Draft Community of Scholars Task Force Report

Working Title: Developing and enhancing the broader impacts of the community of scholars.

Introduction:

This strategic priority is defined by the building of community both within the bounds of campus and extending outward to all parts of the world. Our continued success as a research and teaching institution relies on our ability to connect with our students, develop them into successful scientists and engineers, then send them into the world, thus increasing the influence of New Mexico Tech. We are dedicated to building a strong sense of community among our students, but also as one community with all faculty, staff, and students of the institute. The goals of this effort is to first bring newcomers into the community, then provide a supportive environment for them to grow and innovate within the community, and finally to broaden the circle of community to begin the cycle again. As a diverse and unified community with administrative support for growth and development we have the greatest possibility of success and spreading the influence of New Mexico Tech.

Strategic Goals and Objectives:
The goals of this priority are to develop a cycle for bringing new people into our community, then supporting and encouraging them to grow, learn, and innovate, then to spread their ideas and the New Mexico Tech community outward. Throughout this cycle, individuals will feel they are part of the broader New Mexico Tech family and that their individual success is enhanced by the success of the community as a whole.

Goal 1: Orientation to the community

Objectives:

• Develop new methods for training new faculty and staff on Institute policies and procedures. The training should be phased to allow maximum learning potential and to provide multiple opportunities for new hires to interact and build community.
• Enhance the current student orientation process to improve the sense of community from the first moment a student sets foot on campus. Freshmen should be connected with a student mentor in addition to a faculty advisor. Consider options for incorporating student mentoring into the entry-level classes in each major (ES110, MENG110) Students, faculty, and staff across the institute should be excited to participate in welcoming the newest students to the community. Explore options for the best times to hold student orientation and the most effective length of orientation.
• New faculty members must be provided with a supportive environment to begin their career and to foster developing research interests. New faculty teaching and research workshops should be held regularly, including participation from senior faculty.
• Hold informal social or town-hall type meetings regularly to allow interaction among all community members. These meetings should be held while most of the community is on campus and should be hosted by different departments or divisions to enhance participation from all parts of the institute. A “state of the institute address” should be delivered annually.
• A formal “honor / ethics code” will be developed to be signed by all employees and students. Establish a common set of goals and expectations among all within the community. The spirit of the honor code and code of ethics should be reflected in each course that is taught.
• Investigate methods to allow distance education students to feel more a part of the NMT community.

Goal 2: Incentives to innovate (drive new directions for the community)
Objectives:
• Develop a merit-based pay process and competitive starting/base salaries for all members of the New Mexico Tech community. This will be supported by employees developing annual performance plans, with which supervisors will evaluate employee performance. New metrics and holistic approaches to employee evaluations should be developed and implemented to promote individuals who are contributing to and enhancing the community. Consider the need for job descriptions for faculty and department chairs.
• Enhance current workshops offerings. All should be geared toward helping an employee grow within their position and to enhance their value to the institute. Workshops should also be geared toward students. Workshops should be developed to include education for the campus community on topics including personal protection, date-rape, social networking, and other topics that are unique and important to college campus communities.
• Reward creativity within the classroom and across the institute. Develop a pilot program to allow faculty members to innovate and explore new teaching approaches and transdisciplinary course offerings. Encourage education methodology development and risk taking to engage more students and improve the unique New Mexico Tech educational experience. Staff should also be encouraged to innovate to improve processes and procedures within their jobs and responsibilities.
• Develop a “staff ladder” or “job family” with a natural progression through job ranks. Define baseline skills, qualifications, and workshop participation for promotions.
• Create more innovation spaces for faculty, staff, and students. A place they can gather to develop new ideas and collaborations. The spaces should be unique, friendly, and exciting and can host regular events and showcases of developments. Explore the possibility of creating new or expanding existing informal social areas and opportunities including the Golf Course Grill and Club Macey.
• Improve student academic support structures to improve retention and student success. Establish permanent budgets to support initiatives that were started under DOE grants and have shown success. Expand offerings of the OSL. Evaluate advising programs and continue to improve advising process and approaches. Continue to expand support structures for minority, low income, and at-risk student groups and encourage more faculty participation in these efforts.
• Evaluate the idea of including undergraduate research assistantships as part of NMT scholarships. Expand our undergraduate research by developing unique opportunities where undergraduates receiving scholarships are awarded a research position with a faculty member in conjunction with their tuition scholarship. Improve the interactions of undergraduate students and research divisions.
Goal 3: Broadening the circle of community (changing the institute culture to create a problem solving approach to finding new opportunities)

Objectives:

- Formalize and expand institution outreach activities with the local Socorro county school districts and communities. A specific institution office will coordinate, facilitate, and promote institute and community activities. This office will develop regular interactions with the Socorro schools for recruiting, presentations by faculty and students in the Socorro schools, and to bring Socorro school students to campus for events. The office created under this objective should include a formal liaison between NMT and Socorro County offices and organizations and will attend Socorro county meetings, Socorro City meetings, and school district events. Evaluate the possibility of reviving the “Consulting Scientist” program.

- Enhance the spirit of community across campus with social and Tech-oriented activities. Provide opportunities for the community to gather and celebrate our uniqueness.

- Enhance support for individuals within the community by creating formal committees to research and develop policies or recommendations for social issues including: dual hiring policy, expanded child care offerings, parental leave policies.

- Expand opportunities for alumni, corporations, and government employees to participate in the New Mexico Tech community.