

# NEW MEXICO HIGHER EDUCATION DEPARTMENT



SUSANA MARTINEZ  
GOVERNOR

DR. BARBARA DAMRON  
CABINET SECRETARY

January 5, 2016

Dear Faculty Senate President,

I want to thank each of you for the work you do as leaders in higher education in New Mexico. I am excited about working with you on some very important initiatives that will benefit our students. The New Mexico Higher Education Department (HED) in collaboration with higher education institutions (HEIs) across the state have set long-term goals to improve 4-year graduation rates, transfer and articulation, and remedial education outcomes. HED is pursuing these goals through the following initiatives:

1. Statewide common course numbering and alignment of lower division coursework;
2. Developing meta-majors and transfer modules;
3. Reforming the general education core curriculum; and
4. Co-requisite remediation and math pathways.

### *Common Course Numbering System*

The work to implement a statewide common course numbering system will begin in January 2016. This work will include the identification of comparable courses, alignment of 80% of the student learning outcomes, and assignment of a common course number. Common course numbering will ensure that courses will transfer between all HEIs and that students will achieve the same learning outcomes in comparable courses statewide. **Because NMHED recognizes the unique mission of each institution, the implementation plan does not seek to standardize curriculum or prevent innovation and curriculum redesign.**

### *Meta-majors and Transfer Modules*

Meta-majors are a 1-2 semester map of coursework that will articulate to multiple degrees in a student's area of interest. Meta-majors ensure that students choose courses that will ultimately count as degree requirements for their major while still allowing them to explore their options. In addition to meta-majors, we are developing 60 credit transfer modules that will allow students to transfer seamlessly from a 2-year to 4-year institution.

The meta-majors and transfer module work is dependent on the degree mapping research from UNM's Research and Public Service Project (RPSP) entitled "Degree Plans: Roadmaps for Higher Education in New Mexico". The degree mapping project is creating term by term schedules of courses from all New Mexico higher education institutions that students need to take to graduate on-time. Because this project is not attempting to create new curriculum, the completed degree maps will be analyzed to identify which courses should be included in meta-majors and transfer modules. In addition, the degree mapping project can be the basis for intrusive advising and tracking student success.

### *General Education Core Curriculum Reform*

Our general education core curriculum initiative is being undertaken in collaboration with the provosts of the 4-year HEIs. The provosts will be organizing a group of faculty from across the state to make recommendations on how to improve the general education curriculum in New Mexico. We anticipate that in addition to decreasing the number of required credit hours, this initiative will develop a curriculum that builds the skills important to success in academia and the professional world.

### *Co-requisite Remediation and Math Pathways*

New Mexico was accepted as part of Complete College America's (CCA) Fall 2015 cohort of states that will receive funding and support to implement co-requisite remediation and math pathways statewide by Fall 2017. In co-requisite remediation, students enroll in an introductory college-level course AND an associated studio course. The studio course provides the needed remedial support while the student is taking the introductory course. In other states, the co-requisite remediation model has doubled the number of underprepared students who take and pass the introductory college-level course. In addition, as part of the CCA cohort we will work toward aligning required math courses with a student's intended major.

These are important initiatives that will involve many changes, which means faculty must be involved in each step along the way. I would like to meet with faculty to discuss how we can work to move each of these initiatives forward. Because these initiatives are getting started in January, I will be hosting a **webcast at 1:00 p.m. on January 15, 2016**. I ask that you arrange for a room at your institution where faculty can participate in the webcast. I leave it to you to confer with your Deans and Chairs to determine which faculty can be available for this webcast. From HED's perspective, all faculty are invited. During the webcast, I will discuss each initiative more in depth and answer questions from faculty. Please RSVP with Mary Staffel at [Mary.Staffel@state.nm.us](mailto:Mary.Staffel@state.nm.us). When you RSVP, details on how to join the webcast and submit questions will be forwarded to you.

I plan on having continuing communication with faculty from all of our HEIs. This will include my visiting with faculty and faculty senates in person when I visit each of your institutions in 2016. We will also be scheduling additional webcasts as needed. An HED staff member will be contacting you in order to schedule these meetings.

This is an exciting time to work in higher education. I look forward to collaborating with you to improve education in New Mexico for all of our students.

Sincerely,



Barbara Damron, PhD, RN, FAAN  
Cabinet Secretary  
Higher Education Department