

## 22 Responses to “Draft Plan for Review and Comment”

1.  *Jamie Bronstein* says:

[October 25, 2011 at 5:33 pm](#)

Nowhere are faculty asked to contribute their ideas to this “plan.” but I can assure you that few of us are thrilled by the prospect of being told to (for example) wear nmsu branded apparel on Fridays. Why is it our collective job to increase the profit margins of the on-campus Barnes and Noble?

Incidentally, there’s an easy way to increase “graduation rates” without actually increasing student readiness for the workforce: just tell faculty to give more A grades, earned or not.

2.  *Steve Stochaj* says:

[October 25, 2011 at 7:49 pm](#)

I am disappointed that “research” is not explicitly included in the Vision’s bulleted items.

3.  *Connie Falk* says:

[October 26, 2011 at 9:17 am](#)

I think sustainability should be a primary objective, given we are signers of the President’s Climate Commitment and the Talloires Declaration.

Creating a livable, just, and resilient planet is the most pressing issue for the next generation, as we enter the post-fossil fuel era.

An international focus has minimal value if it is not accompanied by an emphasis on environmental concerns, given the rampant global depletion of natural resources and the plight of half the planet that lives in precarious circumstances.

Students who do travel will find that sustainability issues are a top concern in most developing countries. I have seen even in the poorest regions of Central America a concern about how to provide for basic human needs while conserving and protecting the forest, water, air, animals, soil, human health, and ecosystem functioning.

No student should graduate from a university and not understand the challenges posed by global warming, biodiversity losses, and industrial monoculture. In my view, students need to be introduced to environmental history and philosophy, environmental justice, resilience thinking, complex adaptive systems theory, seed sovereignty, ecological economics, sustainable agriculture, agroecology, agrarian philosophy, food systems, wildlife ecology, and the human capabilities literature.

4.  *Bruce Huhmann* says:

[October 26, 2011 at 3:13 pm](#)

While research, development, and commercialization partnerships between NMSU and organizations, businesses, and others interested economic development is certainly good; I have to agree NMSU should also reward and recognize primary research that enhances NMSU's reputation and expands the fields in which our faculty work.

5.  *Jamie Bronstein* says:

[October 26, 2011 at 3:48 pm](#)

Things are happening at the college level that are explicitly undermining this "strategic vision," by the way. Over the past several years, due to NMSU's refusal to keep up with market salaries in History, we've lost ALL, that's right ALL, of our professors in US history. Although we've campaigned again and again for new hires, stating that we cannot fulfill our mission to teach courses like Mexican-American history, or US West, or US Women's history, without faculty members, we haven't been given permission to hire.

Yesterday, we lost another US history position—to the Geography department, in order to make up for the fact that one of our faculty members is now an associate dean. Clearly, the need for a more bloated administration at every level ACTUALLY trumps the so-called mission to improve graduation rates.

I wait expectantly for someone to put his or her money where his or her mouth is.

6.  *Jeff Brown* says:

[October 27, 2011 at 12:03 pm](#)

The Building the Vision plan says very little about graduate education. NMSU needs to focus on both undergraduate and graduate education.

7.  *Dawn VanLeeuwen* says:

[October 27, 2011 at 12:40 pm](#)

Concern #1: While there are good reasons for the focus on graduation rates, there should be a better balance between this objective and objectives that support requiring students to perform at acceptable levels.

For example objective 2 under GG # 1 refers to “student success” but the document seems to suggest that “student success” is defined only by graduation rates. This seems like a very narrow definition of student success.

Even the goal “Effectiveness and Efficiency” does not include elements that seem to sufficiently balance this singular focus on graduate rates. If we want to ensure that we are being effective, why not require that students pass exit exams that test for basic reading and critical thinking skills prior to graduation? This document does not do anything to state as a goal that students will be held to a high standard or establish strategies for ensuring that students are meeting a high standard.

Concern #2: Under “Effectiveness and Efficiency” Objective 2, the second strategy states “Examine opportunities to consolidate all research-related support units.” Centralization versus de-centralization seems to go in and out of vogue – with neither always being the best structure. I hope that the emphasis here is on “Examine” as it states with no predisposition toward either.

8.  *Karen Reid* says:

[October 28, 2011 at 9:19 am](#)

It is inspirational to review the lofty goals and objectives associated with this plan. Without a doubt, it is comforting to know that college freshmen are one of the most studied populations in the country. However, it’s going to be hard to say whether any of

these objectives are making a difference. It's difficult to claim success, if we don't quantify the gains and timetable under which we anticipate achieving results for each proposal. We also need to think about how we're going to assess our plan when we implement these changes.

Similarly, it appeared we may be going with some of higher education's current trend solutions rather than research based, best practices for some of the changes recommended. This seems to run contrary to NMSU's research charter.

9.  *Mia Kalish* says:

[November 7, 2011 at 11:47 am](#)

Several of the comments here are very insightful. I noticed that there was a strong focus on executives, but very little involvement of the faculty. Achieving the Dream implemented this approach, and summative reports show that their overall "corporate" approach did not achieve the expected results, even at a cost of \$76 million.

Second, Steve Stochaj and Jeff Brown point out two serious omissions. And I would like to add an additional consideration: The Culture of Pride section focused heavily on intramural activities. I, personally, am not a sports enthusiast, and I have been aware of strong student criticism of the dollars allocated to coaching salaries at the expense of other, academically-related, resources and activities. As a researcher, I would like to see an increase in focus on Research (of course), and our Academics. NMSU is an excellent institution of learning, but the majority of our billboards are dedicated to Sports.

We have a very fine Teaching Academy, but who outside the Institution knows about it? We have research happening in improving various aspects of education, but we don't tell the community. Perhaps it's transmitted in meetings with business partners, but it's not communicated to parents and families who are the support base for our students.

So I'm with Karen Reid!

10.  *Michael Young* says:

[November 10, 2011 at 3:39 pm](#)

The Building the Vision (BTV) document is built around seven "Success Goals." Like Steve I am disappointed that enhancement of research productivity is not one of these goals. If you read through the information on the individual success goals you will find

that six of the seven goals (all but Graduation) at least mention research. Under Goal 4 - Economic Engine, NMSU is described as “a land grant research university.” If you read the BTV document again six of the seven goals (this time all but Alumni and Friends) mention research.

In the BTV document research figures most prominently in Goal 4 – Economic Engine. NMSU can be the economic engine of New Mexico and much of the Southwest. Research can play a major role in that effort. But research is of value separate and apart from its potential role in economic development. I would really like to see in the BTV a clear expectation for widespread faculty participation in the research enterprise. As we Build the Vision, that should include building a culture of research across the campus. Externally funded research is important, but research – whether funded or not – can make a contribution to the literature and a difference in the lives of the people whom we are called to serve. I would like to see the important role research plays highlighted not just by mentioning it under other goals, but by developing “Enhancing Research Productivity” as Success Goal #8.

11.  *Larry Creider* says:

[November 11, 2011 at 12:16 pm](#)

#### General Comments

These comments are going to be long, so there will be more than one post. This one is devoted to general comments or comments on more than one area. Succeeding posts will comment on specific provisions of the draft BTV.

First of all, I want to express my appreciation to those who put in much effort and uncompensated time working on the draft. There is considerable excellence in the specifics.

My initial response to the draft of BTV has remained the same even after examining it more closely. The draft is like a construction site with building materials of varying quality and usefulness and no architect’s drawings. What the draft presents is a list of objectives but no vision of what the university is intended to be. I believe that the lack of an explicit connection to the university’s missions and values is fatal. The mission statement should have been presupposed and attached to the draft or it should have been rewritten first. If we have an unclear destination, how can we know if we are taking the right steps to reach that destination or if we are even moving in the right direction?

Related to this problem is the lack of an explicit connection between the objectives and our purposes of learning and increasing opportunity. The failure to of BTW reference either the classic three-legged “stool” of teaching, research, and service or the four-legged “chair” of teaching, scholarship and creative activity, service and

extension/outreach seems fatal because faculty at least will find it harder to relate the objectives to their actual work. Likewise, our fundamental identity as a land grant institution seems to have gotten lost in the shuffle. Much of my pride as an Aggie comes from contributing in a small way to strengthening that identity.

Another problem is the silo-like nature of the Success Goals as an outline form. In fact, graduation and degree completion are intimately related to success in diversity efforts, diversity is related to our efforts at internationalization, and all are related to increasing effectiveness. I am not arguing that the BTV draft is unorganized, but an outline and consistency in presentation are not the same as a coherent plan.

The inability of the draft's presentation to distinguish between "action or measure" and vague aspirations makes much of the specifics irrelevant. For example, in Graduation Strategy 2.3, measuring the number of faculty who participate will not help to "develop faculty/student relationships beyond the classroom," although enabling the "tracking methodology" will enable progress to be measured in an imperfect way.

Related to this fuzziness is the fact that the draft hides (not necessarily intentionally) at least some of the considerable resources that will need to be devoted to meeting some of these "key performance outcomes." Enabling 95% of declared majors to enroll in introductory or upper division courses for their major on the first attempt is going to be quite expensive in terms of faculty and perhaps require new instructional space.

While one can find some references to graduate education and to research through BTV, the lack of emphases on these subjects is very disconcerting since NMSU has stated on many occasions that the long-range goal is to focus more of its instructional efforts on graduate education. Not only does this involve research, but research is one of the core elements of our university's identity as a land grant institution and is vital to providing exciting teaching on all levels.

12.  *Larry Creider* says:

[November 11, 2011 at 12:18 pm](#)

Graduation Goal #1

Objective 2, Graduation strategy 2.1, there should be a section on support services for students who are the first-generation college students.

Graduation strategy 2.5 "Graduation is Goal #1" sounds like a slogan in a factory (Quality is job 1) or in the military. The problem is that it is not directed to the students. We have a marketing program that could come up with something that will be directed to students, something better than "Get that degree" or "Graduation. What it's all about."

Graduation strategy 3.1 Develop and codify an definition of Las Cruces Campus Student ... direct other applicants to NMSU community colleges for admission.” The notion of increasing the number of Las Cruces campus students enrolled full-time in Las Cruces campus classes by 3% per year ignores the pressures exerted by the tuition differential between LC-campus and community college courses and the fact that tuition and living expenses are so high that many students have to work to attend school at all.

Strategy 3.3. The vagueness of this recommendation betrays the lack of interest in improving graduate student completion rates and time to completion. Given the overall goal of moving the LC-campus to more graduate-level courses, there should be more attention given to this goal.

13.  *Larry Creider* says:

[November 11, 2011 at 12:19 pm](#)

#### Diversity

The really difficult part in this section is determining which of the various aspects of diversity outlined in the paragraph before Objective 1 will be measured. Will we be limited to those federal categories of “officially recognized” diversity measurements or consider other aspects such as social class.

Strategy 1.3. Focus ... to diversify the tenure system faculty and professional staff.” This is a much-needed goal. LTV talks about having a faculty that reflects the demographics of our community. While difficult to accomplish, this is a goal that should be verbalized somewhere in BTV. This Strategy needs to address the increased cost of hiring and retaining members of underrepresented groups.

Strategy 4.1. There will be a cost to increasing the number of diversity-focused courses. The effort will require incentives to develop and offer classes, removing barriers to interdisciplinary and team-taught courses. Of course any new faculty positions would also have their costs, both in terms of hiring people and in eliminating things that are already being done.

14.  *Larry Creider* says:

[November 11, 2011 at 12:20 pm](#)

#### International Reach

Objective 2, “Expand international opportunities for NMSU students and faculty.” Both

of these strategies will require funding, internal as well as external. I suspect that the problem is not a lack of information but a lack of means, as well as the difficulty of integrating study abroad into STEM disciplines and programs with few electives.

Objective 3, “Internationalize the curriculum” This can be tied into efforts at increasing diversity on campus. on the other hand, this goal is undercut by persistent efforts to water down the Viewing the Wider World requirements.

Economic engine

Economic Objective 2, “Educate a diverse, internationally competitive, qualified and entrepreneurial workforce.” There is nothing in any of the strategies for this objective that will support a diverse workforce.

Economic Objective 3 is presented largely in terms of benefit (particularly financial) to NMSU. The strategies should be recast in terms of their benefit to the state.

15.  *Larry Creider* says:

[November 11, 2011 at 12:21 pm](#)

Effectiveness and Efficiency

Effectiveness strategy 1.2. “Establish a University Teaching Council.” One could add these duties to the Board of the Teaching Academy, restructure it a bit, and avoid another bureaucratic entity. The TA already has a good deal of expertise in teaching innovation. How about refunding them.

Effectiveness Objective 2, “Develop effective and efficient research programs and activities.” It is clear from the strategies that “research” means “sponsored research.” Either use the term or make provision for the values of unsponsored research, especially that done by the humanities and arts.

Effectiveness Strategy 2.4. “ Examine opportunities to consolidate all-research-related support units.” This seems to pre-judge the decision call for in the Action/Measure to make a decision regarding centralization or decentralization. This not my area, but it is a general bureaucratic and historical rule that decentralized organs develop because the centralized organ is incapable of meeting the needs of the local group. Unless mechanisms are developed to keep the centralized unit quickly responsive, flexible, and willing and able to understand the needs of those “on the ground,” centralizing functions will waste money because new groups will be developed to ensure that the local needs are being met. This is almost an historical law, and can certainly be verified in the history of research organizations.



Effectiveness Strategy 5.1. What is an “accountability dashboard?”

16.  *Larry Creider* says:

[November 11, 2011 at 12:21 pm](#)

Alumni and Friends

This section is fine except that the order of the objectives need to be reversed. The endowment will only be increased with relationships with alumni and friends are improved and they are led to engage in seeing how they can help the university achieve its vision.

- o  *Larry Creider* says:

[November 11, 2011 at 5:25 pm](#)

This should be revised to read:

This section is fine except that the order of the objectives needs to be reversed. The endowment will only be increased when relationships with alumni and friends are improved and these people are led to engage in seeing how they can help the university achieve its vision.

17.  *Rani Alexander* says:

[November 11, 2011 at 1:53 pm](#)

We recommend that “Success Goal #4” highlight one of NMSU’s significant interdisciplinary research strengths – primary field sciences. Field scientists working across colleges in the departments of Animal and Range Science, Entomology, Plant Pathology and Weed Science, Fish, Wildlife and Conservation Ecology, Geological Sciences, Biology, Anthropology, and the Cooperative Extension Service collectively maintain outstanding teaching and research records that include studies of the natural environment in southern New Mexico, the greater American Southwest, and research at international locations. These studies have created important tools, in the form of NMSU’s natural history collections that facilitate contemporary education, research, and outreach in field and laboratory science, and further promote its application to solving problems in everyday urban and rural life. Natural history collections include any zoological, botanical, fungal, microorganism, archaeological, paleontological, geological,

and related collections, and their data and documentation. They illuminate cultural, biological, and environmental change in our state and region.

Externally funded research in the field sciences, and the products and collections generated as a result, are among the best examples of scientific resources that work for educational excellence in New Mexico. The interdisciplinary work of field scientists enables NMSU to address all aspects of the land grant mission – in research, teaching, service, and extension/outreach. The collections and publicly accessible databases serve as repositories documenting basic and applied research in evolutionary ecology and biodiversity. NMSU's field scientists assist State and Federal land management agencies in documenting changes to sensitive natural, biological, and cultural resources that occur in their management areas. We use our collections for activity-based and service learning in courses and programs of study that train students to conduct field science, which qualifies them for employment and professional licensures needed to work on federal and state public lands, public and private research facilities, and initiate entrepreneurial activities such as environmental consultancies. The collections and databases further provide significant avenues for outreach and extension both to the public and to the scientific community. They support public policy decisions through access to scientific information and aid land managers by documenting the state's natural and ecological history. The work of field scientists at NMSU leverages research so that it fosters responsible stewardship and sustainability of New Mexico's natural resources.

Respectfully submitted,

Center for Natural History Collections

Rani Alexander, Professor of Anthropology and Curator, Anthropology Collections

Donovan Bailey, Associate Professor of Biology and Curator, Biology Herbarium

Rebecca Creamer, Professor, Entomology, Plant Pathology and Weed Science and Director, Molecular Biology Program

Peter Houde, Professor of Biology, Curator-in-Charge of the Vertebrate Museum, PI Genome Sequencing Lab


Monte McCrossin, Associate Professor of Anthropology and Director, University Museum

Nancy McMillan, Professor and Dept Head, Geological Sciences

David Richman, College Professor Emeritus, Entomology, Plant Pathology and Weed Science and former Curator, Arthropod Museum

Gary Roemer, Associate Professor, Fish, Wildlife and Conservation Ecology

Carol A. Sutherland, Extension Entomologist, NMSU (Extension Plant Sciences Department) and State Entomologist, NM Department of Agriculture

18.  Larry Creider says:

[November 11, 2011 at 5:41 pm](#)

#### Culture of Pride

What makes me proud to be a part of this university is recognition that I play a small part in helping the university achieve its mission of improving New Mexico through providing opportunity and skills, especially for first-generation students. I am proud to be associated with the many faculty and staff who go the extra mile to help students (and other faculty and staff) achieve their goals.

I had been here less than a year when I came to the conclusion that ours is a community of bumblebees. Bumblebees are supposed to be aerodynamically incapable of flying, but they do so because they are unaware of this “fact.” Our faculty and staff continually do more with limited resources and do it well, (not always perfectly, but well) than one could reasonably expect. That makes me prouder to be at NMSU than I was when a student at or an employee of some Ivy League institutions. Not shirts, not buttons, and certainly not athletic teams.

Pride Strategy 1.2 We have a heritage council already. Don’t create another bureaucratic committee; remake this one into a more effective group.

Pride Objective 2, attendance. Attendance will be increased when people a) have the time and b) find attendance worthwhile.

Pride Strategy 3.1. In addition to my not being very interested in outside signs (pins, clothing, and such), most of the clothing is not available in sizes I can wear. I am not the only large person on campus, so something might be suggested to the “bookstore” about this.

How about an additional strategy 6? Administrators need to tell the academic community just how good they are and do so in a believable manner. We do not hear that. Since I came here in 1999, there have been a few upper administrators who talked up this place and the achievements of students, faculty, and staff. Others did not, and the difference in morale was palpable. Of course, the boundary between genuine appreciation and meaningless gas is easy to transgress and remarkably easy for listeners to detect.

19.  *Peter Houde* says:

[November 11, 2011 at 6:01 pm](#)

This is in reference to Graduation as Goal #1. While it is an easy metric of success, graduation or a diploma per se is not the product our student clients are seeking. It is enhanced opportunity for better employment and quality of life. If our degree programs do not fulfill this, then we serve neither our students nor society. Just as our grades cannot be used to evaluate our teaching effectiveness, graduation rates should not be used in isolation to evaluate student success.

20.  *Cynda Clary* says:

[November 11, 2011 at 6:59 pm](#)

Pg 3, Graduation Strategy 2.2:

Academic advising includes scheduling, mentoring, career guidance, etc. The student satisfaction with advising measure – unless the question is worded to ask specifically about course scheduling advising – will reflect more than just a scheduling emphasis.

Pg. 4, Graduation Strategy 2.3:

Student organization advising is an important avenue for faculty/student relationships.

Pg. 4, Graduation Strategy 2.4

I am not sure what is meant by “mentoring opportunities.” Are these formal programs? Also – active involvement in student organizations connects students with potential peer support and for academic and personal issues. Data on student organization membership may be useful.

Pg. 5, Graduation Strategy 2.5

I believe most students want to complete their education – so that isn't the message that needs to be reinforced. The “Graduation is Goal #1” is a marketing message – the challenge is to make our own processes, policies, attitudes, student expectations, etc. match the message.

Pg. 5, Graduation Strategy 3.1:

The measure of “first-time students with no deficiencies” – does this mean that our admissions standards are changing? Would this imply lower enrollment numbers given the population of these students in our state (and that UNM and NM Tech are competing for these as well)? Is our strategy to recruit more out-of-state first-time freshmen?

We don't control the educational preparation of students prior to their enrollment at our institution. If our motivation is to filter out more students to increase our graduation measures, let's just say that. I have had many students who started with CCDM courses and graduated, although it may have taken longer than 4 years.

I guess I don't believe our graduation rates are as much a function of who has come in, but are instead a reflection of what happens to them when they are here.

Page 8, Diversity Strategy 1.3

The key performance outcome for tenured and senior underrepresented faculty by college will be affected by the available pipeline unless we move to hire with tenure and hire at senior ranks. Seems like we would have a longer time period for that key performance indicator.

Pg 21, Effectiveness Strategy 2.4

The deans should be included as part of the "responsible executive officer" list. The Deans know their own college and their research support needs and capabilities.

Pg. 23, Effectiveness Strategy 4.2

The Cooperative Extension Service is a federally mandated component of our land grant institution. Can't really give a clear reason for my reaction – but seeing the word "extension" in this strategy statement lumped in with continuing professional education and general service gives me the message that Extension is not understood or viewed as it should be. However, unless I missed something, this is the only place in the "Building the Vision" document where the term "extension" is used – and that is unfortunate given the number of faculty and staff in CES and given our NMSU partnership with every county in our state.

Pg. 24

NMSU is not "like all public institutions" – we are a land grant institution and that implies a specific mission and specific federal/state/county funding that is different from other public institutions. I am not arguing with the fund-raising goals – just want us to have a "culture of pride" around our unique heritage, mission, and commitment.

Pg. 26

Again – in the summary statement and in the paragraph – where is the pride in our land grant heritage? We could be UNM with this paragraph. Extension, as a required part of the land grant mission, is not the same thing as "service."

NMSU makes a positive difference in the lives of people every day and to me, that is something to be proud of.

21.  *Ellen Bosman* says:

[November 14, 2011 at 11:17 am](#)

First, allow me to echo Dr. Creider's sentiments of thanks to the people who worked on this document. It is evident that many ideas & perspectives were considered.

Overall, the document could be better organized. For example, many entries under key performance outcomes are dates; dates are not outcomes. As this is a draft, it is likely this issue will be corrected.

Of greater concern is the question "is BTV is a vision?" Vision is supposed to be inspirational, as well as aspirational; vision is about where the Univ should be headed and \*why\* we should be headed in a certain direction. BTV, in this format, lacks the \*why\* and is disconnected from our mission. Currently, BTV seems more like a check list and, in that respect, seems to be largely recycled from LTV.