

October 1, 2002

Dear Review Committee:

With this application for tenure I share my perspectives on my life and career up to this point, on the kind of faculty member I have worked to be in New Mexico State University's College of Education, and on what I hope to achieve in the future. As I write this, I realize that my perspectives are rooted in experiences as far back as I can remember.

I grew up on a farm in Pennsylvania, one of six children. My father was an electrician with an eighth grade education and my mother a homemaker and secretary with two years of high school. Neither has much experience with the academic kind of work I am currently engaged in. Yet I am constantly struck by the realization that a great deal of who I am today is due to their love, their principles, their example, their humor and their support. Both to this day are solicitous for the welfare of people around them. Neither cares much for formalities and official ways of behaving, but both show an easy courtesy and graciousness to whomever is present. They always worked hard, and they were lavish in providing opportunities to us, but they were quick to discourage egomania and self-absorption.

I spent nine years of my adolescence in a Catholic seminary, preparing to be a missionary priest. Again, though I left the seminary 32 years ago, I still find much of my behavior, my attitudes, and my aspirations rooted in that experience. Even at the post-secondary level, few of my seminary teachers had doctorates, but they were intelligent and idealistic; they pushed us to study hard; and they left me with a profound respect for learning. I believe that in the seminary I

began to internalize three perspectives that I will highlight in this letter. First, I spent nine months of every year for nine years living in a community. I learned to value subordinating my own needs and wants to the good of the community. Second, as someone who wanted to be a missionary, I had to think a great deal about what it might mean to work in a different culture, with people whose perspectives differed from my own. Even then, in the 1960s, we were aware of the differences between missionaries who sought to impose their own ways on people of other countries vs. those who honored the culture in which they found themselves and look for ways to adapt to it. I learned to value sensitivity to others' perspectives. Third, I was preparing to be a parish priest, not a member of a scholarly or contemplative religious order. The missionaries whom I met often struggled mightily to meet the human needs of parishioners who lived in poverty and oppression. I have always valued scholarship, and I would dearly love more time for contemplation, but I consistently find in myself a deep pragmatic instinct. I value, when there are needs to be met, wading in with sleeves-rolled-up to meet them.

My career in education for the past 32 years (two in graduate school; two in the military; eight in K-12 teaching; fifteen administering a public school department of research, testing, and evaluation; and five at NMSU) has brought me to specific versions of those three beliefs I mentioned above: 1) Effective educational leadership and administration is largely about getting people to work together, rather than enhancing one's own reputation. The educational leader must often weigh his/her wants and likes against the needs of the organization. 2) To work with people from cultures different from my own, I must constantly attend to perspectives different from my own; and 3) University faculty of school administration must establish links between our scholarly efforts and the world of practice. We must constantly relate our academic ideas to the pragmatic perspectives of administrators in the schools, and in fact test our perspectives against theirs. I will highlight in this letter my efforts at teaching, research, and service in light of these three central beliefs.

Teaching

So far at NMSU, I have taught seven courses, including adapting one course for interactive television and another for Web-CT:

EMD 569: Technology Applications in Educational Administration

EMD 572: History and Philosophy of Education

EMD 585: Elements of Research

EMD 590: Management Technology

EMD 600: Doctoral Research

EMD 620: Doctoral Seminar

EMD 689: Evaluation Design in Education

During my interview for a position at NMSU, I spoke about my research on difficulties Hispanic students had with the high-stakes *Texas Assessment of Academic Skills*. I interpreted those difficulties in light of scholars' claims that ethnic minority students tend to come from the working class, that working-class perspectives are necessarily more pragmatic than academic, and that therefore ethnic minority students may be impatient with the linguistic and conceptual niceties needed to succeed on standardized tests. My research was on how promotion of student discussions might enable students to construct understandings of language and concepts that would enable them to succeed academically. In my interview, I drew a parallel between my understanding in that area and the professor's need to bridge theory and practice. School administration practitioners tend to have pragmatic perspectives and they may find the theoretical teachings of professors irrelevant to what for them is "the real world." I envisaged that as a professor I would strive to relate scholarly ideas to practice, but also to promote student discussion and engagement with scholarly ideas, to foster critical thinking in my pragmatist students who might at first be interested only in instrumentalist learnings.

To foster student engagement, I have reduced my lecturing, resisted my constant urge to critique students' responses, and given up the security of controlling the whole flow of class activities. I use technology to record, display, and address students' questions and perceptions; to enhance students' proficiency with library research; to present video clips of thought-

provoking ideas; and (sometimes) to enhance my lectures. I strive for teaching that is about people working together to construct meanings not about enhancing my own reputation.

In my course, *History and Philosophy of Education*, I promote small-group discussions with thought-provoking questions about the implications of ideas from history and philosophy, and I tailor my comments to students' reactions to the assigned readings. Sometimes students are so engaged and their questions and comments so persistent, that I do not even get around to materials I had brought in "to keep them interested." In my course *Evaluation Design in Education*, I generally have evaluation projects to allow students to work with real-world clients. Students describe it as a great and practical course and a fantastic learning experience. In my two technology courses, I relate technology applications to problems that administrators actually face. Students (even some who did not seem particularly adept at technology) have come back to tell me that they have taken on leadership responsibilities and have used everything I taught them. My newest teaching challenge has been to conduct a two-semester seminar for new doctoral students, to assist them to get started with their dissertation research. Though this seems at first view to be purely about academics, I have had to come to terms with and to make explicit to them the differences in how academics and practitioners approach problem-solving and to note that their task as Ph.D. students is to add the academic approach to their repertoires.

I will always strive for excellence in teaching. I participated in NMSU's original *Institute for Technology Assisted Learning* before I had even begun my first contract year, and have since studied and attended other staff development sessions to improve my teaching.

Research

Unless one understands the centrality of the three principles above to my thinking about my role as scholar-concerned-with-practice, my writing, presentations, and publications may appear to be scattered and unfocused. But, as a matter of fact, most of them exhibit those principles. My resume shows them as follows:

*Sole editorship of a book,
Co-authorship of four refereed articles,
Sole authorship of a book chapter, and
Sole authorship of one ERIC article and co-authorship of two others.*

My latest refereed article is about fostering information literacy in Hispanic-serving postsecondary institutions. Two other refereed pieces are about understanding Hispanic students' difficulties with the language of mathematics and how educators can foster their learning of that language. One of these two studies, reported in the *Border Walking Journal*, led the editors of *Equity and Excellence in Education*, to ask me to review a manuscript on minority students' difficulties with college entrance examinations. Another of my refereed articles discusses using problem-based learning to link the scholar's work to the practitioner's.

When I began teaching the technology courses, I was chagrined to see how little had been written on technology applications for administrators, though much has been written on technology for teachers. So, I developed a proposal and secured a contract to edit a book on the topic. This is one of the only books available on the topic. Four of the chapters are by first-time authors, and I put great effort into making it friendly and practical for users from a variety of backgrounds. Six of the chapters are by users other than professors (including three doctoral students in my department); four of the contributors are ethnic-minority writers and four of them are women. My own chapter is based on my experience as a practitioner.

I have three papers in the ERIC system, and I have seven manuscripts in preparation or submitted: two on whether producing state report cards can support practitioners' decision-making; two on using evaluation or accountability data to support practitioners' decision-making; one on fostering student information-literacy in Hispanic-serving institutions, one on perceptions of Hispanic and Anglo school board members, and one on superintendents' leadership perspectives. Three of these manuscripts are co-authored with students. I value writing with students because, while it benefits me, it also initiates them into the world of

academe. I am happy to take second billing on such pieces because I believe the important issues are to get thoughtful writing published and to mentor students for their scholarly roles.

At the request of two publishers, *Corwin Press* and *Eye on Education*, I have given written feedback on book manuscripts each was considering. An *Eye on Education* representative asked me to find a reviewer for a second manuscript, and I referred him to one of my graduate students, as I want students to have such experiences.

My most ambitious research effort has been to coordinate, a national study by the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) on superintendents' perceptions of leadership. UCEA is the premier professional organization for doctoral-granting departments of school administration. From this study, I have one article in preparation, and I expect UCEA to facilitate a book contract once the research design is finalized.

I have presented ten papers at national conferences. I have thirteen other national presentations and sixteen presentations at state or regional conferences. I am proud that one of my papers was part of a symposium that I had accepted by UCEA, because a symposium is another way for me to participate in the sharing of diverse perspectives. All my conference activities reflect my interest in group efforts, diverse perspectives, and problems of practice.

I have sought external resources for the College and intend to continue my efforts. Recently, we learned that a proposal on which I am co-Principal Investigator (to the U.S. Department of Education's "School Leadership Program," to prepare leaders to foster the success of English Language Learners) has been funded in the amount of nearly \$398,000. Besides this, I participated in several meetings with Las Cruces Public Schools (LCPS) officials to develop an innovative and collaborative program to prepare new administrators. An LCPS official has since secured external funding for this project and the net gain for the College of Education will be a full-time project coordinator and a full-time secretary. I have myself brought in two evaluation contracts to the College, one for \$5,000 and one for \$4,000.

In addition, I wrote a grant to the Spencer Foundation and was co-PI on another (to the Women's Educational Equity Act). I have participated in two two-day training sessions on grant seeking. In keeping with my belief that leadership is more about people working together than about enhancing individual reputations, I have assisted others with their grant-writing efforts. I have written the evaluation sections for two proposals by other faculty, and one for a local agency, the Court Youth Center. Had that last one been funded, it could have brought tens of thousands of dollars to the College of Education by way of an evaluation contract. I also participate in the College's monthly support groups for grant writers. Whoever brings in money to the College, I will be happy.

Service

In my efforts to link scholarship on educational leadership to practice, I have regularly engaged in leadership roles at NMSU, at the national and state level, and with local agencies: For NMSU, I have chaired the College of Education Technology Committee (1998-2001), the NCATE assessment subcommittee (1999-present), the College of Education Research Committee (2001-2002) and three faculty search committees (2000-2002). I was vice-chair of the College Council for 2001-2002. The College has recently named me chair of college-wide assessment for NCATE for the coming year. I serve on the NCATE steering committee (2000-present) and have served on NMSU's General Education Assessment Committee (1999-2002).

At the national level, for the UCEA Convention 2000, I was invited to coordinate the Graduate Student Seminar to advise doctoral students on how to secure faculty positions. I used list-serves of professional organizations to solicit both seminar topics and panelists. Then I strove to have diverse voices on the panel, recruiting faculty from both life-long scholars and those grounded in practice, UCEA and non-UCEA institutions, men and women, and ethnic-minorities. Then, I had attendees work in groups to generate questions for the panelists. UCEA received very positive feedback from those who attended this seminar.

At the international level, I have participated in a project funded by the DeWitt-Wallace Foundation to prepare superintendents for leadership on the U.S./Mexico border. In early 2002, I participated in three days of discussion with other leaders and scholars from both countries to develop the vision for an effective preparation program.

For the state, I have served (1998-present) on the steering committee for Re:Learning New Mexico (affiliated with the Coalition of Essential Schools). In my ongoing effort to link scholarship to practice, I have conducted two program evaluations for Re:Learning, involving my students in each one. I have presented at an “Administrator’s Institute on Technology” for New Mexico’s Regional Educational Technology Assistance Project and I am currently meeting with New Mexico’s State Department of Education to update its standards for administrators. I have also participated in meetings with the Southern New Mexico Principals’ Network.

Locally, I have conducted program evaluations (always involving my students) for the NMSU Alliance for Minority Participation, the NMSU General Education Assessment Committee, NMSU’s Department of Educational Management and Development, El Paso Community College, Las Cruces Public Schools, and the Doña Ana Arts Council. In keeping with Michael Quinn Patton’s reminder that evaluations focused on users’ needs may report findings in a variety of ways, not all of these projects have resulted in formal technical reports.

I was awarded the College Award for Excellence for 1999-2000. My affiliation with this college means much to me, and given the opportunity I will continue to serve to my utmost.

Sincerely,

Gary Ivory, Ed.D.
Associate Professor