



ASSOCIATE PROVOST FOR COOPERATIVE EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

New Mexico State University (NMSU) —New Mexico’s only Land-Grant and one of just two R1 research universities in the state—is seeking applications and nominations for its first Associate Provost for Cooperative Education and Professional Studies.

Reporting to the Provost, the Associate Provost for Cooperative Education and Professional Studies serves as a senior academic leader whose visionary approach advances New Mexico State University’s land grant mission by expanding high-impact, career-connected learning opportunities for all students. This role provides strategic vision and operational leadership for cooperative education, internships, professional studies programs, and employer engagement initiatives that strengthen student success, workforce and career readiness, and community impact. The Associate Provost works collaboratively with academic colleges and deans, faculty, staff, and external partners to design and sustain experiential learning pathways that are accessible, equitable, and aligned with the evolving needs of students and employers.

Founded in 1888 as the first public institution of higher learning in the state, NMSU is the Land Grant university of New Mexico. Its overall mission is to educate the people of New Mexico (traditional and adult learners); to produce research and innovations that advance the wellbeing of the state; and to provide public service across the state via its educational and innovation achievements. Currently, NMSU is the highest-ranked national university in the state (US News & World Report 2025) and has achieved Research 1 status, as well as being ranked the most affordable national university in the region. In addition, it is designated as a HSI, MSI, Carnegie Community Engaged University, as well as a gold-standard military friendly university. Across main campus and Global, academic programs are delivered by five colleges, in addition to the Honors College and the Graduate School, with a total enrollment of over 16,000 students. Our statewide impact consists of four campuses, 12 research stations, 33 extension offices (located in each county), including rural and tribal populations and beyond, bringing the system’s overall student population for Fall 2025 to over 23,500.

The individual in this role champions a culture where learning is enriched through applied practice, interdisciplinary collaboration, and meaningful engagement with industry, nonprofit, and public-sector partners. By integrating cooperative education and professional studies into the academic fabric of the institution, the Associate Provost ensures that students gain the skills, confidence, and professional networks needed to thrive in a rapidly changing world. This leader also advances the university's commitment to inclusive excellence by expanding participation in experiential learning and ensuring that programs reflect the diverse strengths, aspirations, and lived experiences of the student body while growing partnerships with alumni and industry partners.

REQUIREMENTS

Candidates must hold progressive leadership experience in advancing cooperative and experienced-based learning, as well as in supporting professional development opportunities for students at institutions of higher learning. They should hold academic ranks with tenure or hail from the administrative side of higher education, but candidates who present strong backgrounds in creating partnerships between private and public entities, as well as student-centered opportunities outside of academia are strongly encouraged to apply to this opportunity. Candidates must also demonstrate successful experience in each of the following areas:

- Progressive leadership experience: minimum of 5 years of related administrative experience;
- Recruitment and retention of diverse students, faculty, and staff in support of a diverse and inclusive community;
- Commitment to student success in all phases of their academic career (access, retention and graduation);
- Budget planning, management, and fiscal responsibility;
- Outstanding interpersonal and communication skills that engender cooperation and collaboration among faculty, staff, students, and community leaders;
- Fundraising and “friend-raising” with community partners and alumni to promote and advocate on behalf of cooperative education and community learning;
- Federal and State grant-writing in support of innovations in workforce development and cooperative education;
- Deep understanding of cooperative education models, internship structures, professional studies curricula, and high-impact educational practices.
- Supporting entrepreneurial innovations to generate revenue; and
- Reappointment, promotion, and tenure processes.

Additionally, candidates must have a commitment to:

- Continuous improvement in the quality of community-based and experience-based scholarship, teaching and service in the colleges;
- Shared governance and transparency in decision making;
- Empowering faculty and staff and encouraging innovations and interdisciplinary efforts;
- Creating and sustaining student-centered and community-centered practices;
- Partnering with the provost and other university administrators to address challenges and opportunities;
- Forecasting and preparing the colleges to succeed in the changing landscape of higher education;
- Building interdisciplinary partnerships with other colleges at the university; and
- Partnering with the community to fulfill our vision as a premier university in the Southwestern United States to address challenges and opportunities.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

- **Strategic Leadership** — Provides vision and direction for cooperative education and professional studies, aligning programs with institutional goals for student success, academic innovation, and community engagement.
- **Program Development and Oversight** — Leads the design, implementation, and continuous improvement of cooperative education, internship, and professional studies programs, ensuring they meet high academic standards and respond to emerging workforce trends.
- **Partnership and Employer Engagement** — Cultivates and sustains relationships with employers, community organizations, and government agencies to expand high-quality experiential learning opportunities and strengthen economic development for the U.S.-Mexico border region.
- **Faculty and Academic Collaboration** — Works closely with deans, department heads, and faculty to integrate applied learning into curricula, support pedagogical innovation, and ensure academic integrity across experiential programs.
- **Student Access and Support** — Ensures that cooperative education and professional studies programs are inclusive, accessible, and supportive of undergraduate and graduate students from all backgrounds, both domestic and international, with particular attention to reducing barriers for historically underserved populations.

- **Assessment and Quality Assurance** — Establishes metrics, data collection processes, evaluation processes, and reporting structures to assess program effectiveness, student learning outcomes, and employer satisfaction.
- **Operational and Administrative Leadership** — Oversees budgets, staffing, policies, and operational processes that support the effective delivery of cooperative education and professional studies programs.
- **External Representation** — Serves as a visible ambassador for NMSU in forums related to experiential learning, workforce development, and professional education.

NMSU LEADERSHIP

Valerio Ferme became New Mexico State University's 32nd president in January 2025, following a unanimous selection by the NMSU Board of Regents. A scholar, teacher, and administrator who built his career across the nation's leading public research universities, President Ferme brings to NMSU a conviction that the work of a land-grant institution is fundamentally an act of service—to students, to communities, and to the state it was created to serve.

A native of Milan, Italy, Ferme came to the United States at 19 to study at Brown University, earning degrees in biology and religious studies while competing on a nationally ranked crew program. He went on to earn master's degrees from Indiana University and a Ph.D. in comparative literature from UC Berkeley on Fulbright and Chancellor's fellowships. A prolific scholar—author of three monographs, three edited volumes, two book-length translations, and more than 80 articles and reviews—he spent 19 years at the University of Colorado Boulder, rising from faculty member to department chair to divisional dean. He subsequently served as dean at Northern Arizona University, then dean and provost at the University of Cincinnati, where he more than doubled annual sponsored research while expanding access and inclusive excellence initiatives at every level. At each institution, his leadership has centered on a consistent conviction: that access, belonging, and achievement are not competing priorities but a single, inseparable commitment.

VISION FOR NMSU

President Ferme arrived at NMSU with a clear-eyed view of both its opportunity and its moment. "As president of a land-grant university, our mission is pretty clear," he has said. "We need to advance the educational capacity of the state." For Ferme, that is not an abstraction—it is an action agenda with three animating priorities.

Graduating more students. Retention and graduation rates are Ferme’s most immediate focus—outcomes that have held relatively flat at NMSU for a decade and that he has named as his first area of intervention. He sees improved retention not only as a student success imperative but as essential to enrollment stability in a higher education landscape facing demographic headwinds and intensifying competition.

Building on distinctive research strengths. NMSU’s 2025 R1 designation—which Ferme has called “the direct result of years of intentional, strategic work”—creates new opportunity to invest in areas where New Mexico has genuine competitive advantage: water innovation, aerospace and defense, emerging technologies, and agricultural science. Ferme sees these not as siloed research pursuits but as engines of student opportunity and state economic development simultaneously.

Being a university that belongs to New Mexico. Ferme has spoken of his evolution from admiring private institutions to becoming a committed believer in public education—and in the land-grant compact specifically. He envisions NMSU as legibly and palpably connected to the state it serves: graduating more of its students, producing research that addresses New Mexico’s real challenges, and functioning as a genuine civic and economic engine. He is building the university’s strategic direction through broad stakeholder engagement, preferring a living framework flexible enough to respond to a rapidly changing landscape over a fixed plan.

LEADERSHIP PHILOSOPHY

President Ferme’s approach is grounded in empathy, collaborative problem-solving, and a growth mindset—values shaped by his upbringing as one of nine children in Milan, his years as a competitive rower and coach, and his experience as the adoptive father of two sons and primary caregiver, with his husband Giorgio Corda, of four grandchildren. Those personal experiences have deepened his understanding of how teams navigate complexity and change—and they inform his institutional practice directly.

ABOUT LAS CRUCES, NEW MEXICO

NMSU’s main campus is in Las Cruces, New Mexico, a city known for its exceptional quality of life. Las Cruces offers an ideal environment for work and recreation, with more than 300 days of sunshine per year, a vibrant local culture, a low cost of living, and a relaxed pace of life. As part of the dynamic Borderlands region, the city is enriched by its proximity to El Paso, Texas, and Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, creating a unique cultural landscape shaped by diverse traditions, cuisine, and cross-border collaboration.

Las Cruces is also a paradise for outdoor enthusiasts, surrounded by vast public lands that provide access to millions of acres of desert and mountain landscapes. Residents can enjoy hiking, camping, backpacking, rock climbing, mountain biking, and birdwatching, all within easy reach of national forest systems such as the Gila, Lincoln, and Apache Kid Wilderness, as well as the Aldo Leopold Wilderness, Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument, and White Sands National Park.

APPLICATIONS AND NOMINATIONS

New Mexico State University invites letters of nomination and applications (letter of interest, full resume/CV, and contact information of at least five references) to be submitted to the search firm assisting the University. Review of materials will begin immediately and continue until the appointment is made. It is preferred, however, that all nominations and applications are submitted before September 15, 2026. Please submit electronic applications directly to Parker Executive Search. For additional information, please contact:

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Electronic submission of materials required.