

NMSU: transforming lives through discovery
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This week, thousands of students from across town, across the state and across the world are making their way to Las Cruces, in preparation for classes this semester at New Mexico State University. This time of year always reminds me of one student, in particular, who arrived at NMSU on a hot summer day 37 years ago in a VW bus, with homemade curtains, a bed in the back and no air conditioning.

Today, Brad Gordon is a retired corporate executive. He was a venture capitalist and involved in the startup of 11 companies, mostly in the biotech field. He is a proud NMSU alumnus and a successful businessman by every measure – but all of this good fortune almost did not happen.

Brad was born in Nashville and grew up in Evansville, Ind., on the southern Indiana border with Kentucky. It was a small, southern Ohio River town. After graduating from high school, Brad went on to attend a Big Ten university. Unfortunately, failing grades got him kicked out of school during his junior year. Dejected, he then applied at other, smaller schools in the region, but to no avail. His grades continued to haunt him, so he moved to California, unsure of what he would do with his life.

It was there that a career counselor advised Brad of the possibility of attending college in New Mexico, where he could start anew, have a chance at rebuilding his GPA and, perhaps, enter graduate school someday. He wisely chose NMSU, loaded up the VW bus and set out for Las Cruces, arriving in August 1976.

At the time, Las Cruces was a much smaller town. Aside from an inspiring view of the Organ Mountains from campus, Brad felt as if he had landed in the middle of a barren desert. He experienced culture shock. Some of the students he found wore large hats, pointed boots and big belt buckles – things Brad had only seen in cowboy movies. Brad was a self-described hippie and let's just say it was easy to spot him, and his VW bus, on campus among the student body.

Over the next three years, Brad's life changed in a major way. He felt he had arrived as a stranger in a strange land, on a voyage of life discovery. Fortunately, his voyage was a success. New Mexico State University is where Brad "found himself." He discovered who he was and what he wanted to do with his life.

Among the people he met at NMSU was Robin Peterson, a professor in marketing who would become an important mentor, along with other friendly people who cared about his academic success. NMSU gave Brad purpose, ability and direction, and more than

anything else, a belief in himself – his abilities and his talents, and how to put them to use to make an impact. He uncovered his true potential in life and how to succeed.

Brad found that New Mexico State University is all about discovery. We help our students grow. We never miss an opportunity to mentor and always take the extra step to guide and encourage. We expect success and for everyone to take pride in NMSU and what each individual does. At NMSU, we transform lives through discovery.

As Brad has told me, “They say your birthplace is not so much where you were first born, but rather that special place where you first discover the person you were truly meant to be. I was born twice in life. First in Tennessee, then at NMSU.”

Brad graduated from NMSU in 1978 and went on to earn an MBA from a prestigious school in California. He had tremendous success in the business world and even established the Robin T. Peterson Endowed Chair in Marketing at NMSU, named in honor of his mentor.

It is my sincere hope that each and every student who arrives at NMSU this fall has an experience similar to what Brad Gordon was able to have. Perhaps not everyone will arrive in a VW bus, or be surprised by the occasional cowboy hat, boots and large buckle, but I am certain each of them will have an opportunity to find themselves – to discover who they are and what they plan to do with their lives.