Faculty Senate Chair’s January 07 Report

Folks,
I apologize up front for the length of this report. While many of you have been off, administrators have not. There have been a number of significant proposals and developments unveiled. At least, next month’s report should be shorter.

Administrative Council met on Dec. 12 and approved the Print Portal for all campus printing. This proposal went through a number of changes and came out a much stronger and flexible plan to ensure best costs for the offset printing done at NMSU. There were presentations on local programming on our public broadcasting stations, on new student involvement and organization initiatives, and a draft of scheduling priorities for Corbett Center. New ID cards will be issued to all students, faculty, and staff, which will include the individual’s banner number on the front. Because the card will interact with other University systems, it will be possible to determine an individual’s eligibility for campus services (e.g. Natatorium), ability to access appropriate buildings, and the like. The process of issuing new cards is expected to take from May to August of this year, once data feeds between Banner Student and the Blackboard Transaction System are set up. In addition, ID Card Services has contracted with Wells Fargo to provide Checking accounts, ATM, Visa-based transactions, and deposit transfer service. The program for faculty and staff will offer checking with no monthly fee when the account receives direct payroll deposit. The program would work through the new ID card for those who sign up. My comments on the Wells Fargo arrangement are not intended as an endorsement but a heads up for the advertising that will be coming your way. VP Rebecca Dukes made a report on the audit of restricted gift Foundation Scholarships. Significant problems remain with compliance with the terms of scholarships; recipients were awarded more funds that they were eligibility, inconsistency in awards, and problems with the timing of awards. A number of steps involving training and better use of electronic systems for application and timely and consistent awards will be implemented.

The Board of Regents met on Dec. 15. Among the action items was the adoption of the Campus Master Plan. There was a report about the mid-term evaluation of President Martin. The President had asked as part of his contract for an evaluation incorporating feedback from the broad community (faculty, staff, administrators, students, individuals external to the University). The process is underway, and some of you will have received a questionnaire. There were presentations on Living the Vision Goal IV, the UNM/NMSU Health Care Alliance Initiative, and a legislative update from Patricia Quintana. There were also a number of occasions honoring Sherry Kamali, who was participating in her last meeting, as student regent and graduating with a double major. Regent Kamali was a strong force on the board for student recruitment and retention. Speaking of graduation, we were inside the Pan Am Center on Saturday. In a change from previous practice, the doctoral degrees were awarded first, followed by the masters degrees and then the bachelors degrees. This was a response to last spring, when so many of the students left the brutally hot stadium, leaving few spectators (and long-suffering faculty!) to observe these people being rewarded for a great deal of effort. I think it was also good for the bachelor’s students and their family to see some of the pomp that goes with the awarding of the doctorate.
I met with President Martin on Dec. 19 to discuss the draft promotion and tenure document. He likes the draft and promised me more detailed reading with comments. On Wednesday, Dec. 20, I met with the Provost, the VP for Research, Susan Grotevant (Assistant VP for Business and Finance) and Brenda Shannon, (Director of Audit Services), to discuss the Conflict of Interest Form that was to be filled out as part of the annual evaluation and to serve as a substitute for the forms submitted with grant applications. There were suggestions for improvements to the form; Human Resources will do these. The major problem seems to be getting people to fill out the form. Large numbers of faculty did not fill them out, and some colleges did not forward the forms to Human Resources. HR will be developing an online form, and a reporting system that will allow HR to track individuals who have not completed their forms.

The Academic Deans Council met on Jan 4, and covered a number of topics. Probably the biggest item at the ADC meeting was the discussion of the Faculty Line Reallocation Process. The process is still unclear, but I think I can say the following is true as of Jan. 4. The reallocation involves vacant positions; there is no intention to cut current positions. A proportion of previously frozen positions will go back to a central pool. These will be reallocated on the basis of student demand, whether the department is over- or under-staffed (ask your Dean about this), areas of “strategic” importance to NMSU, etc. As vacancies occur, each must be justified to the Provost. Some will go to a central pool; others will not. The intent is to enable NMSU to qualify for the three percent growth money. There was a vigorous discussion, and I suspect there may be further changes. The President offered to come to speak to the Senate on this reallocation process, and I have taken him up on the offer. I asked the Provost if he would talk to the Senate in addition to the President, and he has agreed. Last week I heard that all unfilled positions have been frozen, even those that had been approved previously and for which searches were at various stages of completion.

I hope that as the reallocation process proceeds that there will be broader consultation. The more representatives from different levels are involved, the more unintended problems are avoided, the greater chance that relevant factors are not left out of formulae, the fairer the process can be, and the better the product will be. Such a process takes longer but will result in both a better result and one that makes people realize that they are members of one university. The same things can be said about creating positions, filling vacancies, creating new programs, merging departments, etc. Such activities work best when they follow existing policies and procedures, not because minute adherence to rules is so important but because the observance of shared governance principles results in better governance with less bad feeling.

The Provost also announced a task force to review all NMSU graduate programs. As HED approves new graduate programs, they want universities to delete under-utilized programs. It is unclear (as are most things from HED at this point) whether there will be a one-for-one deletion/approval ratio. Most universities review graduate programs on a cycle, and the task force review is intended to be the start of a regular cycle of such reviews. The President has also announced that he wants this review. I hope that faculty are included in the review process.
Dean Lacey presented a draft proposal for a streamlined approval process for graduate certificate programs. The draft says that certificate proposals would go through the Graduate Council and the Graduate School. If no additional resources are required for the certificate, the approval process ends there. If additional resources are required, then the proposal must also go through an external review process. Please let me know if you have any questions or issues with this, because the issue will probably not come to Faculty Senate. Dean Titus presented a proposal to revise Policy Manual section 5.06.30 on the administrative review of department heads so that such reviews take place within 6 months of the third anniversary of the appointment and every five years thereafter. This would make the policy consistent with review schedules for other academic administrators. The grounds are that the schedule creates a burden for the larger colleges. The proposal was passed and will be introduced in Faculty Senate. The proposal to change the name of the Physical Education, Recreation and Dance Department to Human Performance, Recreation, and Dance Department passed and will be introduced in the Faculty Senate. Dean Carruthers discussed the preliminary grades given to the Living the Vision goals and talked about new membership. I talked about the draft Promotion and Tenure policy and got some useful comments. There seemed to be no strong objections to the draft. After task force discusses the comments that have been submitted and makes changes, I will ask the ADC to approve the policy before it comes to the Senate.

The Council of New Mexico Faculty Senate Presidents met with HED Secretary Dr. Beverley McClure on Jan 8 in Albuquerque. Representatives were present from the whole group ENMU, NMHU, NMSU, NMT, UNM, and WNMU. The Secretary spoke to us about the HED strategic priorities and goals, several of which are directly relevant to faculty. Aside from the need to improve the recruitment and retention of high quality faculty and staff, goals include recognizing and funding the role of research in the state’s economy, realizing that research institutions have different missions, developing a marketing plan to help recruit students in New Mexico by advertising the advantages of higher education (this is something the CNMFSP recommended when we first met with Secretary McClure, and she has been supportive of this). HED also supports the 20 million being asked for matching funds to endow chairs. This document along with others mentioned is available through the HED web pages. Along with the NM Council of University Presidents, HED is supporting money to cover the cost of opening the doors (utility and health insurance inflationary costs this year, library and some other costs next year), an agreement to limit tuition hikes to 5 % or less in exchange for a zero tuition tax credit, etc. Secretary McClure also presented a plan to close the salary gap between NM higher education institutions and regional peers over FY 07-FY11. For NMSU it would raise median salaries from a self-reported $91,500 (including benefits) in FY 09 to $110, 000 in FY11 with raises of 8, 7.5 and 7.0 percent in those three years after 4.5 and 5.0 percent in FY07 and FY08. Since NMSU is the furthest behind, this would involve larger percentages for us than for NMT or UNM. The tradeoff for this would be increased accountability that ties some funding to outcomes in student success. Secretary McClure presented a plan that make a portion of the funding formula dependent not on SCA and enrollment but on student success. Given the decline state high school population, I think this is a good idea. Her plan would make it easier for institutions to
qualify for increased funding. The figure does not just reward completion rates but also provides additional units for remedial, minority, and needy students. If this happens, I believe it would be good for us. HED will be cooperating with the Public Education Dept. in the American Diploma Project, which will increase the preparation of high school students; university faculty in math, science and English will be cooperating with high schools to create curricula that will actually prepare students for higher education. Secretary McClure also discussed the HED legislative priorities, these include the fund for endowing chairs, several proposals to change the lottery success scholarship to make it more available and to trim administrative costs, some of which may fare better than others, a study of increasing access to dual credit (high school/college) courses by better documentation, and a teacher loan forgiveness program for teachers working in areas designated as having teacher shortages. Again these proposals are on the HED website. My impression is that the Secretary is working with a large number of stakeholders and developing plans to meet some of our critical needs. Secretary McClure also suggested that the next faculty representative on the Strategic Advisory Board be the President or an elected rep of the CNMFSP. After the Secretary left, the group spent another hour discussing various issues, ranging from ombudspersons to consulting (how it is defined, how it counts in performance evaluations and p&t, if at all), and the processes and extent of faculty involvement in shared governance on our campuses. I learned that the UNM Faculty Senate has 28 standing subcommittees! I hope the next chair will stay involved with the group; it has been quite helpful to realize the many different ways our campuses can deal with similar issues.

The Naming Committee met on Jan. 8, and approved naming the new hospitality room in the renovated Pan Am Center the Barbara Hubbard Room, and the entrance road from Geothermal Drive to the Golf Clubhouse Herb Wemberly Drive. A suggested placeholder name for the new student apartment complex was rejected with a request that a plant name, similar to Piñón, be submitted instead.

Administrative Council met on Jan. 8 as well. The Printing Portal was approved, as were the naming proposals approved by the Naming Committee. Among other reports, senators might find the report on Student Retention Activities by Jennifer Hiatt interesting. The residential tutoring program La Vista seems to have been a success, along with a pilot early alert system. The Center for Learning Assistance has become the Center for Academic Success since the earlier name seemed to deter students from taking advantage of it. The group did an online survey of student satisfaction and received almost 2600 responses. The demographics are similar to the NMSU student population overall. Satisfaction is good in most areas, but not all. Among the “challenges” are: faculty need to do a better job of giving students timely feedback on their progress in a course, graduate teaching assistants need to improve their competence as classroom instructors, financial aid counselors need to be helpful, etc. The students think we are doing many things well. The data will be made available on the website of the Division of Student Success, and the Division will do more breakdowns of the data by major, year in school, and other criteria. Michael Hites provided an update on IT issues, which there are many. One is that because of increased IRS scrutiny, ICT is working on policies that will treat University provided cell phones and Internet access as benefits. Another is that
the RFP for the National LambdaRail connection from NMSU to South Main St. is out. There is a statewide board for NLR. ICT is working with the library and others on digital asset retention. Work is also being done the issue of e-mail retention and pre-trial “discovery.” There is no estimate on when faculty viewing of courses in the Banner Student module will become easier, but the subject is on the table.

One of my major activities since the last Senate meeting has been the task of collating comments on the draft promotion and tenure policy. Comments so far have been mostly helpful, specific points that need to be included, disagreements with particular points or wordings of the draft, and some misunderstandings. Even these have been helpful in making the Task Force think about whether language needs to be clearer. The Task Force will meet to discuss these comments and developed a revised proposal to submit to the Academic Deans Council and then the Faculty Senate.