# New Mexico Higher Education Department
# 2009 Data Verification Report
# New Mexico Junior College

**Overview**:
New Mexico State Legislation and New Mexico Higher Education Department (NMHED) policy requires that the NMHED conduct regular verifications of state funded institutions of higher education. New Mexico Administrative Code and New Mexico statute state major areas of verification.

New Mexico Statutes Annotated 1978 section 21-1-26.3:
- The higher education department shall annually conduct special verifications of the institutions of higher education. The verifications shall include enrollments, fund balances, compliance with legislation, comparison of expenditures to budgets and other areas to be determined by the department. Reports on the verifications shall be made annually to the department of finance and administration and the legislative finance committee. The department shall consider the verification findings in making its annual recommendations to the executive and legislature for higher education funding. *(This mandate is also met through the quarterly and annual reporting process which includes institutional fiscal watch and BR&R)*

New Mexico Administrative Code 5.6.4.9:
- Are student data reported correctly in the College's students file submissions, and can discrepancies in the data between student files and the report to the department be reconciled?
- Are course data reported correctly on the department course file, and do the credits reported correspond to those reported on student files?
- Does the tuition paid by students correspond to the credits which are reported to NMHED student and course files?
- Are the NMHED data collected and transmitted in an accurate and timely manner?

This report is in response to the department's goal to comply with statutorily mandated responsibilities, and to facilitate a dialogue with the institution about their data and record keeping procedures, and campus policies. In addition to fulfilling legislative requirements the Higher Education Department is interested in learning about and highlighting best practices among and between New Mexico's public postsecondary institutions. Data maintenance and reporting recommendations, including best practices, are offered wherever possible.

**The Purpose**:

This process is an attempt to ensure that the funding mechanisms are functioning as intended, state funds are used appropriately, and data used in policy decisions accurately represents the institutions. There are a number of objectives:

- Comply with NMHED data submission requirements and policies, primarily because compliance directly effects calculations for enrollment funding
- Verify integrity of financial aid data, allocation processes, and the application of the rules concerning eligibility and awards
- Clarify NMHED data requirements, definitions and procedures
- Identify problem areas regarding clarity of NMHED policies and procedures or institutional compliance with data requirements
- Solicit institutional assistance in refining NMHED data elements, submission procedures and data use

**The Process**:

Technology capabilities and the particularly prudent need to be fiscally responsible have lead to changes in the data verification process for 2009. Historically the full verification process took place at each institution in the cycle year. The on-site review consisted of a comparison between institutional records and that which is submitted to NMHED, and maintained in the Data Editing and Reporting database (DEAR). Verification of equipment purchased through I&G funding was also conducted. A review of institutional policies is conducted as well, to determine if polices are in agreement with those of NMHED.

This year we are piloting a new approach that includes conducting the electronic review of institutional records remotely. More specifically the NMHED Planning and Research team together with other NMHED division representatives utilized remote access to Banner in order to conduct the electronic verification of a random sample of files. Using distance technology in this way minimized the amount of travel necessary for NMHED staff and volunteers. Property and security verification as well as student paper files still necessitate an on-site visit by our team. NMHED values the face to face portion of the data verification process and view it as critical to collaboration and relationship building.

Sampling methodology:

Stratified sampling was used to generate the population of students reviewed for this data verification. A random sample was drawn from within each of the tables in the NMHED database (course, student, financial aid and dual credit). The students in the sample were selected using simple random sampling within each strata.

The power analysis included a confidence interval of .70 and margin of error of 5%. All students that appeared in both the student file and the financial aid file samples were removed from the student files because much of the same information is verified in both. The sample population that resulted was as follows:
- Student = 150

- Course = 49
- Financial Aid = 150
- Dual Credit = 48

In addition to the file review a CIP code review of **all** tier 2 and tier 3 level courses (163 courses) was conducted. A sample of faculty contracts (10) was reviewed to ensure that institutions adhere to restricted funding policies.

<u>**Summary**</u>:
In general, the data submitted to the DEAR system appears to be a reasonable reflection of the enrollments at the institution. However, a problem did emerge from the student file review. The majority of discrepancies identified in the data as submitted were resolved upon further investigation. However, the finding that remain in question and the subsequent recommendations as cited below should improve the quality of data submitted to NMHED, as well as the institution's internal use of data for decision making and policy development at NMSU.

<u>**The Policy Review**</u>:
Our objective was to verify NMJC's institutional polices and ensure that they reflect NMHED recommendations and provide adequate and accurate consumer information. We reviewed four of the major publications: Course Catalog, Course Schedule, Student Handbook and the NMJC Website. The major areas of review undertaken in this process include verification of the following institutional policies:

Catalogue and Handbook:
- Late registration
  - Only specific listing of late registration definition listed in academic calendar.
  - No mention of late registration in "8 Simple Steps"
  - Recommendation
    - Include mention of late registration dates and fee in "8 simple steps" of registration
    - Expand brief line on late registration to full paragraph with dates and fees.
- Withdrawals
  - Withdrawal policy listed on page 32
  - Refund policy for withdraw listed on page 18
  - Recommendation
    - Place or reiterate refund policy on same page as withdrawal policy
- Drop/adds
  - Drop add policy listed on page 32
- Financial commitment by students or third party payers
  - No full iteration of policy in handbook, other than sentence on page 14 and refund policy on page 18
  - Recommendation

- o Catalog, student handbook, and website need to have clearly stated financial commitment policies of students and third party payers.
- Classification of students for tuition assessment
  - Catalog clearly states tuition rates for 'In-district', 'Out-of-district', and out of state residents.
  - Catalog does not clearly define 'in-district' and 'out-of-district' limitations.
  - Recommendation
    - o Define 'in-district' and 'out-of-district 'students more clearly.
- Course classification
  - No information in catalog for policies on courses that cancel for students
  - Recommendation
    - o Add policy to both students' registration and financial information sections
- Off campus course offerings
  - No section of course catalog dedicated towards dual credit, ITV, or distant education classes.
  - Sections on AP, CLEP, Credit for prior learning.
  - Recommendation
    - o Full section dedicated to all alternative earning of credits including very specifically dual credit and distance education
- FERPA
  - 1 paragraph on FERPA in catalogue
  - Extensive review in student handbook
- Student Right to Know reports
  - This is adequate

Website:
- Catalog and student handbook linked
- No special pages, links, or tabs for any of the above policies.
- Recommendation
  - o Add special links pages
  - o Add FAQ page with answers and links to specific references of policies

Security:
Compared to other institutions in New Mexico, the level of security at NMJC is very good.
- NMJC maintains a running crime log and an online reporting system which includes crime statistics information school policy violation information
- Collaboration with local fire and police departments is established
- NMJC security staff currently has a staff of 6 people
- Campus Emergency Operations Plan is extensive
- NMJC has invested in a voice activated emergency notification system that allows the administration to communicate an emergency that will alert students and staff

Recommendations/Best Practices:
- SFCC holds a regular campus safety orientation on safety techniques to SFCC students on a semester basis and to new Staff upon hire.
- SJC conduces regular drills and trainings including campus wide single shooter scenarios for which the whole campus and outside community are involved

The Property Inventory:

To ensure that NMJC has an acceptable method for tracking and managing state assets through a property control inventory system NMHED sampled 20 items from the I&G inventory list. Compared to other institutions in New Mexico, the property inventory system at NMJC is very good.

- 18 items were located and properly tagged
- 2 items are on donation to local corrections centers to facilitate ITV/GED course offerings but documentation (MOU and letters) was obtained which indicates the nature of the property agreements
- BANNER (FFIMAST form) is used for the electronic tracking of inventory
- The electronic system links P.O's to tag numbers creating a nice audit record
- The disposition policy is clear and appears to be followed

Recommendations/Best Practices:
- Maintain a central equipment check out log for items such as staff and faculty computers and equipment on loan to others

Two clarifying questions were asked of NMHED during the property verification. We have provided a preliminary response to both below.

How do we define the expected useful life of equipment?
- Equipment is defined based on a 5 and 12 year expected useful life. 5 year items are generally equipment such as computers while 12 year items include items such as furniture. Exact distinctions need to be made at the local campus level.
- Additional information can be found in the Financial Manual
  http://inst.hed.state.nm.us/cms/kunde/rts/insthedstatenmus/docs/688577733-07-17-2006-14-52-15.pdf
  Pages 10, 20, 54, 55 - also look at Accounting Principles in the Financial Manual

What is expected of NMJC in the ER&R submission to NMHED?
- This is documented in the funding formula page 22 and 23 (see link below). In addition specific instructions are e-mailed annually prior to submission deadlines.
- http://inst.hed.state.nm.us/cms/kunde/rts/insthedstatenmus/docs/119585868-03-10-2008-15-07-16.pdf

**Financial Aid files**:

While all aid was checked in this audit there was a focus this year on lottery and 3% scholarships. The financial aid sample was remarkably clean and is among the best we have seen in the state. Tashina Bank-Moore the NMHED Director of Financial Aid also reviewed the files and agrees that NMJC is doing a great job providing fair and equitable support to the NMJC student body.

- Minor data entry error were found in 6 files

Recommendations/Best Practices:

- 3% scholarship allocations will be changing per recent legislation so begin considering how the shift to additional need based allocations will take place at NMJC
- In future verifications a description of the management of aid between the business office and the financial aid office would be helpful
- Keep doing what you are doing


**Student Files**:

The objective was to ensure the accuracy of data concerning student enrollment including origin and residency, demographic characteristics, and student classifications and level.

High Schools

- 40 of 150 (27%) mismatched BANNER with SDVR
  - 34/40 has BANNER record of HS and SDVR has "Other NM HS, inactive"
  - 5/40 Banner is blank and SDVR has "Other NM HS, Inactive"
  - 1 BANNER = GED,SDRV = Unknown

Student Level

- 25 of 150 (17%) mismatched BANNER with SDVR
  - 12 SDVR = Concurrent while BANNER = Freshman
  - 8 SDVR = Sophomore while BANNER = Freshman
  - 3 SDVR = Sophomore while BANNER = Blank
  - 2 SDVR = Undergrad Non-Degree BANNER= Sophomore

- 17 of 150 (11%) mismatched BANNER with SDVR
  - 16 SDVR = Other, BANNER= Dual Credit or ACT Academy
  - 1 SDVR = Other, BANNER= Continuing

Ethnicity

- 3 of 150 (2%) mismatched BANNER with SDVR
  - 2 SDVR = No Response , BANNER = Non Resident
  - 1 SDVR = Hispanic, BANNER = Non- US citizen.

There is a serious concern regarding how the data collected by the NMJC is being reported to the NMHED through the DEAR system. The following is a five area in which the Department would like to see an improvement:

- Non-degree seeking students needs to be coded correctly
- Student levels should keep in mind of transfer credits
- High School should be reported correctly
- Ethnicity information needs to be captured and reported properly
- Census dates for the part of term classes should be adjusted to one third the class length rather than the end of class

**Course Files**:
The objective is to ensure the accuracy of the data reported for course enrollment information including confirmation that students were enrolled as of the course census date and that evidence of a financial commitment exists. These elements are critical to the accurate implementation of the funding formula. Under NMAC, New Mexico Post-secondary Public Institutions are required to omit students who make no financial commitment by the census date when reporting the enrollment information to the New Mexico Higher Education Department for funding purposes.

NMHED staff reviewed whether or not a student had made a serious financial commitment by the census date.
- Out of 670 records reviewed, NMHED staff only found handful of records in which a student did not make a payment by the census date
- On one occasion the staff discovered that there was no proper third party contract in place

Recommendations/Best Practices:
- The Department recommends that the NMJC alters its census date for "part of term" courses. As a general rule, the census date should be set at the third Friday of the regular semester or one third the total length of the course for "part of term" courses rather than at the end of the course.

**CIP Code Review:**
The review revealed overwhelmingly accurate CIP code assignments.
- 9 possible improvements to CIP assignments were identifies
- 4 classes for which we recommended a specific new assignment were identified
- NT111 = 15.0599 recommend =15.0272
- RW113 and RW223 = 15.0599 recommend 15.0703
- TRNS113 = 15.0507 recommend 15.0701

Recommendation/Best Practices:
- An internal desk audit for tier 1 classes
- Continued dialogue on the matter with HED as we continue to review CIP's statewide
- Be mindful of the 2010 changes to the federal CIP categories

**Restricted Classes/Faculty Contracts:**
10 contracts were review (2 part time and 8 full time). Compared to other institutions in the state NMJC faculty contracts are remarkably clean.

- Renewed each year (August 11 – May 11)
- Short course have special contract for part timers
- The account codes are set up in such a transparent way that it is clear how contracts link to budget
- Account codes are printed on the bottom of the contract

**Dual Credit:**
NMHED found no signification issues with the fall 2008 dual credit files and is satisfied with the current data collection process. NMJC's collaborative work with the Lea County Distant Education Consortium should be added as one of the best practices for a model of collaboration between the high schools districts and an institution of higher education.

The Consortium works both as a vehicle to pull the high school's resources together to offer distant education courses as well as the opportunity to improve communication between the parties involved.

NMJC reports that there are currently four methods in which dual credit courses are being offered to the high school students in New Mexico.

- ITV / Polycom distant education
- Courses offered at the NMJC campus
- Web CT online course
- Course offered at the high school

Recommendations/Best Practices:
- NMJC is the model institutions
- Keep doing what you are doing