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UNM golf courses in the rough with deficit

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When it comes to balancing budgets, UNM's golf courses aren't par for the course.

The courses' \$4.6 million deficit is the result of declining over 20 years, said Chris Vallejos, vice president of the Institutional Support Services. He said the financial atmosphere has led to a 26 percent drop in rounds per golf played, and the University discussed cost-cutting strategies. He said targeting people with disposable income, not drafting long-term plans, is the answer to compensate for economic woes.

"There are certain businesses in any industry that you have loss leaders," he said, adding that UNM's golf courses are top 5 in New Mexico. "... There have been lots of grand ideas to try to work to a more break-even model, and those just take a lot of time."

In 2008, Vallejos said, the golf courses outsourced maintenance operations to Mountain West Golfscapes Inc. to cut labor costs. He said the company is paid \$1.2 million per year to perform day-to-day maintenance and prepare the course for an NCAA golf tournament, but he didn't provide an estimate for how much the University saves by outsourcing the work.

"Our golf course is, I think, 46 years old, and we have aging infrastructure," Vallejos said. "Since we haven't made money, we haven't been able to pour money back into infrastructure, like the irrigation system. A lot of our expenses from year to year are repairs and maintenance."

Lisa Marbury, vice president of Institutional Supports Services, said around 20 self-funded auxiliary businesses bring in enough revenue to compensate for the golf courses' deficit.

"The golf course is being carried by that whole exhibit, and that exhibit does not include any instruction or general money, no academic money," she said. "It's strictly the revenues that these businesses bring in. If there's a misperception that golf is bringing down academic dollars or I&G dollars, that's not the case."

UNM spokeswoman Susan McKinsey said the golf courses cut expenses from \$2.9 million to \$2.4 million since 2006.

"The golf course has been aggressively combating its deficit," she said. "Golf is a highly competitive industry, and the University continues to look for every possible way to increase revenues, as well as cut expenses in order to break even."

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