

# **WESTERN NEW MEXICO UNIVERSITY**

## **University History**

The community of Silver City realized a long-time dream on February 11, 1893, when the Thirtieth Session of the Territorial Legislature of New Mexico passed “An Act to Establish and Provide for the Maintenance and Government of the Normal Schools of New Mexico.” Silver City and Las Vegas were chosen to be the locations of these teacher-training institutions. This successfully culminated the efforts of many in Silver City, who had attempted for years to convince the Territorial Legislature to approve an institution of higher learning in Silver City.

A Board of Regents, appointed by Governor L. Bradford Prince, was given the task of selecting a site for the school. On June 2, 1893, the Board accepted Regent John W. Fleming’s offer of 20 acres situated on a high hill west of the community. This site allowed the institution to be visible to all who came into town. On September 7, 1894, an impressive dedication ceremony was held. A copper box containing coins, magazines, and other items of the period was placed within the cornerstone laid by the officials and townspeople. The military band of Fort Bayard provided appropriate music.

The first director was George Selby, an educator from Deming, who was given the title of principal. He is remembered as the man who was given the difficult task of developing curricula and providing instruction for the first forty students.

With the departure of Selby, Charles M. Light became the principal. He later became the first to be given the title of President. Professor Light, a Doctor of Pedagogy, provided a needed air of stability for the young institution and presided over substantial growth of the physical plant, faculty, and student body. His tenure lasted until 1914.

It was during 1917 that Fleming Hall was completed to house a gymnasium and Science Department. Today this building is the home of the WNMU Museum which was established in 1974. In the early 1920’s the New Mexico Normal School became New Mexico State Teachers’ College. Following World War I, Dotson Field was constructed and named after an alumnus who died in the war.

Near the end of the 1920’s, Light Hall was completed to serve as an auditorium, library and classroom facility. Although Graham Gymnasium was started years earlier, it was not completed until 1936. During the Depression of the 1930’s numerous W.P.A. projects brought improvements to the campus. At the end of the 1930’s, a secondary school associated with the college began operation in a new building on the east side of the campus. Western High School was turned over to the Silver Consolidated School District on July 1, 1960.

Although there was a delay in campus expansion during World War II, the influx of many veterans following the war made it necessary to bring temporary housing to the campus. The new housing was immediately dubbed Veterans’ Dormitory. In 1948 a College Cafeteria replaced the cafeteria located in the basement of Ritch Hall. In 1949 the Mustang Field House and swimming pool were completed. In 1979 the wish for an enclosed pool was fulfilled. In 1954 the President’s home was completed. Miller Library was built in 1957 following the razing of “Old Main”. In 1966, the Fine

Arts Center Theatre, the McCray Art Building, and the Parotti Music building were finished. These buildings provide cultural opportunities for the University and local community. Western New Mexico University received its current name in 1963. The Phelps Dodge-Felix Martinez Buildings (1970), Glaser Hall (1981), Juan Chacon Building (1983), Thomas B. McDonald Student Memorial (1997), and the Besse-Forward Global Resource Center (2002) reflect the fulfillment of more recent needs of the University.

WNMU celebrated its 100th Anniversary in 1993. Exemplary teaching, quality programs, and enhanced regional service characterize the University mission, as WNMU moves into its second hundred years.

### **Mission Statement**

Western New Mexico University serves the people of the State of New Mexico and its surrounding areas as a comprehensive, regional, rural, public coeducational university. Its student body is diverse in age, culture, language, and ethnic background. Teacher education continues to provide the basic foundation of WNMU's programs. That focus has broadened to include a range of certificate, associate, baccalaureate, and graduate programs which meet the needs of students in allied health, arts and sciences, business, and vocational education. All undergraduate degree programs include a strong comprehensive general education requirement.

Excellence in teaching is a preeminent goal at Western New Mexico University. The University encourages the exchange of ideas; fosters the cultural, emotional, intellectual, physical, and social growth of students; nurtures a lasting appreciation of learning; encourages increased relationships with people of diverse backgrounds; and furthers an appreciation for the benefits and opportunities derived from community involvement. WNMU, through advanced technology and telecommunications, creates opportunities for its students, the faculty and staff, and the communities it serves to participate more fully in educational efforts which provide access to information and outreach to the global community.

WNMU recognizes as a strength the multilingual, multicultural population of the region and state and accepts the responsibility to be particularly mindful and supportive of the unique opportunities afforded by this diversity. The University aspires to increase access to all levels of education and to help people better understand and appreciate diversity, tolerance and cooperation. The University is committed to help preserve and enhance the rich cultural heritage of the region it serves and to broaden its student diversity by reaching out to students from other states and nations.

WNMU values the contributions of its faculty, staff, and students and is committed to their professional growth and personal enrichment. Faculty and staff encourage student success by providing quality educational opportunities that are affordable and accessible. The University supports innovative and scholarly work, promotes integrity and equity in its dealings with people, actively pursues accreditation by recognized national and regional accreditation agencies, and seeks continual improvement of institutional management practices and processes.

WNMU works diligently to maintain fiscal and ethical integrity in its activities, to provide for the future educational needs of the people of southwestern New Mexico, and to build a collaborative relationship with its constituencies. The University

addresses the educational, cultural, community, and economic development needs of the region through its library, museum, gallery, fine arts center theater, and through supportive partnerships with community and educational organizations, business, industry, and local governments.

## Accreditation and Standing

WNMU is accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, (30 N. La Salle, Suite 2400, Chicago, IL 60602 312-263-0456) and by the New Mexico State Board of Education for offering undergraduate and graduate work. Western New Mexico University, through its Department of Business and Criminal Justice, is nationally accredited by the Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs to offer the following business degrees:

- Bachelor of Business Administration degree with emphasis in Accounting and Business Management.
- Master of Business Administration degree.

WNMU is accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). The university has received national accreditation for its nursing, social work, and occupational therapy assistant programs, and the economic development course/institute. The Child Development Center is also nationally accredited.

WNMU is a member of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, the American Association of University Women, the Renaissance Group, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, the Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs, and The American Library Association.

## University Setting

WNMU is located in the mountain community of Silver City, population 15,000, which serves as the marketing and financial center for a vast four-county area extending west to Arizona and south to Mexico.

Located in the foothills of the Mogollon Mountains and the Black Range at an elevation of 6000 feet, Silver City has a climate that is dry, mild, and invigorating. The Gila National Forest provides opportunities for backpacking, camping, hunting, and fishing. Within the forest are hiking trails and Indian ruins, including the famous Gila Cliff Dwellings. Hot springs and ghost towns are nearby. The area is popular with rockhounds and is still panned for gold.

The town is far enough removed from large urban centers to permit tranquillity and a sense of freedom, yet close enough to the metropolitan areas of Las Cruces, El Paso, Juarez, Albuquerque, Tucson, and Phoenix to enjoy their advantages. Silver City is served by commuter air to Albuquerque and other cities in the neighboring states, and by van service to the El Paso airport.

