

## **Comments for Faculty Meeting – 30 April, 2008**

Thank you President Schmidly for being here, and for listening.

We, as UNM faculty, today acknowledge your own considerable academic credentials and appeal to your strong academic instincts.

I've been asked to highlight some of the current concerns pertaining to UNM's research enterprise.

This I am willing to do because I am concerned with what I see on the horizon

My comments come from the perspective of Biology, but are germane to other departments as well.

In my 23 years at UNM, I've watched at least 8 different Deans of the College of Arts and Sciences struggle with an inadequate budget

The college is the academic engine that drives UNM, and is certainly largely responsible, with contributions from many departments like biology, for UNM's increase in student credit hours.

Yet the college's budget is so lean, and has been so taxed to accommodate other budgets, that several units within the college, including Biology, are under a current hiring freeze

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We have candidates identified and waiting, including minority candidates, but are unable to make offers. Our Dean has no choice – there are no funds.

This comes at a time when external review teams are telling us we lack critical mass (true for both biology and math/stats).

These hires would be the very types who can bring in grant dollars and help right the financial ship.

While we are in stasis, our competitors to the south, UTEP, are hiring 2 biologists this year and 5 next.

I am scared that more hiring freezes may lie ahead.

Regarding grants and the overhead they generate...

Next year both the College and Biology are expecting at least a 22% reduction in overhead return, a decrease of \$125K for Biology.

If enacted, this will leave us short on meeting our obligations for cost shares, soft money supported scientists, and start up funds .....and will diminish the flow of share of overhead back to those PIs who earned it in the first place.

This amounts to a tax on the golden geese

Changes in how interest in foundation accounts is being handled are also affecting basic operations.....

Non-endowment foundations accounts are vital to programs like our Natural Heritage Program

Quarterly interest payments for Natural Heritage's accounts have been withheld, presenting them with totally unforeseen budget problems

Accounts needed for research programs have been frozen across campus without prior notification or explanation.....

This came at a time when we had an external review team on campus and proved to be an embarrassment for the department, college and administration.

So, how do we solve the problems?

1. Stability – UNM desperately needs this now at the higher administrative levels (all the changes have hurt us badly)

21 years for the president of UTEP

We need to work with our administration and try to promote stability

2. Better communication – this meeting is a step in the right direction, but recent events show we have a way to go

3. Better cooperation and teamwork – I've seen UNM do this, as with capital projects, and I know we can do it again

I welcome a visit to my office of UNM's financial experts so we can explain how our department budgets are currently being impacted

I like any number of department chairs would be happy to sit with our Regents to solve problems

In general, and not surprisingly, faculty want more input – one of our biggest sources of talent (and stability) is represented in this audience.

(ERAC involvement is one such way!)

4. Put the golden geese back up on a pedestal – we need to continually work to reinforce and underscore the value of research to UNM .

By promoting research, we also promote quality undergraduate education – they are inseparable.

5. Our primary academic missions - teaching and research – need to drive everything else that we do at UNM.

Thank you President Schmidly for hearing us.