

## Northern New Mexico College makes **strong, data-driven decisions** with Gray Associates's platforms.

### Situation



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**N**orthern New Mexico College is a small, rural college located in Española, New Mexico, that primarily serves the Hispanic and Native American populations. The four-year institution offers bachelor's degrees in a variety of areas, including engineering, nursing, and business administration. It also recently added a community college branch for the purpose of offering technical trade programs.

Because of its size, the college only had one institutional research (IR) employee to provide the data that helps stakeholders and leaders make informed, data-driven decisions. However, financial data was often difficult to obtain on a consistent basis.

“It was very difficult to get data weekly, and most of the data that we had was really about enrollment and retention,” said Ivan Lopez-Hurtado, PhD, the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Northern New Mexico College. “For example, we didn't have the capability to determine the economics for each one of our programs.”

Being able to easily access accurate data is crucial for the college because the information directly impacts tuition prices and influences the types of programs the college offers. According to Ivan, though, it was “impossible to give a good estimate, let alone an accurate one” when it came to the true cost of different programs. Furthermore, the college tended to develop and keep programs out of community and other external pressure instead of basing the decisions on data.



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“The institution was developing programs in a vacuum with little to no data,” said Ivan. “Many programs were built based on anecdotes.”

Ivan first heard of Gray Associates in 2018 at a conference about better decision-making and program economics and costs.

“During a presentation, Gray Associates offered software that could always provide accurate data, so we could know what the real demand for a program is at any time,” said Ivan. “I was unable to find anybody else who offered that. I thought, ‘These guys have exactly what I've been wanting in terms of a resource for us to make better decisions.’”



“Thanks to Gray Associates, we know— at any given time— what's going on with our programs in terms of student demand, employment, and economics. It gives us the power to make real-time decisions.”

Ivan Lopez-Hurtado, PhD

Provost, Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Northern New Mexico College

## Solution



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## RESULTS



We can analyze any program at any level and at any time."

In August 2019, Northern New Mexico College began obtaining data via Gray Associates. Right away, the college was impressed with the data's quality, timeliness, and accuracy.

"If we had hired consultants instead of Gray Associates, whatever the consultants would have told me six months ago would be already obsolete because of COVID," said Ivan. "When something like COVID hits, you can't rely on a one-time consulting project. You need something that's ongoing and frequently updating, and that's what I love about Gray Associates's platforms."

The college uses two of Gray Associates's platforms: one that focuses on program economics and another that pertains to the evaluation of current and potential programs. The information that the platforms provided has led to eye-opening insights and groundbreaking new program development.

"Last February, Gray Associates actually recommended we explore a program in cannabis," said Ivan. "They said it was something new, that nobody was offering this type of program. So in January, we're going to start offering our first courses in cannabis establishment."

The reliable data provided by Gray Associates's program evaluation component also bolster decisions to terminate existing college programs.

"Ending a program is a very difficult decision," said Ivan. "A program's termination ultimately has to be approved by the regents, so you need to have strong data to show that your community doesn't need the program anymore. Gray Associates gives me the data I need to demonstrate a program's value to our regents and my president."

The easy access to structured, comprehensive data from Gray Associates has also improved the college's program review cycle. Now it's easy to determine the cost and performance of a program.

"Thanks to Gray Associates, we know — at any given time—what's going on with our programs in terms of student demand, employment, and economics," said Ivan. "Even though we're on a six-year program review cycle, we can analyze any program at any level and at any time. It gives us the power to make real-time decisions."



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