ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT
ACADEMIC REPORTING-TIMELY GRADE REPORTING

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

Report 2009-05
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ABBREVIATIONS

A&R	Admissions and Registration
I	Incomplete
IA	Internal Audit Department
NR	Not Reported or Non-Reported
UNM	The University of New Mexico
WNR	Withdrawal Not Reported

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part the fiscal year 2009 approved Internal Audit (IA) plan, the Internal Audit Department conducted an audit of timely grade reporting. Structurally, the University has an Office of the Registrar, as well as Branch Campus, School of Law, and School of Medicine Registrars, who have the responsibility of monitoring grade reporting. Timely grade reporting is important for the success of the University of New Mexico students. Any not reported grade can impact a student's ability to graduate.

Our objective is to determine any barriers to timely grade reporting and recommend suggestions related to improvement for the processes used. The University recorded 99% of possible grades for Fall 2008 and Spring 2009. We commend the Office of the Registrar for its achievement. The following recommendations will further improve services to students through timely grade reporting.

GRADING POLICIES

The Provost/Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, in consultation with the Admissions & Registration (A&R) Committee, should review current grade policies contained in the Faculty Handbook for possible modification. Areas for possible modification include:

- Clarification of the 48 hour period for grades to be entered, new financial aid requirements for timely grade reporting, and inclusion of grade reporting procedures for the Schools of Law and Medicine;
- Re-submission of the grade proposal outlining use of an administrative grade of Withdrawal Not Reported (WNR) as a substitute for NR; and
- Discussion of the NR grade as it relates to preventing graduation, when the grade is for a course(s) not required by the student's degree program.

The Deputy Provost will meet with the A&R Committee by April 2010 to review grade policies including the possible modifications.

NOT REPORTED (NR) GRADES

The Registrar should clear NR grades from previous semesters. Currently, the Office of the Registrar is analyzing the status of students who have outstanding NR grades, and developing recommendations to be submitted to the A&R Committee as how to proceed with clearing up the grades.

BANNER WORKFLOW

With the pending upgrade to Banner 8, the Registrar should follow up on the outstanding Fall 2006 Banner Workflow request submitted to Information Technology to help in resolving NR grades. Additionally, using other possible applications and Banner modification approaches may

result in greater efficiency in grade reporting. Discussions are currently underway with IT to discuss workflow possibilities for faculty to submit after end of term processing grades or grade changes. Multiple day grade entry will be available for the entire faculty for Fall 2009 grade entry.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The Office of the Registrar is a customer-focused organization whose mission is to: preserve academic integrity; ensure adherence to academic policy; safeguard the security of academic records; provide course and classroom management; and provide student information and data reporting for students, faculty, staff and external constituencies of the University. The Office of the Registrar does this in a diverse environment, utilizing advanced technology and a legacy of commitment in order to create, apply and disseminate knowledge.

There are several registrars at the University of New Mexico (UNM). In addition to the Office of the Registrar, other UNM registrars include branch campus registrars who report to the branch directors, and registrars at the School of Law and the School of Medicine who report to their respective dean.

As part of their commitment to timely grade reporting, the Office of the Registrar uses an automated series of emails sent via listservs. The emails are sent to faculty, advisors, branch registrars, and a variety of Office of the Registrar's staff to help facilitate timely grade reporting for students.

During the Spring 2009 semester, the Official Enrollment Report totals from all campuses show a headcount of 31,399. The number of grades due for this semester totaled 113,366, of which 235 grades are still due as of July 21, 2009. This results in a 99.79% reporting rate.

The University uses SunGard's Banner student module to report grades. The module went live in the Fall 2006 semester. Existing processes are continuously modified to help facilitate the timely reporting of grades. These include modifications to the delivered grade entry form (based on faculty needs), automated emails to both faculty and students when grades are entered, regular communication with faculty about the grade entry process (how-to, when due, etc.), and individual contact with faculty, department chairs, deans, and others involved in the grading process during the grading period each term. An upgrade to the system with the implementation of Banner 8 is scheduled for completion in 2010. Further enhancements to the student module are scheduled to improve service to students.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this audit was to determine any barriers to timely grade reporting, and to provide suggestions for possible improvements to processes related to timely grade reporting.

SCOPE

The review covers grade and associated reporting from Fall 2006 through Spring 2009 for the entire University system.

OBSERVATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSES

UNM GRADE POLICIES

GRADE DUE DATES

While the Faculty Handbook states faculty are expected to enter and submit Web grades within 48 hours after the final exam, it is not clear when the 48-hour period starts. Additionally, this is not the practice in either the School of Law or the School of Medicine.

The Faculty Handbook, Section D, Policy 125, <u>Grades and Grade Reporting</u> states:

> **Deadlines.** Faculty grades are expected to be entered and submitted using Web Grades within 48 hours after the final exam.

The School of Law grading information from the Handbook of Policies 2009-10 states:

> **Submission of Grades by Faculty**: Faculty shall submit grades for all courses to the Assistant Dean for Registration as soon as possible but no later than:
> 1. For classes in which an examination is given, faculty grades will be due 30 calendar days from the day the faculty member receives his/her examinations from the Registrar.
> 2. If the class is a seminar with a paper, the grades must be submitted within 30 calendar days from the due date for the papers.
> 3. If the professor requires both a paper and a final examination, the final grades are due 30 calendar days from either the paper due date or from the date the examinations are delivered to the faculty member, whichever is later.
> 4. All clinic grades will be due one business day before the first day of the following semester of summer term.
> 5. The grades are due in the Registrar's Office no later than 5:00 p.m.

The Student Enrollment Director of the School of Medicine described the grading process as follows:

> The MD Program does not follow the standard UNM Term Schedule. It follows then that the grade submissions also do not follow the normal UNM Term Schedule. The MD students complete three phases of education in four years to complete the MD Degree. Phase I, the basic science and anatomy lab component, takes place over approximately the first two years of the four. The Phase II and Phase III clinical component take place during the third year and fourth year respectively.

> Phase I grades are compiled and submitted generally within a few weeks of each block being completed. Phase II grades require board "shelf" exams that are

graded outside UNM and take approximately 2 weeks to be returned after the rotation ends. Then the remainder of the Phase II grades can be compiled and submitted a few weeks after the shelf board scores get back. The Phase III grades generally are compiled by multiple attending physicians and generally are due 4 weeks after the rotation is completed.

The University of New Mexico - 2008-09 Adelante Objectives, Theme: Communication states:

A Note About UNM's 2008/09 Theme: To **communicate** effectively is the single most important thing we can do to engage and involve our students, faculty, staff, and the community as we work toward carrying forth UNM's mission and achieving the vision. Over the next year, UNM's leadership will work diligently to enhance all of UNM's communications pathways to ensure that messages are clear, consistent, and timely.

To provide faculty with more direct guidance on requirements for when to enter grades, the Faculty Handbook should clearly state when the 48 hour time period begins and ends, and address the difference in practice for Schools of Medicine and Law.

Additionally, there should be further clarification of and emphasis on the reason for timely submission of grades, as it affects both the return of Title IV funds and satisfactory academic progress. The Faculty Handbook, Section D, Policy 125, Grades and Grade Reporting also refers to prompt submission of grades and the reports provided to financial aid. However, recent changes in student financial aid regulations emphasize timely grade reporting. These changes are not in the Faculty Handbook.

We are not effectively communicating the entire grade reporting process for the University, including the professional schools, with the general population. This is not in keeping with the above language regarding UNM's 2008-09 Adelante Objectives.

WITHDRAWAL NOT REPORTED (WNR) GRADE PROPOSAL

The Registrar presented a proposal for addition of a possible WNR grade to the Admissions & Registration (A&R) Committee in fiscal year 2007-08. According the Registrar's Office, the A&R Committee voted not to proceed with the WNR grade proposal. No option to assign an administrative grade of WNR may result in a grade of NR on the student's transcript, thereby possibly affecting the student's ability to graduate.

The essence of WNR grade proposal states:

The Office of the Registrar moves to create an administrative grade of WNR. The grade would be assigned to student's academic records at the end of one complete

year (3 semesters (including summers) if no grade has been submitted by the instructor of record). This new grade would be effective for Spring 2008.

Information notes:
A grade of WNR would be applied systematically after grades for a student have not been received by the instructor of record one full year after the course was taken. Literal translation - Administrative withdrawal for non-reported grade for back of transcript definitions.

Students would be able to petition through A&R Grade Petition committee to have course/grade removed from record; have instructor initiate a grade change to award the student the earned grade or request an extension to complete the course work.

The chairperson of the A&R Committee in 2007-08 stated in an email dated July 28, 2009, that the Committee and Faculty Senate should discuss the issue.

According to the 2009-10 UNM Catalog, "a student is not permitted to graduate if unresolved Incomplete (I) grades or not reported (NR) grades are on the student's academic record. It is the student's responsibility to resolve any and all incomplete or not reported grades by the published ending of the semester in which graduation occurs." However, neither the Faculty Handbook nor the Student Handbook includes this statement.

At present, an NR grade prevents a student from graduating, even if the grade is in a course not required for graduation. The Registrar attended the Rocky Mountain Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers Annual Meeting, on July 22-24, 2009. At that time, she addressed grade processing and missing grades, and faculty timeliness to get grades in, with colleagues from Colorado, Wyoming and New Mexico. The information received from several schools indicates they will allow students to graduate with non-reported grades on their academic records, as long as the course is not required for their degree program.

The Faculty Handbook, Policy A61.1, "Admissions and Registration Committee" states:

The Admissions and Registration Committee makes recommendations to the Faculty Senate for the establishment of policies and regulations governing admissions, registration, the grading system, university-wide academic regulations, transference and validation of credits, and university-wide graduation requirements. Additionally, this committee monitors the implementation of these policies and regulations. Through subcommittees, the committee rules on individual cases involving falsification of records, grade changes, petitions for waiver of university-wide graduation requirements and special admissions.

Recommendation 1

The Provost/Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs should consult with the A& R Committee and review current grade policies contained in the Faculty Handbook for possible modification. Areas for possible modification are:

- Clarification of the 48 hour period for grades to be entered, new financial aid requirements for timely grade reporting, and inclusion of grade reporting procedures for the Schools of Law and Medicine;
- Re-submission of the WNR grade proposal; and
- Discussion of the NR grade as it relates to preventing graduation, when the grade is for course(s) not required by degree program.

Response from the Provost/Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

The Provost agrees with this recommendation. By April 15, 2010, the Deputy Provost will meet with the A&R Committee to review current grade policies described in the Faculty Handbook for possible modification. The discussion will address the issues specified in the recommendation.

NOT REPORTED (NR) GRADES

Outstanding NR grades date back to the Fall 2006 semester. The table below shows total not reported (NR) grades as of June 24, 2009, for each campus, by semester, beginning with Fall 2006.

Campus	200680	200710	200760	200780	200810	200860	200880	200910
ABQ	47	35	9	107	76	23	69	185
Gallup	98	26	12	81	36	5	36	108
Los Alamos	14	12	0	9	9	0	2	4
Taos	11	9	0	42	22	2	2	23
Valencia	10	1	2	10	38	1	2	19
UNM Totals	180	83	23	249	181	31	111	339

The system assigns assigned a default grade of NR if the faculty does not enter a grade for a student in the system at the end of the reporting semester. The Banner system normally assigns a NR grade within one week after the end of the term. While departments make efforts to clear NR grades, it is not always the responsibility of faculty; it could be the result of student inaction.

According to the 2009-2010 UNM Catalog "a student is not permitted to graduate if unresolved Incomplete (I) grades or not reported (NR) grades are on the student's academic record. It is the student's responsibility to resolve any and all incomplete or not reported grades by the published

ending of the semester in which graduation occurs." Processes exist for the students to resolve any NR grades in order to graduate.

The UNM Faculty Handbook, Section D, Policy 125, Grades and Grade Reporting states:

> **Deadlines.** Faculty grades are expected to be entered and submitted using Web Grades within 48 hours after the final exam.

> **Grade Reporting.** Grades for all students are submitted online through the Web Grade site for all courses completed at the end of 8 weeks and at the end of the semester. This includes all miscellaneous start and end date courses that occur during those time frames. It is the responsibility of the faculty to be able to advise students of progress in their courses, especially from the mid point of the semester to its conclusion. A special class list (Web Grade List) by which the grades are to be entered and submitted is available on line. Web Grades will be available the last day of the 8-week session and the last Friday before final exam week for entering and submitting grades. Web Grade will be available for all short courses on the last scheduled day of the class. The faculty will be notified by e-mail of a successful submission of their grades.

Recommendation 2

The Registrar should work with appropriate offices to clear the outstanding NR grades from previous semesters.

Response from the Registrar

Currently, the Office of the Registrar is doing an analysis of the status of students who have outstanding Non-Reported grades. Upon review, information will be provided and recommendations submitted to the Faculty Senate Admissions and Records Committee, as how to proceed with clearing up outstanding Non-Reported (NR) grades.

BANNER WORKFLOW

The Office of the Registrar's current procedure to notify professors of the grading process appears to be effective; however, it may be more efficient to use Banner Workflow and other computer applications.

Currently, the Office of the Registrar notifies professors to enter grades via formatted automated emails and mail-merge lists. The Office of the Registrar uses a labor-intensive process to get grades entered, which involves offering assistance to individual faculty, and follow-up at the departmental and college level. This process begins during finals week. The follow-up begins

with the courses with the largest enrollments, and includes communication with the Branch Registrars so they may work with their faculty. The Registrar finds this personal touch helps encourage compliance with timely grade reporting.

The Office of the Registrar requested a Banner Workflow process from the Information Technology Department for resolving NR grades after Banner went live in the Fall 2006. According to the Registrar and Associate Registrar, the Information Technology Department has not addressed this request. During the audit, the Registrar and Associate Registrar noted two additional processes to enhance the online grading process: allowing grade entry across multiple days; and, providing an electronic grade change process for faculty to change submitted and NR grades. It came to our attention that implementation of grade entry across multiple days began with the Summer 2009 College of Nursing grading period, and will be available for all courses as grading opens for the Fall 2009 term. SunGard's web site, Banner Workflow states:

> "Banner Workflow is an open, flexible tool that unites processes, information, and people. It automates, simplifies, and directs the flow of information through your entire enterprise. The results are efficient operations, increased automation and visibility, institution-wide consistency, and easy exception handling…
>
> Banner Workflow's automated processes allow business events to trigger user notifications, business process logic, external or internal emails, and automated activities. Mundane, low-value tasks can be streamlined and redundancy eliminated. Morale and productivity improve measurably because staff gain time to focus on more strategic activities…
>
> Banner Workflow allows you to run your processes the way that you see fit, with the flexibility to streamline operations and adapt to changing business needs while measurably improving productivity, morale, and customer service."

Recommendation 3

In conjunction with the upgrade to Banner 8, the Registrar should contact the Information Technology Department to process the outstanding Fall 2006 Workflow request to help resolve NR grades.

Response from the Registrar

Discussions are currently underway with IT to discuss workflow possibilities for faculty to submit after end of term processing grades or grade changes that will continue to allow for more timely posting of grades to the student(s) academic record.

Recommendation 4

The Registrar should continue with the process of allowing faculty to enter grades over several days, and pursue an electronic process to allow faculty to change submitted and NR grades.

Response from the Registrar

Successful implementation of a collaborative effort with the Office of the Registrar and IT has been completed and tested, using the College of Nursing as the test group for multiple day grade entry. This capability will be available for all faculty effective Fall 2009 grade entry. The functionality faculty gain from this effort is the ability to enter student grades in courses they have taught, over multiple days, prior to end of term processing.

REGISTRARS' GROUP

Previously, a Registrars' Group (instituted approximately 11 years ago) met on a regular basis. Due to budget cuts, the Registrars' Group last met in Fall 2008.

While there is a collegial and collaborative working relationship among the various Registrars, there is no reporting relationship between the various Registrars within the University and the Office of the Registrar. A central authority may not officially coordinate the work of the various registrars, but they do work together on grade entry.

The job description for the Registrar, as shown on the UNM Human Resources Web Site, states:

> ### <u>Summary</u>
>
> Under limited supervision, directs all facets of the operations of the Registrar's Office including student registration and records, class schedules, instructional space assignments, <u>graduation clearance</u>, and other related matters. Plans and develops strategies for maintenance and upgrading of academic information infrastructure.
>
> ### <u>Duties and Responsibilities, (Partial</u>)
>
> Recommends and participates in the development and implementation of university policies and procedures regarding student registration, records, class schedules, instructional space scheduling, residency requirements, identification cards, and <u>graduation requirements</u>.

Maintains and upgrades the University's academic information infrastructures including academic records archives, on-line student database, voice response system, World Wide Web and other electronic databases and information systems.

The working relationships and coordination of the various registrars could improve through regularly scheduled meetings, to assist them in meeting standards and providing consistent student services from campus to campus.

Recommendation 5

The Registrar should reinstitute the Registrars' Group meetings, and meet at least once a year to share: information, updates to software, best practices, and tips on how to improve services to students, etc.

Response from the Registrar

The Division of Enrollment Management has committed to an annual meeting with enrollment services representatives from branch campuses and other UNM entities to enhance communication and share issues and strategies. The registrar's group will be part of this event. The registrar is currently contacting all enrollment services representatives to coordinate a meeting in November, 2009. The meeting will include the enrollment professionals from the School of Medicine and the School of Law.

GRADING INFORMATION

Grading information is not available in one centralized location for students on the University's Office of the Registrar website. Students can obtain this information through Fast Info and the Student Handbook, as well as the UNM Catalog.

The University of New Mexico - 2008-09 Adelante Objectives, Theme: Communication states:

"A Note About UNM's 2008/09 Theme: To **communicate** effectively is the single most important thing we can do to engage and involve our students, faculty, staff, and the community as we work toward carrying forth UNM's mission and achieving the vision. Over the next year, UNM's leadership will work diligently to enhance all of UNM's communications pathways to ensure that messages are clear, consistent, and timely."

Students may not know where to access the grading information to gain a complete understanding of grading at UNM, including how to appeal grades. Currently, students must consult the Student Handbook and/or Fast Info to obtain grading information. To better serve

students, the Office of the Registrar should post or link to the grading information on their website.

Recommendation 6

The Registrar should place either the grading information or a link to the information on the Office of the Registrar website, allowing students to access the information in one centralized location.

Response from the Registrar

This project was in the design phase as the internal audit process began. It is expected to be completed by December, 2009, in time for faculty grade entry for Fall 2009.
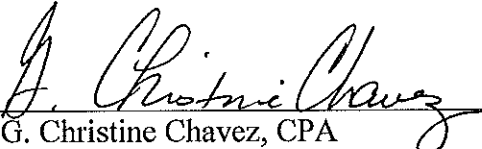
CONCLUSION

The University has recorded over 99% of the possible grades for Fall 2008 and Spring 2009. We believe the following recommendations will improve services to all students.

- Review grade policies for possible modification, to address clarification of the 48 hour grading entering period, the WNR grade proposal, and discussion of NR grades that may prevent graduation;
- Clear all NR grades from previous semesters;
- Follow-up on the outstanding Banner Workflow request, and use other software applications to enhance processes for grade reporting;
- Continue working on a Banner Workflow process allowing grade entry across multiple days (implemented), and an electronic grade change process for faculty to change submitted and NR grades (under implementation).
- Reinstitute the meeting, at least once a year, of all University Registrars; and
- Place or link the grading information on the Office of the Registrar's web site (under implementation).

APPROVALS

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Approved for Publication

Chair, Audit Committee