

## Five New Mexico Colleges Plan to Establish Joint Service System

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After examining their administrative processes, Central New Mexico Community College, Santa Fe Community College, Clovis Community College, Northern New Mexico College and San Juan College collaborated to establish a common platform for student and financial services.



Dr. Toni Pendergrass

As part of the Shared Services Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system, which has been approved by New Mexico Independent Colleges and the New Mexico Higher Education Department, students will hold one “identity” across all five colleges. This will improve the transfer process, eliminate the need to submit multiple applications for admission and employment, lessen duplication of records and increase communication between faculty, staff and students.

“We are just trying to keep the best interest of our students in mind,” said Dr. Toni Pendergrass, president of San Juan College. “We think that having a comprehensive, robust system will really help our students have a wonderful experience at the college where they are not running into issues because we have an archaic system that is not helpful.”

Under the joint system, the schools are working to address barriers and improve student success.

In fall 2019, Hispanic students made up 47.58% of the postsecondary population in New Mexico compared to 29.42% of White students and 9.44% of American Indian students, according to a report from the New Mexico Higher Education Department.

Many college students in New Mexico are first-generation, low-income and live in rural areas, Clovis Community College President Dr. Charles Nwankwo said.

“Students in the rural areas deserve the same opportunities, particularly in technology and so forth, as students elsewhere,” he added. “We want to give them all the available opportunity that can advance them in careers and advance them in whatever endeavor they choose.”

At small institutions for example, one challenge can be class size. If a course does not meet minimum enrollment requirements, there is an added cost to still offer that class. To address this issue, classes are now combined across the five institutions if enrollment is limited.



Dr. Charles Nwankwo

The Shared Services ERP improves efficiency rates by reducing overall operating costs including group purchasing and group licensing for software.

“For the students at all five of our institutions, it is going to create a much more seamless experience,” said Dr. Rick Bailey, president of Northern New Mexico College. “I think it sets us up as institutions to be in a better position given what I know the mid-21st century higher education landscape is going to look like.”

This initiative can also create “proactive planning” in the registration process. The schools are working to allow students to register for courses a year at a time rather than by semester, according to Pendergrass.

“It will allow us to be able to make sure that we know exactly where every student is in their degree program and how we can support them so more students are enrolled, retained and graduate,” she said.

Additionally, at small institutions, there are only a few people in any office completing the necessary tasks and functions. However, this collaboration is “creating communities of interest,” according to Bailey.

“Now, at our fingertips, our HR office has a community of interest because they all speak the same language with the HR teams at the other institutions,” he added. “We are planting the seeds for a much more robust, cross-institutional support network.”

Nwankwo suggested other colleges and universities, specifically those that are under-resourced, should consider using this model.

“The leaders of the colleges are committed,” he added. “The expectation is that it will be a successful venture due to the cost savings that will result from it [as well as] that ease for students and improving their experiences.”

Over the last few months, the institutions have accepted proposals from vendors to implement this system on their campuses. This summer, they will choose a partner and expect aspects of the Shared Services ERP to launch next year.

“Everything we do is because we love students,” said Bailey. “It is all about the students. This initiative ultimately is about making sure that we focus our precious resources on direct student support.”

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