**Memorandum**

Date: January 8, 2020

To: Faculty Senate Operations Committee

From: Dr. Leslie Oakes, Chair, Faculty Senate Policy Committee

Re: Request for Approval of Revised Policy D170 “Student Attendance”

The Faculty Senate Policy Committee is requesting Senate approval of a proposed revision to *Faculty Handbook* Policy D170 “Student Attendance.” The proposed changes are highlighted in the attached draft and explained below. The proposed revisions were sent to the campus for review and comment in April 2017. Comments were addressed and the policies were sent for a second review and comment during the Fall semester of 2019. Comments received were appropriately addressed in the attached proposed policy revision.

Of note for the Senate, campus comments differed strongly on one point. The Chair of the Athletic Council and the UNM Faculty Athletics Representative both requested that the following sentences be added to the Policy. “Students should have the opportunity to make up any assignments or examinations missed. Instructors should provide an opportunity to make up an assignment or test and not limit the accommodation to dropping the lowest test or assignment grade.”

However, 50% (13 of 25) of the faculty who commented on the draft strongly objected to adding these sentences. These faculty members come from multiple disciplines and provided justifications why these sentences pose an undue burden on instructors and limit their ability to provide timely feedback to students who haven’t missed classes. After extensive discussion, the Policy Committee decided not to include the sentences requested by the Athletic Council. The Committee thinks the following sentence in the Policy allows for flexibility and properly addresses the issue. “The student is to take the initiative in arranging with the instructor to make up missed work, and it is expected that the instructor will cooperate with the student in reasonable arrangements in this regard.” In addition, the proposed Policy revision allows for the student to submit a request for reconsideration to the department chair, program/course director, or equivalent position if a request for an excused absence and/or reasonable accommodation is denied by an instructor.

**Process Used by Committee to Revise Policy C170:**

Policy D170 has not been revised since its inception, and the Policy Committee was asked by the Committee on Governance and student leaders to conduct a comprehensive review of the policy, review policies from other institutions, and recommend changes to bring it up-to-date to reflect current practices, laws, and regulations. Student leaders were especially concerned that the policy provide enough guidance to instructors to encourage consistency in application throughout the institution.

The Policy Committee appointed a taskforce to review the policy and recommend changes. The taskforce was chaired by Martha Muller and included members representing faculty, ASUNM, GPSA, Dean of Students Office, Graduate Studies, Athletics, and the Office of University Counsel. The taskforce reviewed policies from 21 colleges and universities (listed at end of this memo) that have student programs similar to UNM.

The proposed revision describes absences that normally qualify as excused absences, some of which are defined in federal laws and regulations that address military obligations, disability, pregnancy, and religious observations. The revised Policy also provides the process for reporting such absences and completing missed assignments and exams. The revised Policy places the authority to excuse an absence with the instructor, but also provides an avenue for a student to request reconsideration by the college or school dean.

The taskforce reviewed policies from the following institutions:

Baylor Univ Boise State Colorado State Cornell Univ

Michigan State NM State Portland State Purdue Univ

San Diego State Texas A&M Texas Tech Univ of Colorado-Denver

Univ of Florida Univ of Houston Univ of Iowa Univ of Nebraska-Lincoln

Univ of Nevada Univ of Texas Univ of Utah Univ of Wyoming

Utah State