

Proposition: 01-22/23

Proposal Type: Bill Resolution Memorial Joint Proposition Other (Proposition)

Title: Proposal to **Reorganize** and **Relocate** Borderlands and Ethnic Studies (BEST)

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(Updated with more co-sponsors and additional support letters on Oct 18, 2022)

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Proposed Committee: Curriculum and Programming

Supportive Documents: Borderlands and Ethnic Studies Faculty; Interim Provost; Dean of Health, Education, and Social Transformation; Dean of Arts and Sciences; Chris Brown (Beyond Borders Faculty Fellow); David Ortiz (Center for Latin American and Border Studies Inaugural Faculty Fellow); External Support Letters, D. Lara's Presentation about BEST for the Regent's Student Success Committee (1/10/2022) (see attached)

Proposal: This is a formal proposal to **Reorganize** the Interdisciplinary Studies Department into the Borderlands and Ethnic Studies (BEST) Department and **Relocate** it from the College of Arts and Sciences (A&S) to the College of Health, Education, and Social Transformation (HEST) (per NMSU ARP 2.15 Part 2)

Below, we outline the justification for this Reorganization and Relocation, the benefits these moves will bring to NMSU, and how this Reorganization and Relocation will support NMSU's LEADS 2025 strategic plan and NMSU's efforts to achieve Carnegie R01 status.

Background

Borderlands and Ethnic Studies (BEST) was initially reorganized in Summer 2022 within the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies (IDS) in the College of Arts and Sciences by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences (A&S).

- 1- The Department of IDS was suspended in May 2021; it was not formally eliminated.
- 2- The Dean of A&S revived the Department of IDS and appointed Dr. Dulcinea Lara as department head based on faculty and stakeholder input.
- 3- The Dean of A&S proceeded with an approval mechanism to administratively move Dulcinea Lara and two BEST faculty affiliates from their current departments into IDS. Manal Hamzeh was already in IDS and remained in that unit as part of the BEST faculty.
- 4- The approvals are complete, and the Department now has the following faculty: Dulcinea Lara, Manal Hamzeh, Georgina Badoni, and Joyce Garay.
- 5- Offices were assigned to BEST faculty in IDS on the second floor of Garcia Center.
- 6- The BEST graduate certificate and the NAS graduate and undergraduate minors are in the process of being moved from Criminal Justice and Anthropology, respectively, to IDS, per the process outlined in ARP 4.81. The final approval required is from UPAC, and this item is scheduled for its October meeting.
- 7- Native American Studies courses now fall under the approved prefix, NATV, to align associated offerings with the Higher Education Department coding system. This prefix approval was achieved through the University Student Records Office according to ARP 6.45.

Justification to Reorganize and Relocate

1. The last step of **Reorganizing** is to rename the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies to the Department of Borderlands and Ethnic Studies.
 - a. The name Borderlands and Ethnic Studies **clarifies and coheres** the courses and program offerings that are gaining traction and visibility in the state of New Mexico pertaining to the paradigm shift happening in public education (*Martinez and Yazzie*).
 - b. The renaming is **timely** as it aligns with national growth in these disciplines/areas: Ethnic Studies, Native American Studies, Chicana/o/e Studies, and Africana/African American Studies.
 - c. NMSU would be the **first** such Department in our state- and it is long overdue in the geo-political and social contexts of our federal designations and stated missions of service related to Hispanic, Native American, and other Minoritized groups in our region.
 - d. This renaming is **responsive** to the academic field of Ethnic Studies while highlighting the specificity of the Borderlands. This place-based and nationally-linked interdisciplinary intellectual project activates relational scholarship,

teaching, and community-based solution-making across multiple intersecting communities. The clarity in naming this Department reflects the region's vast and complex history and elevates the significance of the lived experiences of New Mexican peoples, knowledges, and contributions.

- e. Borderlands and Ethnic Studies is **unique** from our peers in our Borderlands focus. Ethnic Studies programs and departments at peer institutions such as the University of New Mexico and the University of Texas-El Paso have been vibrant for 50+ years. While these two institutions offer courses and programs, neither are home to a full Ethnic Studies Department that houses all related programs: Native American Studies, Chicana/o Studies, and Africana/African American Studies. This situates us uniquely within the Ethnic Studies field.
- f. The name, Borderlands and Ethnic Studies is **crucial to the sustainability** of built relationships with other academic units at NMSU and the ongoing enrollment and graduation of BEST students. Borderlands and Ethnic Studies has developed relationships with other units and departments on campus and is now poised to solidify relationships via the graduate certificate, proposed minors, and even cognates so that students can concentrate on their main area of interest while learning and applying content that is culturally and regionally-relevant.
- g. The name, Borderlands and Ethnic Studies would lend **visibility and accessibility** to students who identify with an array of racial and ethnic backgrounds. Borderlands and Ethnic Studies has the potential to attract the larger NMSU student population, including and beyond students of color, as we are a Hispanic Serving Institution, Minority Serving Institution, and Land Grant Institution. With this name, the faculty will be enabled to elevate recruitment efforts from schools in the Borderlands and beyond to its various programs offered, increasing student **enrollment** overall.
- h. The name, Borderlands and Ethnic Studies would be more **recognizable** as an academic unit to external supporters, including private and public (state and federal) **funders**, in its alignment with meeting the specific targets articulated in **grant** opportunities in the Southwest and New Mexico at large. Additionally, this will make BEST more **recognizable** to community members whom we serve, including the public school systems, non-profit agencies, and grassroots community groups.
- i. The name, Borderlands and Ethnic Studies would **signal to potential new faculty and existing faculty** that NMSU is serious about supporting historically underrepresented faculty and investing in social justice-focused academic programs and decolonial approaches.

2. **Relocate** to the College of Health, Education, and Social Transformation (HEST):

- a. The Borderlands and Ethnic Studies faculty is uniquely situated because of our pedagogy, research, and community-centered work **aligns** directly with the newly articulated “**Social Transformation**” **pillar** of the College of HEST.
- b. **Collaborations** between BEST and HEST faculty are already robust, including a multi-year project, “*Re-Visioning Social Studies*,” **funded** by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the New Mexico Public Education Department, the Daniels Fund, Ngage New Mexico, and the Devasthali Family Foundation.
- c. The 2018 *Martinez and Yazzie* ruling states New Mexico’s legal responsibility to educate New Mexico’s youth in “culturally relevant” and “linguistically relevant” education. BEST faculty have been directly addressing this ruling, working with multiple school districts across the state, the New Mexico Public Education Department, and other stakeholders. We are a recognized group of faculty in these broad efforts and are called upon as experts. BEST, located in HEST, **expands** opportunities for synergy between BEST and HEST faculty and **signals** NMSU’s seriousness as a partner in the paradigmatic educational shift occurring in our state, PreK-College.
- d. BEST in HEST will **facilitate Ethnic Studies, Education, and the Public Education system (PreK-12) triad**. In 2022, New Mexico’s Public Education Department (NMPED) unveiled new Social Studies standards for middle and high schools– including a new “strand.” As of August, the sixth and newest strand is: “Ethnic, Cultural, and Identity Studies.” School districts currently lack the content, capacity, and teacher preparation to fulfill the requirements of this strand. BEST faculty have worked closely with school districts and educators (including Las Cruces, Gadsden, Silver City, Mescalero, and Cuba schools) for years. Trust has been built over those years, and letters of support from community partners indicate this relationship and eagerness to see BEST working directly with Education faculty at NMSU and education stakeholders broadly.
- e. The BEST faculty and HEST faculty’s relationship with **Senator Heinrich’s office** (among other interested and supportive legislators and elected officials) will **open policy change and resource allocation opportunities**. This will **strengthen** the bridge between education, health sciences, Ethnic Studies, and other units, departments, and colleges on campus in applicable ways.

With the above profile, BEST’s relocation to HEST will support LEADS 2025 and efforts to achieve R01 in several ways.

Summary of Benefits this Move will Bring to NMSU

- a. NMSU will be able to claim it is the only institution of higher education in New Mexico with a Borderlands and Ethnic Studies Department.

- b. A Borderlands and Ethnic Studies Department will signal seriousness related to NMSU's federal designations and demonstrate to potential students that we are agile in responding to a national/global call for racial equity and healing sparked by so many moments of racial tensions over the past 2-3 years and extending far beyond that.
- c. Faculty of color and social-justice-minded faculty will potentially find community in the events and programming offered by BEST as we build a campus-wide hub for interdisciplinary exchange. This would potentially improve recruitment, retention, promotion, and quality of experience for minoritized faculty groups.
- d. External funders will be impressed by NMSU's commitment to **Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity** vis-a-vis a Department whose curriculum and service/outreach centers on these values.
- e. Grant-funded research projects will elevate NMSU's profile as we seek **R01** status.
 - i. BEST faculty have built strong relationships with **private and public funding agencies**. The departmental status will demonstrate NMSU's commitment to an infrastructure that supports receiving additional funds and accolades for BEST and NMSU.
 - ii. BEST faculty, Dr. Manal Hamzeh and Dr. Georgina Badoni are co-Editors of the nationally acclaimed **Chicana/Latina Studies Journal** (Journal of the Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social). This journal is nationally significant, and NMSU's unique Borderlands location is exciting to the MALCS community in the international scope and the reach this Editorship can bring.
 - iii. BEST faculty are in conversation with funders to develop a "**Borderlands Research Center/Institute**." A Center/Institute that amplifies research in our region with various community stakeholders will bring attention to NMSU as a leader in this cutting-edge, innovative solution-making research

Outcomes for Students and the Broader Society

Critically-informed graduates of NMSU who take BEST courses will be equipped to **operationalize equity** in their daily lives, jobs, and communities moving forward. Having knowledge of historically-contextualized societal structures will advance **social mobility** for NMSU graduates. Graduates will know how to build meaningful and sustainable relationships with the communities they serve.

A recent study conducted by the Division of Institutional Research at San Francisco State University shows that Ethnic Studies (ES) minors and majors graduated within six years at a rate of 92%, while the institutional average was in the 45-50% range. Significantly, students who took one or more Ethnic Studies classes graduated at a rate of 55% (one ES class), 66% (two ES classes), and 71% (three ES classes). Comparatively, NMSU's average 6-year graduation rate is 48.6% (percentages are lower for students who identify as Hispanic or are from one or more minoritized groups). As BEST, we will be a committed institutional partner in a system-wide plan to address this low graduation rate and its attendant inequities.