

Dyer gives 'State of the Campus' address

Written by By Chrissy Largo Sun Correspondent
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Talks about plans for growth, unity

Speaking to a packed audience full of university administrators, professors, and students, Executive Director Christopher Dyer gave his "State of the Campus" address in the Calvin Hall auditorium on the university's accomplishments, and goals for 2016 on Jan. 11.

Although he is not absolutely certain, he claims that he does not anticipate any significant amounts of new money filtering in the UNM system; however, he strives to continue to work with the main campus to become more efficient and productive in how it uses their resources on campus, and focus on increasing revenues by increasing enrollment.

He said that the issue of performance criteria, it is not going to go away, but improving enrollment and retention and cutting costs at the same time is something that they are going to have to explore.

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"We have to expand our media impacts and performance," he said. "We are doing that. You are doing that. We are doing this together. This is a group effort. I am very pleased. This is a process though. It takes time. It doesn't happen overnight."

He mentioned the TRIO Student Support Services Program, a program designed to assist students towards academic success, completed its annual assessment for the academic year of 2014-15, which far exceeded the national standards in five areas of assessment. In return, the program was funded another five years to allow Student Support Services staff to engage successfully with students.

Also, he says as compared to last year's spring semester, there is an estimated enrollment increase of 8 percent for this year's spring semester and anticipated increase of 2 percent for the fall semester.

"We were the only 2-year [university] that showed an increase in enrollment in the fall," he said. "So, we are doing our job. Are you done yet? Are we getting there? No."

He added that the Middle College High School, located on the UNM-Gallup campus, saw a 66 percent increase of 40 students, from 60 to 100 students currently, and they are looking at ways to expand their enrollment.

He continued by pinpointing different infrastructure projects and programs that are underway that would help improve a "regionally specific and culturally vibrant education," he said.

In short, the college's mission: "The University of New Mexico-Gallup prepares people to achieve their educational and professional goals in a context of respect for their traditions and values in the many groups it serves," Dyer said.

He mentioned the word "agape" from a book titled "Start with Why," authored by Simon Sinek, which means the "love of others."

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"Love of your fellow man and women," he said. "Love of your community of employees. Love of your peers. That's agape. If you really care about other people and put them first, you will be a success in life, I don't care what your job is."

He talks about the revamping of the Early Childhood and Family Center, the Veterans and Student Advising Centers, Emergency Medical Services Institute, just to name a few.

As for the Veterans and Student Advising Centers, the Navajo Veterans Act is being worked on, which will elevate the Navajo Veterans Association's authority to executive level, Dyer said.

Virginia Johnson, who attended the event from the Twin Lakes area, and who also a faculty member that works in the college's Human Resources Department, said her late husband, who is now deceased, was a Vietnam veteran. Ever since his passing, she has started to get more and more involved at the chapter level associated with Veteran affairs, and she was glad the event touched on the Veterans aspect.

"There is so much need," she said. "You see it, you hear it, but how does one go about it to even begin to address the needs because we lack funding, the long-term interest and long-term resources at all levels from the community all the way up to the federal government."

Dyer also discussed the infrastructure of student housing and the Navajo Housing Collaboration, where the University is working on a couple of short-term and long-term projects where the Housing and Construction Tech Program propose to build housing using structural insulated panels.

"If we had student housing would we increase our retention rates? Yes," he said. "If we had student housing, would we increase our enrollment? Yes. If we had student housing would we increase our graduation rates? Yes to all of those. We are actively working on this."

Since 95 percent of small businesses make up the businesses in Gallup, which means less than 15 employees, the college is looking to implement this to expand their revenues and enrollment through certificate and work shop programs, which is under the Work Force Development

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Division.

Small Business Development Center Director Cindy Jarvison said her organization has helped McKinley County citizens start small businesses within the community; however, she has reached out to other entities like the Zuni Pueblo and Navajo Nation since starting her tenure as director beginning June of last year.

"I help from the other end of the spectrum," she said. "I've helped businesses get into the federal, state, and local procurement," she said. "With this position, I am helping people start their jobs or start their business ideas and to help encourage them to promote and start their business. We also met one-on-one with clients on their business plan development."

Dyer applauded the faculty and staff for working together to change the culture on campus and filling the university with positive and powerful energy. Notwithstanding, he addressed the need to help each other.

"This is a journey that we have to do together," he said. "Don't think that you can pull off, oh, it's about me. It is about my program, it is about what I want. It is about what I need in my classroom. It has to be all of us working together. And success depends on loving what we do."

Dyers was appointed executive director for the University of New Mexico-Gallup campus on July 1, 2013, and he has an extensive academic background in the subject of anthropology by obtaining both his master's and Ph.D. in anthropology from Arizona State University.