

## **FACULTY SENATE CHAIR's Report for January 2026**

### Summary of Important Relevant Information

I have put together below items from various committees that I serve on, which I believe are relevant to faculty success and environment. Both Vice Chair and I have remained active and engaged during the break period. For more detailed information, please contact me.

#### **From the Group of 4 Meetings with President Ferme and Provost Reddi**

- **Focus on Graduate Students** – After significant discussion about handling of graduate students prior to arrival, after arrival, and on-boarding interim Provost created a task force consisting of Graduate Dean, Director of International Programs and Compliance, Deputy Provost, Senator Finlator and Senate Chair Chaitanya. The task force is charged with investigating the current practices and adopting best practices to improve the experiences of graduate students, primarily international students. International Graduate students' enrollment has dropped significantly with only 35% enrolling at NMSU from those issued I-20 compared to 50% previously. With travel restriction announced for 75 countries, which includes countries we traditionally hire students from such as Nepal, Bangladesh, and of course Iran, the enrollment numbers are likely to drop further.
- **Focus on next VPR search** – It was conveyed to President Ferme verbally and in writing that at this time with Graduate student population, research funding, and F&A rate shrinking, the need to have the VPR position filled with a permanent hire cannot be under emphasized. We expect an announcement to come soon after the legislative session is over with a permanent hire in position by the beginning of Spring 2027 semester.
- **Focus on Transparency and open communication** – after the recent incidences involving purchase and adoption of Grammarly, Simple Syllabus, third party I-94 handling, Books for Success etc. the need for well-established channels of communication and opportunity to include faculty input was re-emphasized. In many cases senators have volunteered to serve on various important committees but we have not established mechanisms to get periodic updates from them. This need is addressed from this meeting itself, and similarly central offices are committed to staying in touch with committees they initiated and their progress and proceedings.

#### **From the Policy Steering Committee**

- Vice Chair has provided a good summary of various policies under review at present with stakeholders' input through PSC website. One of them I would like to bring to everyone's attention is the federal policy on service animals, emotional support animals, and other animals. This impacts classroom teaching as students are allowed to bring service animals and emotional support animals with them. This is a complicated policy, which faculty need to be very familiar with. It is part of the required SET we do every year.

#### **From the University System Budget Committee**

- This committee now meets every month, thanks to Chris Kinsley. Senators Steve Hanson and Chris Erickson also serve on this committee. One topic that keeps coming up is the change that is implemented about the RPSP requests (currently funded at \$15.8 Million – mostly recurring such as WRRI, Nursing program, . Previously these requests were verbally presented to the committee, and the committee would rank order the proposals and pass it on to the President. At present, the selection is made by the Government and Community Relations Office working with the President. We would like more faculty vetting and input prior to the selection. At present, USBC only hears about progress made by funded RPSPs and are allowed to discuss whether they are meeting their goals.

#### **From the Task Force on Legislative Session**

- **SB 177 Transfer of General Funds to Other Funds** - \$111 M for Research Development and Deployment to promote economic development in five areas; Artificial Intelligence, Quantum Technology, Advanced Energy, Aerospace and Defense, Biosciences. PSL is slated to get \$16 million to build infrastructure.
- **HB 307 BOR No Power on Tenure Decisions** – which needs to be done according to the institution’s policy and faculty vote.
- **SB 243 Student Athletes** at NMSU \$5 million.
- **HB 8 Higher Ed Major Projects Funds** - NMSU \$50 Million for Multi-disciplinary Building
- **HB 248 General Obligation Bonds** - \$20 M statewide for libraries
- **SB 204 Funding for terminated Research Projects - \$100 M to HED**
- **\$20 M for infrastructure NMSU.**
- **LFC recommends 1% increase in faculty compensation. Not expected to change.**