DRAFT (09/06/2011)

President's Success Goal 1: Graduation Goal #1

Make graduation Goal #1 for our students and ensure demonstrable increases in student persistence in our degree and certificate programs.

Background and Definitions

Graduation is the appropriate culmination to the academic experience of the vast majority of NMSU students. Graduation rate data therefore provide an important metric for evaluating institutional success.   In addition, graduation should be a primary educational objective for our students and a goal that is vigorously supported by our administration, faculty, and staff, both philosophically and through the allocation of resources.

Scope, Approach and Process

Graduation rate data: Diversity of degrees and pathways to graduation lead to several types of graduation rates calculated over various time scales (4-year, 6-year, etc.) and student cohorts (first-time entering students, transfer students, graduate students, etc.).   The most extensive data on graduation rates both at NMSU and nationwide are associated with degree-seeking, first-time entering student cohorts, a group that makes up roughly one half the NMSU student population.   These rates can be readily correlated with student input data, providing guidance in developing strategies and objectives for improvement and clarity in assessing our performance relative to other institutions.

Because methodology for calculating graduation rates for other types of student cohorts is not well-defined and universal, the recommendations given here are derived mostly from data on first-time entering students.   Nevertheless, the objectives are still designed to impact the broader undergraduate student community.   The scope does not currently include the graduate student population where issues contributing to student success are not well understood and may likely be quite different.

Demographic factors and graduation rates: Analysis of NMSU graduation rate data identifies numerous demographic factors that correlate significantly with graduation success.   These include:
- High school GPA
- ACT scores
- Financial need
- Race/Ethnicity
- Gender

- First-semester college GPA
- First generation college attendee

These factors are not unique to NMSU, mirroring trends in graduation that are observed nationwide.   This information implies that demographic influences such as racial or economic diversity should be accounted for when assessing graduation rate data in comparison not only with other institutions but also with NMSU's historical graduation rates as student body demographics evolve.   These data also imply, and national data confirm, that admissions requirements strongly impact graduation rates.

Persistence –vs- graduation: As persistence is a prerequisite for graduation, data related to student retention are considered directly relevant to the graduation goal.   Recently, NMSU engaged in an extensive assessment of the First Year student experience through the Foundations of Excellence.   This work culminated in the First Year Improvement – Actions for Comprehensive Transformation (FYI-ACT) final report in the spring of 2008. This strategic plan includes supporting effective implementation of the recommendations given in that document.

Strategic Plan

Objective 1.1: ***Enhance the first-year experience***

Strategy 1.1.A: Proceed with implementation and support of FYI-ACT priority action items as recommended by the FYI-ACT Committee.

> **KPI 1.1.A1**: Assess implementation of FYI-ACT priority action items

> **KPI 1.1.A2:** Increase one-year retention rate for first-time entering students

Objective 1.2: ***Ensure an educational environment that provides broad-based support of student completion goals.***

Strategy 1.2.A: Establish a process to monitor and advise on long-term strategic academic completion goals.

> **KPI 1.2.A1:** Increase four-year and six-year graduation rates for first-time entering students

Strategy 1.2.B: Align NMSU's institutional mission and priorities with academic completion goals through evaluation of admission standards, enrollment levels, remediation mechanisms, and allocation of resources.

> **KPI 1.2.B1:** Decrease the number of first-time entering students who require developmental courses

> **KPI 1.2.B2:** Balance student enrollment in high demand programs.

Strategy 1.2.C: Provide strategic coordination of student advising, course scheduling, and course offerings to minimize scheduling barriers to completion goals.

> **KPI 1.2.C1:** Provide sufficient resources to meet course demand.
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> **KPI 1.2.C2**: Improve student satisfaction with advising and course scheduling.
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> **KPI 1.2.C3:**   Obtain and use salient information to align course scheduling and course offerings with student needs.

Strategy 1.2.D: Develop faculty/student relationships beyond the classroom through faculty participation in learning communities, mentoring programs, service learning projects, campus-wide events, etc.

> **KPI 1.2.D1**: Increase the number of and support for opportunities to establish faculty/student relationships, and value/recognize faculty participation in learning communities, mentoring programs and service learning projects.

Strategy 1.2E: Enhance student support in a holistic fashion that involves collaboration between academic units and student services, and that employs varied delivery options to reach a broad segment of the student population.

> **KPI 1.2.E1:** Increase the percentage of at-risk students identified and supported through intervention programs
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> **KPI 1.2.E2:** Increase mentoring opportunities for all students, both as mentor and mentee as appropriate.
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> **KPI 1.2.E3:** Increase the percentage of student participation in student support activities and functions.

Objective 1.3: Develop a culture in which graduation is the primary educational objective of our students, vigorously supported by our administration, faculty, and staff.

Note: This objective directly overlaps with the "Culture of Pride" objectives as they relate to student success.

Strategy 1.3.A: Implement and support activities and processes designed to develop a "culture of completion".

> **KPI 1.3.A1:** Increase participation in Freshman Convocation and Welcome-Week activities
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> **KPI 1.3.A2:** Increase the visibility of "Graduation is Goal #1" in communications around the campus, and among faculty staff and students.