

NMSU charts a path to a bright future

Focus: Economic Development

New Mexico State University's College of Business has two major goals, to help prepare students for life outside of college and to help foster economic development in New Mexico. Over the next few years, the college's progress in both areas will become very visible.

Big changes planned

A dusty tract of land, undeveloped for years, may soon become a popular piece of real estate for companies wishing to partner with New Mexico State University.

NMSU's Arrowhead Center is working to develop the university's approximately 200-acre research park between Interstates 10 and 25. The research park is larger than the University of New Mexico's entire main campus and would become a home for companies both large and small interested in moving to NMSU to employ students, work with faculty and develop intellectual property.

"It's an integral part of NMSU's plan to assist in the economic development of Southern New Mexico," said Garrey Carruthers, business dean and vice president for economic development. "When you build NMSU, you build this region."

Preliminary plans call for developing the first 11 acres of land beginning in fall 2007. Construction will be done in two phases, with up to seven buildings and 120,000 square feet of office and laboratory space for businesses wishing to partner with NMSU.

"For the entire park, we have the potential to add 2.5 million square feet of 'class-A' office and lab space. Five to six thousand people would be able to work there. That's roughly the same number of faculty, staff and students NMSU already employs throughout the entire university system," Carruthers said.

"This will have a substantial economic development impact on Las Cruces and Southern New Mexico," said Kevin Boberg, Arrowhead Center CEO and associate business dean.

Arrowhead Center specializes in helping small businesses get off the ground. Currently more than 160 students take part in more than 100 projects a year, conducting market research and other services for small businesses. In January, the NMSU Board of Regents agreed to lease land at the research park to Arrowhead for development.

"This will let students roll up their sleeves and gain real-world work experience. Students will be engaged in developing and deploying applications that utilize the principles and knowledge they have learned in the classroom. This will help our students and help us to fulfill our institutional mission," Boberg said.

The first structure in the new development will become the new incubator building for small businesses just getting started. Dean Carruthers said the previous incubator space, the Genesis Building, is now filled. Once the new building is 60 percent occupied, work will begin on the next building in the development, and so on. This would be the first building activity at the NMSU Research Park since General Dynamics moved there 1999.

"Right now, we are actively recruiting two premiere companies to be the anchor tenants for the development," said Carruthers.

“We’re attempting to attract aerospace companies who would want to work with Spaceport America. We’re attempting to attract companies specializing in future combat systems who would want to work with White Sands Missile Range. We’re attempting to attract companies in border development, biosciences, biofuels. All of these industries are part of this region’s aspirations for growth,” he said.

Carruthers said all research park development would be public/private partnerships where NMSU provides the land and infrastructure while the private sector handles building expenses and provides opportunities for students, faculty and staff.

“Many universities already have these relationships. We’re trying to make it happen here,” he said.

NMSU to offer Doctorate in Economic Development

Interested in making a real difference in a local economy? New Mexico State University’s Doctorate in Economic Development might be the ticket. Beginning in fall 2008, NMSU will be the first university in the country to offer the doctoral degree program.

“We’ll try to produce graduates who are connected to the academic knowledge but who are also able to solve real problems in the field,” said Rick Adkisson, the DED’s newly appointed program director.

The Doctorate in Economic Development is designed to provide advanced graduate-level training to people already in the economic development field. Unlike regular PhD programs, DED graduates are not expected to go into research, they are expected to actively make a difference in a community.

“It’s not our goal to train academics. We want the people we train to be able to go out and have a direct impact on economic development, especially in the state of New Mexico,” said Jim Libbin, a professor in agricultural economics and agribusiness.

“Economic development is a priority for New Mexico and NMSU,” said Garrey Carruthers, business dean and vice president for economic development. “This will complement our efforts in creating new economic development opportunities in the state.”

Adkisson said he and others are still working to develop the DED curriculum. The program will start taking applications for enrollment fall 2007, a year before the first classes start in fall 2008 semester.

“This will give students interested in joining the program a chance to complete any courses they might be lacking,” said Adkisson.

The DED is a partnership between the Department of Economics and International Business in the College of Business and the Department of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness in the College of Agriculture and Home Economics to offer a Doctorate in Economic Development.

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