



# State of New Mexico

## *Office of the Governor*

**Bill Richardson**  
Governor

For immediate release  
April 8, 2005

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### **Governor Bill Richardson Creates Department of Higher Education**

SANTA FE -Governor Bill Richardson today signed a bill creating New Mexico's first Department of Higher Education. The Governor signed the bill prior to his honors class on state government at the University of New Mexico.

"Today, with the stroke of my pen, it's official. We are creating a Higher Education Department with a cabinet secretary who will be responsible for increasing access to our colleges and universities and expanding opportunities for all New Mexicans," Governor Bill Richardson said.

"New Mexico will now have a comprehensive statewide agenda for higher education - one that ties together a common commitment among all of our colleges and universities to not only enroll more New Mexicans but to increase the number of graduates," said the Governor. "In addition, our institutions of higher education are important partners in our ongoing efforts to build a highly trained workforce and high-wage economy. Now they will have the guidance and support they need to help more New Mexicans succeed in college and beyond."

House Speaker Ben Lujan sponsored House Bill 745, which was approved by the Legislature. The bill replaces the Commission on Higher Education with the Department of Higher Education. The Secretary of Higher Education will be appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate.

Governor Richardson named Katherine B. Cantrell to serve as acting secretary. Cantrell has been with the Commission for a total of seven years, and has served as the deputy director for finance and administration under the Commission on Higher Education.

The Governor has also appointed a search committee to oversee recruitment of the new cabinet secretary. In addition to Dr. Daniel H. López, president of New Mexico Tech who will chair the search committee, members include: former Governor Toney Anaya; Don Chalmers, who has served as a Commissioner on Higher Education and has served on the Governor's Task Force on Higher Education; Dr. Alicia Chavez, director of UNM's Taos branch; Dr. Viola Florez, dean of the College of Education UNM; Dr. Veronica Garcia, cabinet secretary, New Mexico Public Education Department; Philip P. Larragoite, a lobbyist and attorney; Lenton Malry, Sr., a retired Albuquerque state representative; Dr. Steve McCleery, president, New Mexico Junior College; John Papen, executive vice president, Wells Fargo Bank; Dr. Carol Spencer, president, San Juan College; Tony Trujillo, regent, Western New Mexico University; Della Warrior, president, IAIA.

Staff serving on the committee includes Dr. Elizabeth Gutierrez, Governor Richardson's education policy advisor, as well as Katherine B. Cantrell, acting secretary of Higher Education.

The bill also preserves the right of local Boards of Regents to continue to make local policy decisions about their universities.

The change elevates the importance of higher education in the state and allows the secretary to have a more direct impact on policy and set the public agenda for higher education.

The Governor has also appointed a transition team to guide the commission's transition into a cabinet-level department. Former Governor Toney Anaya will chair the team. Kathi Bearden, former chair of the Commission on Higher Education, will serve as co-chair.



**Governor Richardson's Search Committee  
for  
Cabinet Secretary  
Department of Higher Education  
April 8, 2005**

Dr. Daniel H. López, Chair, President, New Mexico Tech  
Governor Toney Anaya  
Don Chalmers, Business owner, Chalmers Ford Dealerships  
Dr. Alicia Chavez, Director, UNM/Taos  
Dr. Viola Florez, Dean, UNM College of Education  
Dr. Veronica Garcia, Cabinet Secretary, Public Education Department  
Philip Larragoite, Attorney  
Len Malry, Sr., Retired legislator  
Robert Matteucci, TVI Board member  
Dr. Steve McCleery, President, NM Jr. College  
John Papen, Executive VP, Wells Fargo Bank  
Dr. Carol Spencer, President, San Juan College  
Tony Trujillo, Regent, Western NM University  
Della Warrior, President, IAIA



**Governor Richardson's  
Transition Team Members  
Department of Higher Education  
April 7, 2005**

Governor Toney Anaya, Chair

Kathi Bearden, Vice Chair, Chair of former Commission on Higher Education

Gerald Burke, Commissioner, former Commission on Higher Education

Katherine Cantrell, Acting Secretary, Department of Higher Education

Michael Glennon, President, NM Association of Community Colleges and TVI

Elizabeth Gutierrez, Education Policy Advisor, Governor's Office

Miguel Hidalgo, Director of Facilities, Department of Higher Education

John Loehr, Commissioner, former Commission on Higher Education

Dan Lopez, President, Council of University Presidents

Ed Lopez, Cabinet Secretary, General Services Administration

Michael Martin, Commissioner, former Commission on Higher Education

Stephanie Martinez, Human Resources, Department of Higher Education

Representative Rick Miera, Chair, House Education Committee

Senator Cynthia Nava, Chair, Senate Education Committee

Bianca Ortiz-Wertheim, Director of Cabinet Affairs, Governor's Office

Jo Lou Ottino, Commissioner, former Commission on Higher Education

Levi Pesada, President of the Jicarilla Apache Nation

Sandra Perez, Director, State Personnel Office

Bill Taylor, Property Control Director, General Services Administration