

SFCC among 5 New Mexico colleges to collaborate on admissions, transfers

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A new student experience is in the works at five New Mexico colleges.

Through a collaborative effort three years in the making — the first of its kind in the nation — one admissions application could one day open the door to a wider variety of classes and support and ease the process of transferring from one school to another.

The project, announced Friday, has the potential to grow to more state institutions.

The move is expected to affect student recruitment, registration, financial aid and advisement at each of the five participating schools.

“We’re trying to put students’ needs ahead of what has been a little bit easier for [colleges to do] in the past and look at it from a student’s perspective,” said Becky Rowley, president of Santa Fe Community College, which is participating in the partnership.

The name is unwieldy — Shared Services Enterprise Resource Planning system — but the goal is to streamline student services and create more flexibility.

The partnership includes both two-year and four-year schools. Along with SFCC, its members are Clovis Community College, Central New Mexico Community College, Northern New Mexico College and San Juan College. The five schools will share information through one system, which is designed to eliminate the need for multiple applications for admission and employment, reduce duplication of student and employee records, and ease the student transfer process, according to a news release on the initiative.

Rowley said the five schools explored the partnership on their own.

“No one is forcing us to do this,” she said. “We agreed that this was something we wanted to do.”

Stephanie Rodriguez, the state's acting secretary of higher education, said the collaboration is a pilot project that could eventually be broadened to include all New Mexico colleges and universities.

"Let's see how it goes with these two-year programs and our comprehensive universities," Rodriguez said. "Let's see if our systems could really speak to each other and make this work. If we can show that this works, we could potentially grow this in the future."

Rowley said discussions about a shared system began three years ago with CNM, SFCC and Clovis Community College, where Rowley was serving as president at the time. A shared system would be a benefit for small colleges, she said, because the information it provides is something they could not achieve individually.

The initiative also aims to help schools contain technology costs and create other savings by improving efficiency.

San Juan College and Northern New Mexico College agreed to join the project this year, and Rowley said Luna Community College in Las Vegas, N.M., and Tucumcari's Mesalands Community College expressed an interest in joining the partnership in the future.

Rowley said she hopes all independent community colleges in the state eventually will join the system.

"It's about how we can make this really transform the student experience and create efficiencies for our colleges," Rowley said.

The system also could help improve continuing education programs by offering more options for adults, she said, and could be used to help guide professional development.

Dozens of employees from each of the five member schools worked together to develop an outline for the Shared System ERP and created a request for proposals for a contractor to build out the system, the news release said.

The deadline for submissions is Feb. 12.

The project is expected to start with financial services and human resources components in fall 2021, Rowley said, before turning focus on the student portal. The development process could take up to three years.

CNM, SFCC and Clovis Community College each requested \$750,000 in state funding for the project for fiscal year 2022, but Rowley said a group request came after the San Juan and Northern New Mexico colleges agreed to join.

Depending on how many schools join the collaboration, Rowley said the price tag could be as high as \$30 million.

“We are looking at this as a phased-in approach,” Rowley said. “It would have to be. If someone handed us all the money right now, we couldn’t implement it all at once.”