

NMSU Faculty Senate Vice Chair Report

Prepared and Submitted by

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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview of my Faculty Senate Leadership Activities

This report highlights the Faculty Senate service and leadership activities I participated in from May 15 through August 31 in my capacity as Vice Chair of the NMSU Faculty Senate. During this period, my responsibilities included representing the Faculty Senate on university committees and task forces, participating in meetings and consultations with NMSU administration, and engaging in workshops and other institutional activities. These engagements provided opportunities to represent faculty perspectives, contribute to shared governance, and participate in discussions on issues affecting faculty, students, and the broader university community. The report also outlines the specific responsibilities within my purview as Vice Chair, including ongoing assignments and leadership responsibilities. In addition, it highlights initiatives and proposals I developed or advanced during the reporting period to strengthen Faculty Senate engagement, faculty success, academic policy, and institutional effectiveness. Collectively, these activities reflect the Vice Chair’s role in supporting Faculty Senate leadership, faculty representation, shared governance, and collaboration with university administration. The tasks and assignments jointly undertaken by the Chair and me are not included in these highlights, as the Chair has already provided a comprehensive report covering those activities. These include our engagements with the the Policy Steering Committee (PSC) and University Administration, particularly the President, Provost, and Deputy Provost, on various institutional matters.

2. Roles and Responsibilities within my Purview

2.1 Filling open senate seats for HEST and Grants

a) HEST

Dr. Sandra Way’s HEST Senate seat is open because her first term expires this year, and she will be on sabbatical in the fall and did not seek reelection during this election cycle. Therefore, the HEST Senior Senator must work with the Faculty Senate Vice Chair to conduct an election to fill the vacant seat. However, Senators Lynch and Deblick were tied for Senior Senator status based on length of continuous Senate service. According to Article IV, Section 4 of the Faculty Senate Constitution, elections within each voting group are conducted by the senator with the longest continuous service, designated as the Senior Senator. When multiple senators have served for the same duration, the Constitution requires that the Senior Senator be determined by lot. A lot was therefore conducted to determine which senator would assume the Senior Senator role and coordinate the HEST election with the Vice Chair. Under the agreed process, each tied senator selected a number between 1 and 100, with the senator whose number was closest to a randomly generated number becoming the Senior Senator. Senator Lynch selected 61, while Senator Deblick selected

50. Using Random.org, the randomly generated number was 44. Because Senator Deblick’s selection was closest to 44, she is now the HEST Senior Senator and will work with the Vice Chair to conduct the election for the open seat in the fall. Senator Deblick will remain HEST Senior Senator through the end of her current term in 2029.

b) Grants

On June 4, I met with Dr. Schumacher regarding the open Non-Tenure Track (NTT) Faculty Senate seat for Grants. Dr. Schumacher is familiar with the NTT election process, having conducted the election for this voting group last spring. Recent communication indicates that she has obtained the list of eligible NTT voters at Grants. She will request that IT establish an electronic ballot and distribute it to eligible Grants voters. Faculty will have 10 business days to cast their votes. Once voting closes and the results are determined, the successful candidate will become the NTT Faculty Senate representative for Grants. This process will fill the currently vacant Grants NTT Senate seat.

2.2 NMSU Faculty Voting on Change to Faculty Senate Constitution and Bylaws

The bill proposing changes to the Faculty Senate Constitution and Bylaws was passed last year and now requires a vote by all faculty. The process of establishing the electronic voting ballot through ICT is underway, and faculty will receive an email when voting opens. The Recording Secretary has submitted the required ICT ticket to establish the ballot. However, ballot setup requires some lead time, thus the voting period is currently scheduled for September 16-30. The email explaining the rationale for the proposed changes and providing voting information to all faculty is as follows:

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Background and Purpose: The NMSU Faculty Senate divides most of its work among six topical standing committees. The purviews of the University Planning and Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committees have evolved significantly since the adoption of the May 2022 and April 2025 versions of the NMSU Faculty Senate Constitution and the April 2024 version of the NMSU Faculty Senate Bylaws. Consequently,

these documents give the committee names and purviews inaccurately and need to be updated. Moreover, such updates currently require separate changes to the Constitution and the Bylaws, a process that is unnecessarily cumbersome. Proposition 09-25/26 (refer to [09-25/26](#)) was adopted by the Faculty Senate in order to address both issues. It (1) removes all six topical standing committees' names from the Faculty Senate Constitution and refers them to the Bylaws; and (2) updates the names and purviews of the University Planning and Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committees in the Bylaws. Changes to the Faculty Senate Constitution require approval by the full NMSU Faculty. This election therefore asks faculty to support two changes to the committees' names from the Faculty Senate Constitution:

1. Amend Article VII, Section 1 of the NMSU Faculty Senate Constitution (refer to [NMSU Faculty Senate Constitution](#)) to remove explicit mention of topical standing committee names.
2. Amend Article VII, Section 2.1 of the NMSU Faculty Senate Constitution to remove explicit mention of topical standing committee names and refer to the [Faculty Senate Bylaws](#) for their names and purviews.

Conditionally upon ratification by the full NMSU faculty of these changes to the Constitution, [Proposition 09-25/26](#) provides that the names and purviews of the two above-named committees will automatically be updated in the Bylaws.

A vote of “Yes” means: The Faculty Senate Constitution will be changed to remove explicit mention of the six topical standing committees and refer to the Bylaws for both their names and purviews. Pending this change to the Constitution, the Bylaws will automatically update so that the University Planning Committee becomes the Faculty Success Committee and the Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee becomes the Access Opportunity and Outreach Committee. For the updated committee purviews, see [Proposition 09-25/26](#).

A vote of “No” means: Both the NMSU Faculty Senate Constitution and Bylaws remain unchanged.

Thank you.

Faculty Senate Leadership

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2.3 Migration and Review of Faculty Senate Website

Faculty Senate Leadership has been informed that the Faculty Senate website will be migrated to a new platform. As part of my responsibilities, I will work closely with Recording Secretary Mari Cisneros to support a successful migration. The process will also provide an opportunity to review the website's current structure, content, accessibility, and overall functionality. Where appropriate, improvements will be made to enhance usability, organization, and access to Faculty Senate information and resources. Suggestions and recommendations from senators and faculty are welcome as we work to improve the website.

3. Initiatives and Proposals

3.1 Faculty Senate Awareness and Faculty Participation Initiative

3.1.1 Survey to evaluate faculty perception of Faculty Senate: Action item from July 15 FSLC/Admin meeting

Rationale: The NMSU Faculty Senate Leaders aims to increase awareness of the Faculty Senate and encourage greater faculty participation. To support this goal, we seek to assess NMSU faculty perceptions of the Senate's R3: Relevance, Role, and Responsibilities.

Plan: A one-question survey with four response options will be administered, with participants selecting one response. To encourage broad participation, a raffle draw will be held in which 15 participants will each have an opportunity to win a \$25 NMSU Campus Store gift card.

Status quo: I have developed the survey question, which is now ready for review and comments. It has not yet been determined whether the survey will be administered alongside the faculty vote on proposed changes to the Constitution and Bylaws or distributed separately. Suggestions regarding the most effective method for administering the survey are welcome. It is intended that two participants per college and community college (CC) would be drawn from the raffle. On August 25, I formally requested that the NMSU Campus Store donate 15 gift cards valued at \$25 each. The request was approved.

3.1.2 Strategies to communicate FS governance contribution, increase faculty awareness and participation in senate.

Based on Action Item 2 from the FSLC/Admin meeting of July 15: Develop common materials for presentation at college meetings, I proposed converting Senator Finlator's one-page write-up into a flyer. A flyer format has been developed, and the Access, Opportunity and Outreach (AOO) Standing Committee has been tasked with reviewing, amending, or approving the text of the document, "Introduction to NMSU Faculty Senate."

3.2 Faculty Recognition and Faculty Success Initiatives

Background: During the FSLC/Admin meeting on August 12, Dr. Dial visited to discuss strengthening and modernizing employee recognition at NMSU, noting that the current Employee Recognition Administrative Rules and Procedures (ARP) has not been updated since 2008. He encouraged the consideration of more meaningful approaches to employee recognition beyond the current ways. He emphasized that effective recognition contributes to institutional culture, employee engagement, and appreciation of employees' service and accomplishments.

My contribution: After Dr. Dial's charge to the FSLC/Admin team, I transitioned the discussion to faculty recognition and faculty success, proposing a Community Engagement Award for faculty who make significant and impactful contributions to local communities citing the "Seeds of Change!" project in the Navajo Nation. I mentioned that such award is consistent with the recognition of NMSU as a Carnegie Community Engaged institution, NMSU as a land grant mission and goal 2 of NMSU Forward. I also proposed recognizing Faculty Senators who make meaningful contributions through committee participation, ideas, leadership, and sustained service to the university.

Next Steps: To conclude, Dr. Dial proposed establishing an Employee Recognition Council that would meet quarterly and use a shared-governance approach to develop and strengthen recognition practices across NMSU. The council could define longevity and consider appropriate recognition for service milestones such as 5, 10, 15, 20, and 25 years. It could also address recognition for long-serving part-time employees and those whose contributions extend beyond their formal responsibilities. Recognition could include monetary and non-monetary appreciation, public acknowledgment through receptions and ceremonies, and the establishment of named awards. The council could also recommend updates to modernize existing Employee Recognition ARP, with broad university representation and input. **Task:** Faculty Senate and other university groups are to make a call for potential volunteers to participate in the proposed Employee Recognition Council. In addition, the Faculty Senate should work with Deputy Provost McAteer to inventory existing college and university level awards, identify gaps, and explore additional forms or flavor of faculty recognition. The President, Provost, and Deputy Provost expressed support for this initiative to strengthen faculty recognition as it upholds faculty success and NMSU Forward.

3.3 Strategies to support first-year students and student success

3.3.1 Pass/No Credit Grading Proposal for First-Semester, First-Year Students

During the FSLC meeting on August 27, I presented a proposal to consider adopting Pass/No Credit grading for the first semester of a student's first year. This model has been implemented by several universities, most recently the University of Michigan². Under the model, no GPA is recorded during the first semester of first year; instead, students receive either a Pass or No Credit grade. The goal is to strengthen academic preparedness by allowing first-year students time to acclimate to the university's academic environment and expectations. The next step is to establish an Ad Hoc Committee to assess the proposal's feasibility in consultation with the Registrar's Office, Division of Student Enrollment and Success, and ADAC, and subsequently draft a Faculty Senate bill.

3.3.2 President Mentorship Program.

The President's Mentorship Program is a student success initiative developed through collaboration among the Office of the President, Office of the Provost, Faculty Senate Leadership, and Division of Student Enrollment and Success, and coordinated by Dr. Rebecca Campbell and Dr. Spencer Herrera. The initiative originated from my June 25 email to President Ferme, in which I responded to the challenge he presented to faculty in the Office of the President message of May 14, 2026. In response, President Ferme convened a brainstorming meeting with the AVP for Marketing and Communications, VP for Student Enrollment and Success, and Faculty Senate leaders to explore the idea further. He proposed a university wide "campaign" to solicit faculty involvement in student mentorship. These discussions led to the conceptualization and development of the President's Mentorship Program. An invitation for faculty participation was distributed to NMSU faculty on July 27. The program officially launched with a kickoff event on August 21, 2026.

4. Committee Representation and Engagement

4.1 University Program Approval Committee (UPAC)

As Vice Chair, Faculty Senate, I represent the Senate and thus designated as Co-Chair of UPAC. The committee meets on the last Thursday of each month during the fall and spring semesters to hear, review, evaluate, and vote on proposals

1. "Seeds of change: Training elementary educators to implement the Yéego! Healthy eating and gardening program", NMSU receives grant to help Navajo communities increase food sovereignty and related health issues. Retrieved from Featured News Highlights in email from Office of the President, 16 July 2026.
2. UMich College Shifts to P/NC Grading for First-Year Students, Inside Higher Ed. Available on <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/quick-takes/2026/08/05/umich-college-shifts-pnc-grading-first-year-students>

for new academic programs. The first meeting of the 26/27 was held on August 20. Three proposed programs were reviewed: Agricultural Education and Communication Sciences: Ph.D. (1116), Social Work: Ph.D. (Online) (1120), and Wildlife Law Enforcement: B.S. in Fish, Wildlife and Conservation Ecology (1122). Following presentations and deliberations, Program 1116 was not approved due to concerns that could lead the New Mexico Higher Education Department (NMHED) to reject the proposal. One concern was insufficient clarity regarding the expected time to degree completion. Program 1120 was also not approved, primarily due to concerns about the claimed uniqueness, given that Doctor of Social Work (DSW) program is under development at New Mexico Highlands University. Additional concerns included insufficient clarity regarding sustainable funding for graduate assistants, faculty resources, and teaching-load distribution needed to support new Ph.D. coursework and student mentoring while maintaining instructional quality. Program 1122 was conditionally approved, subject to revisions to Program Learning Outcomes, inclusion of representative Criminal Justice and Philosophy faculty, identification of a course to assess multidisciplinary benefits, and stronger workforce demand data demonstrating career opportunities beyond conservation officers. After revisions, Program 1122 may proceed to the remaining internal approvals and presentations to Regent's Student Success Committee and Board of Regents, with a potential October 29 submission deadline for the November 19 NMHED meeting. UPAC's next meeting will focus on proposals for new Graduate Certificate programs.

4.2 Associate Dean Academic Council (ADAC)

The Associate Deans Academic Council (ADAC) meets on the second and fourth Monday of each month. During the July 15 FSLC/Admin meeting, Senator Burkardt raised a concern about students registering for primary courses but forgetting or failing to simultaneously register for associated independent credit courses (e.g., standalone labs, Supplemental Instruction (SI)). She also mentioned that there is an underutilization of SI which has been proven to boost success. Her concern became an action item from the meeting. Deputy Provost McAteer recommended taking the issue to ADAC, noting that representatives responsible for academic scheduling, registration, student success, and course management participate in the council and are well positioned to evaluate the concern. Senator Burkardt and I subsequently developed a proposal on *"Optimizing course registration to enhance enrollment in associated independent credit courses, such as labs and SI"*. At the July 27 ADAC meeting, I presented the proposal on behalf of the Faculty Senate. On August 10, Senator Burkardt was invited to provide additional context based on her firsthand experience with limitations in current registration process. Representatives from the Financial Aid and Scholarship Office and Academic Advising and Student Support were also invited to hear the proposal and contribute potential solutions. The council discussed several possible approaches for addressing the issue and no final determination has been reached.

4.3 Policy Steering Committee (PSC)

(Available in Faculty Senate Chair's report)

4.4 Vice President for NMSU Global Search Committee

The committee is working with Parker Executive Search (PES) to conduct the search. The first meeting with PES, an Initial Search Advisory Meeting, was held on June 17. The committee discussed the search process, expectations for qualified candidates, the proposed timeline, and advertising of the position. The established timeline for advertising the position was July through August. During the July 22 meeting, PES provided the committee with its first search update. On August 10, PES provided the second search update, and President Ferme joined the meeting to reinforce the charge and expectations given to the committee. During the September 1 meeting, PES provided the third search update, including information on the number of internal and external candidates who had applied. The committee will next begin evaluating and screening candidates using a general rubric provided by PES. The initial round of interviews is expected to take place on September 15 and 16.

5. Task Forces and Special Assignments

5.1 American with Disability Act (ADA) Digital Accessibility Compliance

I was enlisted by the Deputy Provost to participate in the Provost's ADA Digital Asset Compliance Task Force. The task force met throughout Summer 2026, from May through July, to address digital accessibility compliance across NMSU. Below is a summarized excerpt from the task force's final report presented to Provost Bull on July 24.

- NMSU has prior accessibility experience from its response to a 2023 Department of Justice Civil Rights Office complaint, which required campus websites to improve accessibility. Although NMSU has some necessary tools, expertise, and experience,

a coordinated, campus-wide compliance initiative is needed. The scale of remediation required to be compliant is still substantial. Academic Technology identified 3,374 Canvas courses containing digital media in 2025 and more than 24,000 digital video files. Compliance also extends to publicly and student-accessible websites, forms, mobile applications, PDFs and Office documents, audiovisual media, Canvas and course materials, library and academic systems, and procurement processes/VPATs. Failure to demonstrate meaningful progress could result in DOJ investigations, civil rights complaints, legal liability, reputational and accreditation concerns, and potential risks to federal funding. Therefore, effective mitigation would require centralized governance, mandatory training, systematic remediation, accessible procurement, documented progress, and continuous monitoring. The committee came up with the following recommendations for the Provost. 1) By summer 2026 NMSU should establish a Digital Accessibility Steering Committee (DASC), communicate expectations, and launch training. Each department should designate a Digital Accessibility Point Person responsible for coordinating and reporting progress. 2) Faculty and staff creating digital content should complete mandatory accessibility training and use remediation tools. Beginning Summer 2026, NMSU should establish DASC, 3) during Fall 2026, units should do an inventory of content, remove or archive obsolete materials, assess websites and systems, and prioritize active content for remediation, with most departmental content targeted for completion by December 11, 2026. 4) From January–March 2027, departments should complete remediation, verify required training, and conduct final reviews of websites, Canvas courses, documents, videos, and other digital resources. The institutional goal is completion by April 24, 2027, followed by departmental reporting and, if required, communication to the DOJ. 5) Thereafter, DASC should oversee continuous compliance through regular scanning, annual training, accessibility monitoring, remediation, and annual review of digital content.

5.2 Academic Program Sustainability

I serve as a representative of the faculty senate on the Academic Program Sustainability taskforce along with Sen. Cook. In this capacity, I contribute to the committee's review of low yield academic programs.

Committee's Rationale: The Board of Regents and NMHED have raised questions about how NMSU evaluates the sustainability of existing academic programs as new programs continue to be added, highlighting the absence of a formal review policy. In response, UPAC developed an academic program sustainability review proposal, which was approved by the Provost in Fall 2025 and subsequently considered by the Faculty Senate, leading to the recommendation to establish an Ad Hoc Committee.

Task: The committee is charged with evaluating and providing relevant feedback on programs being monitored for sustainability (i.e., low yield programs).

Sustainability Benchmark: Evaluation criteria are based on enrollment, completion data, and program history. Programs are identified in three categories: (a) bachelor's programs with 15 or fewer completions over three years and enrollment below 30; (b) master's programs with 10 or fewer completions over three years and enrollment below 10; and (c) doctoral programs with no awards over three years and enrollment below 5. Data are combined for identical programs offered across different departments. Identical programs offered through NMSU Global, and the Main Campus are also combined.

Initial Work: The committee met on April 7, April 15, and May 7 to determine the best approach and establish procedures for carrying out its charge.

Next Step: To advance the review, the committee notified identified programs and provided three response options: (1) request suspension, discontinuation, or consolidation; (2) submit a specific improvement and action plan to achieve adequate yield within a fixed period; or (3) request a time-limited exception to continue under the low-yield criteria.

Current Status: Affected programs/departments have responded by selecting one of the three options. The committee will meet on September 4 to evaluate the responses and action plans submitted by programs identified as low yielding.

6. Workshops and Summits

6.1 Dekker Workshop on Integrated Campus Development Plan

I also contributed to the NMSU Forward Strategic Integrated Campus Development Plan Vision Workshop, led by Dekker on June 30, which provided an opportunity for stakeholders to help shape the vision for NMSU's future campus development. The workshop's objective was to identify a broad range of drivers that should inform future planning, design, programming, and investment decisions, including perspectives related to academics, research, operations, student life, mobility, facilities, sustainability, community engagement, and campus identity. Participants were tasked with collaboratively generating ideas and categorizing them under three headings: *"I Like – What's Working and Should Be Preserved," "I Wish – Opportunities for Positive Change,"* and *"I Wonder – Looking Toward What's Possible."* The process was designed to identify and elevate shared institutional priorities that will help guide the future direction of NMSU's Integrated Campus Plan. The next meeting is on September 9.

6.2 NMSU Data Summit

I participated in the NMSU Data Summit, held on July 23 from 8:15 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., which brought together university stakeholders to advance NMSU's institutional approach to data governance and data informed decision making. The Summit's objectives were to review progress made in past year following the Moran Assessment, commit to developing a sustainable Data Governance plan for NMSU, and establish a long-term vision for NMSU's data future that leverages 21st-century tools to strengthen data-informed decision-making and improve institutional outcomes.

7 Conclusion

The period from 15 May through 31 August 2026 provided opportunities to fulfil the responsibilities of the Faculty Senate Vice Chair through leadership, faculty representation, shared governance, and collaboration with university administration. My engagement cut across different levels, several committees, task forces, leadership meetings, institutional initiatives, and strategic planning activities. While being involved in these engagements, I ensured that faculty perspectives remained represented in discussions and decisions affecting faculty, students, and the broader NMSU community. In addition to fulfilling these responsibilities, I initiated proposals focused on faculty recognition and success, Faculty Senate awareness and participation, and student success. These activities also strengthened collaboration between Faculty Senate Leadership and key university stakeholders while creating opportunities to address institutional priorities through constructive and sustained engagement. Moving forward, I will continue my involvement in advancing ongoing initiatives, strengthening faculty engagement and representation, and supporting a collaborative shared governance environment that contributes to NMSU Forward and the university's land grant mission.