

NMSU Faculty Senate Meeting

March 5, 2026, 4:00 p.m.

Zoom and Hadley Hall Rm 130

MINUTES

1. **Call to Order** – Meeting called to order at 4:02 p.m.

2. **Recognition of Guests** – Karen Kopera-Frye

3. **Approval of Agenda**

Moved and seconded to approve the agenda.

Senate approved the agenda.

4. **Approval of Minutes of February 5, 2025, meeting**

Moved and seconded to approve the minutes.

Minutes approved and submitted.

5. **Reports of Officers**

- FS Chair, Vimal Chaitanya

Chair Chaitanya reported that one major item of business was completed: the election of Kristian Finlator as the next Faculty Senate Chair through a system-wide faculty process. Congratulations were extended to Senator Finlator, and appreciation was expressed to Senator Sandstrom for participating as a candidate and for continued dedication to the NMHC Senate.

The Chair highlighted several updates from recent meetings and interactions. The Board of Regents approved payment of 9 credit hours of tuition for graduate students as part of the collective bargaining agreement with the Graduate Student Union. This measure, supported by the President and the Chair in non-voting roles, will cost approximately \$750,000 annually. Additionally, discussions with the Associate CFO indicated that tuition for research assistants may be classified as fringe benefits, which would eliminate disparities between teaching assistants and research assistants and reduce the need for external grant funds to cover tuition. This was noted as a positive development. A new degree program in artificial intelligence and social sciences was presented by HEST. While initial concerns were raised regarding the lack of a required computer science background, the program was ultimately supported after discussion involving the Chair and Dean Pontelli and was approved by the Regents.

Improving the experience of international graduate students remains a priority. Efforts led by the Chair and Senator Finlator include evaluating current processes and developing better support systems. Dean Koodali has contributed a detailed Canvas course, and Director Yu is developing a flowchart to guide students through essential steps such as opening bank accounts and obtaining Social Security numbers.

The Chair also noted the existence of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) among higher education institutions that allows graduate students to take courses across participating universities. This was brought to attention by Dean Koodali, and Vice Chair Brown clarified that while the policy has existed for years, implementation can be slow and currently applies only to graduate students.

Further discussion addressed the need for improved support for the FACT Committee, particularly regarding consistent documentation and record-keeping. The Provost is considering providing staff support and potentially expanding committee membership. Finally, in a meeting with university leadership, including

the President and FSLC, the concept of accountability in the university's strategic plan was discussed. Accountability was defined as tracking progress and ensuring alignment with goals rather than as a punitive measure.

- FS Vice-Chair/SLC Chair, Christopher Brown
Vice Chair Brown reported that the Group of Four addressed three major issues over the past month. The first concerned the rollout of the simple syllabus, for which the exact authorization process remains unclear. However, President Verme, Provost Reddi, and Deputy Provost McAteer agreed that improvements are needed. Discussions are ongoing regarding whether the FACT should be re-energized or if a new mechanism is required, with emphasis on avoiding disruptions to the teaching mission.
The President also provided an update on the most recent legislative session, noting funding allocations that are subject to final approval. These include approximately \$55 million for an interdisciplinary building, \$16 million for PSL, \$20 million for infrastructure, and \$14 million for a press box. The legislature has advised against tuition increases due to funding pressures on the Opportunity Scholarship and has approved only a 1% increase for staff and faculty salaries. The President and CFO are exploring options to secure an additional 1%.
The ADAC discussed research and service loads, as well as the potential reintroduction of quantitative teaching evaluations, which cannot proceed until the collective bargaining agreement is finalized. A broader discussion on service loads was initiated, building on prior efforts by Tara Gray, whose earlier request to central administration did not receive a response. ADAC plans to revisit this issue. Additionally, concerns were raised regarding students who apply for spring graduation but fail to complete required summer coursework, prompting further investigation. The committee also discussed improving efficiency in room scheduling, though this would require departments to centralize control of room assignments.
At the February UPAC meeting, the primary focus was advancing the Program Sustainability Plan. Dr. Cecilia Hernandez developed a comprehensive template to guide this effort. Vice Chair Brown proposed forming a working group with representation from Senate leadership, department heads, UPAC, the Provost's Office, and Hernandez's office. This proposal has been submitted to the Provost for consideration.
The Policy Steering Committee report included two key items. Policy 4.55, concerning grade changes for graduate courses, has been fully approved. Under the revised policy, when a graduate student repeats a course, the higher grade will be used in GPA calculations. Regarding Policy 4.69, Vice Chair Brown acknowledged that he and Chair Chaitanya mishandled the initial process by not bringing it forward in a timely manner. Efforts are now underway to ensure full Senate review, with Senator Erickson introducing a related bill, though the amended version has not yet been received.
Lastly, the Vice Chair reported that the AO Committee currently lacks a chair following Karen Copper-Fry stepping down. Kim has agreed to provide a report based on prior notes and has volunteered to serve as chair, with a vote to take place at the committee's next meeting.
During discussion, Senator Susan Mickelson inquired about legislative plans to address funding for the Opportunity Scholarship. Vice Chair Brown indicated that no formal plan is known at this time but noted ongoing concerns about its financial sustainability. Senator Erickson also raised a question regarding a potential 2026

ballot amendment related to the selection of Regents. Vice Chair Brown stated that he had no prior knowledge of this proposal, and Senator Erickson agreed to research the matter further.

6. Reports of Standing Committees

- **Budget and Resources Chair, Stephen Hanson**
Chair Hanson reported that the Budget and Resources Committee met and held a forum but did not conduct any official business. A full report has been made available online. The meeting included guests from IT, information security, procurement, and related areas, and focused on a broad discussion of software procurement and approval processes, as well as general IT-related issues. During the discussion, it was noted that service units could potentially improve the level of support they provide. Some recent issues, including those related to Grammarly and syllabus implementation, appear to be connected to broader system interactions. In particular, it was observed that Global has input into Canvas, and that changes initiated through Global can sometimes result in unexpected outcomes for faculty. Overall, the discussion was described as productive, with participants expressing interest in identifying solutions and improving processes moving forward. Chair Hanson also inquired about providing additional related reports during the meeting; however, Vice Chair Brown indicated that while this had been the initial intent, it was not included on the agenda. Committee members may share information if time permits, otherwise updates will be scheduled for the next Senate meeting.

- **University Planning Chair, Stephanie Walker**
Chair Walker reported that the University Planning Committee met on February 13th and achieved a quorum. The committee hosted Karen Koper-Fry as a guest, who presented a bill under consideration. The bill is a joint resolution in support of CNM and UNM opposing the Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education. The Compact, introduced by the current federal administration, was initially directed at larger universities and later expanded to all institutions. It proposes preferential funding for universities that agree to its terms, which include provisions such as capping international student enrollment, freezing undergraduate tuition for a specified period, and implementing certain gender-related policies. These requirements have raised concerns among many universities. Following a brief discussion, the committee unanimously approved the resolution. The measure was forwarded to the full Senate for consideration and vote.
 - The Senate moved and seconded to approve the University Planning Committee report with the vote on Proposition 06-25/26.

- **Curriculum and Planning Chair, Oladayo Bello**
Chair Bello reported that the Curriculum and Planning Committee met in the previous month and had a quorum. While no official business was conducted, the committee reviewed the Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education and held an internal, informal discussion regarding its potential implications for NMSU. Members shared their perspectives and understanding of the Compact; however, no formal action was taken. Vice Chair Brown clarified that the bill related to the Compact had been formally referred to the University Planning Committee, not Curriculum and

Planning. Chair Bello acknowledged this clarification and reiterated that their discussion was informal and not part of any official action.

- Research and Creative Activity Chair, Omar Holguin
Chair Holguin reported that the RCA Committee met on February 17th and achieved a quorum. While no official business was conducted, the committee hosted two guests: Richard Carter of Oregon State University, representing the PTIE (Promotion and Tenure Innovation) organization, and Patricia McGregor-Mendoza, Provost Fellow for Faculty Success. During the meeting, Richard Carter provided an overview of the PTIE organization, including its purpose, scope, and successes. The discussion focused on exploring ways to better recognize societal impact, particularly in innovation and entrepreneurship, within existing promotion and tenure (P&T) processes. The committee considered whether current structures adequately account for these contributions. Carter shared resources developed by PTIE, which are publicly available, and encouraged the committee to consider conducting a gap analysis to assess institutional needs, as well as a faculty survey to gauge interest in these topics. As a follow-up, Patricia McGregor-Mendoza connected the committee with Winnie Lee, Interim Director of Arrowhead Center, to explore potential collaboration. Chair Holguin noted a planned follow-up meeting to discuss opportunities, recognizing Arrowhead's role in business development for the institution. The meeting was described as productive and adjourned slightly before 5:00 p.m.
- Access, Opportunity, and Outreach
Chair Lopez-Gallagher presented a report prepared by Karen Kopera-Frye regarding the committee's most recent meeting. The FSAO Committee met on February 18th via Zoom and had a quorum. No legislation was on the docket. The committee discussed a bill supporting a joint resolution by CNM and UNM opposing the Higher Education Compact 1.0. The bill was referred to the University Planning Committee for further review. Karen Kopera-Frye indicated that she would attend the UPC meeting to address any questions. It was also announced that Karen Kopera-Frye has accepted the position of Associate Dean of the NMSU Graduate School, effective February 23, 2026. Prior to the meeting, she consulted with Vice Chair Brown regarding the process for selecting a new committee chair and was advised to solicit nominations. She subsequently requested that nominations for the chair position be submitted via email. The report was respectfully submitted by Karen Kopera-Frye.
- Student Success Chair, Kristian Finlator
Chair Finlator reported that the Student Success Committee met on February 19th with strong attendance. No official business was conducted during the meeting. The committee discussed three main topics. First, they addressed the challenges faced by international graduate students, a topic previously highlighted by Chair Chaitanya. Second, the committee considered whether NMSU's athletic teams are being promoted equitably and decided to invite a representative from athletics to provide further insight. Third, they noted that Faculty Talk 2.0 is not being consistently promoted each semester as outlined in Proposition 3-21-22 and agreed to encourage adherence to the promotion requirements specified in the proposition.

Senator Bronstein inquired whether Faculty Talk 2.0 is still active. Senator Finlator confirmed that the platform remains accessible through Outlook but noted that activity has been minimal. The limited engagement is attributed both to the lack of reminders and to the fact that the software platform is not commonly used by faculty in other contexts. Senator Finlator emphasized that, regardless, the committee should ensure promotion and use of Faculty Talk 2.0 in accordance with the requirements outlined in Proposition 3-21-22.

7. New Business

- 07-25/26 – Bill sharing input to Policy Steering Committee on proposed changed to ARP 4.69 on Distance Education. Sponsor (s) – C. Erickson (CoB), C. Brown (A&S), and other to follow. **Assigned to Curriculum and Planning.**

Sponsor Brown provided background on a policy change that was missed during initial review by the Policy Steering Committee (PSC). The bill had gone out for community input, with comments provided by Senator Erickson, Senator Sandstrom, and several community college faculty members. Revisions were sent back to the bill sponsors, but as of the latest updates, an amended version had not yet been received by the PSC officer, Donna Ottaviano. Consequently, the current version under review is considered a placeholder until the finalized version is submitted. Sponsor Chris Erickson noted that the policy clearly affects the academic mission of the university, specifically regulations around online teaching, and should therefore come before the Faculty Senate as a proposition. He emphasized that while he had not raised the issue earlier, ultimate responsibility lies with administration to ensure compliance with the Regents Policy Manual.

Senator Bronstein asked whether the policy is considered adopted while the review process is ongoing. Vice Chair Brown clarified that it is unadopted. Policies must go through PSC review, community input, revisions by the sponsor, a PSC vote, the President's Cabinet, and then the President's signature before taking effect, citing the example of Policy 4.55 (graduate grade change), which was recently finalized.

Senator Boutsen observed that some delays result from a lack of institutional memory in the Faculty Senate, with knowledge concentrated in only a few members, which can hinder timely oversight. Senator Erickson added that institutional knowledge naturally evolves over time and that new members are gaining the necessary experience.

Senator Lopez-Gallagher asked whether previous policy versions are archived online. Erickson confirmed that the ARP Manual includes references to prior revisions, though it is not fully comprehensive, and emphasized the need for faculty engagement to understand policy history.

Vice Chair Brown noted the importance of improving archiving practices for policies. He requested that Senator Lopez-Gallagher send an email to him and Vimal proposing a formal request to the PSC officer for a better archival system, which would allow faculty to access historical policy changes without relying on personal emails or retired members. Senator Lopez-Gallagher agreed to submit the request.

- 08-25/26 – Amendment to Article VI of the Faculty Senate Constitution to change the requirements for Chair and Vice Chair. Sponsor (s) – C. Erickson (CoB), V. Chaitanya (ENG). **Assigned to University Planning.**

Sponsor Chris Erickson explained that the proposed measure is intended to maintain a separation between the leadership of the Faculty Senate and the union. While the two organizations have overlapping membership, they are not identical—for example, Faculty Senate represents Extension faculty, who may not be union members. The separation is intended to prevent conflicts of interest while allowing both organizations to operate independently. Erickson noted that in cases where both organizations agree on an issue, the process strengthens the organizations’ joint position, and in cases of disagreement, leadership conflict is avoided.

Senator Hanson raised the importance of mutual awareness between the organizations and suggested that liaisons could sit in with each other. Erickson responded that the proposal does not preclude such interaction or cross-membership among general members; it only restricts overlap in leadership roles.

Senator Bronstein questioned whether it is premature to act before the union has formally established bylaws and elected leadership. Erickson responded that the leadership of the union is legally defined, and action is needed prior to his departure.

Vice Chair Brown suggested that this discussion be referred to committee for further review. He also noted the need to move standing committee discussions out of the Constitution and into the bylaws, to avoid burdensome full-faculty votes for routine amendments. Vice Chair Brown indicated plans to collaborate with Erickson, Chair-elect Finlator, and Chair Chaitanya to address related bylaws changes alongside ongoing bills. The discussion concluded, and the meeting proceeded to the next item of business.

8. Unfinished Business

- 05-25/26 – Proposal to Establish Task Force on the Integration of Artificial Intelligence in Pedagogy. Sponsor (s) – C. Erickson (BUS), K. Sharp-Hoskins (A&S), C. Brown (A&S), O. Bello (ENG), J. Sandstrom (Library), C. DeBlicek (HEST), G. Piña (DACC), M. Brown (A&S), L. Schirmer (A&S), M. Prescott (A&S), K. Finlator (A&S), S. Hanson (A&S); K. Lopez-Gallagher (NMSU-A). **Assigned to Curriculum and Planning.**

Proposition 05-25/26 was moved and seconded. Sponsor Chris Erickson explained that the purpose of the proposition is to balance rapid adoption of AI technologies with careful faculty oversight. The goal is to establish a broad faculty task force to provide input on AI implementation in classrooms, ensuring approaches are flexible across disciplines—arts and sciences, social sciences, humanities, and professional programs. Erickson emphasized that the task force is meant to guide educational practices rather than select specific software, with examples including studio-style courses to manage AI use in real-time instruction.

Sponsor Sharp-Hoskins proposed an amendment to ensure the task force revises procedures for system-wide AI adoption, incorporating interdisciplinary expertise and vetting to guarantee faculty input before campus-wide implementation. The amendment addresses prior issues where AI tools were embedded in Canvas without broad consultation. Erickson seconded the amendment, and it was approved.

VOTE: YES: 40 NO: -0- ABSTAIN: -0-

Senator Boutsen raised concerns about sourcing expertise, emphasizing the need for institutional memory and clarity regarding whether student use of AI is included in the task force's scope. Chair Chaitanya noted the comment would be considered and the discussion moved forward.

Senator Lopez-Gallagher questioned the language regarding representation of community colleges, noting that the bill references "experience teaching in community colleges" and suggested clarifying the language. Erickson explained that "experience" is meant broadly to include faculty who have taught at community colleges or are currently teaching there. Sharp-Hoskins proposed an additional amendment to specify representatives from community colleges rather than relying on prior experience. Erickson seconded, and the amendment passed.

VOTE: YES: 40 NO: -0- ABSTAIN: -0-

The main motion to establish the AI Task Force was then put to a vote and passed, officially creating the task force to provide structured faculty input on AI adoption and instructional practices across NMSU.

VOTE: YES: 40 NO: -0- ABSTAIN: -0-

Motion passes; Proposition approved by Senate.

- 06-25/26 – Supporting CNM and UNM Joint Resolution Against the "Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education." Sponsor (s): Karen Kopera-Frye (HEST), Christopher Brown (A&S), and others to follow. **Assigned to University Planning.**

Senator Cook moved to table the discussion until the next meeting due to the late hour and the potential for losing quorum during extended discussion.

VOTE: YES: 40 NO: -0- ABSTAIN: -0-

The motion to table the bill until the next Faculty Senate meeting was seconded and approved by the Senate.

9. Other Business –

- Discussion of recent catalog changes on which the Senate did not have adequate time to provide full Senate input – VC Brown starting the discussion, all to join.
Vice Chair Brown opened the discussion but noted that he had nothing further to add.

10. Remarks and Announcements

- FS Chair, Vimal Chaitanya
Chair Chaitanya announced that two additional candidates for the provost position will be visiting next week. Senators were encouraged to attend the forums or review the recordings. Senate Leadership Committee members have scheduled 9:00 a.m.

appointments with each candidate. Members were reminded that feedback must be submitted within 48 hours of each interview. Chair Chaitanya noted that while it would have been preferable to collect input after all four candidates had visited, the current schedule requires timely submission following each session.

- FS Vice-Chair/SLC Chair, Christopher Brown
Vice Chair Brown provided further details regarding the upcoming provost candidate visits. The schedule includes a 9:00 a.m. Faculty Senate Leadership Committee meeting in the Town Room, a 10:15 a.m. open forum for the entire university, and a 3:15 p.m. informal session with faculty, students, and academic support staff. Vice Chair Brown emphasized that the informal sessions are often under-attended and encouraged members to participate from 3:15 to 4:00 p.m. to engage with the candidates. Glenn Martinez is scheduled for Tuesday, and Enrico Pontelli for Thursday.

Senator Boutsen requested that the response to a previously raised comment be tabled until the next meeting. Chair Chaitanya noted that the question will be looked at from the current minutes and addressed at the following month's meeting.

Chat Highlights

The following key points from the meeting chat are included for reference:

- Sponsor Senator Sharp-Hoskins:
 - “Revising procedures for system-wide AI adoption or implementation to include interdisciplinary expertise and vetting, ensuring that no system or campus-wide products are implemented without a broad range of faculty input and support”
 - Be it further resolved that the Task Force be composed by April 15, 2026 to create a working plan for the Fall 2026 semester such that they deliver a written report, including findings and recommendations in the form of action items, to the Provost and the Faculty Senate no later than October 1, 2026, or another mutually agreed-upon date.

11. Adjournment – Meeting adjourned at 5:03 p.m.

Present: FS Chair, V. Chaitanya, FS Vice Chair C. Brown, K. Finlator, J. Cook, M. Burkardt, S. Hanson, E. Gamillo, C. Erickson, J. Tomaka, K. Knight, O. Bello, A. Cox. I. Hansen, T. Aguirre, R. Gioannini, J. Klockslem, R. Jayaraman, K.T. Manis, R. Schumacher, F. Boutsen, G. De Necochea, M. Montañez, J. Hunter, J. Bengtson, T. Conner, I. Pedraza, V. Murga, L. Hermanson, M. Talipov, R. Villegas-Arguelles, T. Allred, S. Way, J. Clark, J. Bronstein, C. Creusere, S. Walker, C. DeBlicke, D. Magoc, R. Li, K. Sharp-Hoskins, P. Kemp, S. Mikkleson, R. Ghimire, K. Lopez-Gallagher, M. Durapuneni, H. Memon, O. Holguin, Parliamentarian L. LaPlue, Rec.Sec. M. Cisneros

Guests: Deputy Provost James McAteer, Karen Kopera-Frye Associate Dean of the NMSU Graduate School, Hunter Gonzales, ASNMSU.

Revised and finalized by:

Chair Chaitanya and Vice Chair Brown on 4/1/2026