

Higher Education Nonprofit to Offer Students More Flexibility

CHES will serve students, modernize operations, save money

Today's college students face enormous challenges that require innovative and bold action. Five public New Mexico colleges have established a 501c3 nonprofit organization to fundamentally transform higher education: the Collaborative for Higher Education Shared Services, or CHES. They are the first in the nation to voluntarily join forces in a collective that shares decision-making and technology across institutions. CHES' radical approach will reimagine student services to eliminate barriers and increase educational achievement. Its shared technology system will revolutionize the student journey from recruitment and enrollment to completion and career.

The CHES Board of Directors includes Clovis Community College President Charles Nwankwo, Ph.D.; Central New Mexico Community College President Tracy Hartzler, J.D.; Northern New Mexico College President Richard J. Bailey, Jr., Ph.D.; San Juan College President Toni Pendergrass, Ph.D.; and Santa Fe Community College President Becky Rowley, Ph.D.

"This nonprofit venture will go a long way toward helping the member institutions realize their goals with shared services," said Charles Nwankwo, Ph.D., president of Clovis Community College. "We are excited to be a part of the CHES organization and the potential it provides, moving forward."

CHES' unique organizational structure allows the colleges to take advantage of the efficiencies of a true college system while retaining their independence and unique connection to their local communities and local culture. The Board will establish and promote the vision, work to secure sustainable funding, and guide the project's implementation. Through a strategically designed enterprise technology solution, CHES will employ a radical approach that students are more likely to adapt and more easily understand and that restructures overly complicated, outdated administrative functions.

"Collaboration is key to ensuring the success of our students and the future of higher education in our state," New Mexico Cabinet Secretary of Higher Education Stephanie Rodriguez said. "This initiative is aligned with the New Mexico Higher Education Department's vision to streamline and improve the student experience at our public colleges and universities across the state. I commend the five New Mexico colleges working together on this groundbreaking project and look forward to seeing its success."

As a majority minority state, New Mexico higher education is acutely aware of the obstacles students face. Students of color, first-generation students, and those who are from disadvantaged communities are disproportionately affected by the way colleges have operated, from admission to graduation. They need more flexibility.

"Attaining nonprofit status will help to advance this collaborative effort by allowing us to streamline processes for students so they can achieve their educational goals," says San Juan College President Toni Hopper Pendergrass, Ph.D. "This integrated approach will have numerous benefits including, increasing efficiencies in the application and financial aid processes and providing students with increased flexibility to take courses at multiple colleges. We are excited to be a part of an effort that will have such a positive impact on our students' futures."

CHES' common system will eliminate the need for multiple admission applications and registration; reduce duplication of student and employee records; simplify student transfer; and provide a clear path

to success. Partner colleges will share decision-making, data and processes, resulting in more efficient and cost-effective operations. Users will find the new platform more agile and more intuitive, including on mobile devices.

“Northern New Mexico College is honored to be a part of this truly revolutionary partnership,” said Richard J. Bailey, Jr., Ph.D., NNMC president. “The key to success for higher education institutions in the 21st century is collaboration, and we are excited about the doors of opportunity that CHES will open not only for our colleges, but for students across the state and beyond.”

The five-college collaborative sought assistance from CampusWorks to develop a comprehensive Request for Proposals and assist in shepherding a vendor selection process that will result in a state-of-the-art Enterprise Resource Planning solution.

“As the unknown unfolded around all of us this past year, New Mexico remained steadfast and enthusiastic in its commitment to deliver a student experience that’s better than ever before,” shared Liz Murphy, CEO of CampusWorks. “Eagerly – and voluntarily – stakeholders were coming to the table ready to assess systems and review processes with their peers; we consider this level of buy-in very promising as the colleges begin to transition from strategy to execution and it’s truly a testament to the vision of the leadership of New Mexico’s participating institutions.”

Photo Attached: *from left*, Santa Fe Community College President Becky Rowley, Ph.D.; Northern New Mexico College President Richard J. Bailey, Jr., Ph.D; San Juan College President Toni Pendergrass, Ph.D.; Clovis Community College President Charles Nwankwo, Ph.D.; Central New Mexico Community College President Tracy Hartzler, J.D.