

Proposition: 45-16/17

Title: Memorial to the Governor and Legislature on the Funding of Higher Education

Date Submitted: 25 April 2017

Sponsor(s): Kelly (ENGR), Brown (A&S), Amatya (HHS), Billings (Non-TT), Bloomquist (ACES), Bronstein (A&S), Corran (DACC), Heien (Library), Josselet (NMSU-Carlsbad), Keys (A&S), Marin (ACES), Prentice (CoEd), Rayson (A&S), Roark-Diehl (NMSU-Alamogordo), Rosendorf (A&S), and Sassenfeld (ENGR)

Proposed Committee: University Affairs

Assigned Committee: Emergency Legislation

Prior Approvals: N/A - this is a memorial

Proposal:

By this memorial, the Faculty Senate at New Mexico State University regards with great concern the veto of higher education funding for New Mexico, and calls on the Legislature and Governor to meet in either a special session or an extraordinary session to fully restore funding immediately. No matter what the goal of a veto of the entire higher education budget may have been, the uncertainty regarding funding for the coming year, just at the time when the university needs to make its budget, is creating irreversible harm.

- Students contemplating enrolling at NMSU for the summer and fall, whether as first-year or continuing students, need to know that the institution they have chosen will be able to offer the programs they were counting on pursuing. Ancillary data available at the time this memorial is drafted indicate that 5-10% of currently enrolled students are “sitting on the fence” and not registering for fall 2017 classes due to the uncertainty with the State budget. If the Governor and the State Legislature fail to act quickly, we will see graduate students looking to enroll elsewhere, and undergraduates decamping to neighboring states where the commitment to provide higher education is clearly more secure.
- A failure to fund higher education in New Mexico sends an incredibly harmful message about what we value, to people in and out of the State. To the thousands of hard-working faculty who have dedicated their careers to teaching in New Mexico, it sends the message that the work they do, both important research and educating students, is not valued. It tells students that we do not support their aspirations to become educated citizens or to remain in the state of New Mexico to raise their families. And it tells businesses contemplating moving to New Mexico that we have no intention to develop an informed citizenry or an educated

workforce, or to nurture the cultural and artistic activities that make New Mexico a pleasant place to live.

- New Mexico State University is one of the main engines of economic development for southern New Mexico, not just because the university educates and trains students, but also because students, faculty, and staff spend money in the local community. The failure to fund higher education will cause an economic death spiral for surrounding local businesses.
- Early estimates of the tuition increase that NMSU would need to levy to meet the shortfall that the State's failure to fund higher education would generate range to 30 percent, an increase that is simply outrageous and untenable. Increases of this nature will erode one of the major purposes of public higher education, which is its affordability to the graduates of our state's high schools.

Rationale:

Failure on behalf of the Governor and Legislature to act immediately will have massive and damaging impacts on the ability to educate the State's sons and daughters, and the potential to attract much needed investment and private sector businesses to New Mexico. Regional economies will be severely damaged, the quality of life of the State's residents will be seriously compromised, and the reputation of the State as a place to raise a family and have a meaningful life will be gravely tarnished.