



May 17, 2024

Affiliation with the Higher Learning Commission's (HLC) 10-year Open Pathway cycle requires NNMC to initiate at least one major improvement effort as a "Quality Initiative" during years five through nine for Reaffirmation of Accreditation. NNMC chose to participate in the HLC-sponsored Student Success Academy, a structured, mentor facilitated, multi-year program aimed at evaluating and improving institutional factors that affect student success.

Our local Student Success Team consisted of rotating membership that included: Office of the Provost, Director of Assessment & Accreditation, Institutional Research, Director of Financial Aid, Title V Director, Upward Bound Director, Student Life Coordinator, and faculty/department chair representatives. The Team met biweekly since inception in 2021; investigating current realities and discovering areas that present opportunities for improvement through an environmental scan of extensive inventorying efforts related to data which included current initiatives, infrastructure challenges, and engagement focus groups with students, faculty, staff, and administration. The local team then began to analyze the qualitative and quantitative data collected from each inventory to identify key evidence, themes, and gaps in our institutional support of student success. The local team was further supported by an HLC-assigned mentor, with whom the team had several consultations in the second and third years of Academy participation.

These efforts resulted in a Student Success Plan which identified four overarching themes that connect key inhibitors documented during the inventory process with the strategic pillars of our burgeoning campus-wide strategic plan:

1. Elevate course quality and transparency,
2. Improve retention through targeted academic interventions, 3. Integrate student service systems and processes, and
4. Enhance infrastructure to support student retention.

As a result of the HLC Student Success Academy research process, the local Student Success Team makes the following recommendations for Northern New Mexico College in the form of a three-year plan.

### **NNMC Student Success Plan Recommendations**

#### **1. Elevate Course Quality and Transparency**

Building upon discussions that began in the 8-week course implementation committee through the 15 to Finish initiative (grant-funded activities that encourages strategies that focus on early major exploration, credit accumulation, connections with faculty, and the advantages of institutional programs that promote timely completion), the Team further

considered school/life balance concerns voiced in focus groups, and retention evidence procured during the Data Inventory process. Actions taken in this category will require cooperation and leadership between Institutional Research, Center for Teaching & Learning, and the Provost.

*Actions:*

- AY 2024: Implement a new course survey instrument. Point Person: Rishi Poudyal
- AY 2025: Standardize course templates and syllabi, provide early syllabi access/upload into Blackboard shells (regardless of modality) in 8-week courses, and track course attendance. Point Person: Dr. Larry Guerrero
- AY 2026: Investigate and recommend workflows to improve turn-around time for online course reviews. Point Person: Dr. Farjahan Shawon

*Anticipated Impact:* A new course survey instrument will allow students to submit student course evaluations easily and confidentially near the end of the course. Providing students with course information prior to the start of courses will allow them to best determine how course requirements will best fit their existing schedules. Standardizing templates will provide a uniform experience across courses and allow students to find information efficiently and effectively. Tracking course attendance across instructors and departments will allow the college to identify students who need support at an early stage and help put measures in place to help them succeed (tied directly to supporting student retention in a later recommendation). Optimizing time and workflows associated with online course approvals sets clear expectations between course creation and approvals to eliminate time lags and redundancies.

## **2. Improve Retention through Targeted Academic Interventions**

College readiness was quickly identified as an issue during faculty, staff, and administrative focus group discussions. Furthermore, retention data collected during the Data Inventory efforts revealed that many students do not persist past the first year or semester. This recommendation stemmed from participation in two outside opportunities: the UNM Echo project (developmental English and Math corequisite course redesign), and the 15 to Finish initiative (summer bridge efforts). The recommendation was also motivated by our own internal investigation using clustering analysis to identify characteristics of three different groups of students who were not retained. We also identified specific gateway courses with high drop, fail, and/or withdrawal rates. Faculty met to discuss and propose intervention strategies in targeted gateway courses.

*Actions:*

- AY 2024: Increase retention of Developmental English and Math students by providing an accelerated track and additional support through the corequisite model, identify and pilot gateway course completion strategies, and strengthen college readiness via dual credit and summer bridge efforts. Point Person: Lori Franklin

- AY 2025: Implement master and utilizing forecasting methods to increase course availability and on-time completion. Point Person: Maria Cedillo

*Anticipated Impact:* Focusing attention on experiences that bridge the transition from high school to college and helping students adapt to college expectations are expected to increase student retention upon college entry. Implementing strategies to improve pass rates in gateway courses that bottleneck student progress will help improve retention and ensure program sequence completion.

### **3. Integrate Student Service Systems and Processes**

Focus group feedback identified concerns gleaned through the initial experiences prospective given to new students. Discussions revealed a need to better streamline enrollment and familiarize students with the institution. Actions taken in this category involve staff groups who initially interact with students.

*Actions:*

- AY 2024: Create timely and effective credit transfer processes: Janett Orozco
- and increase efficiency and productivity of enrollment/recruitment activities: Emma Hashman
- AY 2025: Enhance new student onboarding from acceptance through the beginning of classes: Emma Hashman/Ambrosia Tuero

*Anticipated Impact:* Easing the credit transfer process, enhancing recruitment activities, and streamlining the student onboarding process will eliminate any confusion or frustration prior to the beginning of classes.

### **4. Enhance Infrastructure to Support Student Retention**

Evidence in the Data Inventory revealed NNMC must address the issue of retention. Staff and faculty focus groups were able to hone in on specific issues that directly affect a student ability to be successful in courses. Unlike the efforts of Recommendation II which focus on direct academic interventions, this recommendation highlights a need to collaborate across academic and student support services.

*Actions:*

- AY 2025: Decrease the amount of time it takes students to receive all course materials at an affordable price: Jessica Holguin
- AY 2026: Create clear and robust mechanisms for supporting student financial obligations related to school attendance; investigate disenrollment for non-payment and early drop date issues; Point Person: Theresa Story

- and identify, intervene, and track pivotal moments related to student retention from first semester through graduation: Ambrosia Tuero/Courtney Bruch

*Anticipated Impact:* Students often forego or delay course materials and are at risk of falling behind in classes. Access to all course materials on the first day of courses is a step toward solving that problem. Ensuring students are informed repeatedly and provided with options to address financial obligations increases their likelihood of completing classes. A revamped Early Alert system and workflows with clear responsibility and tracking mechanisms will increase the College's ability to respond with the right resources at the right time to make meaningful connections with at-risk students.