MEMO

TO: David Lopez  
FROM: John Nash  
DATE: Nov. 1, 2007  
RE: NHU Strategic Direction

In this memorandum I outline the five most salient points around which there is common ground among the experts who advised NHU's trustees in a two day sub-committee session in October, 2007. Based on these points I make a recommendation to the trustees as to the most viable institutional direction for NHU.

**Point 1: To be successful, everyone has to sing off the same sheet of music.**

- That sheet of music is two things from a student offering standpoint:
  - Clear outcomes for students at the end of their senior year
  - Delivered through a rigorous, supportive four year program creates competitive graduates.
  - In doing so, the board, administration, faculty and staff will be able to answer the following question from students (prospective and current):
    - "What will I do here when I join you, and what will I be able to do when I graduate?"
  - For the sake of all that you hope to serve, and in the name of the social justice you seek, you must be able to answer the above question truthfully for any prospective student that asks.

**Point 2: All the partners who spoke during the two-day event spoke of two things**

1. "We want to partner with NHU."
2. "We'll partner with NHU when the university knows what its offerings are going to be for students."

**Conclusion:** NHU’s future students, its educational partners in K-12, its educational partners in higher education all want to be a part of NHU’s efforts. But before they do they have one simple question: What are the offerings?
Specifically, what are the offerings that NHU’s students will have (what is the sheet of music that NHU is going to be singing off of)?

**Point 3: The evidence is clear where the greatest gap is that best fits NHU’s potential**

- NHU is well situated to address Hispanic Education Crisis\(^1\). Two points of evidence support this
  - **Evidence point one:** The inter-institutional transfer rate among Latinos is terrible. Students are not being well prepared to take on the rigors of university work.
  - **Evidence point two:** Liberal arts programs are the most effective among all undergraduate programs to prepare students for a future of work or further study.

**Conclusion:** NHU must not maintain nor create programs to address problems it can’t empirically show it solves best. In sum, don’t keep or develop programs on the sole reason that you already have them in place.

**Point 4: The common denominator of successful programs serving similar populations can be summed up in with two ideas: Evidence-based policy and focus**

- **Enlace at Evergreen Community College**
  - Enlace’s program is successful because it sticks to courses that are the evidence-based building blocks to Latino educational success.
  - Furthermore:
    - Administrators in the Enlace program admit they can’t serve everyone, and understand they don’t have the capacity to do so.
    - Evergreen Community College provides orientation and guidance courses for all students to set classroom expectations. Issues commonly associated with immature behavior are nipped in the bud.
- **Cal State Fullerton**
  - “Once you accept a student, regardless of ability, the university has to commit to serve them in order to graduate them.”\(^2\)

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1 Juan Necochea
2 Silas Abrego
Ingredients of their success:

- CSUF objectively examines each student’s at high school grades and test scores and determine an objective risk of student success.
  
  - If CSUF cannot support them, they do not admit them. "We have to make sure we have the services to meet the students' needs. Just letting them in does no service."³

- Similar to Evergreen, CSUF holds orientation for students and parents. Parents need to know the expectations held for their children who are college students.

- CSUF knows which courses their students need and they provide them.
  
  - "We know the gate keeping courses and assign grad students to sit in class and meet the students right after class. This is not rocket science."⁴

Conclusion: NHU’s trustees, administrators, faculty and staff must not confuse limited capacity as an equivalent to taking away opportunities from Latinos. NHU must understand that admitting a student it cannot properly serve is a wrong. Unlimited, ongoing open enrollment in an institution that does not have the capacity or programming to support all learners is a policy that harms students and communities, disenfranchising even more Latinos from higher education.

Point 5: Success Comes by Looking and Behaving Like a University

- To be a successful institution “you have to establish the full university frosh-senior experience in a meaningful student-body sense at a place you call 'the university.”⁵

  Furthermore

  - "Quality is important. As much as I care about access, quality is just as important."⁶

  - "If you don’t go down that path (of becoming a real university) you will be just another diploma mill out there."⁷

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³ Silas Abrego
⁴ Silas Abrego
⁵ Tomas Arciniega
⁶ Tomas Arciniega
**Recommendation: Plant the Flag**

Take on the look and feel of a real university by providing offerings that best match the capabilities, capacity and physical plant of the NHU as well as the needs of the students the institution seeks to serve. Become a top flight liberal arts university for undergraduates.

John Porter, superintended of Franklin McKinley schools stated that the most successful students in the western world are the ones who are liberal arts graduates. His statement is not incorrect.

Research conducted by the Center of Inquiry in the Liberal Arts states\(^8\): "we now have solid evidence that students at institutions emphasizing liberal arts education achieve higher gains than students at other kinds of institutions. Liberal arts students do better in

- reading comprehension,
- critical thinking,
- writing ability,
- openness to challenge and diversity, and
- learning for self-understanding, among other things."

**Benefits of Planting the Flag as a Liberal Arts University**

It provides NHU with a clearer path to institutional success

- Ability to begin locally\(^9\)
- Allows NHU to focus on sound programs built on the evidence that is known regarding what it takes to be successful with the underserved of America\(^10\)

With a clear, tall flag planted in terms of liberal arts outcomes and a program to reach those outcomes, NHU will have the institutional profile to\(^11\)

- seek adequate resources: public private funding sources, philanthropic organizations, individual donors
- document best practices and disseminate research findings

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\(^7\) Tomas Arciniega  
\(^8\) [http://liberalarts.wabash.edu/home.cfm?news_id=1382](http://liberalarts.wabash.edu/home.cfm?news_id=1382)  
\(^9\) Juan Necochea  
\(^10\) Juan Necochea  
\(^11\) Juan Necochea
• gain prominence by attracting quality faculty, attract first rate scholars, star
group quality student exchange programs and national/internationally recognition
• Invest in the future as an enrollment driven institution

By becoming a liberal arts university, NHU can leverage the strength of the many
partners that desire to work with the institution:

• LCPA will likely send far more students to NHU.
• Enlace will send well prepared juniors who can matriculate into a strong liberal
  arts program at NHU. They are committed to expanding to bring transfer students
to NHU.
• NHU freshmen and sophomores will be well-prepared to transfer, if they choose,
to other institutions.

  ▪ Both of these outcomes directly impact the transfer problem endemic in
  the Hispanic population

• Franklin McKinley will be able to better partners with NHU because the path for
  success for their graduates will be much clearer
• Santa Clara will be able to better map their program offerings to those of NHUs,
  enhancing the prestige of the institution.
Education Forum

Brief Observations

By Juan Necochea

Professor of Education at Cal State San Marcos

Please Note: Dr. John Nash put forth a document that summarizes many of the excellent ideas that were discussed at the Strategic Planning Forum at the National Hispanic University in October 2007 during the various conversations and presentations. This particular section intends to synthesize some of the key elements that were addressed during the forum in a format intended to reflect the nature of the conversations in a more “user friendly” manner. Four interrelated and interacting components can be distilled from forum and the summary that Dr. Nash put forth.

1) Obtain National Recognition by beginning locally. The National Hispanic University needs to have an unequivocal push to establish itself nationally as the recognized university that serves the educational needs of Latino students. Due to the demographic realities of California and the nation, the time is now and the effort begins locally by increasing its prestige and reputation in the local region with a focused strategic plan and set of priorities. When other universities, institutions, researchers and practitioners, as well as policy-makers want to see successful schooling experiences for Latinos the place to see needs to be the National Hispanic University. Other large universities, such as the CSU, is too unwieldy and has multiple roles and responsibilities to focus their energies on Latinos, and also has to respond to a much wider audience with multiple and often contradictory demands. This national/local recognition will come from exemplary teaching, service, and research that focus on improving the educational opportunities for Latino students.

2) Focus on a quality liberal arts program. The National Hispanic University must commit to establishing itself as a solid liberal arts institution that serves the needs of Latinos in the region, state, and nationally. Research has shown that liberal arts produce students who are “well-rounded,” well prepared for the workplace, and can quickly adapt to the changing circumstances of the global economy and an uncertain future, particularly in terms of employment. These are partly the reasons why the “historically black colleges and universities” have focused their energy in creating high quality liberal arts programs that are well recognized. Indeed, many of the African American leaders and successful entrepreneurs have emerged from these colleges and universities. Additionally, the attention on quality liberal arts programs has prevented the tendency to be “everything to everyone,” thus scattering their
limited resources in a “surface deep” manner in all directions. Similarly, the National Hispanic University has too many programs, but does not have the resources to make them all quality programs. Committing itself to establishing a quality liberal arts program will allow NHU to create a set of priorities and strategic plan that is focused, so that the limited resources under which it operates will serve the Latino students well in liberal arts, encouraging others who wish a more concentrated area of study in science or law to further their education elsewhere when the time is right.

Furthermore, a quality liberal arts program will be conducive to the creation of a substantial “blended or integrated” education program. A “blended” credential program is intended to start in the third year of university studies in a way that will allow students to finish their B.A. and teaching credential simultaneously. Indeed, many of the liberal arts courses will “serve two masters” as key components of an education liberal studies program. A logical “bridge” can be created between the liberal arts program and a “blended” credential program that will serve the needs of underserved and Latino students well. Currently, universities that included blended programs attract a disproportionately high number of underserved and Latino students, particularly those who know they want to be teachers on the first day they enroll in a university. For the National Hispanic University, which traditionally enrolls a disproportionate high number of underserved and Latino students, a blended educational program will likely result in a higher number of undergraduates selecting teacher education, especially if the credential program is well integrated with liberal studies.

3) **Create partnerships and collaboration with key institutions.** From the forum, it was obvious by the number of speaker representing other institutions and schools that there is strong desire to enter into partnerships and collaboration with the National Hispanic University. As programs are built, strategic and win/win partnerships with key local, regional, and state educational institutions need to be negotiated that could result in the National Hispanic University being more responsive the needs of the underserved and Latino students of America. These partnerships need to be established “slow to go fast” as programs are created in a way consistent with the strategic priorities and mission of the university. The partnerships need to be at both ends of the NHU experience, from those institutions (e.g., Evergreen graduates transferring into NHU) that will provide students for the liberal arts and teacher education programs to appropriate placements for NHU graduates students who seek alternatives to further their education. Potential immediate partnerships are the following:
• Outreach activities with the largest regional high schools serving a large number of Latino students to create “bridges” or pathways as freshmen into the National Hispanic University.

• Santa Clara University indicated a desire to work with NHU in a way that would be mutually beneficial, such as providing a natural U.S. setting for Jesuits to practice their “pedagogy of engagement”. For example, this pedagogy of engagement could entail teaching some courses or providing community service to NHU parents/families.

• Evergreen College, in particular the Enlace Program, can be a nice bridge for students who wish to transfer into our liberal arts program. Additionally, those seeking teacher education can easily transfer into the blended program as juniors.

• San Jose State. San Jose State can play a critical role in helping our teacher candidates obtain credentials, especially in “low incidence” programs where completing the program may necessitate “joint courses” or transfer to San Jose State. A partnership with San Jose State makes sense and could be mutually benefiting since the institution is challenged in addressing the needs of the growing Latino population, thus NHU will be in good position to reach MOUs that increase the program options for our students. As a recognized “Hispanic Serving Institution,” NHU is in a good position to pursue a relationship with SJS that could attract federal and foundation dollars for the benefit of Latino students.

• Stanford University. Although not present at the Forum in October, Stanford University could become a key player in working with NHU in various arenas, particularly in conducting research and service that address the needs of Latinos. Also, a partnership could be negotiated that might serve as conduit to attract recent PhDs. to come and teach at the NHU for a couple of years (or permanently) before moving on with their careers.

• There may be other potential partnerships, however, the key to successful MOUs is to become strategic and bring in those parties according to established priorities and, therefore, will give us the most “bang for our buck” at this moment in NHU's mission of serving the underserved and Latino students of America. Moving in too many directions at once may be counterproductive and dilute the effectiveness of the university.

4. **Mission Driven University.** All decisions, curriculum, academic programs, service, research, strategic plan and set of priorities must ultimately be measured and evaluated in relation to how well they promote or advance the mission of the National Hispanic University. In other words, to the extent possible, the National Hispanic University needs to become a mission driven institution as the best “practice” to providing qualitatively sound educational programs that reflect an unequivocal
commitment to equity and social justice in serving the educational needs of the underserved of America, in particular Latino students. In a few words, this is the raison detrás of the creation and existence of the National Hispanic University, and should be used as the foundation to build curriculum and programs, seek funding and resources, evaluate decisions and initiatives, assess effectiveness and successes, as well as selectively abandon practices and organizational structures that are contrary to its the mission. The stark demographic reality in California and the rest of the nation necessitates a mission driven university that is focused on providing quality educational programs to the underserved of America—the time is now and the place is the National Hispanic University.

Institutions, like individuals, must face existential questions at critical stages in their development and formation. The journey is difficult to navigate, with turbulent waters at every turn, reminding us of Machado’s words in his famous poem, caminante no hay camino, se hace camino al andar. This being the case, a mission driven university must stay true to itself by using its mission as the true north star in making its own path in a journey full of pitfalls and distractions to avoid “losing its way.”