WNMU Enrollment White Paper
From One of Our Greatest Successes Comes One of Our Greatest Challenges

Introduction: The past several years produced difficult economic times in southwest New Mexico. From 1999 to 2004, over 3000 workers were displaced, many with nowhere to go and no hope for the future. WNMU played a leading role helping the workers and their families by coordinating a wide range of assistance efforts among various community and state agencies. Of greatest significance, WNMU was instrumental in providing training and education opportunities that enabled many of these individuals to get back on their feet and realize new job and career opportunities. Collectively these efforts represent one of our greatest successes in serving the people of New Mexico. Economic progress is being made in southwest New Mexico thanks not only to WNMU, but also the Governor and his staff, our legislators, local government entities, and many other proactive people and organizations. However, much remains to be accomplished.

An unintended consequence of WNMU’s proactive initiatives has put the University in a very negative situation. From Fall 2001 to Fall 2003 student credit hour (SCH) enrollment increased by 26%. With our assistance, most of the individuals have completed their training and/or education and moved on with their lives. With their departure, WNMU’s enrollment declined over the last two years by approximately 10.9%. Unfortunately, as a result of our successful efforts during troubled times, the University now confronts one of its greatest challenges: the prospect of having to cope with a base workload budget reduction of approximately $1.26 million commencing with the 2007-2008 academic year.

Foreseeing this concern, WNMU embarked on a number of proactive initiatives to enhance enrollment by providing new programs, implementing new delivery methods, expanding recruitment activities, and strengthening retention programs. The impact of such a reduction will be devastating not only to WNMU and to these important initiatives, but more importantly to the communities and region WNMU serves. The reduction will further exacerbate an already tenuous economic situation and be a huge setback to WNMU programs and initiatives that may take years to overcome. The benefits of protecting the University during these dynamic and uncertain economic times clearly outweigh the costs.

Purpose: This proposal requests that commencing with AY 2006-2007 WNMU’s I & G budget be protected at the current level for a minimum of three years or until the University’s enrollment is once again within the HED enrollment band (-5% to +3% of the AY 2003-2004 student credit hours).

WNMU’s Unique Competencies and Commitment to Quality: Western New Mexico University serves a wide spectrum of students on the western side of the state through its dual missions of university and community college. As a community college, WNMU offers GED classes, welfare-to-work programs, English language training, and 17 certificate and associate degrees in technical and health science areas. As a university,
WNMU offers baccalaureate and master’s degrees in face to face, interactive television, web-based and mixed delivery courses. For a number of years, the university has served the communities of Silver City, Gallup, Deming, and T or C. Recently, we were asked to establish a presence in Socorro and Lordsburg. Through the Gila Instructional Consortium, we serve dually enrolled high school students in Lordsburg, Quemado, Reserve and Magdalena.

Because of regional socioeconomic conditions, many students come to WNMU under-prepared. Comprehensive developmental programs in reading, writing, and math as well as a student success freshman seminar help them gain the necessary skills to be successful in college. An excellent Academic Support Center offers tutoring and advising by faculty members trained in advising, and WNMU’s award-winning student support software program gives students access to their academic and financial information and enables them to be advised by phone and email if they cannot come to a face-to-face meeting.

WNMU works collaboratively with local businesses and school districts to offer courses and programs that meet local needs. For example, a financial services associate degree was created to respond to the needs of local banks and insurance companies for a better prepared work force; work force development training is provided to upgrade computer skills for a local call center; WNMU works with local contractors to provide skilled workers for the construction boom that Grant and Luna counties are experiencing; an online Spanish course was offered when a school district in our service area lost its only Spanish teacher.

As part of our pursuit of quality, we are committed to serving our various stakeholders responsively, flexibly, affordably and with agility. This achievement is recognized by top marks on our accreditations, including Nursing, Occupational Therapy Assistant, Social Work, Economic Development, Business, Early Childhood Development, and Education programs. We achieved the Zia Award, New Mexico’s highest recognition for performance excellence in 2003. We were one of the first universities accepted into the Academic Quality Improvement Program, our accreditation process for the North Central Association. Our School of Education was honored in 2005 by the 760 member American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE) with the singular national award for “Best Practices in Quality and Accountability.” Recently the Silver City-Grant County Chamber of Commerce honored WNMU with their prestigious “Large Business Leadership Award for 2006.”

**Dire Economic Circumstances and WNMU’s Response:** The period from 1999 to 2004 presented severe economic challenges for southwest New Mexico, particularly Grant, Luna and Hidalgo Counties from which WNMU draws a majority of its students. Two major sequential events contributed to dire economic times - layoffs at Phelps Dodge Mining Corporation followed by the closure of Stream International call center.

Low copper prices, high energy costs and a slow economy were very problematic for Phelps Dodge Mining Company (PD) the region’s major employer. In 1998, PD had over
2400 employees in southwest New Mexico (most in Grant County) and by 2004 this number was reduced to only 648. Almost 1800 workers, most with families, were either laid-off or displaced to other sites outside of New Mexico. While conditions are more favorable for the mining industry today and presently PD has 1270 employees in Grant County, this number is not expected to grow.

The economy also impacted Stream International. This 1,100 employee incoming call center provided customer service for various information technology products. In 2003 the decision was reached to close and all workers were displaced. Like, PD, this sector of the Grant County economy is improving, but not to the previous level. This year a new call center, Teleperformance USA, has been established in Silver City and employs 350 people.

The residual unemployment caused by these two events resulted in over 3000 workers being displaced. In both instances WNMU immediately mobilized to help. The President established a Displaced Worker Assistance Team (DWAT) composed of people from WNMU, Phelps Dodge, Stream, New Mexico Department of Labor, the local schools and governments, health providers and staff from both Senator Bingaman’s and Domenici’s offices in Las Cruces. Together the team offered support in every feasible way. The workers enrolled in a wide range of training and education opportunities--many that WNMU created just for them, such as truck driver training, heavy equipment operator training, computer network technology, certified nursing assistant and educational assistant training and the early childhood program-- in addition to WNMU’s regular undergraduate and graduate course offerings. The Department of Labor was very responsive and the training and education was greatly facilitated by WIA and TAA funding.

WMNU’s unique role as both a university and a community college greatly facilitated serving these displaced individuals because of our capabilities to serve a wide range of student needs. Despite dire circumstances, the team effort to help the displaced workers and their families was a huge success. The university received well-deserved praise and the majority of these students completed their training/education and moved on to new opportunities in southwest New Mexico or elsewhere.

A final contributing factor, of lesser importance, which increased WNMU’s enrollment spike was a CHE approved program to provide Computer Networking instruction to soldiers stationed at Ft. Bliss. Unfortunately, this successful effort was curtailed after one year based on a CHE re-assessment of the program.

**Impact on WNMU Enrollment:** These circumstances generated a significant spike in WNMU’s enrollment that is unique among Universities in New Mexico. As mentioned earlier, Fall enrollment student credit hours (SCHs) increased by 26% between 2001 and 2003. The annual (SCH) production which serves as the basis for the I & G budget also increased dramatically as seen in Table 1.
The three SCH data points in Table 1 show annual SCH numbers increased dramatically by 22.7% from AY 2000-2001 to AY 2003-2004; then decreased by 10.9% from AY 2003-2004 to AY 2005-2006.

It must be noted that for the entire period AY 2000-2001 to AY 2005-2006 WNMU’s enrollment increased by 9.3%.

The 66,621 SCH achieved in AY 2003-2004 is WNMU’s highest enrollment ever. This number is the basis for last year’s (AY 2005-2006) and this year’s (AY 2006-2007) budget calculations.

HED has already commenced preparation of the 2007-2008 budgets and the new SCH basis for WNMU’s 2007-2008 budget is 10.9% less than this year’s budget (66,621 SCH versus 59,363 SCH).

**Impact on Future Funding and the Case for Protecting WNMU’s Budget:** The HED Funding Formula Summary now shows that the impact of the 10.9% SCH decline on WNMU’s 2007-2008 base workload budget is over $1.26 million dollars. A reduction of this magnitude will result in serious consequences for the university and the thousands of people we serve. WNMU prides itself on superb financial management, and through the years did an excellent job of “trimming the fat” and focusing resources on academic programs that best serve the needs of the State. Approximately 75% of the WNMU budget is compensation, and the remainder covers several mandatory expenditures (risk management, workman’s comp, legal expenses, etc.) and supplies and travel. The later two were dramatically reduced during this year’s budget cycle which means further budget reductions must necessarily focus on reducing the employee base. This in turn will result in eliminating academic programs, and curtailing many initiatives currently underway to better serve the region.

The importance of WNMU to the region we serve cannot be over estimated. Our programs are key to workforce development in the western part of the state. Reduction of our current funding will further exacerbate the tough economic situation in the region by causing us to layoff people critical to our mission as both a university and a community college. A reduction in our current funding will lessen our capability to accomplish our mission by greatly limiting flexibility to respond to student needs. Thus we will be reducing the willingness of potential students to enroll at WNMU at precisely the same time we need to attract more students. We will be forced to cut programs and halt
ongoing initiatives that support our longer term enrollment growth. WNMU is engaged in a number of such ongoing initiatives to include the following new programs submitted to HED, new delivery model initiatives, and recruitment and retention initiatives.

**Initiatives to Enhance Enrollment:**

These new programs have been submitted to HED.

### Baccalaureate and Masters Degree Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree Program</th>
<th>Degree Type</th>
<th>Date/Year to be Proposed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional Writing</td>
<td>Baccalaureate</td>
<td>2006-2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership for Rural and Diverse Populations</td>
<td>Ed.D.</td>
<td>2007-2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilingual Special Education</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>2007-2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>2007-2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Psychology</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>2008-2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Therapy</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>2008-2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Work</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>2008 - 2009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Community College Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree Program</th>
<th>Degree Type</th>
<th>Date/Year to be Proposed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cabinet maker</td>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>2007-2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Electronics</td>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>2007-2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Executive Assistant and Budget Analyst (AT)</td>
<td>Associate</td>
<td>2007-2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Systems Administration (Computer Science)</td>
<td>Associate</td>
<td>2008-2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiber Optic and Cabling Designer (AT)</td>
<td>Associate</td>
<td>2008-2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Application Development (Computer Science)</td>
<td>Associate</td>
<td>2010-2011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- A comprehensive program review process has been undertaken to enhance critical existing degree programs and phase out programs no longer relevant.
- We submitted a Title V partnering grant with Tulsa Community College that will enhance the cultural competence of our faculty, staff and students as well as reaching out to parents in the communities we serve to help keep their children in school and encourage them to attend college.
- We submitted a FIPSE grant that will enable us to train faculty and adjuncts in the use of quality principles and tools to teach developmental students the use of new technology to increase student success in, and access to four year degrees.
Delivery Model Initiatives
- The Network for Teacher Licensure program is placing all of our teacher licensure programs online so as to be accessible anywhere in the state, thus enabling us to share our accredited education programs with an even broader audience.
- The criminal justice program will be available this year in a web-based or online format to better serve students who are place bound. Recently we signed a Memorandum of Agreement with Central New Mexico Community College (TVI) to offer their associate degree criminal justice graduates a two plus two program to enable them to earn a baccalaureate degree while continuing to live and work in Albuquerque.
- The rehabilitation services baccalaureate degree completion program is available online serving students from throughout New Mexico and the Southwest.

Recruitment Initiatives. WNMU has undertaken numerous actions to bolster recruitment. Examples of some, but not all, of the initiatives follows:

- Classes offered via ITV to students in Gallup, Deming, TorC, and Silver City
- Courses in a variety of formats: face-to-face, ITV, online, mixed delivery, evening and weekend.
- Special workshops and evening courses available for community members.
- A Chicano Institute with such noted speakers as Luis Valdez and Denise Chavez funded by the Title V grant. This program will be an annual event.
- Attendance at College Day and College Night programs across the state of New Mexico.
- Attendance at College Day and Night Programs in Arizona and El Paso and visit the community colleges in New Mexico, Arizona and El Paso
- Subscription to the Educational Opportunity Service (EOS) to identify prospective students in New Mexico and surrounding states.
- Campus tour groups.
- Early scholarships to qualified students.
- Scholarships to the winners of the Science Olympiad.
- Participation in the Western University Exchange (WUE) Program which allows students in the 11 western states plus California to attend college in New Mexico for 1.5 times the in-state rate.
- A reciprocity agreement with the state of Arizona which allows up to 200 Arizona students to attend Western for in-state rates.
- Limited tuition waiver programs with El Paso and the Navajo Nation.
- Concurrent enrollment programs in Socorro in Applied Technology and graduate Education
- Programs at Fort Bliss for Sergeant Majors in Computer Networking. We plan to approach White Sands and the Air Force base in Alamogordo to determine if they have needs we can serve.
- Enhancement of concurrent/dual enrollment for students in Silver, Cobre, Deming, Cliff, TorC, Socorro and Lordsburg.
DRAFT

• Enhanced WNMU web pages to make them more attractive and easy to use for students who want to submit an application to the University, apply for financial aid, and apply for housing online.
• Access to the University portal for prospective students upon submitting an application to WNMU.
• New View Books in Music, Art, Occupational Therapy, and Gallup Graduate Education.
• The catalog available online.
• Contact with new applicants at least once a month via email, letter, or telephone.
• A number of orientation programs each summer for students and their families. Students take placement tests, are advised and pre-register, check their status in admissions, housing and financial aid, and receive a billing statement. The parents program is offered bilingually if needed. Transfer students have their transcript analysis available at orientation.
• Significant renovations in the residence halls and apartment unit, thanks to the generosity of the Legislature and Governor.
• All K-12 teachers west of I-25 receive a summer school schedule and are encouraged to pursue advanced degrees.
• Partial tuition waivers to transfer students.
• Articulation agreements with our feeder community colleges in Arizona and New Mexico.
• Feedback reports to area high schools.
• Faculty who travel with Admissions representatives to help recruit students.
• Graduate recruiting posters sent to 500 private four year schools each year.
• Contact with all students eligible to return who have not pre-registered to schedule an advising session to get them pre-registered.
• Recruitment of concurrent and GED graduates.
• Focus on service to rural schools
• Incentives to attract new transfer students.
• Invitations to students who completed an associate degree to enter a baccalaureate program
• Contact with students who began but did not complete their degree to invite them to return and complete it.

Retention Initiatives. An ACT publication entitled What Works in Student Retention: Four-Year Public Colleges (2004) describes three retention practices responsible for the greatest contribution to retention: academic advising, first year programs, and learning support. WNMU has robust programs in all three areas.

• A student success course for all four-year degree and undeclared students. The course offers help in adjusting to the demands of college and provides the students with skills necessary to be successful.
• An Academic Support Center providing advising and tutoring and staffed by trained professional counselors and full time faculty
• Monthly advising training sessions for all faculty and staff.
• A Declare Your Major Day to enable students to learn about a variety of majors has been offered for the past two years.
• All students are encouraged to pre-register.
• Departments host get-togethers for their majors.
• All degree programs are available on the web and are updated annually.
• A degree audit program which allows advisors and students to determine what they still need to take in order to graduate.
• A deferred payment plan and online credit card payment.
• An incentive program for juniors and seniors who want to live in the residence halls.
• An honors program for qualified students.
• Faculty conducts research with their students and takes them to conferences to present their research.
• A balanced number of athletic programs for students who want to participate in sports as well as a strong theatre, art and music program.
• Incentives to retain our 4-year students into the upper division.
• Tracking the progress of all lottery scholarship students and intervening when necessary to keep them on track.

Conclusion: As a result of these and many other proactive initiatives, WNMU’s leadership is cautiously confident that within three years, commencing with AY 2007-2008, WNMU’s enrollment will be within the HED enrollment band (-5% to +3% of the AY 2003-2004 base year student credit hours of 66,621). Therefore, we strongly recommend that WNMU’s I&G budget be protected at the current level during this crucial time.

It is essential that WNMU’s fiscal viability remain stable so that the many positive, proactive enrollment initiatives can bear fruit. WNMU has a well-earned reputation for excellent financial management and this potential crisis is not the result of any mismanagement whatsoever. Rather, it is the product of reaching out during tough times to help people who were in desperate need of assistance. The 66,621 SCH is WNMU’s highest enrollment and is derived from the University’s response to a regional economic crises which we could not sit by and ignore. As a public university, WNMU’s actions, which resulted in this enrollment anomaly, were not just appropriate, they were commendable.

WNMU’s leadership is vital to the region’s future, and we are optimistic economic progress will continue. However, in order to successfully move forward it is essential that WNMU’s budget be protected to ensure the stability so crucial to planning for and advancing the region’s future.