

MINUTES
NMSU Faculty Senate Leadership Committee (FSLC)
December 19, 2024
Zoom (<https://nmsu.zoom.us/j/86052805269>) and Hadley 130

1. Call to Order

2. Recognition of Guests-

Dr. Valerio Ferme, President Designate, Dr. Enrico Pontelli, AI Advisor to the Provost, Mr. Robbie Grant, Executive Director, Academic Technology.

President Ferme-

The discussion explores the need for better coordination of online education across New Mexico's universities, prompted by legislative interest and financial considerations.

- There's a push from legislators to unify online programs across New Mexico's universities, with considerable state financial investment in higher education.
- Currently, only one university has a dedicated internal online platform, unlike many others that utilize external online platform management systems (OPMs).
- OPMs, such as those used by Arizona State University, typically split revenue with universities, which is a concern since money is leaving the state.
- Legislators suggest using New Mexico State University (NMSU) as a model to help provide online services for other state universities and keep the generated revenue within the state.
- The discussion highlights the need for collaboration among university leaders to address potential concerns regarding maintaining institutional identity and brand while providing these services.
- The President emphasizes NMSU's recent achievement of becoming an R1 research institution and how this status could enhance its role in online education.
- Concerns about not losing the university's brand identity or becoming predominantly an online university were raised.
- Ideas surrounding creating a "center" at NMSU to provide support services for online education instead of becoming simply an OPM were suggested.
- The overall approach advocates for strategic planning in research and online offerings, ensuring that universities do not compete unnecessarily in similar areas.
- Pilot programs in high-demand fields (e. g., social work, nursing) across the universities could establish accountability and evaluate the success of coordinated online offerings over time.
- Continuous assessment is recommended, checking enrollment figures over a span of two and four years to understand the impact of these changes.

The discussion serves as a preliminary inquiry into the future of online education in New Mexico, stressing the importance of collaboration, strategic planning, and continuous evaluation to enhance the state's educational offerings while retaining financial benefits within state borders.

Questions & Answers followed.

Dean Enrico Pontelli-

Embracing a New Opportunity in AI

Dean Pontelli expresses excitement about participating in a new AI consortium in New Mexico. This opportunity allows representation from multiple institutions to engage in important discussions about AI at both the state and federal levels.

- The consortium has been officially established, comprising seven entities including universities and research labs (UNM, NMSU, New Mexico Tech, CNN, Sandia, and Los Alamos).
- A proposal has been made for \$4 million from the state legislature to support AI training at universities.
- Discussions are ongoing with Senator Heinrich office to launch an initiative that utilizes AI to enhance scientific discovery speed, indicating significant potential investments.
- A survey revealed that at least 30 individuals across the university are engaged in various AI research initiatives, though efforts are currently dispersed.
- There is a goal to create an expertise repository to connect those involved in AI with others seeking assistance, fostering collaboration among those interested in AI.
- Many colleges are developing AI-related courses, and the consortium aims to create a general AI course to avoid duplication of efforts.
- The rapid growth of AI raises concerns, particularly regarding its use by students. The importance of teaching students to use AI responsibly and effectively is emphasized.
- AI can be a tool to enhance critical thinking, as asking the right questions is essential for obtaining useful answers.
- The consortium will also focus on offering professional development for faculty to explore AI tools in their teaching practices.

Discussion, Questions & Answers followed.

Robbie Grant-

Understanding AI and Education: Tools and Ethics

In recent years, there has been a significant focus on understanding artificial intelligence (AI) and its application in education. Workshops have been organized to educate faculty members about AI and alleviate their fears regarding its use, emphasizing that AI should be seen as a helpful tool rather than something to be afraid of.

- AI is compared to traditional tools like computers and pens. It represents the evolution of education and should be integrated into the learning process rather than feared.
- Various AI detection tools exist, such as Copy Leaks and GPT Zero. While these tools are expensive, their purpose is to help catch instances of plagiarism and ensure academic integrity.
- Instead of relying solely on detection tools to catch cheaters, there's an emphasis on educating students about the ethical use of AI. More AI courses are suggested for freshmen and graduate students to promote understanding of AI's role in their studies.
- Students who misuse AI tools for plagiarism may face academic misconduct consequences. Instructors can often recognize AI-generated writing by observing similarities in the style and content among students.

- A new tool, Grammarly, is set to be piloted next semester. This tool will track authorship in writing, including copy-pasting and AI-generated content. It has a feature that records writing activities, making it more challenging to manipulate the results.
- Recent presentations to faculty and student technology committees showed unanimous support for the Grammarly pilot program, which will be used in writing and communication classes.
- Research has indicated that using Grammarly can improve students' writing skills over the semester, showing evidence of its effectiveness.
- Grammarly can assist in brainstorming and provide guidance on starting papers rather than writing them entirely, focusing on enhancing learning rather than merely catching dishonest practices.

As AI continues to evolve, education systems are encouraged to embrace AI as an essential tool for learning. The integration of tools like Grammarly aims to enhance students' writing skills while promoting ethical considerations regarding AI use. The balance between utilizing detection methods and focusing on education is vital in fostering a culture of integrity in academia.

3. Approval of Agenda

Moved and seconded to approve agenda.

Senator Lopez-Gallagher proposes a friendly amendment to be removed from Proposition 08-24/25 as a sponsor.

Moved and seconded to approve minutes with the friendly amendment.

Minutes approved and submitted.

4. Approval of Minutes of 21 November 2024 meeting (Posted to Website)

Moved and seconded to approve minutes.

Minutes approved and submitted by Senate Leadership.

5. Reports on Legislation (posted to Website)

- **03-24/25 - Clarifying Exceptions to Final Exam Requirements in ARP 4.50.** Sponsors – K. Finlator (A&S); J. Burchett (A&S), M. Burkardt (A&S); and M. Prescott (A&S).
 - Vice-Chair Brown reported that Proposition 03-24/25 received a Do Pass vote at the full Faculty Senate meeting on December 5, 2024.
- **05-24/25 - Establishing Continuing Support for Open Access Publication Costs -** Sponsor(s): K. Finlator (A&S); F. Arslan (CoB).
 - Vice-Chair Brown reported that Proposition 05-24/25 received a Do Pass vote at the Faculty Senate meeting on December 5, 2024.
- **06-24/25 – A Memorial affirming the diverse campus community that NMSU is, and in support of students at-risk of Harassment, Discrimination, and Deportation.** Sponsor(s): William Walker (A&S), Christopher Brown, (A&S), Tawny Aguirre (DACC), Dylan McDonald (Library), Tom Hart (A&S), Michaela Burkardt (A&S), Kim Lopez Gallagher (DACC), Lois Stanford (A&S), Kelly Jenks (A&S), Kathryn Olszowy (A&S), Katie Richards (A&S), Colleen Bond (NMSU Alamogordo), Debasmita Roychowdhury (DACC), Hiranya Roychowdhury (DACC) Kristian Finlator (A&S), Juie Shetye (A&S), Amy Garcia (DACC). Michaela Buenemann (A&S), Amanda Cuellar (ACC), Avis James (A&S), Brian Hurd (ACES), Jamie Bronstein (A&S), Bertha A. Bermúdez Tapia (HEST), David Ortiz (HEST), Patricia MacGregor-Mendoza (A&S).

Emergency Legislation.

 - Vice-Chair Brown reported that Proposition 06-24/25 passed as Emergency Legislation at the Faculty Senate meeting on December 5, 2024.

- **07-24/25 – Resolution to allow NMSU main campus students to enroll in and receive credit for NMSU system branch courses.** Sponsors: R. Gioannini (NTT), T.Aguirre (DACC), K. Lopez Gallagher (Alamogordo), and K. Finlator (A & S).**Assigned to Curriculum and Planning.**
 - Senate Leadership recommends that Proposition 07-24/25 go to full Faculty Senate meeting held on January 9, 2025, for a vote.
- **08-24-25 - Changes to ARP 4.46.** Sponsors: K. Finlator, J.Rice, M. Elshinawy, D. Magoc, S. Lynch, R. Gioannini, K. Finlator (A & S).**Assigned to Curriculum and Planning.**
 - Senate Leadership recommends that Proposition 08-24/25 go to full Faculty Senate meeting held on January 9, 2025, for a vote.

6. Proposed Legislation – NONE

7. Other Business

- a. Discussion of items for Faculty Senate Agenda for 1.9.24 Full Senate meeting
 - Chair Chaitanya and Recording Secretary Cisneros will work on agenda items and post them to the website.
- b. Standing Committees Reports
 - Budget and Resources Chair, Stephen Hanson
Chair Hanson made a brief report. The committee met and had a quorum. Full BR report on FS website.
 - University Planning Committee Chair, Erik Lehnhoff
Chair Lehnhoff was not available to give a report. Full UP report on FS website.
 - Curriculum and Planning Chair, Gustavo Pina
Chair Piña gave a brief report. The committee met, had quorum and they discussed Propositions 07-24/25 and 08-24/25. Full CP report on FS website.
 - Research and Creative Activity Chair, Paul Tian
Chair Tian gave a brief report. The committee met on December 19th. The committee discussed a few topics. Full RCA report on FS website.
 - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Chair, Karen Kopera-Frye
Chair Kopera-Frye gave a report. The committee did not meet in December but met in November. The committee is communicating by email with the University Diversity Council. In preparation for January 25, the committee is addressing campus issues and revising a land acknowledgment proposal with input from tribal communities. Chair Kopera-Frye said she expects to come forward with a new proposal by January or February.
 - Student Success Chair, Tawny Aguirre
Chair Aguirre gave a brief report. The committee met December 18th with 4 members and discussed goals for 2025. Two goals include scholarships with a GPA requirement, like the President's scholarship, which students lose if their GPA falls below 3.9. We also talked about finding more scholarships for studying abroad.

Full SS report on FS website.

- c. Discussion of issues related to the Graduate Student Workers CBA (Senator Badawy)
Senator Badawy wanted to make a few quick comments. Senator said that each TA costs more money while the overall budget remains the same. There are fewer TAs, and their department believes they won't have enough to cover their needs. A solution is needed to increase the funding as contracts grow; otherwise, their services for students will be affected. Deputy Provost James McAteer gave a brief statement regarding Senator Badawy's comments. He stated that the pool of money is growing. The State provided funds, which are now included. They received additional money from the Central Executive office after adjusting some open start lines. Regional funding was also reorganized, leading to a substantial increase in the central pot for TAs. A 2% increase to the stipend pool is already being applied, and everyone should see it.
- d. Ideas to stand up the Open Access Publication Fund Advisory Committee established in Senate Bill 05-24/25 – Vice Chair Brown
Vice-Chair Brown spoke about the topic and said that the Central Administration was asked to provide ongoing financial support for open access journal article processing charges, which had previously faced a clerical error that was corrected. As part of this effort, Senator Finlator and Arslan called for a permanent commitment from the administration. President Torres managed to find \$100,000 in one-time funds for the fiscal year to support this initiative.

Christian Kinsley requested guidance on how to use the funds. A suggestion was made to form an Open Access Publication Fund Advisory Committee, which would include one faculty member from each of the five academic colleges and a faculty member from the library. Initial ideas to recruit members included sending emails to faculty, but these were deemed ineffective. Instead, it was proposed to reach out to the Faculty Senate Library Advisory Committee. Vice-Chair Brown asked for support to either have a member from this committee serve on the open access advisory committee or to help identify suitable candidates. Additionally, there was a suggestion to include the library dean and possibly someone from the Provost's office as ex-officio members of the committee. Guidance and support were requested to contact the Faculty Senate Library Advisory Committee. Discussion, questions and answers followed.

Motion was made to support the suggested strategy that Vice-Chair Brown provided. Moved and seconded.

Vice-Chair Brown made a last comment and said they will request the Library Advisory Committee members to nominate themselves or suggest names. Chair Vimal and Vice-Chair Brown will review them. If needed, they will return for difficult decisions.

8. Remarks and Announcements

- FS Chair Vimal Chaitanya
Chair Chaitanya had a few important announcements. They are beginning the search for the new Vice President for Research. He will be chairing the search committee, which includes two members. We expect candidates to visit the campus in early April, with an offer going out by the end of April. We hope the new Vice President will join us in the fall.

Additionally, the new President is looking for a Chief of Staff and wants faculty involvement in the selection. Chair Chaitanya suggested using the Faculty Senate Leadership Committee for this process, which was accepted. Candidates will be on campus between January 9 and 17 next year. The Faculty Senate Leadership Committee and Chair Chaitanya will reach out with more details later. The job opening was announced in October and closed on November 16. Further candidate details are not yet available.

Chair Chaitanya gave his last important announcement. There is a New Mexico State University Day on January 31st. February 1st marks the Las Cruces Day. Las Cruces Day has been celebrated for

many years, and this is the second year for NMSU Day. The first year was disjointed, so a community was formed to ensure everyone works together. An email was sent to all the Deans to forward it to the chairs because this event is open to everyone. However, attendees need to pay for themselves or have someone in their department pay. The government and foundation will not cover costs. Copies of the agenda are available for those interested.

- FS Vice-Chair / SLC Chair, Christopher Brown
Vice-Chair Brown wants to thank everyone for their continued support and contributions to the Faculty Senate.

9. Adjournment – Meeting adjourned at 5:19 p.m.

Present: Vice-Chair C. Brown, Chair V. Chaitanya, T. Aguirre, K. Finlator, J. Cook, K. Kopera-Frye, M. Burkardt, C. DeBlicke, K. Lopez-Gallagher, P. Tian, O. Holguin, G. Piña, D. McDonald, H. Badawy, J. Sandstrom, S. Gordon, S. Hanson.

Guest: President Valerio Ferme, Deputy Provost James McAteer, Dean of Arts & Sciences College Enrico Pontelli, Executive Director, Academic Technology Robbie Grant.