



## **Opportunity and Challenge Profile**

*Search for the Director, School of Social Work  
College of Health, Education, and Social Transformation  
New Mexico State University  
Las Cruces, New Mexico*

The College of Health, Education, and Social Transformation (HEST) at New Mexico State University (NMSU), a Hispanic- and minority-serving land-grant institution, seeks a strategic and collaborative leader to serve as the next director of the [School of Social Work](#) (School). With the School being the recent recipient of a [\\$16.5 million endowment](#) aimed at increasing the number of social workers in the State, the next director will have a unique opportunity to grow and shape the future of social work education at NMSU for a significant impact on New Mexico's workforce. To propel the School towards achieving its mission, the director will foster a supportive, transparent, and welcoming community for all faculty, staff, and students with a focus on impact in Las Cruces, the Borderlands region, and the State of New Mexico.

As one of the most diverse land-grant universities in the nation, NMSU is situated less than an hour from the US-Mexico border. Rooted in its dedication to mobility, justice, and transformation, the university embodies this commitment in its culturally rich geographical context. In addition to its main campus in Las Cruces, the institution includes community colleges across the state, cooperative extension offices in New Mexico's 33 counties, 12 agriculture research and science centers, and an expanding [distance education program](#). NMSU is the institution of choice for more than 21,000 students from 49 states and 89 foreign countries, with approximately 12,730 students enrolled at the Las Cruces campus, with New Mexico residents comprising approximately 70% of the student population. The institution's diverse student population includes many first-generation, Pell-grant eligible, part-time, and working adult students through in-person and online programming.

The [College of Health, Education, and Social Transformation \(HEST\)](#) was created in 2021 to enhance collaborations and improve individual, societal, and policy outcomes by addressing systemic issues of access, quality, and equity within health, education, and society, and to achieve a more community-grounded financially sustainable future. The [School of Social Work](#) is one of nine disciplines represented within HEST and is strongly committed to promoting social and economic justice and serving a culturally diverse student population to enhance the social work profession locally and more broadly. Accredited by

the Council on Social Work Education, the School of Social Work serves approximately 225 undergraduate and 166 graduate students and has 18 faculty and three dedicated staff positions. It emphasizes the principles of empowerment and cultural competence to prepare students for ethical, evidence-informed social work practice.

This is an opportune time to join as the director, as the School seeks a strategic and visionary leader to shape and rejuvenate their culture and operations for a more impactful future. Given the state's mandate to double NMSU's social work student enrollment by 2027, the director will recruit additional faculty and ensure the internal operations that can best support a thriving enterprise. The director will bring effective leadership skills and administrative experience to position the School as a regional and State leader in advancing social work science, education, practice, and policy. To accomplish this, the director will be expected to address the following opportunities and challenges, further expanded upon on pages 5-7:

- Thoughtfully steward the School's community for an even greater impact
- Strengthen the School's administrative infrastructure for improved effectiveness and growth
- Enhance educational excellence and the student experience
- Recruit, retain, and support a talented, diverse, and collaborative faculty and staff
- Serve as an effective representative and advocate for the School in support of its ambitions

A list of the desired qualifications and characteristics of the director of the School of Social Work can be found at the conclusion of this document, which was prepared by the search committee with the assistance of Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to provide background information and detail the key opportunities and challenges related to the position. All confidential applications, inquiries, and nominations should be directed to the parties listed at the conclusion of this document.

## **ABOUT NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY**

NMSU comprises five degree-granting colleges, including the [College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences \(ACES\)](#); [College of Arts and Sciences](#); [College of Business](#); [College of Health, Education, and Social Transformation](#); and the [College of Engineering](#), which all report to the Provost. The university also houses the Honors College, the Graduate School, and the NMSU Library. NMSU offers over 180 degree programs, including over 70 online programs through NMSU Global. NMSU is a Carnegie-designated R2 university with the [Community Engagement Classification](#), and the institution will become an R1 institution in 2025 with the recent changes to Carnegie classifications. Along with the main Las Cruces campus, the NMSU system has three branch community colleges: NMSU–Alamogordo, NMSU–Doña Ana Community College, and NMSU–Grants.

[NMSU LEADS 2025](#), the strategic plan for the university, was approved by the Board of Regents in May 2019. The goals include: Enhance Student Success & Social Mobility (Goal 1); Elevate Research and Creativity (Goal 2); Amplify Extension and Outreach (Goal 3); and Build a Robust University System (Goal

4). Recently, Build an Online Global Campus (Goal 5) and Build, Elevate, and Strengthen Sustainable Systemwide Equity, Inclusion and Diversity Practices (Goal 6) have been added. The strategic goals are designed to be broad enough for each unit within the university to find a way to contribute. Additionally, the university is focusing on a number of grand challenges facing the state and communities around the globe. These include creating healthy borders, modernizing critical infrastructure, and transforming education in New Mexico.

### **ABOUT THE COLLEGE OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION (HEST)**

Founded in 2021, HEST is the second-largest college at NMSU, currently serving nearly 4,000 students, including over 2,700 undergraduate students and over 1,100 graduate students, and includes over 250 full-time faculty members. It is home to six academic departments and three schools: [Borderlands and Ethnic Studies](#), [Communication Disorders](#), [Counseling & Educational Psychology](#), [Kinesiology](#), [Public Health Sciences](#), [Sociology](#), [School of Nursing](#), [School of Social Work](#), and [School of Teacher Preparation, Administration, and Leadership](#).

HEST was formed in July 2021 following a vote in favor of the new college by the NMSU Board of Regents in May 2021. It was created as a regional leader in identifying gaps leading to health, education, and socio-economic outcome disparities. The college combines the previous College of Education and College of Health and Social Services, as well as the Departments of Sociology and Borderlands & Ethnic Studies (BEST) from the College of Arts and Sciences. HEST intends to ensure a more sustainable future through efficiencies, shared resources, and innovative thinking around programming to support New Mexico's student, research, clinical, and workforce needs, all through a social justice framework. The College of HEST's slogan is "Learn, Engage, Transform." Iconic to this slogan, HEST is a community of learning and engagement as a catalyst for transformation, acting as engines/drivers of community and economic development in New Mexico, across the Borderlands, and beyond. In particular, social transformation is an unique HEST identity, which is about promoting social change and justice for the good of our society.

Dr. Yoshi Iwasaki was named the inaugural dean of HEST in July 2022. Before joining NMSU, Dr. Iwasaki served as the chair of the Department of Public Health and Recreation at San Jose State University and previously served as Associate Dean for Research at the University of Alberta's Faculty of Extension. Dean Iwasaki's areas of interest and expertise include culture, diversity and community-university engagement, active living, and quality of life. He also specializes in participatory action research to address social justice issues such as human rights, poverty, empowerment, youth engagement, mental health, and social change. Under his leadership, HEST is upheld by three pillars of culture-building: (1) a [culture of mentoring](#), (2) a culture of appreciation and recognition, and (3) a culture of research. This commitment is guided by the [Boyer's Scholarship of Engagement](#) — a framework of public scholarship that values public-facing work of collaborative research, encompassing scholarly dimensions of teaching, integration, and application, besides a dimension of discovery.

## **ABOUT THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**

The School has prepared students for ethical and evidence-informed professional social work practice for over 30 years through its Bachelor of Social Work and Master of Social Work programs in Las Cruces, Albuquerque, and through distance education, including the recent addition of an online Bachelor's program. As the only School of Social Work in New Mexico that is part of a doctoral degree-granting research university, the School is committed to serving people through teaching, outreach, leadership, research, service, and the development of knowledge, skills, and values that promote social workers' professional ability to respond to individuals, families, groups, communities and organizations in their unique context. The School is accredited by the Council on Social Work Education and recently affirmed its accreditation for the next five years. The recent [\\$16.5 million endowment](#) provided for four new college faculty positions and two tenure-track positions and NMSU Global recently committed to supporting the expansion of the School by funding four faculty lines, including visiting and permanent positions. Of the 18 faculty, nine were hired in the last two years.

To fulfill its commitment to its students and community, the School has a mission to foster optimal health and well-being, equal human rights, and a just society rooted in ethical, culturally responsive, and evidence-informed social work practice in the Southwest, nationally, and internally. The School envisions being a leader in culturally-responsive and inclusive education, applied research, community engagement, and interdisciplinary collaboration. The School partners with regional Tribal and Native communities on student recruitment and practice-based initiatives and offers a dual degree MPH-MSW to meet the unique needs of their border community and New Mexico.

School faculty research and education interests include family/maternal/child health and cultural competency, child welfare, mental health (access to care, substance use disorder, childhood trauma), caregivers and the aging population, school-based policy and social work practice, immigration policy, as well as an array of health disparity and social justice issues among Latino, Latinx and Chicanx immigrant communities. Through a federally funded collaboration with the New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD), the School offers a Title IV-E Child Welfare Scholar Program. This program is designed to increase the number of BSW graduates and MSW- degreed social workers trained to provide services to children and their families who are New Mexico clients of CYFD. As such, the program is able to offer scholarships to students interested in becoming a practitioner in the field of child welfare. Based out of the School, the Center on Immigration and Child Welfare promotes and disseminates research, develops and disseminates resources, and provides leadership and guidance to child welfare agencies on policy and practice in working with immigrants.

## **ROLE OF THE DIRECTOR**

Reporting to the dean of HEST, the director is responsible for the comprehensive leadership and management of the School's mission related to academics, research, and service. The director is

responsible for providing the needed coursework and practicum experiences for students; allocating teaching assignments; leading programmatic growth through innovation, collaboration, and technology development; supervising and providing professional development opportunities for faculty and staff; maintaining and strengthening relationships with alumni and educational, research, clinical, community, policy, state, and national partners; complying with CSWE accreditation requirements; outreach and fundraising activities; and promoting collaborations across the School, HEST, and NMSU.

## **KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE DIRECTOR**

The director will have the opportunity to join a highly dedicated, passionate, and collaborative School of faculty and staff who are deeply committed to the School's success and who are ready for stability after multiple leadership transitions. At a pivotal time with new resources to be creative for growth and many new faculty members, the director will have the opportunity to address the following opportunities and challenges:

### ***Thoughtfully steward the School's community for an even greater impact***

After multiple years of instability and low morale, the School is eager for a visionary and relational leader who can inspire them for the future, and they can easily rally behind. The School's community will be looking to the director to lead an impactful vision and cultivate a sense of community by listening to the internal and external communities, and identifying areas of strength, growth, impact, and distinction for crafting a more compelling and cohesive identity. To be successful, the director will lead with openness, authenticity, and transparency and demonstrate a commitment to making positive, meaningful cultural and operational changes to best support the School's success. By fostering a strong internal culture of trust and cohesion, and articulating a compelling narrative about the School's identity, mission, and values. The director will also need to enhance the morale of faculty and staff and help to ensure that the program is top of choice in the Borderlands region and beyond, with faculty and staff already committed to positioning the School as a leading social work program in the State. The director will ensure the School remains nimble to adapt to the changing needs of the social work field and the State, and work closely with faculty for the appropriate programming to meet the needs and interests of students, the State, and the workforce. The director will also reaffirm the School as a mutually-beneficial partner to community partners and other NMSU entities to promote student success, community impact, interdisciplinary collaborations, and encourage research and grant opportunities where possible for even greater impact.

### ***Strengthen the School's administrative infrastructure for improved effectiveness and growth***

With recent investments from the State and NMSU Online, it is an opportune time to ensure the infrastructure for future success and growth. The director will evaluate what has worked well and not so well in the past and determine the appropriate administrative support moving forward. The School is currently completing their recruitment for a new academic advisor, which will add to the two other more

general administrative professionals supporting the School's operations, but additional support will be needed to cultivate a culture where staff and faculty feel valued and can thrive, and where faculty, staff, and students feel adequately supported. The director will serve as an advocate for the School, making a case for additional resources as necessary to support their growth. As the infrastructure evolves, the director will promote inclusivity, communication, transparency, and accountability in the School, ensuring the appropriate protocols and procedures are in place and that shared governance is respected.

***Enhance educational excellence and the student experience***

The director will bring a dedicated focus to understanding and enhancing the experience of its diverse student population by ensuring the required courses, preparing faculty for the classroom and ensuring healthy and fruitful practicum offerings that promote student success and a smooth transition to the workforce. The director will actively listen to students' experiences and needs and ensure a supportive School infrastructure responsive to those needs. The director will manage program curricula and ensure all programs are aligned with CSWE accreditation standards while also providing unique offerings in support of students' interests and the Borderlands region. By prioritizing the student experience, the School aims to become a top destination for social work education in support of rural and diverse populations that educates and graduates leaders dedicated to changing the structure of inequities to best support the needs of the State. The ultimate goal is to graduate happy alumni who serve New Mexico and who remain engaged in NMSU alumni activities, such as by becoming practicum supervisors or workforce collaborators in support of future social work graduates.

***Recruit, retain, and support a talented, diverse, and collaborative faculty and staff***

Faculty and staff make up the engine for the School to successfully live out its mission. Luckily, the director will be joining a School of faculty and staff who are already very committed to collaborative work and trying new things for even greater impact. Recognizing this, the director will help recruit and retain a talented and diverse faculty and staff committed to the mission and values of the School, and will provide multiple professional development opportunities to ensure their success, including a mentoring structure to nurture faculty and staff in their areas of interest, expertise, teaching, scholarship, and leadership, especially ensuring the appropriate infrastructure to support the many new faculty in the School. The director will work diligently to cultivate an even stronger sense of community, ensure all voices are heard in decision making, advocate for faculty and staff when needed, and highlight their important contributions to ensure they feel valued. Clear and frequent communication will be critical to build and sustain community, and ultimately retain faculty and staff, as many remain remote or hybrid.

***Serve as an effective representative and advocate for the School in support of its ambitions***

As a member of HEST's leadership team and principal ambassador for the School, the director will be a visible leader actively engaging with diverse partners in New Mexico, the Borderlands region, and more

broadly nationally in the field of social work. A primary focus will be building relationships across the State to enhance the delivery of high-quality programs and services, such as developing and strengthening relationships with practicum partners, augmenting community-engaged research and clinical work, and ensuring mutually beneficial partnerships among agencies and students. The director will advocate for the School's various needs locally and at the State level and will work closely with faculty to encourage innovative approaches for alternative funding sources to enhance the School's work. A crucial aspect of this role is telling the School's story enthusiastically to individual, health, foundation, government, and community leaders for additional support and impact.

### **QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS**

The successful candidate will bring demonstrated success as a practicing social worker with the experience commensurate with appointment at the rank of Associate Professor or Full Professor in the School of Social Work. An MSW from a CSWE-accredited program and a doctorate in social work or a closely related field is required, with a minimum of two years post-MSW experience as a practicing social worker.

The search committee understands that no single candidate will have all the ideal qualifications, but it seeks candidates with the following experiences and abilities:

- A bold, innovative, and visionary leader who demonstrates empathy, integrity, and drive;
- Administrative leadership experience in an academic setting with a successful record of managing change;
- Active program of research and scholarship with experience in applying for and securing extramural funding;
- A deep understanding and appreciation of the educational value of a diverse community, along with a record of nourishing a culture climate that supports the advancement of equity, diversity, and inclusion;
- An avid listener who communicates frequently to the community and demonstrates a strong commitment to fairness and transparency;
- An engaged, hands-on individual who values consensus building and consultation with the community but can make difficult decisions;
- Strong mentoring skills with experience developing professional development programs for staff and faculty;
- The ability to represent the School compellingly to external constituencies, enhancing the visibility and impact of its work while fostering new relationships and partnerships that expand the mission of the School;
- Knowledge of and experience with CSWE accreditation requirements.



### *Preferred Qualifications*

- Record of successful administrative management experience, including budgetary experience, within a higher education setting;
- Evidence of collaboration with students to include cultivating relationships and recruitment of potential students;
- Experience with the development of degree programs in social work at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, course scheduling, and field collaboration;
- Experience with online program/course development and teaching;
- Ability to utilize computer and virtual technology and multi-task within these systems for course and program development;
- Experience in managing multiple site-based programs and distance education faculty and students;
- Understanding of and commitment to leadership in a Hispanic-serving, minority-serving, and land grant institution;
- Experience working with underrepresented student groups and a commitment to student success, preferably at a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) and/or Minority-Serving Institution (MSI);
- Experience in mentoring faculty in research/scholarship, teaching, and service, including guiding them through the promotion and tenure process;
- Current licensure or eligibility for licensure as an LMSW or LCSW;
- Bilingualism in English and Spanish is a value-add but not required; all backgrounds are welcome to apply.

### **LOCATION**

New Mexico is known as "The Land of Enchantment" or "Tierra del Encanto," because of its scenic beauty and rich history. New Mexico offers various adventures, art, music and dance, breathtaking landscapes, and a multicultural heritage that cannot be found in any other state in the U.S. New Mexico has the highest percentage of Hispanic residents by State. It has the second-highest percentage of Native Americans as a proportion of the population and the fourth-highest total number of Native Americans.

The community of Las Cruces is located in southern New Mexico and is well known for its hospitality, people, and deep appreciation of a colorful past, and its enthusiasm for a future rich with possibilities. The geography, climate, demographics, and ambiance combine to offer a truly excellent place to live. With the unsurpassed beauty of sunsets, purple mountains, and a climate that is warm and inviting, Las Cruces offers a very high quality of life.

The City of Las Cruces is the second-largest city in New Mexico, located in Doña Ana County, approximately 45 miles north of El Paso, Texas, and 225 miles south of Albuquerque. Las Cruces is the economic and geographic center of the Mesilla Valley, the agricultural region on the floodplain of the Rio Grande, which



extends from Hatch to the west side of El Paso, Texas. The Organ Mountains, 10 miles to the east, are dominant in the city's landscape, along with the Doña Ana Mountains, Robledo Mountains, and Picacho Peak. Las Cruces lies within a short driving distance of the Mexican border at Santa Teresa.

The historic downtown features an open-air plaza with an extensive farmer's market where a variety of foods and cultural items can be purchased from local farmers, artists, and craftspeople. Las Cruces features multiple outdoor recreation areas including more than 100 parks covering over 700 acres. Throughout the year residents enjoy festivals celebrating local culture and food as well as local and national historical sites, national monuments, galleries, theaters, museums, and the symphony.

#### **APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS**

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and an application (CV with cover letter) can be submitted via the Isaacson, Miller website for the search: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/new-mexico-state-university-director-social-work>. Please submit all materials directly to the Isaacson, Miller website.

Lindsay Gold and Leslie Lemus  
Isaacson, Miller  
1000 Sansome Street, Suite 300  
San Francisco, CA 94111

*New Mexico State University is dedicated to providing equal employment opportunities in all areas of occupation without regard to race, color, religion, gender, national origin, mental or physical disability, serious medical condition, age, ancestry, sexual orientation, sexual identity, spousal affiliation, veteran status, or genetic information according to state and federal laws.*