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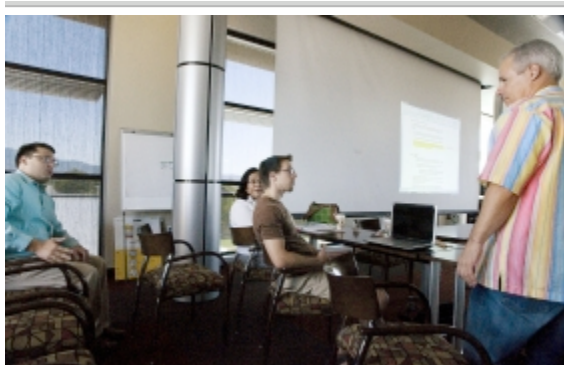
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## Town and gown must coordinate, report says

By **Pat Lohmann** | DAILY LOBO

A report published by an American studies class attempts to strengthen relations between UNM and the city that surrounds it.

The “Report on Community Engagement and University of New Mexico Campus Development” was published Aug. 26 by instructor and Ph.D. candidate Andrew Marcum after it was drafted in July by students taking part in a four-week course.



Zach Gould / DAILY LOBO

Student Andrew Marcum, far left, asks Mayor Martin Chávez, far right, about University-community relations during a GPSA meeting Saturday at the Continuing Education Building. Marcum’s American studies class published a report on the topic Wednesday.

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The 82-page document examines the history of conflicts between the city of Albuquerque and UNM and features testimonials from members of nearby neighborhood associations. It also looks at how other universities have dealt with development within a community.

“One of the things we hear from neighbors is that UNM doesn’t respect the historical nature of their neighborhoods, oftentimes,” Marcum said. “The neighbors value that deeply, and they wish the University would have the same sort of reverence for it.”

A resolution at the end of the report asking for improved representation of neighborhood associations in University decision-making will be presented to the Board of Regents at their Sep. 23 meeting. GPSA passed the same resolution during an Aug. 30 committee meeting.

Danny Hernandez, chair of the Graduate and Professional Student Association Council, said the association passed the resolution because its members often live near the University.

“Most of us live in the surrounding neighborhoods, and the relations between the University and those surrounding neighborhoods are strained,” Hernandez said. “What harms those neighborhoods actually harms the people living there.”

Roughly 100 copies of the report were published and several have been distributed to Mayor Martin Chávez, Vice President of Institutional Support Services Steve Beffort, Planning Director Mary Kenney and several neighborhood associations.

“Our goal with this report is really to start thinking about ways to engage the community (and) build better partnerships with the community,” Marcum said. “We see it as an opportunity to think through how we build better partnerships with the city and with the residents, so that we don’t get described as an island unto ourselves.” Chávez attended the Aug. 30 GPSA meeting, and Marcum asked about his vision for University-city relations.

“The University is an island in the city,” Chávez said. “It’s not subject to the city’s zoning regulations or things of that nature. They don’t come to us for building codes. It’s state land ... so it’s always a dance, if you will.”

Marcum said many community members share Chávez’s impression of UNM as an “island.”

“You heard the mayor say that UNM is (architecturally) turning its back on its neighbors. Well, I’ve heard that a dozen times from different community groups,” Marcum said. “I heard the mayor also use the phrase, ‘an island unto itself,’ which is another thing I’ve heard in neighborhoods all across the city.”

Marcum referenced the recent failure of the Las Lomas-Redondo parking structure — which the State Board of Finance opposed — as a reason for a collaborative relationship between the University and the city around it.

“By the time they brought (the structure plan) to the neighbors or the neighbors found out about it, it was too late to think it through in a way that met everybody’s interest,” he said. “I think that having that conversation collectively with students, faculty, staff and the residents is going to make the best possible chances come about.”

Hernandez also said the University is dependent on the community that surrounds it.

“The University can’t sustain itself without the good will of the surrounding communities. Right now, it doesn’t have it,” he said.

*Added at 12:32 am on August 31, 2009*

*Section: News*