

New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology
FACULTY SENATE MEETING
Tuesday, November 5, 2024
3:30 pm, Workman 101
Minutes

1. Call to Order.

Dr. Linda DeVeaux called the meeting to order at 3:33 pm.

2. Approval of the Minutes.

- October minutes were not distributed and will be approved at the December meeting.

3. Reports of Standing Committees.

a. Education and Research Efficiency Committee, *Gilberto Gonzalez-Parra*.

Report distributed by the committee. There was no further discussion.

b. Budget and Research Committee, *Doug Wells*.

Report distributed by the committee. There was no further discussion.

c. Curriculum Committee, *Isabel Morris*.

Dr. Morris led the discussion of the various curriculum proposals.

- Details pertaining to proposal 0078 were presented (new MTLs minor in Quantum Materials). The proposal, having come from the committee, was moved for approval. There was no further discussion. The motion was unanimously approved.
- Details pertaining to proposal 0079 were presented (BIOL BA and BS, BMS BS, and BIOL MS). The proposal, having come from the committee, was moved for approval. One element of the proposal was the change in the program's name from Biomedical Sciences to Biomolecular Sciences and Technology. A question about whether that would be beneficial was raised. The rationale for the change was that many students were going into the degree thinking it was one thing (e.g. medical field preparation) but it was something else. The name change is being proposed to address this issue. Students in the program were consulted regarding the name change and its current abbreviation (BMST, adopted in Fall 2023) also aligns with the program's designation in the catalog. Members in the Department of Chemistry raised a concern because of a potential change to the chemistry department's name that may also involve the term 'biomolecular' and that it could draw students away from their program. Sally Pias made a motion to table the BMST name change component of the proposal. Taffeta Elliott seconded the motion and that component of the proposal was tabled. There was no further discussion of the remainder of the proposal which was unanimously approved.
- Details pertaining to proposal 0080 were presented (related to elements of the undergraduate Civil Engineering and Environmental Engineering degree programs). The proposal, having come from the committee, was moved for approval. There was no further discussion. The motion was unanimously approved.

4. Grad Council Report, *Aly El-Osery*.

a. Grad Council Minutes.

Dr. El-Osery provided an overview of the Grad Council minutes. This included: updates are being made to Slate so that program requirements are seen by prospective students starting Spring 2025. Recently a degree completion workshop was held by the Center for Graduate Studies.

Additionally, the Center is holding ‘drop-in hours’ where students can show up and work on their paperwork, seeking assistance from individuals in the Center when needed. Dr. El-Osery also mentioned the recent newsletter featured several graduate students and he encouraged faculty to please recommend students for future issues so that their excellent work could be promoted to the campus community and beyond. Finally, Dr. El-Osery discussed the opportunity for departments and programs to expand their Distance Education (DE) course offerings and the subsequent advertising of DE courses to prospective students that the Center could assist with. If there is any interest, please be sure to contact Dr. El-Osery for more information.

b. Proposal to strike ‘Advanced degree’ policy.

Dr. El-Osery outlined an existing policy on the catalog that limited the opportunity for faculty to pursue an advanced degree. He indicated there didn’t appear to be a need for this policy to continue. Grad Council discussed this and voted to strike this language from the catalog. The proposal, having come from Grad Council, was moved for approval. There was some discussion about the existing language in the catalog. For example, what is an administrative officer? This is referring to someone like a Dean. The motion was unanimously approved.

c. English Proficiency Scores.

Dr. El-Osery looked into the proposed English proficiency scores from the perspective of their use for graduate programs. He recommended to not distinguish between RA/TA scores and to instead use the same set of information for all students. He put together a chart showing what is currently used at NMT, what is proposed, and what is used elsewhere. Information regarding calculators for how exams compare to one other and how other schools use the scores was also provided. The proposal, having come from Grad Council, was moved for approval.

During discussion, a question was asked about how we can make sure the student’s identity is verified? Dr. El-Osery indicated that is the responsibility of the appropriate testing center the student uses – which are also accepted by other institutions. To assist with their evaluation of students, Dr. El-Osery also recommended that departments conduct a short interview with students to see how they engage with faculty and their comfort in having conversations. A concern was raised about the use of Duolingo as some student groups have gained admittance using this test but they are not performing well. This question was raised because these students are not their majors – rather they are students faculty see in their general education courses and so there is nothing that the department can do to address it. Service departments are not involved in the admission process, particularly at the undergraduate level. The goal is to ensure everyone engages in this process to the best of their ability.

Dr. Steve Simpson has also provided Dr. El-Osery with an alternate exam that could be given to students. For a number of proficiency exams, there is often an additional test given to TAs to evaluate their fluency. As a result, this is another mechanism departments and programs could add to their own process so that they have an idea for how they engage in conversation. For those interested, this exam can be made available for departments and programs if they want to use it as an additional exam during the interview process.

A question was raised about whether we avoid accepting Duolingo. However, Dr. El-Osery mentioned that this exam is used by other institutions (e.g., UNM, NMSU, CSU, TTU). Dr. El-Osery reiterated the benefits of using an interview and having a conversation as part of the process for evaluating English proficiency.

Following the discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.

5. Council of Chairs, *Michael Jackson*.

- a. Draft Minutes of the October 15 Council of Chairs meeting. VPAA Jackson highlighted several items found in the draft minutes from the last Council of Chairs meeting.
 - Active Shooter training will be available to the campus community on Friday, December 6. We will have one session start at 8 am and another session will start at 1 pm. Registration will be open soon. For May 9, we will have some of our required Research Compliance training along with a workshop on active learning. More details will be forthcoming.
 - NMT will be hosting SENMC on Friday, November 22 and I am working with department chairs and program directors to coordinate the visit.
 - The other items that were discussed are on today's agenda: policies, university enrollments, and the strategic plan.
- b. Policies out for Community Review: The Council of Chairs will be working on updating the emeritus policy. Two other policies out for university review are:
 - Degree Conferral Policy
 - Conflict of Interest Policy
 - No request for endorsement is being made at this time. This was just to open the floor for any general Q&A, particularly about the Degree Conferral Policy (as it is going through the new process).
 - Other policies that have been given to Faculty Senate committees include:
 - Policy and Procedure for Appointment, Promotion & Tenure (Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee);
 - Honorary Degrees (Honorary Degree Committee).

No further discussion ensued.

6. Old Business.

- a. Undergraduate Academic Honesty, *Richard Thompson*.

This was the annual update on academic honesty violations for undergraduate students. During the presentation, Dr. Thompson discussed the various resources for dealing with violations. Statistics for the past year were reviewed. Most of the violations were related to the use of online resources for homework assignments which was found in several different classes. There were a few other situations that involved the unauthorized use of technology. Penalties that were implemented aligned with the respective instructor's recommendations. Dr. Thompson also provided some guidance for instructors. If there are any questions, he encouraged individuals to reach out to him for further discussion. A question was asked about how many students were repeat violators. Dr. Thompson indicated that very few students, over time, were repeat violators – none were observed this past year. To date, there have not been any instances of AI violations that have been brought forward. He encouraged faculty to review the language in the syllabus template and to be sure to communicate their expectations to students at the outset of the semester.

VPAA Jackson announced that Director Lunceford will be convening a task force on AI to look at policy language in different areas of the campus – curriculum, research, operations. Those interested in serving on this task force should reach out to him and indicate an interest in serving.
- b. Graduate Academic Honesty, *Aly El-Osery*.

Dr. El-Osery discussed academic honesty violations of graduate students. There were two sets of cases involving 4 students. Violations were related to homework and assignments. The penalties that were implemented aligned with the recommendations made by the faculty. In these cases, the syllabus clearly stated what was and was not allowed. Dr. El-Osery emphasized the

importance of having a detailed syllabus as it was immensely helpful in these cases. There is a current case that Dr. El-Osery is reviewing which involves AI. Both Dr. El-Osery and Dr. Thompson highlighted the need to emphasize the use of AI (and resources in general) in the syllabus. As mentioned, some of this information that faculty could consider using can be found in the syllabus template. Dr. El-Osery also mentioned that academic honesty issues is something that is discussed in TA training.

7. New Business.

a. Strategic Plan final endorsement, *Mike Jackson*.

VPAA Jackson provided a brief overview of the current state of the plan.

- The strategic plan was approved by the BOR in December 2022. It was developed to be a living strategic plan – meaning that modifications could be made to the plan with the campus kept informed with annual updates.
- In October 2024 there were multiple listening sessions. Out of these sessions came some proposed revisions to the Mission, Vision, and Values. A major item of the feedback that was provided was that they were too long and needed to be shortened.
- The strategic plan was also slightly modified: (1) the dates for the plan were removed; (2) the retention, persistence, and graduation rate targets were moved from the action plan into the strategic plan; and (3) there was a correction of a past tense statement in the financial section ('Hire more Major Gifts...' instead of 'Hired more Major Gifts...').
- Finally, rather than finalizing the action plan, the Vice Presidents will use this information as a guide for advancing the strategic plan in their respective areas. To assist with facilitating this, the working groups may still continue to meet to track and monitor outcomes.

The document is being brought back to the Faculty Senate for endorsement of the revised set of documents.

During discussion, there were several questions that were raised:

- In the bullet referring to 'driving innovation discovery through cutting edge research' does it make sense to connect research application to industry? VPAA Jackson mentioned he would bring it back to the Strategic Plan's Executive Board so that it could be addressed.
- The phrasing "Empowering student success" is not appropriate – perhaps something like 'Enabling student success' would be more accurate. VPAA Jackson mentioned he would bring it back to the Strategic Plan's Executive Board so that it could be addressed.
- A general comment was made about completely overhauling these statements, perhaps during the next iteration, using a structure similar to what one finds in the business sector, where you define a statement that anyone can remember and that says what NMT is about. VPAA Jackson mentioned doing so in the future would be fine and that he would leave those details for President Amouzegar to consider for the next iteration of this.
- Was removing 'entrepreneurial' and STE²M intentional? VPAA Jackson indicated it was at this time. This doesn't mean individuals should not be entrepreneurial though. However, in looking back at the activities that we have undertaken, the Strategic Plan's Executive Board did not feel that the level of our engagement to date warranted this type of emphasis (at this time).

On the understanding that the first two items would be addressed, in some way, by the Strategic Plan's Executive Board, the updated version of the Strategic Plan, with revisions to the Mission, Vision, and Values, were endorsed.

- b. Informational: For those interested, a recent Chronicle [article](#) highlighted graduation rates for 2-year and 4-year degree-seeking students. The article is by Brian O’Leary and Julia Piper (October 17, 2024).
- c. Enrollment trends, *Doug Wells*.
Document was distributed. There was no further discussion.
- d. Enrollment report, *David Greene*.

Vice President of Students Affairs (VPSA) Greene provided an overview of enrollment trends and what issues are being taken. Some updates included:

- NMT is down in headcount by about 3.5% (degree seeking and non-degree seeking). Two other NM schools are also down (e.g., Highlands by about 3.6% and Western by about 1.1%). Nationally, first-year students are down by about 8.5% and it is impacting a number of institutions. One disadvantage NMT has is that we don’t have programs that recruit adult learners – a population some other institutions could focus on in assisting them complete a degree.
- Since 2020, there have been about 90 paid applications from CO and TX – so our efforts in these areas have not paid off. As a result, we will be looking to redirect our resources elsewhere. One way we have done this is through NACAC’s regional conferences (National Association for College Admission Counseling). NMT will be going to 9 of these regional conferences (e.g., Seattle, Spokane, Portland) to make sure we are seen and to begin matching prospective students to our programs. This is an updated version of name buys that had been done in prior years. So far we have received over 3000 names in our matching process – these include prospective students who are first-year HS through senior HS students. At these events, our Summer STEM program is being promoted to the non-graduating HS students.
- Our goal has been to get our name out there. MENG is always at the top of the list for prospective students inquiring about the institution. One observation at one of these events was that students in CO, who could receive in-state tuition, were less familiar with NMT than students from Kansas City, for example. Two additional recruiters have been hired and now join Joe in our recruiting efforts. Matthew has also been working on a scholarship application system that we have not been using in Slate. So we have not been fully utilizing our resources. The goal is to have this implemented in the spring semester which we think will be helpful in providing more complete information to prospective students.
- The state of NM has also provided NMT with some support for student success initiatives. Dean Elaine DeBrine Howell has hired a Student Success Coach while the OSL has received support to fund a graduate TA that could provide additional assistance in Mathematics. Show rates from this past Student Orientations were quite high indicating that students who did want to come to NMT attended. Now the goal is to have more students at these events.
- The Associate Vice President of Strategic Enrollment Management has been hired and he will be starting in January 2025. In terms of the Office of Admission, there was a Director of Admission, an Executive Director of Admission, and then this has transitioned to be an AVP role. We are excited to have him on board.
- NMT also offers all students from WUE states scholarships. There is a WUE and WUE plus scholarship, the latter requiring a 3.55 GPA whereby a student will receive in-state tuition. The Colorado CORE is another program that provides in-state tuition while a number of TX agreements provide tuition at a rate of 1.5× tuition. We also have an internal competitive scholarship process, which is particularly beneficial to students that have ACT/SAT scores. About 6 WUE students are part of the process right now, but we are hoping to expand that further based on our NACAC regional conference visits.

Following the summary, there was discussion. Some of the questions, and responses included:

- Could you please comment on the number of degree seeking students and first year students this year? In comparison to last year, NMT has gone down from about 222 to 185 FTFT students. A major challenge we experienced this year was due to financial aid. NMT received the first full set of information from FAFSA on July 31. As a result, it was difficult for institutions and students to make their decisions and we believe this impacted enrollments.
- However, much of our financial aid is institutional, through our endowments as well as the Lottery and Opportunity Scholarships. Shouldn't some of this should be unrelated to FAFSA? Financial Aid processed a number of scholarships. However, it takes more than these to pay for the entire college experience, such as housing, meal plans, etc – which other forms of financial aid covers. So it was providing information to the whole total award that delayed responses.
- This past Saturday was Exploration Day, but the campus seemed empty. Do you have any thoughts about this? 76 students were registered with about 50 expected to attend. Upon reflection, we should have had college counselors receive this information sooner. Looking forward, we will be better prepared for the spring events.
- It was noted that we generally start advertising Exploration Day during the summer. Similarly, can we start advertising for 2025's Research @ Tech Day now? The current website indicates information for 2022. Our admission counselors are promoting these events and we will update the website to address this.
- How effective would it be to go to institutions and HS around the state? There are 22k NM HS graduates projected with 7 universities and numerous community colleges competing for this same group of students. We want to expend our energy on these students while also expanding to other states. By 2032, we are only projecting 17k NM HS graduates. As a result, we need to develop a full comprehensive plan to recruit and attract students.
- A faculty member mentioned that the Opportunity Scholarship was removed from student who graduated from a NM HS (but were here on a visa). They indicated the student had not received any information regarding how this could be addressed. What can be done for this student? Giving the Opportunity Scholarship to students in this situation was permissible in prior years, but the state has reversed that permission. Such students are eligible for in-state tuition. The question financial aid is now looking into is whether prior students can be grandfathered into this. They are anticipating that these students will not be eligible for the Opportunity Scholarship. If not, then we will look for other scholarships that we could give these students to supplement what the Opportunity Scholarship would have otherwise covered. Our goal is to ensure students have some funding to match what the Opportunity Scholarship would have provided. While internal scholarships can be used to accomplish this, some have criteria that need to be appropriately applied. Other students may also be getting scholarships from other sources.
- Another reason for the potential drop in enrollments is that, at least a few years ago, our admission process waived testing with a test-optional pathway recently implemented.
- There have been a number of offices that have lost individuals working in them. What is the responsibility we have in retaining people? VPSA Greene noted that we do our best to retain individuals but they are free to move on to better opportunities and we shouldn't stand in their way of progressing in their career.
- During discussion, a faculty member recognized that Financial Aid was very busy at the start of the year. However, it took several weeks to get responses to questions that were asked by students and some of these individuals are teachers. Because they are working professionals, they are unable to speak with office staff during work hours. To assist the student, the faculty

member asked the student to allow them to be included in the financial discussion – which generally would not have been allowed. Some issues specific to a particular student then began to arise, and it was suggested that Financial Aid and the faculty member talk about this outside the meeting.

- During discussion, it was noted that the two other schools with decreasing headcounts were Western and Highlands; two schools that NMT is not usually compared with as they are regional universities. The other NM research universities though have had increasing enrollments, even in the STEM areas. And these schools face some of the same challenges we do. The ripples of our low incoming class enrollments will impact the institution for many years to come. This seems to be a serious issue. VPSA Greene highlighted that Student Affairs took over leading admissions activities in June 2023.
- Concern was expressed as there didn't seem to be any sense of urgency in addressing the enrollment issue. At which point, President Amouzegar weighed in on the conversation. He highlighted that we have a collective responsibility for enrollments. Along with the need to recruit students, we need to do our best to retain them – to the extent possible. For example, our STEM focused curriculum means that there aren't other pathways for students to pursue if a STEM degree is no longer of interest to them. The President emphasized that addressing enrollments is a priority, that we need to hire the right people, do a better job with communications, have a better website, be more visible at events, and ensure our orientations are better. He has seen a number of our deficiencies and believe that we, collectively, need to engage in the solution. He also highlighted the need to keep programs current and of interest to the new generation of students. The demographic shift is real and we want to find ways that allows us to identify who we want to be as an institution. Then we can communicate this to attract students, retain them, and eventually graduate them. Unfortunately, we don't have a magic wand to correct the issue. However, we need some more time along with expectations that may be feasible – like a growth of 2% or 3% each year. We can then report back in a few months to inform you what we have done and evaluate how things are.
- A question to VPSA Greene was how we are informing ourselves about why students / parents are selecting not NMT. VPSA Greene mentioned they did call the 50 students who did not attend as to why they didn't attend this past year. Some students who they talked with were sitting out while others went to other institutions. A number of those students who attended elsewhere went to community college because it was cheaper.
- A follow-up comment was that if we consider regularly having 200 first year incoming students, that even with 100% retention, would only have 800 undergraduate students at NMT. This, in part, demonstrates the magnitude / importance of recruiting for NMT as compared with our efforts on retention.
- Our current retention rate is 77%. A question we can collectively ask is how we can make this better as it goes hand-in-hand with improved recruitment of new students. However, retention efforts are not only on the academic side. From talking with advisees, faculty have been informed of students who need assistance from offices across campus and highlighted the need to ensure office doors are open, people are answering the phone, etc. – something faculty and students have commented is not happening in administrative and student-led offices on campus.
- Is there a plan for overhauling the NMT website? An RFP was developed for a complete website redesign and an offer letter has been given to a vendor. The total cost of the redesign, that includes the posting of the new website, will require BOR approval due to the amount. Once approved, we will begin the discovery phase of the process. The new website would then be launch approximately 13 months following the discovery phase. We plan to launch the website in stages though – meaning that once a section of the website was ready (e.g., home page, academic pages) it would be posted. All member of the campus community will

- have the opportunity to weigh in on what we want in the website, what tools do we need, etc. This will include some training the trainer sessions so individuals know how to use the website that will allow us to update pages in a timely manner. In the interim, we will continue updating pages related to admission, recruiting, etc.
- Discussion continued regarding the creation of a committee that could oversee the development of a survey to explore the reasons why we are losing students and what steps could be done to address this issue. This could be a committee that involves individuals from across campus, emphasizing that we all have a role in this solution.
 - A motion was made by Dr. Bhattacharjee to create a committee to collect data for why students are not selecting NMT, identify talking points and potential issues, and collect potential solutions to address potential solutions. The committee would consist of individuals from across campus. The motion was seconded by Dr. Goncz.
 - Discussion ensued. A question was raised as to the status of the enrollment management committee. This was an administrative committee whose membership was appointed by the President. It ceased meeting and there was no additional activity.
 - Dr. Stone offered a substitute motion to reactivate the Strategic Enrollment Management Committee. The substitute motion was seconded by Dr. Borchers. This committee was originally developed to address these issues. The motion was unanimously approved. VPSA Greene mentioned with the new AVP coming in, he will ensure it will be one of his top priorities.

8. Announcements.

Members of the Faculty Senate were asked to review the announcements as there was insufficient time to discuss them further. One of the announcements was related to the Student Research Symposium (see Director Aga Gabor da Silva with questions).

9. Adjournment.

Dr. Borchers made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:15 pm. Multiple members seconded the motion. Motion passed.