

**New Mexico State University
External Review Report**

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Organizational Structure and Strategy

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External Review Team

Archie Ervin, Ph.D.
Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer
Institute Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
The Georgia Institute of Technology

Paulette Granberry Russell, JD
Senior Advisor to the President for Diversity and Director
Office for Inclusion and Intercultural Initiative
Michigan State University

Jozi De Leon, Ph.D.
Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion,
California Polytechnic State University San Luis Obispo

Executive Summary

Scope and Objective:

New Mexico State University's Provost and Chief Academic Officer invited the external review team to campus on November 17 and 18, 2019 to meet and conduct interviews with senior administrative officers, faculty, staff and students. The review team was charged to review and determine the optimal structure that will permit the University to achieve its goals for a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive campus community.

Observations and Recommendations:

Based upon the interviews, we believe the campus community members we met with are invested in the success of the institution's diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts. There were some expressions of skepticism about whether the necessary change will occur, but also some optimism that the recent changes in leadership and the review itself could lead to positive movement in the creation of infrastructure to support change. In addition, the diversity, equity, and inclusion work that currently exists arises from investments in historically decentralized efforts, with some functions performed centrally, factors not unique to the NMSU, nor necessarily detrimental to success. This includes the unique relationship that NMSU has with the various community colleges within its system.

Decentralized efforts have contributed to certain successes but has its limitations and challenges as well. The team believes there are ways in which decentralization results in unnecessary redundancy, communication issues, lack of connectivity and synergies, and lack of or difficulty in the assessment of programmatic efforts, as well as accountability for results aligned with the goals of NMSU.

Many of those we met with are looking for the University to move with a greater sense of urgency and purpose, and with a definitive commitment of resources that includes a more clearly defined organizational structure. Some prefer the existing structures but believe more resources dedicated to their efforts is essential to support positive change.

In answer to the question of whether NMSU was ready for a Chief Diversity Officer, those we spoke with see the benefits of a more robust infrastructure, inclusive of a senior executive officer that reports, in this case, to the President of NMSU and is responsible for leading campus DEI strategies, and works collaboratively with the community colleges.

Recommendations:

1. The review team recommends that the President appoint a cabinet-level Vice President who will serve as the institution's Chief Diversity Officer (CDO). The CDO will lead and enhance coordination, accountability and sustainability of campus DEI efforts.
2. We recommend that the Office for Institutional Equity and its administrative leader report to the CDO. Further, staffing of the office should be enhanced so that the Title IX Coordinator, and ADA and EEO Coordinator(s) are separately identified and distinguishable from one another.
3. The review team recommends the realignment of the various diversity centers and officers to report to the new Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer, which includes the centers that direct their efforts at racial/ethnic "minority" groups, along with the LGBTQA+ office. We also encourage NMSU to review and realign the office that provides disability support services to report to the newly created CDO position. These realignments should ensure that the centers do not lose any of their current funding as a part of reorganizing them to report to the new CDO structure.
4. Along with the reassignment of the centers, they should undergo an internal review to clarify the vision, mission, metrics for impact, and annual progress reports to supervisors for review.
5. Recommend that the current Diversity Council be reconstituted under the leadership of the new VP/CDO with a specific mission and charge. Membership should be term specific with diverse representation from across the campus.
6. The University should explore opportunities to diversify its "non-faculty" staff. Recruiting, advancing, retaining and rewarding staff in a manner that helps promote diversity, especially when resources are strained, is a challenge. The CDO should explore new opportunities to maximize efforts in diversifying the NMSU workforce, especially where there is underrepresentation of minorities, women, persons with disabilities and other minoritized groups
7. We recommend that the President charge the CDO with the responsibility for co-creating with the NMSU community a clear rationale, definitions, and vision of success regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion, and lay the foundation for a planning process for DEI at the institution.
8. We further recommend that the University engage in a DEI planning process once the infrastructure for the unit is in place. The planning process should align with a framework for DEI where efforts are both centrally driven and unit based, i.e., efforts that reside within the individual academic, administrative, and support units but aligned with the strategic vision for DEI at the university as outlined in NMSU Leads 2025 Strategic Plan.

9. In order to better inform the strategic initiatives (centrally and unit based), the review team is recommending that NMSU conduct a campus climate assessment for students, faculty and staff on their lived experiences at NMSU that can inform the development of strategies at both the central and unit levels.
10. We also recommend that the University conduct an inventory of existing diversity, equity, and inclusion programs and initiatives to assess efficacy, impact, and identify potential connections that can be leveraged for future DEI work. We recommend that the campus inventory of DEI programs and resources be conducted within the first six (6) to twelve (12) months for possible realignment of other campus DEI initiatives into the office of the new VP/CDO.
11. Supplier diversity, while not the focus of this review, should be included in the diversity inventory. We recommend that the University, through the CDO, work collaboratively with the units (central and distributed, including the community colleges) that contract construction projects and purchase goods and services. NMSU should specifically assess the effectiveness of its supplier diversity efforts as a part of the overall diversity planning process and make recommendations for enhancement of such efforts.
12. The University's designation as an HSI and MSI institution represents the diversity among students at NMSU but is not a proxy for being an inclusive community. Campus climate and culture is influenced by whether NMSU is viewed as welcoming and inclusive for ALL. The University is urged to examine how the campus communicates its messaging on DEI and how the campus "looks" to different groups (e.g., pictures in central support buildings, names of buildings, and public art) – how inclusive are representations of campus life, pictorial history of campus and who is represented and who is not, etc.