

## Welcome Message for Review Team

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### New Mexico's First Independent Community College

Founded in 1965, New Mexico Junior College (NMJC) became the first independent community college in New Mexico, authorized under the New Mexico Junior College Act of 1963. Few could have envisioned the remarkable educational, economic, and cultural hub the college would become for the communities of southeastern New Mexico and west Texas. Despite its location in the far southeastern corner of the state, NMJC has earned widespread recognition for its robust liberal arts programs as well as its cutting-edge technical, professional, and workforce development training.

### Our History

The college's foundation is deeply rooted in its community. NMJC was established to serve as the community's college, catering to the residents of Lea County and its surrounding areas. Robert Anderson, president of New Mexico Junior College from 1978 to 1987, articulated this vision during an address to the faculty in August 1978, stating:

“Ours is not the choice of whether or not they should learn, who should have the privilege of learning, or even necessarily what they should learn. Ours is the responsibility to ascertain what it is that our service-area public wants to learn... to allow all citizens who desire to learn the opportunity to do so... ours is the responsibility to reach out in a proactive manner to inspire and motivate those citizens who have not typically sought further learning experiences; ours is the responsibility to respond to every legitimate request made to us for help... ours is the responsibility to be a viable, existing, solidly-based county-wide college.”

Over the decades, the college's mission has remained steadfast: *New Mexico Junior College, as a comprehensive community college, promotes success through learning.* This mission is brought to life through the college's core values of **excellence, effectiveness, responsiveness, access, and community involvement**. The founders of NMJC envisioned it as a hub for lifelong learning, a gathering place for the community, and a vital contributor to the local economy.

### Our Region

NMJC serves a region encompassing southeastern New Mexico and western Texas, an area approximately the size of the state of Connecticut. Southeastern New Mexico lies within the Permian Basin, the leading producer of oil and gas in the United States. Advances in technology have significantly increased oil and gas production in the Permian Basin, contributing to the nation's progress toward energy independence. However, this economic success presents a unique challenge for NMJC, which will be articulated in the assurance argument.

Managing finances by balancing fluctuating revenue streams remains one of the college's most significant challenges. Committed to being responsible stewards of the fiscal resources entrusted to us, the college conservatively budgeted \$983,333 in monthly oil and gas

revenue for FY25. However, with the average price of oil at \$70.21 per barrel during FY25, actual monthly revenue far exceeded projections, averaging \$5,287,478. Historically, oil prices have ranged from a high of \$100 per barrel in July 2022 to a low of \$14 per barrel in April 2020. Given this volatility, the college employs conservative budget forecasting to mitigate the potential impact of revenue declines on the campus community, ensuring financial stability even during periods of economic uncertainty.

The NMJC community reflect the diversity of Lea County, where the population is roughly 60% Hispanic, 3.4% Black, and 32% White. NMJC's student demographics closely align, with 60.9% Hispanic, 4.73% Black, and 21.38% White students enrolled. The seven-member elected Board also mirrors this diversity, comprised of three Hispanic, one Black, and three White members, providing a broad range of perspectives that inform the college's governance and strategic direction.

## **Navigating Change**

Much has changed at NMJC since 2020. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Kelvin Sharp, the college's 6th president, announced his retirement in September 2021. In response, the NMJC Board of Directors appointed Dr. Steve McCleery, the college's 5th president who had retired in 2016, as interim president in October 2021. After conducting a national search, the Board selected Dr. Derek Moore as NMJC's 7th president, with his term beginning in July 2022.

During Dr. Moore's presidency, the college engaged a third-party agency to provide interim leadership for two key roles: Vice President for Student Services and Vice President for Instruction. However, in December 2024, Dr. Moore announced his resignation. To ensure continuity, the NMJC Board of Directors appointed Ms. Cathy Mitchell, former Vice President for Student Services, as interim president.

Under Ms. Mitchell's leadership, the interim vice president contracts were terminated, and permanent appointments were made for both the Vice President for Student Services and the Vice President for Instruction after conducting nation-wide searches. With a fully staffed Executive Cabinet now in place, the leadership team has focused on transforming and evolving the college while maintaining the stability and core values that have defined NMJC since its founding in 1965. First and foremost is the campus-wide development of the college's next strategic plan.

## **Dynamic and Responsive**

Over the past five years, NMJC has implemented significant changes in operations, academic programs, and workforce training to better serve the evolving needs of our newest generation of students. While many of these changes are detailed in later sections of this document, the following key initiatives are worth highlighting:

- **Advising Model Revamp:** The college introduced a new advising model featuring Success Coaches, who maintain a portfolio of students and provide personalized support to enhance their academic and personal success.
- **Course Designation System Alignment:** NMJC transitioned from a two-letter, three-number course designation system to a four-letter, four-number system, aligning with the statewide common course transfer system to improve transferability and consistency for students.

- **LPN to RN Program Re-establishment:** The college reinstated the Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) to Registered Nurse (RN) pathway, addressing a critical workforce need in healthcare.
- **Steve McCleery Industrial Technology Center:** NMJC celebrated the grand opening of the Steve McCleery Industrial Technology Center, a state-of-the-art facility designed to modernize and expand programs in automation and industrial systems, welding, oil and gas, and lineman utility training.
- **NMJC Educational Success Endowment Fund:** Designed to stabilize the college amid oil and gas market volatility, this restricted, long-term endowment, governed by the NMJC Board, will support college operations should the oil and gas market drop substantially. Until that time the fund proceeds will be reinvested to grow the endowment.

These initiatives reflect NMJC's commitment to adapting to the needs of students, industries, and the communities we serve, while maintaining a focus on innovation and excellence in education. Stability, integrity, and an unwavering commitment to our mission of serving students are the cornerstones of NMJC.

We are confident that this Assurance Argument provides a complete and accurate portrayal of New Mexico Junior College as a strong, student-centered, and forward-thinking institution. We sincerely thank the Peer Review Team in advance for their thoughtful engagement with our materials and appreciate the opportunity to discuss our work during the site visit.