

# Approved Minutes

## Faculty Senate Meeting

9 September 2009

Kennedy Lounge - New Mexico Highlands University 3:00 pm

1. **Meeting Call to Order:**
2. **Roll Call: Present:** Dr. Romine, April Kent, Kathy Jenkins, Jim Peters, Ken Bentson, David Lobdell, David Arguello, Daniel Martínez, Maura Pilotti, Gilbert Rivera (VPAA, *ex officio*), Merritt Helvenston, Stella Helvie, Julius Harrington.  
**Also Present:** Mary Jane Valdez, Bob Mishler, Linda LaGrange.  
**Absent:**
3. **Approval of Agenda:** Approved with one addition.
4. **Approval of Minutes:** 26 August 2009: Approved with one change.
5. **Communication from the Administration:** Dr. Rivera began his report with the issue of audits. Dr. Rivera reported that his investigation indicated that according to policy, auditors were expected to attend seventy percent of the class meetings, but did not specify any consequences. He further noted that the registrar had some concern that allowing faculty to change the audit to a w might enable—via Banner—faculty members would be able to change any grade to a W. A discussion ensued, and the Executive Committee will draft a charge for the Academic Affairs to look further into the issue. Dr. Rivera also reported on the Board of Regents' meeting of that day, noting that the contract for the renovation of the Félix Martínez Building had been given to Franken Construction. The regents also approved the purchase of the green house near the new dormitory; a lively discussion ensued about the possible uses of the structure, including a coffee shop and the new president's residence. Dr. Rivera also reported on other initiatives approved by the Board to acquire property adjacent to the NMHU campus. He next reported that enrollment was up from the previous year, even after some students were disenrolled because of nonpayment of tuition. Dr. Romine also distributed a fact sheet on Fall 2009 enrollments.
6. **Communication from the Chair:** Dr. Romine invited April Kent to report briefly on the Board of Regents meeting of that morning, Ms. Kent having attended in place of Dr. Romine. Dr. Romine then invited Dr. Helvenston to report on a Cabinet meeting held last week. Dr. Helvenston reported briefly on a number of issues associated with the upcoming accreditation meeting. Dr. Rivera clarified the issue created by the university's attempt to have two online programs reviewed. A complex discussion ensued, apparently revolving around synchronous vs. asynchronous classes and programs. Dr. Helvenston further reported on the strategic planning process, and noted that there will be added both changes, and specific unit plans. A question was asked about the university's level of preparedness for the H1N1 flu, and a brief discussion ensued. Dr. Arguello made a motion to have a

discussion of this issue at the next General Faculty Meeting. The motion was seconded, and passed without dissent. Dr. Romine then reported on her conversation with Maxine Salas of the Staff Senate, and her invitation to Ms. Salas to attend an upcoming Senate meeting, in order to improve communication with the new Staff Senate. She also reported on initiatives underway for changing committee structure and putting Senate documents online at the Faculty Senate webpage. Dr. Romine then invited Dr. Peters to report on a recent meeting of the Financial Planning Committee. Dr. Peters noted that the committee had met, and that Dr. Taylor had been in attendance. He discussed the role envisioned by the committee, as a means of lobbying the administration, and educating faculty about budgetary issues. The next meeting will take place after the upcoming October special session of the State Legislature. Dr. Peters then shared various gloomy budgetary scenarios, but noted that it was impossible to proceed very far until more information is forthcoming.

7. **Communication from Academic Affairs:** Dr. Bentson reported on the previous week's Academic Affairs Committee meeting. One issue of interest that came up was communication with the centers; communication problems are apparently significant, except in the case of Rio Rancho. Program review came up, and a number of issues associated with this process were discussed. Dr. Rivera outlined the program review responsibilities spelled out in the current Faculty Handbook. Dr. Romine noted that the new director of Assessment, William Sayre, needs to be included in any discussion of the review process.

8. **Old Business:**

- a) **International Education Committee:** Professor Robert Mishler was introduced, and given the floor to report. Professor Mishler reported on nearly forty years of experience working as an advisor of the International Education Office and students from abroad. Professor Mishler outlined his view of International Education as an academic issue, necessitating a key oversight and direction role for faculty. The International Education Committee provides a framework for that oversight role. Also curricular issues are relevant in our own limited Study-Abroad programs. A key question emerging from the discussion is whether or not the function of International Education is an academic one—to be met under the VPAA's auspices—or left where it is, in Student Support. The Executive Committee will consider a charge to the committee to review its responsibilities.

- b) **Strategic Plan—Linda LaGrange:** Dr. LaGrange provided a brief summary of the plan, and the NMHU Unit-Specific Action Plan. All individual units—academic & otherwise—will have a faculty member to act as liaison. After the report, Dr. Romine outlined the process that the Senate needed to go through, to approve the vision, mission, and goals sections of the strategic plan currently being finalized. This will be an action item at the next meeting of the Faculty Senate.

**c) 100% online programs: a philosophical discussion (Dr. Jean Hill):** (moved from New Business): Dr. Romine introduced Dr. Hill, with a brief statement about the immediacy of the issue at hand. Dr. Hill first noted that there are currently no programs that are entirely online, at least not to the point of graduating students who have had only online courses. She observed also that there exists a significant potential for changes in rules, particularly that the synchronous/asynchronous distinction will be rendered irrelevant. At the moment it remains unclear exactly what the policy will be. The Higher Learning Commission will be changing their rules, and this will affect the School of Business, and probably the nursing program as well. In light of this, the university had initially planned to have the two online programs reviewed by the Higher Learning Commission team in November. Problems arose when it was discovered that the distance education policy as spelled out in the Distance Education Handbook has not been implemented. The program in the School of Business has evolved into a potentially online-only program, without review or approval by the Distance Education Subcommittee, Academic Affairs, or the Faculty Senate. There was an effort by the administration to withdraw their request to have these programs reviewed; the Higher Learning Commission advised the administration that the visit be used as an opportunity to garner feedback and assessment of our programs. In order to take advantage of the November “opportunity,” and to be in line with our own stated policies, the Distance Education policy manual must be reviewed and revised, and the university must decide if, when, and how we will offer online degree programs, how to verify student identity. Programs involved must look at assessment procedures, in order to determine equality of educational outcomes. Dr. Jenkins noted that the issue had arisen regarding a state statute that required that at least seventy-five percent of instructional time is asynchronous, only twenty-five percent synchronous. Dr. Hill then fielded several questions.

**c) Position Statement, Shared Governance:** Dr. Romine provided a brief introduction to the issue, and opened the floor to comment on the statement, which reads:

“The Faculty Senate is concerned by the recent unilateral decision of the administration to suspend the requirement for incoming freshmen to take INDP 135: First Year Experience; we wish to remind the administration that in the spirit of shared governance, curricular matters are properly the responsibility of the university faculty, working through the Faculty Senate’s Academic Affairs Committee. It is our hope that in future curricular issues should be presented to the faculty for their consideration and action before such decisions are made.”

A number of faculty commented, and Dr. Rivera discussed his perspective and his rationale for initiating the change. He noted as well that when changes are formalized, they will go through the process in place for modification of the curriculum. A lively discussion ensued. It was moved and seconded not to go forward with the statement

developed by the Executive Committee. The question was called, and the tally was six in favor of the motion, three opposed, one abstention. The motion not to go forward with the statement passed.

d) **Dean Search Timetable Inquiry:** Dr. Rivera will report as soon as the issue moves forward.

**9. New business:**

a) **Faculty Senate Representative to Student Affairs committee:** Dr. Romine asked for volunteers. Dr. Aguello volunteered and was confirmed unanimously by the Senate.

a) **Governance issues:** Faculty Search Committee function and faculty rights: Tabled.

b) **Distance Education Subcommittee:** Tabled.

c) **Certificate Programs:** Tabled.

Adjourned: 4:57pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Peter S. Linder