

Student Success, October 3, 2024, last edit 10.31.24 7:34 a.m. ta

Members Present: Chair T. Aguirre, S. Lynch, J. Rice, M. Burkardt, K. Knight, D. Magoc, K. Finlator, R. Giannini, M. Elshinaway

Members Absent: R. Figuero, S. Smyth

Guest:

- ❖ **Tony Marin, Associate VP for Student Affairs**
- ❖ **Marissa Fowler, Director Academic Advising and Student Support**
- ❖ **Melissa Magnusson, Director Financial Aid, University Financial Aid and Scholarship Services**

Agenda Item 1: Status of NMSU students being able to take classes at DACC.

Dr. Tony Marin, Assistant VP Student Affairs, provided a brief history of the primary campus policy and why it started. He let the committee know that the policy started in 2019 under the direction of Renay Scott, VP Student Success, in an effort to increase retention at the 1000 and 2000 levels. The one exception was remedial courses since NMSU does not offer them.

In 2021, the implementation of this policy was delegated to Dr. Marin. In 2022, students could access an online form entitled, Primary Campus Priority Registration, that explains the policy and indicates reasons for exceptions such as: the class is not offered at the home campus, or there are not enough seats available. If students meet one of these exceptions, there is a link in the form to petition taking a class at another campus. The form is located at <https://records.nmsu.edu/assets/primary-campus.html>

After the student completes this form, there is dialog between the student and their advisor and utilization of the degree audit program to ensure that the request is valid. The students are also referred to Financial Aid to see if any financial aid issues would occur from taking classes at other campuses. It was also explained that it is alright for NMSU students to take classes at NMSU Global since it is part of the NMSU Main campus; however, the form is still used for tracking purposes. After the student completes the form, the process can take up to 72 hours to receive an answer.

Senator Giannini asked is there a way a NMSU student can take a class at DACC if it fits their needs better.

Dr. Marin explained that policy is a decision that was made from the office of the Provost. Then he went on to explain that he consults with students and their advisor before making the decision. In making that decision he always tries to make sure that it meets the best interest of the student while also trying to make sure that it is honoring the idea behind the practice of improving overall retention rates.

Sen Giannini stated that in her experience, it does not always help improve retention because she has had students drop out because of these circumstances. For example, she has had some students take classes at EPCC because they don't want to take classes at main campus.

Dr. Marin agreed that there are some students that do take classes at El Paso Community College, or CNM, or one of the campuses in their home towns since they may have more online offerings. Students will take classes at other institutions if it does not fit their class schedule. He shared the form with the committee and let us know that he copies himself, Dr. Fowler, the Academic Advisor and that is recorded

in Navigate. It is primarily Math classes that are requested to be taken at DACC because they are smaller classes, or because they are offered online.

Dr. Fowler mentioned that it is sometimes Psychology or Sociology classes depending on the time of the year. On the advising side, they do try to find an on-campus class. If nothing can work, then that is the feedback that they give Dr. Marin.

Dr. Marin stated that if something is absolutely not working then he will accommodate them. If the class is at the same time, at both campuses, then this might be more questionable.

Senator Burkhardt asked Dr. Marin if their office keeps track of classes that are requested to be held online and if that information could be forwarded to Global. She also asked if that information could be tallied and moved forward.

Dr. Marin replied that his office certainly can do that. He stated that his office does keep a record for the last two years of every single request.

Senator Magoc asked if there are any policies in place or written in any document that states that students are allowed, or not allowed to take classes at DACC. He stated that he is looking for a more concrete statement in a specific NMSU document that would be specific rather than looking at this issue on an individual basis.

Dr. Marin answered that he will find language in the Undergraduate catalog in terms of how classes are evaluated coming in and the option for how a student might transfer a class if they decide to take a class during the summer at another college and forward it to us.

Dr. Fowler added that the campus restriction policy and how many credits will transfer are two separate policies. Courses taken at our own community colleges are not evaluated as they are part of the student's transcript. There is no limit on the number of classes accepted at NMSU. However, she shared that there is a limit on the back-end stating that the last 30 hours have to be taken at NMSU.

Senator Gioannini asked for confirmation that, if we are talking about a single class, then we must come up with a compelling reason why the student wants to take a class at DACC. If the Faculty Senate felt that this particular rule is an impediment. How do we approach making a change to this policy.

Dr. Marin answered that it would be entirely up to Faculty Senate to make this determination.

Sen Finlator stated that he thinks that there are three reasons to take classes elsewhere: 1.) the grading is easier 2.) save money on tuition or 3.) there is a course that they need to take that is not available.

If students are leaving NMSU because of the third reason, then that is a Student Success issue and Dr. Scott should look into that. Another issue might be that the students don't know that there is a waiver policy.

Dr. Marin answered that the three reasons just mentioned are common as well as many more. He gave an example related to the Fall of 2022, when they had students that had trouble finding enough classes to take 15 hours to take advantage of the Opportunity Scholarship. His office worked with Dr. Scott in order to get this policy lifted because NMSU did not have enough classes. Another item that he takes into consideration, is if the class needs enough students to fill the class. He also stated that there is

advocacy on the part of Advisors to inform the students that there are exceptions to the policy and there is a form to petition to take a class at another campus.

Dr. Fowler added that one question in particular that is asked by her staff is, does not taking this class delay graduation?

Dr. Marin added that he sees a big challenge in that many of the courses that are offered are during the day when students have to work due to their particular profession. Has brought it to the attention of the Deans of the particular colleges. His office will always ensure that students are going to be able to take classes while supporting their families. Otherwise, they will leave NMSU to take classes where they better fit their needs.

Senator Burkhardt brought up the issue that Freshmen register so much later than other students and their classes are often closed. She has seen other universities hold classes for freshmen. She specifically has math classes in mind. She was wondering if there are flow charts for specific degree programs and ideas of what needs are for incoming students and asked the question, why don't we reserve space for them?

Dr. Marin responded that his office is aware of this problem as well as the Associate Deans for Academics. His office is also aware of which classes fill up more quickly. They also do projections in the various colleges. The Associate Deans attempt to offer more sections of those courses or at times ask faculty to lift their caps a little bit. They are meeting on a monthly basis with Provost office, all Associate Academic Deans along with Dr. Fowler, Dr. Scott and a few other individuals in order to address this problem.

Dr. Fowler mentioned that ideas of reserving spots has been workshopped a little bit. There are some coding issues, but they are absolutely exploring it. Her office consistently shares waitlists with Associate Deans. She is sharing projections for particular majors that are going to be hitting their departments based off of what they can see from orientation. One thing that is going to be different this summer is that the orientations are going to be pushed up in an effort to provide more time to adjust to high waitlists. Her office doesn't want the students to have more credits, they want the students to have meaningful credits.

Agenda Item # 2 Department of Education/ Federal Aid (in relation to only paying for classes going towards a student's major)

Melissa Magnusson, Director of Financial Aid at NMSU, shared her knowledge about this ruling with our committee. She started by clarifying that this is not a new ruling; however, recently, the wording has changed to become more stringent. The wording states, "a person must be enrolled as a regular student in an eligible program to receive federal student aid funds." She clarified that students can also only be taking classes that count towards their degree, certificate or other recognized credential. The current leadership is evaluating whether they will stick with the current software, or a new degree audit platform. The current platform expires in 2026. If they switch programs, it would take eighteen months to implement.

The ruling only affects federal aid. Every student will have the opportunity to look at their CPOS, course program of study, and determine how far they are from completing their degree. The requirements for the CPOS are specific for federal funding eligibility. Students that would be the most impacted are those

that are receiving PELL Grants as they have a requirement of 12 credit hours to receive the full amount. Starting this term, every credit has a different rate percentage. If a student is not enrolled in 12 credits towards their degree program, they can still receive aid, but at a reduced rate. Any student who is not eligible for Pell but eligible for loans only has an enrollment requirement of 6 credits. There is a way for students to get away from taking classes outside of their major as long as they are taking 12 credits towards their major.

Sen Burkhardt asked how Advisors will know if a class is counting towards a major? In particular, how will they know if electives will be counted towards a student's major?

Melissa Magnussun explained that the biggest lift that NMSU faces is to determine what degree audit platform to go forward with. Every degree granting program has to get together to better define their degree pathways. In terms of electives, some degrees have specific requirements such as you must choose six classes out of these ten classes. Some degrees are very strict. The flip side is you can take any class from NMSU as long as you take 30 credits. Either example would be fine since they are defined. The programs that are not explicitly stated is a bigger problem. If a degree program doesn't have specific coding, they would have some work to do in order to be in compliance.

Senator Finlator asked if the system can accommodate students who want to change majors?

Melissa provided an example that if a student came to NMSU and wanted to be an Art major and then decided to switch to Mechanical Engineering. This would be fine, if they were enrolled in Art and taking all Art classes, and then switched to Mechanical Engineering and took all ME classes. It could cause problems if the student was coded as an Art major, but took Engineering classes. In the latter case, they could receive less funding. The end goal is to have a portal where the student and Advisor have access to see a list of the classes a student has taken, and all of the classes that are left. In addition to confirmation of classes that will count towards their financial aid. If the student is only enrolled in two classes that will count towards their major, they will get a message that they are not in enough classes and that they should change his or her schedule, or risk not receive full funding.

Dr. Fowler also added that there is room for supplemental instruction courses as long as a student is enrolled in 12 credits towards their major. For example, the supplemental instruction class can be the thirteenth credit.

Sen Burkhardt asked how do we detect students if they have declared a major, but they are not actually taking classes towards their major?

Melissa Magnussun explained that once they are in compliance, the biggest challenge would be to work on communication. Examples would be a clear FAQ section, or big red flags in my.nmsu.edu stating that a student might not be enrolled in the right classes.

Despite frequent communication from her office, the biggest challenge is that students can change their schedule with no flags. She estimated that it might take approximately two years before they have to have a defined communication plan to include: having a portal that will flag them before registration opens, once registration opens and before census date to make sure that they do not receive a reduction in funding.