

Introduction to NMSU's Faculty Senate

(Introduction)

My name is Kristian Finlator. I am an associate professor in the NMSU Astronomy Department and I am joining you here today in my capacity as the Chair of the NMSU Faculty Senate. I want to tell you about the Faculty Senate's role, what we have done for you recently, what we will look into over the upcoming year, and how you can help us.

(Problem)

According to the NMSU Regent's Policy Manual, the Faculty Senate "has legislative prerogative to initiate and develop rules and procedures affecting the university's academic mission in regard to education, research, and service." Members of the University Administration do not necessarily have the knowledge and experience to address these topics, so it falls to your 68 faculty senators to channel and distill the faculty's views and communicate them back up. Faculty Senate is not primarily concerned with work conditions, which are the purview of the Union.

(Method)

The Faculty Senate functions in two complementary ways. First and foremost, we confront difficult questions and distill our decisions into bills, resolutions, memorials, and joint propositions which are then subject to approval or denial by the President or the Board of Regents. Even if the Administration opposes our decision (which is rare), they must acknowledge our views. Secondly, faculty senators are appointed to over a dozen system-wide committees ranging from the Athletic Department Advisory Committee through the Policy Steering Committee to the University System Budget Committee. Here, their voting privileges give them direct influence on system-wide decisions. Our leadership also meets weekly with the President and the Provost, offering regular opportunities to raise and address issues.

(Results)

In recent years, the Faculty Senate advocated for inter-campus swirling; addressed policy changes related to grades, exams, and undergraduate admissions; obtained \$100k of annual funding for faculty to publish in Open Access journals; updated the Dean's Evaluation process, and drew attention to challenges confronting non-tenure track and part-time faculty.

(Plans)

Over the upcoming year, Faculty Senate will study how to acknowledge innovation and entrepreneurship within the Promotion and Tenure process; consult on undergraduate support programs; review proposed changes to the General Education Course Certification process; and address dual-career issues affecting faculty with highly trained spouses. (That laundry list, by the way, is only a starting point.) Faculty Senators will also continue to serve on over a dozen external committees.

(Getting Engaged)

If you think any of what I have mentioned sounds important, please find out who your senators are and ask them to keep you informed. Ideally, they should consult with you before they cast their votes, and return to you with the outcome. You can attend our monthly meetings even if you do not have a vote. If you find that you are not content to sit in the audience, then please consider running for an open seat in the spring. We have so much to do, and we would love for you to help us get it done right.