



THE UNIVERSITY *of*
NEW MEXICO

To: Faculty colleagues at the University of New Mexico
From: Rich Wood
President of the Faculty Senate
Date: December 10, 2010
Re: End of semester update

I write to update you on what's been going on of late. The answer is lots, of course, indeed enough that we've not put together a new formal newsletter since October. We intend to do so at the start of next semester. This email is intended to offer you some interim and timely information in the meantime. It is written from El Salvador, where I am off doing research fieldwork at present.

The work of the Faculty Senate has recently been shaped by the confluence of our usual university governance activities with the UNM budget crisis, the changeover of administrations in Santa Fe, the upcoming legislative session, the recent announcement by the Educational Retirement Board, and the teaching tasks of the end of semester. The resulting Faculty Senate activities include the following:

1. *Policy development:* Faculty Senate committees have been making progress on proposed new policies to govern parental leave, faculty disciplinary procedures, how we will handle consideration of any proposed degree elimination or consolidation that emerges from the Provosts Academic Prioritization process, and encouraging instructors to facilitate electronic document access for students (rather than insist on paper printing) when this can be done without undermining educational outcomes. Some of these have already come before the Faculty Senate, others will produce policy proposals that will come before the Faculty Senate before going on to the Board of Regents in coming months.
2. *Strategic budget work:* Even as Departments, Colleges, and other academic and administrative support units deal with the painful work of absorbing the recent 3.2% budget rescission (and the ongoing impact of prior cuts), the Faculty Senate has been working to minimize any further damage to the academic mission of the University arising from possible further cuts. This work is occurring with positive collaboration from the University's fiscal and academic authorities, via the offices of the EVP for Administration, the Provost/EVP for Academic Affairs, and the Deans of the Colleges. First, the Faculty Senate Budget Committee (FSBC) – with faculty who bring to the table accounting expertise, management experience, and academic judgment, and active engagement with the administration – has exhaustively probed past expenditures and our current fiscal situation. They are confident that they now have a clear picture of how money has been used in the past and where funds are now held.

Second, representatives of the Operations Committee and the FSBC have been meeting regularly with the Deans, the staff of the EVP for Administration, and the Provost in order to understand the fiscal elements in play as a proposed FY2012 budget is developed. This “strategic budget process” was endorsed by President Schmidly before his departure, and has been supported by EVP Harris, Provost Ortega, and Acting President Roth. Very important work on this has been done by the Faculty Senate Budget Committee under chairperson Ann Brooks of the Anderson School of Management faculty. For full membership of the Budget Committee, please see <http://facgov.unm.edu/committee.cfm?comm=11>

Third, the Operations Committee is planning for a Special Faculty Senate Meeting to examine the emergent budget picture for FY2012, probably for just before classes start in January. We expect this to occur on January 12 or 13; details to be announced soon.

Through these efforts, we intend to lay the groundwork for academically-guided *and* expertly-informed decision-making; and to use that structure for the coming fiscal year *and* as groundwork for budget decisions in the future. The final FY2012 budget (i.e. July 2011 to June 2012) will be put together under the President’s direction and the Regents ultimate budget-setting authority; that will happen in March or April in a rather accelerated budget end-game, once the Legislature has acted on funding for higher education. Such fast budget-setting will best minimize damage to our academic mission in these hard budget days – and best advance our mission when a better fiscal picture emerges – if academic judgment and fiscal expertise lay the groundwork for it by working together.

3. Legislative Finance Committee:

Given the centrality of the Legislative Finance Committee in shaping UNM’s fiscal situation and (increasingly) in shaping other dimensions of our work, I met with the LFC senior staff (November 29, 2010) and addressed the full LFC Hearing on Higher Education (December 4, 2010). My comments focused on: a) Depth of faculty commitment to assuring that UNM meets its budget challenges while minimizing damage to our academic mission; b) Progress in forging a budget process to embody that commitment, including our endorsement of the need to eliminate the tuition credit (both its legislative and formula-based components) and to change the state funding formula to reflect the tasks of a research university; and c) We ask for fairness in any further budget cuts, taking into account the fact that UNM and the other research universities have absorbed the lion’s share of recent cuts. The full text of my comments to the LFC are available at facgov.unm.edu (or will be shortly).

4. Governmental Relations:

Faculty members Tim Ross (FS President-elect), Greg Heilman (FS Governmental Relations Committee), and Chaouki Abdallah (Chair of EECE) represented the Faculty Senate at the reception for the Legislative Finance Committee held near the Roundhouse, and sponsored by the UNM Office of Governmental Relations and President Schmidly and Acting President Roth. This event represented a good chance to further extend the excellent work of the Faculty Senate Governmental Relations Committee under

chairperson Antoinette Sedillo Lopez in building bipartisan relations with legislators via a town hall meeting, informal working sessions, and the UNM Forum on Higher Education.

5. *Advancing our academic mission, even in hard budget times:*

In difficult budget times, organizations are tempted to turn inward and lose a sense of strategic direction. We are fighting that tendency through all of the above, and by moving forward when strategic intellectual opportunities present themselves and can be pursued without immediate new investment. Thus, for example, the Faculty Senate has just approved a new M.A. degree and a new Ph.D.-level certification in Biomedical Engineering, faculty-led research has brought in more grant funding than ever before, and the OVPR's office has launched new efforts to invest in research and creative work in the humanities and the fine arts.

6. *HSC restructuring:*

The Operations Committee of the Faculty Senate supports the overall goal of the proposed HSC restructuring due to be considered at next week's Board of Regents meeting (the key documents can soon be found at facgov.unm.edu under "working documents"): Re-organizing the reporting structure and consolidating HSC decision-making under one BoR subcommittee (the proposed HSC Board) can advance the HSC's work and better position the University within the new health environment that is emerging under national healthcare reform. At the same time, we are asking the University to assure that the restructuring does not unintentionally impact UNM's overall fiscal integration or governance process. As of this writing, we remain in dialogue with Acting President Paul Roth on these fronts, and hope that the final proposal for consideration on December 14 will fully address these concerns.

7. *Educational Retirement Board:*

As most faculty are aware, the ERB's announced approach to solvency has created great anxiety among UNM staff and faculty. The joint Faculty/Staff Benefits Committee officially opposed the initial proposal as announced, and as President of the Faculty Senate I co-signed a letter of opposition (also posted at www.unm.edu under "working documents") along with Acting President Paul Roth, Staff Council President Merle Kennedy, and President David Schmidly. Both those statements will be presented at the December 10 ERB hearing on behalf of the Faculty Senate. We are also supporting the efforts by the UNM chapter of the American Association of University Professors to argue for an approach to solvency that protects the interests of UNM faculty and staff.

8. *Campus Student Housing:*

The Central Campus Housing Subcommittee of the Campus Development Advisory Committee of the Faculty Senate has written a letter regarding appropriate planning and decision-making for further development of main campus to serve student housing needs. That letter is posted at the same site.

In all these and other ways, Faculty Senators, the various FS committee members, and the

Operations Committee are investing time in protecting and advancing the University and its central academic mission. Please consider attending the special Faculty Senate session on the budget in mid-January, as it will be important for *all* of us to know as much as possible about the budget and the strategic budget process. And please communicate with your Faculty Senator about any issues of interest or concern to you. That list can be found at <http://www4.unm.edu/facsen/facsen/senators.cfm>