

Faculty Senate Chair's Report

Interval: May 19, 2026 - August 27, 2026 Author:
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Opening Message

Profs. Chaitanya and Brown concluded their service as Chair and Vice Chair of the Faculty Senate at the end of May 18, 2026. On May 19th, Prof Finlator became Chair and Prof.

Bello became Vice Chair. Since then, each of us has attended over a dozen meetings with various members of Central Administration, other faculty, and the Board of Regents.

Communication is excellent: concerns pass in both directions between Faculty and Administration, action never lags, and there is a strong sense of trust. Many faculty senators have kindly agreed to serve on over twenty external committees (below), further strengthening shared governance.

Early in the summer, Senators Kenney, Pimentel, Miller-Tomlinson, and Djaman all agreed to serve in an ARP 10.50 Pre-Determination hearing over the summer - many thanks for their summer service!

With support from the Provost's office, Senators Kenney and Abdelkefi have successfully raised the profiles of Faculty-Talk 2.0 and the Open Access Publication Fund.

And since May, four senators have drafted five new resolutions for us to consider this fall. *All of these senators were first-time resolution authors!* This is exciting, and bodes well for the upcoming year.

1. External Committee Appointments Table

Committee	Senator(s)	Comments
Faculty Advisory Committee on Technology (FACT)	Erickson	
Legislative Task Force	Finlator	convenes in Spring
University System Budget Committee		(email sent out)
Library Faculty Senate Advisory Committee	Lopez Gallagher	
Graduate Faculty Council	Palacios	(not appointed by FS)
Athletic Department Advisory Committee	Aguirre	
Global Faculty Advisory Council (GFAC)	Manis	
Committee	Senator(s)	Comments

Classroom Technology Strategic Planning	Manis	
ASNMSU Liaison		to be appointed by Student Success
Open Access Fund Allocation Committee (OAPFAC)	Abdelkefi, Sandstrom	(not appointed by FS)
UPAC	Bello	FS Vice Chair is <i>ex officio</i> co-chair
ADAC	Bello	FS Vice Chair is <i>ex officio</i> member
Policy Steering Committee (PSC)	Finlator, Bello	FS Chair and Vice Chair <i>ex-officio</i> members
ADA Compliance Task Force	Bello	should complete by May 2027
Housing Strategic Visioning Group	Finlator	has met once
Integrated Development Campus Plan	Finlator	has met twice
Data Stewards Committee	Finlator	meets second Friday each month
Enrollment Management Committee	Finlator	meets third Thursday each month
IT Governance Committee	Finlator	meets first Thursday each month
President's Cabinet	Finlator	meets bi-weekly
Search: VPR	Finlator	co-chairing with Deputy Provost McAteer
Search: VP of Global	Bello, Palacios	
Search: Cooperative Experiential Associate Provost	Holguin	

2. Board of Regents Meetings

On 7/2/2026, the BoR met at a Special Meeting.

- Collective Bargaining with the Graduate Student Union yielded a 3% increase to the minimum salary that graduate assistants receive; students who already earn more than the minimum receive a 2.5% increase under certain conditions. Approved.
- Texas 135 Waiver to In State Tuition: NM state law permits NMSU to charge in-state tuition to Texas students who live within 135 miles of NMSU. Currently, these “Texas 135” students pay 110% of in-state tuition. UTEP’s “Pay Dirt Promise” program exerts competitive pressure on that 110%, so NMSU wants to reduce Texas 135 students’ tuition the in-state rate in order to align with undergrads from Arizona & Colorado and reinforce the student pipeline. CFO Bottorff is pursuing this; it will return to BoR after further analysis.

On 8/18/2026, the BoR held a Regular Meeting.

- The Regents Audit and Risk Committee received reports; no news.
- The Regents Real Estate Committee met; no news.
- Regents Financial Strategies, Performance, and Budget Committee: approved many demolitions, constructions, and repairs (including re-roofing Hadley Hall).

3. Group of 5 Meetings

Vice Chair Bello and Chair Finlator meet weekly with the President, Provost, and Deputy Provost. These meetings have addressed dozens of topics, many of which indicate the need for Faculty Senate engagement (in maroon).

- The designation of a Faculty Senate office remains on the menu. There used to be one in the basement of Hadley Hall; it was turned over to HR in favor of an office in Guthrie. The current plan is to identify a space that's freed when the President's team and the Global teams are finished moving.
- A new Faculty Fellow for Faculty Success has been chosen - it's our own Senator Pimentel. He'll build on Dr. MacGregor-Mendoza's foundation.
- President Fermé wants the development of a robust teaching-based route to tenure whereas former Chair Chaitanya wants a research-based route. **Further discussion of these ideas should originate in Faculty Senate.**
- The Strategic Planning Draft is now publicly available; everyone should have a look.
- The AI task force (requested in Proposition 05-25/26) has not yet been stood up; Dean Pontelli owns this.
- The Faculty Senate fund (\$3k) exists. No bylaws exist that address who controls them.
- President Fermé reported that the Open Access Publication Fund will become a *recurring line* available through an index in the Provost's office. Since we began publicizing this fund through all-faculty, there has been an uptick in applications. Moreover, COAS has now established a similar fund. This is therefore an extremely popular FS initiative. (OAPFAC is co-chaired by Sen. Abdelkefi.)
- VP of Student Success Tony Marin is introducing new metrics + tracking measures to improve undergraduate retention, with special attention paid to the 118-119 freshmen who enter with cumulative high school GPA of 2.5-2.75 (as approved in Proposition 03-25/26). Many probably did Aggie Jump-Start. Student Success should consult with Dr. Marin in the spring about retention outcomes. President Fermé indicated a desire to see the many student support initiatives get assessed.
- President Fermé believes that a six-week early performance screening is too late. This is referred, for the moment, to the Teaching Academy, where Senator Campbell, as the Faculty Fellow for Student Success, will discuss best practices regarding screening for student weaknesses with faculty in intro. survey classes. It may become legislation.
- President Fermé believes that the deadline for students to register for classes without a signature should be moved back; two days is far too short. **Further discussion of this should originate in Faculty Senate.**
- Chair Bello suggests that NMSU might consider changing grades so that all courses are P/F for first-semester Freshmen. Provost Bull noted supportively that MIT has done this for years, and UMich recently adopted it too. **Further discussion of this should originate in Faculty Senate.**

- Relatedly, Chair Finlator relayed that ENGR loses many students to GE classes either for poor grades or lack of course availability. DP McAteer responded that the Provost's office added 50 sections to oversubscribed classes in Fall 2026 to address this. President Fermé indicates that proper data governance will eventually reveal course bottlenecks in more detail; a lot of effort appears to be going into this.
- Chair Finlator relayed concern from ENGR that NMSU's Gen Ed program has never been assessed. President Fermé responded that he is eager to do this.
- Admin's Tribal visits have been a big success. Students generally report very favorable experiences at NMSU, including those who leave without a degree, but conflict between traditional & coursework obligations is a major issue. HEST Dean Marlatt notes that most HEST degrees culminate with in-person practicum experience, and tribal students cite this as a particular plus. A common theme is the need to preserve tribal languages - can NMSU help with this? Expanding hybrid options was floated. FS Chair Finlator & SS Chair Campbell will take these things up with AIP on 9/3.
- Chair Finlator noted that, when Provost Bull was hired, the negotiation process gave him automatic tenure in ENGR/MAE, *but MAE was never consulted*. President Fermé & Provost Bull agreed that this was an oversight. They committed to ensuring that future Administrative candidates will automatically be evaluated by prospective tenure homes during the interview stage.
- Vice Chair Bello asked about NMSU's relationship with Project Jupiter, if any. President Fermé replied that *there is none*. NMSU has not written letters of support and not signed any NDA. Project Jupiter has attempted to secure NMSU support both at Administrative and at the individual Faculty level, but President Fermé has insisted that any collaboration must originate at a high level and further NMSU's mission as an educational institution (for example, by supporting water, soil, or carbon research). They have balked so far at taking meaningful steps.

4. Policy Steering Committee

The Policy Steering Committee met on 5/11, 5/27, 8/10, and 8/24. 5/11/2026

- ARP 3.40 Process for Disability Accommodation. Three definitions were revised. This was sent to the President.
- ARP 15.50 NMSU Institutional Data Security. Rewritten to update outdated, specific language regarding desktops/servers so as to focus more broadly on Information Security, authorizing reviews & risk evaluations, and data. Sent back to sponsor for being too general.
- ARP 15.26 Protection of Federal Information: FISMA Compliance. This one deals with Federal information and Controlled Unclassified Information. It was sent to stakeholders.
- ARP 4.65 General Education Coursework Required for Graduation. This enables committee representation from Community Colleges and ex-officio representatives from Student Records and OIE. *Sent to Faculty Senate for review.*
- ARP 18.85 Interfaith Council. This ARP regulates a council that has not existed since 2019. It is repealed for simplicity.

- Reduction in Force - Non-Bargaining Unit. This establishes the RIF process and clarifies that it doesn't apply to employees covered under a CBA.

7/13/2026

- ARP 7.20 Staff Overtime Pay or Comp Time. Clarifies an error in ARP 7.20 that brought it into conflict with FLSA. Sent to the President.
- ARP 15.60 Management of Health Information (HIPAA Compliance). This was corrected to reflect policy ownership and sent to stakeholders. On 8/10, a corrected version was sent to Policy Hub for community review.

8/10/2026

- ARP 6.81 New Employee Orientation. Voted to repeal because it is an exact duplicate of ARP 8.01. Sent to President.
- ARP 6.85 Staff Work Schedules. This ARP attempts to prevent full-time, FLSA exempt staff from taking on too much additional teaching work. There was discussion about the choice of credit-hour limit and the enforcement process. This will be revised.
- 8/26/2026 ARP 4.62 clarifies the distinction between Articulation Agreements and Academic Agreements, and moves the power to originate Articulation Agreements up from Faculty to DH, Dean, or College level. **Sent to Faculty Senate for review.**
- 8/26/2026 ARP 4.61 Transfer Credit. Makes some nuanced changes to what faculty vs. Registrar's involvement in approving transfer credit is. **Sent to Faculty Senate for review.**
- 8/26/2026 ARP 15.50 NMSU Institutional Data Security. Sent to stakeholders.
- 8/26/2026 ARP 15.71 Acquisition and Implementation of Software Systems. Policy initiator received, significant thoughtful feedback from four different individuals representing a broad range of backgrounds, dismissed all comments with minimal explanation. Returned for improved justification.

5. Data Stewards

The Data Stewards Committee met on 8/14/2026. Broadly, NMSU is overhauling its data storage and retrieval to make institutional data much easier to query. These conversations can be hard to follow as they invoke a high-level vocabulary drawing fine Org. chart distinctions between Data Managers, Data Stewards, Data Trustees, and functional users.

- They are considering using Snowflake for their new data platform. It will have AI support and streamline the process of getting institutional data to people.
- They consider obtaining a data ingestion tool from 5M.
- These changes won't replace Cognos, which makes reports, just the data that Cognos connects to.
- BJ Maestas is updating the NMSU Phone Book. Detailed questions were asked about access, the default sharing privileges, and student worker listings.
- Renita Hicks proposes a new "Data Manager" Role...see their notes for details.
- It was agreed that the Data Tools workshops should be continued, run the the Data Trustees.

6. President's Cabinet

The Faculty Senate Chair is an *ex officio* member of the President's Cabinet, which meets weekly. Topics include the Strategic Plan (now available online); enrollment (UG could be worse, G could be better, CCs are complicated); scholarship support; the status of transfer

outreach to increase enrollment; faculty/staff salary inequities (hopefully future tuition increases will create possibilities); the Genesis Mission (NMSU received an award and a sub-award while UNM, UTEP, NMT didn't get aught); a new NMSU Fire Chief; the status of the New World Screwworm and the excellent NMSU/NMDA collaboration...it's a long list.

- A prominent result of all the student retention discussion was the President's Mentoring Challenge, which is off to a strong start.
- A new multidisciplinary building is planned (and partially funded) that will have space for classes and labs. The location and design are TBD, but Faculty Senate should eventually be involved though no specifics are available at present.
- President Fermé and Associate VP for Human Resources Dr. Bill Dial plan to rethink employee recognition (where faculty count as employees). Dr. Dial has reached out to FS Chair Finlator and Employee Council chair Sonia White to form an "Employee Recognition Council." The first discussions will be in early September. Please forward any ideas to Chair Finlator.

7. NMCHES

The New Mexico Council for Higher Education (NMCHES) is a nascent effort to build an organization that combines the voices of faculty and staff from colleges and universities across New Mexico. It began in response to the original Compact for Higher Education (and resulted in our [Proposition 06-25/26](#)). More recently, it has been gathering strength as a mechanism for generally strengthening the voice of higher education employees, including staff and faculty. Bylaws and membership are still being worked out.

8. IT Governance

I have been to one IT Governance committee meeting so far. There seems to be a lot of confusion regarding how RoI on Enterprise software purchases is evaluated.

- Bodyswaps (VR development environment) was scrutinized. We have a 3-yr relationship with them that gives us a good deal. Grants, NMSU-A, DACC, and HEST use it, Ida Holguin apparently won some awards using it in CJ, and annual use is growing. Still, with 710 current users (though use is growing) is \$30k/year for four years justified? Provisionally approved.
- There was a brief review of how Shinyhunters hacked Instructure and hence Canvas (it was clever). As of June 2026 NMSU does not know what NMSU data were downloaded, but they didn't include NMSU passwords.

9. Campus Development

NMSU is consulting with two complementary outfits to re-envision the campus and its buildings. Dekker's "Integrated Campus Development Plan" appears to be a study of campus layout/architecture. Their work will span 18 months beginning 6/30/2026. On 6/30, a huge cast of NMSU stakeholders participated in a dreamy "I Like, I Wish, I Wonder" exercise to generate lots of ideas. Brailsford & Dunlavey (B&D) hosted two meetings (5/11 and 7/16) focused more on assessing residential housing condition, needs, and financial realities. The first year live-in requirement has to be matched with suitable housing options, but some buildings (Tom Fort / Sutherland) have reached end-of-life status. It's a

complicated process that's being undertaken in a visionary rather than piecemeal way so as to maximize return and minimize inevitable disruptions.

10. Meetings with Faculty

As the Faculty Senate Chair, I spoke at the College of Business convocation 8/17, the Arts & Sciences General Faculty meeting 8/21, and the College of Engineering Leadership 8/26. I am also scheduled to meet separately with the full faculty in several HEST departments to solicit candidates for the open HEST seat.

11. Administrative Searches

Three national administrative searches are underway where Faculty Senate is involved:

- VPR: co-chaired by Chair Finlator
- VP for Global: co-chaired by Vice Chair Bello
- Associate Provost: co-chaired by Senator O. Holguin

All three searches will culminate in in-person interviews this fall.

In parallel, Human Resources will be starting up national searches for deans for ACES and Engineering, both of which will have interim deans through AY 2026-27. Those searches should complete in the spring. Search committees have not yet been chosen.

12. Faculty Senate Elections

Two Faculty Senate seats need to be filled this fall, one for non-tenure-track faculty member from NMSU-Grants and one for a tenure-track faculty member from HEST. Senator Schumacher is running the NMSU-Grants election in September, and Senator DeBlieck will run the HEST election in October so that Chair Finlator can meet with the departments that are eligible to send up a senator.