Faculty Senate Resolution — Compensation Adjustment to Address Rising Living Costs and Basic Needs Insecurity

Faculty Senate Operations Committee, for discussion and action in the Faculty Senate Meeting, October 27, 2026, 3:00-5:00 pm, Student Union Building, Albuquerque campus

Text of the proposed resolution:

In its representative and advisory role, the Faculty Senate communicates the concerns and priorities of the University of New Mexico (UNM) faculty and works with University leadership to advance policies that support the University's academic mission.

Faculty compensation and benefits directly affect UNM's ability to recruit and retain excellent faculty, sustain high-quality teaching and research, and serve students and communities throughout New Mexico. Rising living costs and healthcare expenses can disproportionately affect lower-paid faculty, including lecturers and other faculty whose salaries may provide limited capacity to absorb substantial increases in insurance premiums.

Whereas, on September 3, 2026, the University of New Mexico Staff Council adopted the Resolution on Compensation Adjustment to Address Rising Living Costs and Basic Needs Insecurity, which affirmed the critical need for the University to alleviate the burden of rising living costs, increasing health insurance premiums, and ongoing inflation on UNM's employees; and

Whereas, on September 29, 2026, the Faculty Senate voted to endorse this Staff Council Resolution; and

Whereas, the University of New Mexico Faculty Senate recognizes that rising living costs, increasing health insurance premiums, and rapidly increasing rates of inflation have placed significant financial pressure on faculty across the University; and

Whereas, competitive compensation and affordable health benefits are essential not only to the well-being of current faculty but also to UNM's ability to recruit and retain highly qualified educators, researchers, and academic professionals; and

Whereas, UNM employee salary data show that half of all employees (one out of six faculty and three out of five staff) make less than $80,000, less than the amount required for a family of four to survive in the State of New Mexico. Further, two thirds of all employees (two out of five faculty and almost four out of five staff) make less than $111,571, which is half the minimum required for a family of four to live comfortably.

Be It Therefore Resolved that the University of New Mexico and the New Mexico Legislature support a health insurance premium cost-sharing model that minimizes the financial burden on employees and promotes affordable healthcare benefits for faculty and staff; and

Resolved, that the University of New Mexico continue to advocate for recurring faculty compensation increases sufficient to keep pace with the rising cost of living, inflation, and increases in employee health insurance premiums; and

Resolved, that the University of New Mexico continue to prioritize faculty compensation as a critical strategy for recruiting and retaining highly qualified faculty, maintaining academic excellence, and addressing the documented basic-needs insecurity experienced by members of the UNM community; and

Resolved, that if the New Mexico Legislature approves a health insurance premium cost-sharing model under which employees contribute 20% of premium costs and the State of New Mexico and the University of New

Mexico collectively contribute the remaining 80%, the University advocate for a minimum 4% recurring compensation increase for faculty and staff, recognizing that employees earning $54,999 or less already contribute approximately 20% of their health insurance premiums and therefore may receive little or no financial benefit from the proposed cost-sharing model; and

Resolved, that no health insurance cost-sharing model compromise the quality of medical care or coverage for faculty and staff; and

Be it finally resolved, that if the proposed 20% employee / 80% State–University health insurance premium cost-sharing model is not approved, the University advocate for a minimum 6–7% recurring compensation increase for faculty and staff to help offset increases in employee health insurance premiums and support employees' purchasing power.

Faculty Senate Rationale

The next step is for the Faculty Senate to work collaboratively with university administration and staff to develop priorities for the New Mexico Legislature that support meaningful recurring compensation, affordable health benefits, and the economic well-being of both faculty and staff at the University of New Mexico.

Compensation Adjustment to Address Rising Living Costs and Basic Needs Insecurity

Members of the Faculty Senate Compensation Adjustment Resolution Ad hoc Committee: Heather Sweetser, Deirdre Caparoso, Luis Izquierdo, Jim Burns, Vivek R Katukuri, Tracy Lassiter, Liz Hutchison, and Nahir I. Otaño Gracia

The resolution addresses faculty and staff quality of life, which has gone down considerably in the last few years. Here are some facts about faculty salary:

- 1/6 faculty make less than 79.9K; 17.4% of faculty
    - This is less than the amount necessary for a family of four to survive living in NM (see ALICE)
- 1/4 faculty make less than 89.8K; 26% of faculty
    - This is less than the amount necessary for a single adult to live comfortably in NM (see SmartAsses)
- 2 /5 faculty make less than $111,571; 40.1% of faculty
- Approximately 1/10 faculty filled out the UNM Staff Basic Needs Survey; 310/3200. My two big takeaways:
    - UNM is a food desert for healthy affordable options
        - "I actually do not have time for lunches because of workload and this was going on for all years at UNM. The food quality in the faculty club deteriorated a few years ago and it was not very healthy anyway. There is no place to eat in the XXX corner. There is not even a good coffee place in walking distance. There is no faculty room at all in the XXX Bldg, there was never one. There is no place to eat except for own office and own food. There is no place except for toilets to clean cups/plates! Yes, I have healthy food at home, just I am not at home and absolutely nothing helps to eat during days."
    - Worrying over rising costs is making it harder for faculty to do our jobs well
        - "Financial insecurity brought about by high housing costs, high grocery costs, and higher student loan repayment amounts … has resulted in substantial anxiety, which sometimes makes it difficult to focus at work. The increase in the cost of health care only adds to this. It feels like I am moving backwards financially, even as I am promoted professionally. Also, there are times when I simply cannot afford to put the costs of conference or research travel on my own cards to be reimbursed later. I have skipped conferences that I should have attended due to worry over fronting the money (which I need to use to cover my basic needs and those of my children)."

Resolution ALICE SmartAsset