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For Immediate Release

UNM-LA Advisory Board votes to proceed with mil levy request

The UNM-Los Alamos Advisory Board has directed administration to proceed with plans to ask voters for a 2 mil levy increase for the college in early in 2010. A mil levy is the number of dollars a taxpayer must pay for every \$1,000 of assessed value. A mil is \$1 of tax for every \$1,000. Each mil equals \$767,000 in Los Alamos County. The proposal must be approved by The UNM Board of Regents and will be presented to them in November.

It has been 27 years since the voters approved a 1 mil levy for the college and UNM-LA has not sought additional operational support from voters since that time. The college did request, and voters approved, a capital bond in 1998, but that debt is now retired. UNM-LA's rate of support through mil levy is one of the lowest of any of the state's community colleges, noted UNM-LA Executive Director Dr Cedric Page.

"We are at a critical point at UNM-LA in that we have had to reduce core faculty and depend on adjunct instructors," said UNM-LA Advisory Board Chair Marie Chiravalle. This means reduced support and advisement services for students enrolled at UNM-LA, she said.

Enrollment has been increasing over the past four semesters at UNM-LA and the campus has been struggling to serve more students with static resources.

"Adverse fiscal circumstances beyond our control have driven UNM-LA to a really difficult critical financial situation," Chiravalle. said. "We have tried to maintain through management decisions rather than seeking public support, but we have done all that we can do."

In spite of financial constraints, UNM-LA has moved ahead with a number of new initiatives, including a new Applied Technologies program, the only one of its kind in northern New Mexico. A new solar concentration is being added to the program at this time, said UNM-LA Dean of Instruction Dr Kate Massengale.

"UNM-LA has revised and updated a number of its technical degree programs recently. A newly revised Environmental Science degree program is currently being developed," Massengale said. "UNM-LA is constantly striving to be responsive to local economic development. We work closely with the Department of Energy, Los Alamos National Laboratory, local government and area employers to provide the programs that will improve the economic vitality of our region."

Rapid changes in technology have made updates in equipment and training a necessity, Chiravalle pointed out.

"We must stay at a competitive level by expanding our programs to fit the needs of the student population. Rapidly changing technology requires a highly qualified and responsive staff. It also

requires replacing hardware and software, which requires a larger share of our operating resources,” Chiravalle said. “The community has expressed a desire for us to pursue innovative and vibrant STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and workforce focused programs, but they require faculty administrative support, equipment and technology. Our state funding formula does not provide support to develop new programs, hire new faculty or promote new programs.”

“Well-designed, maintained, and upgraded smart or computer classrooms will support our delivery of science, technology, math, and engineering oriented programs,” Page pointed out. “These classrooms can also serve as learning environments, not only for UNM-LA students, but for Los Alamos High School students.”

The role of UNM-LA in serving the needs of high school students has increased steadily in recent years and will continue to grow, said Page. The Dual Credit program, which allows students to earn both high school and college credit, is projected to enroll 100 students in spring 2010.

Future plans at UNM-LA include extending comprehensive tutoring services.

“An increasing percentage of first-time freshmen students entering UNM-LA are underprepared for the rigor of college level courses and require assistance to help them be successful,” Page said.

“Los Alamos citizens are cognizant of the educational needs of our community. We at UNM-LA are committed to continuing our services to our students and to the community,” Chiravalle said. “We are grateful to the taxpayers for supporting the projects and programs that are critical to this campus in fulfilling its mission and goals. We ask your support with a yes vote on UNM-LA’s proposed request for a two mil levy increase.”