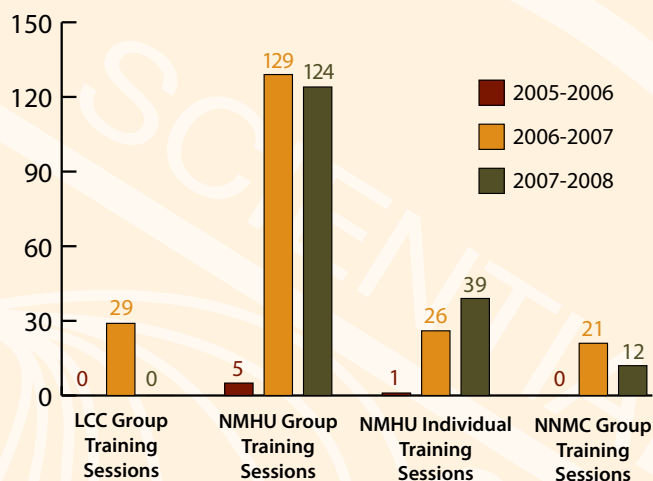
Highlands' distance education courses migrated from strictly an Interactive Television environment, to offering online courses through WebCT and Blackboard (using live chat and asynchronous tools such as the bulletin board), to offering live, synchronous courses through the voice-activation software, Elluminate. The number of online course offerings increased 48% from 2006 through 2008 from 310 to approximately 460. Traditional courses also use Blackboard technology to communicate with students and provide constant access to course information.

#### Faculty Training in Use of Online Course Delivery Systems

Faculty access to training has improved due to the establishment

of a training schedule in various technologies both academic and administrative, and through a number of staffing decisions to add technology trainers. Training in these areas increased as follows:

**Training Sessions 2005-2008**



Training occurred in a variety technology areas, such as:

- Blackboard/WebCT CE 6.0
- Document Camera
- Elluminate Live v 8
- Instructional Television (ITV)
- NMHU Libraries
- Respondus 3.5
- Smartboard Technology & Smart Notebook Software
- Student E-mail
- Student Login (Username & Passwords)
- Other areas as requested by faculty (Microsoft PowerPoint)

#### Innovative Digital Education and Learning in New Mexico (IDEAL-NM)

Governor Bill Richardson [announced](#) on October 27, 2006 that New Mexico would become the first state in the nation to develop a statewide eLearning delivery system that would encompass P-12, higher education, and professional development. The purpose of the Innovative Digital Education and Learning in New Mexico (IDEAL-NM) initiative is to

- Introduce a common statewide platform/course learning management system;
- Reduce the cost of licensing by pooling resources;
- Increase access to courses for various student populations, including, but not limited to, advanced placement, remedial education, special education, and home bound students;
- Improve alignment of curriculum; and

**Highlands has significantly improved classroom and distance education technology through a number of initiatives.**



Enhance collaboration amongst various partners in education.

During the 2007 regular legislative session, Representative Rick Miera introduced House Bill 201 and Senator Cynthia Nava introduced [Senate Bill 209](#), regarding the enactment of a statewide cyber academy. This legislation passed both the house and senate and was signed into law (Chapter 293), by the governor, on April 23, 2007.

New Mexico Highlands University is one of five higher education institutions to be involved in the first cohort through IDEAL-NM. The five institutions are: Luna Community College, New Mexico Highlands University, New Mexico Tech, Northern New Mexico College, and Western New Mexico University. New Mexico Highlands University has been the lead institution in this initiative, as members of the cohort have adopted script from our university that imports data from Banner directly into the Course Learning Management System, Blackboard, to:

- Create courses;
- Identify the instructor of record and make him/her the course designer and instructor within the Blackboard environment; and
- Enroll/disenroll students from online courses.

Being part of this initiative has helped to eliminate the Blackboard cost and reduce the Elluminate Live licensing expenses for NMHU. Elluminate Live is a software program that provides Web, video, and audio solutions for real-time online learning and collaboration. It provides faculty and students alike with opportunities to share their desktops, experience enriched communication via break-out sessions, complete online quizzes, and review recorded sessions for enhanced retention, amongst many other functions.

### *Academic Program Use of Online Course Technology*

The most noticeable incorporation of technology is seen in the School of Business. The school utilizes both Blackboard and Eluminate in its courses to bring together both online and live students in the same classroom. Currently about 30% of all business courses and about 80% of the MBA courses are offered via online methods.

In 2002, the Department of Exercise and Sport Sciences began an accelerated master's program (AMAP) option for its graduate degrees. Students enrolled in the AMAP format may complete 75% of their master's degree online, while attending an intensive, three week, nine credit session in July on the main campus in Las Vegas. The three week session brings graduate students from all over the United States, with a unique set of backgrounds, to the main campus.

The session creates powerful student cohorts and lasting relationships, far beyond college. Students in the AMAP have included retired and current players from the National Football League (NFL), Arena Football League, the Harlem Globetrotters, Women's United Soccer Association (WUSA), National Professional Fastpitch League, and Minor League Baseball. These students would not normally have attended NMHU, but the AMAP format of class offerings and the reputation of the program have allowed us to recruit a very diverse set of students. The diverse backgrounds of students in AMAP enrich not only the ESS graduate program, but also the City of Las Vegas, while the students are in attendance each July.

## The People Behind the Data

### *ESS AMAP Students*

Darrin Chiaverini completed his Master's degree in Human Performance and Sport with AMAP, in the summer of 2009. Darrin played wide receiver for the Cleveland Browns, Dallas Cowboys, and Atlanta Falcons before retiring. He played football at the University of Colorado and still holds the record for most catches by a rookie with the Cleveland Browns. Currently, Darrin is an assistant football coach at UCLA.

Mike Moschetti, a current AMAP student, won baseball and football national championships while in college. Drafted by the Oakland A's, he played Class A baseball, until he changed his mind and went back to college to play football for the University of Colorado, as the starting quarterback.

Nick Rolovich, an AMAP graduate in 2008, plays quarterback, currently for the Las Vegas Gladiators of the Arena Football League. Nick played quarterback at the University of Hawaii, where he set 19 passing records. He also played with the NFL's Denver Broncos and in NFL Europe, before joining Arena Football.

Ron Foster, a current AMAP student nearing the completion of his degree, currently works in the Sports Marketing and Promotion division for the NBA's Los Angeles Clippers.

**Core Component 2b** *The organization's resource base supports its education programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.*

The university's resources come in many different forms. In this section we will specifically cover economic resources, facilities, and technological resources. Our partnerships, which represent a major resource for the University, are covered throughout the report, as is our most important resource, our people.

**Economic Resources**

Financial stability and accountability were a major issue identified during our 2000 NCA accreditation visit. By the time of the 2004 focus visit this area had demonstrated significant improvement and, as the economic recession continues, our financial stability is one of our strongest assets.

In order to meet strategic goals of improving the University's physical environments and provide needed resources for future expansion in university centers, financial planning for the University was restructured. Administrative positions were added that included additional financial experts to oversee the management and operations of university finances. These positions included the addition of a new associate vice president for finance, a comptroller, and a budget director.

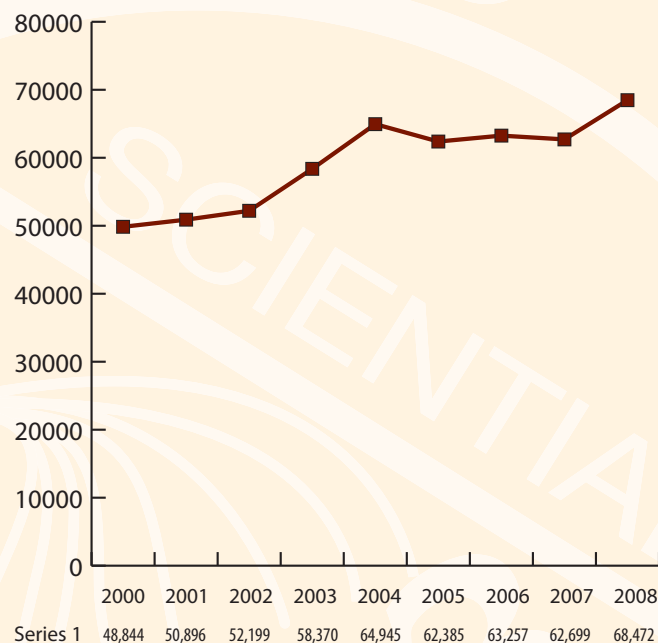
During the last three years Highlands' administration began to implement procedures to improve its financial health and stabilize the University's resources. As a result of tight expenditure controls, collection of receivables, timely drawing of grant funds and other prudent cash management measures, coupled with proceeds of a bond issue (\$19.7 million), the University was able to gradually increase the average amount of cash in the bank throughout the years, thus significantly improving the University's access to working capital and investment earnings. These changes help to ensure that the University has the resources available that it needs to support both its academic and non-academic programs, and to continue to focus on improving the quality of student learning at Highlands.

Currently Highlands receives funding from several sources:

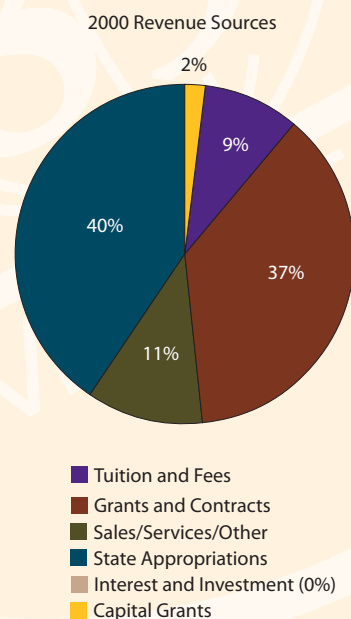
- State of New Mexico general fund appropriations
- Tuition and fees revenues it collects from enrolling students
- External funding from research activities involving grants and contracts
- Sales and services revenue from auxiliary enterprises on the campus
- Interest and investment income
- Capital grants
- Other revenues

Revenue from all sources at Highlands has increased by 34.7% during the past nine years. Audit reports are available at <http://www.nmhu.edu/audit>.

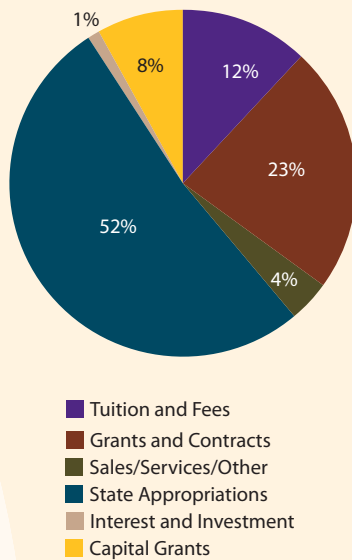
**All Forms of Revenue 2000 to 2008 in Thousands**



The following tables provide a comparison of sources of funds between 2000 and 2008. As can be seen, during the past nine years the proportion of our revenue coming from various sources of income has shifted to a greater reliance on state appropriations and tuition and fees and less reliance on grants and contracts.



2008 Revenue Sources

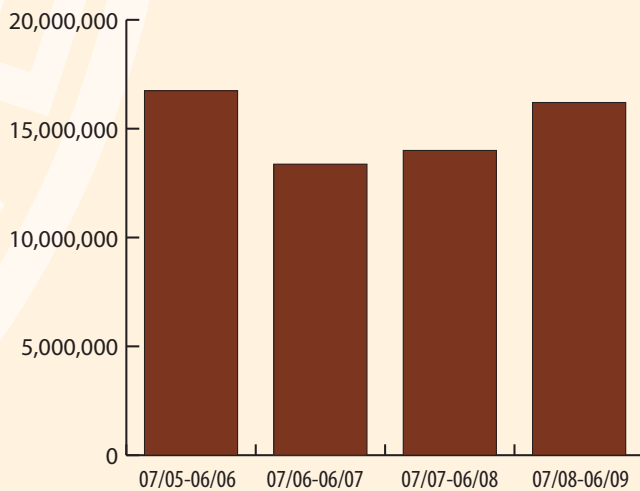


#### Reinvigorating the Grants Process

The decline in grant revenue corresponds to change in emphasis from 2004-2006 during the Aragon administration, when the Office of Research and Sponsored Projects (ORSP) was closed. During those years a number of faculty members with sponsored grants left the University, and the total grant funding flowing to the University declined, from a high of \$16.7 million in 2005, to a low of \$13.4 million in 2006, a twenty percent decline in one year.

Funding rebounded in FY08 back to \$14 million, and is currently at \$16.2 million for FY09, almost back to pre-2005 levels. This

Grant Award Amounts, FY '06 to FY '09



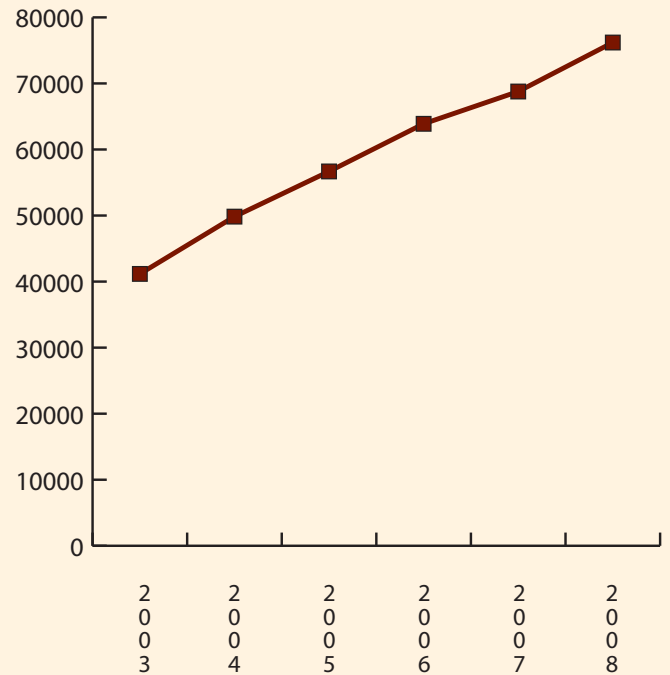
rebound can be attributed in large part to the establishment of the Office of Research and Sponsored Projects (ORSP), which is headed by an associate vice president. Under the auspices of the ORSP, the University has implemented a number of new initiatives designed to support faculty members in their research and proposal writing efforts. These initiatives are covered in Criterion Four.

#### Prudent Asset Management Practices

During the fiscal year ended June 30, 2008, the University's net assets increased by 10.8 percent from \$68.7 million to \$76.1 million and cash and cash equivalents increased by 93.7%, from \$22.5 million to \$43.6 million ([FY 2008 audit report](#)). These increases are primarily attributed to increases in the value of investments and capital assets (such as land and buildings).

Increases in Highlands' net assets over time are one indicator of the institution's financial health and ability to meet its strategic goals of providing a quality education. During the past six years, from FY 2003 to FY 2008, the University's net assets increased by 85.1%.

Net Assets in Thousands, 2003 to 2008



The university maximizes earnings by investing funds in the State of New Mexico Local Government Investment Pool (\$42.1 million) and with the State Investment Council (\$5.2 million). The university has abided by its short term and endowment investment policies thereby ensuring liquidity and safety. The university implemented procedures to collect receivables in a timely manner and is well able to meet all its current financial obligations. The relative strength of Highlands' financial position is one indicator of the increasing importance that the current administration is placing on planning for the future.



## State funding for Higher Education

New Mexico state educational budgets are facing serious shortfalls this year as the economic downturn and falling oil prices negatively affect state revenues. The New Mexico Higher Education Department projected that the budget shortfall during 2008 and 2009 will translate into a 4% drop in expected budgets for the upcoming budget cycle. At Highlands these cuts translated into a 2.5% cut in the FY09 budget that was instituted mid-year, and an additional 2.5% cut in the FY10 budget (for a total 5% cut). These budget cuts were absorbed through not filling vacancies, reserve funds, and careful budgeting. Budget administrators were asked to eliminate or reduce supplies, and were also directed to cut or hold some part-time positions without compromising existing programs. It is quite likely that we will need to absorb an additional cut mid-year to the FY10 budget. Where possible, these cuts will be absorbed by not filling open positions or by delaying spending on new projects. No reduction in force is expected.

In 2002 a task force was convened for the purpose of revising the state funding formula, which had remained unchanged since the 1970s. The task force recommended changes to the funding formula to support increased access and economic development in New Mexico, to make the formula easier to understand, and to create incentives for student and institutional success. The new [funding formula](#) began in 2005. Institutions are funded based on the total number of student credit hours compared to the base year of the institution. If student credit hours increase by 3% or more, or decline by 5% or more in a given year compared to the base year, an institution qualifies for a workload adjustment in addition to adjustments in student services funding.

Highlands continually monitors budgets and plans for improvements, and attempts to optimize its opportunities for formula funding. For the past several years, NMHU has targeted student credit hour increases year-to-year as a means of increasing the funding from the state as part of its annual enrollment management plans. NMHU met the required 3% enrollment increase in 2008-2009, which should result in additional funds to the University in FY11. While the exact dollar amount has not been released, previously such funding for enrollment increases was approximately \$700,000. These additional dollars flow into the general fund. However state revenue shortfalls may offset any increased funding.

In addition to changes in the formula funding for instructional support, institutions receive funding for physical plant operations based on the allowable square footage available at the University. During the last five years the University has reallocated space for various programs. In 2008 the state of New Mexico provided written standards for square footage, and then conducted an audit. Because of space reallocation that had occurred during the last several years, Highlands' square footage allocation was reduced from 780,000 square feet to 720,000 square feet, thus reducing funding available for building renewal and replacement.

## Campus Physical Environment

We are very excited at Highlands about the ongoing improvements to our campus buildings and grounds. Several of these projects have been in progress for years. Others have risen through the development, in 2009, of our Campus Master Plan. The projects range from major buildings, such as our new residence hall and our planned new student center, to small enhancements to the look and feel of the campus, such as improved signage and lighting. Taken together, these projects will

help to revitalize the campus, allowing us to better meet the needs of the Highlands' community.

This focus on infrastructure improvements began in FY06, when the New Mexico Higher Education Department undertook a statewide assessment of facility needs. As a result, the 2008 legislative session provided for an additional \$40.0 million dollars distributed through the Building Renewal and Replacement (BR&R) formula to all higher education entities.

Highlands was the recipient of approximately \$1.7 million from this fund, plus additional appropriations for infrastructure, deferred maintenance, master planning, renovation, equipment, and one million toward a new student center. Ultimately, the University received capital grant appropriations of \$5.7 million designated for physical plant improvements at the main campus. In the spring of 2008, an additional \$1.8 million was requested from the legislature to complete specific infrastructure improvements. The university has also sought funding from general obligation bonds, which have been approved by the legislature and the citizens of New Mexico ([presentation](#) on bonding rating to Standard and Poor).

Funding for capital projects currently underway totals \$31.6M ([NMHU Capital Projects Report](#), Summer 2009). The total projected cost for recently completed and currently planned capital outlay projects is approximately \$80 million. This includes:

- \$19.4M for a new 276 bed residence hall (completed),
- \$5.6M for renovation of the Science Annex (completed),
- \$3.0M for roof replacement and a new HVAC system at Burris Hall (completed),
- \$4.0M for renovation of the Golf Course (completed),
- \$1.8M toward remodeling the Lora Mangum Shields Science Building (in progress),
- \$3.5M for creation of a one-stop shop for student services at the Felix Martinez building (in planning stage),
- \$6.5M toward a new student center (in planning stage)
- \$8.1M for renovation of the Trolley Building for media arts (in planning stage)
  - \$5.3M in deferred maintenance capital projects.

Three of these projects, the new residence hall, the new student center, and the Trolley Building renovation, are discussed below.

### *New Student Center*

The current student center is housed in a converted gymnasium and is located on the periphery of the campus. It is underutilized and fails as a center for student life. In addition, the need for new dining facilities is critical. The current campus cafeteria is on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Archuleta residence hall. It is over 45 years old and has serious code violations. The cafeteria's kitchen is in the 1<sup>st</sup> floor/basement. The elevator is unusable and all food has to be carried by hand to the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. The facility is completely outdated and fails to meet students' expectations, and thus detracts from the University's efforts to enhance student life.

The new student center will be approximately 55,000 to 65,000 square feet and will be located near the corner of 8<sup>th</sup> Street and National Avenue. It will serve as the home for numerous student services. Some

of the services that will be housed in the building include: study areas; computer labs; offices for Native American Services, International Student Services, Student Activities, and student clubs; a board room for student and public meetings; a student art gallery; a copy center; the post office; the bookstore; and dining facilities adequate to serve 400 students (compared to the current capacity of 250 students).

The building will be designed to meet current student needs as well as future growth on the main campus. As with the new residence hall, it is designed to meet LEED Silver Certification requirements ([presentation](#) on bonding rating to Standard and Poor). The university has currently received \$6.5M toward the estimated \$18M cost for this project. We have approval for a bond issue to fund the balance of the project and hope to be in construction by January of 2009.

#### *New Residence Hall*



We are exceedingly proud of our new residence hall. The building is the first new residence hall built on campus since the 1960s and provides a critical upgrade in student residential facilities. The residence hall houses 276 students in 89 spacious apartment-style suites that feature private bedrooms, a kitchenette, living room, and bathrooms. The new residence hall will be the first in the state to attain [Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design](#) (LEED) Silver Certification for sustainable building design and construction.

The university issued revenue bonds through the New Mexico Finance Authority to fund the residence hall project. The loans will be paid off solely through student dorm fees. The project was completed on time and on budget.

#### *Trolley Building Renovation*

As documented throughout this report, the Media Arts Program has demonstrated great success in educating skilled artists and designers and providing them with exciting, hands-on training. However, the facility currently housing the program is in poor condition and has never met the program's needs. Classroom, studio and office space are all inadequate, particularly given the projected growth of the program.

The question of where to house this innovative, technologically-based program was an interesting one. As mentioned in the introduction to this report, Las Vegas has a wealth of historic buildings. Instead of lobbying the administration for a new building, the media arts faculty and students looked around their community and found an empty, historic building in desperate need of care.

The Las Vegas Railroad and Power Company Building, or Trolley Building, was erected in 1905. The building is listed in the State Register of Cultural Properties and the National Register of Historic Places. The Office of Cultural affairs has indicated it would be pleased to support New Mexico Highlands University's efforts to repair and reuse this structure. The idea of using a historic building to house a cutting-edge technology program is one way that Highlands honors its history and culture while at the same time immersing its students in 21<sup>st</sup> century educational opportunities. The preservation of this building and its transformation into a media arts facility will be the fifth building on our campus to be included on the National Register (to see the others, take this tour from the Las Vegas [Citizens Committee for Historic Preservation](#)).

The university plans to use \$1M from the 2008 general obligation bond to stabilize the building and has requested the remainder of the necessary funds from the 2010 general obligation bond. The Trolley Building project (along with the Natatorium renovation and the remainder of the Lora Shields renovation), will be considered for approval at the HED Capital Projects Committee meeting in September and by the Board of Finance in October. If the necessary funding for the project is included in the general obligation bond list by the New Mexico Legislature and approved by the voters in November of 2010, major renovation of the building will begin in 2011.

#### *Campus Master Plan*

The projects described above form the center piece of the NMHU Campus Master Plan that is currently under development. Highlands contracted with Studio-Insite, a space design and planning firm from Denver, Colorado, to review current facilities and complete a comprehensive, forward-looking campus plan. During the spring, 2009, semester a series of meetings was held with university stakeholders, resulting in several town-hall style meetings to discuss with the Las Vegas community the results of Studio-Insite's review and several potential plans for campus development ([presentation by Studio-Insite](#)).

Important findings from the review include the fact that, according to the Studio-Insite analysis, Highlands has adequate classroom space for an additional 1,000 students. The plan also identified a general level of work to bring each existing building up to acceptable standards, and has classified each building according to the costs for that work. The level of structural problems in certain buildings (Hewitt Hall most notably) is so extensive that renovation is not a fiscally sound option. These buildings will be taken off line as soon as logistically possible.

One of the most interesting aspects of the campus master plan is that it addresses the physical points of entry between the Highlands campus and the rest of the Las Vegas community. The plan identifies several major points of entry (such as 8<sup>th</sup> Street and National Avenue, and 9<sup>th</sup> Street and Washington Avenue) which introduce travelers to the University. The plan discusses the placement of buildings, signage, lighting, and landscaping that will highlight these areas as distinctive and welcoming introductions to the campus.

The plan is also seriously addressing the issue of the Highlands' main campus as a pedestrian space. We want our campus to highlight easy access between heavily used resources, and to encourage frequent and



safe interaction among members of our community. The necessary contrast to a pedestrian space, of course, is that adequate and convenient parking must be a part of the finalized plan.

At the time of this writing we are still working on the final, adopted form of the Campus Master Plan. Further discussions of the plan, and its formal adoption, will take place during the fall, 2009 semester.

#### Improvements in campus security

In April of 2007, President Fries established the Campus Security Working Group (CSWG) to assess the need for security improvements at Highlands and to develop a plan for implementing those improvements. The CSWG was established partially as a response to the shootings at Virginia Tech. The group published a report in June of 2008 detailing the plan and an [update](#) in August of 2009 documenting the implementation. The project included: placing deadbolt locks on classrooms throughout the main campus and the Rio Rancho Center; installing security poles around the main campus that provide immediate audio and video connections with Campus Police; installing video surveillance cameras at key points around the main campus and the Rio Rancho Center; updating lighting to improve campus safety; and developing a system to use text messaging and email to inform the Highlands community of campus emergencies.

#### Technology resources and plans for improvement

NMHU's recognition of the importance of technology and its role in meeting the needs of higher education in rapidly changing times led to the 1999 launching of a comprehensive and concerted strategic technology initiative. Among other things, the University set out to centralize its technology efforts, improve the quality of connectivity at Highlands, and implement a system-wide overhaul of information in both administrative and academic areas.

In 2001, Information Technology Services (ITS) created the first [Five-Year IT Plan \(2001-2006\)](#) setting forth specific targeted university-wide initiatives. In accordance with the plan, funding for ITS increased from \$750,000 in 2001 to \$1.2 million in 2003, and has maintained at least that level of investment since that time. Capital expenditures for IT related technologies during the past two years exceeded \$2 million.

Additionally, NMHU's ITS department has succeeded in obtaining additional internal and external funding beyond that specified in the plan, to support improvements in networking infrastructure. In particular, strategic technology goals that have been successfully met include:

- The Highlands main campus in Las Vegas became the first in New Mexico to offer campuswide wireless connectivity. Our wireless infrastructure provides high security connectivity, with 1024 bits of encryption for our students, faculty, and administration. To be sure that we keep pace with the latest developments in wireless connectivity, we are upgrading our existing wireless infrastructure design to include compatibility with new specifications.
- In 2006, the ITS department instituted a new initiative called the "Self Servicing NMHU community." Through this initiative a majority of university computer systems are available to the University community directly by a self-service Web interface. As a result, students, faculty and staff easily and independently access online

a multitude of routine functions and tasks, including admissions, registration, online payments, pay stubs, benefits, account lookups, password resets, and numerous other financial, student advising, and class related activities.

- Computers, projectors, and smart boards were installed in every classroom and laboratory in which they were requested campus-wide.
- Access to software for faculty and staff was expanded by providing campus licensing for a wide-range of applications, including the option of MS Office 2007 for home use, McAfee Antivirus, and SPSS. In addition, ITS obtained special software pricing for NMHU students through a program which allows them to purchase MS Office 2007 at a reduced price of 85% of the manufacturer's suggested retail pricing.
- A regular training program was established for faculty on the use of educational technology in the classroom, utilization of the NMHU Banner system, and specialty programs.
- The number of active NMHU workstations was tripled, from 600 to 1,800.
- NMHU not only became the first campus in New Mexico to provide a "single sign-on" for our students, faculty and staff, we also extended single sign-on to a broad range of key applications, including the Banner system, learning management systems (Blackboard), library access, and email.
- In collaboration with the Office of University Relations, ITS has worked to employ the latest new and emerging Web-based communications technologies, including: enhanced Web pages; affording faculty and departments the ability to update their own pages; use of social networking Web sites such as Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter to better communicate with our students, faculty, and alumni; and other evolving technologies, such as placing video clips on YouTube and maintaining Web blogs. In addition, NMHU continually explores how emerging technologies such as Second Life, wikis, Flickr, and Folsonomy may be adapted for use in higher education.
- A computer replacement plan was instituted in 2004. This plan has enabled NMHU to prioritize and allocate its computer resources in accordance with the specific needs of the entire university community. Some technology-intensive academic departments need upgrades on short cycles to maintain competitiveness and perform their functions, while others perform perfectly well with supported extended-life hardware. Such centralized prioritization and distribution ensures that IT funding achieves maximum benefits at the lowest possible cost.
- Main campus backbone core infrastructure connections have grown by an order of ten in magnitude, from 10Mbps in 1999 to 10Gbs, with edge devices capable of 2Gbs connections. An upgrade is underway to increase these capabilities even further to core connections of 100Gbs with edge devices capable of 10Gbs. The present standard local area network (LAN) access is already a fully-switched 200Mbps which includes offices, classrooms, labs, residential halls, and multifunction rooms. Upon the completion of the

**Highlands' main campus in Las Vegas became the first in New Mexico to offer campuswide wireless connectivity.**



ongoing upgrades, each port will have access to a full 2Gbs.

- We have added to our campus backbone data services individual streams for video for instruction and surveillance, energy and environmental control management systems, and fire and other alarm systems.
- We have achieved 99.998% system uptime for both our main computer systems and network.
- NMHU switched from satellite broadcasting to video over IP (VOIP). There are now more than 15 remote classroom sites across the state. This change increased the capacity ten-fold, from 3MBs in 2003 to over 30MBs in 2009, with the capability of bridging over 50 concurrent video and audio streams at HD 1080p or video streaming to 80 participants.

NMHU developed a small (64) node cluster for advanced parallel processing and has direct access to El Canto – New Mexico's supercomputer. In addition, NMHU will be a future site for a NM Computer Application Center (NMCAC) gateway. Such gateways provide HD video conferencing, state-of-the-art 3-D visualization and technical support for developing models.

### **Core Component 2c** *The organization's ongoing evaluation and assessment processes provide reliable evidence of institutional effectiveness that clearly informs strategies for continual improvement.*

Effective evaluation requires clear, measurable goals, and accurate data to assess progress toward those goals. This has been, and continues to be, a major focus at Highlands. At a university level, our major effort has been our involvement in a process coordinated by the New Mexico Higher Education Department to assess the effectiveness of higher education statewide. This includes a decade-long program of reporting common and institution-specific performance measures to the HED and State Legislature. Those measures include bi-annual reports to the state legislature and the yearly publication of the Council of University Presidents' [Performance Effectiveness Reports](#). The HED then uses these data and others to publish its annual report on the state of higher education in New Mexico. As a state, New Mexico has made great progress in accountability practices, and was recently rated by [Education Sector](#), a think tank promoting education reform, as a state whose higher education accountability practices were "in progress." As part of their report, they [rated New Mexico](#) as demonstrating "best practice" in the areas of "Alignment with Pre K-12 Education" and "Governance and Strategic Planning."

Taken together, these efforts have resulted in a good, ongoing understanding of the state of higher education in New Mexico, and have allowed the state to develop and support focused initiatives, such as the dual-credit program and other P-20 initiatives, IDEAL-NM and other technology and accessibility initiatives, and targeted programs to address documented workforce needs in the state, such as the [Nursing Program](#). However, there are still concerns within HED and the state universities that the current performance measures give an incomplete and somewhat inaccurate picture of higher education in the state. The

only graduation rate included in the performance measures is the six-year graduation rate of students who began at an institution as first-time freshmen. This exclusive focus on first-time freshmen graduation rates ignores the reality of a state where many students attend multiple institutions of higher education before graduation. This is illustrated by the fact that, at NMHU, at least 75% of our undergraduate degree recipients begin at Highlands as transfer students, not as first time freshmen ([NMHU Undergraduate Degree Recipients, 2007-2008](#)). In addition, none of the current performance measures address the issue of post-baccalaureate education.

For these reasons, the New Mexico Higher Education Department, in collaboration with the Council of University Presidents and the institutional research offices of the state universities, have begun a process of *identifying new performance measures*. It is expected that the new common measures will include measures identified in the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA). Since each of the state's universities has made a commitment to participate in the VSA, these data will be collected and publically reported by each institution. The VSA measures include graduation measures not only of first-time freshmen, but also of transfer students. And the graduation rates include data on students who received a degree from any institution, not just the institution at which they were first enrolled. The development of new performance measures will take multiple years. Several changes to performance measures were approved by the state Council of University Presidents and presented to the HED and relevant legislative bodies in the summer of 2009. Additional measures based upon the VSA will be developed during the course of the year as all the institutions become well versed in that system. These measures will then be presented for approval in the summer of 2010.

New performance measures mean little, however, without useful data that can be used to set goals. In New Mexico, each university has a state-selected set of comparison institutions which are used to generate data to set performance benchmarks. The comparison groups are to a large degree institution specific, and Highlands' comparison group is made up largely of institutions that began as normal schools. The comparison groups are published at the end of the Performance Effectiveness Reports. For many years, a great deal of concern has been expressed that these comparison groups are not appropriate for the institutions. Currently, the secretary of the New Mexico Higher Education Department, Dr. Peter White, has set as one of his educational priorities *the development of new comparison groups* for each state university so that reasonable data for performance benchmarks can be obtained ([Updates from the Cabinet Secretary of Higher Education, May 26, 2009](#)).

We have begun this process at Highlands by asking key stakeholders to prioritize the institutional characteristics, which they feel should be used in identifying our peer group. Based upon this information, a list will be developed of potential institutions for our new peer group. That list will then be circulated throughout the University for discussion, and the final list will be sent to the administration, faculty and staff senates, Faculty Association, student senates, and Board of Regents for approval. This inclusive process is considered necessary since the make-up of our comparison group has implications for every aspect of the University, including benchmarks for learning outcomes, graduation rates, enrollment, staffing patterns, funding goals, and

salaries. We expect to have our new peer group identified, approved by the various constituencies at the University and submitted to the HED for approval by late fall, 2009. We will then spend the spring of 2010 developing benchmarks for key areas of performance as outlined in our reporting to the state and our new strategic plan.

Developing clear, measurable goals with appropriate benchmarks is just one part of successful evaluation. The university also needs to have consistent access to accurate data by which to judge our attainment of those goals. The [Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research](#) has primary responsibility for ensuring that data relevant to all aspects of the University is publicly available to all constituents. The importance of this for a well-functioning university is illustrated by the fact that one of the eight benchmarks identified in the report of the 2000 NCA accreditation visit and reiterated in report of the focused visit in 2004 was specifically directed at institutional research. As documented in our Monitoring Report on Institutional Research, filed on July 1, 2007, Highlands has made institutional research a priority. The Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (OIER) was established, with a half-time director and two full-time institutional researchers. The OIER developed a [mission](#) that specifically documented the role of the OIER in providing data for institutional assessment and planning. Since that time, the OIER has focused on providing a wealth of data on their web site related to [enrollments](#), [degrees awarded](#), [graduation rates](#), [university publications](#), the VSA [College Portrait](#), and [other reports](#) related to issues important to the University.

The OIER also serves as the public repository of the results of academic outcomes assessment. Assessment of our academic programs, core curriculum, and student learning is covered in detail under Criterion Three. Evaluation of other units at the University is generally conducted at the level of the individual units. For example, the professional schools (business, education, and social work) must maintain and report specific assessment processes to their respective accrediting agencies in order to maintain specialty accreditation status. Many other programs at the University are funded through grants and have specific evaluation procedures (for examples, see Criterion Five). The effectiveness of the Business Office is measured through its ability to allocate adequate resources for the functioning of the University and manage the budget appropriately and transparently. Its ability to meet these goals is documented in component 2c of this report, and through the yearly [audit reports](#) available on our Web site. Donnelly Library has specific goals that are developed in accordance with the Association of College and Research Libraries and the American Library Association Standards. Their progress in meeting these standards is documented in their [yearly reports](#) (more detail on Donnelly Library is presented elsewhere in this report).

To coordinate and extend all of these assessment activities, NMHU hired its first full-time director of assessment in the summer of 2009. This individual will work with the Outcomes Assessment Committee of the Faculty Senate, the Academy for the Assessment of Student

Learning team, and the academic program faculty to enhance our processes for assessing student learning. Beyond that, the director will also work to institute procedures for the assessment of the effectiveness of non-academic programs throughout the University.

## **Core Component 2d** *All levels of planning align with the organization's mission, thereby enhancing its capacity to fulfill that mission.*

### **2003 Strategic Planning Process**

The process that culminated in the 2003-2008 strategic plan exemplifies the University's broad-based and realistic strategic planning process. Beginning in fall of 2002, the president articulated a vision for completing a strategic plan that would incorporate all constituencies of the University. Representatives from administration, faculty, staff, students, and community members were invited to a series of open meetings to identify core strategic issues of the University. In these meetings a thorough environmental assessment was conducted. An external analysis identified potential opportunities and threats to the University. An internal analysis identified potential strengths and weaknesses of the University.

In early 2003 a coordinated series of committee meetings, public forums, and community discussions produced a draft strategic plan that included the prioritized set of objectives gleaned from relevant stakeholders of the University. The process identified six strategic goals to serve as the foundation of Highlands' Strategic Plan. Preliminary drafts of the document were disseminated throughout the campus community and requests for public comment were made. The Board of Regents subsequently asked a consultant to come in and review the document and several changes to the document were made, the most significant of which was to add a seventh strategic goal. The amended strategic plan was approved by the Board of Regents in January of 2005 and subsequently adopted. Departments within the University were asked to develop their own strategic plans and to align their plans with the University's mission, vision, and values as articulated in that document. This plan served the University from 2005 through 2008 when the new administration embarked upon a new strategic planning process in order to update the mission and strategic vision for the University.

### **2009 Strategic Planning Process**

The 2009 strategic planning process is underway, involving constituents from all areas of the University: administration, faculty, staff, students, and community members. This Strategic Planning Committee was convened in January 2009 to review the existing strategic plan and to assess the continued relevance of specific goals and measures. The group has systematically revised the earlier strategic plan, starting with the mission and vision of the University. Through a series of committee meetings the draft mission and core values of the University have been articulated as follows:

**'Highlands is actively engaged in planning for the future  
of our university, region, and state.'**



**NMHU Mission: Education through teaching, research,  
and service**

**Core Values**

- Advancement of knowledge
- Student success
- Multiculturalism
- A diversity of ideas
- Accessible education
- Community
- Individual well-being
- Sustainable practices

**Vision Statement**

New Mexico Highlands University will provide an inspiring, multicultural learning environment that promotes excellence, empowerment, transformation, and global understanding.

- Strategic Goal I: Advance knowledge and promote student success.
- Strategic Goal II: Promote a respectful and stimulating living and learning environment.
- Strategic Goal III: Promote the educational, social, cultural, and economic advancement and the environmental sustainability of the region.
- Strategic Goal IV: Develop effective and efficient academic and administrative processes, systems, and structures that support continuous improvement
- Strategic Goal V: Enhance the University's reputation and external support.

Strategic Goal VI: Increase student enrollment to meet the University's infrastructure carrying capacity.

The process is underway to finalize the draft mission, vision and goals, and to seek approval by the Regents. Once the Regents approve the contents of this plan, it will be disseminated to constituents for approval and comment. University units will be charged with identifying and revising their own mission statements, and developing their own strategic plans in alignment with those of the University. This process is ongoing and should be finalized sometime during the upcoming fall semester.

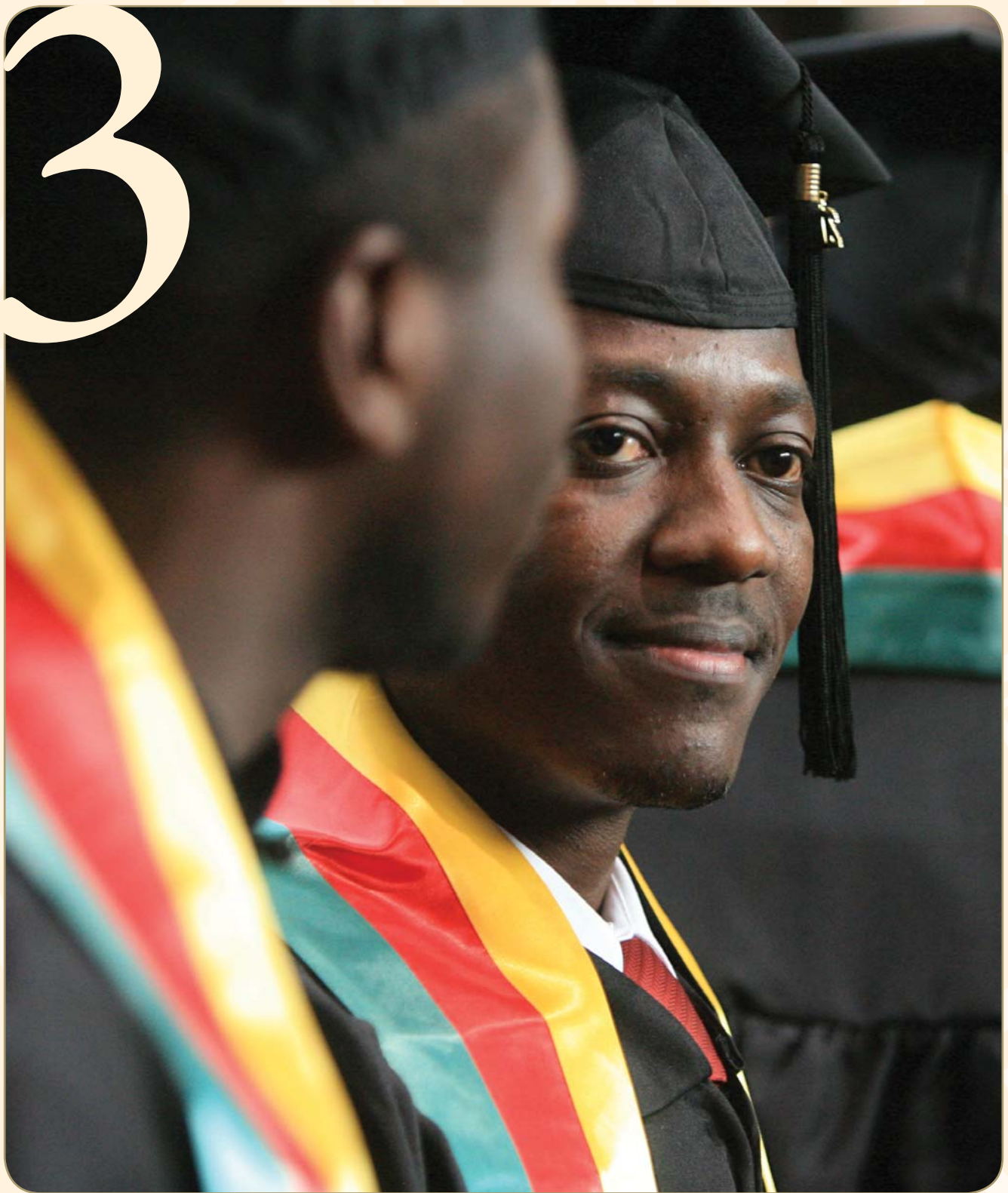
## Opportunities for Improvement

Highlands is actively engaged in planning for the future of our university, region, and state. We are excited about the opportunities presented by extending our services to new populations of students through our Centers, distance education, and on-line degree programs. In this section we have documented our understanding of demographic, economic, workforce, and technological trends and our efforts to address those trends. The challenge will be to ensure that these efforts reflect a coherent understanding of our strategic plan and that ongoing assessment of our adherence to that plan occurs. In order to meet that this challenge, the following action steps will be implemented:

- **Documentation of communications and decision-making processes:** While the University is conscientious about making minutes of all official governing bodies public, this has not always been the case for the more informal structures, such as ad-hoc committees and advisory councils. These entities need to ensure that their work is publicly disseminated, and gains formal approval when necessary, so we can ensure university-wide understanding of all actions taken by the University.
- **Documentation of unit activities and adherence to their strategic plans:** All units of the University should be required to submit annual updates to their strategic plans, which are aligned to the overall University strategic plan currently being completed. Along with this, performance measures for each unit should be developed and implemented to determine unit performance. Our new director of assessment will play an important role in this action step.







## Criterion Three: Student Learning and Effective Teaching

*The organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.*

### Introduction

The current Highlands' mission statement emphasizes our "university-wide commitment to quality student-centered education." That commitment takes the form of an extensive system of student learning assessment, recognition of and support for effective teaching, and comprehensive student support services. The results of these efforts are visible in the opinions of our graduating seniors and alumni, who consistently place Highlands first or second in the state in terms of satisfaction with their educational experience. Over 90% of both graduating seniors and alumni report that they are satisfied or very satisfied with the curriculum and instruction at NMHU. As can be seen in the report of our survey of graduating students in the spring of 2009, student satisfaction on many of our measures has been increasing during the past three years ([Student Satisfaction Survey AY 2008-2009](#)).

In addition to analysis of current students, the University regularly surveys alumni. In the summer of 2008, the OIER conducted an [alumni survey](#) of graduates from NMHU between the years of 2005 and 2006. The details of this survey are discussed in section 3A of this criterion.

- 69.8% of undergraduate and 82.4% of graduate alumni responded favorably regarding the quality of career counseling and advisement.

- 90.5% of undergraduate and 89.5% of graduate alumni responded favorably on the quality of laboratory facilities and equipment.
- 85.7% of undergraduate and 87% of graduate alumni responded favorably on the adequacy of library facilities.
- 88.9% of undergraduate and 95.8% of graduate alumni responded favorably on the adequacy of computer facilities.

Assessment of student learning outcomes at NMHU involves three distinct, but inter-related, tasks, each with different timelines and different entities responsible for oversight ([NMHU Assessment Handbook](#)). Those three processes are assessment of our common core (General Education Assessment), assessment of academic programs (Annual Outcomes Assessment, Program Review, and Program Specific Accreditation), and assessment of the educational efforts of the University as a whole (University-Wide Assessment). Support for all assessment activities is provided by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research.

To enhance our outcomes assessment processes at the University, NMHU joined the Higher Learning Commission's [Academy for the Assessment of Student Learning](#) in the spring of 2008. Our goal in this three-year program is to align all aspects of our outcomes assessment system along core traits identified by the faculty, staff, students, and administrators of the University. This systems alignment will allow us to aggregate our outcomes assessment data across programs and tie these outcomes, ultimately, to our vision of what it means to be a Highlands graduate.

Survey of Graduating Seniors, 2007

Percent Satisfied or Very Satisfied	NM Tech	NM State	UNM	Western NM	Eastern NM	NMHU
Curriculum and Instruction	77.5%	78%	78.5%	86.2%	93%	90.3%
Student Support	77.3%	74%	75.3%	70.8%	90%	89.5%
Overall with Institution	81.5%	83%	77.9%	80.8%	96%	95.1%

New Mexico Council of University Presidents "[Performance Effectiveness Report](#)", November of 2008

Survey of 2004-2005 Alumni

Percent Satisfied or Very Satisfied	NM Tech	NM State	UNM	Western NM	Eastern NM	NMHU
Curriculum and Instruction	95%	89.1%	83.1%	88.6%	85%	91.4%
Student Support	87%	96.7%	68.7%	80.7%	81%	86.1%
Overall with Institution	92%	92.8%	88.2%	92.3%	89%	93.7%

New Mexico Council of University Presidents "[Performance Effectiveness Report](#)", November of 2008

## Summary of Assessment Processes

Assessment Task		Timeline	Overseeing Entity
General Education Assessment		Data collected every fall semester	Outcomes Assessment Committee
Academic Program Assessment	Outcomes Assessment	Reports due every fall	Academic Program Faculty
	Program Review	Every five years	Graduate programs: Office of Graduate Studies Undergraduate programs: Academic Affairs Committee
	Program Specific Accreditation	Varies by program	Academic Program Faculty
University-Wide Assessment		Yearly	Outcomes Assessment Committee and Academy for the Assessment of Student Learning Team

### **Core Component 3a** *The organization's goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible.*

In 2004, the Higher Learning Commission conducted a focused visit at NMHU, which included an evaluation of the University's outcomes assessment system. The team concluded that NMHU had made adequate progress in its system. Unfortunately, the period of instability experienced by the University after the 2004 focus visit included the elimination of the position of outcomes assessment coordinator. With no one to monitor the process, and with the attention of the University community focused on other significant issues, outcomes assessment activities at the University became disorganized and, in some cases, ceased.

During the 2007-2008 academic year, the University again began to focus on the assessment of student learning. Academic programs were asked to review their last existing outcomes assessment plans and prepare reports based upon 2006-2007 data. The Office of Graduate Studies and the Academic Affairs Committee reviewed and updated the graduate and undergraduate Academic Program Review Manuals and approved schedules for program reviews. The Outcomes Assessment Committee of the Faculty Senate was reconstituted, with the explicit goal of implementing a new system for evaluation of the general education curriculum. The report of the 2004 focus visit was reviewed, with attention to the recommendation that the outcomes assessment system initiatives and results be "widely communicated to all university constituents." In response to that recommendation, the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness developed [Web pages](#) that post information regarding outcomes assessment, including program reports, program plans, and additional information.

As a result of these efforts, academic programs began producing annual reports of assessment activities with data from the 2006-2007 academic year. The Outcomes Assessment Committee developed a new process for the assessment of our common core, which was first

implemented in the 2007-2008 academic year. The Office of Graduate Studies and the Academic Affairs Committee began implementing the schedule of academic program review in the 2008-2009 academic year. And our Academy for the Assessment of Student Learning team began the process of identifying core traits for Highlands graduates and developing a process for aligning instruction and assessment along those traits. Each of these activities will be described in more detail below.

#### **Assessment of the General Education Curriculum**

The specifics of the NMHU general education curriculum (also called the common core) and its development are discussed in Criterion Four of this report. In this section we are discussing the goals of that curriculum and their assessment. NMHU established four goals for our general education courses: (1) mastery of communication skills, (2) mastery of critical thinking skills, (3) basic information and basic intellectual procedures, and (4) ability to access and manipulate data and other forms of communication. In addition, the New Mexico Higher Education Department has established 32 competencies in five content areas for the state's common core.

Assessment of the general education program at NMHU began over a decade ago, with an inconsistent history. Early assessment was based on the four identified outcomes developed by the Outcomes Assessment Committee of the Faculty Senate. From 2001 through 2004, this committee utilized a portfolio system. While the system was deemed successful, it was extremely labor intensive. In 2005, the outcomes assessment coordinator position was eliminated by the University, and the portfolio assessment and meetings of this committee halted. In the summer of 2007, the Outcomes Assessment Committee was reconstituted and began to revise the general education assessment system. In addition, in 2008, the Higher Education Department mandated that all public universities evaluate the general education requirements using the [32 state competencies](#).

In response to these changes, the Outcomes Assessment Committee developed a Banner-based data collection system, in collaboration with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research, and ITS. This new system was designed to make it easy for instructors to input



course data based on existing course assignments. This system was chosen to ensure maximum flexibility for instructors to embed their assessments of student learning in specific course activities. Instructors are asked to indicate which of the four NMHU goals were addressed in their classes, to identify an assignment used to assess this goal, and to assess each student's mastery of each core competency. The results from the spring of 2008 indicated mastery of the general education curricula ranging from 20% (Area 2 – Calculus) to 85.4% (Area 1 Communications) of the students by area. By excluding calculus, the range for mastery was 66.7% to 85.4% by area ([General Education Assessment Report, Spring 2008](#)).

Following the presentation of the report to the University faculty, programs were asked to address the following questions:

- How can academic programs align their courses so that the same competencies are being addressed in all sections of a course?
- Exactly how should each competency be assessed?
- What steps can we take to assure mastery of these competencies by our students?

#### **Assessment of Academic Programs: Annual Outcomes Assessment**

The involvement of faculty and staff in the assessment process is paramount to the success of our programs. Since 1998, department and discipline faculty have designed and implemented their own outcomes assessment system. This process includes substantial faculty involvement through the design of the system, development and refinement of outcomes, analysis of outcomes and program data, and implementation of program changes. Each program has a lead person who oversees this process, generally the program coordinator, however, all unit faculty are responsible for helping to collect and analyze the outcomes data.

Beginning in the fall of 2007, outcomes assessment workshops were sponsored by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research to discuss outcomes assessment procedures, share reports among program coordinators, and provide peer review and feedback on those reports. In addition, staff of the OIER provides assistance, most often in the form of program data, to the academic programs.

Although the University does not use a prescribed format for outcomes assessment, each program should identify its mission, goals, assessment criteria, program data and analysis, and the usage of the data to enhance the program's curricula. Currently, a faculty member from outside the program evaluates the outcomes assessment report and provides feedback to each program on: (1) the clarity of the program's mission, (2) the outcomes assessment data indicators, and (3) the program's usage of the data (see Appendix B of the [NMHU Assessment Handbook](#)). The feedback is incorporated into the report and then a finalized version is posted to the [outcomes assessment Web site](#).

#### **Assessment of Academic Programs: Academic Program Review**

Undergraduate Academic Program Review is the responsibility of the Academic Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate. Our current [Undergraduate Academic Program Review Manual](#) is based substantially upon the [Graduate Program Review Manual](#) and was adopted by the Academic Affairs Committee in February of 2002 and last revised in February of 2008 ([Academic Affairs Committee minutes, February 6, 2008](#)).

Generally, programs are reviewed every five years. For academic programs holding accreditation from an external organization, program reviews are scheduled to be done in parallel with and as part of the accreditation process. Faculty members in the discipline conduct the review according to the guidelines in the manual. After approval from the respective dean, program review reports are assigned to a subcommittee of the Academic Affairs Committee consisting of three members of the committee, one from the schools and two from the colleges. The members of the subcommittee analyze the report and provide feedback to the program faculty. The faculty members then, in consultation with their dean, prepare a revised program review and meet with the members of the subcommittee to discuss the revisions. The Academic Affairs Committee then sends the review, with their comments and any recommendations, to the vice president of academic affairs.

The outcomes of this process consist of recognition of successes and challenges for the program, with discussion of future plans for building upon successes and addressing challenges. During the next round of program reviews each program is expected to provide a discussion of how they responded to the feedback from the previous review.

On occasion, the vice president for academic affairs requests that a program undergo the academic review process because of specific concerns regarding the program. This was the case in the spring of 2008, when the vice president for academic affairs requested that the Academic Affairs Committee schedule the Forensics Science Bachelor of Science Program for review. The program had begun in 2006, but had struggled with recruiting appropriate faculty, attracting funding to support the necessary infrastructure, and subsequent low enrollments. After the completion of the program review by the Academic Affairs Committee, the recommendation was that the program conduct another faculty search and be reviewed again in two years ([Academic Affairs Committee minutes, April 30, 2008](#)). However, upon additional discussion between the program faculty and the administration, the consensus of all concerned was that the program be suspended until such time as these issues can be appropriately addressed.

In addition to the forensic science program, the Computational Engineering Major was also reviewed by the Academic Affairs Committee. They recommended that the program be eliminated. The administration concurred with the recommendation and the Board of Regents eliminated the major.

[Graduate Academic Program Review](#) follows essentially the same process, but is overseen by the Office of Graduate Studies.

#### **Assessment of Academic Programs: Program Specific Accreditation**

The three professional schools (business, social work, and education) and some disciplines maintain professional accreditation. The participation of faculty and staff in assessment activities in these areas is an integral part of maintaining these accreditations:

- School of Business – ACBSP -Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs
- School of Social Work – CSWE (Council on Social Work Education)

- Rehabilitation Counseling graduate program- CORE (Council of Rehabilitation Education)
- Chemistry Major – ACS (American Chemical Society)

The most recent accreditation reports from these programs are not available online, but hard copies maybe be found in the Self Study Resource Room on the third floor of Donnelly Library.

The School of Education is accredited by the State of New Mexico to offer teacher education programs. The School was accredited by NCATE during the last HLC comprehensive visit, and our last NCATE accreditation visit was in 2006. At that time it was determined that the school met all NCATE standards except for Standard 2: Assessment System and Unit Evaluation. Although Highlands filed appeals regarding the accreditation team's decision, the school's national NCATE accreditation was revoked.

New Mexico Highlands University was among the [first group of institutions](#) to hold NCATE accreditation when the organization was incorporated in 1954. NCATE accreditation is part of our school's historical identity. In addition, NCATE accreditation is recognized nationally as the professional standard for teacher training programs. For these reasons, the Highlands' administration and faculty have made a determination that it is in the school's best interest to seek re-accreditation by NCATE.

In support of this decision, the School of Education has taken several steps not only to address existing problems but also to significantly strengthen the school overall. Highlands hired a new dean for the School of Education in 2008 and a new associate dean in 2009. The new associate dean will be providing direct oversight of the education program at our Rio Rancho Center. This individual has specific and significant experience with NCATE accreditation procedures and will be taking the lead role in helping the school to prepare for re-accreditation.

The school underwent an academic re-organization (described in Criterion One) that is designed to increase unit cohesiveness and foster better decision-making processes. The school has begun a major revision of their assessment procedures. This includes the use of an online student portfolio system, [Chalk and Wire](#). This system will strengthen the ability of advisers to track student progress. It will also allow programs to identify and improve areas in their curriculum that are presenting challenges for their students. And it will allow the

school as a whole to link student performance at the program level with alumni success in earning licensure. The university's new director of assessment will be devoting approximately one third of his time to working with the School of Education on these assessment initiatives.

In an exciting new development, the School of Education is initiating a Professional Development School (PDS) program. Professional Development Schools ensure that students are continually supported in linking educational theory with teaching practice. This occurs by moving education courses away from the college campus to K-12 schools in the community. The university has a room in the school where education students take their pedagogical coursework. The teachers-in-training then go directly into the classroom to apply what they have just learned under the supervision of certified teachers. Educational theory can be applied to the classroom experience within hours. Classroom experiences help direct the University curriculum. University students gain the experience of interacting with teachers and school-age children in operating classrooms. Likewise, the licensed teachers receive the help from university students. School-age children receive more attention because of reduced student-to-teacher ratios within the classrooms. In a fully developed PDS, public school administrators and teachers formally teach university students. University faculty can provide teacher in-services and graduate cohort classes on site to public school educators and administrators.

The first steps to the PDS program at NMHU will occur the fall, 2009 semester. The bilingual and special education programs are starting a PDS program in a Las Vegas school. Also, the NMHU campus in Farmington has proposed a Teacher Quality Grant to establish a PDS program in that part of the state.

#### University-wide Assessment

At Highlands we are just beginning to address the important question of what does it mean to receive a baccalaureate degree from our university. This question goes beyond the assessment of whether or not students are learning what we expect them to learn in individual courses, beyond the question of whether or not they can exhibit the skills meant to be taught by our general education curriculum, and beyond the question of whether or not we can prepare our students for work or graduate study in a particular academic discipline. Assessment of the University as a whole requires identifying the unifying traits we wish to instill in all of our degree recipients. It involves understanding the characteristics we want to be identified with a Highlands' graduate.

### Results of Traits Survey

	Faculty (56)	Staff (54)	Students (77)
Mastery of content knowledge and skills	100%	100%	94.8%
Effective communication skills	100%	100%	97.4%
Critical thinking skills	100%	100%	98.7%
Reflective thinking skills	82.9%	96.3%	85.7%
Effective use of technology	91.0%	100%	93.5%
Quantitative or qualitative analysis of data & information	92.8%	96.3%	86.8%

From [Spring 2009 Academy Workshop Presentation](#)

And then it involves aligning all of those other forms of assessment to help us determine whether we are successful in educating students with those characteristics.

We currently have two somewhat separate, but closely related, initiatives that are addressing this challenge. Those are our involvement with the HLC Academy for the Assessment of Student Learning and our decision to implement use of the Collegiate Learning Assessment.

#### Academy for the Assessment of Student Learning Initiative

In 2008, NMHU joined the Higher Learning Commission's [Academy for the Assessment of Student Learning](#). The project adopted by our academy team is focused on the alignment of our outcomes assessment system, with the goal of assessing our undergraduate educational system as a whole. The Academy team is composed of five tenured or tenure-track faculty, one full-time retained term faculty member, and one staff member from the OIER. All work conducted by the team is posted to our [academy team Web pages](#) to inform and communicate with faculty, staff, students, and members of the community. During the fall of 2008, the team worked with faculty and students to identify common traits across our academic curricula. A survey was sent to faculty, staff and students asking respondents to identify the traits they felt should exemplify Highlands graduates. There was a remarkably high degree of consensus in the results.

Based upon these results four traits were identified; effective communication, critical thinking, use of technology, and ability to analyze data. These traits will be tied to the outcomes assessment system in each discipline as well as to our university general education curriculum, and our developmental courses. Each discipline will tie its current outcomes assessment system to these traits so program data can be compiled across the University, and then disaggregated by trait.

During the spring of 2009, the academy team met with program faculty and staff for training related to the newly aligned system ([Spring 2009 Academy Workshop Presentation](#)). In the fall of 2009, program faculty will submit plans for outcomes assessment for 2009-2010 aligned to the four identified traits. Additionally, faculty, staff, and students will work in 2009 through 2010 to identify other traits that may be used in our assessment system alignment.

#### Collegiate Learning Assessment

In the summer of 2008, Dr. Bill Flores, the deputy director of the New Mexico Higher Education Department requested that all public universities in New Mexico participate in the [Voluntary System of Accountability](#) (VSA). The VSA was developed by the [American Association of State Colleges and Universities](#) (AASCU) and the [Association of Public and Land-grant Universities](#) (APLU) to provide a standardized way for four-year colleges to present information regarding educational outcomes to the public. The standardized format is called the College Portrait. NMHU announced that beginning in the fall of 2008 that it would participate in the VSA, and our first [College Portrait](#) was posted on our Web site that fall.

Participation in the VSA requires the administration of two standardized measures: a measure of student engagement and a measure of learning outcomes. For each measure, the VSA gives participating institutions several choices. For the measure of student engagement, NMHU decided to use the [National Survey of](#)

[Student Engagement](#) (NSSE), mostly because it is the one used by other institutions in New Mexico. The administration of the NSSE is entirely online. Randomly selected first year freshmen and graduating seniors received emails in the spring of 2008 prompting them to take the survey, which only takes about 15 minutes. The results from this survey will be available in early August of 2009.

For the measure of student learning outcomes, NMHU adopted the [Collegiate Learning Assessment](#) (CLA). This assessment was chosen after the Outcomes Assessment Committee of the Faculty Senate had reviewed testing materials from both ACT and the Educational Testing Service in the summer of 2007 and determined that they would not serve as an appropriate assessment tool for Highlands students. The CLA provided a significant and interesting alternative to those measures. This 90 minute online exam is entirely essay in nature, and requires critical, analytic, and communication skills. In the fall of 2008, 100 freshmen in the First Year Experience (FYE) course were randomly selected to take the CLA. All students in the FYE courses took the exam, but only the 100 exams given to the randomly selected sample were scored. This method of administration worked well, with many students reporting that the exam was actually interesting to complete.

In the spring of 2009, 200 graduating seniors were randomly selected to be invited to take the exam. Testing sessions were scheduled on the main campus, as well as in Santa Fe, Rio Rancho and Farmington. The selected seniors were emailed and asked to sign up for one of the testing sessions on the NMHU Web site. They were informed that all students who completed the exam would be entered into a raffle, and 20 students would be selected to receive \$25 each. Faculty and advisers were informed that the testing was taking place, and were asked to encourage students who received the emails to respond. Student response to these recruitment measures was poor, and it was only through extensive efforts, including identifying classes with several selected students and conducting testing during the class period, that we were able to test an appropriate sample size.

Results of the CLA will be available in August of 2009 and we will spend the 2009-2010 academic year reviewing the results and determining how they be most effectively used as part of our overall assessment system.

### Core Component 3b *The organization values and supports effective teaching.*

The [Collective Bargaining Agreement](#) for all tenured and tenure-track faculty states: "the paramount responsibility of each faculty member is teaching and advising students. All faculty members are expected to demonstrate a commitment to excellence in teaching and advising." Furthermore, the Collective Bargaining Agreement specifies that effective teaching is (Article 23, section 4.1.1):

- Command of one's subject matter
- Knowledge of current development in one's discipline
- Ability to relate one's subject to other areas of knowledge
- Skill in communicating with students
- Ability to plan and execute a well-organized course



## Cumulative Percentage Faculty Salary Increase, AY 1997-98 through AY 2006-07

UNM	NM State	NM Tech	Eastern NM	Western NM	NMHU
37.2%	34.2%	36.8%	35.8%	32.3%	27%

(Data from [HED Report on the State of Higher Education, December 2006 page 41](#) and NMHU institutional data.)

- Capacity to challenge students
- Ability to utilize effective teaching methods and strategies
- Integrity, open-mindedness, and fairness in teaching
- Positive student evaluations

This contract shows the consensus among the faculty and the administration of the importance of effective teaching at NMHU. The university supports effective teaching in a number of ways, including faculty development and programs for the recognition of outstanding teaching. Perhaps the clearest evidence of this support is the extreme effort that has been put into increasing faculty salaries at Highlands in recent years. In the decade spanning from the 1997-1998 to the 2006-2007 academic years Highlands faculty received the lowest cumulative salary increases of any faculty at the six universities in New Mexico.

In fact, NMHU had the lowest cumulative salary increase of ANY institute of higher education in New Mexico except one, Luna Community College, whose faculty received a cumulative percentage increase of only 26.5%. Of course, New Mexico is not a wealthy state, so even the faculty at our sister institutions earn salaries significantly below those of regional peer institutions. These differentials and an ambitious plan to bring New Mexico faculty salaries up to peer averages are documented in the faculty salary "[Gap Analysis](#)", prepared by the state HED in the fall of 2006.

Unfortunately, the recent economic trends have essentially derailed that plan at the state level, but NMHU has remained committed to the goal of achieving faculty salary parity with regional peers. Through the process of collective bargaining, the NMHU Faculty Association

and the current administration have implemented significant salary increases for tenured/tenure-track faculty for two years in a row, with the result that the average full professor salary went from 28.5% below regional peers to 17.8% below, the average associate professor salary went from 10.2% below regional peers to 4.9% below, and the average assistant professor salary went from 7.9% below regional peers to 6.5% below.

This commitment on the part of the NMHU administration to increase salaries also extends to Highlands' staff. Over the past three years Highlands' faculty and staff have received average raises significantly above the levels appropriated by the New Mexico State Legislature. In the latest legislative session, faculty and staff contributions to their retirement accounts were increased by 1.5%, resulting in actual compensation reductions. The Highlands' administration responded by increasing salaries by 1.5% to compensate.

NMHU's efforts to enhance teaching effectiveness can also be demonstrated by a commitment to maintaining small class sizes. In fact, Highlands has some of the smallest undergraduate class sizes of any of the universities in New Mexico.

Highlands maintains small class sizes, in the face of increasing enrollments, through a serious effort to increase the number of full-time faculty. In the fall of 2005, the University had 114 full-time faculty (including administrators holding tenured faculty status). By the fall of 2009 that number had increased to 153. This number includes 13 retained term, masters-level, instructors, most of who are responsible for teaching our 100-level English and math courses. Many of these courses were previously taught by per-course instructors.

### NMHU Faculty and Staff Salary Increases Compared to State Increases

	NMHU Faculty	NMHU Staff	Legislative Increase
2007-2008	10.8%	5.0%	5.0%
2008-2009	3.8%	3.3%	2.0%
2009-2010	1.5%	1.5%	(1.5%)
Three Year Total	16.1%	9.8%	5.5%

### Average Class Size, Fall 2008

	NM Tech	NM State	UNM	Eastern NM	NMHU	WesternNM
Lower Division	23.86	33	36	21	14.7	15.2
Upper Division	11.25	19	20	9.3	9	10.4
Graduate Division	4.37	8	11	7	7.7	8.8

(Council of University Presidents' "[Performance Effectiveness Report](#)", November of 2008)

## The People Behind the Data

*Arlie Tagayuna*

Highlands University sociology professor Arlie Tagayuna was named professor of the year for 2009 after being nominated by several students.

"I want my students to be empowered, critical thinkers with a global perspective," said Tagayuna, who grew up in the Philippines. "I always wanted to teach and be a catalyst for positive change."

Tagayuna taught at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, before joining the Highlands faculty in 2007. He earned his Ph.D. and master's degrees in sociology from the University of Hawaii, Manoa, and a bachelor's degree in sociology from the University of the Philippines.

He describes himself as a hybrid who can teach both sociology and criminal justice. His book manuscript, *Learning Disability and Learning Delinquency*, is under review by two publishers.

"Dr. Tagayuna is a professor that encourages us to think outside the box to be open minded, and provoke thought... all in the pursuit of knowledge," wrote sociology graduate student Simon Cao in his letter nominating Tagayuna for professor of the year.

These increases have been accomplished while still maintaining a high percentage of tenure-track faculty. In the fall of 2005, 70% of the full-time faculty were tenure-track (80 of 114). In the fall of 2009 that number is 65%, if the 13 masters-level instructors are included, (99 of 153), and 71% if that new position is not included (99 of 140).

This dramatic increase in the number of full-time faculty is of particular benefit to our Centers. While the Centers all began by utilizing part-time, per-course faculty, we recognized that this resulted in limited advisement for our students and was contributing to communication problems with the main campus. To rectify this situation, Highlands has made it a priority to hire full-time faculty for the Centers. Each of these faculty members belong to the relevant academic units on the main campus, and each participates in regular department meetings with the main campus faculty. By the fall of 2009, there were nine tenure-track faculty and 20 full-time visiting faculty teaching at our Centers.

### Recognition and Evaluation of Effective Teaching

The value that the University places on effective teaching, and the degree to which it is recognized, is evidenced by the central role that teaching plays in annual evaluation, tenure and promotion review, and post-tenure review. All full-time faculty members engage in annual evaluation. Annual evaluation follows the same criteria as tenure and promotion at NMHU. The Collective Bargaining Agreement specifies that all faculty members be evaluated annually by both peer faculty and student review ([Collective Bargaining Agreement article 23](#)). Non-tenure-track, full-time faculty are also evaluated by the department/school faculty annually using the same criteria outlined in the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Following annual evaluation, full-time faculty members develop a faculty development plan every fall which must be approved by the department chair/dean of the faculty member's unit. This faculty development plan must specify goals for teaching, scholarship and service for the upcoming school year, as well as a strategy for meeting

those goals. Specifically, according to the Collective Bargaining Agreement, these plans can include the following information related to effective teaching:

- Development of new courses
- Teaching methods or examination processes
- Mastery of new subject matter or technologies

To help the faculty member reach goals related to teaching effectiveness, the University provides many avenues of professional development, both on and off campus. Professional development include (these initiatives are discussed further in Criterion Four):

- Training on new technologies, including Blackboard, Eluminate Live, Respondus, ITV equipment and Smartboard technologies.
- Faculty development week. The week prior to every fall semester includes many presentations geared toward providing professional development for faculty.
- Travel monies to attend conferences.
- Support for faculty research through the Faculty Senate's Research Committee.
- Sabbaticals

The university provides opportunities for sabbaticals for faculty members to advance their academic contributions, and to "revitalize themselves through writing, scholarship, travel, research, and/or further formal educational study... (Collective Bargaining Contract – Article 14)." In addition, sabbaticals must contribute to the faculty member's development as a teacher and scholar. These leaves are available for 100% release for one semester or 50% release for two semesters with no loss of benefits or breaks in university service.

Each proposal for a sabbatical is evaluated on three criteria ([Faculty Handbook, Section VI, Part K](#)):

- Teaching Effectiveness: the leave proposal should indicate how the

applicant's effectiveness in future teaching responsibilities will be improved by the proposed travel, study, and/or research.

- **Program Development:** the extent to which the present and future programmatic needs within the member's curricula will benefit from the faculty member's proposed travel, activity, and/or research.
- **Professional Growth:** the proposed travel, activity, and/or research should contribute to the faculty member's effectiveness in his/her area of specialization.

Faculty members have used this leave support to develop courses, teaching materials, new programs, teaching methodologies, and to enhance their research. The Highlands' sabbatical program is discussed further under Criterion Four.

#### Center for Teaching Excellence

Highlands is currently considering the development of a Center for Teaching Excellence, based upon a model presented during the August 2008 Faculty Development Week by Tara Gray, of the New Mexico State University Center for Teaching Excellence ([Faculty Development Week Agenda 2008](#)). Developing such a center is a challenge on a small campus with few resources, however, a group of faculty members are currently developing a [proposal](#) for a sustainable center.

#### Rewards for Teaching Excellence

Highlands recognizes one outstanding teacher each year with the Professor of the Year Award. This award is sponsored by the Office of Alumni Affairs and administered by the Office of Campus Life. The call for nominations is circulated each spring, and the award is given at the annual Student Leadership Recognition Banquet. Nomination letters are evaluated and ranked by a committee of students, faculty and staff constituted by the Office of Campus Life. The first Professor of the Year award was given in the spring of 2001. Winners are listed on plaques in the Student Center. In its ninth year the award was given to Arlie Tagayuna, a professor of sociology and criminal justice studies.

### Core Component 3c. The organization creates effective learning environments.

#### Assessment Results Inform Improvements in Curriculum, Pedagogy, Instructional Resources, and Student Services

As described earlier in Component 3a, NMHU utilizes annual outcomes assessment and a five year cycle of program review to help evaluate its programs. Key to creating an effective learning environment is the "closing of the loop" in outcomes assessment. The outcomes assessment reports prepared by discipline are available on the [NMHU Web site](#). A few examples of academic programmatic changes based on outcomes assessment data are the following:

- **Biology** faculty found that "the average scores for the Cell and Molecular Biology upper division laboratory course (Biol424) were 95% (n=5, 2004), 70% (n=6, 2005), and 83% (n=11, 2006). 95% of seniors (n=6 in 2005, n=7 in 2006, and n=7/8 in 2007) successfully completed their senior project (Biol 492) receiving a

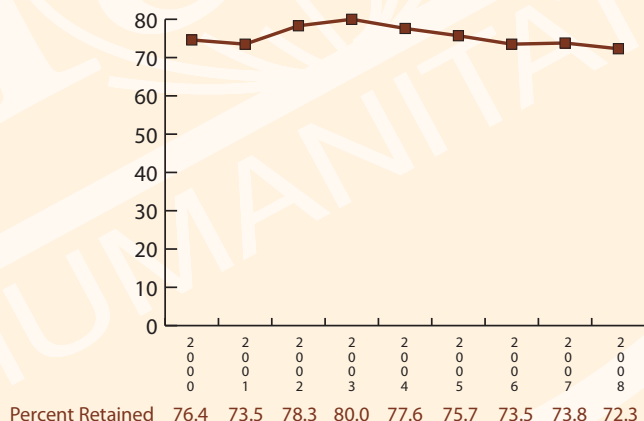
grade of "C" or better and presenting their senior project research as part of their final grade. Based on our 2003-2004 assessment report and need for our students to improve their writing skills. A research paper (10-12 pages in length) on the cell biology of a specific cancer was added to the course evaluation tools."

- **Geology** faculty reported the creation of three new goals, following their 2007-2008 outcomes assessment report. The goals of their program include improving scientific paper writing, improving class attendance, and improving student attention to deadlines. Outcomes for each goal are outlined in the report.
- **Forestry** faculty determined through outcomes assessment that shorter writing assignments were needed in their courses to allow for more feedback from course instructors. In addition, forestry faculty found that "in some of the upper level courses students are given assignments of critiquing journal articles and requiring them to provide feedback not only on content by structure and organization. Faculty are also allowing students to participate in the review process of manuscripts that have been submitted to professional journals so they get a better perspective of the nuts and bolts of constructing technical review documents."
- **Psychology** faculty reported that "...psychology paper(s) improved from last year to this year, in part due to changes made by the instructor to increase feedback, encourage greater participation in the online class, and deal early with emergent plagiarism issues."

#### Retention Initiatives

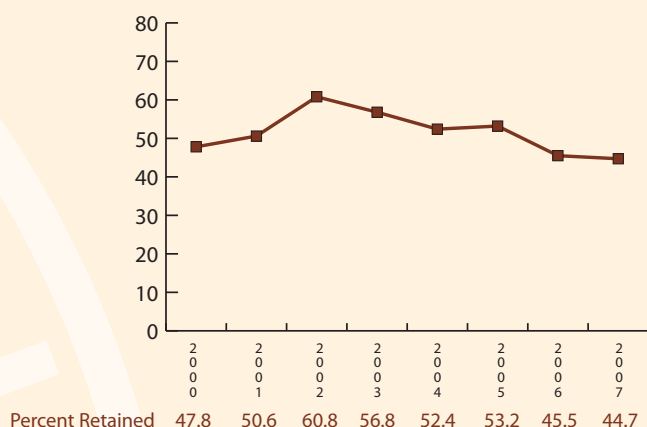
Retention of first-time freshmen has been a challenge at New Mexico Highlands University. Generally, 25% of each fall's first-time, full-time freshmen cohort does not return for the spring semester, and another 25% does not return for the second year (the following charts are based upon end-of-term data from the Banner system).

Fall to Spring Retention of First-Time Freshmen  
Fall 2000 to Fall 2008





Fall to Fall Retention of First-Time Freshmen  
Fall 2000 to Fall 2007



There are many possible reasons for these low retention rates, most centering on the fact that Highlands is an open enrollment institution. As an open enrollment institution our students demonstrate lower levels of academic preparation than students nationally (or at other four-year institutions in the state) and a lower level of commitment to college. This low level of commitment to college is evidenced by the fact that 42% of the fall 2008 freshmen cohort did not report ACT or SAT scores to the University, and 43% of the cohort was reported to the Early Alert system for poor attendance and/or poor academic performance in the third week of class (see [First-time Freshmen at NMHU, Fall 2000 to Fall 2008](#) for an in-depth discussion of factors effecting first-time freshmen retention).

Highlands is dedicated to increasing student retention. In the spring of 2006 a university-wide Retention Committee was formed. This committee was active through the spring of 2008 (although the last available minutes are from December of 2007) and developed a draft [retention plan for 2007-2008](#). Although this plan was never formally adopted, several of the action steps were successfully implemented. These include:

- Tracking student athletes in the Banner system to ensure accurate data on their academic progress; this was implemented in the spring of 2006
- Improving on-campus residential housing; our new residence hall is now complete and will be open in the fall of 2009 (see Criterion Two)
- Offer personal counseling services for our students; partially implemented in the fall of 2007, to be fully implement in the fall of 2009 (see Core Component 3d)
- Improve developmental course programs; both the math and English developmental programs have plans in place for improvement (see Criterion Four)
- Changes in first-year programming; see below
- Improved advisement procedures; see below

- Clear agreements with and support for underprepared students; see Core Component 3d
- Improved communication and contact with students; see Core Component 3d

We are working to increase the academic skills of high school graduates in the region through programs like the Center for the Study of Diverse Populations, the GEAR UP program, the Upward Bound program, and the Dual Credit Program (see Criterion Five). To address the skills of our students once they are enrolled at NMHU, we are making targeted improvements to our development course sequences in English and mathematics (see Criterion Four). We also have a number of specific initiatives designed to support students in the STEM fields (see Criterion Four) and Native American students (see Criterion Five).

In this section, we will discuss our efforts to increase student success through our advising programs, the Student Academic Support program, the Student Support Services Program, our support for students with accessibility needs, and our Learning Communities program.

### Advising and Student Academic Support

NMHU recognizes the importance of providing support services to our students. The [Office of Student Academic Support](#) (SAS) offers academic support to first-time and transfer students. SAS provides student orientations for incoming students to familiarize them with the University and to place students in our general education coursework. Staff in SAS advise students who have not yet declared a major and help link students with faculty in their desired programs of study.

NMHU utilizes a two-step advisement system for all undergraduate students. Upon entrance to the University, students are assigned to the Office of Student Academic Support for advisement (see the [Academic Support Policies and Procedures Manual](#)). These advisers help to place students in appropriate levels of coursework in the general education curriculum. In addition, the SAS staff helps students to investigate possible majors and minors within the University. Once the student has selected a major, the student is referred to the department/school for advisement by the faculty of that discipline.

When a student declares a major, the student is automatically assigned a "default faculty adviser" in the primary adviser field in the University's Banner system. These faculty members are chosen by the disciplines and are generally the program coordinators. This system then allows the program coordinator (or other identified default adviser) to generate a list of all students who have declared that major who have not yet been assigned to another faculty adviser, and to access contact information and academic transcripts for those students.

Once a semester the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research generates a list of all declared majors in each program, with contact information for each student. That list is then sent to the department chairs or school deans for distribution to the program coordinators. The program coordinators are then responsible for ensuring that all the majors in that program are assigned to appropriate faculty members as primary advisers. If the program wishes to change the primary adviser, the administrative assistant in the department can make that change in Banner.

Each semester, at the time when enrollment for the subsequent semester opens, an automatic message is generated by Banner to be viewed by each student. The message reminds the student to make an appointment with his or her faculty adviser, and gives the adviser's name. The message is viewed whenever a student logs onto self-service Banner for a period of two weeks.

While each student is assigned a primary adviser, Banner actually allows for multiple advisers to be identified for each student. This is extremely useful, since often student advisement is offered by more than one faculty or staff member (such as a minor adviser, a staff adviser from Student Support Services, or a center director). Programs can assign multiple advisers to students, and any faculty member can assign him or herself as an adviser if the student gives access.

Individual programs may handle faculty advisement in various ways. For example, some programs have a faculty member designated for undergraduate student advisement, while other programs may distribute advisement responsibilities among all the faculty. No matter how a program chooses to handle the identification of faculty advisers, all programs are required to maintain advisement folders for each major, minor, and graduate student. The files are required to have a copy of the student's major or minor form (for undergraduate students) or program of study (for graduate students). Contacts with students should be documented in the file, and the goal is to have a minimum of one documented advising contact with each student every semester.

The details of the advisement system may differ from program to program. In the Department of Exercise and Sport Sciences, for example, an advisement system was developed over a two year span using training from New Mexico's Strengthening Quality in Schools Initiative (SQS). The advisement system focuses on advisement twice a semester, publicized faculty advisement days, and the incorporation of advisement manuals into the advisement process. Faculty in these disciplines have developed a two-year plan of course offerings and recommended course sequencing for all their majors so that they may advise students up to two years in advance.

The [Student Support Services](#) (SSS) program is a federally funded Trio program. Trio programs were established by the U.S. Congress to help low-income Americans enter college and graduate. These programs are funded under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, and are designed to help students overcome class, social, academic, and cultural barriers to higher education. To qualify for this program, students must meet one of three criteria:

- First Generation - Neither parent received a four-year college degree before student turned 18.
- Low Income Student - Student's taxable income meets a federal standard.

- Disability - Student has either a certified or verified physical or learning disability.

Once students qualify for the program, SSS offers:

- Academic Assistance
- Career & Major Development
- Personal Counseling
- Tutoring
- Peer Mentoring
- Supplemental Grant Aid
- Social, Educational and Cultural Enrichment Opportunities
- Financial Aid Assistance

#### Assistance for Students with Disabilities

The Student Support Services program has been shown to be an effective retention initiative at Highlands. In the fall of 2008 43.5% of the first-time, full-time freshmen cohort enrolled in the SSS program. Students in the program were retained for the spring semesters at a rate of 78.4%, compared to 67.6% for students not in the program. It is important to note the SSS is a voluntary program; students must apply to and be accepted into the program. This means that students in the program probably possess a higher degree of commitment to college than those not in the program ([First-time Freshmen at NMHU, Fall 2000 to Fall 2008](#)).

#### Accessibility Services

The [Office of Accessibility Services](#) coordinates academic accommodations with appropriate university departments and employees; advises faculty, staff, and management on disability issues, and advocates on issues of concern to students with disabilities. Accessibility Services also advises students on academic, career, and transitional issues and provides referrals where appropriate.

The Office of Accessibility Services ensures that all students know about university policies regarding accessibility by requiring that the following statement be attached to all course syllabi at Highlands. An email is sent out before the beginning of each semester by the director of accessibility services reminding all faculty of this requirement.

NOTE: "In accordance with federal law, it is university policy to comply with the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA). If you believe that you have a physical, learning, or psychological disability that requires an academic accommodation, contact the Coordinator of Accessibility Services by phone at (505) 454-3188 or 454-3252, via e-mail at [desquibel@nmhu.edu](mailto:desquibel@nmhu.edu), or visit the Engineering building on the Las Vegas campus. If you

Fall-to-Spring Retention of Fall 2008 Freshmen by SSS

	Retained Spring		% Retained	Ratio of Retained vs. Not Retained	Odds Ratio
	No	Yes			
SSS	41	149	78.4%	3.63	1.74
No SSS	80	167	67.6%**	2.09	

need the document upon which this notice appears in an alternative format, you may also contact the Coordinator of Accessibility Service.”

On March 25, 2008 New Mexico Highlands University had a grand opening of its Adaptive Technology Center in the Thomas C. Donnelly Library. The center is located on the first floor of the Library. The Adaptive Technology Center was developed to assist students with disabilities by providing the latest in adaptive technology to better meet their academic needs. While the Adaptive Technology Center was designed for students registered with Accessibility Services, it is available for use by all currently registered NMHU students. Students who may have difficulties with comprehension/retention of academic courses, but were never diagnosed with a disability, now have the availability of an alternative manner of learning ([07-08 Donnelly Annual Report](#)).

### Learning Communities

Beginning in the fall of 2009, in order to increase student persistence and student chances for success, the University will be initiating a comprehensive Freshman Year Program. The program will be housed in the Department of English and Philosophy, in the College of Humanities and Fine Arts. One of the main initiatives of the program will be the continuation and expansion of the University’s Learning Communities program.

While Learning Communities are open to all students, they are specifically designed to increase retention among first-time freshmen. All first-time freshmen are encouraged to participate in a learning community their first semester. The learning communities involve two or sometimes three courses from either the general education requirements or an entry-level class for an academic major. Faculty members in these courses work together to weave the theme of the learning community throughout the coursework.

Learning Communities are proposed by unit faculty. For the fall of 2009, eleven learning communities are offered. These learning communities include:

- “We are the Champions” for student athletes interested in human performance and sport.
- “Speaking about the Arts” for students interested in media and fine arts.
- “Arts and Community” for students who want to investigate art as a living form of community expression.
- “Mineral Logic” for students who want to learn about the Earth’s mineral resources and how they influence our health, security, well being and society.
- “Healthy People 20/20” for students who want to develop attitudes and choices that will increase quality of life and athletic performance.
- “Do the Math” for students interested in exploring the many applications of math in day to day life.
- “Orale” for students interested in northern New Mexico Hispanic language and culture.
- “Heroes, Villains and Vampires” for students interested in the role

of heroes and villains in books and films such as *Frankenstein*, *Interview with the Vampire*, and *Twilight*.

- “School of Rock!” for students interested in exploring the basic elements of music and the importance of music as a form of human expression.
- “Who Am I?” for students interested in exploring similarities and differences in human nature.
- “Reach for the Stars”

Perhaps the most exciting learning community offered this fall is “Reach for the Stars.” Students in this learning community will build and launch a scientific experiment from Spaceport America. The students’ experiment will be launched in a UP Aerospace Space Loft XL sounding rocket designed specifically for scientific research. The 20-foot-long rocket will soar approximately 70 miles into space before dropping back to earth by parachute. Funding for the program comes from a NASA grant to the New Mexico Space Grant Consortium. Highlands is one of four New Mexico institutions involved in the program.

### Core Component 3d *The organization’s learning resources support student learning and effective teaching.*

At NMHU, we recognize that access to resources is an integral part of the learning process. A student-centered learning environment takes not only dedicated faculty, but also support for learning, pedagogical training, access to academic advising and support, and experiences in programs which enhance learning through practica, student jobs, and internships.

In addition to the programs listed in component 3c, the University also provides support for students through the Child Development Center, Student Health Services, Personal Counseling Services, and the Career Development Center. These programs are all designed to address issues that are central to our students’ lives, and which can have a major impact on their academic success.

The [Child Development Center](#) provides a structured day care program for infants, toddlers and preschoolers. The center services the children of Highlands’ students, staff, faculty and members of the local community. The program is approved by the New Mexico Department of Children, Youth and Families.

Highlands has been providing [Student Health Services](#) since 1992 through [El Centro Family Health](#). Office visits are free for students and students receive a discount on laboratory tests and prescriptions.

Personal counseling services were first offered at NMHU starting in 1990, but by 1998 the service had been essentially eliminated as the office was relocated and the staff members were assigned other duties. As a result of the recommendations of the Retention Committee (see Core Component 3c), Highlands again began offering confidential counseling services to our students. In the fall of 2007 a psychology professor with a degree and training in counseling psychology received a ¼ time release from teaching to offer counseling under the supervision of a licensed clinical psychologist. The fall semester was spent developing [a policies and procedures manual](#) and counseling



services began in the spring. Currently, we are in the process of hiring a full-time counselor to staff the center and extend services. The program will also have a secretary who will be shared with the Career Services Center.

As with personal counseling, career services have recently been strengthened at NMHU. The university had a fully staffed career services center through until 1998, at which point the center was essentially dismantled. From 1998 to 2008, career services were run by a career services coordinator with multiple other duties, and for two years the position was completely unfilled. In the fall of 2008, the University hired a full-time director, and our Career Services Center was again operational.

The [Career Services Center](#) offers free services to all NMHU students regarding career plans, obtaining internships and other career related experiences, and finding full-time employment upon graduation. This assistance is provided through individual counseling, workshops, class presentations, and special events that bring together employers and students. The center is not just focused on graduating seniors. Freshmen and other new students are encouraged to take advantage of the services early in their college education. Services include career advisement, resume writing, interviewing techniques, summer internships, career fairs, and job fairs ([Career Services Operating Procedures](#)). The success of this re-invigorated program is evidenced by its 2,677 student contacts and 798 employer contacts during the 2008-2009 academic year ([Career Services Activity Report, 2008-2009](#)). The center has also been successful in facilitating the placement of 50 Highlands students in a variety of summer internship programs.

Like many universities, Highlands has struggled with providing support for students in need of remediation in math and English (see Criterion Four for a discussion of these development programs). In the fall of 2008, 163 incoming freshmen enrolled in 100-level developmental courses for both reading and math. This accounted for 37% of the first-time freshmen cohort ([Fall 2008 Enrollment Success Cohort Final Report](#)). This cohort was identified as needing intensive intervention through the Office of Student Academic Support (OAS), a program that was titled the Enrollment Success Cohort. Of students registered in the Enrollment Success Cohort, 137 (84%) successfully completed the fall 2008 semester. Students had an overall fall 2008 GPA of 1.99.

In order to help prepare students for successful completion of their first semester in college, students in the Enrollment Success Cohort were asked to sign a [contract](#) with the University to show their commitment to their education. The conditions of the contract require students to seek advisement, tutoring, and other services that are available to all students. More specifically, the following provisions were required for students in this program:

- Complete of all courses with a GPA of 2.0 or better
- Attend all classes
- Meet regularly with an academic adviser from either SSS or OAS
- Attend tutoring sessions, workshops, and presentations agreed to with academic adviser
- Complete career development exploration with academic adviser
- Complete academic progress sheet for the 2nd, 6th, 10th, and 15th weeks of the semester

- Preregister for the subsequent semester
- Renew the contract by the end of the semester with academic adviser.

Students signing the contract understand that failure to comply with the contract may result in academic probation or dismissal from the University. Results from the analysis of the fall 2008 data indicated that 43% of students received a GPA of less than 2.0, thus breaking their contract with the University. After analyzing data from the cohort, it was determined that the biggest challenge that students faced was meeting with their academic adviser on a regular basis. Only 41 students met with their adviser on a weekly basis, as required, while 72 students met only a few times, and 50 students never met with their advisers.

These results point out a major challenge with student support at Highlands: maintaining contact with our students, particularly our first-time freshmen. Students often fail to update their contact information and do not respond to phone calls or mail. Although all students are assigned a university email account and are informed that official communications from the University are sent via email, the response to these communications is often poor. Students just do not use their university email accounts. In an effort to increase student usage of their email accounts, a number of changes are being implemented in the fall of 2009. Students will be allowed to choose their own username, their email storage capacity will be increased, they will be able to link their university email account to other accounts (such as Hotmail), and they will be able to use their email addresses on a wider variety of Internet sites and services.

#### Practicum and Internship Experiences

Practica and internships play a central role in the support of student learning. Students often find that the opportunity to utilize what they have learned in the classroom in a supervised real-world setting is the exciting and rewarding part of their educational programs. Internships are required parts of some academic programs, such as in the School of Education where teacher candidates complete three field-based internships, including a student teaching capstone experience. Students in the exercise science major must complete a practicum in a wellness program to gain experience working with clients (see Criterion Five). And students in counseling and guidance, social work, and the masters in psychology program all must complete practicum hours in a clinical setting.

In addition to those programs requiring internship experience, several programs, such as media arts, business, and sociology have elective internship classes. Some practica, such as the NMHU Wellness Program, and the counseling services center run by faculty from the counseling and guidance program, take place in settings on campus. The English program offers graduate students practicum course credit for working on *Picayune*, Highlands' literary magazine.

But the majority of these placements depend upon collaborative relationships with various organizations in the region. The media arts PICT (Intensive Program in Interactive Cultural Technology) internship program places students at organizations around the state (see Criterion Two). The software development program that is being reinstated is built around paid internships (see Criterion Two). Students in those programs requiring clinical mental health

**In 2008-09, approximately 420 students competed on Cowboys and Cowgirls teams.**

practica benefit from the large number of mental health providers in Las Vegas, such as the New Mexico Behavioral Health Institute (the state psychiatric hospital). The Institute provides students experience working with clients with severe mental illness, adolescent sex offenders, and forensic populations. Mental health interns are also placed with the San Miguel/Mora/Guadalupe Community Mental Health Center, the Tri-County Family Justice Center, and the Department of Children, Youth and Family Services. The School of Business places students in a number of state agencies, such as the New Mexico Taxation and Revenue Department, the Finance Authority, and the Public Education Department. Interns from other programs are placed with the Las Vegas District Attorney's Office, the Juvenile Probation and Parole Office, the San Miguel County Detention Center and a wide variety of other agencies too numerous to mention.

Highlands' students are strongly encouraged to apply for summer internship programs which recruit students nationally. While we do not have a good method of tracking these students across the University, in the 2008-2009 academic year the Career Services Center tracked 50 students who were placed in summer internships, including six students in the [HACU National Internship Program](#) and ten students with the USDA Forest Service.

### Athletics

Highlands University is a member of the NCAA Division II athletic program. We compete in the Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference (RMAC), which is celebrated its 100 year anniversary in 2008-09. NMHU athletics consists of 12 sports affiliated with the NCAA and two sports affiliated in the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association. The sports include: men's and women's cross-country; football; women's volleyball; women's soccer; men's wrestling; men's and women's basketball; women's indoor track and field; women's outdoor track and field; men's baseball; women's softball; and men's and women's rodeo.

In 2008-09, approximately 420 students competed on Cowboys and Cowgirls teams, up from 317 in 2007-08. Athletes are the only group of students at NMHU that must meet academic admission requirements. Incoming freshmen must have scored an 18 on the ACT exam or 820 on the SAT exam, and must have passed 14 core units in high school with a 2.0 GPA. Transfer students must have completed 12 transferrable credits for every full time semester attended previously at postsecondary institutions.

Our athletic programs provide a great deal of support for our athlete/scholars. Athletic scholarships are an important source of financial support for our students, particularly transfer students. Most of the teams require their members to provide records of class attendance,

and poor academic performance results in suspension from the team. As a result of these efforts, athletes who begin as first-time freshmen at Highlands have significantly higher graduation [rates](#) than do all other first-time freshmen.

Highlands received the [NCAA Diversity in Athletics Award for Racial Diversity](#) in 2007-08. Our men's basketball team just completed a season that broke the NCAA record for single season win turnaround for any division. The NMHU baseball team competed in the NCAA Regional Baseball Tournament. Three wrestlers and four rodeo members competed in national tournaments. These accomplishments over the past year have resulted in a great deal of positive media coverage of NMHU Athletics.

## Opportunities For Improvement

As an open enrollment institution, Highlands has the opportunity to provide a quality university education to a wide variety of students. We embrace this opportunity, but it comes with challenges. It is particularly important to our institution that we have a clear understanding of the needs of our students, and that we continually assess our effectiveness in meeting those needs. In order to meet this challenge, the following action steps will be implemented:

- **Coordination of retention efforts for first-time freshmen:** The new director of first-year initiatives will coordinate efforts to identify issues related to student retention, set realistic goals in each of these areas, and provide effective coordination of retention efforts.
- **Alignment and utilization of student learning assessment at all levels:** We will continue with our HLC Academy for Assessment of Student Learning project to align assessment procedures across the university in accordance with our newly identified traits for NMHU graduates. The data from that aligned assessment system, and the data from the Collegiate Learning Assessment, to identify key areas for improvement in our curriculum.
- **Center for Teaching Excellence:** Supporting student learning means supporting effective teaching. Highlands has never had a recognized mechanism for disseminating information regarding effective teaching approaches or mentoring faculty in their use. We will establish such a center in the next year.
- **Policies and procedures for part-time faculty:** Currently our policies for the training and evaluation of part-time and adjunct faculty exist only at the department level. The university's administration and the Faculty Senate are discussing the creation of a new handbook for part-time and non-tenure track faculty, or the inclusion of the issues in the current NMHU Faculty Handbook.







## Criterion Four: Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge

*The organization promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.*

### Introduction

New Mexico Highlands began as a normal school, a teacher's college, and we have never lost sight of the fact that teaching is at the heart of our mission. During the past century, however, that original focus on teaching has become a focus on learning, with a complex understanding of what learning entails. At Highlands we view learning as enriching the lives of individuals at every point, in a myriad of ways from career development to an enhanced understanding and enjoyment of the world around them. We also believe that, as a university, we have an obligation to ensure that our students will have the knowledge, skills and sense of purpose and passion necessary to address the complex issues faced by our diverse, technological world. Finally, we believe that research and scholarship serve not just to generate new knowledge but are central to the process of teaching and learning.

Our commitment to this complex understanding of the process of learning is evident throughout the University. One of the clearest indicators is our strong research program, with external research funding levels significantly above those of our peers. In addition, in the past few years we have initiated new programs, and strengthened

existing ones, to support scholarship and faculty and staff development. Across the University, we have seen the development of programs, both large and small, designed to engage our students with the world around us, and to provide them with the knowledge and skills they need to work and live effectively in that world.

**Core Component 4a** *The organization demonstrates, through the actions of its board, administrators, faculty and staff, that it values a life of learning.*

The active and vibrant role of research and scholarship at NMHU, and the ways in which scholarship supports learning, are acknowledged and supported by policies throughout the University. The NMHU Handbook on Research Policy states:

“NMHU acknowledges that research is the path and force for succeeding in our rapidly changing economy and society. It is an essential element toward the search and understanding of new knowledge and its applications. It is the constant for redefining existing theories, data, programs, techniques and equipment. It is the opportunity to apply scientific process and methodology in a variety of settings including laboratories, clinical settings, in the community, across the country, and around the world” ([NMHU Handbook on Research Policy, Introduction](#)).



### External Funding (In Millions) Awarded, FY 03 to FY 08

Institution	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
NMHU	\$19.7	\$20.04	\$17.9	\$16.6	\$14.8	\$14.9
Eastern NM	\$8.3	\$8.3	\$8.3	\$7.8	\$6.6	\$7.4
Western NM	\$3.0	\$3.6	\$6.9	\$4.6	\$3.1	\$2.9

Council of University Presidents [Performance Effectiveness Reports](#), 2002-2008

### Grants Awarded by Area, FY 99 to FY 09

Campus Department	Number of Awards	Amount Awarded
College of Arts and Sciences	663	\$47,630,993.83
School of Business	6	\$ 289,363.19
School of Education	469	\$52,280,716.85
School of Social Work	63	\$21,358,558.03
Student Services	656	\$93,915,971.48

This understanding of the importance of scholarship at the University is mirrored in the NMHUFA [Collective Bargaining Agreement](#), which states, “Effective teaching is enhanced through involvement in the intellectual and scholarly developments in a discipline” (article 23.4.2). This commitment to the support of scholarship can be clearly seen in the amount of external funding awarded to the institution.

Highlands University is distinguished, in part, from our sister institutions through our strong focus on graduate education and the significant amount of external funding the University is awarded each year. Generally, Highlands receives at least twice as much external funding as the state’s other comprehensive institutions.

Grant activity pervades the University. Our external funding includes funded scholarship, student service, and community service programs. The service programs will be explored further under Criterion Five, while in this chapter we will discuss externally funded research.

- The Mechanical Biological Treatment Feasibility Research Program involves faculty from the School of Business conducting research on the financial aspects of developing a green waste treatment plant. This program could result in the establishment of a center at NMHU on green treatment of solid waste.
- Highlands is one of four New Mexico institutions to receive funding under the New Mexico Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research. The program is designed to stimulate climate change research in the state. The funding at NMHU will be used to equip a new water quality lab in the Department of Natural Resource Management and to fund graduate and undergraduate student research. Faculty member Edward Martinez and his students are examining the effect of climate change on water quality in New Mexico’s high-elevation watersheds.
- The [New Mexico Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute](#) (NMFWR) is a statewide effort that engages government agencies, academic and research institutions, land managers, and the interested public in forest and watershed management. The New Mexico For-

est and Watershed Restoration Institute is one of three Institutes formed by the Federal [Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act of 2004](#). Our partner institutions are the [Ecological Restoration Institute](#), at Northern Arizona University, and the Colorado Forest Restoration Institute, at Colorado State University. During the 2007 fiscal year (July 2007 – June 2008), the NMFWR participated in approximately 35 projects involving 11 land management entities across the state. Time commitments for these projects ranged from a few hours (making maps or providing GPS training) to multiple weeks (field monitoring and data analysis). In the 2007 fiscal year, the NMFWR had six full-time employees. In addition to the full-time staff, the institute employed two Highlands’ undergraduates and a masters’ student during the school year, and five undergraduates during the summer of 2008. The institute also engaged nine contractors to help complete several of the projects. These projects, and their relevance to institute objectives, are outlined in the [2007-2008 Annual Report](#).

- The [Research Infrastructure in Minority Institutions](#) (RIMI) program is a major funded research program at NMHU designed to increase faculty involvement in funded research. The program lasts for five years and includes release time for faculty members to write grants, a summer fellowship program to encourage faculty to engage in collaborative research with researchers at other institutions, and individual research programs. There are currently three RIMI funded research programs at NMHU, in Biology, Chemistry and Social Work.
- The RIMI program also supports the [Post-Doctoral Fellows Program](#), which is currently (2008-2009) supporting two biomedical researchers who are collaborating on the RIMI research grants in Biology and Chemistry.

The [Office of Research and Sponsored Projects](#) (ORSP) provides oversight of and support for grant writing activity at NMHU. This office is responsible for ensuring compliance with university, state, and federal regulations regarding grant activity. The ORSP identifies and

## The People Behind the Data

*Ana Zepeda, psychology student, Farmington Center*

Anna Zepeda is one of the Highlands University students who worked on the cyberbullying pilot study. “We were surprised at how common cyberbullying is,” Zepeda said. “The three of us who worked on the study graduated from high school in the mid 1990s. This wasn’t an issue then because social networking sites didn’t exist. It’s amazing – and disturbing – how much things have changed. It was interesting to learn that girls are much more likely to be victims of cyberbullying than boys.”

“You hear about studies all the time but you don’t know what’s involved,” Zepeda said. I learned a lot about conducting research from beginning to end. It’s really exciting that our first research project was approved for presentation at the Rocky Mountain Psychological Association Convention.”

informs faculty of [opportunities for funded projects](#). Highlands recognizes that it can be challenging for small departments with few faculty to successfully pursue external funding. Because of this, the ORSP puts a special emphasis on forming collaborative, multidisciplinary relationships among diverse groups at the University to pursue those opportunities ([NMHU Handbook on Research Policy, Introduction](#)).

Research programs at NMHU are guided by our [Handbook on Research Policy](#). This document outlines general policies and procedures regarding research, administration and management of grants, intellectual property rights, and policies regarding the safe and ethical implementation of research programs. Written in 2000, the handbook was last updated in 2007. Responsibility for updating and implementing the Handbook on Research Policy is shared by the ORSP, research faculty, and the Faculty Research Committee.

The NMHU [Faculty Research Committee](#) is a subcommittee of the Faculty Senate. As part of its responsibilities, it awards our Faculty Research Funds. While the awards are small, the [list of the projects awarded](#) during the past two years demonstrates the breadth of faculty research interests here at NMHU. Between the fall of 2007 through the summer of 2009, the Faculty Research Committee funded a total of 30 projects from 24 faculty members representing 11 different disciplines. Of those 30 projects, 20 were for research activities and 10 were for travel. The total amount awarded during that time was \$69,149, over 83% of which went for research activities.

The Faculty Research Committee also hosts our annual Faculty/Student Research Day. The [7<sup>th</sup> Annual Research Day](#) was held in April of 2009. The event this year included seven oral presentations and 30 poster presentations representing nine academic programs. Twenty faculty members and 41 students presented their research, including a student from our University Studies program.

For the past two years, NMHU has conducted a [survey of faculty non-teaching productivity](#). The survey of 2007-2008 activities documents a high level of faculty scholarly activity.

- 42.6% of the respondents published a refereed work as author or co-author.
- 46.8% of the respondents served in some capacity on an externally funded grant.

- All together, 76.6% of the respondents published or presented their work.

Faculty who have recently published books or chapters in books include **Jose Sisneros** (*Critical Multicultural Social Work*, with C. Stakeman, M. Joyner, and C. Schmitz), **Peter Linder** from History (“19th and 20th Centuries: Venezuela” in *The Handbook of Latin American Studies*), **Eddie Tafoya** (*The Legacy of the Wisecrack: Stand-up Comedy as the Great American Literary Form*), and **Camea Gagliardi-Blea** (“College Giftedness” in *Encyclopedia of Giftedness, Creativity, and Talent*).

Highlands faculty members also take a leadership role in the production and dissemination of scholarship and creative activity, as demonstrated by the number of faculty who hold elected office in state, regional, and national professional associations. In the past two years those faculty have included:

- Jim Burns, Executive Secretary, New Mexico Middle Level Educators
- Jean Hill, Secretary, Society for Community Research and Action, Division 27 of the American Psychological Association
- David Hacker, President, New Mexico Society of American Foresters
- Merritt Helvenston, Board of Directors, Rocky Mountain Region of the American Chemical Society
- David Lobdell, President, Western Cast Iron Art Alliance
- Daniel Martinez, Board Member, New Mexico Humanities Council
- Mary Romero, Director, Association of Latino Professionals in Finance and Accounting Albuquerque New Mexico Chapter
- Maureen Romine, Board Member, New Mexico Academy of Science
- Lee Stauffer, Member of Executive Council, New Mexico West Texas Philosophical Society; Member of Executive Council, International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilization

At Highlands, research is not seen as an activity separate from teaching, instead research is seen as a way of enhancing our teaching. Jim Burns, a professor in the School of Education, puts it this way: “Being both a qualitative researcher and an instructor of action research in education, I truly enjoy actively engaging my students as researchers. What is wonderful about this process is the relationships that common engagement (and perhaps love) for research produces.

Last semester, two of my graduate students in educational leadership, Michael Tenorio and Daniel Maestas, received co-author credit in a publication for a study in which they assisted with the stats. Two more of my recent educational leadership grads, Rita Bustamante and Jesse Miller, presented their research at the Center for Teaching Excellence's 17th Annual Action Research Conference, held in Taos in June 2009."

Highlands' students across the University demonstrate a high level of scholastic and scholarly activity. For example, at the Rocky Mountain Psychological Association Conference in April of 2009, fourteen psychology students presented research. Three of those students were undergraduate students from the psychology program at our Farmington Center who presented research on cyber bullying. Travis Simcox, a graduate student from the psychology program on the main campus, won a student research award at the conference, the same award won in 2008 by Michael Zimmermann, another Highlands psychology graduate student. Other examples of student involvement in research and scholarly activities are presented throughout this Self Study.

### Nuevo Mexico – An Anthology of History

In a major piece of New Mexico scholarship, Semos Unlimited published, with the support of Highlands University, a new, groundbreaking high school textbook on the history of New Mexico. Semos is a private nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving the language and culture of Hispanics in New Mexico. The textbook will be used in high schools throughout the state and is also appropriate for some college-level history courses.

"This is the first textbook on New Mexico history written by New Mexico scholars and historians," said Roberto Mondragon, president of Semos, and former New Mexico lieutenant governor. He also taught at the University of New Mexico. "The textbook comes from the heart of not one person but from the heart of many."

Georgia Roybal, executive director for Semos and longtime bilingual educator, said the most important element of the book is the culturally diverse authors represented in the anthology. For example, the Navajo section is written by a Navajo. Several chapters of the textbook were written by Highlands University professors ([press release](#)).

### Picayune: Highlands' Literary Magazine

*Picayune* began as *Perspectivas* circa 1995, a journal based in the English programs with the aim to publish local (especially Highlands University student) writing. *Perspectivas* was between 5 to 6 years old when the name was changed to *Sendero*. This version of the magazine successfully continued publishing local and statewide writing. Because of dedicated staff and editors (English program graduate students often working for practicum course credit), the magazine went from saddle stitching to perfect bound in one year and developed a regional and international submission network over the next few volumes.

In 2008 a new moniker, *Picayune*, was adopted. Under this name, the magazine has published two volumes in perfect bound containing local, regional, national and international material. Submissions are accepted electronically with a default print run of 100 copies per volume and a reading period of October 15 through January 15.

### Faculty and Staff Development

Scholarship, the generation of new knowledge, is only one part of fostering a life-long approach to learning. Supporting our faculty

and staff in accessing that knowledge, continually developing their skills and exploring new ways of understanding their work is another important part. To this aim, NMHU maintains a number of programs aimed at faculty and staff development.

- The Faculty Sabbatical program is supported by the Faculty Handbook ([Section VI, K. 1.](#)) and the Collective Bargaining Agreement ([Article 14](#)).
- Held the week before the beginning of the fall semester, our annual [Faculty Development Week](#), provides faculty with training on advisement, distance education, teaching pedagogy, use of technology in teaching, grant writing, article publication, and research ethics.
- In November of 2008, our Regents approved the expansion of our [Employee Educational Assistance Tuition Reduction Program](#). Employees of NMHU and their eligible dependents may now take up to eight credit hours during the regular semesters and four credit hours during the summer semester tuition-free. The university also extended the list of eligible dependents covered under the program to include domestic partners.
- The [Pino Endowment for Faculty Development](#) is designed to "provide faculty at NMHU an opportunity to further their development in the areas of Teaching, Research/Scholarly Activity, and Service to the University and Community." The endowment dispersed its first awards during the 2007-2008 academic year.
- The [Nina Telsa Ballen Visiting Professor Endowment](#) was formed "to support an energized scholastic environment among the faculty at New Mexico Highlands University." The endowment brings a visiting scholar to NMHU for a two-week period each year. The first Nina Telsa Ballen Visiting Professor to come to Highlands was artist [Eddie Dominguez](#), who gave a series of demonstrations and lectures on campus in November of 2008. The second Ballen Visiting Scholar, Dr. Paul Zolbrod, gave public lectures on Navajo mythology, taught several classes, and gave a faculty colloquium during his visit in April 2009.
- The Research Infrastructure in Minority Institutions (RIMI) program also funds [faculty development](#) programs, including fellowships to provide release time for faculty to prepare and submit applications for research funding to the National Institutes of Health and summer fellowships for travel to a research-intensive institution for the purpose of conducting collaborative research.
- The RIMI program also provides funding for our [Biomedical Lecture Series](#), which to date has brought three internationally known biomedical researchers to the NMHU campus to present their work.
- The Faculty Research Committee's (FRC) funds will be increased so that more faculty members will have access to research seed money.
- The ORSP established a competitive process through which faculty members can submit a summary proposal that identifies a funding agency and research topic. The FRC selects the best proposals and will award up to five faculty members per semester .25 FTE release time. It is hoped this one-course release will give the faculty member enough time to write and submit the complete proposal. Finally, in an effort to provide a forum for the research efforts of our faculty members and students, the ORSP will begin publication of a refereed journal that will have a multidisciplinary focus.



## The People Behind the Data

### *Miriam Langer, Media Arts Professor*

Miriam Langer, Highlands University media arts professor and Visual and Performing Arts Department chair, spent a successful sabbatical abroad last spring building partnerships with universities in Switzerland and Italy. She also met with European innovators in media arts to share ideas.

"The faculty at the University of Lugano was stunned at the quality of work and the technical demands we place on our students," Langer said. "No one could believe that our students are doing real work for exhibitions and delivering professional work."

During her sabbatical, Langer also had the opportunity to teach two week-long workshops at the University of Siena, Tuscany, Italy. She taught in Italian.

"We are definitely on our way to building an excellent international reputation," Langer said.

- The ORSP has provided all faculty and staff who have sought to submit a proposal with grant writing assistance. During the last two years, the University employed six different grant writers, each of whom has different areas of expertise, and matched proposal topics to the expertise of the grant writer.
- Although many universities around the nation are completely eliminating funds for faculty travel in an attempt to deal with severe budget shortfalls, NMHU remains committed to the idea that faculty travel is central to faculty development and the dissemination of scholarship. The university attempts to maintain approximately \$500 for travel per full-time faculty member in each departmental budget. While this amount is obviously limited, it is still an important aspect of university support for faculty research.

Many of these programs are relatively new, beginning in the past few years, such as the Pino Endowment and the Ballen Award. Others have been strengthened, such as the employee tuition reimbursement program. The positive effects of these programs can be seen across the University. A few examples of these positive effects will be given here.

#### **Sabbaticals**

The sabbatical program at NMHU has a very sporadic history. From 1993 to 2001, no sabbaticals were granted. In 2001-2002 three faculty members were awarded leave, but the program was then suspended again for the next five years. For the past three academic years the University has made a significant and consistent effort to support the sabbatical program. Three faculty members were awarded leave for the 2007-2008 year, four were awarded leave for the 2008-2009 year, and

three have been awarded leave for the 2009-2010 year.

#### **Employee Tuition Reimbursement Program**

Participation in the employee tuition reimbursement program has increased significantly during the past decade (from 97 employees in the fall of 2000 to 132 employees in the fall of 2008) and increased again to 165 employees in the spring 2008 (after the extension of the program).

Many of these employees are degree-seeking students. There are currently 22 employees of the University who have completed or are in the process of completing degrees utilizing the employee tuition reimbursement program. Cindy Gurule is one of those people. Cindy completed all of the classes for her MBA while working full-time for the University and received her degree in the spring of 2008. Cindy says: "I would say that the tuition program played a huge role in me completing my degree. My cost was only for books."

Some employees, such as Rosalie Martinez, have earned two degrees while supported by the employee tuition reimbursement program. Rosalie says: "The employee tuition reimbursement program allowed me to fulfill a lifelong dream. I completed my undergraduate degree in social work, working full time, and I am now pursuing a master's degree in bilingual/bicultural clinical social work graduating May 2009."

One significant aspect of the employee tuition reimbursement program is that it allows for enrollment at other New Mexico state institutions. Charlene Ortiz-Cordova is taking advantage of this provision to complete her Ph.D. in the Educational Leadership Program at New Mexico State University.

## The People Behind the Data

### *Kimberly Valdez, Registrar Center Specialist and Sociology student*

Kimberly Valdez works in the university's Registrar's Office and is completing her master's degree in public affairs with a concentration in applied sociology, thanks to the University's Employee Tuition Reimbursement Program.

"It feels great to be working at an institution of higher education that supports and encourages its employees to continue their education," Valdez said. "It made it so much easier for me not to have to take out student loans."

Valdez, who worked full time during her graduate studies, also credits her supervisor, Registrar John Coca, with giving her the support and job flexibility that allowed her to take the classes she needed.

## Core Component 4b *The organization demonstrates that the acquisition of a breadth of knowledge and skills and the exercise of intellectual inquiry are integral to its educational program.*

The current NMHU mission states that we develop “broadly literate citizens and leaders, educated in analytical and critical thought and in the appreciation of the arts and sciences.” This statement reflects Highlands’ identity as a liberal arts institution, and, as such, our core curriculum lies at the heart of our educational experience.

New Mexico’s Higher Education Department spent several years working with various stakeholders, including the state’s higher education institutions, to develop a [35 credit-hour general education common core curriculum](#). In 2005 the New Mexico Legislature passed Senate Bill 161, which ensured that courses meeting common-core requirements at one institution are accepted at all other institutions in the state. The purpose of this effort was to ensure that students could easily transfer within the state without having to repeat general education core courses. The core matrix of approved courses guaranteed to transfer and meet general education requirements at any New Mexico college or university can be found on the [New Mexico Higher Education Department Web site](#). Courses in the state core matrix are listed by institution under each of the five general education areas.

After the common core and articulation agreements were developed, the NMHED led a series of task force meetings with the goal of developing a recognized set of [general education core competencies](#) that all students completing the common core in the state are expected to achieve. Attainment of these core competencies is assessed yearly as part of our university-wide outcomes assessment process (covered in Criterion Three of this report).

Our current core curriculum has been in place since 1997 ([Undergraduate Catalog, pg. 138](#)). There have only been a few modifications since then to reflect course changes at the discipline level. The general education curriculum includes the 35-hour state mandated common core, as well as three proficiency requirements (in math, English, and computer proficiency). Our general education curriculum also has some additional requirements, not part of the state mandated core, illustrating Highlands’ commitment to ensure that all of our students will acquire an education that is broadly relevant to living and working in our complex, modern society. These requirements include two classes in a second language, one upper-division literature class, and two credits in physical education.

The Academic Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate holds the primary responsibility for the development and assessment of the NMHU core curriculum. In the fall of 2007, that committee reviewed the core curriculum to determine if our institution-specific core requirements placed an undue burden on our students ([AA minutes from 12/5/07](#)). A [review of general education requirements](#) from across the state demonstrated that our requirements were equivalent to those of our sister institutions. In addition, the faculty expressed the strong belief that the additional requirements were a necessary reflection of our mission and of our goals for our core curriculum.

Our core curriculum is designed to ensure that all students at NMHU

attain four broad sets of skills and knowledge. These outcomes are listed below.

### *NMHU Core Curriculum Outcomes*

I	II
Communication skills to function effectively in society	Critical thinking skills to function effectively in society
III	IV
Basic information & intellectual processes to function effectively in society	Ability to access, manipulate & use data & other information to function effectively in society

Our current assessment of the core is based upon the measurement of these outcomes, and the general education core competencies identified by the state of New Mexico. As described under Criterion Three, Highlands is presently engaged in a process of articulating our common vision of the characteristics we hope to instill in all students who receive a degree from our university. These characteristics will essentially replace the core competencies listed above and will serve as the basis for the University-wide alignment of our outcomes assessment efforts.

### **Composition Program and Writing Center**

At Highlands, we understand the crucial role that reading and writing play in a college education. The ability to analyze written material is central to learning, and the ability to write clearly and elegantly in a variety of genres is central to communicating information in every field. We also understand that imparting these skills at a level appropriate for a college graduate is a challenge for every open-enrollment institution. This challenge, and our struggles to address it, is evident in our program-specific outcomes assessment activities, our retention efforts, and in our core curriculum and developmental programs. The English and Philosophy Department directs two of our major initiatives in addressing this challenge, the Composition Program and the Writing Center.

The NMHU [Writing Center](#) provides assistance to all NMHU students at any stage of a writing project, from conceptualization and organization through final editing. Instructors can provide the Writing Center staff with descriptions of the writing assignments in their courses and require their students to demonstrate that they used the center’s services.

The Composition Program includes English 100 (our developmental course, Reading and Writing for College), English 111 (Freshmen Composition I) and English 112 (Freshmen Composition II). The program has undergone continuous change during the past five years. These changes (many of which also applied to our developmental math courses), included one year when all developmental courses were offered through Luna Community College and another year in which all developmental and core English and math courses had required lab sections. The changes also included an ongoing effort begun in 2007-2008 to hire full-time, retained term masters-level instructors with specific skills in teaching developmental English.

However, the program has stabilized since the University hired a full-time, tenure-track director of composition in August 2007. In

2007-2008, due to research indicating its effectiveness for open-admissions and first-generation students, the director implemented an English 111 course design based on the explicit teaching of genre. The Composition Program now produces and revises its own textbook (published by Fountainhead Press) every year, involving course instructors and teaching assistants in the process as a part of the program's commitment to ongoing teacher training and professional development. In 2008-2009 the director of the program, in consultation with other members of the English faculty, formalized clear objectives and methods of assessment for English 111 and 112. These efforts are documented in the [Annual Composition Program Report for 2008-2009](#).

One of the Composition Program's objectives for 2008-2009 was to develop a more effective curriculum for English 100. One exciting outcome of that research is the pilot of an inquiry-based curriculum and textbook in one section of English 100 in the spring 2009 semester. The students in this section had a pass rate of 90%, much higher than the overall pass rate for English 100 classes of about 60%. While several aspects of this class made it unique, and it is not expected that the 90% pass rate will be easily duplicated, the results are impressive enough that this curriculum is going to be adopted for all sections of English 100 in the fall of 2009. Because the English 100 curriculum was being revised that year, the director worked on its objectives and methods of assessment during the summer, and they will be formalized by English faculty in August 2009.

Due to the importance of reading to college student success, the director has implemented several changes in curriculum and training to improve composition students' achievement in reading. In fall 2009, the Composition Program will implement a reading pre- and post-test for English 100 that was developed in alignment with course content, pedagogy, and objectives. The annual August composition teaching orientation includes workshops on the teaching of reading and assignment design, most notably the effective use of reading guides. In the graduate-level teaching seminar required of all teaching assistants, reading and writing are presented as integrated, and the revised course objectives now emphasize reading to ensure it receives the appropriate attention across composition courses.

#### Math Program

The [developmental mathematics program](#) at Highlands consists of Math 100 (Introduction to Algebra) and Math 120 (Intermediate Algebra). These classes are designed to prepare students for Math 140 (College Algebra), the course required in New Mexico's common core curriculum and included among the graduation requirements of most major programs at Highlands. The developmental math program has faced the same continual level of change as the composition program, and the faculty of the department is currently performing a comprehensive analysis of the challenges faced by the program. They have reduced the number of faculty teaching the courses and introduced standardized course expectations, methods of assessment, and grading. These efforts have already produced some positive results, particularly in the decreased variation in pass rates among instructors.

The program also introduced, in the fall of 2008, a new, self-paced algebra class, Math 135. This class is actually a composite of Math 100 and Math 120 and includes all of the learning objectives for both courses. Students who have not met all of the learning objectives for Math 120 may re-enroll in Math 135 until they master the objectives.

The course is based on the Accelerated Math® software provided by Renaissance Learning® and was already in use at NMHU by the GEAR UP program. About 20 students who completed the Math 135 course are expected to enroll in Math 140 in the fall of 2009, allowing for a comprehensive assessment of the success of the initiative.

Finally, the math faculty is working with local high schools participating in the GEAR UP program in an effort to align math skills attained in high school with the entry-level skills needed in college. The partners are currently seeking grant funding for this collaboration.

#### Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Initiatives

We need to educate more students in STEM fields throughout the nation ("Rising Above the Gathering Storm: Energizing and Employing America for a Brighter Economic Future," The National Academies Press, 2005). As a Hispanic serving, open enrollment, rural university with a vibrant research program Highlands is in a unique position to support the entry of minority students into STEM fields.

Currently 14.2% of first-time, full-time Hispanic students at NMHU who declare a STEM major will graduate with a baccalaureate degree in a STEM field ([STEM Majors at NMHU](#)). Nationally that number is 16.3% for all schools collectively, including very selective institutions ([National Center for Education Statistics, 2009](#)). This is a difference of only 2.1 percentage points, suggesting that at Highlands we do a better job of supporting our Hispanic student STEM majors than do other institutions nationally.

Highlands has a number of initiatives aimed at recruiting, supporting and graduating these students. To increase the number of students entering the STEM pipeline, Highlands serves as fiscal agent and partner for a number of collaborative programs with local school districts designed to increase the academic preparedness of our incoming students. These programs include GEAR UP, MESA, Upward Bound, the New Mexico Highlands University/Luna Community College Science and Agriculture Summer Experience (SASE) project, the Project GUTS/ Supercomputing Challenge Summer Round Up and Highlands' 54 years of sponsorship of the Northeast Regional Science and Engineering Fair (see Criterion Five for a complete description of these programs).

There are also several programs that seek to address the needs of STEM students currently at Highlands.

The [Achieving in Research in Math and Science in Education \(ARMAS\)](#) program began at NMHU in the 2008-2009 academic year. ARMAS is funded through the Bridging Careers for Success program, a two-year grant funded by the US Department of Education with the goal of increasing the number of Hispanic students who complete their bachelor's degree in science, technology, engineering, and math. The grant funded the establishment of physical centers on both campuses and provided funds to hire a center coordinator, an academic coach, part-time tutors, and one administrative support staff member on each campus.

The program has three objectives: to develop a seamless transfer of science, technology, engineering and math students from Luna Community College to Highlands University through a model course alignment and transfer articulation agreement, to provide support for STEM students and faculty through the centers on each campus, and to engage in targeted infrastructure improvements for STEM students

**Highlands serves as fiscal agent for a number of programs designed to increase the academic preparedness of incoming students.**



and faculty on each campus ([ARMAS program description](#)). Two key student performance outcomes for the program include a 100% increase in Hispanic enrollment in STEM courses and 80% of Hispanic students participating in the program passing STEM gatekeeper courses with a C+ or better grade.

To date, the program has constructed the Centers, hired staff, and held a two-day workshop with Highlands and Luna STEM faculty to discuss course alignment and articulation agreements. That meeting has resulted in a schedule for alignment activities ([ARMAS LCC/ NMHU Faculty Workshop, May 2009](#)).

The **Pre-Med Education and Development** program was funded by the New Mexico State Legislature in 2008 to develop a demonstration project at NMHU that would “better prepare undergraduate students from small universities for successful entry into medical school or related health fields.” The project began in the fall of 2008 and included a four-week MCAT review course, a series of four workshops covering the specifics of applying to medical school, stipends and scholarships for students, and a summer internship in which students in the program shadow and are mentored by local physicians.

The **STEM STARS** program was just funded by the National Science Foundation and will begin in the spring of 2010. STEM STARS is a collaboration between faculty in the biology and math programs and the School of Education, and the Office of Accessibility Services. The goal of the project is to support students with disabilities in the STEM fields. The project team will employ an educational model called universal design for learning, a framework for designing educational environments that help all learners gain knowledge, skills, and excitement for learning. Universal design makes learning goals achievable by using flexible curricular materials and activities. Assistive technology will also be used. For example, a screen-reading adaptive software called JAWS can be used for textbooks. The accessibility center already uses this software as well as other assistive technology. The STEM STARS project team will begin redesigning four existing courses for inclusion in the project, two algebra courses and two biology courses. While the program targets students with disabilities it is expected that all STEM majors will benefit from the re-designed courses.

In addition to these externally funded programs, and in an effort to recruit new majors into STEM programs and to support incoming students with an interest in those fields, the science faculty members regularly propose several science-based learning communities (see Criterion Three for a complete discussion of learning communities). In the fall of 2009 these include “Mineral Logic” with Geology 101, “Do the Math” with Math 100, and “Reach for the Stars” with Math 135 and Physics 110.

### **Donnelly Library**

At any university the library is a crucial resource in the acquisition and discovery of knowledge. At Highlands, Donnelly Library serves as that resource. Each year, Donnelly Library assesses its services in coordination with the Library Committee of the Faculty Senate. The results of those assessments are presented in [publicly available reports](#) and form the basis for this discussion.

Like most libraries across the country, Donnelly has had to deal with increasing and improving services in the face of flat or shrinking

budgets. Donnelly has met this challenge through several means. The Donnelly librarians continually assess their budget to ensure that they meet standard guidelines regarding the distribution of funds. The New Mexico Consortium of Academic Libraries endorses the standards of the Association of College and Research Libraries and the American Library Association. These standards mandate that the library budget, exclusive of capital costs and the cost of physical maintenance, not fall below six percent of the college’s total educational and general expenditures if the library is to sustain the range of programs required by the institution and appropriate institutional objectives. The distribution formula for library funds indicates that between 50% and 60% should be spent on personnel, 35% to 45% on the acquisition of materials, and the remaining percentage on other expenses. As is documented in the yearly assessments, our library spends its financial resources in accordance with the standards.

In addition to its regular budget, Donnelly, along with other local and state libraries, periodically receives funding through bond sales. For example, in 2004 New Mexico voters passed a bond that allocated \$49,832.55 to Donnelly Library for the purchase of books and materials. During the November 2006 general election, Bond Issue C for the acquisition of library materials passed. This resulted in an additional \$97,521 allocated to Donnelly during FY2007-08.

Donnelly is also responding to budget constraints, as well as the changing needs of our students and faculty, through an extensive, ongoing investment in online resources. Our electronic resources are accessible to students and faculty via the [Donnelly Library Web Site](#) with nearly 92,000 visits in 2007-2008. Electronic resources have vastly increased the immediate availability of research materials. Our online catalog and subscription electronic databases are available to our clientele both on-campus and remotely through the library’s web page. Services include several full text and bibliographic databases (see the Donnelly Library [Web site](#) for a full listing). Subscriptions to electronic resources have improved access to research material, especially important to our distance education students and to remote external academic sites. Presently, we have access to 20,043 full-text journals, as well as 38,151 electronic books to complement our print holdings.

Our professional librarians are considered members of the New Mexico Highlands University Faculty ([Faculty Handbook](#), Section IV, 3). They serve on the Faculty Senate, Academic Affairs Committee, and other faculty committees with full voting rights. We have recently hired a fifth professional librarian on the Donnelly Library staff. The librarians also have teaching responsibilities, which are reflected by their involvement in such programs at the First Year Experience program. The librarians also provide instruction in library resources and research at the request of departments and instructors. These classes can be conducted via ITV to allow students at the Centers and in distance education courses to participate.

Library services are provided for the external sites by the NMHU Rio Rancho assistant librarian. She promotes library services, particularly the use of online subscription databases through course-related library instruction sessions. The assistant librarian also oversees the Interlibrary Loan (ILL) and Document Delivery Services (DDS) for Donnelly Library.

## **Core Component 4c** *The organization assesses the usefulness of its curricula to students who will live and work in a global, diverse, and technological society.*

### **Bilingual/Bicultural and Study Abroad Programs**

Given Highlands' role as a Hispanic Serving Institution and our commitment to the communities, cultures, and languages of New Mexico, we have developed programs placing particular emphasis on graduating students who are linguistically and culturally competent to work with Spanish-speaking groups. This commitment is demonstrated in the following programs:

The School of Education has a long-standing program for teachers seeking bilingual endorsement in Spanish. As part of this program, the school offers a [summer Spanish immersion program](#). The *Programa de Español para Maestros Bilingües* is an intensive one-week immersion review of the Spanish language targeted at pre-service and in-service teachers who must pass the state mandated exam, *Prueba de Español para la Certificación Bilingüe*, as part of the requirements for the bilingual and the modern and classical languages (Spanish) teaching endorsements. This *Programa* is offered through New Mexico Highlands University's School of Education in collaboration with the New Mexico Public Education Department. Of the 89 school districts in New Mexico, 59 have bilingual programs which require the bilingual endorsement and also assure a "highly qualified" status required by No Child Left Behind.

Participants take six credits of courses while in the summer program. All instruction reflects the Spanish linguistic (listening comprehension, oral reading, speaking, and written communication) requirements of the official exam. The Spanish language is strictly maintained throughout the days and evenings during breaks, mealtimes and through homework assignments. In essence, students are provided with the truest form of academic language immersion short of an authentic academic experience abroad. Since 1994 the program has involved teachers from 36 school districts throughout New Mexico. In recent years the program has served between 12 and 44 students each summer. In the summer of 2009, twenty teachers participated in the program.

In 2005, NMHU was awarded [Research and Public Service Projects](#) (RPSP) funds from the New Mexico State Legislature specifically to enhance Spanish language skills and multicultural competency in our undergraduate and graduate students. With these funds, the College of Arts and Sciences developed the Spanish as a Heritage Language Program, the School of Business developed an international business concentration, the School of Social Work developed a Bilingual/Bicultural Practice Program, and the School of Education significantly strengthened their Bilingual Education Program.

The Spanish language in New Mexico has a long history and unique evolution. Many NMHU students grew up in homes in which Spanish was spoken but did not learn to speak Spanish themselves. The Spanish as a Heritage Language Program is designed to build upon the Spanish competencies our students already possess, and to recognize and support the regionally specific form of Spanish spoken in Northern

New Mexico. The program provides an alternative to the existing Spanish as a second language curriculum. This alternative program serves students who consider Spanish their heritage language rather than a second language. State funds were used to create a director position for the program and outreach efforts. Since the Spanish as a Heritage Language Program began in the spring of 2005, 14.5% of students who have completed two semesters of Spanish at NMHU have done so through that program.

The Spanish as a Heritage Language Program also includes a [four-week summer immersion](#) program. Weeks one and four of the program are held on the Highlands campus and weeks two and three of the program are held in Granada, Nicaragua. For the past two years the program has had 12 students each summer. Participants include students from a variety of academic programs at Highlands, local teachers who are preparing for their bilingual endorsement, and even a local high school student.

The School of Social Work began its Bilingual/Bicultural Practice program four years ago, and has since graduated 51 students from the program. It is the only program of its kind in the region. As part of the program, 13 students and three professors spent eight days at the University of Chihuahua's School of Social Work in the fall of 2008 as part of an exchange program ([press release](#)). The program is also developing an exchange partnership with Universidad Autónoma de Juárez, to begin in 2009.

The School of Business developed its international business concentration with the goal of providing students with an international business perspective in areas such as marketing, negotiations, accounting, and finance. The school has hired a full-time international business professor, and, including courses taught by other faculty, devotes approximately two FTE to this program. Eleven MBA students have graduated with this concentration since its inception. As part of the program, faculty member Luis Ortiz took 15 business students on a two-week "Doing Business in Mexico" summer program in 2008. The program included a faculty member from the University of Texas, Pan American.

The School of Education has been conducting a 14-to 17-day summer program in Oaxaca, Mexico since 2005. The program is conducted in collaboration with the Instituto Estatal de Educación Pública de Oaxaca (IEEPO), the equivalent of the New Mexico Public Education Department. The program is for teachers and prospective teachers. In the summer of 2008, eighteen participants from three different local school districts and NMHU participated in the program. The participants take classes in Spanish, visit local schools, and experience the local community. As one 2008 participant said, "Fue una experiencia increíble que guardo siempre."

In addition to, and predating, the programs supported through the state's research and project development funds, NMHU has also sponsored a [study abroad program in Trujillo, Spain](#). This program allows NMHU students and faculty to study in Trujillo in alternate summers. The University of New Mexico uses the site the other summers. In the summer of 2004, 18 students and seven faculty members participated in the program. Unfortunately, the program does not receive any dedicated funding and the cost to the participants is high (\$3,576 per student and \$1,846 per faculty member in 2004).

**NMHU's Biligual/Bicultural Practice Social Work program is the only one of its kind in the region.**

Because of these costs, an insufficient number of students could afford the program in 2006 and 2008, and the program did not take place. Highlands still has access to the facility, however, and we hope to continue the program in the future.

The NMHU commitment to instilling “global competence” in our students permeates the University. For example, the Environmental Geology program received a \$20,000 grant from the National Science Foundation to support collaborative work with researchers from Ireland and France on geologic rifts. As part of the program, professors Jennifer Lindline and Michael Petronis took two of their students to Ireland. “To me, it’s important not just to teach the fundamentals of geology, but to have students learn how to communicate and work with people around the world,” said Highlands University environmental geology associate professor Jennifer Lindline ([press release](#)).

This educational commitment can take diverse forms at our university. While we continue to expand opportunities for students from the region to explore the world, our large international student population ensures that we are providing opportunities for students from other countries. For example, a research project involving the Gallinas River Watershed is allowing a Cameroonian graduate student, Bildad Eta Eyong, to develop the skills and knowledge he will need to address the significant problem of water contamination in his home country. This research was supported in part by a \$5,000 student researcher grant from the New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute ([press release](#)).

**Core Component 4d** *The organization provides support to ensure that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.*

All research involving human participants must be reviewed by the University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB), while research with animals must be approved by the Animal Subjects Committee. Both of these committees had been constituted as subcommittees of the Faculty Research Committee of the Faculty Senate. However, in 2008, by action of the faculty, both became stand-alone committees to reflect the reality that they report to federal agencies, not the faculty.

The IRB applies for and receives Federal Wide Assurance from the [Office of Human Research Protections](#) (part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) every three years. Our last assurance was received in the fall of 2006.

The chair of the IRB regularly gives presentations on research ethics to classes throughout the University. Presentations on the IRB and research ethics have regularly formed part of our Faculty Development Week, although this has not been consistent. The RIMI grant provides for release time for a one-credit course on research ethics every year. It has been offered three times in the past five years, based on faculty need. Currently, every principal investigator who submits a research proposal to the IRB must complete the online [training module](#) offered by the Office of Human Research Protections. Copies of the certificate of completion must be submitted to the IRB.

While it is fairly easy to document that the University supports ethical research practices, the question of our effectiveness in fostering ethical

and socially responsible students is much more complex. The term “ethics” appears frequently in course titles and descriptions, in fields from natural resource management and business to social work and coaching. In addition, several programs explicitly require their students (and faculty) to adhere to specific codes of professional ethics. Such programs include social work, counseling, psychology and business. Students are informed that violations of the ethics codes could result in dismissal from these programs.

But just searching for the word “ethics” in course descriptions is a very poor indicator of a program’s commitment to developing socially responsible students. For example, the term does not appear in any course title or description in the sociology program, but the faculty in that program would argue vehemently that a major goal of their program is to graduate students with a sophisticated understanding of and passion for social justice.

When our team for the Academy for the Assessment of Student Learning surveyed faculty, staff and students regarding the traits we wish to see in our graduates, many endorsed civic engagement and social responsibility as desirable characteristics. It was decided that addressing these traits was beyond the scope of our initial project, but will constitute a second level of development. Once we have established a workable means of assessing our identified student characteristics as part of an integrated system of university-wide assessment, we will then tackle the complex question of developing and assessing social responsibility in our students.

## Opportunities For Improvement

After some disruptions in the past decade, University support for scholarship is at strong levels, and the results can be seen in the achievements of our students and faculty. Maintaining that level of support could be a challenge in the face of budget shortfalls. Perhaps ironically, the main challenge we identified in this area during the Self-Study process is to document and publicize those accomplishments. In order to meet these challenges, the following action steps will be implemented:

- **Support for student research and travel:** At this time, Highlands has no regular mechanism to fund student research or travel. Students must rely upon small grants from honor societies such as Sigma Xi, and fundraising. Highlands needs to investigate ways to financially support student research.
- **Track student accomplishments:** Currently we have no mechanism for tracking student accomplishments except through the personal knowledge of faculty members. As a result, we do not have accurate information on the number of students accepted to graduate programs, the number accepted to competitive internships, or student publications or presentations. We need to develop a process to regularly collect this information.
- **Publicize faculty accomplishments:** Although we now have a process for collecting information on faculty accomplishments (the annual survey of faculty non-teaching productivity) we do not have a central mechanism for publicizing that information. Some faculty members remember to contact University Relations with this information, but many do not.





## Criterion Five: Engagement and Service Introduction

In this chapter, we will examine our relationships with the people we serve. Our constituencies are extensive and diverse, including the people and organizations in our local communities in San Miguel County, the communities which host our Centers, the rural towns and school districts of Northern New Mexico, the Hispanic and Native American populations of New Mexico, and the citizens of the state as a whole.

### **Core Component 5a** *The organization learns from the constituencies it serves and analyzes its capacity to serve their needs and expectations.*

Our relationships with our constituencies have developed over decades and are informed through multiple paths of communication. In many cases we use formal assessments to determine the needs of the organizations and communities we serve and our capacity to meet those needs. In other cases much more informal processes are used. We are not just the faculty and staff of New Mexico Highlands University, we are also members of the groups that we serve. And it is often through those memberships that the needs of our constituents, and our capacity to meet those needs, are explored. In many instances

our response to a community need is the result of a simple request. Examples of all these processes will be presented throughout this chapter.

Given our historical focus on teacher education, NMHU has been a natural home for several initiatives focused on education throughout Northern New Mexico. Perhaps our largest educational outreach program is the [Center for Education & Study of Diverse Populations](#) (CESDP). The primary mission of the CESDP is to assist communities in improving the quality of education for all citizens including, students, families, educators, and community members. The CESDP was established by the New Mexico Legislature in 1993 to provide technical assistance, distribute research findings, offer resources, and promote quality in public educational systems.

The complex and diverse work of CESDP is extraordinarily difficult to summarize. While it is based at NMHU, CESDP has four offices across New Mexico. Its primary mechanism for meeting its mission is through collaboration with communities and organizations, and this is reflected in the diverse array of partnerships the CESDP has developed. During its 16-year history, CESDP has provided technical assistance to school districts throughout the southwestern United

States. The program has worked with 69 schools in New Mexico, across 37 school districts. The program has served over 9,000 educators, administrators, parents, school board members, policy makers, and

state and federal Department of Education personnel.

Current initiatives include an online toolkit for New Mexico schools called “[Working Together: School-Family-Community Partnerships](#)” and an annual Back to School Institute for families, educators, community members and youth. The CESDP is sponsoring the [18<sup>th</sup> Annual Back to School Institute](#) this fall. The CESDP is also involved in three major programs for youth: the [GEAR UP/ ENLACE Collaborative](#), Northern New Mexico and statewide [ENLACE](#), and the [EBS Youth Entrepreneurship Project](#). All three programs are coordinated by staff at Santa Fe Community College, Northern New Mexico College in Española, and CESDP.

The work conducted by CESDP is too extensive and varied to be fully summarized in this report. Instead, we will describe two projects, one of which is completed and one of which is in its second year.

The Career Ladder Program began in 2002 and was designed to address a shortage of qualified teachers in the rural areas of Northern New Mexico, and, in particular, address the need for teachers who are qualified to work with children with limited English proficiency. The program took a “home grown” approach, recruiting people from the communities who were interested in teaching in their communities. Over a six-year period, the program recruited 73 individuals with no college experience and 33 transfer students. Of the 73 individuals with no college experience, 63 completed the requirements for their teaching credentials. Of the 33 transfer students, all completed their program of study. At the completion of the grant, 86 of the 96 graduates of the program had full-time teaching positions in one of the targeted school districts and another four were serving as substitute teachers in their districts while they were waiting for full-time positions to become available. In addition to the graduation of qualified teachers, the Career Ladder Program also resulted in 51 individuals earning an English as a second language (ESL) endorsement and another 11 individuals earning a bilingual endorsement. The number of graduates from both aspects of the program exceeded the original goals of the grant ([Final Evaluation Report, Career Ladder Program](#)).

These numbers clearly show the success of the program in supporting individuals to earn their teaching credentials so they could teach in their communities. The program achieved this success by providing a high level of support for the students and by scheduling the courses at times and a location (Española) convenient to the students. The program staff provided assistance in registering for classes, tutorial support, and employment placements services. The program also focused on intensive advisement and significant practicum experiences.

While federal funding for the program ended in 2007, the success of the program was such that Highlands has made a commitment to its continuation. The director of the Santa Fe Center now serves as the adviser for students in the program. The School of Education works with our Educational Outreach Services (EOS) program to provide courses on-site in the more isolated districts, as well as in Española. In addition, a survey was conducted of the teachers in the participating districts to determine the need for a master’s program in bilingual/ESL education. The response was favorable and resulted in the National Professional Development and ESL Endorsement Program described below.

The National Professional Development and ESL Endorsement Program is a five-year program funded by a Title 3 Professional

Development grant by the U.S. Department of Education. The project began in June of 2007 and will run through June of 2012. The program has three objectives.

- 1) Provide a master of arts degree program in Curriculum and Instruction with an English as a second language (ESL) endorsement, specifically targeting teachers in isolated and rural school districts in Northern New Mexico. The program will enroll 60 teachers in two cohorts.
- 2) Collect data on the effectiveness of the participants post-graduation to assess the effect of the program on the English language proficiency of limited English proficiency (LEP) students.
- 3) Align program curricula with New Mexico state content standards and state English proficiency standards.

In year one of the project, program objective number three was completed and 30 teachers from eight districts were enrolled in the program. The school districts are all in Northern New Mexico and almost all rural. They include Española, Mesa Vista, Chama, Peñasco, Ojo Caliente, Pojaque, Santa Fe and Taos ([National Professional Development and ESL Endorsement Program](#), Year One Report). At the time of this writing, all 30 students from the first cohort are still enrolled and on-track to complete their degrees in May of 2010. A second cohort of teachers will be recruited in the spring of 2010 ([National Professional Development and ESL Endorsement Program](#), Year Two Report).

There are several other outreach programs based at NMHU that are designed specifically to increase postsecondary educational success among New Mexico college students by increasing academic skills before college entry. CESDP works with several of these programs, such as ENLACE and Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP). Highlands is also home to a second GEAR UP program, the [NMHU/Rural Northern New Mexico GEAR UP Partnership](#). This is a six-year grant (2005-2011), funded by the U.S. Department of Education, designed to increase the number of low-income students who will be prepared to enter and succeed in college. GEAR UP works with 23 school districts. This school year approximately 1,152 students were enrolled in the program. Students begin with the GEAR UP program when they are in seventh grade and continue through high school graduation. The program:

- Basic skills in reading, math and science and fosters a desire in the graduates to pursue a post-secondary degree.
- Informs parents about financial challenges and opportunities including scholarship, loan, and grant programs.
- Supports ACT test preparation beginning in the eighth grade.
- Provides teacher stipends that are linked to student performance.
- Provides incentives to students for mastery of learning objectives in reading, math, and science.

The [Upward Bound](#) program was funded in 1965 under Title IV of the Education Act. The project at NMHU was one of the original 16 demonstration programs funded throughout the country. The intent of the project is to increase secondary school success and post-secondary enrollment among first-generation college students from low-income



families. The program at Highlands currently serves 150 students from 13 high schools in Northern New Mexico. The students attend a six-week summer residential program on the NMHU campus.

The [New Mexico Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement](#) (MESA) program provides year-round academically enriched activities for under-represented students throughout New Mexico. It is a pre-college program designed to prepare students for college majors and careers in mathematics, engineering, science or technology related fields. MESA is a statewide organization with the main office in Albuquerque. NMHU hosts the North Region Office. We provide office space, general support, and a small budget for support of North Region activities. This budget also provides for a work study and allows for MESA to be a full partner in the NMHU College Night.

The [Advanced Placement \(AP\) Program](#), a national nonprofit educational association of colleges, universities and high schools, monitors introductory-level college curricula and then designs courses, materials, and professional development to deliver the curricula in middle schools and high schools. National examinations are administered to measure the knowledge and skills of students who have taken AP courses. The program encourages colleges and universities to grant credit and/or advanced placement to students' representative of their achievement.

In cooperation with the Public Education Department, Highlands runs AP summer institutes for teachers in Albuquerque, Las Cruces, Roswell, and Las Vegas. In the [summer of 2009](#), 478 teachers attended the institutes.

In addition to the specific outreach programs describe above, Highlands also serves the educational needs of our constituents through our department of Educational Outreach Services.

#### **Educational Outreach Services (EOS)**

EOS affords the University the flexibility to respond to the unique educational and professional development needs of our constituents. While EOS provides important support for our Centers (see Criterion Two for a discussion of the Centers), their services go beyond that role. The Centers are structured programs that reflect a significant, long-term investment on the part of the University. EOS, through its distance education programs, can respond to specific, short-term educational requests from the various communities throughout our service area.

In order to plan their services, EOS conducts annual surveys with the regional school districts to discuss their needs for [professional development](#) and [dual credit classes](#). The results of the annual assessment are shared with the relevant academic units at Highlands. The faculty of the relevant academic programs work collaboratively with EOS to determine the feasibility of the requests, schedule courses, identify faculty to teach the respective courses, and identify the sites and vehicles for delivery.

Courses are offered via the following modes of delivery at NMHU:

- 1) **Traditional, face-to-face delivery (on campus or off campus)**- requested classes can be scheduled at the main campus, at one of NMHU's sites or centers, or off-campus at designated locations throughout New Mexico.
- 2) **Televised instruction (ITV)**-brings the professor and students

into an interactive environment via two-way audio and video conferencing. ITV courses can be transmitted to up to 25 sites for any given class.

- 3) **Web-based instruction**-provides another alternative for students. Using Blackboard and/or Elluminate Live, students can login to class from anywhere assuming they have a computer and a live Internet connection. Blackboard is a course learning management system that allows for synchronous and asynchronous communications, as well as student accessibility to course content/material 24 hours a day, seven days a week throughout the semester. Elluminate Live, on the other hand, is a synchronized course learning management tool that allows for audio, video, and application sharing, among multiple other features. Elluminate Live sessions can be recorded.
- 4) **Hybrid**-some combination of the various modes of delivery (traditional, face-to-face; televised instruction, and/or web-based instruction). Hybrid courses are offered to accommodate students' needs.

Some of these requests are for degree programs to be offered to specific cohorts of students, often teachers, in specific communities. The two CESDP programs highlighted above are examples of this approach. Another example of this cohort approach occurred when the Taos Municipal School District requested that NMHU offer their teachers a masters degree in curriculum and instruction, with an emphasis in reading. Nine teachers matriculated in the program in 2005, seven of whom have since completed the program.

In addition to degree program cohorts, EOS also receives regular requests to offer dual credit courses for local high school students.

#### **Dual Credit**

While NMHU has had a longstanding concurrent enrollment program for high school students, recent changes in state education policy have increased our emphasis on dual credit courses. The Dual Credit Program was established in 2007 by [Senate Bill 943](#) and extended to include summer terms in 2008 by [Senate Bill 31](#). The program allows high school students to enroll in college courses in postsecondary institutions (universities, colleges, and community colleges) prior to high school graduation, giving them enrichment opportunities and first-hand experiences with the requirements of college-level work. Dual credit students receive both high school and college credit simultaneously. Tuition and standard fees are waived by NMHU for students participating in this program. Beginning with freshman high school students in 2009, the state of New Mexico is requiring that students take either an on-line, distance education, advanced placement, or dual credit class prior to their graduation from high school (see [Senate Bill 561, 2007](#)).

To address this increased need for dual credit classes for regional high schools, NMHU initially hired a part-time dual credit coordinator to address the development of policies and procedures and to facilitate communication with the high schools and the students. As the dual credit program has grown, NMHU has expanded the coordinator position to full-time in order to address the needs of the students and local high schools.

The NMHU dual credit coordinator serves on the joint New Mexico Public Education Department/Higher Education Department Alignment Task Force- Statewide Dual Credit Agreement



**Concurrent Enrollment Experience and Relationship to Freshmen Retention  
Fall 2008 Cohort**

	Retained Spring		Total	% Retained	Ratio of Retained vs. Not Retained	Odds Ratio
	No	Yes				
<b>Ever Concurrent</b>	5	43	48	89.6%	8.6	3.7
<b>Never Concurrent</b>	116	273	389	70.2%**	2.4	

*\*\*significant at the  $p < .01$  level*

Subcommittee. This committee has been responsible for making recommendations regarding implementation of the requirements set forth in New Mexico Senate Bill 943 to establish the [Statewide Dual Credit Agreement](#), the Dual Credit Request Form, and the associated New Mexico Administrative Code (NMAC) regarding dual credit.

Students from local high schools within walking distance are able to take dual credit classes on NMHU's main campus. However, this does little to meet the needs of high school students from the rural communities in the region. To meet the needs of those students, NMHU for example has partnered with the Mora Independent School District to offer dual credit classes on-site through face- to-face classes with a Highlands professor in Mora or via ITV. Lab science courses have been offered with the Mora high school students travelling to the Highlands campus once a week to participate in the labs. This past year, students from the Raton and Maxwell high schools were able to access face-to-face classes at the NMHU Raton Center.

Courses available for dual credit offered through the Raton Center (either on-site or via ITV) included Psychology 101, Spanish 101, Theater 100, Media Arts 124, and Biology 110. Courses offered face-to-face on-site at the Mora High School included Forestry 105, Sociology 152, and History 100.

The number of first-time freshmen who attended NMHU as concurrent enrollment students before graduating from high school has been increasing steadily, from three in the fall 2000 cohort to 48 in the fall 2008 cohort (11% of the cohort). As the numbers have grown, so has the significance of concurrent enrollment as a predictor of retention. As the table below shows, having concurrent enrollment experience was a significant predictor of retention for the fall 2008 cohort of first-time freshmen. In fact, for every student with no concurrent enrollment history who was retained to the spring semester, we retained 3.7 students with concurrent enrollment experience.

These data support the continued emphasis on dual credit programs as a means for increasing college enrollment and retention among New Mexico's high school graduates.

#### **Native American Initiatives**

In addition to meeting the educational needs of specific communities in the region, Highlands also has an important role in addressing the needs of Native American communities throughout the state. New Mexico has one of the largest Native American populations in the nation, ranking fifth among the states in raw numbers of Native Americans (behind California, Oklahoma, Arizona, and Texas). New Mexico's population was 10% Native American in 2000, ranking us

third in the nation behind Alaska and Oklahoma ([The American Indian and Alaska Native Population: 2000](#), US Census Bureau). There are 22 sovereign Indian nations located at least partially within our geographic borders, including the Navajo Nation, two Apache tribes, and 19 Pueblos (for a listing, see [http://www.newmexico.org/native\\_america/pueblos/index.php](http://www.newmexico.org/native_america/pueblos/index.php)).

Highlands has long recognized a special obligation to provide educational access and support to Native American students. In February of 2009 we reaffirmed this special obligation when President Jim Fries and leaders from 23 Native American tribes (all 22 from New Mexico and one from Texas) signed an agreement to promote higher education opportunities for Native American students at Highlands. The agreement updates memoranda of understanding that have been in place since 1997. The new agreement extends the number of tribes participating in the program from 19 in 1997 to 23 today. The agreement triples the number of tuition scholarships available to Native American students to three per tribe. Previously the scholarships were available only to undergraduate students. Under the new agreement graduate students also qualify for the scholarship. The agreement also strengthens our recruitment and retention activities for our Native American students.

Those services are offered through the [Native American Services Office](#). The office has two staff members, both members of tribes in the state. The office provides academic advising, assistance with financial aid and scholarships, and outreach to schools and communities to provide information about higher education to the Native American citizens of our state. Highlands has two active student organizations devoted to our Native American population, the Native American Club and the American Indian Science and Engineering Society.

#### **Other Community Needs**

Often the University is aware of community needs because they match the needs of the University. This is the case, for example, with local libraries, all of whom collaborate in assessing resources, and ensuring that all their patrons have access to those resources. The libraries work to develop and lobby for requests for library funding through the state legislature and local bond issues. The Donnelly Library staff participates in bimonthly city librarian meetings. Participating libraries include Donnelly Library (Highlands), Luna Community College, the New Mexico Behavioral Health Institute, Las Vegas City Schools, West Las Vegas City Schools, the United World College, the Fort Union National Monument Library, and the Carnegie Public Library. The primary goal of the City Librarians Committee is to work together in providing quality library services to our community. Initiatives include

developing library services training for staff, ensuring reciprocal borrowing privileges, increasing library technology, and ongoing joint cooperative efforts on library legislative issues ([Donnelly Library Annual Report 2007-2008, p.4-5](#)).

In other instances the University specifically asks community groups about needs that the University might help address. For example, Campus Life responds to community needs by coordinating requests from groups that need help (i.e., Keep America Beautiful, Red Cross, Big Brother/Big Sister, Samaritan House & Salvation Army Food Drives) and presenting them to the student clubs. The clubs then decide to volunteer if it fits their organization's mission. While we do not keep records of the clubs' activities, we do have some examples of community service projects. Campus Life partners with United Blood Services to conduct three to four community blood drives per year here on campus. In another example the Geology Society received a volunteer service certificate from the Keep Las Vegas Beautiful Program after five students from the group picked up 50 pounds of trash this past spring ([press release](#)).

Finally, as stated in the introduction to this chapter, we are often aware of community needs because we are members of various community groups. As documented in the For the 2007-2008 [survey of faculty non-teaching productivity](#), 82.9% of the faculty who responded to the survey participated in some form of public service (with schools, government, non-profit organizations or businesses). All together, respondents spent a total of 722 days in public service.

## **Core Component 5b** *The organization has the capacity and the commitment to engage with its identified constituencies and communities.*

As "Northern New Mexico's University" and the only four-year institution of higher education in the northeast quadrant of the state, Highlands plays a unique role in supporting cultural activities in the region. The university's faculty, students, and staff work in collaboration with community organizations to provide a wide variety of cultural activities. A few of these are highlighted below.

### *Musical and Theatrical Performances*

The New Mexico Highlands University Fiesta de la Hispanidad celebrated its 15<sup>th</sup> annual performance in March of 2009. This event, held at Ilfeld Auditorium, brings together performers from the University, the community, and across the state in a celebration of Hispanic culture. The event is extremely popular, with 621 people attending this year ([press release](#)).

Highlands sponsors a number of groups that offer all students (and in many cases, staff and community members) opportunities to engage in musical performances. These include Concert Choir, Madrigal Choir (El Coro de la Tierra Alta), Jazz Choir, HU Singers, Music Theater, Marching Band, Pep Band, Chamber Orchestra, Guitar Ensemble, Jazz Ensemble, and Mariachi (Vaqueros de la Sierra). The NMHU



### **The People Behind the Data**

#### *Eliza Woodyard*

Last November, Eliza Woodyard won the Emerging Artist portion of the Vocal Artistry Art Song Competition in Albuquerque. Eliza studies with Andre Garcia-Nuthmann, director of the music program at Highlands, and with Regina Rickless. Rickless, a mezzo-soprano, was a student of Florence Page Kimball at the Julliard School. Her long and distinguished career centered in Europe and the Metropolitan Opera. Rickless teaches voice in the Santa Fe Opera apprentice program.

"Andre is amazing," Eliza said. Slated to start the Boston Conservatory, which only takes 12 students a year, but unable to, Eliza was hesitant about coming to New Mexico and starting at Highlands. "At first I didn't think I'd like it here, but my dad kept telling me about Andre and the vocal program," Eliza said. "Andre bends over backwards to help his students out. I got more positive feedback in an hour and a half from him than I ever did from my judges in the Midwest."

"Mrs. Rickless is so intense. I feel like she stepped out of the Metropolitan Opera House to work with me. She's like so many famous people of their day, like Maria Callas, incredibly passionate and intelligent."

Music Program sponsored 14 performances in Ilfeld Auditorium during the 2008-2009 academic year, with a total of 1,338 people in attendance. This is in addition to many performances at smaller venues both on and off campus.

The major original production of the academic year was “Freak Show,” a combined effort of faculty and students from the music and theater programs, as well as members of the community.

Several of the performances were student-produced by members of the Performing Arts Club, a student club formed in 2007. The Performing Arts Club was created by music student Joseph Chavez as a way for students to learn the craft of musical theater, conduct fundraisers for future events such as the choir trip to Austria, and recruit new students into the music program. The HU Singers and musical theater classes were created to meet the needs of the growing student body ([Enrollment and Graduation Rates of Undergraduate Program, NMHU 2009](#)).

The Highlands Madrigal Choir performed in August of 2007 at the Haydn Music Festival in Eisenstadt, Austria and was invited back for the 2009 festival. Several of the musical and theatrical performances in 2009 were fundraisers to help send the Madrigal Choir back to Austria.

The Ilfeld staff work hard to ensure that a variety of productions are available for students and community members year round. Musical performances featuring artists not associated with the University included Krzysztof Zimowski who, in March, presented a violin concerto accompanied by pianist Linda King. Zimowski is concertmaster and featured soloist of the New Mexico Symphony Orchestra. Other performances mix Highlands artists with other musicians and bands from around the state, such as the Montage performance given at Ilfeld in February. The event included groups from El Dorado, Albuquerque, and Pecos performing a wide variety of music.

Ilfeld has hosted groups known nationally and internationally including the rock band War, the Air Force Band, the Peking Acrobats, beoga (an internationally known Irish band), and Ani Ma’amin, a modern dance piece performed by the Keshet Dance Company exploring the impact of the Holocaust on American Jews. Some acts are too big even for Ilfeld, such as the Triple Threat concert featuring Pitbull, Melissa Lujan and Paul Wall. This March 2009 event was held in the Wilson Sports Complex.

Currently, Las Vegas only has one operating movie theater and a local drive-in theater that only operates on weekends during the summer. In an attempt to increase the opportunities for students and community members to go to the movies, without having to drive to Santa Fe, Ilfeld began sponsoring Cineflix in Ilfeld. Recently released movies are shown two or three times a week in Ilfeld on the big screen, in high definition with BluRay and surround sound. These events are free of charge and open to both students and community members.

#### *Art Shows and Events*

Donnelly Library has a donated art collection of more than 1,775 pieces, some of which is loaned to faculty and departments. Highlights of the library’s art collection include an extensive fine art print collection, totaling more than 1,500 prints, representing the history of Western printmaking. The collection includes 16th century Durer woodcuts, and works by Goya, Whistler, Picasso, Matisse, and Chagall.

The art collection also includes work by artists central to Highlands’ history, including Ray Drew (for whom the library’s Ray Drew Gallery is named) and Elmer Schooley.

In the 2007-2008 academic year, the library completed an art inventory and cataloging project, which included assigning each piece a bar code and entering each piece into LIBROS, the library’s online catalog. This project allows for better tracking of the art collection and ensures that all patrons can see what the library owns ([Donnelly Library Annual Report 2007-2008, p.4-5](#)).

The two main venues for art exhibits at the University are the Ray Drew Gallery in Donnelly Library and in Burris Hall, home of the fine arts program. Events include an annual show by new visual arts faculty, a fall and spring student art show, individual shows by graduating art students, and shows by local and visiting artists (such as the show in the fall of 2008 by Ballen Endowment visiting professor Eddie Dominguez). The Ray Drew Gallery also occasionally exhibits materials from the Donnelly Library collection such as the Marc Chagall prints, which were shown in the fall of 2007. All together there are about 20 art exhibits each year on campus.

New Mexico Highlands is one of the few universities in the region to offer a fully equipped art foundry. The foundry program is responsible for one of the most interesting art events on campus, Iron Tribe. The fifth iron art exhibit at NMHU was held in March of 2009, and included works by more than 80 professional local, national, and international iron artists. International artists in this year’s Iron Tribe hail from England, Estonia, France, Ireland, Japan, Scotland, and Wales. Two of the featured artists in last year’s event were Highlands’ arts alumni, Aaron Juarros and Matt Eaton. Aaron is a graduate student at the Edinburgh College of Art, and Matt earned his MFA from Georgia State University.

Perhaps the most exciting aspects of the event are the iron pours. The event in March included two castings. Pictures of the iron pours are available [here](#).

Past Iron Tribe exhibits helped spark the formation of the Western Cast Iron Art Alliance in 2008. David Lobdell, director of the foundry program, cofounded the alliance and serves as its president.

#### *KEDP Radio Station*

The fall of 2005 saw a major milestone at NMHU, the start of our own radio station, [KEDP, 91.1 FM](#). Two transmitters were donated by Citadel Broadcasting of Albuquerque (a 1,000 watt and a 10,000 watt). Initially the station broadcast from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. Mondays through Fridays, but in December, 2005 the station went on the air full-time. By the spring of 2006, there were 20 student DJs trained and broadcasting their own shows. DJs must sign an agreement and are trained in FCC regulations. KEDP broadcasts a [wide variety of musical genres](#) including classic rock, alternative, disco, techno, Latin, mariachi, salsa, reggae, hip hop, urban, country, folk, children’s music and music from Northern New Mexico. They do remote broadcasts of university events, such as athletic events and the Iron Tribe iron pours. Four of the KEDP DJs have received scholarships from the New Mexico Broadcasters Association.



### Donnelly Library Book Discussion Series

In the fall of 2008 a Donnelly librarian and an English professor instituted a program designed to engage members of the community. They organized a reading program called "Let's Talk About It!: A Mind of Her Own" which scheduled discussion groups around works of Jewish literature dealing with themes of father-daughter relationships. The program was funded by a small grant from the American Library Association and Nextbook and was conducted in collaboration with a local independent book store, Tome on the Range, which advertised the program and had the books for sale. In addition, participants could check the books out at Donnelly Library.

The program generated considerable interest among members of the community. In fact the majority of the participants were not Highlands faculty or students. Between ten and 26 people signed up for each of the six meetings, and actual attendance ranged from four to 24. A stated goal of the program was to "to diversify the cultures celebrated in our programs" and to reinvigorate "scholarly and cultural discussion" of Jewish identity and Jewish literature with both the greater Las Vegas community and the campus community. The organizers consider this program to be a solid first step towards more multicultural programming ([Report to the American Library Association](#)).

### Summer Camps

Finding fun, appropriate activities for kids during the summer can be difficult. Highlands helps in this effort by sponsoring a number of summer camps, focusing on a wide range of topics and activities. The camps are not only for children, sometimes adults can participate. In 2008, 75 women and 150 men attended basketball camps at the Wilson Sports Complex ([Wilson Complex 07-08 Usage Report](#)).

Highlands sponsors a variety of athletic camps, including basketball camps for children and adults, football camps for area high school athletes, and soccer camps. The soccer camps provide local children the opportunity to interact with collegiate level soccer players. The three-day long soccer camps currently cost about \$30 per child and are very popular. Sessions are available for children ages four through 16. The camp is run by the members of the Highlands Women's Soccer team. The summer 2009 camp was run from August 4 to the 6, and between 30 and 60 children were expected to attend.

Highlands also hosts a number of academic camps for middle and high school students. Research is clear that bringing these students on to a college campus before high school graduation can help increase college enrollment. Some of these camps are associated with established programs, such as GEAR UP and Upward Bound, while others focus on specific academic fields.

The GEAR UP program sponsors an annual three-day summer program that brings over 100 high school sophomores from Española, Pojoaque, and Santa Fe to the Highlands campus. The camp helps high school sophomores learn about college financial aid, student services, majors and minors, and how to succeed in their college freshman year. The three-day GEAR UP for College Camp is a collaboration between Highland's Española GEAR UP program, the Center for the Education and Study of Diverse Populations, and Engaging Latino Communities for Education (ENLACE).

The [New Mexico Highlands University/Luna Community](#)

[College Science and Agriculture Summer Experience Project](#) (SASE) provides high school juniors and seniors with an opportunity, early in their academic career, to conduct hands-on research in the natural sciences using state-of-the-art scientific instrumentation. The program encourages students through experiential learning to pursue a degree and an eventual career in an agriculturally related field. In the summer of 2008, twenty students participated in the program. Four of the students had just graduated from high school and all four enrolled in Highlands that fall, three as science majors ([SASE 2008 Outcomes Summary](#)).

Highlands hosted the [Supercomputing Challenge](#), a free, five-day summer camp for middle and high school students, in June of 2009. The camp was sponsored by [Project GUTS - Growing Up Thinking Scientifically](#), which is a summer and after-school science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) program for middle school students in New Mexico. Students and teachers learned about how scientists and others use computer modeling in cutting-edge research. Participating teachers also learned how to start a Project GUTS club and sponsor a Supercomputing Challenge team. On the Highlands campus the program was sponsored by the ARMAS in Education program (see Criterion Four), which is continuing to work with Project GUTS to develop an after school club for local middle school students beginning in fall 2009.

Past camps have included the Digital Filmmaking Boot Camp held in July of 2007. This 12-day residential program brought 12 high school students from across the state to the NMHU campus for an intensive program in digital filmmaking. Two of the films produced by the camp participants can be seen on a DVD in the Self Study Resource Room in Donnelly Library. The importance of hosting academic camps is highlighted in [the report of this camp](#), where the organizers paraphrase a young female participant as saying, "I was going to join the military after school but you guys make me think I should go to college!" The HED declined to fund the camp after the first year, but we still believe it is an excellent example of the innovative approaches that can be taken to on-campus summer programming for high school students.

### Community Use of University Facilities

New Mexico Highlands University believes that university buildings and other facilities should be made available, under reasonable conditions, to non-university organizations for certain activities. These activities must foster the educational, cultural, recreational, civic, moral, religious, or social development of the community ([Policies and Procedures for Use of Campus Facilities](#)).

These facilities include:

- Melody, Centennial and Central Parks
- Wilson Sports Complex: (3,000 person capacity) basketball courts, racquetball courts, and tennis courts
- Perkins Stadium: (3,800 person capacity) football field, track, practice fields
- Sala de Madrid: (250 person capacity) large open space with built-in stage and small atrium area can be set up to accommodate auditorium or banquet-style seating
- Kennedy Lounge: (150 person capacity) large open space can be

set up to accommodate auditorium or banquet-style seating

- Natatorium
- Ilfeld Auditorium: (718 person capacity)
- Gene Torres Golf Course

The Wilson Sports Complex is heavily used by students, staff, and community members. In the 2007-2008 academic year, about 200 community members used the facility per day ([Wilson Complex 07-08 Usage Report](#)). Individuals use the basketball court, racquetball courts, and Fitness Center. Wilson Complex is also used by the community for large-scale athletics events such as the North/South All-Star Games (approximately 4,000 attendance) and the annual Stu Clark High School Basketball Tournament (approximately 6,000 attendance).

The HU Wellness Program is housed at the Wellness and Fitness Center, an exercise center in the Wilson Sports Complex open to students, staff, and community members. The HU Wellness Program provides physical assessments and consultations to students, staff, and community members. The assessments include evaluations of flexibility, body fat, muscular strength, muscular endurance, and cardio respiratory endurance. The Wellness Program staff then conducts consultations with participants to review the results of the assessments and to make recommendations regarding individualized exercise programs. Participants can then return to the Wellness Program for additional consultations regarding the effectiveness of their efforts. From September 2007 to July 2008 the program staff provided 575 assessments and 496 consultations. Two hundred and five of the assessments and 179 of the consultations were provided for community members. In addition, the program staff made 12 presentations as part of their educational outreach efforts. Some of the presentations included providing wellness assessments. Presentations/assessments were conducted for Alta Vista Regional Hospital, Mora High School, Robertson High School, and the Senior Trek for Healthy Fitness ([HU Wellness Program 07-08 Yearly Report](#)).

The Wellness Program also offers the Cardiovascular Health Enhancement and Exercise Rehabilitation (CHEER) program for area residents who are recovering from serious cardiovascular health problems, such as heart attacks. The program is by referral only and participants are referred to the program by their physicians. The program includes an exercise course that includes an individualized schedule of approved exercises. Participants in the class have already completed a program of exercise supervised by their physicians, and are now ready to move on to a more rigorous, but still carefully selected, exercise schedule.

The NMHU Swimming Pool is unique in Northern New Mexico in that it has a deep end, allowing the University to offer courses in lifeguard training and scuba diving. The pool has heavy community usage. In the summer of 2008, groups such as the United World College, Upward Bound, and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century program from the West Las Vegas school district all contributed to the 1,439 community members who used the pool ([NMHU Swimming Pool 2008 Usage Report](#)).

The [Gene Torres Golf Course](#) reopened this year after extensive renovations. The course is USGA certified, and New Mexico residents can play for a reduced fee. The course is an important part of the Las

Vegas community and in fact is listed in the City Master Plan as a permanent green space.

### *Intramurals*

The intramurals program was begun in the fall of 2002. It included leagues in basketball, flag football, volleyball, softball, racquetball, tennis, badminton, and ping pong ([Intramural Sports Program Proposal, 2002](#)). Originally the program was only open to Highlands students, but in 2006 the program was expanded to include students from Luna Community College, the United World College, Las Vegas City Schools, West Las Vegas Schools, and community members. In order to accomplish this, a one-credit intramurals course was created. Having community members enroll in this course allowed the University to open the intramurals program while still ensuring that all participants would be covered under university insurance policies. In 2008 the intramurals program was moved from the Department of Exercise and Sport Science to the Athletics Program.

### *Ilfeld Auditorium*

As documented in the section on musical and theatrical performances, Highlands sponsors a wide range of events that are open to the public. In addition to the programs that are put on by the University, Ilfeld Auditorium is available to community groups for performances, often for reduced or waived fees. For example, the Missoula Children's Theater, sponsored by the Las Vegas Arts Club, uses Ilfeld for a week every summer with the rental fee waived. The theater recruits local children every summer to practice for a week for a theatrical performance. The 2009 performance was "Robinson Carouse." There are many children in town who have participated in the Missoula Children's Theater productions every summer of their lives.

Other organizations use Ilfeld for fundraising performances. During the past year the United World College had a fundraiser with the folk musician John McCutcheon, and the Las Children's Dance Theater gave a fundraising performance. In addition, community groups use Ilfeld for special events such as the Las Vegas Mainstreet Awards Reception and "State of the City Address" by the City of Las Vegas.

## **Core Component 5c** *The organization demonstrates its responsiveness to those constituencies that depend on its services.*

### **Articulation Agreements**

Along with the rest of the nation, New Mexico has recognized the importance of supporting mobility of students in higher education. The students in higher education often do not proceed through the traditional path of graduating from high school, enrolling in a college or university, and earning a baccalaureate degree from that institution four to six years later. Instead, many students enter higher education at the community college level. They stop out and return to college, sometimes years later. And they transfer between institutions. They transfer a lot. At Highlands, we can identify students who began at NMHU as first-time freshmen who have since attended up to six different institutions in multiple states ([The Effect of Transfers on First-time Freshmen at NMHU](#)).

This pattern, sometimes referred to as "swirling," is now a defining feature of higher education in the United States. It is this phenomenon

that results in the fact that more than 80% of NMHU undergraduate degree recipients began here as transfer students, not as first-time freshmen. The recognition of this pattern at the state-level has resulted in a strong and ongoing emphasis on developing clear articulation agreements among the state's colleges and universities. If our students are going to be transferring, often multiple times, we need to ensure that they can transfer as easily and seamlessly, with as little loss of time and credit, as possible.

As discussed elsewhere in this Self Study, efforts coordinated through the Higher Education Department have resulted in articulation agreements regarding the state's 35-credit-hour common core. In addition, statewide articulation agreements have been developed for a number of academic programs. A number of Highlands faculty have been involved in these statewide efforts.

Bridging between associate's degrees at community colleges and baccalaureate degrees at the state universities (2 +2 programs) has been a particular focus of the state, and of NMHU. As described earlier in this section, the Highlands Centers have extensive articulation agreements with their collaborating community colleges. The main campus also has an extensive articulation agreement with Luna Community College in Las Vegas, perhaps exemplified by the RN to BSN program, which literally could not exist without the collaboration between the schools.

One recent example of the development of an articulation agreement that clearly illustrates our responsiveness to our constituents comes from the Rio Rancho Center. Central New Mexico Community College (CNM) had an associate of arts degree in family studies that did not transfer to any four-year institution in the state. CNM contacted the Highlands Rio Rancho Center to discuss channeling those students into the NMHU social work program. The School of Social Work provided the CNM faculty with syllabi from their lower-level courses. CNM then worked to re-design their courses to reflect the curricular requirements of the bachelor's of social work degree. After a year of work, an [articulation agreement](#) was signed.

As an institute of higher education, it is not enough for Highlands as an organization to demonstrate responsiveness and service to the wider community. We also have an obligation to instill in our students the passion and skills they require to address the needs of their communities. One way in which Highlands meets this goal is through the [Ben Lujan Leadership & Public Policy Institute](#). Created in 2005 and named for the current New Mexico Speaker of the House, the Ben Lujan Leadership and Public Policy Institute seeks to "Create the Next Generation of Leaders." The institute supports student leadership activities that result in shaping public policy. The institute houses five centers that support leadership development, learning opportunities, research, and community service that have important policy implications.

Among its other initiatives, the Institute supported four Highlands students to attend a forum sponsored by the [Alliance to Harness Global Opportunities](#). The alliance is dedicated to providing youth with the education and applied training necessary to become social entrepreneurs. This forum attended by the Highlands students was titled "The Global Clean Technology Forum."

In collaboration with the NM Acequia Association, the Ben Lujan Institute also sponsored the [3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Land and Water Institute](#) at Highlands in May of 2009. The title of the institute was "Honoring our Legacy: Planting Seeds for the Future." Over one hundred people from across the state participated, including numerous community leaders and advocates.

One of the main purposes of the institute is to support public policy research, often with students as researchers. One recent research project involved a collaboration with the Rural School and Community Trust to conduct an analysis of the effects of a proposed new funding formula on New Mexico's school districts ([An Analysis of the Impacts of the AIR Funding Formula Proposal on New Mexico School Districts, January 2009](#)).

Thanks to a grant from the Con Alma Foundation, the Ben Lujan

## The People Behind the Data

*Rodrigo Javier Blanco*

In 2005 the Ben Lujan Leadership and Public Policy Institute entered into an agreement with Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs to support students in applying for Princeton's Public Policy and International Affairs Junior Summer Institute. Highlands student Rodrigo Javier Blanco successfully competed with juniors from over 30 countries to be accepted into the 2009 Institute.

Rodrigo is interested in health policy and developmental studies. His goal is to work in the public health sector and improve access to public health services and health education for impoverished children and pregnant women. His interest in health policy stems from witnessing the enormous gap between the very rich and the very poor and the dramatic effects of poverty on public health.

Each summer since 2004, Rodrigo has been involved in a program conducted by the Public Health Department in Alto Paraná, Paraguay. Together with volunteer nurses, he visits the poorest areas of the state to give free vaccines to children and pregnant mothers.



Institute, in collaboration with the University of New Mexico's Family Practice Residency Program, is testing a new approach to training family medicine residents in community medicine. Under this model, second and third year medical residents learn to work collaboratively with community health representatives from the northern Indian Pueblos and *promotores* from rural clinics in the delivery of culturally sensitive, cost effective primary care to underserved populations of Northern New Mexico. This program is designed to encourage medical residents to opt for careers serving underserved rural populations of New Mexico and teach them to bridge front line community-based medicine and public health to impact the social determinants of health. By structuring their interaction with community health workers in different clinical learning and service venues, which range from hospital discharge, to clinical care, to home care, to community projects; the Ben Lujan Institute and UNM's Northern New Mexico Family Practice Residency Program seek to teach family practice residents how to leverage community resources in order to improve the health of their patients, their families, and the larger community.

### **Core Component 5d** *Internal and external constituencies value the services the organization provides.*

One challenge for every university is how to effectively support economic development in the local community. As documented throughout this report, Highlands is involved in numerous collaborative efforts with the local business community. Those collaborations range from such formal arrangements as the sponsoring of the Las Vegas Economic Development Council (EDC) through more informal initiatives, such as students developing business plans for local businesses.

In 2002, there were concerns that little was being done successfully in the community to address economic development. Highlands was approached by the newly formed Las Vegas – San Miguel Economic Development Corporation (EDC) and asked for assistance. The EDC was given office space in Sininger Hall. Business professor Luis Ortiz was assigned to work with them, and the EDC included part of his salary in their budget. Highlands also provided a budget for student workers. The Highlands Foundation donated money to provide equipment to be used by the EDC in the Sininger Hall conference room.

While the EDC was housed at Highlands, a property was bought by the city to develop a wood business park. This was important, as it linked the University through not only economic development, but also with the NMHU Forestry institute in an attempt to promote economic development efforts through wood commercialization. The university also provided training for small business owners, helped businesses write business plans, counseled small businesses on financing and writing grant proposals to the USDA for rural grants. Through this collaboration NMHU and the EDC helped a local business owner acquire an \$80,000 grant for the development of the brewery on Grand Avenue. Unfortunately, this project never received approval at the state level.

Eventually, the EDC decided to hire a full-time director and, as part of this decision, moved to new offices. Even with this change, the strong relationship continues between the University and the EDC with many of the EDC activities, such as conferences, occurring on

campus. As one recent example of this collaboration, NMHU joined the EDC in sponsoring a [Job Fair](#) on June 24<sup>th</sup> 2009 on the Highlands campus. The fair was in response to the recent suspension of operations of a local call center and the resulting loss of jobs. The job fair had the specific goal of helping those affected to find new jobs or explore educational options.

An interesting aspect of Highland's collaboration with the EDC is the work of Mary Romero, assistant professor of accounting in the NMHU School of Business. She worked as EDC's accountant from the time it incorporated until March, 2008. In lieu of payment, the EDC agreed to donate \$2,500 per year to the NMHU Association of Latino Professionals in Finance and Accounting (ALPFA) student chapter. The money was used to pay for School of Business students to attend the annual ALPFA national convention. With a combination of the EDC money and fundraisers, they funded an average of 15 students per year at a cost of about \$600 each. Students have gone to Orlando (twice), Chicago, Albuquerque, Miami, Fort Worth, and Phoenix.

As an example of informal collaborations with the local business community, students in the Strategic Management class have, for the past three years, developed [business plans](#) as part of their course assignments. Some of these are for projects designed by the students themselves, but others are developed at the request of local businesses. Examples include the development of a pricing structure for the Woods Products Industrial Park (a project of the EDC), a proposed expansion of a local restaurant, and a plan to handle the rapid expansion of a local construction company. One of the companies (Phillips Search Group, LLC) was so impressed with the students' work that the owner hired the team leader to work for her. The owner of another company (Barella Lumber) used some of the material the students developed as part of a successful grant application.

This initiative is not just limited to businesses in San Miguel County. Business students in Farmington also develop business plans as part of the Strategic Management class. Recently they wrote business plans for two companies, Fire Safe Homes and Cambridge Home and Design, which are under incubation at the Enterprise Center of the Quality Center for Business at San Juan College. Parts of both of those plans have been implemented by the business owners.

While not supporting economic development on a community-level, the [Vistas Sin Limites](#) program does promote employment among a specific population in the community. Vistas Sin Limites is a not-for-profit vocational service agency that provides services for individuals with developmental disabilities, mental health issues, or issues with substance abuse. The Vistas Sin Limites program is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF).

The [Northeastern New Mexico Regional Science & Engineering Fair](#) provides an excellent example of how community service at Highlands supports the mission of the University and is highly valued by our constituents. The fair is in its 54<sup>th</sup> year of operation on the Highlands campus. It is the second largest science fair in New Mexico and is affiliated with the Society for Science and the Public, formerly known as Science Service. The Science Fair is one of the most important services that Highlands provides, and it is extremely well received. Its location at NMHU is also fortunate in that it supports other initiatives, such as the GEAR UP program, which works with elementary and high school students to build the skills

## The People Behind the Data

*Chanae Esquibel and Loretta Overberger*

Chanae Esquibel is one of the Roy students who traveled to Highlands to work on her science project along with her project team member Megan Costa.

“Dr. Shaw supervised us in her lab to extract the DNA from the pulp of burned teeth that we got from a dentist,” said Esquibel of her CSI-type research project. “Our project was very technical and complex so we needed a lot of help. We really enjoyed working with Dr. Shaw and learned a lot. She’s so nice, helpful and patient. It was great to get hands-on experience in her lab.”

Loretta Overberger, the science teacher at Roy Middle/Senior High School, said: “This work with Highlands enabled my students to communicate with a professor and become comfortable asking scientific questions. They got a chance to learn with the best. It amazed me how the professors made so much time for my kids. We’re a very small school and don’t often get this kind of opportunity.”

and commitment necessary to increase college enrollment and success. One of the services provided by GEAR UP is training the teachers to implement successful science fair programs in their schools. They also provide material resources, such as project boards.

The program also provides service opportunities for Highlands faculty and students, in fact, the Science Fair could not take place without them. Highlands faculty and students make up a significant portion of the many judges needed by the Science Fair each year. Perhaps more importantly, the Science Fair gives NMHU faculty the opportunity to serve as mentors for middle school and high school students in the region.

All of these interactions were present in this year’s Science Fair, when NMHU science faculty worked with GEAR UP participants from Roy middle and high schools on their science fair projects. The students worked with chemistry and biology faculty on their projects. As part of the mentorship the students had access to the science labs on the Highlands campus. For example, one student project explored how safe cookware is by using an atomic absorption spectrometer in Dr. Merritt Helvenston’s lab.

As a final example of the recognition we have received for our community service efforts, New Mexico Highlands University’s was named to the [President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll](#) February 9, 2009 by the Corporation for National and Community Service. Launched in 2006, the Honor Roll is a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service, and is sponsored by the President’s Council on Service and Civic Participation, the USA Freedom Corps, and the U.S. Departments of Education and Housing and Urban Development. Highlands University is one of only two colleges in New Mexico to [receive the](#)

[honor this year](#), and was recognized for making community service a campus priority.

## Opportunities For Improvement

As evidenced throughout the self study, NMHU does an excellent job of identifying and addressing constituent’s needs both formally and informally. Based upon recommendations received from various constituents, NMHU does a quality job of analyzing its capacity to meet their needs. For example, some units conduct formal and informal needs assessments, while others work in collaboration with relevant stakeholders to identify areas of service. Further, some units do an outstanding job of documenting details regarding services provided. However, most do not, as observed during the data collection process of this chapter. In order to meet these challenges, the following action steps will be implemented:

- Conduct regular assessments of constituents’ needs: All units within the University should adopt a formal process for conducting needs assessment to evaluating their constituent’s needs.
- Develop an effective method to document services to constituents: A recurring theme in the Self-Study is our need to better document activities at the University. This also applies to our services to our constituents.
- Develop a method for our constituents to evaluate our services: While we provide several methods for our students to evaluate our services, we have no such formal mechanism for our other constituents. We need this information in order to understand how to improve our services.









## Conclusion

The Self-Study serves multiple purposes. It is the basis for our application for continued accreditation but, perhaps more importantly, it is an opportunity to reflect upon our successes and challenges, our strengths and weaknesses. While the Self-Study process has certainly helped to identify areas in need of improvement at Highlands, the overwhelming experience of the many people who have worked on or reviewed this document has been one of amazement at the progress we have made. The changes that have occurred at Highlands since our last accreditation visit are extensive, exciting, and deserving of review.

The relationship between our Board of Regents and our administration has been a positive one for several years. This atmosphere of cooperation and mutual respect has allowed the University to move forward on major projects, such as the collective bargaining agreement with the Faculty Association and the new residence hall, which could never have been achieved in an antagonistic atmosphere. As a result, publicity regarding the University has been almost unanimously positive in recent years.

Our finances are in excellent shape. We have had a series of clean audits and have built our cash reserves while still maintaining the lowest tuition and fees in the Western United States. We have also managed

to implement significant faculty and staff raises, while at the same time increasing our numbers of full-time faculty and maintaining a strong ratio of tenure-track to visiting positions. We have had cuts in our state funding and expect further cuts before the recession ends, but at this point we are confident of our ability to absorb those cuts without seriously impacting the functioning and growth of the University. We have achieved our strong financial situation through restructuring our financial planning processes, hiring three new financial management positions (associate vice president for finance, comptroller, and budget director), and by optimizing our utilization of the Banner system to ensure accurate financial information is available to all units at the University.

Enrollments have been increasing, and those increases (with some yearly variations) have occurred across the University. First-time freshmen, transfer students, graduate students, main campus and Centers have all seen enrollment increases over the past decade. We met the 3% student credit hour growth necessary for an increase in state funding last year, and expect to meet that goal again this year. While it is doubtful that this will actually lead to an increase in state funding due to state revenue shortfalls, this demonstrates steady growth at the University.

We are currently in the process of developing a new mission, vision,



and strategic plan for the University, and expect to have those in place at the time of the accreditation visit in November. This process has been free of the contention surrounding the development of our last strategic plan, and we confidently expect the documents to reflect a strong consensus opinion of the University community.

Our governance structures have been demonstrably strengthened through the recognition of the NMHU Faculty Association, and the creation of the NMHU Association of Graduate Students, and the Staff Advisory Senate. The president meets regularly with representatives of each of these organizations, as well as the previously existing Faculty Senate and student senate. While the new Association of Emeritus and Retired Faculty does not play an official role in University governance, we expect this organization to serve as a major resource for the University. Communication with and administration of the Centers has been strengthened through the oversight of the vice president of academic affairs, and the formation of the Deans' Council.

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research is in its third year of operation and is serving as a major source of data and information regarding the functioning of the University. Information is made publicly available on the University Web site and is being regularly used by people across the University for decision making and planning.

Our assessment system was revived three years ago, and the majority

of academic units have data from at least those three years to utilize for program development. Through our involvement in the Higher Learning Commission Academy for the Assessment of Student Learning we are developing an integrated system of university-wide assessment, based upon a common understanding of our goals for our graduates. Assessment information is publicly available on our Web site. With the creation of the new director of assessment position, we expect to strengthen the processes already in place for academic units and institute regular assessment of non-academic units across the University.

Highlands has developed the processes, infrastructure, and positions necessary to understand and address the challenges our students, communities and state will address in the coming years. We do not underestimate those challenges, but the progress we have made during the past decade has given us the confidence to face them with a sense of excitement and anticipation. The evidence presented throughout this Self-Study demonstrates that New Mexico Highlands University unequivocally meets the standards for accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.





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