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AUTHOR   Iannozzi, Maria
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ABSTRACT
        This report describes efforts by Eastern New Mexico
University (ENMU) to recast its mission more narrowly while at the same time
reducing the sense of remoteness and disconnection, as well as geographic
isolation, between the main campus and its branch campuses. In the early
1980s, ENMU suffered from mission drift, in part as a result of its efforts
to look like a research university at the expense of other programs. After a
1987 North Central Association accreditation visit, ENMU focused its mission
by pruning nine undergraduate and six graduate programs that no longer served
the students or the region; four programs more consistent with local demand
were added. Subsequently, ENMU's mission was revised, and six strategic
priorities (including significant investment in technology and distance
education) were identified. Technology became the means for most of ENMU's
ends, including curriculum reform and a commitment to serving the whole range
of students' academic and co-curricular needs. The university's willingness
to experiment has resulted in a string of successes in implementing new
technology in distance and traditional instruction, including the use of
interactive instructional television, email, listservs, multimedia
presentations, and the Internet to deliver instructional material.
Institutional statistics and a list of milestones on ENMU's path to reform
are included. (MAB)

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Eastern New Mexico University

The Problem: *Reduce the sense of remoteness, and even disconnection, between the main campus and its branch campuses, as well as the geographic isolation of the institution; and recast the mission of a public institution trying to fulfill too many roles simultaneously.*

The Solution: *Make a significant investment in technology to draw remote campuses closer together; focus the mission on improving student outcomes, building on prior advances in assessment, active learning, and collaborative teaching; and extend the University's intellectual reach.*

In the early 1980s, Eastern New Mexico University, like many regional comprehensives at the time, suffered from mission drift—struggling to look like a research university, while missing opportunities to improve the outcomes and retention of its rural, economically disadvantaged, and geographically dispersed student population. Situated in a remote corner of New Mexico, and serving first-generation college students whose competing family and schooling responsibilities frequently cause them to defer their educations, Eastern was also challenged to draw together its scattered geographic components and find a way to bring the world to its campus.

With a nationally recognized program of assessment and a decade of work in active learning, Eastern reined in its assets to achieve focus, becoming proactive and developing an agenda for transformation, rather than remaining reactive to state-level demands. Although in many ways a traditionally structured public institution, this smaller school was able to reach consensus because it had maintained a strong culture of collaboration

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among faculty—and between faculty and administration—as well as visionary and resourceful leadership. Timing was also key. According to the University's president, Everett Frost, two North Central regional accreditation visits in 1987 and 1997 supplied opportunities for Eastern to be self-reflective, to address a mixed mission and identify priorities.

After a 1987 North Central visit, Eastern's first step was to prune nine undergraduate and six graduate programs that no longer served the students or the region—while adding four undergraduate programs more consistent with local demand. Then, building on a decade of work in student and institutional assessment as well as a campus-wide commitment to active learning and collaborative teaching, Eastern embarked on a mission review process at another accreditation milestone to identify values centered on liberal education. In March of 1996, the University came to affirm what George Mehaffy, vice president for academic affairs, calls a "unity of purpose." "Public institutions face an enormous pressure to become multi-purpose organizations," he explains, "but we came to understand that our primary role is neither to be the generator of new knowledge nor the only entity taking care of local and social needs. We chose to focus on students and student outcomes."

The revised mission led to the identification of six strategic priorities, which included significant investment in technology and distance education, as well as curricular reform and a dedication to "whole student" life: a commitment to serve the range of students' academic and co-curricular needs. In fact, technology became the means for most of the University's ends; Eastern realized that it could use technology as a way to propel its prior advances in active learning, collaborative teaching, student outcomes, competency-based assessment, and multicultural awareness—as well as invite the world outside of rural New Mexico into student residences, computer labs, and faculty offices.

Although the governance structure at Eastern is traditional, the strategies pursued to internally "market" its ideas for change are innovative. "We needed to reach a critical mass for all of our initiatives to weave each strand of reform into the fabric of the institution," says Mehaffy. "In each case, we employed high visibility, high-level administrative support, multiple institutional players, and rewards for participation." For the assessment, diversity, and technology initiatives, the rewards came in the form of mini-grants to the faculty for their investigation and experimentation.

More importantly, Eastern's culture—in part, a by-product of its location—contributed to the success of institutional renewal. President Frost

explains how being geographically isolated had the unexpected benefit of fostering academic community: "We have traditional disciplinary boundaries within the curriculum, but our faculty talk across departments and to each other, rather than focusing their attention entirely on their disciplines or outside of the institution."

Although leadership within the administration played a significant role in fostering reform, Frost believes that Eastern benefits from the "coffee pot" model of change, where ideas percolate up from the faculty. "The culture at Eastern goes beyond shared governance, constituency senates, and committees," says Frost. "It's really about shared creativity and innovation on the one hand and shared traditional academic values around teaching, student focus, and general education on the other." Ed Kinley, director of Eastern's Computer Services, acknowledges the importance of institutional support for experimentation and innovation, particularly in the case of technology. "We celebrate our successes—and that's extremely important for sustaining change. But Eastern has encouraged an entrepreneurism that includes a willingness to tolerate failures as well as hail victories. If it doesn't work, then we have still learned something."

This willingness to experiment has resulted in a string of successes—the most recent is Eastern's enhanced use of technology for distance learning and as a teaching and learning tool. Eastern rolled out its technology initiative in stages beginning in 1994, dubbed the "Year of Technology," with the first goal of placing a computer on every faculty member's desk. To ensure that faculty would actually use their computers, Eastern developed a technical support service that, literally, makes house calls. These appointments are not just for troubleshooting; technicians actively work with faculty to develop strategies for incorporating technology into their teaching. The "Year of Technology" was followed by a string of initiatives in quick succession: wiring Eastern's two-year campuses to the Internet; joining the American Association for Higher Education's (AAHE) Teaching, Learning, Technology Roundtable; dedicating a new state-of-the-art Computer Center; and unveiling enhanced training programs for faculty teaching on interactive instructional television (I^2TV).

I^2TV is nothing new at Eastern; the University has offered televised courses since 1978. However, greater investment has helped to draw remote campuses closer together and improve the quality of instruction delivered. With a recent increase in demand for interactive distance courses, the University invested heavily in upgrading the facilities, technology, and

skill of its faculty. It also increased the number of distance courses available to over 100 each year in six distinct degree programs.

Innovations in instructional television complemented the applications of technology in the on-campus classroom: faculty and student use of multimedia tools for presentations, Web-based dissemination of lecture and course information, the use of list-servs, faculty-student interaction via e-mail, and courses delivered entirely over the Internet. At the heart of every level of application, however, is the active engagement of students in the learning process and the improvement of teaching effectiveness—the ability of students and teachers to focus less on content and more on cognitive and conceptual skills.

At the most basic level, these tools free up student time and attention to focus on the material they are learning. "I can print out a professor's lecture notes and overheads before attending class," says Angela Partin, a Computer Information Systems major and an adult student. "I don't have to constantly scribble to get everything down, and I know what's coming next. It allows me to really pay attention to what the professor is saying, to absorb and synthesize the information as it is being presented." Technology also allows access to what Kinley calls "just-in-time information." When data are readily accessible at the touch of a keyboard, it becomes less essential that students memorize facts and more feasible for them to focus on honing their cognitive abilities. "The software we use in my physics classes allows me to really grasp what's happening by demonstrating what I wouldn't normally be able to see, like the interaction of atoms to form molecules," says T.J. Whitaker, a junior physics major and student body president. "Once I understand the underlying principles of a theory, I can apply that concept to any situation. It doesn't matter what combination of atoms I could be dealing with; I'm going to understand how they form bonds."

At another level, the use of e-mail, list-servs, and Internet courses increases communication between students and faculty, as well as among students and their peers. In fact, 74 percent of Eastern's faculty report that they regularly exchange e-mail with students. "We know that student success hinges on faculty-student interaction," says Kinley, "and this is one of the best ways to increase that contact while maintaining flexibility for faculty and students." An added benefit of classes conducted on the Internet is greater student participation in discussions. Virtual environments enable students who hesitate to contribute in class to participate more fully.

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Students' time-on-task also increases through the use of electronic communication. Kinley explains the value of this dimension of technology: "There is little question that the more a student engages material and inter-acts with peers about it, the more likely he or she will internalize what's been learned. We're focusing on asynchronous, outside-of-class use, whether through list-servs or groupware, as a way to extend the course itself into non-class hours, so that students actively engage material and expand their learning experiences." One example of the benefit to expanded time-on-task has emerged in an introductory music appreciation class, which recently introduced a list-serv component. In the traditional course, students would listen to a musical piece and submit a brief—and, too often, simplistic—reaction on paper. Now, students post their responses on a list-serv. Not only are they more careful about what they write, they also read each other's reactions and compare experiences in an asynchronous dialog. What began as a "task" has turned into active conversation, and for many students has led to a deeper understanding of approaches to music.
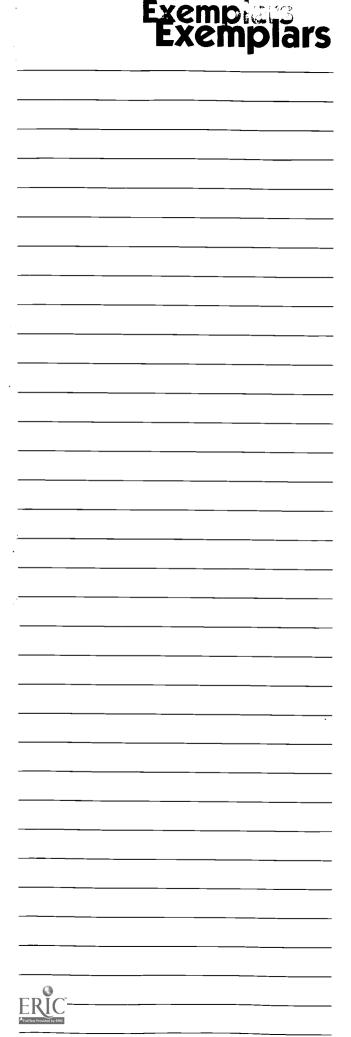
While anecdote offers interesting testimony, Eastern's current challenge is to build on its lauded assessment system to gauge objectively the impact of using technology in the classroom. Alec Testa, Eastern's assessment coordinator, is currently focusing on these efforts. "Technology doesn't change the outcomes; it changes how you achieve them—the processes you use—and we're currently constructing ways to measure how those new processes affect learning. One instrument Eastern uses, a Teaching Technology Questionnaire, lists seven principles that lead to effective under-graduate experiences and asks professors to identify how they support those principles using technology."

While the introduction of technology has extended the notion of students as active learners, it has also shifted faculty roles to that of "coach." Although Eastern has not overhauled its tenure and promotion process, it stresses faculty self-assessment, including the use of technology to enhance learning objectives. Other investments in faculty include increasing salaries to become more consistent with peer institutions and providing extensive professional development, particularly around reforms. For example, Eastern's investment in technology was accompanied by an explicit invest-ment in professional development opportunities.

How was the institution able to make such substantial investments in technology and professional development? Much of Eastern's success is due to resourceful financial planning, in the face of an unstable funding envi-

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ronment. "We're in many ways a beleaguered institution in a poor state competing with much wealthier universities," explains Mehaffy, "but we have weathered fluctuations in state support without having to drastically reduce our staff and faculty." The restructuring of undergraduate and graduate programs in 1986 generated some savings, but not enough to offset the significant costs of a new technology infrastructure. Instead, Eastern's president "cashed in" a rainy-day fund and matched a one-time grant from the state earmarked for equipment upgrades. In addition, faculty are as involved in the budgeting process as they are in reform efforts. This fact seems to have made a real difference in promoting change. "Our budget committee is faculty-oriented," says Ed Kinley. "Unlike other institutions, when budgets get tight, faculty never question where the dollars are going, because they're involved in making those decisions."

In the spirit of "episodic improvement," Eastern continues to revisit all of the threads of its reform efforts. In fact, as George Mehaffy describes, it is one way to identify when a particular initiative has become fully integrated into the culture of the institution: "I knew we had been successful when one of the faculty members—in a discussion about improving teaching methods—began his sentence with, 'Beyond technology'. . . ." Perhaps the clearest indication of success, however, is the demand for Eastern graduates in high-tech industries. At a recent job fair, Eastern's students comprised only 11 percent of the attendees, but walked away with 44 percent of the job offers. In fact, seven Eastern computer science majors were offered positions on the spot by Hughes Aircraft, based in Washington State. Now, Hughes comes to Eastern to interview students—one striking example of how Eastern has started to bring the world to its campus.

Institutional Statistics:

Public, comprehensive baccalaureate and master's granting institution on the rural high plains of eastern New Mexico

3,500 students on the main campus in Portales, **2,800** students at the Roswell campus, and **600** students at the Ruidoso campus

Ethnic composition of student body: **21.5%** Hispanic, **3.5%** African American, **2.5%** Native American, **70%** Anglo American

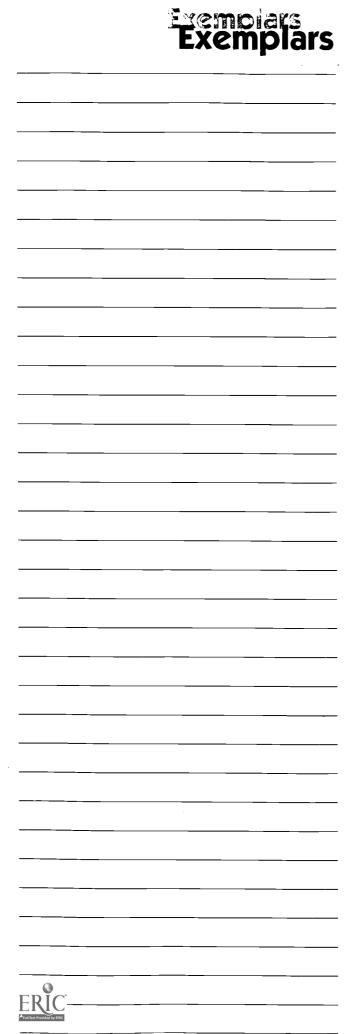**150** full-time, tenure-track faculty; **57** part-time faculty

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Milestones on the Path to Reform:

- In 1986, Eastern began regularly assessing student satisfaction with instructional and non-instructional services, general education knowledge, and discipline-specific learning. An assessment plan and process were enacted for all units on campus.

- In 1988, "Collegiate Renewal," a campus-wide commitment to active learning and collaborative teaching, was launched as a professional development initiative.

- In 1991, Eastern's student body voluntarily voted to assess themselves a fee to build the Instructional Equipment Fund (IEF), which supports the purchases of teaching-related technology.

- Eastern declared 1994 "The Year of Technology," with the goal of placing a computer on every faculty desk.

- In October of 1994, Steve Gilbert, technology projects director at AAHE, invited Eastern to become one of 12 founding universities of the Teaching, Learning, Technology Roundtable (TLTR). Eastern also initiated the first "Teaching Technology Initiative" (TTI) challenge grants program.

- A new Computer Center (the remodeled University Theater) was dedicated in October of 1994, making over 100 computers available to students in labs and classrooms.

- Eastern inaugurated its homepage on the Web in October of 1994.

- In the spring of 1995, Eastern hosted a campus "Technology Fair," showcasing the faculty projects from the TTI grants.

- In August of 1995, the focus of "The Year of Technology II" turned to computer upgrades and faculty collaboration on TTI grants.

- Also in August, a regular training program for all faculty teaching on I°TV was inaugurated. Faculty met for approximately ten hours of instruction and discussion about the technology and pedagogy of effective teaching via distance.

- In September of 1995, Eastern received a federal grant to expand its instructional TV system to deliver four-channel capacity to additional schools and communities in its 20,000 square-mile service area.

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- In preparation for the North Central Accreditation visit and as part of Eastern's strategic planning, the campus began a mission review process in 1995-96. The resulting new mission (adopted in March of 1996) identified institutional values centered on liberal education that engages teachers and students in a dynamic, collaborative process.

- In March of 1996, after campus consultation, six strategic priorities were identified: curriculum and academic programs, enrollment management, technology, whole student life, whole employee life, and distance education.

- Capping a decade of institutional effort, Eastern was recognized by the North Central Association for an "exemplary" assessment plan in 1996. Year 3 of the TTI grants introduced an assessment component for classroom projects.

- Following the spring of 1997 North Central accreditation visit, the University received the best evaluation in its institutional history: ten years of re-accreditation with no identified weaknesses.

Exemplars

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Organization/Address: Institute for Research on Higher Education
4200 Pine Street
Philadelphia, Pa 19104-4090

Printed Name/Position/Title:
Jo Anne Saporito/Associate Director

Telephone: 215-898-4585   FAX: 215-898-9876

E-Mail Address: