

August 6, 2012

Amy Neel, Ph.D., President, Faculty Senate  
Ganesh Balakrishnan, Chair, Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, Faculty Senate  
Linney Wix, Chair, Graduate Committee, Faculty Senate  
The University of New Mexico

Dear Drs. Neel, Balakrishnan and Wix:

It is my pleasure to express enthusiastic support for creating a “U.S. and Global Diversity and Inclusion (USGDI)” university-wide requirement for all undergraduate students at the University of New Mexico. The inclusion of a 3-credit USGDI university-wide requirement would represent a small but high impact institutional change that can create a high quality curriculum for an increasingly diverse student population as well as improve the graduation rates for all of our students and our under-represented students in particular.

In Fall 2011, I convened the UNM Provost Diversity Council Curriculum Committee. Subcommittees were formed to create key action items related to diversity. The curriculum committee met consistently over the Spring 2012 semester and proposed the creation of a university-wide requirement (3-credits) entitled, “U.S. and Global Diversity and Inclusion.” The University of New Mexico is a national leader in research, teaching and service in the areas of diversity and inclusion in U.S. society. As an Hispanic-serving Research I university with a critical mass of Native American students, we are strategically positioned to attract and graduate a diverse group of talented undergraduate and graduate students. In our increasing complex and diverse society, it is critical that all students demonstrate critical literacy and deep learning pertaining to the dynamics of diversity and inclusion by race, gender, class, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, and disability. It is also important that our curriculum reflect our commitment to diversity and inclusion in U.S. society.

It is my understanding that the Graduate Committee of the Faculty Senate considered a similar proposal in 2007 but it was not adopted. Although the graduate committee agreed that diversity was an important learning outcome, they felt that these important learning outcomes could be met via workshops. Committee members also worried that adding a new requirement could delay graduation for some students. While these are important concerns, they do not address the possibility that this requirement does not add additional credit hours to the core or degree requirements. Furthermore, many of the courses in the UNM catalog meet these learning outcomes and can double count as core curriculum or elective/required courses in their degree granting programs. Moreover, including this

requirement can in turn increase the engagement and success of all our students, particularly those who have lower graduate rates than other groups. For instance, at a recent public forum at the University of New Mexico, Dr. George Kuh gave a compelling presentation that urged the faculty, student and administrators at UNM to engage in deep reflection about how we can transform our graduation rates by promoting deep learning and engagement among all of our students. He pointed to national data with a total of 4 million students that demonstrated that students who had an infusion of diversity experiences had better engagement, retention and graduation rates than their similarly located peers that did not have such experiences. This is particularly important for students from racial and ethnic underrepresented backgrounds.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of the proposed “U.S. and Global Diversity and Inclusion” university-wide requirement. Again, I urge you to adopt this requirement as a step in improving our graduation rates and creating an institutional transformation that values excellence through diversity in our curriculum.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chaouki Abdallah".

Chaouki Abdallah, Ph.D.

Provost & Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs