


New Mexico Business Weekly - July 23, 2007
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New Mexico sees strong, varied recruiting scene

New Mexico Business Weekly - July 20, 2007 by [Thomas Munro](#) NMBW Staff
New Mexico's hot economy and the growing reputation of its colleges are fueling a boom in recruiting across a variety of industries.

"The National Association of Colleges and Employers reported a 17 percent increase in college hiring from 2006 to 2007, and that's about what we saw," said Steve Salway, director of career services at New Mexico State University.

Ted Bouras, director of career and student services at the University of New Mexico's Anderson Schools of Management, saw a dramatic jump in employer interest in the schools' job fairs -- as much as 70 percent.

The increases appeared to be the result of a mix of greater home-grown interest and greater respect from out-of-state private and public employers.

A mix of needs
Local workforce needs -- some temporary and some seemingly intractable -- had demand outpacing supply in several areas.

At the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology in Socorro, Career Services Director Chelsea Buffington saw heavy demand for petroleum, mechanical and chemical engineers.

Students with expertise in petroleum engineering and mining technology are finding themselves graduating in a boom time.

"We're one of the few schools that has petroleum engineering," Buffington said. "[That industry] is in a major upturn."

In an era of general engineer shortages, it's a good time to be a Tech graduate.

"Those looking for jobs find jobs," Buffington said. "That's the nice thing about Tech. Our majors are very practical, competitive and sought after."

Salway has seen the same call for the pocket-protector set from recruiters at NMSU.

"Engineering has been going gangbusters," Salway said.

Recruiters coming to NMSU are looking for civil, electrical, computer and mechanical engineers.

Scott Swanson, a December 2006 graduate of Central New Mexico Community College, found his engineering job at Sagebrush Technology Inc. in slightly more than a month. He was able to choose between two local opportunities and a good shot at a job with Raytheon in California. A 35-year-old veteran on the GI Bill, Swanson chose his electronics and photonics major with a mature focus on speedy employment.

"I had to find a field or fields and get it right the first time," Swanson said.

With a varied engineering skill set, it did not take Swanson long to find an employer.

High demand in certain fields
Deep teacher and nurse shortages also bring many recruiters to NMSU. Representatives of 90 to 100 school districts from 13 states around the region came looking for teachers in April.

"[Graduates are] limited only by whether they're willing to go where the jobs are," Salway said.

The nurse shortage is, if anything, even more severe.

"If we cranked out 50 times as many nursing graduates, we still wouldn't meet the need," he said.

Salway also noted a rising interest in students with food-nutrition and production-agriculture expertise and experience as food processing opportunities grow in the region.



At Central New Mexico Community College, Job Connection Center Director Annette Chavez y de la Cruz saw demand across the allied health fields along with shortages of truck drivers, diesel mechanics, welders, machinists and paralegals. The need for truck drivers and diesel mechanics was unusually strong.

"Historically, I don't have the anecdotal information I've heard in the last few weeks in terms of need," Chavez y de la Cruz said.

If one school saw a truly remarkable jump in local employer interest, it was UNM's business school. That jump, as it turns out, was by design.

"Small businesses may not feel they have enough ongoing demand to attend our job fairs," Bouras said. "I told them, if you have just one opening, that's fine. My goal is taking the mystery out of on-campus recruiting."

Recruiting up 70 percent

Employers participating in the Anderson Schools' accounting job fair went up 44 percent last year. The business job fair participation rose 38 percent. There were 30 percent more employers at the fall 2006 job fair and a whopping 70 percent more at the spring 2007 job fair.

Bouras said these numbers reflect both growing local participation and increased interest from outside the state.

"In my opinion, our numbers have been historically low," Bouras said. "We're moving up to the point where we're more competitive with other business schools of our size. We're being discovered, and it's a nice discovery."

One example of this growing national attention is Goldman Sachs. The global investment banking and securities firm was the biggest single employer of Anderson grads over the summer, bringing 11 students to its offices in Manhattan and Salt Lake City.

Bouras is also fostering broader interest by setting up special recruiting days for single corporations, such as Procter & Gamble Day and Target Day.

Government agencies recruit

Attention is also coming to New Mexico from the public sector.

NMSU was one of four sites around the country to host regional showcases for the U.S. Office of Personnel Management in 2006.

Salway said the federal government chose New Mexico in part because of the quality and variety of education students are receiving and partly because of federal diversity requirements that make New Mexico a good place to shop for candidates.

"The feds are really looking at New Mexico as a fertile recruiting ground," Salway said.

And for NMSU, the federal government is a great partner. The Office of Personnel Management was looking to hire for every federal department, from Treasury to Agriculture.

"What's nice from our perspective is they are looking across the board from all different disciplines," Salway said.

NMSU will again host the Office of Personnel Management this year on Oct. 23. UNM will then join in the government job hunt, hosting a second OPM career fair Oct. 25.

Grads get jobs, stay put

All the schools featured in this story are seeing post-graduation employment rates in or near the 90th percentile, factoring out graduates who elect to continue their education and decide not to look for work or who simply disappear.

Within those rules, CNM has a 97 percent post-graduation employment rate. NM Tech regularly sees about 93 percent of its non-continuing students employed. NMSU sends 12 to 15 percent of its graduates to graduate school while about 80 percent find jobs. At the Anderson Schools, many graduates stay in the same job they've had all along, but still, half of the undergraduates and 70 percent of the MBAs have a new job at graduation.

And the good news for those fearing a brain drain is that many of those graduates are staying in New Mexico.

Taking CNM's 2005-2006 numbers as an example, 136 of the 138 nursing degree graduates of the school found jobs in the state. In another shortage area, accounting, all but one of the 32 graduates the school followed stayed in New Mexico.

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