As promised, this report is a bit shorter. Academic Deans Council met Tuesday, Jan 23 and had a full agenda. The Provost described what the Legislative Finance Committee agreed to, but I won’t describe it since nothing is certain until after the Legislature adjourns and the Governor has exercised his pencil. The Council approved a proposal for General Education requirements for transfer students that says that any student transferring from a two- or four-year accredited institution has satisfied NMSU’s general education requirements if the institution the student is transferring from says that student has satisfied its general education requirements. The proposal also says that a notation will be attached to any NMSU student who has completed general education requirements. As part of my Faculty Senate report, I presented the memorial Senate passed revising the academic misconduct section of the Student Handbook and asked for the Deans’ approval. After some vigorous discussion about the issue of jurisdiction, they passed the measure in principle, and it is up to the Provost to revise the section incorporating our requests. I have offered to help draft the section. VP for Research Vimal Chaitanya presented an update on federal initiatives and spoke of the allocation of projects to colleges and federal departments and agencies. There was a discussion of President Martin’s memo on the review of graduate programs, which lists some of the criteria, such as trends in enrollment, connection to research clusters, record of obtaining grants funding, success and placement of graduates, success of each program relative to NRC criteria, etc. I pointed out that some of the criteria were not appropriate for programs in the humanities and arts and asked that other criteria be included. The Dean and the Provost realize the need for faculty to participate in the process, and they agreed that the review task force should include a number of faculty from various programs and colleges.

The Board of Regents met in Santa Fe on January 29. The main action of the meeting was the approval of the merger of the Research Park into the Arrowhead Center, with a new memorandum of agreement between the Regents and the Arrowhead Center and the designation of the VP for Planning, Physical Resources and University Relations (Ben Woods). Approval was also given for the demolition of the remaining Alumni Dormitories. Beverlee McClure, secretary of the Higher Education Department was unable to make her presentation since she was kept at the Governor’s office. There was a report by the NMSU Foundation on its endowment and the campaign. The campaign has reached its $150 million goal with 4 years left, so a new goal of $225 million has been set for the end of 2010. Michael Hites and Bernadette Montoya presented preliminary enrollment figures for this semester, and we are doing nicely. These figures indicate that all campuses except for Carlsbad have increased their enrollment. On the Las Cruces campus, student credit hours are up by 2.7% over last year and enrollment is up 7.5% for undergraduates and down 4.7% for graduate students. Senior VP Jennifer Taylor presented some interesting figures that indicate that the University budget has gone up by about 4% per year for the last 10 years. Perhaps more revealing is that the proportions of the budget devoted to I&G, administrative support, student services, operation and maintenance, and institutional support have stayed the approximately the same over that period. Patricia Quintana gave a very brief summary of legislative action and handed out a list of about 150 bills introduced so far that concern higher ed and NMSU specifically. She thinks that the number will eventually reach 300 by the deadline for the introduction
of bills. So far 1200 separate bills have been introduced to the legislature, so they certainly will have a busy time. She also presented comparisons of the proposals of the Legislative Finance Committee, the Governor, and the Higher Education Department. They are not that far apart in terms of dollars but vary in where the money goes. We’ll have to see what happens when all is done and signed or vetoed. Two significant points about money, however. Most of you probably know about the first, that the federal government is seriously considering doing the rest of the federal budget (homeland security and defense excepted) by continuing resolution, which will exclude earmarks. This could cause NMSU considerable discomfort, along with other public universities. The second is that the LFC liked the zero percent tuition tax credit, but the current bill limits the tuition increase the universities could pass to 2%. Ouch! The ASNMSU report included the announcement that that body would like to see a Heritage Council established for the University that would be charged with keeping track of university traditions (mascot, songs, etc.) and creating new “traditions.” The council would consist of members from all segments of the University. Finally, a group of AFSCME members asked permission to talk to the Regents, which was granted with the understanding that the Regents are not part of the negotiation process. The gist of their presentation was that the University is dragging its feet on negotiations and refusing to meet while the union wants to be part of the process in Santa Fe to fight for more money for the University. The Regents made no direct reply other than to comment that the process would work better if the union refrained from ad hominem attacks on administrators. It remains very hard to see what is happening here, and nothing will be certain until the contract is negotiated and presented for ratification. One union representative said that she hoped the process could avoid the development of confrontational attitudes. I hope she is right, and that all parties will in fact work towards that end.