

Research & Creative Activities

Annual Report: 2021-2022

Members: Erik Lehnhoff (Chair), Abdessatar Abdelkefi, Delia Vvalles-Rosales, Amanda Ashley, Mary Fahrenbruck, Kelly Sharp-Hoskins, Kristian Finlator, Megan Papesch, Sangu Angadi and Faruk Arslan

Function/Purpose: The purpose of this committee is to address issues broadly related to research and creative activity at NMSU. The committee is aligned with NMSU LEADS 2025 Goal 2, Elevate Research & Creative Activity. The committee maintains an open line of communication with administrators (primarily the Vice President for Research [VPR]) to stay informed on issues affecting the research and creative activity enterprise and faculty involved in said enterprise. Concerns about policy are discussed and solutions are proposed by the committee. The Chair meets monthly with the VPR and attends Goal 2 team meetings to serve as a liaison between the VPR, Goal 2 Team and the committee.

Primary Tasks and Accomplishments

Faculty Talk: An open faculty forum, Faculty Talk, existed until January 2021 when the forum was taken down by the administration because of inappropriate postings by a few faculty members. Such a forum is important for faculty to be able to communicate freely about numerous issues, including those affecting research and creative activity. The committee drafted a proposition to create a new forum, Faculty Talk 2.0, on the platform Yammer. The proposition which was co-sponsored by Senators Sharp-Hoskins and Lehnhoff was submitted on September 24, 2021, and was assigned to the University Planning committee. The proposal was passed by the full Senate on December 2, 2021. The Chancellor then requested a working group to facilitate the launch of Faculty Talk 2.0. Senators Sharp-Hoskins and Lehnhoff, along with Chair Parra, joined a group with representation from HR, General Counsel and ITC to address issues. Faculty Talk 2.0 was eventually launched in April 2022.

Scorecard/Goalcard: A metric called Scorecard (changed to Goalcard) had been developed by the Provost's and VPR's offices to evaluate how Departments were performing. There was concern among faculty about the contexts for adoption and use of Goalcard, and many believed that Goalcard would unfairly penalize and become a burden for some faculty. This led the committee to invite the VPR Cifuentes to its October meeting to discuss concerns. The VPR responded to the concerns and provided additional information; however, there were unresolved issues with Goalcard and the committee drafted a letter (Appendix 1) to the VPR which was sent on December 9, 2021. In January 2021 the VPR attended the committee meeting and informed the committee that Goalcard was on hold until (at least) a new permanent Provost was appointed.

Service: An issue that came to light in the discussions of Goalcard was that of faculty service. Most committee members indicated that their service responsibilities were often far greater than what was acknowledged on their Allocation of Effort forms, and this had numerous negative impacts on faculty. To address this issue, the committee had extensive discussions about service, gathered information from faculty within committee members' respective colleges, and conducted a survey of Senators to obtain information on Senators' service loads. The committee prepared Proposition 13-21/22, Resolution to Alleviate Service Burdens and Recognize Service Performed by Faculty ([Proposition 13-21/22](#)), co-sponsored by Senators Bronstein, Lehnhoff, Sharp-Hoskins and Finlator. The committee unanimously

voted to pass it and send it to the Senate Leadership Committee for inclusion on the consent agenda of the Faculty Senate Agenda for the meeting on May 5, 2022.

Monthly Committee Reports

October

The Research and Creative Activity Committee met with 8 members and had one guest: VPR Luis Cifuentes. Dr. Cifuentes gave a presentation on the Score Card / Goal Card tool which will be used to gather data and make budget decisions based on Department performance in various categories. After his presentation, Dr. Cifuentes answered questions from the committee. After Dr. Cifuentes left the meeting, and over the next several days, members of the committee discussed Goal Card and identified numerous areas of concern. We are now drafting a list of questions to be routed through the entire committee for feedback during the next meeting on November 16, and the questions will be presented to the Senate Leadership Committee on November 18.

The committee also discussed potential language to amend Proposition 03-21/22 (Faculty Talk). Suggested amendments for this proposition were sent to the Chair of the University Planning Committee on October 27, 2021.

November

The Research and Creative Activity Committee met with 9 members present. The committee discussed numerous concerns and questions regarding the October 19 presentation on Goalcard by the VPR. Kristian Finlator had prepared a document with concerns and questions which served as a starting point for discussions. It was agreed that the VPR's office was committed to Goalcard, and our role should be to advocate for faculty input which would improve the instrument and assure transparency and a process for reconciliation. It was agreed that in the spirit of building bridges, a path forward would be to edit the list of questions and concerns and present it to the VPR. We would then request an open, town hall style meeting where the VPR could address questions and concerns. How to assure diverse faculty involvement in the iterative process of improving Goalcard was unresolved.

December

The Research and Creative Activity Committee met with 8 members present. The committee discussed the draft written response to the VPR regarding Goal Card. An abbreviated version of the letter was agreed upon and sent to the VPR. The committee decided that the VPR should be invited to attend another meeting after having a chance to read the letter and think about its questions and proposals. Erik Lehnhoff met with the VPR on December 9, 2021, and the VPR indicated he would be happy to meet with the committee to answer questions and discuss Goal Card.

January

The Research and Creative Activity Committee met with 8 members present. Dr. Luis Cifuentes joined as a guest. Dr. Cifuentes had previously responded in writing to our letter of questions about Goal Card. In the meeting he noted that the Goal Card initiative was on hold until a permanent Provost is named. We

spent some time discussing Service activities in which NMSU Faculty engage and noted that many faculty engage in Service far above what is required by their annual allocation of effort.

Dr. Cifuentes discussed the structure of the new Office of Research, Creativity & Strategic Initiatives (RCSI). This new office will oversee Research, Creativity, Economic Development, Workforce Development, Industry Relations, and Government Relations. RCSI foci will include LEADS 2025 goals 2 and 3.

February

The Research and Creative Activity Committee met with 7 members present and Faculty Senate Chair Julia Parra joined as a guest.

The committee discussed ideas and issues regarding service at NMSU, with the purpose of getting a better understanding of what types of services are performed, whether they are in addition to faculty's regular duties, and whether they are perceived as being valued by the administration. The committee also discussed Faculty Senate service specifically, with the main question of what could be done / changed to make Faculty Senate more desirable to faculty members. Ideas included course buyouts for leadership roles, "banking" service hours, and additional compensation for service.

Erik Lehnhoff started a shared document in the Research and Creative Activity section of the Faculty Senate Teams page. This document is meant to gather information on services performed, hours spent, relation to LEADS 2025, and more.

March

The Research and Creative Activity Committee met with 10 members present.

The committee discussed the various service activities in which faculty engage, with a focus on how service was valued (or perceived to be valued) and how much time was spent on service activities relative to faculty's allocation of effort. It was questioned if the service model at NMSU was really problematic, and if it is problematic, is it the job of Faculty Senate to address it. The consensus was that faculty seem to perform too much service for the credit given, and such excess service could hinder career development.

Issues identified by the committee included:

- Women and people of color disproportionately perform service activities.
- The level of service of all faculty has increased because there are fewer faculty lines filled and more classes taught by adjunct faculty.
- There are numerous vacant administrative assistant positions, and this pushes additional duties onto faculty.
- Many faculty perform more service than noted on their allocation of effort forms.

It was agreed that a proposition would be drafted to address these issues. The issue of service on Faculty Senate was also addressed. It was noted that some colleges require a faculty member to serve, suggesting lack of willingness to serve voluntarily. The consensus was that faculty do not feel valued for Faculty Senate service. No further action on this issue was taken.

April

The Research and Creative Activity Committee met with 8 members present.

The committee finalized Proposition 13-21/22, Resolution to Alleviate Service Burdens and Recognize Service Performed by Faculty. The committee unanimously voted to pass it and send it to the Senate Leadership Committee for inclusion on the consent agenda of the Faculty Senate Agenda for the meeting on May 5, 2022.

Appendix 1. Goalcard Memo

December 7, 2021

To: Dr. Luis Cifuentes, NMSU Vice President of Research

From: NMSU Faculty Senate Research & Creative Activities Committee

Dear Vice President Cifuentes,

Thank you again for taking the time to brief us on developments regarding Goal Card. The need to incorporate more data into administrative decisions and the potential of metrics and KPI's to uncover NMSU's strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for growth are broadly appreciated.

Prompted by our committee's ongoing concerns that the Goal Card is grounded in a deficit model of faculty productivity, which

- lacks evidence of underlying assumptions,
- excludes extensive and differential service obligations (which reduce capacity for teaching, research, and creative activities but are necessary to the function of the University)
- requires significant and ongoing technical oversight and support, and
- indicates intrinsic bias against faculty from underrepresented demographics (such as mothers, persons of color, and disabled faculty) owing to their sensitivity to biased external factors (such as the COVID-19 pandemic), we pose the following questions (organized by category) and proposals:

Questions

Contexts of Adoption

1. What metrics were used to determine the need for (and potential benefit of) adopting the Goal Card, especially in context of the resources required for its implementation and maintenance? How were NMSU's academic units involved in this determination?
2. What efforts were made to discuss barriers to increasing output with faculty before adopting/developing Goal Card?
3. What specific information is sought from Academic Analytics that cannot be gleaned from Digital Measures or from the academic units themselves?
4. What efforts were undertaken to obtain that information directly from the units before contracting with Academic Analytics?
5. How will Goal Card assess which academic units' outputs would be increased most efficiently through increased support in the form of administrative FTEs or graduate assistantships?

Contexts of Use

6. How does university- and department-level service contribute to a Goal Card?

7. How does the Goal Card acknowledge the relationships between visibly revenue-generating projects and the invisible service that maintains both those projects (and supports students and the mission of the university)?
8. How can the Goal Card become a tool to acknowledge and reward and better distribute heretofore and emerging (uncompensated) service?
9. What specific metrics will be used to assess the Goal Card itself (to identify and/or solve the perceived problems that it is being formulated to address)? Who will determine the effectiveness of the Goal Card itself?
10. How are each unit's priorities—especially as expressed in their Functions and Criteria documents—to be factored into Goal Card assessments?
11. How will results from Goal Card assessments be weighed against results from external departmental reviews, particularly when they disagree?

Sustainability, Resources, and Support

12. What resources will be used to train and support faculty to assess and maintain the accuracy of their Goal Card data?
13. How will faculty labor involved in maintaining the accuracy of their data be recognized and compensated?
14. How will administrative and faculty review be organized to ensure consistent review and maintenance of this tool at multiple scales (individual, unit-level, and cross-unit)? How much will this cost? How will participants be compensated?
15. How will communication with faculty about the tool be facilitated to alleviate faculty concern and promote faculty involvement?
16. How will opportunities for growth (identified by the Goal Card) be advertised and supported?

Proposals

1. Goal Card should be developed through an iterative and transparent process involving continuing input from faculty and Department Heads representing a diverse range of disciplines. Goal Card impact on unit-level activities should be phased in over several years and reflect unit-level goal and extant Functions and Criteria. A review process for continuing improvement guided by discussions between faculty and administration should be developed.
2. During the first year, Goal Card should use only data that can be obtained either from Digital Measures or directly from the academic units. This will enable an assessment of whether the extra administrative work and duplication of effort associated with outsourcing data collection to Academic Analytics is worth the effort.
3. NMSU administration should evaluate unit-level and faculty-level output in a way that accounts for their level of administrative support (including administrative FTEs per faculty, GA and TA support, and proposal writing resources, etc.) and for their level of

commitment/functions/roles in their corresponding departments and colleges. Efforts should be made to increase and regularize this support. While increase is in progress, administration should pro-actively remove from communications regarding Goal Card suggestions that NMSU faculty are currently underperforming.

4. Margins should be calculated either over a multi-year period or using a weighted combination of short-term and long-term calculations in order to prevent GoalCard from suppressing bold but long-term investments.