

New Mexico State University (NMSU)/Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua (UACH) Partnership

The NMSU partnership with UACH began with the signing of the first university-to-university agreement in 1975. Before the signing of this first agreement, NMSU had been training future UACH faculty members, particularly in the field of agriculture. NMSU continues to train current and future UACH faculty through their enrollment in NMSU's numerous masters and doctoral programs. The fields of study have expanded well beyond agriculture to include engineering, education, the social and physical sciences, as well as numerous other areas.

NMSU's relationship with UACH has had periods of significant activity, such as we are experiencing today, and other times when joint activities were less prominent and somewhat sporadic. The level of activity has always depended on two factors—first, faculty interest and commitment, and second, the commitment and interest of the higher-level administration. Currently, we are in the midst of an array of joint activities—a level of collaborative activity that began in earnest five years ago that has never been equaled. Part of the reason for this is that NMSU has fully recognized that our location, approximately 40 miles from the Mexican border and the state of Chihuahua, is a strategic asset on which to capitalize. In addition, six years ago, and based on a joint decision by the former provost and president, the NMSU Office of International Programs was changed to the Office of International and Border Programs, and a national search was initiated to fill the leadership of that office—an upgraded position (vice provost) held by a recognized expert on Latin American, Mexican and border issues. The position was filled in December 2002.

With this renewed interest on the border, specifically in the State of Chihuahua, NMSU automatically turned to UACH as a resources and collaborative partner. Moreover, UACH's executive director of international programs and NMSU's dean of international and border programs (formerly vice provost) assumed their respective positions within months of one another; they philosophically agreed with one another on the desirability of increased collaborations between the two institutions; and they have worked together over the last five years to make this happen. And finally, the importance of collaboration has been embraced by the current highest level authorities at both institutions—the UACH rector and secretary general and the NMSU president and executive vice president and provost.

Our joint activities can be broken down into categories such as:

- 1) External funding for joint collaborative projects**
 - a) Jointly administering a USAID funded HED-TIES project titled "New Mexico-Chihuahua Partnership for the Sierra"
 - b) Jointly participating in a FIPSE North American Mobility grant to exchange students and faculty between 2 U.S. universities; 2 Mexican universities; and 2 Canadian universities
 - c) Collaborating between Confucius Institutes at NMSU and UACH (although each university received separate funding)
- 2) Cultural exchange between both universities**
 - a) Participation of the UACH ballet folklórico dance group at the NMSU 2007 Homecoming celebration (a total of 37 performers)
 - b) Participation by the NMSU modern dance group in a dance festival held at UACH
 - c) The Executive Director and conductor of the Las Cruces Symphony was guest conductor on two occasions for the Chihuahua Symphony Orchestra (which

operates under the administrative oversight and is located on the campus of UACH)

- 3) **Academic exchanges**
 - a) Formally agreed to offer joint dual undergraduate degree program in Aerospace Engineering starting in Fall 2008
 - b) Currently negotiating a joint dual doctorate degree in Civil Engineering
 - c) Currently negotiating a student and faculty exchange (English instruction for Spanish instruction)
 - d) Teaching of numerous short courses by NMSU faculty at UACH
- 4) **Hosting of visitors to each others campuses**
 - a) UACH presidential delegation participated in the installation of and inaugural festivities of NMSU's current president
 - b) NMSU president and delegation visited UACH in August 2007 to renew formal agreement and to initiate formally the joint undergraduate program in aerospace engineering
 - c) UACH presidential delegation participated in 2007 NMSU Homecoming
 - d) Hosting groups of faculty from each others universities in specific disciplines including agriculture (too numerous to list), education (9/20/07), business (11/16/07), engineering (visits back and forth between both universities have been taking place at an increased pace January 2007)
- 5) **Hosting of Joint Conferences, Summits, and General Educational Events**
 - a) Jointly organized with other partners the 2006 Indigenous and Rural Educational Summit (Dec. 1 and 2, 2006 in Creel, Chihuahua)
 - b) Currently planning for a larger follow-up rural educational summit for October 2008 to be held in Chihuahua, Chihuahua
 - c) Participation of NMSU and UACH faculty in each other's events

It is important to note that many of the aforementioned activities, programs, and collaborations have been facilitated by New Mexico State University's office in Ciudad Chihuahua, a fully staffed office directed by Armando Martinez that has been in operation since February 2005. And finally, it is important to note that this report summarizes activities with only one of NMSU's partners in Chihuahua, the Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua. Other significant activities, including a large NSF-funded binational technology transfer project, are of equal importance in highlighting NMSU's work on the US—Mexico border, specifically in Chihuahua.