

Proposition 22-09/10

Sponsors: Torres, Reyes, Osanloo, Education

Date Submitted: 4/24/2010

Proposed Committee Assignment: University Affairs

Assigned Committee:

Title: Memorial in Support of Preservation of the NMSU Graduate Assistantships

Whereas, many Ph.D. programs depend upon graduate assistantships to sustain enrollment, and

Whereas, incoming students have expressed genuine concern about a letter received from the Graduate College saying that their assistantship may be at risk, and

Whereas, graduate teaching assistantships are a way to support faculty teaching so that faculty have additional time to pursue research and grants which affects reaccreditation, and

Whereas, as a major land grant university in the U.S., NMSU uses graduate assistantships to accomplish its collective mission of teaching, outreach, research, and service, and

Whereas, graduate students need mentorship in teaching, research and other academic activities as part of their preparation for their careers as academics

Therefore, the NMSU Faculty Senate supports the budget committee in finding alternatives in the budget cut scenarios that do not reduce the number of graduate assistantships that NMSU offers in 2010-2011. We believe that graduate students need to be reassured by the Graduate School that the assistantships of incoming and continuing students are secure. Graduate assistantships are integral to the activities central to the mission of the University.

Specifically, we support the following efforts:

- The Budget Committee make every effort not to cut graduate assistantships,
- Faculty are encouraged to reassure graduate students with assistantships that their funding is secure,
- Leadership are encouraged work to develop alternatives to budget cuts that do not jeopardize graduate assistantship funding for incoming and continuing students, and
- Leadership's continuing support of faculty's teaching and research with graduate assistants
- All members of the campus community are encouraged to work both collectively and individually to support graduate assistantships.

Background

Over the last few weeks, we have received reports from incoming graduate students in the Business and Education college, seeking reassurance that offers made for admission with assistantship funding are not being rescinded. International students, in particular, are concerned that making the move to Las Cruces, they will have the funding that was promised to them, for the period in which it was promised. While it is important to make graduate students aware of our finite financial resource base and the emerging realities of legislative funding actions, we believe it is important not to overstate the situation. In particular, the letter sent to graduate students about their assistantships has caused some students to reconsider coming to NMSU.

As these realities have unfolded, faculty, staff, and leadership at NMSU have acknowledged the nature of the financial situation and attendant challenges and the potential role that NMSU may and should play in the ensuing ways to meet challenges without cutting graduate assistantship support. Indeed President Couture, at the 13 April 2010 student forum, President Barbara Couture, has made it clear that preserving instructional resources is a priority in formulating budget cut scenarios. Couture said “she asked departments to decide what percentage of cuts will do the least amount of damage to student academics and programming, which will help determine what substantial cuts can be made that won’t affect the university” (Round Up April 15 2010). Faculty Senate believes this effort is very positive and expresses our formal support of this new initiative in this memorial in support of preserving graduate assistantships.