


Friday, November 18, 2022

TO: James Holloway, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs  
COEHS Interim Dean Search Advisory Committee Members

FROM: Jay Parkes, PhD   
Professor of Educational Psychology  
Associate Dean of Undergraduate and Graduate Education

RE: Letter of Interest for the COEHS Interim Dean Position

The College of Education and Human Sciences is poised for unprecedented opportunities yet has atrophied so as to be unprepared to capitalize on them. The Interim Dean to be appointed will need to direct the college's building back its strength and capabilities while simultaneously realizing the opportunities. Fortuitously, working hard collectively for unprecedented contributions will likely strengthen the COEHS.

The State of New Mexico is investing in wellbeing, families, children, and education as never before. There are resources not only directly for faculty in the COEHS but also for our students and for us as researchers and service providers. The COEHS faculty, staff, and students in every department have fresh invitations to contribute to New Mexico and beyond.

In order to be able to maximize our contributions, though, we need to grow healthier as an organization. My vision is for the COEHS to pursue three goals: 1) to internally strengthen the COEHS; 2) to make concerted contributions to New Mexico; and 3) to increase our impact. *I will not accomplish these goals; we will accomplish these goals together.* To me, leadership is harnessing and focusing the expertise, talents, and perspectives of our staff, our faculty, and the entire UNM community to achieve these goals.

### **Goal #1: Internally Strengthening the COEHS**

Routine business in the college needs to return to being routine. From properly staffing the COEHS units, to keeping activities like faculty evaluation mundane, to clear, consistent, and regular communication, our "routine business" needs to take little thought and attention. Convulsive activities like faculty hiring planning, budget building, and salary compaction/ inversion resolution need to become ongoing, routine operations.

We each individually and collectively need to (re)learn. Departments, not the college, are the foundational units of our activities, yet, with a years-long adjustment of resources, policies, and control to the college level, departments' abilities to vigorously attend to all aspect of academic life have atrophied. We each, individually and collectively, will need to learn and relearn how to practice faculty governance and academic responsibility in a fully orbbed way.

Every aspect of our interactions needs to center on the COEHS Core Value of Dignity. "We treat all people ethically, with respect and afford them the dignity that is their innate right." Departments act respectfully when they communicate openly with one another and trust each other's expertise and

contributions. Staff, students, administrators, and faculty are not parts of a hierarchy but rather pieces of a mosaic. Caste-systems and their attendant microaggressions and macroaggressions will need to be explicitly addressed and eliminated.

The atrophy of the COEHS has taken years; building back likely will too. We cannot do it ourselves. It will require expert, professional, outside supports and guidance. As interim dean, I would form a UNM-advisory group to work alongside the COEHS structures. This advisory group could include experts from Project ADVANCE, Faculty Senate, UA-UNM, Staff Council, UNM HR, Ombuds. I would also look to engage an entity like the National Center for Professional and Research Ethics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign which specializes in academic unit integrity and climate.

### **Goal #2: Contributions to New Mexico**

The COEHS has been largely inward facing over the last decade. There are many opportunities for us to turn outward, to invest our energies in others. These opportunities exist across the college, not only in educator preparation. Working together to address the needs of New Mexico has the potential to recalibrate our priorities from internal struggles to outward contributions.

By Spring Break 2023, the COEHS can identify 2-3 of our own “grand challenges” which we can address together. Then staffing plans, faculty hiring plans, curriculum, and other resources can be focused there. For too long, the COEHS has used a “let a thousand flowers bloom” approach which heavily dilutes our efforts and places the burden of too-scarce resources on individual faculty & staff.

### **Goal #3: Increase our Impact**

With an outcomes-based, outward-facing focus for college activities, our internal needs and struggles can be reframed. Working together toward common goals with demonstrable impact provides motivation for building our capacities, respecting each other more, and making routine business simply routine.

New Mexico can wait no longer for the COEHS’ impact to increase, and, simultaneously, the COEHS can wait no longer to strengthen ourselves. Using a more focused approach to making concrete differences in New Mexico as the “exercise” we need to build back may ultimately be our most efficient and effective approach.

Recently, I was honored to represent the college at the La Cosecha Dual Language Conference in Santa Fe. At one event, a nine-year-old stood in front of a ballroom full of adults and sang the national anthem in Najavo, acapella. May we be as gifted, as fearless, as proud of and confident in who we are as she was. And more importantly, may we be as effective as those around her have been of tending to her wellbeing, to her sense of communities, to her language and her culture. As our own Penny Bird reminded that same audience, all of the peoples of New Mexico, and every person here, deserves as an innate right their fullest wellbeing of health, of mind, of spirit, of language, and of culture.

I look forward to elaborating on these goals and the strategies to reach them through the Interim Dean selection process. If these goals and approaches resonate with staff, faculty, students, and administration, then I would be honored to serve the dean’s role in our mosaic for this next phase of the college’s life.