

# Senate Chair's Report

November 7, 2013

Here we are again. On a personal note, I'd like to acknowledge that Anne Meek, our long-time Recording Secretary, died a year ago yesterday.

## Activities

In addition to meeting with the Standing Committees, in the past month I have met with the University Executive Committee (UEC), the Academic Dean's Council (ADC), several search Committees, Greg Walke (our Planning Guru) and the President and Provost.

Upcoming Senate tasks:

1. Nomination and election of Senators for 2014-15 is directed to take place in December. This has traditionally been honored more in the breach than in the reality. Personally, I think holding a University election in December is something more worthy of a Monty Python skit than real life. So, Senior Senators, please consider this a call to get with Britney to figure out whose terms are expiring, and start collecting nominees. Do please remember that no Department in your College may have two Senators until *all* Departments are represented.
2. Nomination of candidates for the 2014-15 Senate Chair is supposed to happen in December. The Senate will hold a preliminary election if there are more than two nominees. Per the Constitution, nominees (other than myself) must come from a College other than mine. The nominees must both be current Senators.

## Meetings

A discussion about admissions standards to the Las Cruces campus has begun. A proposal will be put forward to the Academic Deans for discussion in December. I am a part of the discussion. It is time to begin the water-cooler discussions about this matter. I believe the evidence is fairly compelling that our admissions standards need to be raised, if we believe that graduation is the desired end-point for our undergraduate students. This will come before the Senate eventually: I hope it arrives in the Spring term with time for us to have the discussion.

I met with the folks in Planning about our Chambers. You may have noticed that the acoustics aren't too good, and we don't have enough power outlets to back up our battery-powered devices. A proposal will be forthcoming to go on the Building Renewal and Renovation Committee's list of desires. We were approached by ICT about the possibility of using the Chambers as a temporary computing lab. The Leadership Committee gave them permission to look at feasibility. I have not heard back from ICT to date.

## Current Issues

Last year, the Senate approved a proposition dissolving the College of Extended Learning. As part of that process, a Department of Interdisciplinary Studies was to be formed in the College of Arts and Sciences. This Department was to provide a home for the students in the B.A.S and B.I.S. programs *and* also house the Women's Studies faculty. I am asking Scholastic Affairs to look into the progress towards establishing this Department.

In conversations with President Carruthers, I have learned that there is substantial disagreement between the Governor's Office and the Legislature about higher education funding. The President told me that (unlike previous administrations) he does not mind if University

faculty exercise their free speech rights to speak with their legislators. I would add (and ask) only that we remember to qualify our points of view as not necessarily representing those of the University. President Carruthers also asks that those who *do* speak on the University's behalf (e.g., the Governmental Affairs Committee) keep to the University's priorities list. It's going to be a very interesting legislative session.

There have been rumors floating around about PPACA (a/k/a *Obamacare*) and its effects on University hiring of adjunct faculty. There is no question that PPACA provisions have changed the way hiring of adjuncts is (and can be) handled. For instance, under PPACA, hiring at DACC and on the Las Cruces campus both count toward "working at NMSU". The law mandates that employer-sponsored coverage be offered to employees over 0.74 FTE. According to the University's HR staff, some adjuncts have been cut from three to two courses. So far as they are aware, none have been cut below two courses (six hours) total *because of PPACA*. The law is problematic for higher education generally and we aren't an exception. But it remains the law, and NMSU must comply.

Finally, progress is being made toward asking the Legislature to act on the lottery scholarship crisis. Bernadette Montoya sent me an email this week outlining the University's response to the crisis. Dr. Montoya notes two important facts: the Department of Higher has the authority to unilaterally change the scholarship terms to bring them into line with demand and revenues. Second, the Legislature *can* act, but the session does not begin until *after* the Spring term has begun. The University Administration is communicating its intended actions to the stakeholders (students on a lottery scholarship or in their qualifying semester, parents of those students, and students of major University-sponsored scholarships). I have asked Dr. Montoya to send the Senate information copies of the letters when they are finalized. I will have these posted on the Senate's website for your information. I will only note here (and applaud) the Administration's decision to hold students on major University scholarships harmless in this matter, provided they meet the renewal criteria.

Respectfully submitted,

Dennis L. Clason  
Faculty Senate Chair 2013-14