

NORTHERN New Mexico University



Senate Bill 603 Change for Common Convenience College Name Summary and FAQs

Summary: During their January 2015 meeting, the Board of Regents unanimously approved the institution's name from Northern New Mexico College to Northern New Mexico University. Their ability to make this change is articulated in Article 12, Section 13 of the State's Constitution.

The statute impacted by this bill was last amended in 2005 to allow the institution's name to be referenced in rule, law and statute as Northern New Mexico College. This amendment would now change the reference to Northern New Mexico University. Please note that the institution's legal name remains the same in the Constitution as Northern New Mexico State School.

Does Northern's accrediting agency need to approve/authorize the name change?

No. The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) has already recognized Northern's name change on its website. The agency also recognizes 27 other institutions across the nation that use the name "university" and only offer two-year and four-year degrees.

What is the difference between University and College?

The difference between a college and a university is that a college just offers a collection of degrees in one specific area while a university is a collection of colleges. Northern currently has five Colleges – Arts and Sciences, Nursing and Health Sciences, Education, Business Administration and Engineering. When a student goes to a university they will ultimately graduate from one of its colleges, such as the business college.

In the U.S., there is very little difference academically between a "college" and a "university." The terms are synonymous; other countries use "college" to refer to some secondary schools, but "university" is always used to mean an institution of tertiary education and higher learning. However, some of the top-ranked schools in the US have a name including "college" (e.g., Dartmouth College, Boston College, Edgewood College and St. John's College).

Why change the name now?

The name change was a capstone on four years of rebuilding the institution on a number of levels. Over the past four years, Northern has made significant progress in regaining the financial stability of the University, and rebuilding and strengthening the academic programs and Colleges.

Why was the name not changed to university in 2005 when the institution began offering four-year degrees?

The change predates the current administration. However, given the definition and traditional difference between colleges and universities, the administration may have not used University in the institution's name because it had not yet established distinct colleges. The academic organization of five academic colleges took place over the past four years.

Who is Northern's accrediting agency?

Northern, as an institution, is accredited by the same agency that accredits all other Universities in the state – The Higher Learning Commission. Northern also holds the following program accreditations:

- Information Engineering Technology (BA): ABET accredited
- AA Business programs: ACBSP accredited
- RN to BSN Program: CCNE accredited
- Barbering, Cosmetology, Massage Therapy, and Nursing programs: Approved by their respective state licensing boards

Does the HED need to approve/authorize the name change?

No. No current rule or statute requires the approval of the Higher Education Department to change an institution's name. The institution has, however requested a letter from both the HED and HLC to this effect.

What is the current tuition rate at Northern?

The cost per credit hour is \$114.50. A full-time student will pay \$2,030 per semester. This rate includes tuition and general fees. Northern is the most affordable four-year institution in the southwestern United States.

What impact will the name change have on tuition?

Each year the Board of Regents, in conjunction with the administration, evaluate the necessity to increase tuition. The name change will not act as a weight for or against a tuition increase.

Will the name change impact course offerings or have an adverse impact on students' ability to graduate?

No. The name change will not change degree or admission requirements for any student. Northern is an open admissions institution and will continue to be. The University will also remain committed to certificates and two-year degrees in addition to its 13 baccalaureate degrees.

How many full-time faculty does Northern employ?

Northern currently employs 53 full-time faculty. Of the total full-time faculty, 57 percent (N=30) hold a PhD. Northern's faculty is also highly diverse with 49 percent being either Hispanic or Native American.