

## New UNM-G initiatives encourages 'lifelong' learning

Written by Staff Reports

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Students at UNM-Gallup now have even more reasons than ever to be “lifelong learners” thanks to some new initiatives at the campus. UNM-Gallup functions as a two-year community college but with the closure of the Extended University site over a year ago, students have had a harder time accessing upper division bachelor and graduate coursework. With the expertise of Melissa Collings, Educational Site Coordinator, and Roxanne Escajeda, Student Recruitment Specialist, students can now explore additional educational options once they graduate from UNM-Gallup.

Escajeda currently works to recruit students into online programs available through the UNM main campus in Albuquerque. This allows students the convenience of working remotely on their degree programs from almost any location. The bachelor programs available this fall that utilize a fully online format include Bachelor of Arts degrees in Chicano/Chicana Studies, Native American Studies, and Psychology. Also offered will be a Master of Arts degree in Construction Management. According to Escajeda, “The online format and 8 week schedule of courses means students often need less time to finish their degree.” She functions as an enrollment coach by growing awareness of the online choices, getting students admitted and ultimately referring them to advisors within their chosen programs.

Escajeda is noticing an increase in the number of students who are enrolling in online degree programs. “For many people it is something they always thought of doing it because it could enhance their current job. The fully online coursework means students can go to school while continuing with their jobs. Even parents of young children are discovering the convenience of online learning by doing their school work after their children have gone to bed at night.”

Collings is in a newly created position at UNM-Gallup where she will be helping students transfer to four year institutions. She noticed that many students stop going to school after they complete their two year degree, often times due to a lack of understanding of what is needed to transfer. Collings says, “I want to let students know what resources are available to them to navigate the system. We are working to achieve softer hand offs to four year institutions.” Currently Collings plans on working as a transfer advisor for programs at the UNM main

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campus, but the hope is partnerships can grow with other institutions. “We hope the transfer center will allow for smooth transitions with other higher education systems, especially in areas where UNM may not offer programs.”

Knowing where to begin is often the biggest challenge for students looking to move forward with their education. Collings notes, “We will work with our main campus to decide how and when to have branch students talk about transferring so they can maximize both their financial aid and their long term goals. Sometimes getting the right pre-requisites and getting admitted can be the hardest part.”

For more information about upper division and online programs, contact Melissa Collings at (505) 863-7573 or Roxanne Escajeda at (505) 863-7554.

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