inside the College of Arts and Sciences

Partnership program offers option for second degree

PHOTO: Robert Altamirano is the first graduate of the UNM/NMSU Cooperative Pharmacy Program. The program is now offering graduates the option to receive a bachelor's degree from NMSU in addition to a doctorate from UNM. (Photo by Rosemary Woller)

New Mexico State University’s partnership with the University of New Mexico College of Pharmacy is adding a new benefit – the option to receive two college degrees instead of one. Starting this semester, students will have the opportunity to receive a bachelor’s degree from NMSU as well as a doctoral degree from UNM.

“The requirement that the last 30 credit hours of a degree be earned at NMSU has been waived for this program,” said Ken Van Winkle, associate dean in the College of Arts and Sciences. “Students in the program now have the option to transfer credits earned at UNM back to NMSU in order to receive a bachelor’s in interdisciplinary studies in addition to their degree from UNM.”

The UNM/NMSU Cooperative Pharmacy Program in the College of Arts and Sciences began in 2006. At least 10 students begin the program each year at NMSU and once they have earned 91 credit hours at the Las Cruces campus, they transfer into UNM’s College of Pharmacy for three years to complete a doctorate in pharmacy.

“This program provides opportunities for success that students in this region might not otherwise have,” Amy Buesing, director of the program said. “I like to think of this as economic development. I believe that over time the availability of more pharmacists wanting to live and work in southern New Mexico will create additional jobs.”

“Our students are performing well in this program,” said Christa Slaton, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. “UNM appreciates these students because they are so well prepared for the rigorous coursework. It is not easy, but thanks to Amy and her staff, these students are gaining the skills they need to enter UNM’s College of Pharmacy and succeed.”

Physics to acquire new instrumentation

A team of faculty led by College of Arts and Sciences Professor Stefan Zollner has received a grant of about $300,000 for the acquisition of a high-resolution, high-intensity X-ray diffractometer and reflectometer. The grant was awarded through the Army Research Office from the Department of Defense Research and Education Program.

“We can perform thickness measurements with this instrument, we can measure very thin structures,” Zollner said. “Crystals are made out of atoms which have regular arrangements. There are bonds between the atoms and these bonds have

Calendar of Events

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For more Events, visit artsci.nmsu.edu and click on Calendar.

Full articles can be seen at [http://artsci.nmsu.edu/news](http://artsci.nmsu.edu/news)
certain lengths and the atoms are certain distances apart. This device can measure distances between atoms, bond angles, lengths of crystal structures and film thickness, and can be applied to a broad range of materials – semiconductors, metals and oxides.”

The device will aid scientists pursuing a variety of research areas at NMSU, including Zollner’s colleagues Heinz Nakotte and Edwin Fohtung of the physics department and Shuqiang Deng and Hongmei Luo of the chemical engineering department.

“This acquisition is truly an interdisciplinary collaboration of two departments in two different colleges,” Zollner said. “My goal is training students so they can be successful and get jobs,” Zollner said. “It would be a misconception to think that only faculty perform the research on campus. I would rather compare a faculty member to the director of our marching band, who supports and directs the band from the sideline; but the music is produced by the students on the field. It is the same with research.

Physics graduate student Dennis Trujillo from Espanola will be in charge of maintaining the XRD and will train others on the operation of the instrument. He will be assisted by Luis Barrera from Las Cruces, a double major in mechanical engineering and engineering physics.

PHOTO: NMSU physics professor Stefan Zollner speaks at a research rally event on campus. (Photo by Darren Phillips)

Model UN team earns top honors

PHOTO: The NMSU Model United Nations team attends the national conference in New York City, where they earned the award for Outstanding Delegation.

NMSU’s Model United Nations team members recently returned from a trip to New York City where they earned the Distinguished Delegation award at the Model United Nations Conference – a distinction that placed them in the top 15 percent of participants.

“The officers and I handpicked this team and watching them grow and going to conference and watching everyone shine, that was most important to me,” said Lydia Hammond, NMSU Model U.N. president.

This marks the eighth year in a row that the team of students in the College of Arts and Sciences earn top honors at the conference. In addition to the delegation award, 14 NMSU students earned individual awards.

“Since this was my second year, I was able to use the stuff I learned last year to push myself to a higher standard,” said Theodora Trejo, NMSU Model U.N. vice president of operations. “I was able to develop a more sophisticated strategy.”

The delegates’ responsibilities included writing reports and coming up with a resolution that gets voted on and possibly passed. Delegates are given their assignments in November, and in March they each submit position papers on assigned topics. Two students received individual awards for the work within their committees.

Sophomore languages and linguistics major Jasmine Bentley served on the General Assembly First Committee.

“If you go in with a strategy, people can tell if you know what you’re talking about,” Bentley said. “I knew what to expect. Everything we’d done all year had fallen into place.”

PHOTO: The Model United Nations team was recognized by the City of Las Cruces for its success at the national conference. The team took home the Distinguished Delegation award for the eighth year in a row. (Photo by Isabel Rodriguez)

Borderlands Writing Project

For the last three years, English professors Patricia Wojahn and Chris Burnham in NMSU’s College of Arts and Sciences have spent their Saturdays in Truth or Consequences teaching public school teachers.

“These are tough times for public education teachers,” said Barbara Pearlman, one of the first teachers to work with the two at Hot Springs High School. “The increasing challenges and what we are being asked to deal with in our classrooms go way beyond just the three R’s. Teachers can feel overwhelmed by mandates, changing policy and a narrative that often paints us in an unfavorable light. However, we have been extremely fortunate in Truth or
Consequences to have the privilege to work with the Borderlands Writing Project.”

During the first two years of the project, Burnham and Wojahn began helping teachers across all disciplines at Hot Springs High School. This year, they are working to help kindergarten and first grade teachers build confidence in using writing to help their students learn. They are also helping teachers understand how the new Common Core State Standards can align with what they already do well. The aim is to allow the teachers to take the lead as practitioners and professionals.

“The Borderlands Writing Project is one of many outreach efforts our faculty provide in this region,” said Christa Slaton, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. “Chris and Patti really care and it shows in their relationships with teachers at these T or C schools.”

PHOTO: Participants in NMSU’s Borderlands Writing Project

outreach in Truth or Consequences. From left standing: Barbara Pearlman, Hot Springs High School; Linda Adkins, Kasey Bassler, Shenandoah Montoya, Brandi Lindsey, all from Truth or Consequences Elementary school; Karen Cummins, district gifted specialist; and Delana Marrufu, Truth or Consequences Elementary. Seated: Truth or Consequences Elementary Principal Melissa Sanchez-Robinson and Patti Wojahn, NMSU associate professor of English. (Courtesy photo)

Art students decorate electrical enclosures

PHOTO: Isabel Ramos (back) and Mariah Morrell (front) paint an electrical enclosure near Williams Hall in collaboration with Facilities and Services to reduce graffiti and beautify campus. (Photo by Emily C. Kelley)

Olive green electrical boxes on the NMSU Las Cruces campus are drab, but necessary to protect the campus electrical infrastructure, however, they also are graffiti magnets. Two agencies on campus have collaborated to change that.

Glen Haubold, NMSU associate vice president for facilities, had recently attended a conference at Northern Arizona University, and had Michael Luchau from the Facilities and Services electrical shop approach the Department of Art about an idea he had seen at the conference.

Craig Cully, associate professor of painting and drawing, teaches Art 350 and incorporated three electrical enclosure projects near the art building into his class.

“They contacted us and asked if our students would be interested, and I built this project into our course,” Cully said. “The project looks at pop art, with the bright colors and patterning that are associated with it. We filtered that through ideas of abstraction to come up with a design.”

“I just want to say how proud I am of my students,” Cully said. “Once the projects are done and the community sees how awesome they are, and Facilities sees how wonderful they are, they’re going to ask us to do every one of them on campus over the next couple of years. We’re hoping for that to happen.”

DIN Magazine available online

The fifth issue of DIN Magazine is now available online. This magazine is produced by NMSU students and features literature and art by members of the NMSU community, along with national and international contributors. To view the magazine, visit dinmagazine.org.

Filmmaker’s ‘The Odd Way Home’ released

An NMSU filmmaker has landed a distribution deal for his latest feature-length film. Breaking Glass Pictures is partnering with Sandia Media and Slant Productions to release Rajeev Nirmalakhandan’s feature film “The Odd Way Home” on DVD June 10. The film will have a theatrical release May 30 at the Arena Cinema theater in Hollywood. It will be available on iTunes and Dish Video on Demand June 3.

It was while doing research for an earlier film – a documentary about autism – that Nirmalakhandan, an instructor in the College of Arts and Science’s Creative Media Institute, came up with the idea for “The Odd Way Home,” a film that premiered last year at the Austin Film Festival.

In the film, Maya (played by Rumer Willis), a young woman escaping her past meets Duncan (Chris Marquette), a man with autism who’s never left his hometown and is a master of maps and directions. Together they set out on an inspirational journey and learn that home is defined in many different ways.
Social Media

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The College of Arts and Sciences YouTube showcases videos about the College’s various Faculty & Staff Awards, our “Stars” of Arts and Sciences and various special projects. View our videos at http://www.youtube.com/user/nmsu

Additional videos can be found at vimeo.com/edc. Treat yourself to almost 400 videos created by our Creative Media Institute faculty!

Anthropology student at White House signing for Organ Mountains Monument

Angel Pena, NMSU Arts and Sciences anthropology graduate student, was among a group from New Mexico attending the White House signing of legislation designating nearly 500,000 acres around the Organ Mountains as a national monument.

Pena is among local organizers involved in the effort to protect the mountains and Chihuahuan Desert region. He was one of the primary speakers when U.S. Interior Secretary Sally Jewell held hearings here on the matter. While researching his master’s thesis on ancient pottery in the area, Pena has discovered new petroglyphs at a site known as Providence Cone.

The White House signing for Organ Mountains National Monument took place on Wednesday, May 21 in Washington, D.C.

Full articles can be seen at http://arts.nmsu.edu/news
NMSU College of Arts and Sciences program receives $1.9 million grant

PHOTO: Ralph Preszler, principal investigator and program director of NMSU’s Howard Hughes Medical Institute program (Photo by Darren Phillips)

The Howard Hughes Medical Institute program at NMSU is one of only 37 in the country to receive a five-year grant in the 2014-2019 competition. NMSU beat the odds among 170 universities that applied for funding this year.

“Our grant was renewed in part due to the demonstrated success of students in biology courses that have been revised with previous support from HHMI and due to the achievements of alumni of our Research Scholars Program,” said Ralph Preszler. “Both of these achievements are a testament to the dedication of our faculty to helping students be successful in science.”

The $1.9 million grant for NMSU’s HHMI program in the College of Arts and Sciences will provide support through 2019 for three related programs: enhancement of NMSU biology courses that includes the use of research cases and undergraduate peer facilitators; the development of a series of authentic research courses in biology for sophomores; and continued support of junior and senior undergraduate research opportunities for students studying the biological sciences across many departments at the university.

“The NMSU HHMI Program will develop a pipeline that will transfer concepts and practices from faculty research programs to research courses and to introductory biology lecture and laboratory courses,” Preszler said. “The direct benefit of millions of dollars from HHMI across three awards to NMSU is small compared to the indirect economic benefits of producing high school and university graduates in New Mexico who are more scientifically literate, and who have more developed critical-thinking skills that will allow them to succeed in a variety of professions in the 21st century.”

A 2012 report from the President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology argues the need for a million more college graduates in Science, Technology Engineering or Math (STEM) fields over the next ten years. However, the report goes on to say fewer than 40 percent of students who enter college intending to major in a STEM field complete a STEM degree.

By introducing research into biology courses, providing support in and out of the classroom through peer instructors and peer advisors and by supporting students who participate in research projects, Preszler hopes to motivate more NMSU students, including those who belong to underrepresented groups, to pursue a degree in STEM fields and to increase the number of those who attain degrees in STEM.

“At a time when grant funding across the country is shrinking, this $1.9 million award is proof that Dr. Preszler and his team have developed a competitive approach in helping students to thrive in STEM fields,” said Christa Slaton, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. “For more than eight years, NMSU’s HHMI program has opened the door to research for students across the state and I am proud that our faculty’s hard work is being recognized by the Hughes organization with an additional five years of support.”

The potential for NMSU students is unlimited according to Preszler, who has stayed in contact with 95 percent of NMSU’s HHMI undergraduate research alumni and found nearly three quarters of them have gone on to STEM-related professions or graduate school. Twenty-one percent of NMSU’s HHMI’s Research Scholars alumni are working in STEM-related positions; 15 percent are in medical, dental or veterinary school; seven percent are in other professional programs associated with medicine; and 31 percent are in graduate schools including UCLA, Harvard and Yale.

“The nation will need many more well-trained and creative scientists in the coming decades to meet many societal challenges such as the application of genomics to personalized medicine, and the application of concepts from the biological sciences to the challenges associated with global change,” said Preszler. “We have an opportunity to produce more scientists, and to produce a more creative and diverse scientific community, by increasing the persistence of NMSU undergraduates in science majors.”

Full articles can be seen at http://artsci.nmsu.edu/news
Annual fundraisers net NMSU $335,000 for cancer research

PHOTO: Representatives of the Cowboys for Cancer Research organization including Denny Calhoun, fifth from right, present a check for $335,000 to university officials during a special reception held at the NMSU Alumni Center on campus. (Photo by Darren Phillips)

Cancer research at NMSU is about to get an additional shot in the arm, thanks to the annual fundraising efforts by Cowboys for Cancer Research and NMSU Aggies are Tough Enough to Wear Pink. This year, for the first time, a portion of the money raised will be made available immediately to fund new and ongoing research projects.

The two groups presented a check for $335,000 to NMSU today. Of the money donated, $210,000 will be contributed to the Cowboys for Cancer Research Funded Endowed Fund at the NMSU Foundation. The additional $125,000 will be immediately available to fund cancer research projects at NMSU during the 2014-2015 fiscal year.

"I continue to be impressed by the amount of cancer research projects conducted by our researchers here New Mexico State University," said NMSU President Garrey Carruthers. "It's outstanding and these donations will help us take this important work even further."

The combined 2013 efforts of Cowboys for Cancer Research and NMSU Aggies Are Tough Enough to Wear Pink generated $961,063 in cash and in-kind goods and services. During the ceremony, UNM also received donations for their cancer research endowment, as well as funds to be used immediately.

Lynn Arnold, president of Cowboys for Cancer Research said, "This year, rather than depositing all of the cash into the endowments at NMSU and UNM, our board has voted to make $334,000 immediately available to researchers at both institutions."

"Tough Enough to Wear Pink has partnered with Cowboys for Cancer Research since 2007 and we are very proud of the work we've done together," said Pat Sisbarro, a cancer survivor and co-chair of the NMSU Aggies Are Tough Enough to Wear Pink campaign. "The $1.5 million commitment that was made to the Cowboys for Cancer Research Funded Endowed Fund at the NMSU Foundation is more than 75 percent complete and researchers like NMSU's Dr. Jeff Arterburn now have access to cash for their projects. This is why we do what we do."

"This new funding will have huge positive impacts on the cancer research done at New Mexico State University," said Jeff Arterburn, a Regents Professor in NMSU's Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry. "The origin of these funds from our local community provides a direct connection to the research, and places personal context to the impacts of cancer on our families and friends that is extremely motivational for the researchers. This is a crucial time when advances in science and technology make it possible for new research breakthroughs, but federal funding rates are at all time lows. This new funding will stimulate important cancer research at NMSU and promises to lead to significant advances in understanding and ultimately improvements in the treatment of this devastating disease."

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