



**Board of Regents Regular Meeting**  
*Friday, March 07, 2025*  
*9:00 am*  
*La Posada Hotel, 330 E. Palace Ave Santa Fe NM 878501*

**MINUTES**

The New Mexico Tech Board of Regents Regular Meeting convened at 9:00 am on Friday, March 07, 2025, with Regent Chair Jerry Armijo presiding via Zoom. Other Board members attending were Dr. David Lepre, Dr. Yolanda Jones King, Dr. Srinivas Mukkamala and Cody Johnston. University administrators, faculty, staff, and guests in attendance included President Mahyar Amouzegar, Vice Presidents Richard Cervantes, Lique Coolen, Michael Jackson, and David Greene. Vanessa Grain, along with Juliann Ulibarri, Linda DeVeaux, JoAnn Salome, Brandon Boutler, Peter Szatmary, David Manzano, Carlos Romero, Mike Timmons, and other NMT staff and guests.

1. **Call to Order.** Regent Chair Armijo called the meeting to order at 9:00 am.
  - a) **Proof of Meeting Notice.** Ms. Grain confirmed that legal notices were placed in the *Albuquerque Journal* and *El Defensor Chieftain*.
2. **Approval of Agenda.** The Agenda was unanimously approved on a motion made by Regent King and a second by Regent Mukkamala.
3. **Public Comment.** Chair Armijo. None.
4. **Mark Adams Recognition.** VP Cervantes recognized long-time New Mexico Tech employee and colleague Mark Adams for his dedicated service to the institution. Mr. Adams received a standing ovation from the Board and attendees in appreciation of his contributions. Regent Chair Armijo and several Board members expressed their gratitude and best wishes for Mr. Adams. Chair Armijo remarked, "Mark has been the steady hand behind the scenes, ensuring the smooth operation of so many efforts at Tech. His commitment and professionalism have left a lasting impact on this institution."
5. **Regent Committee Reports, Chair Armijo.**
  - a) **NMT Foundation Updates.** Chair Armijo said there was no formal update from the NMT Foundation during the meeting, as Chair Armijo noted that the Foundation's Board meeting was scheduled for later that afternoon.
  - b) **NMT Univ. Research Park Corp. Updates.** Regent King reported on recent developments with the Research Park Corporation. She noted that a new board member would be added during the meeting and that additional

candidates are under review for future appointments. The RPC is also finalizing its strategic plan and has begun working closely with VP Coolen to better manage and leverage intellectual property (IP) at New Mexico Tech. Regent King praised Dale Decker's leadership as RPC President, describing him as proactive and effective in his role.

- c) NM HERC Updates.** Regent King said they have been closely monitoring the legislative session and asked Director Manzano to give an overview of legislative matters highlighting several bills of interest to New Mexico Tech: House Bill 11 and House Bill 89, which relate to funding and workforce development, House Bill 137, focused on STEM pipelines, and Senate Bill 266, which had been tabled. There was discussion about the importance of leveraging legislative momentum to secure funding for key initiatives, particularly in areas of data science and workforce training. Regent King mentioned HERC will be holding emergency elections, and that another NMT Regent will need to be appointed to the HERC at the April Board meeting.
- d) Regent Finance Subcmte/Legislative Updates.** Regent Lepre noted that legislative updates were already provided earlier in the meeting. He announced that the Finance Subcommittee is planning the spring Budget Forum for April 2, to be held at the Deju House from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm. The forum aims to include structured presentations and discussions centered on institutional data and funding priorities. Provost Jackson has coordinated with the Faculty Senate to collect questions in advance, ensuring that responses can be prepared beforehand, and all voices are heard. This marks the second annual Budget Forum; the first was held last year and revealed a need for more time and preparation. The upcoming session seeks to build on that experience by improving engagement and information sharing. Regent Lepre emphasized that the forum is a key opportunity to provide the Board with insights necessary for budget decisions at the April meeting. He also shared that he has spoken with HED Secretary Stephanie Rodriguez, who has pre-approved an extension should more time be needed to finalize the budget. He concluded by encouraging full campus participation at the Budget Forum.
- e) Regent Research Subcmte.** Regent Mukkamala reported that the next research meeting will be convened as part of a quarterly schedule. He welcomed VP Coolen and praised her entrepreneurial vision, especially efforts to reinvigorate commercialization at Tech. He highlighted Dr. Tomar's work organizing the Inventor and Entrepreneur Workshop, emphasizing its potential to foster innovation and inclusivity across disciplines and demographics. He expressed concern over the national funding climate after speaking with US Senator Lujan, stressing the importance of preparing contingency plans in case of federal funding shortfalls. Regent Mukkamala urged the administration to accelerate stress testing and consider alternative funding sources, especially in state-prioritized sectors like clean energy, cybersecurity, and AI. He commended leadership efforts beyond Tech's core

responsibilities, particularly collaborations by Dr. Balch. He closed by acknowledging the vital behind-the-scenes work of Carlos Romero, AVPR, and David Manzano, Director of Govt. Affairs, in Santa Fe, crediting them with ensuring Tech's needs are effectively communicated and supported across bipartisan lines.

- f) **Student Updates.** Regent Johnston, recently appointed as Student Regent, shared introductory remarks expressing his gratitude for the opportunity to serve.

## 6. Info Items, Chair Armijo

- a) **SGA Updates.** Elijah Collins, SGA President, addressed the Board and provided an update on recent and upcoming SGA activities. He reported that through the Senate Bill fund, SGA has distributed over \$20,000 to support student clubs and individuals attending professional and research conferences, including five students who presented at nationally and internationally recognized events. He noted that the student newspaper, Pay Dirt, is experimenting with a return to newsprint and will rebrand as the Pay Dirt Chronicle. SGA is currently exploring printing options. Collins shared that 42 clubs are registered for the semester, including the revival of K-Tech, the campus radio station. K-Tech will be producing YouTube broadcasts with both video and pre-recorded content including entertainment and student programming. He also announced a Senate special election underway to fill several vacant Senate and Associate Justice Positions, with applications closing that day and elections concluding the following week. Soon after, applications for SGA President and Vice President will open, with voting scheduled for the week after spring break. Collins expressed his excitement about the strong field of upcoming candidates. He concluded by inviting Regents and attendees to the upcoming Spring Fling, taking place March 28–30. As part of the festivities, clubs will host a carnival and fundraising fair on Sunday, March 30, starting at 1:30 p.m. The event will feature live music coordinated by K-Tech and partner performers.
- b) **Student Affairs and Enrollment Update.** Vice President David Greene introduced Associate Vice President Brandon Boutler, who joined New Mexico Tech earlier in the semester. Mr. Boutler expressed enthusiasm for his role and shared an overview of his early initiatives aimed at enhancing student experience and engagement. These include revamping new student orientation into a more interactive and welcoming experience, expanding student wellness services, and partnering with academic departments to ensure a more holistic student support model. Mr. Boutler reported a current retention rate of 95.2%, signaling strong persistence among continuing students. He also provided a snapshot of recruitment efforts, including a focus on personalized outreach, early engagement strategies, and collaborations with high school counselors. He mentioned improvements to

the financial aid process, which now provides students with earlier and clearer communication about their packages. Boutler emphasized a shift toward a data-informed approach to enrollment management, citing ongoing analysis of yield rates and student demographics to refine outreach and engagement. He noted efforts to identify key geographic areas for prospective students and opportunities for virtual programming to expand the university's reach. Regent King expressed appreciation for the energy and focus of Mr. Boulter's team and stressed the importance of aligning student affairs goals with broader institutional enrollment strategies. Members of the Board acknowledged the urgency of addressing enrollment challenges and voiced support for the student-centered approach being developed. Chair Armijo also commented on the spring enrollment numbers, noting that while the figures are encouraging in terms of retention, continued vigilance and proactive strategy are essential. Chair Armijo stated NMT has had a good spring in terms of retention, and the numbers were encouraging, but that NMT still has work to do. He emphasized that enrollment remains a key performance indicator for the institution's stability and future planning and would like to have actual spring enrollment numbers by the end of April. Mr. Boutler also provided a status report on current enrollment trends, noting a strong retention rate of 95.2%. He acknowledged areas of concern and pointed to ongoing collaborations with departments across campus to boost recruitment efforts and address potential enrollment declines. Enhancements to the financial aid notification process were also introduced, designed to offer students more transparency and earlier access to critical financial information. Regent King underscored the importance of maintaining momentum in enrollment and retention strategies. Mr. Boutler noted that outreach efforts are increasingly data-driven and that the student affairs team is working closely with academic and administrative units to ensure a holistic approach. There was broad consensus on the Board regarding the need for sustained attention to enrollment management moving forward.

- c) **Faculty Senate Updates.** Faculty Senate Vice-chair Dr. Curtis O'Malley, also head of the Miner Mayhem Robotics Outreach Program, addressed the Board with a summary of faculty sentiment. He noted ongoing concern over declining enrollment, referencing IPEDS data showing a drop in incoming freshmen. Faculty remain anxious about the future and emphasized the importance of timely communication regarding enrollment projections to better plan course offerings. Dr. O'Malley also mentioned the annual faculty sentiment survey currently underway, which will be formally presented to the Board in the summer. He stressed that increased transparency and collaboration will go a long way in reducing uncertainty and improving morale among faculty. Dr. O'Malley reported that general faculty sentiment remains anxious, particularly due to declining enrollment numbers. He referenced shared IPEDS data showing fluctuating freshman class sizes between 250 and 300 in recent years, followed by a continuing downward

trend that has heightened concern among faculty members. He emphasized the need for improved communication between administration and faculty, especially in relation to enrollment forecasting and course planning. Faculty have already submitted fall course offerings without clarity on the expected incoming freshman class size, which limits their ability to adjust proactively. Dr. O'Malley advocated for the restoration of pre-COVID-era communication practices that promoted constructive dialogue. He also noted broader concerns among faculty regarding the stability of funding sources, staffing shortages, and support services for students and researchers. Despite the challenges, she expressed appreciation for efforts underway and said that better communication would greatly help alleviate uncertainty and foster confidence moving forward. Dr. O'Malley concluded his remarks by inviting questions from the Board.

- d) NMT Investments.** VP Richard Cervantes provided a detailed report on New Mexico Tech's investment portfolio. He highlighted a strong fiscal performance, noting a 28.7% return during FY21 and a five-year average return that continues to outperform national benchmarks. VP Cervantes explained that the university's investment strategy remains focused on long-term growth, diversification, and risk management. He also provided insight into how the institution is positioning its investments to respond to market fluctuations and anticipated changes in federal funding environments. The Board acknowledged the report with appreciation for the finance team's continued diligence. VP Cervantes is updating the investment policy which will be given to the new VPAF to refine and present.
- e) Research Presentation.** Director Michael Smith presented an update on the research initiatives at the Institute for Complex Additive Systems Analysis (ICASA). He highlighted the Institute's progress in expanding its workforce, with a goal of reaching 200 employees in the coming years. Director Smith also spoke about ongoing and future collaborations with defense and national security agencies and emphasized the importance of broadening ICASA's reach beyond New Mexico. His presentation underscored the alignment of ICASA's mission with national strategic priorities in cybersecurity, AI, and complex systems research.
- f) President's Updates.** President Amouzegar shared several updates with the Board, beginning with appreciation for the extensive efforts of David Manzano and Carlos Romero during the recent legislative session. He acknowledged their work behind the scenes in Santa Fe. He emphasized how their roles go unnoticed but are vital in moving and protecting bills such as the defeat of Senate Bill 266, which could have had negative long-term consequences for the university. President Amouzegar reported on ongoing funding efforts including capital requests for a Student and Community Wellness Center, marketing and recruitment enhancements, and an upgrade to the university's nearly 20-year-old ERP system. He mentioned that VP Coolen is leading a threat assessment to model worst-case research funding



scenarios, helping the university understand potential financial vulnerabilities. He also noted that the administration is currently evaluating tuition planning for FY26. Discussions are underway with students and other stakeholders to explore the possibility of reducing the tuition rate, with the goal of improving affordability and reversing enrollment declines. While early signs are positive, he cautioned against overly focusing on enrollment alone, as Tech's operations are uniquely complex and involve many critical research and academic components. A key strategic concern shared by the President was the faculty-to-student ratio, which he is actively addressing in collaboration with Provost Jackson to ensure long-term sustainability. Looking ahead, President Amouzegar announced plans for a comprehensive fundraising campaign. He stated that he intends to hire a Vice President for Advancement and it will be a joint appointment with the NMT Foundation. He stressed the importance of grounding the campaign in input from faculty, staff, students, and community members to ensure it aligns with both donor priorities and institutional goals. Finally, he reported that New Mexico Tech Day at the Capitol was a success, drawing strong participation from faculty and staff. He thanked the team for their work, with special recognition to VP Greene and Ms. Sandi Lucero for their coordination efforts, and gave a nod to standout faculty exhibits, including Dr. Mustafa's drone demonstration.

**7. Action Items, Chair Armijo.**

- a) **Approval of January 31, 2025 Minutes.** Regent King moved approval, with a second from Regent Mukkamala. The motion passed unanimously.
- b) **Approval of NMT Univ. RPC Board Member for VP Coolen.** Regent King moved approval, with a second from Regent Mukkamala. The motion passed unanimously.
- c) **Approval of Resolution Appointing Director of NMC, Inc.** Regent King moved approval, with a second from Regent Mukkamala. The motion passed unanimously.
- d) **Approval of OR-01 Conflicts of Interest in Research Policy.** Regent King moved approval with contingency on a favorable legal review, with a second from Regent Mukkamala. The motion passed unanimously.
- e) **Approval of NMHED Capital Projects Transmittal Sheets for Unmanned Aerial Systems Field and South Hall Roof Deck Replacement.** Regent King moved approval, with a second from Regent Johnston. The motion passed unanimously.

**8. Individual Board Member Comments, Chair Armijo. None**

**9. New Business, Chair Armijo. None**

**10. Executive Session, Chair Armijo.**

NMSA 1978, Sec. 10-15-1 (H) (2), (If Required to Consider Legal and/or Personnel Matters). None.

**11. Reconvene in open session and take final action, if any, on such limited legal and/or personnel matters which shall be acted upon in open session following conclusion of the closed session, Chair Armijo. None.**

**12. Adjournment, Chair Armijo.** The meeting was unanimously adjourned at 10:36 a.m. on a motion by Regent King and a second from Regent Mukkamala.

  
**President**

**Attest:**

  
**Secretary-Treasurer**

