UNM Receives Lumina Latino Student Success Grant

Albuquerque, NM — November 7, 2011 — The University of New Mexico’s Division for Equity and Inclusion, in collaboration with the Center for Education Policy Research, is the recipient of a four-year $600,000 Lumina Latino Student Success Grant, as announced by the Lumina Foundation.

“UNM is the only Hispanic-Serving Institution with a Carnegie Very High Research designation that was awarded a grant. This will lead to additional funding in the future,” said Jozi De Leon, vice president, Equity and Inclusion.

Under the project, Lumina will provide a total of $7.2 million over a four-year period to 12 partnerships in 10 states with significant and growing Latino populations. The partnerships will leverage community leaders across key policy, education, business and nonprofit sectors to build, implement and sustain successful “place-based efforts” that capitalize on their local talents and ingenuity.

Lumina sent out 250 invitations to institutions that had the capacity to address this important issue; 65 proposals were received by Lumina and only 12 proposals in 10 states were funded. This grant allows UNM to partner with Central New Mexico Community College, Albuquerque Public Schools, various community organizations and policy leaders to enhance Latino student success by making systemic institutional changes.

The Lumina funded initiative at UNM, the Unidos Project, focuses on creating a seamless transition in and through the educational pipeline and access to services for students and families. The educational institutions will expand a one-stop shop model, linking services to school goals and student/family needs. Building on a "no wrong door" philosophy, strategies for the Unidos Project include developing a community-school model with two middle schools and
two high schools and; creating seamless transitions from APS, CNM to UNM and into the workforce by implementing complementary support services.

Central to the Unidos Project is creation of an "Unidos Council" that will provide overall leadership and sustainability of the infrastructure. By providing easier access to services coupled with an improved path through the pipeline, UNM expects graduation rates to increase at the high school and post-secondary level by 10 percent per year.

De Leon points to New Mexico’s status as a Hispanic majority state. She said, "This project will have a tremendous impact on degree completion rates of Latino students, but more importantly it will elevate all our educational systems to better serve New Mexico students and reach Lumina's Big Bold Goal to increase college degree completion to 60 percent by 2025.”

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“The Latino success project is the culmination of nearly two years of planning and engagement with many foundations and national leaders in the Latino community,” said Lumina President and CEO Jamie Merisotis. “Through these partnerships, we aim to build bridges among leadership groups already working to improve Latino college student success.”

De Leon noted that successful acquisition of the grant came from strong partnerships on and off campus. They include: CNM; APS; ENLACE; El Centro de la Raza; UNM IT; Enrollment Management; Viola Florez, Endowed Chair, PNM P-20 Initiative; Center for Education Policy Research; UNM Office of Student Affairs; Hispanic College Fund; Albuquerque Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; Albuquerque Bernalillo County Community School Partnership; Youth Development Incorporated; Innovate Educate; and Representative Rick Miera. This collaboration will be led by Jennifer Gomez-Chavez, Director, Student Academic Success, UNM.

“The strong collaborative partnerships will ensure the success and sustainability of the work that will drive this project over the next four years,” said De Leon.

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About the Division for Equity and Inclusion:
The University of New Mexico established the Division for Equity and Inclusion (DEI) in 2007 to strengthen the organizational capacity in order to serve UNM’s diverse student body. DEI provides leadership for addressing institution-wide equity and inclusion and lends its support to student, staff and faculty efforts that build on the university’s diversity initiatives. DEI supports system-wide diversity initiatives to enhance student recruitment and retention, academic excellence, employee diversity and a campus climate that embraces its diversity as an asset. In addition, the Division for Equity and Inclusion is the only university entity of its kind in a very diverse state, serving a diverse student population.