

## ACTION PLAN

Submitted by agency?	No
Timeline assigned?	No
Responsibility assigned?	No

## New Mexico Higher Education Institutions

The following trends show the challenges confronting higher education: two-year community colleges are enrolling fewer college students, which are being replaced with dual-credit high school students; New Mexico public high schools are graduating more students, but fewer are enrolling in New Mexico colleges or universities; two-year community colleges are transferring fewer students to four-year universities, which has decreased by 9 percent over the past 5 years; two-year colleges are awarding more sub-baccalaureate certificates (up 41 percent), while bachelor's degrees conferred by universities have plateaued over the past 3 years. Key industries in the state cannot find enough graduates with bachelor's degree to meet their employment needs.

### Student Retention Rates

At four-year universities, an average 35 percent of first-time university students leave after the first year. Universities do not maintain data to describe the reasons students leave; some students transfer to a different institution, some students leave for financial reasons, and some leave for academic reasons. Of the 65 percent of students who persist through their first year, 42 percent, on average, graduate within 6 years.

New Mexico universities lag regional peers at retaining students, which impacts college enrollments and tuition revenue. The cost to the student is tremendous; the student population with the highest default rates on student loans has balances under \$5,000. The cost to the state is equally detrimental, impacting the state's ability to reach a more educated population and to meet workforce demands. The state invests on average \$7,874 per student annually.

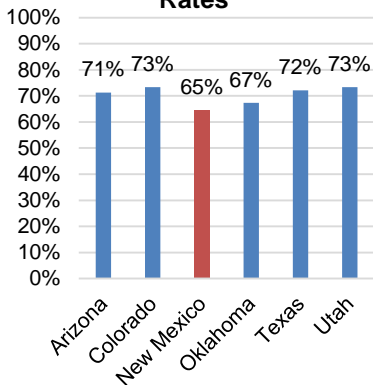
### Four-Year Research Universities

Four-year research institutions retained students similar to their historical levels. The research universities range from 70 to 80 percent retention; the comprehensive universities range from 50 to 65 percent. NMSU has been steadily improving retention. NMSU's Aggie Pathway, a model designed to help students better prepare for the rigors of a research university by starting at a NMSU branch campus, may be an effective tactic to support students. UNM's program, called the Gateway Program, provides similar ease-of-transfer for students who attend UNM branch campuses or partner two-year colleges such as CNM, San Juan College, New Mexico Junior College, or Santa Fe Community College. The targets remain low, below regional peers. Institutions could develop retention efforts with a sharp focus on improving beyond regional peers with stretch targets.

#### Retention rates for first-time, full-time degree-seeking students to the third semester

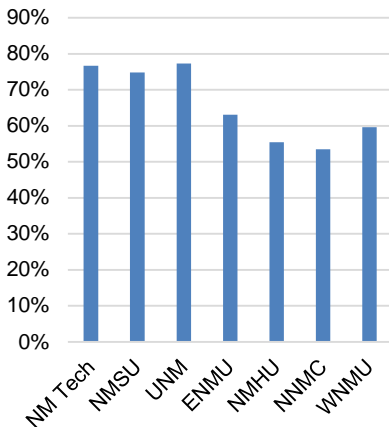
	Fall 2016 to Fall 2017 Actual	Fall 2017 to Fall 2018 Actual	Fall 2018 to Fall 2019 Target	Fall 2018 to Fall 2019 Actual	Rating
New Mexico Tech	74.1%	80.8%	77%	76.7%	Y
New Mexico State University	73.9%	73.9%	75%	74.8%	Y
University of New Mexico	78.3%	73.7%	77%	77.3%	G
<b>Program Rating</b>					Y

#### Regional Four-Year Universities: Retention Rates



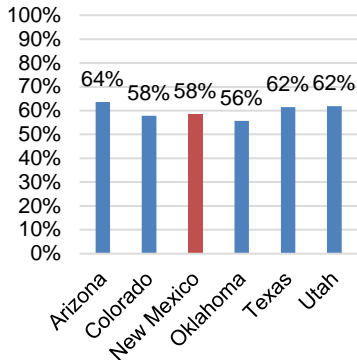
Source: IPEDS, FY17 Graduation Data, Public Institutions

#### NM Four-Year Universities: Fall 2018 Retention Rates



Source: Institutions

**Regional Two-year  
Colleges: Retention  
Rates**



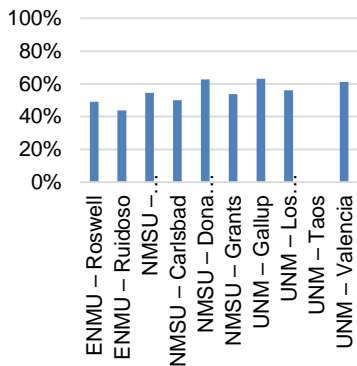
Source: IPEDS, FY17 Graduation Data, Public Institutions

**Four-Year Comprehensive Universities**

Four-year comprehensive institutions are improving retention. Each of the institutions in the category implemented programs to focus on retention. Despite a drop in the current year and a low standing relative to its peers, Northern New Mexico College has been improving its enrollment and graduation rate. In particular, Northern seeks out students who have left college and recruits them back to campus, providing a more comprehensive approach to student services. Guided by a five-year strategic plan for enrollment management, NMHU updates its tactics annually to improve student retention, which has been improving the retention rate consistently over the past three years, although it remains below its state peers.

Retention rates for first-time, full-time degree-seeking students to the third semester	Fall 2016 to Fall 2017 Actual	Fall 2017 to Fall 2018 Actual	Fall 2018 to Fall 2019 Target	Fall 2018 to Fall 2019 Actual	Rating
Eastern NM University	63.1%	62.4%	65%	63.1%	Y
Western NM University	61%	58.9%	57%	59.6%	Y
NM Highlands University	45.2%	51.6%	53%	55.4%	G
Northern NM College	55%	58%	66.5%	53.5%	R
<b>Program Rating</b>					Y

**NM Two-Year Branches:  
Fall 2018 Retention  
Rates**



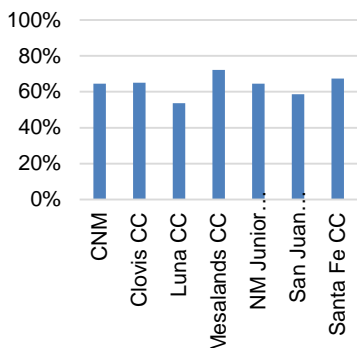
Source: Institutions

**Community Colleges and Branch Campuses**

At two-year colleges, 42 percent of first-time students leave after the first year. Of the 58 percent of students who do persist through their first year, 23 percent of those students graduate within 3 years. Community colleges continue to experience significant variance in retention rates. Community colleges targets are low, and the results vary by institution and by year-over-year outcomes. Large fluctuations are in part a result of schools with small number of students.

Retention rates for first-time, full-time degree-seeking students to the second semester	Fall 2016 to Fall 2017 Actual	Fall 2017 to Fall 2018 Actual	Fall 2018 to Fall 2019 Target	Fall 2018 to Fall 2019 Actual	Rating
ENMU - Roswell	50.1%	52.1%	54%	49%	R
ENMU - Ruidoso	41%	32.7%	43%	43.8%	Y
NMSU - Alamogordo	48%	52%	55%	54.6%	G
NMSU - Carlsbad	48.6%	49.7%	57%	50%	Y
NMSU - Dona Ana CC	59.2%	59.1%	60%	62.7%	G
NMSU - Grants	43.5%	52.5%	53%	53.7%	Y
UNM - Gallup	52.8%	57.9%	57.5%	63.1%	G
UNM - Los Alamos	60%	58.8%	56.5%	56%	Y
UNM - Taos	45.2%	60%	49.5%	40.7%	R
UNM - Valencia	60.9%	61.2%	55%	61.2%	Y
<b>Program Rating</b>					Y

**NM Two-Year  
Independents:  
Fall 2018 Retention  
Rates**



Source: Institutions

## Independent Community Colleges

Independent community colleges showed the strongest performance as a group. Clovis Community College exceeded its target, but underperformed on retention rate compared with prior years. All of the other colleges improved their year-over-year performance.

The sector tends to develop target levels that are more aspirational than the other sectors in New Mexico. The difference between the independent community colleges and branch campuses may be the level of local communities' financial support and participation. As a group, this sector receives fewer state dollars per student FTE, \$5,266.

Retention rates for first-time full-time degree-seeking students to the second semester	Fall 2016 to Fall 2017 Actual	Fall 2017 to Fall 2018 Actual	Fall 2018 to Fall 2019 Target	Fall 2018 to Fall 2019 Actual	Rating
Central NM Community College	62%	63.1%	63.0%	64.5%	G
Clovis Community College	66.1%	67.4%	63.0%	65.0%	Y
Luna Community College	39.7%	41.3%	60.0%	53.7%	Y
Mesalands Community College	56.1%	72.1%	65.0%	72.2%	Y
New Mexico Junior College	54%	59.6%	60.0%	64.6%	G
San Juan College	60.3%	57.7%	62.0%	58.7%	Y
Santa Fe Community College	63.6%	64.6%	50.0%	67.3%	G
<b>Program Rating</b>					<b>G</b>

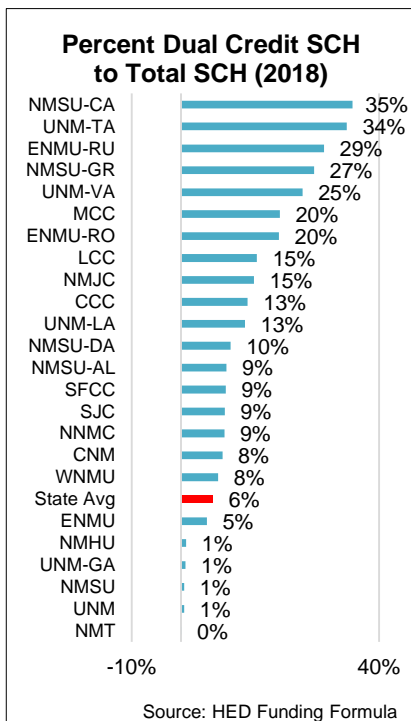
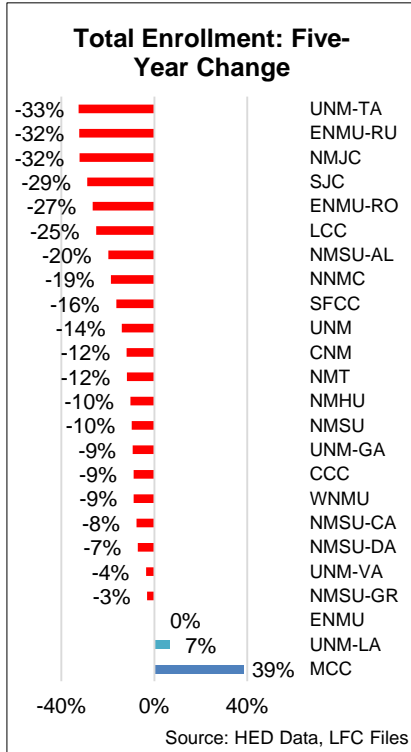
## Growth in Dual-Credit Students at Two-Year Colleges

Institutions are growing dual credit activity to fill excess capacity left by substantial declines in college enrollments. At two-year colleges, a 15.9 percent decline in freshman enrollment has been most acute at the independent community colleges, where a 1,942 drop in freshman headcount was offset by dual-credit enrollment, which has increased by the same amount, 1,937 students. Importantly, the colleges with the most robust dual-credit programs are suffering the highest level of decline in freshman enrollment.

Recently, freshman enrollment has begun to reverse its decline at some colleges. For instance, at New Mexico Junior College, freshman enrollment is up 35.4 percent year-over-year, San Juan College is up 5.7 percent, and Dona Ana Community College is up 8.6 percent. The increases, regionally significant given the local economies, could point to student choices to return to college to add to their skill set or a sense of a worsening economy.

## Dual-Credit Workload

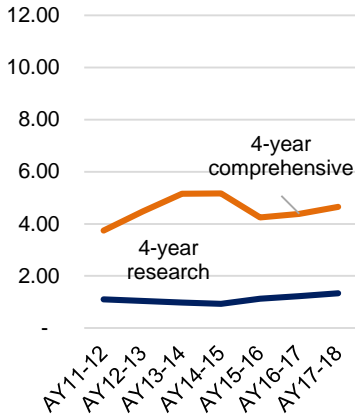
At the same time, faculty workload – measured by end-of-course (EOC) student credit hours (SCH) – has declined by 13.1 percent (more than 346 thousand EOC-SCH) at campuses statewide over the past 5 years, when dual-credit EOC-SCH increased by 49 percent. Even more, dual-credit courses are outpacing the number of dual-credit students, suggesting that each student is completing a greater number of courses.



## PERFORMANCE REPORT CARD

### New Mexico Higher Education Institutions First Quarter, Fiscal Year 2020

**Average SCH per Dual-Credit Student**



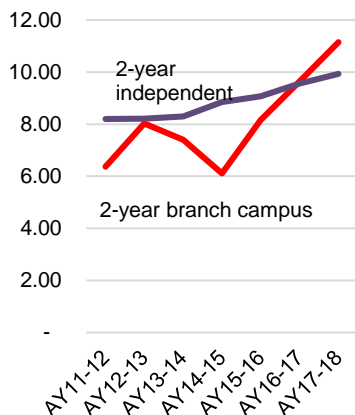
Source: HED Funding Formula

End-of-course student credit hours at four-year universities declined by 10 percent overall, with the greatest impact in lower-level courses (freshman and sophomore level courses). Lower-level courses declined by 22 percent at comprehensive universities and by 14 percent at research universities. If dual-credit students are earning college credit, the class credit earned would likely be lower-level courses.

The branch campuses of UNM, NMSU, and ENMU show the largest increase in dual-credit courses, having dramatically increased by 50 percent over the past five years. Independent community colleges increased by 20 percent over the same time period. The two-year sector has seen the most activity from dual-credit students.

The data framework to characterize the value of dual credit is limited, particularly in terms of improving student outcomes for under-represented students. Colleges and universities lack the systems to track student outcomes for their high-school dual-credit students. Research is mixed on the value of dual-credit programming in closing the achievement gap or improving enrollment or student success at universities. Dual-credit programming is not standardized or transparent across the state, and is largely dependent on high school or college administrators' concentrations rather than a broad educational pathway aligned with college admissions or degree programs. Similar limitations confound sub-baccalaureate certificates.

**Average SCH per Dual-Credit Student**



Source: HED Funding Formula

#### Student Retention Programs

Best practices for retaining students center around creating an environment, which engenders a sense of community and pride in the school. Successful strategies include personalizing the recruitment-to-freshmen enrollment by actively engaging students through consistent communication. As an example, CNM has implemented a communication strategy, the right message at the right time with the right medium. Another approach is to implement a recruitment strategy for continuing students, i.e., "recruitment doesn't stop after freshman enrollment" but should be an aggressive strategy to learn more about student needs. As an example, Georgia State University has implemented an early warning system to address potential challenges for students during their academic journey. A third strategy is to develop a culture of customer service by training all staff to be attentive to student needs, particularly with financial aid service. As an example, under Georgia State University's model, the school has learned financial challenges represent the most significant challenge for students in progressing to completion of a degree. A fourth approach is to develop local community engagement strategies to help students acclimate into the local or surrounding community. A sense of community on- and off-campus supports students to persist toward completion of their degrees. Removing financial barriers could have the most significant impact.