

UNM takes steps to streamline course transferals from other institutions

Written by By Andy Gibbons III Sun Correspondent
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Alternative programs help students complete degrees

You've heard it before. A college student moves to a larger city to finish a degree at their new university's main campus, but is met with a hang-up. Not all of their credits from their previous school will transfer to the new location. The student who returns to their smaller hometown to wrap up their degree at a branch campus of a major university is often faced with the same predicament.

This can be frustrating for students who want whatever help they can get in finishing their degree. To transfer older credits that are withheld from their new program can be extremely costly, especially for students who don't want to pay again for a course they've already taken.

The potential loss can inconvenience students who may have to drive hours to attend a special class at their new university's main campus.

This, however, may no longer be the situation for local students attending University of New Mexico-Gallup.

Some students will find that navigating the transfer of credits from previous institutions, as well as taking new online courses and enrolling in new programs will be simpler than before. This is due in part to a recent announcement on the UNM-G website.

Students opening gallup.unm.edu on July 21 would have been met with a surprise: a memo attached to their news feed by Maria Stutsman y Marquez, the student success specialist for the

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enrollment management division of the University of New Mexico.

Stutsman y Marquez states in the announcement: “The goal of our smaller statewide team is to ensure that current students have the support and resources from main campus to succeed and prospective students at-a-distance continue to have local support.”

Amidst a new reorganized process for extended learning, there is a streamlined delivery of distance learning and even a new staff member to help support prospective and current students through these programs.

While Roxanne Escajada was just hired in her new capacity in student support on June 27, she has been working at UNM for 17 years as a recruiter and academic advisor for UNM Extended Learning.

“I feel this new development is exciting, because there are more programs that our students can start and finish and not have to go to the main campus to do it,” Escajada said. “We know that for some students it is not always feasible to just get up and go, especially since we service quite a few students who are considered non-traditional.”

Escajada said the new program allows students to remain in Gallup and complete their degrees online.

“I am here to help and encourage them to do just that,” she said.

The benefits of this new development keep stacking up for students of diverse stages of life looking for more freedom in upper-division classes.

Marilee Petranovich, marketing and communications officer for UNM-Gallup, noted how the changes exemplify UNM-G’s motto of “Stay Close, Go Far!”

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“The online platform will continue to allow students to achieve academic goals that include Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees from the comfort of their home community,” Petranovich said. “The convenience of online learning also allows our students to maintain many of their work and family obligations while accessing coursework at times that work for them.”

The new services are not limited to online classes. UNM students at branch campuses like UNM-Gallup will have access to main-campus resources, as well as advisement from a team of enrollment coaches.

Stutsman y Marquez said these coaches “will support the students over the phone, Skype, and computer screen-sharing capabilities.”

In addition to all of this support, some students also benefit from a new structure of coursework that has courses in two eight-week sessions that cover the normal span of a traditional 16-week semester.

“For instance,” Stutsman y Marquez said, “a full-time student would take two courses in the first eight-week session and then two more in the second eight-week session.

Stustman y Marquez hopes this structure will give more flexibility to students who work full-time or have other commitments to manage.

“UNM offers hundreds of online courses, allowing students incredible scheduling flexibility,” Stutsman y Marquez said. “Many online classes allow branch students the ability to fulfill major requirements for degree completion. Additionally, with considerable support resources available, finishing a degree online is a very viable option.”

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