UNM Council on Academic Planning

**Statement on Value/Value Systems and Comparative Advantages**

**March 2, 2012**

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**Statement:**

As the state’s flagship university, we should expect to have the best undergraduate program in the Southwest, and graduate programs that compete nationally, enabling us to attract the best faculty and students. A caveat regarding being a “flagship” university: Our pride should be tempered with the realization that if UNM is perceived as arrogant, it can erode support from legislators and from the state’s other education institutions.

**Question**

The threshold question was whether UNM can embrace both access and excellence. The consensus of the group was a resounding “Yes”. To accomplish this goal the following issues must be addressed:

* Articulation standards among colleges must be improved and enforced. Apparently, New Mexico has laws that mandate consistent articulation, but they have not been fully implemented and expanded, leading to wasted time and resources and adversely impacting degree completion.
* An emphasis in the new funding formula on degree completion will give UNM recognition for its efforts to attract returning students and for the success of transfer students. The standard six-year graduation rate metric relates only to each cohort of entering freshman. We must redouble our efforts to identify the impediments to student success and implement effective programs for Undergraduate and graduate programs. As Dr. Don Randel put it so succinctly, “We must strive to be pumps, not filters.”
* We should extend our recent efforts to attract highly competitive undergraduate and graduate students, including award-winning scholars at both levels. For undergraduates, we should place a special emphasis upon nationwide recruiting of National Merit Scholars and pursuing New Mexico’s own National Hispanic, National Achievement and Native American scholars; at the graduate level, recruiting distinguished undergraduate students from underrepresented groups who will bring both diversity and merit to our graduate programs. Targeting high-achieving students from contiguous and regional states should also be a priority. Albuquerque’s weather and proximity could be attractive to students seeking an out-of-state university, but scholarship and/or fee waiver resources are also critical enticements. Increasing assistantship opportunities for graduate students is important, but equally or more so would be to offer more fellowships and scholarships, especially for first and second-year graduate students. Expanded recruitment of talented international students at all levels provides enrichment for all and delivers on our commitment to globalization and a positive economic impact on New Mexico.
* A key to maintaining high standards while remaining accessible is to forge effective alliances with our feeder schools, especially UNM’s branch campuses. UNM’s insistence on a more rigorous high school curriculum should provide better prepared students with less need for remedial classes while maintaining our commitment to diversity. Students with substantial remedial educational needs should be directed to community colleges and/or branch campuses for this remediation.
* We must reaffirm and value our diversity as the unique strategic advantage it confers. It provides the environment where our students learn from one another to generate new knowledge to help the world understand and celebrate the value of our differences.
* A defining attribute for University of New Mexico could be our commitment to academic and scholarly integrity. They are key to the research enterprise as well as to the work of faculty and staff. UNM should strive to create and maintain a culture of academic integrity, broadly construed as the commitment to truth, fairness, honesty, and mutual respect in all our practices.
* To ensure that the academic enterprise remains chief among our values, we will be increasingly challenged to maintain a high level of integrity in the university’s athletic program. The corrosive influence of big-money sports must continue to be resisted. The average FBS level head football coach realized a salary increase of 35% in 2011. The quaint days when Alabama’s legendary coach Bear Bryant refused to accept a salary larger than the university president has given way to current Alabama coach Lou Saban making $5M/year, which is seven times what their current well-paid (top ten in U.S. among public universities) president makes.
* We must forge alliances with business, government, and workforce development partners to strengthen the economic development of our state and nation.
* We must commit to engagement with our surrounding communities and to serve them through lifelong learning programs, service projects, health and wellness programs, and other meaningful forms of outreach. We demonstrate responsiveness to the constituencies which depend on our university for service.
* We should continually strive to become an employer of choice, attracting and developing excellent leadership, faculty and staff.

**Role as a Flagship**

Preservation of UNM’s status as New Mexico’s flagship university is a cherished value. Key drivers are a robust research mission, led by a diverse and nationally recognized faculty and thriving graduate and professional school programs. An aspiration: What if all faculty and all students committed to a goal of discovering or “creating knowledge”? To maintain and grow our graduate programs, UNM should consider a system of better recruiting, tracking, and supporting graduate students. The graduate (research) enterprise should drive the undergraduate experience. Consideration should be given to encouraging undergraduate research through participation in Council on Undergraduate Research activities.

To provide a comparative advantage for UNM globally as well as nationally, UNM will need the appropriate infrastructure and facilities to support graduate and undergraduate education and the related research. While the 1996 Master Plan located research facilities in the south campus, the 2011 Consolidated Master Plan recognizes the adjacency requirements for additional research facilities on the main campus to enhance student participation. To assist with the infrastructure and facilities planning, more detailed enrollment projections and research expansion plans will need to be completed. We recognize that experience of place matters.

The various schools and colleges at UNM should be committed to helping all other units succeed. There is power in the collective success of all university endeavors that transcends the individual parts and adds strength to all.

For UNM to succeed, our community must succeed. We must seek ways to engage with the community and the state and to be an engine of economic growth.

If UNM manages to “get it right” in terms of maintaining its commitment to access and diversity while continuing to make progress in student success, we could become a model for other flagship universities which are just learning how to serve America’s “emerging majority” successfully.