

## New Mexico

New Mexico Higher Education Department

Tanya I. Garcia

P20 Policy Analyst

1068 Cerrillos Road

Santa Fe, NM 87505

Email: [tanya.garcia@state.nm.us](mailto:tanya.garcia@state.nm.us)

- 1) Does the state have an identifiable “P-16” effort visible? Who is in charge of this effort?

The New Mexico Higher Education Department created a P20 Policy and Program Development Division in 2005. Their work with the Public Education Department includes a joint Alignment Task Force to address high school redesign and dual credit issues. In addition, the task force is adopting a higher education cut score policy to facilitate high school student college placement once they graduate. Recently the division was awarded six-year GEAR UP grant by the U.S. Department of Education to increase academic preparation and student readiness for college and careers.

In addition, the New Mexico Higher Education Department is the lead agency in the Student Data Sharing Task Force formed to address several pieces of legislation, including the implementation of a unique student identifier that follows each New Mexico K12 student throughout their postsecondary and workforce careers. In addition, the Cyber Academy Act was passed in 2007 to create a statewide mechanism for distance learning. This law has major implications for our statewide dual credit program, particularly for students in rural areas.

There is no permanent P20 council. However, the New Mexico Higher Education Department is in the process of drafting and proposing an executive order for Governor Richardson’s consideration to create such a council.

- a) Does the agency include a utility or function on its website designed explicitly to help potential students locate an appropriate college or university to attend?

No. However the GEAR UP program will create a website for college preparation that will link to college selection sites similar to the College Board site which guides students through college and university selection.

- 2) Is a mandated or recommended college preparatory curriculum in place in the state’s public high schools?

Yes. In April 2007, Governor Bill Richardson signed SB561: High School Redesign into law. The law modifies the timing and purpose of high school assessments, uses these assessments to inform students about career and postsecondary options, increases the age a student may legally drop out of school, increases graduation requirements, and establishes the structure for a middle and high school literacy initiative. The law requires the creation of a high school readiness exam in grade nine, a college readiness exam in grade ten, and a workplace readiness exam in grade eleven.

- 3) Has the state articulated a set of explicit competencies or skills that define what it means to be “college ready?”

Yes. The default college preparation curriculum specified in SB561 will be in effect for ninth grade students in 2009. SB561 increases graduation requirements to 24 instead of 23 units. Beginning in the 2009-2010 school year, ninth graders must take 4 units of English, 4 units of math (with one unit equal to or greater than algebra 2), 3 units of science, 3.5 units of social science, 1 unit of physical education, 1 unit of either a career cluster, workplace readiness, or language other than English, and 7.5 elective units.

A student shall not receive a *New Mexico Diploma of Excellence* unless he/she demonstrates competence in math, reading and language arts, writing, social studies, and science, as well as the constitutions of New Mexico and the United States, through a standards-based exam or portfolio of standards-based indicators.

- 4) Are systematic programs in place in the state that encourage students to accelerate progress by taking college-level courses while still enrolled in high school?

Governor Richardson signed two pieces of legislation in early April 2007 that expand college options for New Mexico high school students: SB943: Dual High School and Postsecondary Credits and HB201/SB209: Cyber Academy Act.

SB943 requires the New Mexico Higher Education Department, New Mexico Public Education Department, school districts, charter schools, and public postsecondary institutions to create a statewide dual credit agreement. School districts pay for textbooks and course supplies and public postsecondary institutions waive general fees and are encouraged to waive tuition.

The Cyber Academy was created to address the needs of New Mexico schools to prepare students for 21st century and to develop a common distance education tool for collaboration. While the district pays a nominal fee, these courses will be offered free of charge to New Mexico students.

These laws complement SB561, which requires ninth graders beginning in the 2009-2010 school year to earn at least one credit as an advanced placement, honors, dual credit, or distance learning course.

- 5) Is there a statewide policy present that governs placement into college-level courses or remedial courses? Is a standard set of placement tests recommended or required? If yes, are common cut scores for placement decisions in place or do institutions get to set their own?

Not at the moment. The HED/PED Alignment Task Force published its placement exam cut score matrix July 3, 2007. Legislation passed in 2003 requires the use of a high school exit exam that may be used for college placement in order to facilitate alignment between secondary and postsecondary institutions. In order to implement this law, in August 2007 the New Mexico Higher Education Department will recommend to the legislature a single exam with a common cut score, suggesting a two-year grace period for institutions of higher education to comply. The New Mexico Higher Education Department will use state funding

of this exam as an incentive. Overall, the goal is to determine high school students' college readiness so they may take the remedial courses necessary during their secondary studies and be prepared to enroll in credit-bearing courses once they enter a New Mexico college or university.

- 6) Is there a visible statewide transfer and articulation policy? Does this cover all institutions or only public institutions? What are the specifics of this policy?

Yes, the policies were developed through the state legislature. During the 2005 New Mexico Legislative session, Senate Bill 161, consistent with requirements of state law (Chapter 224 of the Laws of New Mexico, 1995 as amended) was signed into law to further enhance and facilitate the articulation of general education courses among New Mexico's colleges and universities. In accordance with policies established by the New Mexico Higher Education Department, designated general education core courses successfully completed at any regionally accredited public institution of higher education in New Mexico are guaranteed to transfer to any New Mexico public institution.

Currently the policy covers public institutions. Tribal colleges participate on a voluntary basis. Most likely private institutions will be given the same voluntary opportunity to participate.

- a) Is the transfer/articulation policy accompanied by a statewide transferable general education requirement? Does this name actual courses and/or credits? Are specific competencies identified that the student should meet through this coursework? Is testing used to guarantee student competency for progress or transfer?

Yes the transfer/articulation policy is included in the legislation. Yes this policy names actual course and/or credits; we have a General Education Core Matrix. Yes, there are specific competencies for each discipline core area. No there is no testing used to guarantee student competency for progress or transfer, however there is a grade requirement of a "C" or better.

- b) More specifically, does an AA or AS degree from a community college in the state meet general education requirements at public four-year institutions? What mechanisms are in place to make sure this actually happens?

Yes. General Education Common Core for courses is included in the 35 hour core requirements. These include common course numbering, common competencies, and assessment. All courses are fully transferable to NM institutions of higher education and tribal colleges.

- c) Does credit from transfer courses meet specific course requirements at the transfer institution (e.g. American History counts for American History) or do just the credits transfer to count against the total needed for graduation?

Credits from transfer courses in the general education common core meet specific course requirements and competencies.

- 7) Are there statewide test-out or competency-based provisions that will allow a student to accelerate progress toward a degree?

No, there are no statewide test-out or competency-based provisions that will allow a student to accelerate progress toward a degree.

- 8) Does the state have an easily-accessible state-supported alternative institution that allows students to complete their degrees more quickly or conveniently than through attendance at a traditional public institution?

The state does not have an alternative institution. However, the New Mexico Learning Network (NMLN) is an alternative source for students to access online courses. It will eventually be the interface for 100% online programs to meet the goals "that allow students to complete their degrees more quickly or conveniently than through attendance at a traditional public institution". The NMLN will be fully functional in two years when articulation agreements are in place to provide a common application for admission, enrollment and offer courses thru a common interface, etc.

- a) Does the state have an accessible central bank or catalog of on-line courses contributed by many institutions that enable students to do "one-stop shopping" for electronic courses?

Yes. It may be referenced online at the New Mexico Learning Network at:  
<http://nmln.net/site/index.php>

- 9) Does the state provide incentives to institutions for improvements in degree production or graduation rates? For minimizing the number of students graduating with excessive numbers of credits (e.g. more than 120 SCH)?

The New Mexico Higher Education Department has initiated a performance incentive fund to institutions who increase freshman retention, graduation rates, and enrollment and graduation of Hispanic and Native American students.

- 10) Does the state provide incentives for students who successfully complete their degrees (e.g. tuition rebates or cash bonuses)? For students who complete their programs without amassing additional credits (e.g. within 120 SCH)? Are there financial disincentives for students to take more than the number of credits needed to graduate (e.g. full or out-of-state tuition)?

No, the state does not provide incentives for students who successfully complete their degrees, or for completing degree without taking additional credits, nor are there financial disincentives for students taking more than the number of credits needed to graduate.