

Santa Fe New Mexican

MY VIEW RICK BAILEY AND BECKY ROWLEY

Colleges introduce new collaborations

By Rick Bailey and Becky Rowley

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As challenging as 2020 has been from health, safety and economic perspectives, this year has also been one marked by a renewed spirit of collaboration among New Mexico's higher-education institutions.

Our governor and Legislature have challenged us to find new ways to partner with each other. As public institutions, and as stewards of taxpayer funding, we have taken this challenge head on and are happy to share some exciting news about how we are implementing that guidance.

In a breakthrough for higher education in New Mexico, five institutions — Northern New Mexico College, Santa Fe Community College, Central New Mexico Community College, Clovis Community College and San Juan College — have signed a memorandum of understanding to implement and share a new Enterprise Resource Planning system.

For our coalition, Enterprise Resource Planning is an integrated suite of software applications with a central database using the same platform so we strategically can share resources and information, such as accounting, student records, financial aid, etc., among our partner colleges to better serve our students and our communities.

This partnership will open the door for us to share courses and academic programs, which in turn will simplify and enhance the student experience and allow for a seamless flow throughout our institutions. Imagine a student filling out one application for admission and opening all five of our institutions' expertise areas at once. This will help students of all ages navigate particular challenges in balancing family, work and education in a more efficient way, and clear the path for a faster approach to graduation.

By joining forces in areas such as consortium purchasing, data storage and emergency business recovery, information security, grant writing, facilities planning and institutional research, we will drive down operational costs, streamline processes and increase efficiency at all of our partner institutions.

As momentous as this new project is, it is only one example of how we are collaborating and innovating across the state. For example, Northern New Mexico College and Santa Fe Community College already have begun discussions with CNM about coordinating and specializing in career technical programs.

Similar coordination and distribution of emphasis areas already has paid dividends in our partnerships with Los Alamos National Laboratory, where Northern focuses on radiological control technician education and training, and SFCC specializes in machinist-engineering pathways. These programs help fill two of the lab's most pressing career pipelines. More are in the works.

And we're just beginning. With a spirit of collaboration and trust, we know we can move mountains. Although higher education faces significant challenges, we pledge to continue to explore new ways to come together to drive innovative, effective and efficient solutions to championing student success.

The more successful we are in these endeavors, the more we will support our governor's and Legislature's vision — and our colleges' commitment — to improve the quality of life for all New Mexicans.

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