

Approved Minutes

Faculty Senate Meeting

March 23, 2011

Sininger Hall, Room 100

New Mexico Highlands University, 3:06 p.m.

1. **Call to Order: 3:07 p.m.**
2. **Roll Call:**
3. **Present:** Maureen Romine (*Chair*), Ken Bentson, David Braun y Harycki, Regina Briefs-Elgin, Tom Corbin, Tatiana Dutoit, Jayni Flores, Jane Gorman, Richard Greene, Julius Harrington, Kathy Jenkins, Kent April, Maura Pilotti, Maxine Salas, Charles Swim, Susan Williams, and Jennifer Almand (*GSA representative*)
4. **Also Present:** Gilbert Rivera (VPAA)
Peter Linder & David Sammeth (Representatives of the Faculty Association)
5. **Absent:** Stella Helvie (*Vice Chair*; excused absence) and Shani Crawford (*Student Senate representative*)
6. **Approval of Agenda:** 23 March 2011 – as amended
7. **Approval of Minutes:** 9 March 2011 – as amended
8. **Communication from the Administration:**
Dr. Rivera addressed a few issues. The gist of his comments is reported below:
 1. Budget hearings are ongoing. A comprehensive budget will be finalized before May 1st. The Board of Regents will be meeting to approve the budget prior to the May 1st deadline.
 2. Decisions regarding sabbatical leave will be made by April 1st. Decisions will be based on merit.
9. **Communication from the Chair:**
Dr. Romine briefly mentioned the following issues:
 1. Documents discussed during the previous Faculty Senate meeting were sent to the President for review.
 2. The President is reviewing and contemplating changes to a list of peer institutions.
 3. A meeting regarding website issues was held during spring break.Members of the Website committee, representatives of the Executive committee of

the Senate and staff discussed their concerns and suggestions with representatives from University Relations. The latter are currently working on re-designing the NMHU website. A decision was made at the meeting to require that department chairs identify individual Faculty in their departments who would be in charge of updating the web pages pertaining to their program offerings. Faculty could choose to have direct access to the pages or indirect access through University Relations.

4. The Learning Platform committee e-mailed a survey to all Faculty to assess modes of use of Blackboard and attitudes towards it.

5. Approximately 78 applications were received by the search committee in charge of the VPAA selection. Members of the committee are currently reviewing applications and ranking candidates. Subsequently, they will perform telephone interviews and then invite some candidates on campus for in-person interviews.

6. Certificates recognizing Faculty members' committee-related work will be distributed shortly.

7. Surveys intended to evaluate administrators were recently distributed though e-mail.

10. Communication from Academic Affairs:

Dr. Bentson indicated he had no report since the committee did not meet.

11. Communication from the Student Senate:

None

12. Communication from the GSA:

Ms. Almand indicated she had no report since the GSA did not meet. Nevertheless, she informed Senators that the GSA had selected a documentary entitled 'Waiting for Superman'. The documentary examines the failing American education system and offers solutions.

13. Communication from the Staff Senate:

Ms. Salas indicated that members of the Staff Senate did not meet. She then reported on work of the Staff Senate's different committees. She also mentioned that the staff satisfaction survey had been distributed the previous week.

14. Old Business

1. *Vacant tenure-track positions*

Dr. Rivera reported on current and planned searches to fill tenure-track positions in the School of Education and the College of Arts and Sciences. An inquiry was formulated regarding the School of Business where some Faculty asked that their tenure-track positions be converted to non-tenure track. Dr. Rivera indicated that once these individuals vacate the current positions due to retirement, the original tenure-track positions will become available.

Dr. Greene asked whether the timing of the VPAA search would prevent 'successful candidates' from applying. Dr. Jenkins asked whether the Faculty would have time to examine candidates before the summer break. Dr. Rivera indicated that the search had started during the fall break and that a large number of applications

had been received. He added that the Administration was seeking a candidate able to start on July 1st. He admitted that he could not determine at the present time whether the date was to be interpreted as a requirement or merely as an expectation under 'best-scenario' conditions.

15. New Business

1. Department Chair Selection

Dr. Romine distributed the section in the Faculty Handbook that pertains to the Department Chair selection process. She asked Senators to review its language. She indicated that a discussion regarding possible changes would occur at the next meeting. Several comments or inquiries were made by individual Senators:

Dr. Bentson questioned the process in the case of a tie vote.

Dr. Corbin stated that in the event of a tie, eligible Faculty should vote until a consensus is reached on a single candidate.

Dr. Rivera indicated that if a Chair resigns, the election is to be intended for a three-year position.

Dr. Romine requested that the issue of sabbatical leave be considered a contractual issue and, as such, be addressed by the Faculty Association. At issue is the meaning of Article 14 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement in which a Faculty on sabbatical leave is described as 'relieved from all teaching, research, administrative, and committee duties for the duration of the leave' (p. 22). Dr. Jenkins argued that she would like to discuss the issue of sabbatical leave with Faculty.

A motion was made and seconded that the Chair of the Faculty Senate be directed to contact the President of the Faculty Association, Dr. Katherine Jenkins, to meet with the Executive Committee of the Faculty Association and address concerns regarding sabbatical leave.

The motion was approved unanimously.

Dr. Romine introduced the issue of the selection of a Chair for the Department of English and Philosophy. Dr. Briefs-Elgin indicated that the consensus of the eligible Faculty in the English and Philosophy Department was to request that the Dean name an interim Chair for a one-year appointment.

Dr. Jenkins requested that an e-mail be sent to Dr. Romine illustrating the decision of the Department. Dr. Briefs-Elgin assented.

2. University sanctioned absences (not an action item)

Dr. Romine requested that the document distributed with minutes of the previous meeting be examined and that discussion be postponed to the next meeting.

Dr. Briefs-Elgin suggested that rosters of students attending sports-related events be embedded in e-mails.

3. Faculty Senate Committees: Update on Section 5 (draft document)

Dr. Romine requested that the document distributed with minutes of the previous meeting be examined by Senators.

A motion was made and seconded *to charge the Academic Affairs Committee to review the draft document dated 3/14/2011 regarding proposed changes to the Committee.*

The motion was approved unanimously.

16. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 3:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

**Maura Pilotti
Secretary/Treasurer**