



PINNACLE

EVALUATION SERVICES

November 19, 2012

Stan Carlson
Title III HSI STEM Project Director
New Mexico State University-Alamogordo
2400 N. Scenic Drive
Alamogordo, NM 88310

Dear Stan,

I appreciate the opportunity to evaluate the status and progress of the Title III HSI STEM project titled *Strengthening Science, Engineering, and Energy Career Options (SECO)*. The interviews conducted with project staff and other College personnel, the tour of the new labs that have been developed and are under development, and the review of project records and documentation during the evaluation site visit revealed the extensive amount of development work that has been carried out by New Mexico State University-Alamogordo's Title III HSI STEM project. It was a pleasure to visit with you and your staff during the evaluation site visit. Furthermore, summary documents provided during the evaluation site visit in regards to work accomplished and progress toward objectives were extremely helpful and are much appreciated.

The attached report provides a summary of findings from the evaluation site visit, which took place October 30-31, 2012. Much of this information was discussed with you and your staff on the final day of the site visit. If you would like to discuss any of this further or have any questions in regards to the report, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Maddie Zeigler". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Maddie Zeigler
External Evaluator

Evaluation Report – Title III HSI STEM Grant, Year 1
NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY-ALAMOGORDO
STRENGTHENING SCIENCE, ENGINEERING, AND ENERGY CAREER OPTIONS (SECO)
(AWARD # P031C110087)

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EVALUATION REPORT
TITLE III HSI STEM GRANT, YEAR 1 (AWARD # P031C110087)
NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY-ALAMOGORDO
MADDIE ZEIGLER, EXTERNAL EVALUATOR
OCTOBER 2012

Introduction

New Mexico State University Alamogordo (NMSU-A), located in the south-central region of New Mexico, is a public, comprehensive, open-admissions, two-year institution and a separately accredited branch of New Mexico State University. NMSU-A offers Associate degrees, Certificates, and community/continuing education. The service area for NMSU-A is primarily Otero County, a rural county with a population of 62,776; one-third of residents are Hispanic. This area of New Mexico is home to various federal facilities, including Holloman Air Force Base and White Sands Missile Range, and therefore offers career opportunities in fields related to science and technology.

In 2011, NMSU-Alamogordo was awarded a 5-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education (USDE), Office of Postsecondary Education, HSI STEM and Articulation Program (Title III, Part F). The Project (*Strengthening Science, Engineering, and Energy Career Options*) proposes to increase STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) interest, access, success, and transfer for Hispanic and low-income students, with a focus on developing and improving five degree programs: Science (AS), General Engineering (AS), Computer Graphics (AAS & Certificate), Renewable Energy (AAS & Certificates), and Biomedical Electronics Technology (AAS). Project goals include curriculum development/revision; lab renovation/construction; enhancement of student outreach, support and transfer services; and development of a model articulation plan.

Scope of External Evaluation

The external evaluation focuses on two major areas: (1) reviewing formative and summative evaluation data results to determine if the project has made progress toward stated objectives and outcomes; and (2) examining written documentation to determine if the project is being managed in compliance with applicable Federal regulations. This report summarizes the findings of the external evaluation conducted at the completion of the first project year, including a summary of key developmental work accomplished during the year, identification of project strengths and weaknesses, and recommendations to address project gaps/weaknesses and strengthen overall performance and management of the project.

External Evaluation Process

An external evaluator (Maddie Zeigler, *Pinnacle Evaluation Services*) conducted an on-site visit to the NMSU-A campus October 30-31, 2012 to assess the progress of the Title III STEM project, focusing on the areas specified above. Project staff and other institutional personnel interviewed during the onsite visit for the Title III STEM project are listed below.

- Dr. Cheri Jimeno, President
- Dr. Debra Teachman, VP for Academic Affairs
- Tony Salinas, VP for Business and Finance
- Dr. Juan Garcia, VP for Student Success
- Donna Cook, Associate Vice President, Extended Programs
- Cathy Aguilar-Morgan, Interim Division Head Math, Engineering, Science, Health
- Gary Bond, Director, Learning Technology Center
- Greg Hillis, Institutional Research
- Jary Rupe, Title V Project Director
- Bryan Yancey, ProTech Division Head
- Wayne McGowan, Chemistry Instructor
- Mike Eydenberg, Science Faculty Member
- Margaret Turpin (student), President of newly-formed STEM Club
- HSI STEM project staff members (listed on page 9)

In addition, relevant documents were reviewed or consulted, including:

- Title III STEM approved grant proposal and approved budget;
- Correspondence with USDE Program Officer;
- Interim Performance Report;
- Project personnel documentation (monthly reports);
- Equipment inventory list;
- Documentation of travel undertaken with grant funds;
- Purchasing and budget/financial documents.

Progress in Attainment of Project Objectives

For Year 1, the project had several performance measures to report on, which are related to two objectives slated to be completed by Fall 2013. Progress on Year 1 performance measures is detailed in the table below.

Project Objective #1

By Fall 2013, at least 80% of participants (at least 40% Hispanic/low-income) each in Associate of Science (AS), Renewable Energy (RE) AAS, and Computer Graphics (CG) AAS first-year STEM course pilots will re-enroll for the second year.

Outcome/Progress: This objective will be assessed in Fall 2013. See below for related year-1 performance measures.

Performance Measures (for Objective#1)

By Fall 2012:

1-a. At least 40 AS majors (at least 16 Hispanic/low-income) will enroll in first-year STEM course pilots (with at least 90% re-enrolling for the Spring 2013 semester).

Progress toward performance measure 1-a:

- A substantial outreach effort was undertaken by the institution to increase enrollment in the AS Program (45 freshman were enrolled in Fall 2011).
- In Fall 2012, 66 students (freshmen) enrolled and were identified as AS majors.
- Of the 66 AS freshmen, 18 were Hispanic.

1-b. At least 40 each RE AAS majors (at least 16 Hispanic/low-income) will enroll in first-year STEM course pilots (with at least 90% re-enrolling for the Spring 2013 semester).

Progress toward performance measure 1-b:

- This performance measure is delayed until Fall 2013 (due to the various levels of review and approval required within the NMSU system for development of curricular programs).

1-c. At least 40 CG AAS majors (at least 16 Hispanic/low-income) will enroll in first-year STEM course pilots (with at least 90% re-enrolling for the Spring 2013 semester).

Progress toward performance measure 1-c:

- This performance measure is delayed until Fall 2013 (curriculum development work could not be completed and approved by Fall 2012).

Project Objective #2

By Fall 2013, at least 80% of participants (at least 40% Hispanic/low-income) each will earn grades of C/+ in Associate of Science (AS), Renewable Energy (RE) AAS, and Computer Graphics (CG) AAS first-year STEM course pilots; at least 75% of participants will express satisfaction with courses and services.

Outcome/Progress: This objective will be assessed in Fall 2013. See below for related year-1 performance measures.

Performance Measures (for Objective #2)

By Fall 2012:

2-a. At least 95% of project staff will be released/hired and oriented.

Progress toward performance measure 2-a:

- As of 9/30/12 (end of Year 1), 100% of project staff were hired and oriented, although two employees (Renewable Energy Instructional Coordinator and Biology Lab Instructional Specialist) are full-time temporary hires.

2-b. First-year construction/renovation projects will be completed (Chemistry lab renovation and renewable energy lab).

Progress toward performance measure 2-b:

- The Chemistry lab renovation project commenced in September 2012 and is scheduled for completion by January 2013 (onsite work to take place over the winter break).
- Development of the RE lab is delayed; construction is scheduled for Spring 2013.

2-c. First-year supplies and equipment will be acquired and installed.

Progress toward performance measure 2-c:

- All Year 1 supplies and equipment have been purchased (although some items have not been received and installed).

2-d. First-year STEM academic and Outreach-Transfer support programs will be developed.

Progress toward performance measure 2-d:

- Much development work was accomplished in Year 1 related to the development of academic/Outreach-Transfer support programs (details in next section of report).

2-e. At least 95% of first-year STEM curricula will be revised/developed/converted.

Progress toward performance measure 2-e:

- Revised the Associate of Science degree plan and submitted it for review to the NMSU-A Division Head that oversees Science.
- Revised the Associate of Applied Science in Computing degree plan (for computer graphics program) and submitted draft to NMSU-A Curriculum Committee for review.

Development Work Carried Out to Support Attainment of Objectives

Even though there was some delay in hiring Title III STEM staff—the Project Director was appointed in January 2012; other staff members were hired between February and August 2012—staff members have worked diligently once on board and made substantial progress toward achieving the stated performance measures for Year 1, as described in the table above. The narrative in this section describes additional details related to development tasks accomplished in Year 1 for each of the three key development areas of the project.

1- Develop/revise curricula and academic programs in five STEM areas (Science, General Engineering, Computer Graphics, Renewable Energy, and Biomedical Electronics Technology).

- The revised Associate of Science (AS) degree plan was completed, which includes general education core requirements and degree requirements; a team of science faculty members assisted with this endeavor.
- A draft of an articulation agreement between NMSU-Alamogordo and NMSU-Las Cruces was completed, to be presented to the Academic Council by December 2012.
- Articulation tables were developed (NMSU-Las Cruces and NMSU-Alamogordo) for the Associate of Science (AS) and the General Engineering AS degree programs. The articulation table for each program indicates how the revised AS degree will transfer to NMSU-Las Cruces into 13 natural sciences bachelor's degree programs.

2- Renovate STEM labs/install up-to-date instructional equipment and instrumentation in labs to support development of the five curricular programs included in the project.

- The graphics design lab was equipped with 20 computer workstations (state-of-the-art iMac computers).
- The mathematics lab was equipped with 28 workstations.

3- Develop academic outreach/support services and a model articulation plan.

- Conducted a formal review of the literature on service learning and created a PowerPoint presentation to present approaches for integrating service learning into courses to science faculty (4 primary approaches: direct service, indirect service, advocacy, research).

- Created a flyer (English and Spanish) describing the HSI project and the AS programs in Science (AS) and General Engineering (GE AS).
- Developed outreach information for the NMSU-A website (included links to STEM careers and women in STEM fields); created a webpage describing the Associate in Science degree and how it can lead to a bachelor's degree in one of the natural sciences.
- Developed a PSA on NMSU-A's outreach efforts related to the STEM grant project.
- Developed and distributed AS & GE AS informational postcards to all Alamogordo High School, Tularosa High School, and Cloudcroft High School graduating seniors.
- Developed a STEM student organization (STEM Club) at NMSU-A and submitted the chartering documentation to the College for approval.
- Began developing community partnerships (City of Alamogordo, Engineers without Borders, Chamber of Commerce, White Sands National Monument) for internship placements of NMSU-A students in STEM programs.

Title III STEM Project Renovation

NMSU-A's STEM project includes renovation of STEM labs. The original proposal had the development of the lab facilities spread out over the 5-year grant period. However, the institution requested a change to the renovation timeline, to complete all project renovations within the first two years of the grant project (approved by the USDE Program Officer in February 2012). Renovation slated for Year 1 (chemistry lab) was delayed; the new timeline is September 2012 – January 2013. The Project Director held meetings with architects from Williams Design Group (the selected firm); the NMSU-A Facilities Director; and faculty members from the Math, Engineering, Science & Health Division to discuss recommendations for the science lab renovations (February – April 2012). As a result of these meetings, a list of recommendations for the renovation of the chemistry lab and associated prep/storage area was generated. Architectural plans for the chemistry lab were finalized in July 2012.

Other Observations

Grant Management Processes

- A project manual procedures for the Title III STEM project was completed and posted on the Title III STEM webpage on NMSU-A's website; a hard copy is maintained in the Title III STEM office. The manual contains descriptions of the project design and its components; an organizational chart; personnel hiring and policies; management plan and procedures; legislation and regulations; fiscal/accounting practices; contractual policies and procedures; project evaluation plan; and appendices with additional information.
- Forms to facilitate project management were developed (time & effort report, monthly progress report, travel request, travel report).

Internal Evaluation Team

NMSU-A formed an internal evaluation team to help guide the project's evaluation efforts and monitor completion of key evaluation tasks (e.g., collection, analysis, use of data). The table below specifies the names and positions of evaluation team members. The evaluator reviewed minutes of a meeting of the Internal Evaluation Team held on 5/16/12, the only meeting held in Year 1. Also included in the documentation were minutes from a meeting held on 10/8/12 (which is Year 2 of the grant project). The Project Director indicated the early October meeting was the wrap-up meeting for the project's first year.

It is recommended that the Internal Evaluation Team hold meetings at least on a quarterly basis.

Internal Evaluation Team <i>Strengthening Science, Engineering, and Energy Career Options (SECO)</i>	
Name	Position/Role at PCC-West
Cathy Aguilar-Morgan	Interim Division Head Math, Engineering, Science, Health
Gary Bond	Director, Learning Technology Center
Dr. Juan Garcia	VP, Student Success
Greg Hillis	Institutional Research
Jary Rupe	Title V Project Director
Bryan Yancey	ProTech Division Head

Compliance with Applicable Federal Regulations

- 1. All approved positions should be filled. If changes were made to time commitments, or qualifications of key personnel, changes should be approved by USDE.***

At the time of the site visit by the external evaluator (October 2012), all approved key positions for Year 1 of the project were filled, although two of them are temporary hires (Biology Lab Instructional Specialist and Renewable Energy Instructional Coordinator) until the hiring process is finalized for each of those positions. Donna Cook, named as the Project Director in the approved grant application, was unable to take on the position, but served as a half-time Project Director between 10/1/11 and 12/31/11 until the search for a new Project Director was completed. The new project director, Stan Carlson, was appointed by the President in January 2012. The change in Project Director was approved by the USDE program officer on 1/31/12. The other key project positions were filled between February and August 2012.

The table below lists the project personnel for NMSU-A's Title III STEM project for Year 1.

Title III STEM Project Staff – Year 1		
Position	Name	% Time
Project Director	Stan Carlson	100%
Outreach-Transfer Coordinator	Christina Sarabia-Stroud	100%
Renewable Energy Instructional Coordinator	Robert Karns	100%
Technology Specialist	Charles Pulliam	75%
Technology Specialist	Fernando Terrazas	25%
Biology Lab Instructional Specialist	Jeffrey Bacon	100%
Physical Sciences Lab Instructional Specialist	Zita Klaene	100%
Administrative Assistant	Tammy Harrelson	100%

Various explanations related to project personnel were provided to the external evaluator, as detailed here. Robert Karns (Renewable Energy Instructional Coordinator) was hired in August 2012, but only served in the position for two months. A new person, Clay Bevins, was identified to replace Mr. Karns and was slated to begin in that position on November 1, 2012 as a temporary full-time employee. The search and hiring process for the Biology Lab Instructional Specialist culminated with the selection of a highly qualified candidate, who did not accept the offer. Subsequently, the process began anew; in the meantime a qualified individual who serves as an adjunct faculty member for the institution (Jeffrey Bacon) was identified and hired (August 2012) as a temporary full-time employee. The position of Technology Specialist is divided

between two individuals (75% and 25%). Fernando Terrazas, an existing 0.75 FTE employee (Associate Systems Analyst) at NMSU-A has the required qualifications, and was upgraded to 1.0 FTE (75% Associate Systems Analyst and 25% STEM Technology Specialist).

Subsequently, Charles Pulliam was hired for the remainder 75% of the Technology Specialist position. The explanation provided for not hiring Mr. Terrazas for the 100% position was so as not to jeopardize his permanent employee status at the institution once the grant ends.

It is recommended that one individual (1.0 FTE) serve in the position of Technology Specialist.

2. The Title III STEM Project Director should have copies of employment contracts or letters of employment on file, specifying percent of effort funded by the grant.

A letter announcing the appointment of Stan Carlson as Project Director is on file in the Title III STEM office. The letter is signed by the employee and the NMSU-A President and specifies that the position is a 12-month position and the appointment will last for the duration of the grant.

Letters of offer, signed by the Project Director, and Acceptance Letters, signed by the employees, are on file for the Outreach-Transfer Coordinator (Christina Sarabia-Stroud), the Physical Sciences Lab Instructional Specialist (Zita Klaene) and the 75% Technology Specialist (Charles Pulliam). There are no employment letters for individuals hired as temporary staff.

Resumes are in place for all project personnel.

It is recommended that the personnel files maintained in the Title III STEM office be updated to include documentation for all project personnel. In the case of project personnel who have no letter of employment, based on institutional practices (such as temporary hires), a memo to the file should be included in the Title III Personnel files explaining their status.

3. Title III STEM staff and other positions committing time to the project must document appropriate levels of time and effort.

Time and Effort reports are in place for all project staff and are signed and dated by the employee and the supervisor. The form used indicates the percent of time devoted to the project, a list of descriptive tasks, and the estimated percentage of time allotted to each task. It was noted that employee names and titles are not always included at the top of the reports. It was also noted that the titles used are not always consistent with titles specified in the grant proposal.

All project staff members must include employee name and title on Time and Effort reports.

Titles should be consistent with titles used in the approved grant proposal

4. Title III STEM project professional staff complete monthly progress reports.

Monthly progress reports are in place in the Title III STEM office for all project staff (including the Project Director) and are signed and dated by the employee and the supervisor. The reports include work objectives for the month, a summary of work activities carried out during the month, and a discussion of any problems/delays experienced in the month's objectives. Although not required, faculty members involved in revising curriculum also submit a monthly progress report. This demonstrates the high level of reporting that the external evaluator found during the review of the project's management practices.

The monthly progress reports would be strengthened by adding supporting documentation or making reference to where such documentation is found (e.g., materials developed, agendas of meetings, sign-in sheets for faculty training sessions).

5. Supplanting.

Title III STEM staff members are a combination of new employees and employees who previously held other positions within NMSU-A. Those who have moved into Title III STEM positions from other areas as full-time employees, such as the Project Director, have been released from their previous duties and 100% of their former duties have been assumed by other individuals. One grant position, the 25% Technology Specialist, was upgraded to 100% from his previous 75% institutional position (with 25% of the salary covered by Title III grant funds). It was noted that the title used when completing Time and Effort reports for this position is the institutional title (Associate Systems Analyst) rather than the grant title (Technology Specialist).

To eliminate any appearance of supplanting institutional costs with grant funds, it is recommended that one person fill the 100% position of Technology Specialist, as described in the approved grant proposal.

6. Equipment purchased with grant funds must be inventoried and tagged in accordance with federal and institutional policy.

An inventory system is in place and is used to log and track equipment, as well as supply items (such as computers). The inventory document reviewed by the external evaluator includes date received, item description, company (vendor), model number, budget category (according to institution), unit price, location, brief justification, STEM inventory number, and serial/tag

number. A tagging system for items purchased with Title III funds was also developed. The Title III STEM project adheres to NMSU policy regarding institutional tagging of items that have a unit cost of \$1,000 or higher. The evaluator checked random items and saw the STEM tags, with the STEM name and the STEM inventory number. NMSU-A's Physical Plant personnel check inventory of all equipment valued at \$1,000 or more on an annual basis.

7. Travel requests and reports document how travel relates to annual project objectives.

Travel in Year 1 was minimal and consisted of local and state travel for project staff, primarily for training or professional development related to increasing skills/knowledge related to the duties of the position. Extensive travel documentation is maintained, including:

- (1) Travel Request Form (STEM project form) completed by traveler that specifies how the proposed travel is related to the HSI STEM SECO project;
- (2) NMSU-A Request for Travel Funds (institutional form) indicating costs of travel;
- (3) Travel Report Form (STEM project form) completed by traveler post travel, describing which project objectives/activities were supported by the travel and how it contributed to the objectives/activities;
- (4) Supporting documentation such as confirmation of training registration, agendas, certificates of completion, flyers describing training sessions, etc.

8. Budget Monitoring: The project director must authorize all expenditures and receive regular reports concerning encumbrances, expenditures, and account balances.

In its first year, the Title III STEM project established budget management systems. Following NMSU policy, budget Indexes were established for (1) the Salary and Non-salary categories and (2) Construction. The Project Director developed a shadow budget system, used to independently track project expenditures and to reconcile and verify NMSU budget reports (accessed through the Banner accounting system) on a monthly basis. The shadow budget "translates" the NMSU accounting system into the 8 federal budget categories (personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual, construction, and other) to facilitate budget monitoring. Review of financial records maintained in the Title III office indicates that the shadow budget shows (for each budget category) expenditures for each month, cumulative expenditures, and remaining balance. Drawdowns are done once a month by the main NMSU campus, and the Project Director is able to track drawdowns and other transactions by accessing the Banner system.

Purchases made with grant funds are documented in a very thorough manner, and the documentation is extensive. Review of purchasing documentation revealed the following: a cover sheet for each purchase that indicates date of purchase, vendor name, purpose of purchase, and location. Documentation also includes completed Institutional Purchase Order Request (POR), quote, invoice/receipt, e-mail communication with vendor, and completed and stamped PO from the Central Purchasing and Risk Management Office.

Overall, the budget review and interview process—which included obtaining information from both the Title III Project Director and the VP of Business and Finance (Tony Salinas)—revealed that NMSU-A’s Title III STEM project budget is efficiently managed and carefully monitored.

The project is ending its first year with a carry-forward amount of approximately \$66,000.

9. The project observes USDE and Title III regulations concerning obtaining prior federal approval for certain changes made within the project.

The Title III STEM Project Director maintains documentation indicating any request for change requiring USDE approval, as well as written communications reflecting the response from the USDE Program Officer. The external evaluator reviewed documentation of two instances in which change requests were submitted by NMSU-A to the USDE Program Officer (Everardo Gil). The first request (February 2012) was related to modifications made to the timeline for lab renovations, which was approved by the Program Officer on 2/15/12. The second request (June 2012) was for extending the timeline for some of the project objectives specified for the first year. The response from the Program Officer, on 6/8/12, indicated that the requested change in timeline is caused by a delay in grant activities, and as such, is not “approved, rather it is simply acknowledged.” The request to change the person serving as Project Director was not found in the Title III project files.

It is recommended that documentation of the change in Project Director from the individual named in the approved grant proposal (Donna Cook) to the current director (Stan Carlson) be maintained in the project files, including approval received from the USDE Program Officer.

10. Project staff must be compensated at the same rates that are applicable to other college employees.

The project staff is compensated in accordance with salary classifications and salary tables that

are applicable across NMSU-A. Project staff positions have been classified through the same process that is applied to other College positions, on the basis of written job descriptions.

11. *In the absence of federal or program regulations addressing a matter of policy, institutional policy must be followed.*

In the absence of applicable federal or program regulations, institutional policy applies and is followed by the Title III STEM project. This is the case, for example, with medical and annual leave, and other matters related to employee fringe benefits. Unless overridden by federal regulation, the institution's purchasing code governs processes of bidding, contracting, and purchasing.

12. *Describe what has been done to evaluate the project.*

Evaluation activities in Year 1 of the Title III STEM project have been primarily formative in nature and have included the following:

- Review of progress toward revising STEM academic programs by reviewing drafts of revised AS degree plans and AS articulation tables (show how the revised degree transfers to NMSU-Las Cruces natural sciences programs), by obtaining feedback from key faculty, and by making revisions to improve the final documents.
- Review of progress toward updating instructional equipment to support the five academic programs being developed through the project—including progress related to infrastructure preparation (e.g., re-cabling activities) and installation of equipment (e.g., iMac computers, audio visual equipment) through updates written by the Technology Specialist in monthly reports and through on-site inspections.
- Review of materials developed to support academic outreach and transfer services and making modifications, as needed, to create final versions found to be most effective in explaining NMSU-A STEM programs and attracting students to those programs.

Other forms of evaluation in Year 1 include:

- Establishing an Internal Evaluation Team to provide ongoing feedback and guidance related to project evaluation (names and institutional positions listed on page 8 of this report).

- Providing independent, external evaluation of the project—including review of formative and summative data, evidence of project accomplishments, indicators of progress toward objectives, and project documentation—which is the subject of this report.
- Developing an Annual Performance Reports (APR, submitted to the USDE), which includes data on attainment of project objectives and performance indicators, as well as budget updates (not yet completed at the time of the external evaluation site visit).

Project Outcomes

Project outcomes will be examined in depth in later years of the grant project, when the impact of Title III STEM activities is more discernible. However, two key outcomes that are already making a difference for the institution should be mentioned at this juncture.

- (a) Development of the STEM Student Organization – The external evaluator had the opportunity to meet with the individual serving as the president of the newly formed STEM Club (Margaret Turpin, who aspires to become an engineer). This young woman spoke with great enthusiasm about her role in encouraging students who may be interested in pursuing STEM studies of program and ensuring that they receive the support they need.
- (b) Updating of lab facilities – Improvements made in the first year of the project to NMSU-A lab facilities are already improving the experiences of students in STEM courses.

Recommendations to Strengthen Project Management and Performance

- A copy of the approval received from the USDE Program Officer documenting the change in Project Director from Donna Cook to Stan Carlson should be added to the project files (can be added to the “Program Officer Communications” binder).
- It is recommended that one individual serve as the Technology Specialist (100%) for the project, rather than dividing it between two people with 75% and 25% time commitments to the position.
- Personnel files maintained in the Title III STEM office should be updated to include letters of employment for all project personnel. If there is no letter of employment, based on institutional practices (such as for temporary staff members), a memo to the file should be included explaining the status of those individuals.

- The Project Director should ensure that all project staff members include name and title on Time and Effort reports, and use titles that are consistent with those used in the approved grant proposal.
- Adding supporting documentation to monthly progress reports developed by project staff is a recommended practice (materials developed, agendas of meetings, sign-in sheets for faculty training sessions, etc.).
- It is recommended that the Internal Evaluation Team hold meetings at least on a quarterly basis.
- It is imperative that the reporting structure for Title III project staff be made clear to faculty and staff within the institution. Title III project staff members are to report to the Title III Project Director, are to be supervised by the Project Director, and are not to be assigned or be engaged in ongoing college operational activities. The Title III, Part F grant is a developmental grant, for the purpose of developing, piloting, and evaluating new facilities, academic programs, and/or support services, as described in the approved grant proposal.

Summary

Identified Strengths of the Project

- The project receives strong support from the Campus President and other top-level administrators.
- The external evaluator found a high level of organization across all aspects of the project.
- Project staff members appear to be highly qualified for their positions.
- Strong administrative systems have been put in place in the first year to guide the project through its subsequent years, such as development of policies and procedures, systems for project reporting and project management, etc.
- For the most part, project staff members keep detailed documentation describing ongoing activities of the project specific to their positions.
- The project benefits from support provided by key administrative areas of the institution, such as the Business Office.

Identified Weaknesses of the Project

- Dividing the position of Technology Specialist between two individuals with time commitments of 75% and 25% does not appear to be the most effective way to carry out project activities in support of acquisition, installation, faculty training, and maintenance of instructional technology.
- Some Title III STEM positions seem to be involved in ongoing operational activities for the institution, assigned by personnel other than the Title III Project Director, in particular, the Technology Specialist (75% position), the Biology Lab Instructional Specialist, and the Physical Sciences Instructional Specialist.
- Based on conversations with faculty and staff members during the evaluation site visit, it does not appear that institutional personnel have a full understanding of the purpose of the Federal Title III grant program, which is a development program and is not meant to provide personnel to carry on ongoing institutional operational activities.

Overall Summary Statement

NMSU-A's Title III STEM project (Strengthening Science, Engineering, and Energy Career Options) experienced a successful first year, notwithstanding the delayed hiring of project personnel. By the end of Year 1, the project has demonstrated progress on the majority of its Year 1 performance measures. This report reflects findings from an external evaluation process that included a site visit to NMSU-Alamogordo, interaction with project and institutional staff, and review of project documentation. The external evaluator examined evaluation data, which provided evidence of the first year's project achievements. On the whole, the evaluation process revealed that project staff carried out developmental activities in support of the first year's project objectives and that the project demonstrated compliance with Federal regulations. Based on the findings of the external evaluation, recommendations are provided in support of strengthened project management and in regards to increasing understanding within the institution of the purpose of the Title III program.