

Faculty Senate Vice Chair Report – Activities for January 2026 **Christopher Brown, filed 2.2.26**

Below, I share highlights of work I have completed as Vice Chair in January of 2026. As always, I am very happy to visit with anyone who would like to gain more data on activities reported. Please note due to the winter break and returning to contract on 1.15.25, this will be an abbreviated report due to less Senate-related activities being in play.

Group of 4 Meetings with President Ferme and Provost Reddi – Owing to winter break and the Legislative session, we only met once with the President and Provost on 1.14.26, and I share data on issues discussed below.

- **Urging President Ferme to start VPR search this term** – we made a strong case that Central initiate this search at the earliest, citing the need to fill this position to allow a search for director of PSL and Arrowhead Center to move forward. Chair Chaitanya, Senator Holguin, and I also wrote a letter to the President making the same case. President Ferme inquired with external firms if they could make this happen this term, and the firms noted they did not see this as possible. We will continue to advocate that the committee be assembled, and the profile refreshed this term so the search can start in late summer or early fall.
- **President update on Legislative session** – NMSU is looking good on capital outlays, Economic Development (ED) Sec’y is pushing ED hubs. NMSU may end up with 2 (DoD, Ag Tech), and \$ for work on a test lab for chips with Fujitsu is also being pursued, perhaps with work on clean rooms. Specific asks are \$55M for ID building, \$20M for PSL, and \$20M for infrastructure.
- **Simple Syllabus and other acquisition of software impacting teaching** – I made a very strong case that Central must do much better engaging faculty and Senate leadership on acquisition of software impacting teaching. Simple Syllabus was the latest case of major purchases and launches with inadequate faculty and Senate input (Grammarly rollout in Canvas was a previous case of this). Both Provost and Deputy Provost were unaware of the Simple Syllabus launch until we brought it to their attention, and we are in discussions with both the Provost and Deputy Provost to revisit how the Faculty Advisory Committee on Technology (a Provost Committee) can be repurposed or a better mechanism put in place to better engage faculty and Senate Leadership.

Meetings of the Academic Deans Advisory Council (ADAC), University Program Approval Council (UPAC), and the Policy Steering Committee (PSC)

- **ADAC** – We met twice during January, and discussions have focused on the following issues (some of this detail comes directly from ADAC minutes, with permission of ADAC Chair Ben Widmer):
 - **Simple Syllabus Rollout** - The transition and implementation status of Simple Syllabus were discussed. The tool will be discussed by various groups, including but not limited to the faculty senate and ADAC. I noted forcefully noted that this was the second launch of a S/W tool with major impacts on faculty teaching activities that has happened with limited and inadequate faculty and Senate input. As noted above, I am

working with Deputy Provost McAteer to create a better process for adoption and launching this type of S/W with adequate faculty and Senate input.

- **Duplication of Degree** - Dean Koodali introduced proposed language to revise the current catalog regarding duplicate degrees. The proposal states that a student cannot receive a duplicate degree from NMSU if they have previously earned it elsewhere (note, these instances are frequently related to PhD students earning an MS that they already hold).
- **Professional Degree and Non-Thesis Final Examination Forms** - Dean Koodali presented updates regarding the forms required for professional degrees and non-thesis final examinations. The goal is to standardize the documentation process for graduate students finishing these specific track. After a lively discussion, ADAC voted to discontinue the requirement for oral final exams for non-thesis master degrees, noting the admin load on certain departments that grant upwards of 40 non-thesis Master degrees per year.
- **Timely Graduate Decisions** – Dean Koodali provided an update on grad degree apps. There are currently 795 graduate applications pending decisions. Programs are encouraged to make early offers, particularly to high-achieving local students. Delays in admissions decisions negatively impact international students due to limited visa appointment availability. The Graduate School has updated its workflow. If only letters of recommendation (non-Graduate School requirements) are missing, applications are now forwarded to programs for review to allow departments more autonomy in waiving those requirements.
- **Numerical vs Qualitative Evaluations (SET)** - Council members discussed research showing that numerical evaluations often negatively impact women and faculty of color. However, it was noted that purely qualitative feedback can sometimes be more biased or "nasty." Qualitative-only evaluations may hinder graduate students applying for jobs or awards elsewhere. Changes to [ARP 9.31](#) regarding quantitative student evaluations are currently paused due to ongoing collective bargaining negotiations. While the ARP prohibits quantitative data for annual reviews and those towards P&T, faculty can collect their own quantitative data (via Canvas/Qualtrics) for external awards or personal reflection. [Part 3,2 of ARP 9.31](#).
- **UPAC** – UPAC did not meet in January, and updates from February meeting will be provided in a future report.
- **PSC** – The PSC met on 1.12.26, several changes to the ARP are proposed, proposals are in various stages of the review process, and details are provided at the NMSU Policy Hub - <https://policy.nmsu.edu/>. Donna Ottaviano has started posting changes in play in Hotline, and interested parties are encouraged to review progress, provide input to changes that are in process, and also submit proposed changes at The Policy Hub. Below are tables noting things currently in play, this detail pulled directly from the January PSC agenda:

1. Proposed Policy Actions

Donna/Lisa

Record #	ARP	Title
2025.19	3.45	Assistive, Service, and Companion Animals on University Premises.
		Community Wide review/feedback EOB 12/23. No recommendations submitted. Consider next step, President's Cabinet Review.
2025.09	4.55	Grade Reports
		Community Wide review/feedback EOB 12/23. Feedback sent to Proposal Sponsor. New version of draft prepared as result of feedback. Consider next step, President's Cabinet Review.
2025.13	16.12	Clery Act Compliance
		Distributed to President's Cabinet member on Dec 10. Feedback deadline EOB 12/23. No feedback received, consider next step, President review.

2. Status Report

Record #	ARP	Title	Status
2025.08	4.69	Academic Rules for Distance Education	Community Wide Review
		Community Wide review/feedback EOB 12/23. Feedback was sent to Proposal Sponsor on Jan 5 for review.	
2025.12	3.25	Prohibition of All Forms of Unlawful Discrimination	President Review
		Removal of language referencing "Affirmative Action" for compliance with Executive Order #14173. Sent to President for review as "expedited approval".	

Record #	ARP	Title	Status
2025.14	6.01	Hiring	President Review
		Deletes language in the Recruitment section that described "underutilization" and "affirmative action" for compliance with Executive Order #14173. Sent to President for review as "expedited approval".	
2025.18	6.72	Department Head Responsibilities, Including Teaching	President Review
		Deletes language in the Recruitment section that describes "underutilization" and "affirmative action" for compliance with Executive Order #14173. Sent to President for review as "expedited approval".	
2025.16	9.10	Staff Internal Promotion Process	President Review
		Deletes language regarding "EEO/Affirmative Action" for compliance with Executive Order #14173. Sent to President for review as "expedited approval".	
2025.11	3.40	Process for Disability Accommodation	Initial Draft Being Prepared
		AVP-HRS reviewing draft and requested pause until after holiday break.	
2024.05	16.79	NMSU Sponsored Youth Programs (proposed title: Programs Involving Minors)	Revised Draft Being Prepared
		Review period ended 11/11. Feedback sent to proposal sponsor. Proposal sponsor reviewing feedback for possible revisions.	
2024.02	3.10	COI: Prohibitions in Procurement	See Note
		Initially sent to the President's Cabinet for review and discussion at their Meeting on October 13. On Oct 7 it was pulled from the agenda by the sponsor. Status update requested by Jan 9, subject to case closure.	
2024.03	14.92	Sales and Solicitation	See Note
		Initially sent to the President's Cabinet for review and discussion at their Meeting on October 13. On Oct 7 it was pulled from the agenda by the sponsor. Status update requested by Jan 9, subject to case closure.	
2024.08	3.63	Freedom of Expression (proposed title: Freedom of Expression and Peaceful Assembly)	Revised Draft Being Prepared
		Process paused for further evaluation by the proposal sponsor. FOE committee met and another version is being prepared with assistance from S. Field of UGC.	