

*Speech for Spring Retreat*  
*January, 18, 2008*

Friends, Romans, Country Men and Women....oops...wrong speech...let me try again...

Hey, Good Morning, Happy New Year and Happy Birthday to Us! What a wonderful celebration; we are 50-years old!

Let's start the morning by taking a quick look of what was happening in 1958:

- Nikita Krushchev became the leader of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics;
- Bank of America launched its first credit card;
- Douglass introduced the DC-8;
- The New York Yankees won the World Series. Does anyone know (or even care who they beat)? *Note: Actually Sharon Fischer even knew the answer—the Milwaukee Braves.*
- “Hard Headed Woman” by Elvis Presley and the “Purple People Eater” by Sheb Wooley were two of the most popular songs;
- *Doctor Zhivago* was one of the most popular works of fiction;
- *Kids Say the Darndest Things* was the most popular work of non-fiction;
- If you had a TV, you watched ....”Gunsmoke”
- Oh no, the Super Bowl did not exist;
- Frederick Sanger won the Nobel Prize for his work on the structure of proteins;
- And, what was the most important happening of all in 1958? Yep, New Mexico State University at Alamogordo was founded.

In 1958, we held our first classes—at night--in Alamogordo High School. But, in 1968 we found a permanent home here at 2400 N. Scenic Drive. Now, as we begin the celebration of our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we have 14 buildings and a new enrollment record. According to our Institutional Researcher, Bruce Martin:

“On Friday, January 18, Spring 2008 enrollment consists of a Headcount of 2,650 (up 36.7%), and an FTE of 1,286.1 (up 22.8%). Both enrollments are all-time records.”

Let's give ourselves a big hand! If any of you would like to jitterbug in the aisles, please feel free...Glenda—where is Russ when you need him?

So, what else is happening...

The members of the Administrative Policies Advisory Council (APAC) just completed an Assessment of Progress for our 2004-2009 Strategic Plan. As soon as we have the report formatted correctly, we will ask our outstanding webmaster and Library Director extraordinaire, Dan Kammer, to post a copy of the Assessment on our website. The 60+ page document provides us with some good information on areas where we exceeded our

expectations but also some areas where we need to spend more time and energy.

Let's do a quick synopsis:

One area where we show significant progress is with the receipt of over \$4 million in Title V monies. The influx of this external funding has had a significant impact on our campus. For example, we have a new Academic Support Center building where we have been able to centralize many of our tutoring services. We have been able to purchase a variety of new technologies for the campus including Starboards, Elmos, projectors and new computers. We have supported professional development opportunities both on- and off-campus for several individuals.

Another area where we have made significant progress has been in the expansion of online courses. As we noted last semester (and we anticipate the same will happen this semester), our increased enrollment is due to our increased enrollment in these courses. A special thank you goes to Donna Cook, all the Title V staff, and our faculty and staff who have worked so hard in this arena.

Another area where we continue to show we are making significant progress is our investment into our facilities. What is current status of this investment? In addition to our new Academic Support Center, we have been able to renovate some of the classrooms in the Classroom Building, and yes, we even have a new roof that doesn't leak! (Please, Bruce, do not tell me it has not rained since November!). If you haven't already been over to view our newly renovated language labs, please be sure to do so. In fact, Rosa Rico-Fernandez tells me there may even be an open house sometime this semester! The Physical Plant Department, especially Raymond Porchas and Billy Page, have spent many hours getting this area ready for use this semester.

We hope to begin construction on the Health Sciences addition to the Reidlinger Science Complex sometime during March or April. Williams Design Group, Inc. is our architectural firm, the plans for the addition are complete, and the RFPs for construction should be reviewed in February. This exciting project will be the first construction on this campus that will be built to meet LEED Silver Certification requirements. Some of the things you will see when the addition is complete will be more natural light, water-saving devices, the use of several recycled materials, and reduced air pollution from the building. It is very exciting that we are starting the process of "Going Green!" A special thank you goes to Nancy Montgomery, Larry Flores, Jack Rogers, Jary Rupe, Tony Salinas, Sharon Fischer and Debra Teachman for their involvement in this project. Bryan Yancey has also agreed to become intimately involved with the project this semester.

Please be aware that when a construction project begins, there will be some additional noise, some shutting off of air conditioning and some reduction in parking spaces.

However, also keep in mind that construction is temporary (you know, something like labor pains). However, once construction is complete, we will have a wonderful new addition to our campus.

Where does our Assessment of Progress show us we need to spend more time and energy?

Area One: Student Retention. Our assessment of progress shows that although the absolute numbers of students returning each fall has been similar, we hover around the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile. Let's work together to identify strategies that will increase retention by at least 2% a year over the next five years.

Please remember that retention does not mean lowering our standards. However, when we talk about good retention strategies we carefully examine the type of student enrolled, and we tailor our activities to these different types of students.

Area Two: I will call this area, the area of the 3 A's...Assessment, Assessment, and Assessment. Although we seem to have some bits and pieces in the assessment of our academic programs, we do not have an overarching assessment plan for the institution. So, we will start focusing our energies on developing and implementing a thoughtful and useful plan where we assign appropriate resources and make certain individuals are charged with the overall responsibility of moving committees forward.

One of the first areas we will tackle this year is online course assessment. We must sustain our enrollment using this medium. We should also anticipate that our competition (especially the other community colleges) will soon be expanding the number of online courses they offer (especially when they see our increased enrollment). So, we want to assure that every individual taking an online course from NMSU-A wants to take a second and then a third online course from us. Please keep in mind that word travels fast—the type of word we want is our students encouraging their friends and relatives to consider NMSU-A for their educational needs.

Area Three: On-site Students. Our number of on-site students has not increased; therefore, we must continue to look for opportunities that will expand our on-site programming. Over three years ago, the community asked us to look for ways to offer programming in the trades (i.e. automotive, carpentry, welding, HVAC, electrical and plumbing technology). So, yes, we have been spending many hours meeting with community leaders, legislators, personnel from New Mexico State University and the Higher Education Department to continue with this initiative.

Here is our progress to date:

The architect, Gary Williams, has been hired using the planning monies provided to NMSU-A and OCEDC from last year's legislature. We will see recommendations for

possible sites and a very rough initial design by the end of February or early March. This Tuesday evening, our Advisory Board (the APS School Board) unanimously approved our resolution to ask to the community to approve a local \$5 million GO Bond election on April 1. If we are successful with the election, \$3 million will go towards the Trades Center (particularly automotive and welding programs) and \$2 million will go towards campus infrastructure renovations and expansions. As a campus community and for the benefit of the Alamogordo community, I sincerely hope you will support this very important initiative.

One question you will get is, “What will passage of this GO Bond mean in taxes to homeowners?” Well, if you have a home valued at about \$100,000 will pay about \$1.32 per month in property taxes. If you own a \$300,000 home, you will pay an additional \$4.18 per month. So, will this resolution mean increased taxes? Well, no, not really. Last year, we paid off all General Obligation Bonds. So, realistically, over the past few months, our property owners saw a slight decrease in their property taxes. The approval for a new GO Bond means assessed property taxes will go back to the 2006-07 levels. Please keep in mind that one thing the State is always looking for when examining initiatives for community colleges is evidence of community support. So, we have much work ahead of us during the coming months. On January 28, we will go before the Board of Regents for election approval. On February 12, we go before the Higher Education Department for the same.

In new program development, the second area we will be pursuing over the next two years is the development of 2+2 programming in HTRM (hospitality, tourism & recreation). Since New Mexico State University is the only four-year institution in the State that has this bachelors degree, Chancellor Martin is very interested in making sure all community colleges within the system offer programming in this area. The CAOs are working diligently with the faculty to make this initiative to fruition.

Let's also continue to look for opportunities to expand our offerings in certificate and two-year programming. As I have mentioned to several of you, we should closely examine programs that support alternative energy (especially solar), water quality, the sciences, the gaming industry, and of course, the trades. If we can develop well-defined programs in these areas, we will not only better meet the needs of our service area but we will also see an increase in our on-site enrollment.

Another area where we have significant opportunity is in dual enrollment. With the passage of SB 561—High School Redesign, we have excellent potential to increase the number of high school students who enroll at NMSU-A. As the State continues to grapple with dual-enrollment regulations, we need to closely follow any emerging regulations.

During this last semester, our Student Services personnel and our Division Heads met with the area school counselors and administrators. This type of meeting gives us

excellent feedback on what our surrounding school districts actually need and want. Thank you, Sharon, for putting this meeting together. Please, let's continue to engage in these types of conversations.

Area Four: Institutional Salaries. Our Assessment of Progress towards our Strategic Plan also shows that increasing institutional salaries for both faculty and staff continues to be an area where we need to improve. However, we should not be naïve. Whenever we enter into the discussion of salaries, we always press a “hot button” – not my “Easy” button. It doesn't matter if we have good times or bad times, salaries are a sensitive issue and as altruistic as all of us are, if we didn't receive a paycheck, I doubt if many of us would show up for work.

Let me update you on where we are and some directions we are discussing:

During fall 2007, the average salary increase for full-time faculty in New Mexico State University System was 4.4%. The increase for Alamogordo full-time faculty was slightly over 5%. When we examine the recent data for average full-time faculty salaries, we are slightly above Grants and below Dona Ana and Carlsbad. But, we always have to be cautious when we use the concept of “average full-time faculty salaries.” For example, UNM –Taos lists one of the highest average salaries for their full-time faculty. What the average salary doesn't show is that UNM –Taos has five full-time faculty members. Our Assessment of Progress shows we have not increased part-time faculty salaries for several years. The state just completed a study on part-time faculty salaries and benefits. The results of the study were distributed to the academic officers and the President of the Faculty Assembly.

We have a three-year collective bargaining agreement with AFSME. Therefore, our non-exempt staff knows exactly what is going to happen over the next two years; they have also been informed that dues will increase next year.

During the last Administrative Council meeting at NMSU, Vice-President Taylor announced that New Mexico State University will be hiring an outside consultant to review faculty salaries. Once the faculty review is completed, a study will be conducted on the salaries for exempt staff. I would anticipate it will take about two years to complete both reviews.

Chancellor Martin has instituted a freeze on all new employee hires. We anticipate the freeze will be lifted after this legislative session ends. Please remember that you are going to hear a lot of talk during the legislative session, but if any of you believe you know exactly what the legislature will do, please let me know. My personal experience has been that it is very difficult to predict exactly what the legislature or the Governor will do until a bill is actually signed. So, when it comes to politics, I believe I can make one prediction with absolute certainty--George W. Bush will not be our next President.

On Wednesday, Dr. Teachman presented to Administrative Council the requested plan for replacements for faculty. The Council approved all but one position. With the freeze, we have to receive permission from the Provost to go ahead with advertising the positions—I anticipate we will receive this permission. Since January and February are the prime months for advertising faculty positions, if permission is received from the Provost’s Office I would like to see the ads in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* by February 15.

Sometimes, early in the morning I see Yong Mitchell. So, Yong--this is for you. We are still trying to hire another custodian. We are in the process of re-advertising the position—we hope to have someone on board by the end of February.

We offered the Counselor position for SBDC; she did not accept our offer. As a result, Dwight Harp and Brenda Garcia are moving forward with re-advertising this position. I would also like to announce that WIA and TANF are back with NMSU-A. A special “welcome back” goes to Linda Swenson, Susan Padilla, Alicia Jacquez, and Christine Bobowski. Over the past two years, WIA and TANF have been part of New Mexico State University at Las Cruces. The programs are now back under NMSU-A.

Our Assessment of Progress of our Strategic Plan has certainly given us some direction. So, one of the things I will be implementing immediately is

- Development of a new Strategic Plan. Our current plan expires in 2009, and yes, we are already in 2008. So, we will continue under this plan until a new plan is developed. However, for the new plan, we will
  - First, conduct a SWOTs analysis; and
  - Second, form a Strategic Plan Task Force that includes members of our campus and some of our major stakeholders. Therefore, if you have some nominations for the Task Force, or if you would like to serve as member of this Task Force, please let me know.
- We will be developing processes to annually review our data sets and use the review to create an even more student-centered learning organization.

You also need to be aware that there is one other item happening within the NMSU system that we believe will help raise the public’s perception of our community colleges. First, the use of the term, “branch campuses” is starting to disappear. In addition, we will no longer be using the term “main” to refer to the Las Cruces campus. We want to make sure our constituencies view us as a comprehensive community college within our own right—not less than, not more than the campus in Las Cruces.

Second, during the December Board of Regents, the Regents changed the title for Dr. Martin to Chancellor of the New Mexico State University System and President of New Mexico State University and Dr. Cruzado became the Executive Vice Chancellor of the New Mexico State University System and Provost of New Mexico State University. The

titles for the CEOs of the four community colleges, Alamogordo, Carlsbad, Dona Ana and Grants were changed from CEO to President. The titles of these positions are now in-sync with the independent community college. You should also anticipate that we will soon be changing the titles of our senior officers as well—this title change should take place sometime before July 1.

One question I typically get is, “Did the title change of your position also mean significant salary increase?” Well, I want you to know right up front that I heard a significant increase in salary for my position is part of the long-term plan. I believe my position is scheduled for a significant salary increase during our next anniversary celebration – yep, our 100<sup>th</sup>! So, I ask you for a small favor when this happens—please burn the “green” in an environmentally-appropriate manner and spread the “green” ashes over me. I look forward to watching the ceremony!

So, Happy New Year and Happy Birthday to US! On Tuesday, I was privileged to be a guest of Representative Cote and sit on the floor (well, not literally) of the House of Representatives for the Opening Session. Governor Richardson ended his State of the State speech with something I hold dear to my heart; I will take this opportunity to share it with you. He stated, “We can take the timid path of the status quo, or continue down the path to progress with bold steps and strong action. Let us choose to be bold. Let us choose to act. Let’s choose to make a difference. We care too deeply for this generation and every generation that follows to do anything other than make a difference for the people we serve, in the place that we cherish—the great state of New Mexico.” In my opinion, we have also chosen to work in one of the best jobs available—higher education. But, since we have chosen this area of employment, we also know in advance we will not always agree on how things should be done. However, please remember that we also ascribe to be critical thinkers, so let’s continue to have discussions about issues, not persons.

Thank you for your time; we will now take any questions....

Cheri Jimeno, Ph.D.  
President