

Proposition: 2-22/23

Proposal Type: Bill Resolution Memorial Joint Proposition Other
(If Joint proposition, also select type)

Title: A Resolution to Authorize the Chair of Faculty Senate to Send a Letter to Legislators and the Governor on Behalf of the NMSU Faculty Senate

Date Submitted: October 6, 2022

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Proposed Committee: Emergency Legislation

Prior Approvals:

Proposal: The Faculty Senate authorizes the chair of Faculty Senate to sign and send a letter on behalf of Faculty Senate to legislators and the governor.

Rationale:

As pointed out in the collectively-written letter, NMSU salaries lag behind R2 salaries at the time that NMSU has made the pursuit of R1 status one of the university's four "Leads 2025 goals." The failure of NMSU faculty salaries to keep pace with the market, and the paucity of retention packages, has led to the departure of many early- and mid-career faculty. The NMSU executive committee (Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, Provost) suggested in a previous meeting with Faculty Senate Leadership that we should approach the legislators and governor directly with our concerns.

Text of the letter:

Dear [Legislator, Governor, etc.]

Universities are critical for economic development in the state of New Mexico. For them to play this role effectively requires attracting and retaining high-quality faculty. Faculty who are current in the latest research can provide cutting-edge training to New Mexico's future doctors, engineers, and scientists in industry, all necessary to ensure that our state remains competitive. We must be able to attract and retain nursing faculty who will help to correct New Mexico's nursing shortage. In the wake of the Yazzie/Martinez decision, excellent faculty in education are key to ensure that new teachers are prepared for the challenges of more culturally responsive curricula in Pre-K-12 classrooms.

Despite a collective effort to provide a conducive environment for career growth, NMSU is losing the battle to retain faculty. Between FY 2010 and FY 2020, 214 tenure-track professors quit out of 324 newly hired. Over the past 4 years, NMSU lost 600 faculty and staff members to jobs elsewhere. Those who left primarily cited better pay and opportunities available elsewhere. This hemorrhaging of human capital endangers NMSU's land-grant mission. Too often NMSU has invested in the development of a new faculty member—spending on recruitment, on laboratories, and providing course releases to do research, development, and outreach—only to have that faculty member be hired away by another institution.

The market for high-quality faculty is national. Unfortunately, NMSU is just not competitive with other university in faculty salaries. NMSU professors conducted an external market study of NMSU salaries,

comparing them with peer institutions but excluding the best-paid universities (in California and the East Coast). Even on this more limited basis, the study concluded that only 3 percent of NMSU faculty earned salaries at or above the 40th percentile of faculty in their fields compared to very high research intensive (R1) universities (the designation currently sought by NMSU). In fact, only 30 percent of NMSU faculty earn salaries at or above the 40th percentile for R2 universities (NMSU's current designation).

Faculty searches are expensive, as is startup funding for laboratories. A great deal of time and effort is expended in developing and mentoring young faculty. When the university loses those faculty members because NMSU is unable to provide market-competitive salaries, that investment has been wasted. Increasingly, faculty who are offered positions elsewhere do not even bother to ask their deans for retention offers, because they know that these will not be forthcoming.

The inability to retain early- and mid-career faculty compromises NMSU's ability to successfully pursue federal grants, which are extremely competitive. Senior faculty are crucial in obtaining these grants. But just as NMSU faculty gain the experience and expertise to be productive in generating grants, they are lured away from NMSU by higher salaries at other institutions, compromising NMSU's ability to compete for grants.

Success in federal grants is not just important for NMSU but for our state. Federal grants provide salaries for New Mexico residents. Major grants attract high-quality graduate students who want to work on cutting-edge research. Many of these students will remain in New Mexico to live and work. They will provide the core leadership that will make New Mexico competitive in the high tech 21st century economy.

New Mexico State University has the potential to be an economic engine for the state. But it cannot do so when its salaries are not competitive. We urge the legislature to take action to address this problem.

Signed on behalf of New Mexico State University Faculty Senate,

Professor Gaylene Fassenko, Chair, NMSU Faculty Senate