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EXECUTIVE SEARCH PROFILE

DEAN, FACUNDO VALDEZ
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
LAS VEGAS, NEW MEXICO

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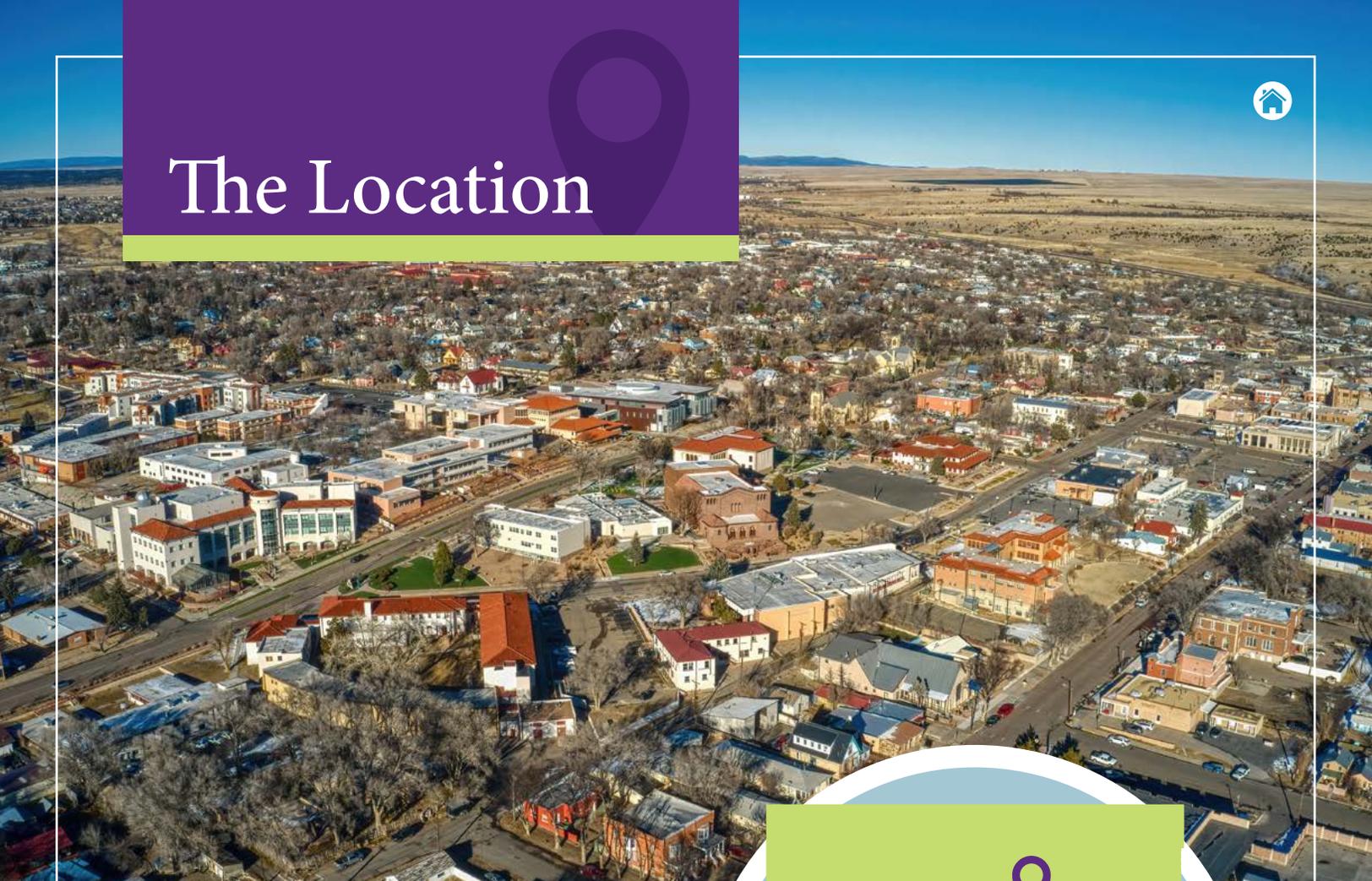
The Opportunity

New Mexico Highlands University (NHMU), a Hispanic Serving Institution and an aspiring Native American Non-Tribal Serving Institution located in the beautiful mountains of Northern New Mexico, seeks a student-centered, community-engaged visionary and innovative leader for Dean of the Facundo Valdez School of Social Work (FVSSW). The FVSSW has a primary commitment to Hispanic and Native American populations of the Southwest. The dean serves as the chief academic and administrative officer of the school, leading faculty, staff, and students at the Las Vegas, Albuquerque Metro area, Santa Fe, and Farmington campuses and online. The dean also oversees the Native American Social Work Studies Institute and a Center of Excellence for Social Work. In 2025, the School of Social Work awarded degrees to 126 graduate and 49 undergraduate students, for a total of 175.





The Location



NMHU's main campus is located in Las Vegas, New Mexico at the juncture of the Great Plains and the Sangre de Cristo mountains. New Mexico is called the Land of Enchantment, filled with rich diversity, history, heritage, and culture. The city of Las Vegas is the county seat of San Miguel County, New Mexico. Established in 1835 by a group of settlers receiving a land grant from the Mexican government, it soon prospered as a stop on the Santa Fe Trail and during the Mexican-American War was the site of General Stephen Kearny's address claiming New Mexico for the United States in 1847. In 1880, a railroad was established one mile from the original Old Town Plaza, creating a separate, rival New Town.

As early as 1913, Las Vegas and the surrounding area became a favorite film location including numerous western films starring Tom Mix and through the years has been the site for such noted movies as "Easy Rider", "Speechless", "All the Pretty Horses", "The Astronaut Farmer", "Red Sky at Morning", "No Country for Old Men", and recently, the TV series "Longmire". Today, Las Vegas maintains its historical flavor with a central plaza and over 900 historical structures listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

A town of approximately 15,000 people with an 83% Hispanic population, Las Vegas is the home of New Mexico Highlands University, Luna Community College and the United World

Las Vegas  New Mexico
Highlands
University

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College in Montezuma, New Mexico, a two-year International Baccalaureate high school. Las Vegas is approximately a one-hour drive east of Santa Fe and two hours from Albuquerque accessed by Interstate 25, with additional transportation services of Amtrak.

Las Vegas lies on the edge of the 1.5 million-acre Santa Fe National Forest with opportunities for hiking, skiing, shopping and dining. Situated at an elevation of 6,800 feet, Las Vegas gets sunshine an average of 275 days a year and gets 65 inches of snow annually.

The Campus



The main campus of NMHU is located on 85-acres with 44 buildings and an additional 165-acre golf course. Ten residential buildings with a capacity of approximately 700 students also include accommodations for students with families. In 2012, NMHU was the only university in the state to be honored for sustainable building practices with a new 67,000 square-foot student union building, opened in Spring of 2013. The Student Union is LEED Gold certified and includes dining facilities, a ballroom, flexible theater space, the campus bookstore, post office, computer lab, classrooms, conference space, a game room, and a convenience store. This facility is the home to university offices for Student Life, Housing, International Education Center, Indigenous Student Lounge, the Center for Advocacy Resources Education and Support, student senate, and the Dean of Students

Office. It is seen not only as the heart of the campus but the bridge between Highlands and the Las Vegas community.

Other LEED Gold designations have been received for the remodeling projects of the Felix Martinez Building, Lora Shields Building, and the Natatorium. In 2010, the Viles & Crimmin Residence Hall was the first university dormitory in the state to earn the LEED Silver certification. The Adele Ilfeld Auditorium, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, was renovated in 1996. This hundred-year-old sandstone landmark has borne the test of time. Closed for more than a year for renovations, the 727-seat auditorium reopened in 1996 and is the only major theatre in northeastern New Mexico and a premier contemporary performance arts center.

The University



New Mexico Highlands University was founded in 1893. It is a public, state-funded, regional comprehensive university. NMHU is a Hispanic Serving Institution and an aspiring Native American Serving Non-Tribal Institution, with open undergraduate admissions and master's level programs serving more than 68% Hispanic, Native American, and African American students. Fifty-one percent of all students study at the master's degree level. In 1997-1998, NMHU established its first extended learning center in Rio Rancho, which began offering upper division undergraduate and graduate courses in business, accounting, education, and social work. Since that time, the University has expanded its curriculum offerings and created other center campuses in Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and Farmington. NMHU also offers a range of online programs in both synchronous and asynchronous formats.

The total Fall 2025 FTE for all campuses, both undergraduate and graduate, was 2,741.

The university serves a broad and diverse range of students across various modalities in various locations. The university is committed to student success and providing resources that help students succeed. NMHU works closely with the communities it serves to foster partnerships and collaborative opportunities and has existing partnerships with Los Alamos National Labs, schools throughout New Mexico, as well as governmental and non-profit entities in New Mexico.

The university operates with a faculty senate, staff senate, and student senate, as well as separate collective bargaining agreements with the faculty, hourly staff, and exempt staff.

Vision

Our vision is to be a premier comprehensive university transforming lives and communities now and for generations to come.

Mission

New Mexico Highlands University is a public comprehensive university serving our local and global communities. Our mission is to provide opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to attain an exceptional education by fostering creativity, critical thinking, and research in the liberal arts, sciences and professions within a diverse community.

At Highlands, we prioritize integrity, collaboration, and respectful communication to cultivate an inclusive community that supports growth and well-being. We address challenges in a timely fashion and with civility, focusing on our shared mission and diverse perspectives to achieve excellence. We value intentional leadership, data-informed decision-making, scholarship, accountability to self and others, and service to all.

Values

Excellence
Diversity

Accessibility
Responsiveness

Destination Highlands

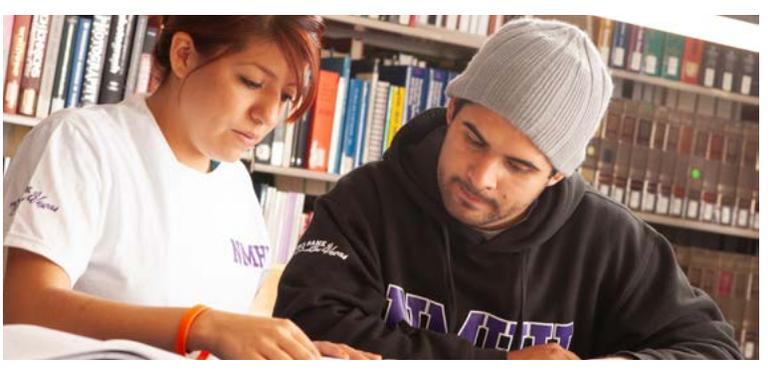


Executive Overview

Destination Highlands is both a vision and a call to action – to make the Las Vegas campus and its surrounding community the beating heart of a revitalized, forward-looking New Mexico Highlands University. The Plan, in part, operationalizes the 2035 NMHU Vision, Mission, and Strategic Plan.

Destination Highlands celebrates where history, community, and opportunity converge – while embracing the digital future and statewide centers that extend Highlands’ reach far beyond the main campus.

This vision honors deep Northern New Mexico roots even as it positions Highlands as a fully modern university: innovative in delivery, inclusive in access, and unmistakably proud of its sense of place.



Pillar 1: Growth with Purpose

Highlands will expand its impact through intentional, mission-driven growth – beginning with the renewal of the Las Vegas campus and extending through its centers and statewide partnerships.

KEY DRIVERS:

- Enrollment growth on the Las Vegas campus.
- Strategic outreach via regional centers.
- Engagement and leadership in the NM Hub for online and collaborative learning.

Improve systems, processes, policy, procedures, and organizational structure to strengthen a student-focused experience.

Pillar 2: Modern Campus, Sustainable Future

Highlands will invest in facilities and infrastructure that manifest progress – modern, connected, safe, and environmentally responsible. These improvements will strengthen the student experience and express the university’s pride of place.

KEY DRIVERS:

- Modernize across academic, residential, and athletic facilities.
- Achieve energy independence.
- Upgrade library and classroom technologies.
- Improvements to campus safety, security, and campus beautification.

Legislative Priorities

- \$17M Funding for Athletics Facilities Renovation (LCS#1210)
- \$1,536M Athletics Recurring Budget Increase, Transportation Costs, Nutrition, and Wellness (LCS#1211)
- \$1M Connar/Kenney Residence Hall Upgrades (LCS#1212)
- \$10M Library Renovation (GO Bond)
- \$2.9M Information Technology Services Equipment Security Upgrades (LCS#1213)
- \$5.6M Campus Safety and Lockdown Infrastructure Enhancement initiative (LCS#1214)
- \$253K Research Investment and Support for Students and Staff (LCS#1215)
- \$500K Legislative Leadership Fellowship Program (LCS#1216)

Academics



NMHU is composed of the College of Arts and Sciences, School of Business, Media and Technology, School of Education, and the Facundo Valdez School of Social Work. The university offers undergraduate programs and 21 graduate programs.

The College of Arts and Sciences delivers the majority of the university's core courses with 21 BA and 10 BS degrees including graduate programs in applied chemistry, computer science, English, human performance and sport, geology, computer science, natural science, psychology, public affairs, and southwest studies. It provides the only undergraduate accredited forestry major in the state and a Bachelor's of Science in Nursing (BSN) offered totally online with in-person clinicals. It is also noted for its focus on STEM disciplines and success in advancing students toward doctoral studies.

The School of Education offers BAs in Early Childhood Multicultural Education, Elementary Education, Special Education, and a dual BA in Elementary/Special and Gifted Education with a variety of minors such as Special and Gifted Education, Bilingual Education/TESOL, ESL, Secondary Education, and General Sciences for Elementary School Teachers. Its graduate offerings include alternative teaching licensure, MAs in counseling, curriculum and instruction, educational leadership, and special education. The SOE also includes the Center for the Study of Diverse Populations (CESDP) and The Institute for Culturally and Linguistically Response Learning and Teaching (ICLRLT) which is our research arm and interdisciplinary.

The School of Business, Media, and Technology offers several undergraduate degrees including a Bachelor of Business Administration with several concentrations, Bachelor of Applied Science in General Business, Bachelor of Arts in Organizational Leadership in Public Safety, Bachelor of Fine Arts in Media Arts, and Bachelor of Science in Software Systems Design. At the graduate level, the following degrees are offered: Master of Business Administration with several concentrations, Master of Fine Arts in Cultural Technology, and Master of Science in Software-Driven Systems Design.

The Facundo Valdez School of Social Work is the oldest school of social work in New Mexico, dating back to 1974 and is also the oldest school accredited by the Council of Social Work in the Southwest. It offers both the BSW and MSW degree programs on the main campus and some of these programs at the center campuses and online, and operates the Native American Social Work Studies Institute and the Center for Social Work Excellence.

NMHU offers numerous online courses through its Brightspace learning management tool, which is used to host all online classes and to enhance traditional classes both on- and off-campus locations. The University also provides a dual credit program allowing high school juniors and seniors to enroll in college.

Student Success



NMHU is known for providing its multicultural student body with deep and meaningful learning opportunities through relationships with faculty in small classes and associated research activities. Faculty and administration are committed to providing navigational support for a student body characterized by a significant number of first-generation students. Navigational support extends to full-time, part-time, and online students reflecting NMHU's commitment to the diverse interests and needs of its student body.

Success for NMHU students is characterized by combining academic interests with real-world experiences. Clubs, sports, art exhibits, concerts, and films support academic offerings and enhance the region's rich southwest history teeming with

fascinating legends and culture. NMHU is embedded in the region and assists students to honor the roots of the region and pursue their goals, passions, and dreams for the future. Student success at NMHU focuses on honoring each student, their unique history, and supporting an educational path which provides knowledge and tools to achieve well-being and a successful first destination—a good job or placement in a good graduate program. NMHU seeks to become the foundation for graduates' successful long-term careers and life experiences. NMHU focuses on each student's unique background and cultural heritage while they pursue their goals and dreams. Current students and alums alike frequently describe NMHU as having transformed their lives.



The Position

The Dean reports directly to the Provost of NMHU and is the chief academic officer providing strategic leadership and support to the faculty and staff of the Facundo Valdez School of Social Work (FVSSW). The Dean is responsible for strategic initiatives for the majors with the school and the two centers. The Dean provides leadership and ensures the strategic planning, fiscal operations, accountability, and continuous improvement of new and current academic programs and services, builds and maintains relationships with the many culturally diverse communities of New Mexico, promotes student success and satisfaction, engages in fund/friend-raising, and works to increase enrollment and retention. The Dean promotes professional development, faculty research, and other scholarly activities. Other responsibilities include leading the development, evaluation, and administration of the school curriculum for all campuses including online.

Responsibilities of the Dean include the following:

- Acting as a champion of NMHU and the Facundo Valdez School of Social Work;
- Providing leadership to the FVSSW by developing, implementing, and evaluating a strategic plan specific to the School;
- Providing leadership in faculty and staff recruitment;
- Overseeing personnel matters involving academic and non-academic employees including recruiting qualified candidates;
- Conducting personnel evaluations in accordance with university policies;
- Making recommendations to the Provost regarding personnel appointments and re-appointments, promotion and tenure decisions, post-tenure review, annual staff evaluations, and dismissal, if necessary;
- Overseeing faculty workload plans to ensure School operational efficiency;
- Articulating budgetary needs of the School and managing the allocation and expenditure of resources;
- Assuming responsibility for enrollment growth in the School including recruiting efforts, student retention, and attending various academic and social functions both on and off campus, including the Centers;
- Promoting interdisciplinary collaboration, cooperation, and scholarly activity;
- Collaborating with faculty and staff, guiding the activities of the School and developing annual goals and objectives;
- Supporting the FVSSW through involvement in relevant professional associations as well as state and national regulatory or accrediting agencies;
- Leading the FVSSW in maintaining continuous accreditation and compliance with the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE);
- Collaborating with the Provost, serving to support the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) accreditation efforts to include compiling data and preparing accreditation documents;
- Coordinating and overseeing the assessment of academic programs, including student learning outcomes and assessment of the learning environment and learning opportunities, as per CSWE standards;
- Supporting the departments in submission of grant applications and in preparing proposals for outside funding of projects including oversight of the Title IV-E and SWEEP federal grants;
- Working with tribal leaders to ensure success of the Native American Social Work Studies Institute;
- Leading the Center of Excellence for Social Work, Mental and Behavioral Health to ensure quality of programming across New Mexico.

Opportunities & Challenges



- A major opportunity and challenge for the Dean will be to build trust and collaboration among and with the faculty. Ensuring that faculty are part of the decision-making process will result in successful new programs and expansion of existing offerings. Collaboration between faculty and staff of FVSSW and the Provost and President will continue the success of the School and its national reputation. New opportunities to increase that success are abundant.
- As a Hispanic serving and aspiring Native American Serving Non-Tribal Institution the Dean will not only want to understand and embrace the local culture but develop ways to make the link between that culture and academic offerings.
- Adult learners, on-line education, and the work of the two Centers all have the potential to expand enrollment and offerings to a wider community and increase student success.
- Strong online programs throughout the state, as well as highly regarded programs at several locations, make these programs attractive to a broader population.
- The faculty are strongly engaged with a high degree of commitment to programs, students, and the programs' impact on New Mexico (NM). The mission of the School is grounded in NM and its populations.
- As the oldest school of Social Work in NM, the programs and degrees are strong academically and faculty have a high commitment to teaching excellence.
- Students are committed to their success and the success of their communities. They see the NMHU cost as very competitive and of value based on the quality of the program
- An important challenge for the new dean is to develop a deep understanding of the socio, political, spiritual and cultural dynamics of the School, the university, and its community.
- The complexity of the institution's financial systems and HR and a geographically dispersed faculty and staff in FVSSW, is a challenge requiring broad administrative experience. As for many institutions, the national climate is tense and difficult.
- A critical event that the new Dean will need to address is preparing for a major accreditation review beginning in Fall, 2026.

Qualifications



Education

- An earned doctorate (Ph.D., DSW, Ed.D.) and a Master of Social Work degree, or from related fields, from a regionally accredited institution

Experience

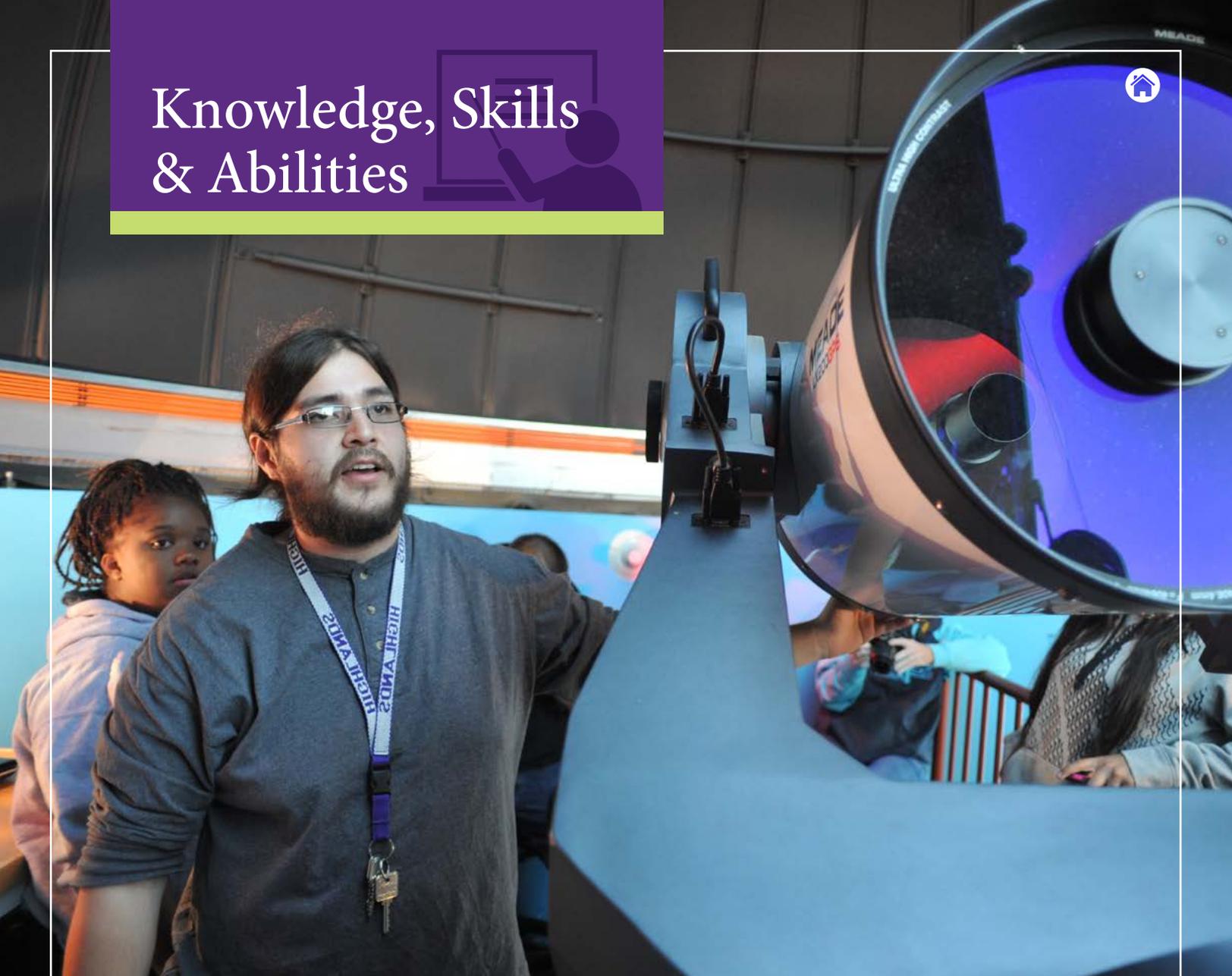
- Possess a record of academic achievement in teaching, scholarship, service and/or experience warranting the rank of a minimum of Associate Professor and tenure at NMHU.
- Progressive leadership in higher education over a six-year period.
- Administrative experience in budgeting and grant oversight.

Preferred Qualifications

- Licensed Social Worker in NM or eligibility to obtain a license prior to hire;
- Is/was tenured and holds/held the rank of associate or full professor;
- Outstanding record of academic leadership;
- Executive level of social work professional experience;
- Experience with learning, teaching, quality, and oversight of asynchronous online programs;
- Experience with multi-cultural community populations;
- Demonstrated success with strategic planning and budget management;
- Demonstrated success with community engagement, professional organizations, legislators, and fundraising;
- Demonstrated record of commitment to excellence in teaching and research;
- Demonstrated success working collaboratively with faculty to develop and strengthen programs;
- Experience in online education and delivery systems including collaboration with enrollment management and third-party enrollment partners; and
- Demonstrated success and/or ability and willingness to collaborate on program/degree development in cross-discipline partnerships within the University.



Knowledge, Skills & Abilities



- Ability to work and communicate effectively with faculty, staff, students, employers, and the professional community;
- Skill in supervising and mentoring faculty and staff;
- Ability to maintain currency in the social work field;
- Knowledge of the goals, objectives, structure and operations of a public university;
- Strong listening skills and mediation experience;
- Program evaluation, planning, and implementation skills;
- Knowledge of customer service standards and procedures;
- Skill in organizing resources and establishing priorities;
- Ability to analyze budgetary expenditures for compliance with approved budget;
- Ability to develop, plan, and implement short-and long-range goals;
- Ability to plan and evaluate programs;
- Skill in establishing, directing and enforcing policies and regulations;
- Effective teambuilding skills and experience;
- Familiarity with and commitment to accreditation and assessment of student learning outcomes;
- Ability to teach graduate-level courses;
- Ability to supervise graduate student research;
- Ability to supervise graduate internships.

Leadership



President



Neil Wolf

Neil Wolf is NMHU's 19th President, having been appointed in 2024. As a long-time advocate for public education, he has spent much of his career advancing student success initiatives and expanding access to the many benefits provided by higher education.

His educational journey included three experiences, first attending Eastern Washington University where he earned a bachelor's degree (B.A.) in government. Then he earned a master's degree in public administration (MPA) from the University of Utah. Finally, he completed his formal education by earning a Doctorate of Education (Ed.D.) in Educational Leadership with an emphasis in Higher Education Administration from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

He began his professional career at the Nevada System of Higher Education working on statewide academic and student affairs projects, economic and workplace development, and diversity initiatives for low-income and first-generation students. From there, he joined Nevada State University as their Director of Financial Aid and then as Chief Student Affairs Officer and Executive Director of Enrollment Services. He returned to his alma mater, Eastern Washington, and served as their Associate Vice President of Enrollment Management building strategic enrollment management initiatives that brought record enrollment growth. He then served as the Vice President of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs and later as the Executive Vice President at Southern Oregon University.

In his first year at NMHU his focus has been on student success and establishing policies to guide the academic endeavor, as well as identifying new initiatives that will expand the reach of the university. He and his family reside on the campus.

Provost



Dann Brown

An experienced higher education administrator, Dr. Dann Brown has spent nearly 20 years serving in virtually every facet of academic administration on regional comprehensive, doctoral-granting, and Emerging Research University campuses in New Mexico and Texas. These experiences have enabled him to develop and implement policies and processes within complex organizations that promote effective and efficient operations and support achieving strategic goals for academic program development, enrollment, learning, and student success.

Dann earned his Ph.D. in agriculture from Oklahoma State University and MS/BS in biology from Pittsburg State University. He began his faculty career at Eastern New Mexico University, where he taught biology and agriculture, launched new degree programs, and served as coordinator of Freshman Studies. Dann has worked at four Hispanic-serving institutions and authored, received, and directed over \$23 million in U.S. Department of Education Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions grants. He has served as an external consultant and evaluator on student success, HSI, and organizational effectiveness.





Application Procedures

Completed applications are due by **March 23, 2026**. To ensure full consideration, you will be required to submit:

- 1) a current resume or CV;
- 2) a cover letter addressing the position;
- 3) the contact information for three professional references (a current or former supervisor, a current or former direct report, and a professional colleague).

Submit your application securely through our website at [here](#).

For further information, please contact:

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RH Perry & Associates is committed to the highest standards of professionalism in all dealings with candidates, sources, and references. We fully respect the need for confidentiality and assure interested parties that their background and interests will not be discussed without their consent.

New Mexico Highlands University Equal Employment Opportunity and Non-discrimination Policy

It is the policy of the University to prohibit unlawful discrimination and harassment against employees or applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin or ancestry, sex, age, physical or mental disability or handicap, serious medical condition, spousal affiliation, sexual orientation, gender identity, veteran status or any other basis prohibited by applicable law.