



June 30, 2011

Dear colleagues:

This will be my last official message to the faculty in my role as president of the Faculty Senate this year. Incoming President Tim Ross has generously lent me access to this email account for a last send-out, for which I am grateful.

This has been a difficult year for all of us, as we continued to struggle through the budgetary and academic implications of the downturn in state finances and other negative impacts on our academic endeavors. Given the constraints that we faced, we did better than we feared a year ago. But that fact does not diminish the budgetary pain felt by faculty, staff, and students through the myriad of cuts that affected us all this year. Of course, some departments were able to shield themselves from the impact of those cuts better than others, either temporarily or permanently; but the reality is that core I&G funding for our mission suffered significantly.

In addition, as this message is being sent, all of us are experiencing the further pocketbook cuts resulting from the Legislature's decision to cushion the state General Fund budget by capturing 1.75% of all state employee's salaries. Your July 1 paycheck will have reflected that change. I assume we will need to fight in order for that cut not to become permanent.

None of what I say next should undercut the realities above, nor the fact that we need ongoing transformation of UNM's culture and structure. But I believe we are now well-positioned for a turnaround in the year ahead. Several factors convince me of this:

1. We have a new interim Provost with the vision, leadership skills, and emerging team (both the Deans and the staff in the Office of the Provost) to move us forward intellectually and organizationally;
2. Under new Faculty Senate President Tim Ross, we have a faculty leadership team in place to uphold the faculty's end of shared governance in ways that truly defend and advance the academic mission, and we are discussing what structural changes will best support this;
3. We have a new interim Dean of our largest college who likewise brings the vision and skills needed to advance the transformative process we have begun over recent years of faculty-led revisioning;
4. We will be significantly involved in the search for a new President of the University currently being organized by the Regents;
5. From a position of strength, we have forged or deepened the kinds of partnerships that we need to advance the academic mission – with key administrators and staff, with the Board of Regents, with students, with parents and alumni, etc. None of these partnerships should be taken for granted, but it's a start;

6. The University committed new money for faculty hiring this year that should allow 15-20 NEW positions to be filled, beyond replacement; and the finances of the State of New Mexico have begun to recover, with revenues well ahead of forecasts.

Taken together, we are in better shape than I would have dared to hope a year ago. All of these positive factors may allow us to make real progress in the months ahead, despite some ongoing counter-vailing headwinds (especially our current political context opposed to public institutions, emerging cuts to federal research funding, and the fact that we still face holes in our budget from past cuts).

Recovering from the hits to our academic mission of recent years will not be easy. Let us do our part to make it happen. With this note, I return to full-time faculty work as a researcher and teacher, proud to be part of this faculty and this University.

With warm regards,  
Rich Wood

ps: I also copy you here on the attached reports to the Board of Regents