



Office of the Dean for International & Border Programs

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Barbara Couture, President

FROM: Everett Egginton, Dean

DATE: March 1, 2010

SUBJECT: Internationalization of New Mexico State University

1. **Background and challenges.** On February 12, more than 40 faculty members, students and administrators from across New Mexico State University gathered for a two and a half hour forum to discuss the present situation for, and the future of, international programs at NMSU. Many individuals, organizations and institutional units are engaged in a wide range of international activities, from study abroad to collaborative research, involving students from many countries around the world coming to New Mexico, as well as faculty and students here on campus, in all colleges, who are studying, doing research and teaching about the world around us. A great deal of energy and excitement is shared among those of us working in international programs.

Our position on the US-Mexico border gives us a special obligation and opportunity to deal with issues of borders and boundaries, as well as immigration and related concerns. Our niche in the high desert and the Mesilla Valley makes NMSU a natural leader in water, energy, and arid lands development issues with applications around the planet. And as teachers we constantly strive to prepare our students to live in an increasingly globalized economic and political environment.

But there is also a strong sense of frustration with the current state of international programs at NMSU. There are concerns with the collection and dissemination of information, with the coordination of activities and programs, and with the facilitation of ideas and initiatives. Participants in the forum expressed a feeling of urgency in the need to address these concerns.

2. **NMSU's mandate.** We began by thinking about what we want NMSU to be. As a Land Grant university we have a clear educational mandate to prepare students in New Mexico for life and work in the community, the state, and the wider world. We identified two broad areas:

- a) Given our geographic location in the American Southwest and on the US-Mexico border, we are ideally positioned to address the specific issues and concerns of these places, and to generalize from those to larger patterns and comparative insights. And as the institution most responsible for the education of future generations of New Mexicans, we must take into account the increasingly interconnected and interdependent world into which we will be launching our graduates.

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- b) In addition, through teaching, research and service, we want NMSU to be a university that is recognized as, and that thinks of itself as, a leader in international and global education. Our existing strengths in areas like water management, arid lands, and border studies need to be further developed and integrated with area studies for regions of the world most relevant for the future of our students and our community, so that internationalization becomes fully a part of our identity as a university.

3. **Short term actions.** In order to pursue this vision of the future, we recommend that specific steps be taken in the short term:

- a) First, we call on you as the new president of NSMU to play a strong leadership role in international programs. We realize that in a time of fiscal stringency the stewardship of university resources is a pressing concern. Yet without a clear vision of NMSU as a leader in international programs, the future of both the university and the people we serve will be diminished.
- b) As a further immediate step towards realizing our vision, we urge that a high level administrative office be established to oversee and coordinate international programs, at the level of a vice-president or vice-provost, reporting directly either to you or to the provost. NMSU had such a position in the past, and it is vital that we again give international programs this level of institutional oversight and prominence.
- c) We also suggest that the VP for international programs be supported by an advisory body, with representation from all of the colleges as well as students, alumni and the off-campus community.
- d) In order to ensure that internationalization is suffused into all aspects of university life, and to keep international programs as a recognized component of the budget process, we strongly recommend that specific goals relating to internationalization and metrics for their measurement be developed and included in the NMSU Living the Vision plan.

4. **Long range perspectives.** The forum also identified several long-terms goals, including:

- a) Identify and build on strengths in the international arena, including arid lands issues, border issues, immigration and security, and East Asian studies.
- b) Take advantage of research and scholarship opportunities; aggressively seek grant funding and external funding for vital program needs.
- c) Use technology (e.g., distance education) to expand our reach and provide services to students and faculty; provide incentives for inventive technology solutions to internationalizing the curriculum.
- d) Expand reach into K-12 education, using resources such as the Confucius Institute and the Center for Latin American and Border Studies.
- e) Encourage and provide real, tangible incentives to interdisciplinary, joint research projects with an international perspective or theme.
- f) Provide enhanced incentives for international research and curriculum development.
- g) Solicit and utilize input from alumni and the community-at-large.

5. **The bottom line.** Finally, recognizing the current fiscal situation as one which places constraints on all, we nonetheless call on you to seek ways to ensure that resources adequate to fulfill the mandate we have as a Land Grant university, and to the vision we share for preparing our students for life in the twenty-first century, will be devoted to this work.