



Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

January 14, 2026

Location: RAB 120

ZOOM <https://nmhu.zoom.us/j/92457318161>

Approved January 28, 2026

1. Call meeting to order.

2. Roll Call.

	ATTENDANCE		
	Present	Absent	Excused
Art & Music; Edward Harrington	X		
Biology; Maureen Romine	X		
Business Administration; Stephen Owusu-Ansah	X		
Chemistry; Steven Karpowicz	X		
Computer and Mathematical Sciences; Gil Gallegos, At-Large	X		
Education - Counseling; Diane Lacen	X		
Education - Curriculum & Instruction; Daniel Olufemi	X		
Education - Educational Leadership; Sheree Jederberg, At-Large	X		
Education - Special Education; PJ Sedillo	X		
Education - Teacher Education; Angela Redondo	X		
English and Philosophy; Jess Goldberg (they/them)	X		
Exercise and Sport Sciences; Kathy Jenkins, Vice-Chair	X		
Forestry; Michael Remke (he/him/his)	X		
History and Political Science; Bilgesu Sümer			X
Languages and Culture; Norma Valenzuela	X		
Library; Katie Gray, Secretary (she/her)	X		
Media Arts and Technology; Miriam Langer	X		
Natural Resources Management; Jennifer Lindline, Chair (she/her)	X		
Nursing; Siri Khalsa (she/her)	X		
Psychology; David Pan			X
Social Work; VACANT [Rebecca Moore, proxy]	X		
Sociology, Anthropology, and CJ; Gloria Gadsden	X		
President; Neil Woolf			X
Provost/VPAA; Dann Brown	X		
Staff Senate; Gina Marie Medina	X		
Student Senate; Lydia Okojie		X	

Also Present:

Lauren Fath (Associate Dean, CAS), Doajo Hicks (General Counsel), Laura LaCour-Johnson (Rio Rancho), Todd Lekan (Dean, CAS), Peter Linder (History & Political Science), Mike Petronis (Natural Resources Management), Luke Romero (Natural Resources Management), John Tourangeau (Interim Dean, Social Work), Cin Ulibarri

(ICLRLT), Clint Weckerly (CTE), Barbara Wharton (Interim Registrar), Ian Williamson (AVPAA/Graduate Dean)

3. Approval of Agenda.

MOTION to move Executive Session to No.11 on the agenda. Seconded. 18 ayes, 0 nays, 0 abstentions. Motion carried.

MOTION to approve the agenda with the noted change. Seconded. 19 ayes, 0 nays, 0 abstentions. Motion carried.

4. Approval of Minutes from December 10, 2025 (attachment).

MOTION to approve the minutes. Seconded. 17 ayes, 0 nays, 2 abstentions. Motion carried.

5. Communication from the President (N. Woolf).

Not present.

6. Communication from the Vice President of Academic Affairs (D. Brown).

D. Brown reported the following:

- Dr. Woolf is out for a family emergency and will be back next week.
- Legislative update: Legislative Finance Committee came out with budget suggestion: overall increase of \$1.5 M, 3/1% increase; funding for nursing expansion rolled into general budget; \$9M for library renovation on GO Bond (will be used to identify RFP, take on some immediate challenges like elevators, HVAC); next Tuesday is the State of the State address from Governor.
- Enrollment update: up over 2% in head count enrollment from spring to spring; full time is up 8% and part time is down 5%; dual credit up; degree seeking students up 2%; up 11% on campus in Las Vegas; arts and sciences flat; business 10% increase; social work increase; education decrease; up 21% undergrad and down 15% grad; seeing the impact of recruitment in Native/Hawaiian enrollment.
- Thanks to everyone for participating in Professional Development Days and thanks to C. Weckerly for organizing it. Mr. Weckerly is working on a schedule for more programs throughout the semester.
- B. Wharton will speak about the Registrar.

Comment from a Senator that they have been hearing from Facilities staff about the reorganization or outside company and that staff feel that their jobs are in jeopardy. Senator asked for details.

Dr. Brown stated that he does not have much to share on the topic. Dr. Brown stated that there was a campus wide meeting yesterday for people in those positions with A. Flure and S. Gonzales.

Comment from a Senator that the meeting did not address the issues, because they were speaking to people 15 minutes before this meeting about their concerns.

Comment from a Senator that they are frustrated that administration went forward with the Registrar search without faculty members on the search committee.

Dr. Brown stated that he could not provide details but that they were pleased with the pool of candidates and that there are 2 finalists.

Question from a Senator about whether Dr. Brown is presenting today as both President and Provost, as they have questions about the Legislative Session. Dr. Brown stated that he was reporting for both.

Question from a Senator about the Governor's announcement that there will be less money and how this will affect the university's priorities.

Dr. Brown noted that the situation in Venezuela and oil and gas could impact things in New Mexico but that it will be multiple years before it will impact us. Dr. Brown stated that priorities have not been changed. Dr. Brown stated that responses from higher education and legislation are proceeding with a positive outcome. Dr. Brown stated that the numbers are more conservative than we might see. Dr. Brown noted that there is a major release on number of countries that the U.S. is not supporting visas from.

Comment from a Senator that the university is not going to have a Dean in School of Education and that there is no advertising for the position. Senator noted that there have been 2 interim deans and wants to know why the delay and where the university is on the search.

Dr. Brown stated that administration is preparing to sign a contract for a search firm and that they will work expeditiously. Dr. Brown noted that the response they are getting is exciting. Dr. Brown stated that R. Karaba will manage that within the school.

Senator asked why the process is taking so long.

Dr. Brown stated that there were a number of issues to address and that it was challenging.

Comment from a Senator that it is January, that most universities, when advertising for a Dean, advertise in the fall, and that highly qualified candidates are usually gone by this point.

Chair noted that oil and gas revenues provide 20-35% of the NM state budget, \$9-15B in state revenue which supports education and infrastructure.

Comment from a Senator that international imperialism affects all of us. Senator asked about the enrollment numbers for Indigenous students.

Dr. Brown stated that Native American undergraduate enrollment is 98 (86 last year) and graduate enrollment is 64 (82 last year).

Question from a Senator about the advantages of using a search firm.

Dr. Brown stated that search firms tend to expand the pool of potential candidates and that they look for candidates nominated by peers that might not have been looking for a job but might be a good fit. Dr. Brown stated that they can play a role in helping to expand the conversation about the excellence of the university they are searching for and share the good news.

Comment from a Senator that the faculty are in the process of discussing a computer science program involving Sandbox. Senator asked why there are computer classes listed as Sandbox already which are not in the program.

Chair noted that there are 4 courses being offered in the Computer Science program tagged as Sandbox.

Dr. Brown stated that he was not involved in scheduling the courses.

D. Lekan stated that these are topics courses for students transferring into the University Studies degree and that they are hoping to become a pilot.

Comment from a Senator that they feel deceived. Senator noted that N. Valenzuela brought this up in late fall and that Dr. Brown told faculty that no Sandbox would be brought to Highlands at the undergraduate level.

Comment from a Senator that they are confused about what track these courses would count toward. Senator asked if faculty was involved. Senator noted that faculty were assured there would be no Sandbox program.

Chair noted that she previously advised for University Studies and did not recall the university identifying incoming students and building courses to suit them.

G. Gallegos said that, as the coordinator of Computer Sciences, no one discussed these courses with him. Dr. Gallegos asked who did the administration discuss this with and who approved of the courses.

Dr. Lekan stated that these are undergraduate students transferring to Highlands and completing a degree. Dr. Lekan stated that he is working with N. Valenzuela and Chad Mano. Dr. Lekan stated that this is not the Sandbox program; it is a University Studies program.

Chair noted that the administrators did not answer Dr. Gallegos' questions.

Comment from a Senator that University Studies students take courses that already exist and that they have never seen courses created for incoming students. Senator noted that the course listing says “pilot for the Sandbox program” in the course description.

Comment from a Senator that the catalog explicitly states that life experience may not be counted for course credit.

Dr. Gallegos asked why he was not consulted and noted that this is highly irregular. Dr. Gallegos stated that faculty should have input on courses offered within their disciplines.

Chair stated that for programs to be successful, faculty involvement is essential.

N. Valenzuela stated that she is approaching it as if they are any other type of transfer student and to base advising on course transfers. Dr. Valenzuela noted that degree audits have not been updated.

Comment from a Senator that they support Dr. Valenzuela. Senator noted that their concern that curriculum is domain of the faculty, not the Provost or the Dean, as is stated in the faculty handbook and the CBA. Senator noted that it sounds like these courses were created by administration and a special consultant related to the President and that the courses were created in Computer Science without the discipline’s input.

Comment from a Senator that no instructors are listed on the courses and that faculty were assured that any instructors would be hired within the process.

Dr. Gallegos noted that he is not opposed to the classes but that he is opposed to the way the process was completed. Dr. Gallegos noted that there is pushback for not consulting Computer Science faculty. Dr. Gallegos state that the faculty have expertise and asked why they were not consulted and why their expertise was not needed and why they were not told so. Dr. Gallegos asserted that faculty have the right to exert their expertise on the courses labelled Computer Science, especially since these courses get attached to their degree.

Question from a Senator about who is teaching the classes.

Dr. Brown stated that he addressed this today with the Dean and that there is a position.

Chair noted that resumes and CVs for adjunct faculty are shared with departments.

Comment from a Senator that they do not know if they oppose the courses or not because there are no descriptions. Senator that they do not know what these courses are or who is controlling the content and that it is unprecedented for administration to create classes for a discipline.

Comment from a Senator that this is a hijacking and that any faculty member would be furious to find that courses were put in without their approval. Senator stated that it is unacceptable.

Comment from a Senator that action is needed and that the Senate should move to have these courses retracted from the catalog. Senator stated that the handbook was not followed and that the action is illegal.

Comment from a Senator that those courses do not have students yet. Senator suggested making a recommendation that they be pulled and that the Senate needs to speak to the Registrar and compliance.

Comment from a Senator that they would like to add that administration needs to have meetings with Computer Science before something like this happens again.

Comment from a Senator that they would like the special topics paperwork to be shared with the Senate. Senator noted that you have to create a syllabus that must be approved by the department.

MOTION for the Executive Committee to speak with Registrar about if the courses can be pulled, and if so, that they be retracted from the catalog, that affected disciplines are involved in decision making, and that the course paperwork for the special topics be provided to the Senate. Seconded.

Dr. Gallegos commented their department has done this before in cybersecurity and that they had discussions with NM Tech and agreed between the disciplines to offer courses in Business and cross list in Computer Science.

19 ayes, 0 nays, 0 abstentions.

7. Communication from the Faculty Senate Chair (J. Lindline).

Chair reported the following:

- Departments should be receiving info about department chair elections; look for a call from the Executive Committee.
- The Executive Committee is preparing a call for committee reports.
- Annual evaluation of administrators coming up. Any input is welcome.
- Thanks to Mr. Weckerly for the Professional Development Days. Recordings are in progress and will be available soon.
- Highlands Day at the Legislature is 2/10; reserve your space to highlight our students and disciplines.
- There are Registrar candidate meetings on Friday and Tuesday.
- Faculty have reported a number of student athletes with course and practice conflicts, which will require discussion.
- Ellucian was updated over the break, which caused a number of issues.

- There were a number of terminations at the Centers. Dr. Woolf rescinded the firings, but the explanation for the RIF (Reduction in Force) has not been shared with faculty.
- 2026 HLC meeting is taking place the 3rd week in March. Delegates include: T. Lekan, L. Fath, B. Kempner, B. Wharton, and A. Kent.
- University has proposed the outsourcing of Facilities. AVPA A. Flure reported that the university is considering SSC for Facilities and implied that they are moving in that trajectory.

Comment from a Senator that last year, Dr. Woolf apologized to the Senate and to the Chair for excluding her from the HLC group and they have excluded her once again. Senator noted that the Gen Ed core will be discussed and that it is the purview of faculty. Senator asked if the Chair has heard why she was not invited.

Chair stated that she did not hear anything and that she confirmed the list today with Ms. Kent. Chair stated that she will be reaching out to the President and administration. Chair noted that the President did say it would not happen again.

Comment from a Senator that the Senate was promised that the Chair would be invited and that they are concerned about that.

Dean Lekan stated that he was charged with inviting another CAS member to go to HLC and has not gotten around to that. Dean Lekan noted that he is thinking about asking someone from Science side.

Chair stated that she appreciated that and that it was always the Senate Chair in the past. Chair noted that outcomes assessment is the faculty's responsibility.

Comment from a Senator that they are fully supportive of Senate Chair being there and also suggested having someone from the Outcomes Assessment committee. Senator stated that someone from that committee that understands the science gen ed core would be helpful.

Chair stated that when there are university initiatives, if you do not involve faculty, they rarely succeed.

Comment from a Senator that historically, the Senate Chair did go and that they would love to see another faculty member go, as well. Senator noted that it is also important to social sciences and humanities.

Comment from a Senator that the university follows governance and that it is the governing body that chooses the representatives to these bodies.

Dean Lekan noted that they were thinking about adding someone from the sciences, because they have humanities scholars going on the admin side.

8. Communication from Academic Affairs Committee (G. Gadsden).

G. Gadsden had nothing to report; first meeting of the committee is next week.

9. Communication from the Student Senate (L. Okojie).

Not present.

10. Communication from the Staff Senate (G. Medina).

G. Medina reported the following:

- Staff Senate is moving forward and increasing their numbers.
- Next meeting is 1/20

Dr. Brown stated that he will see if he can get the meeting announcement into the Friday email.

Move to executive session.

11. Old Business

a. Faculty Senate Committee Nominations/Elections

- i. Athletic Committee
- ii. Student Affairs Committee
- iii. International Education Committee

b. Academic Affairs Committee Program Addition/Deletion/Modification Proposals

- i. MA/MS of Computer Science Program Revision (G. Gallegos and M. Langer)

c. Issues with Human Resources, ITS, and Facilities Ticketing

12. New Business

- a. Graduate Handbook Changes; Graduate Committee Chair Eligibility Language (attachments)
- b. Elucian Experience Updates
- c. Reorganization of Student Support Services Workforce at the NMHU Centers

13. Executive Session.

14. Action and Statements as Necessary on Executive Session Discussion.

No actions taken during Executive Session.

MOTION for the Faculty Senate Executive Committee to draft a letter of support. Seconded. 19 ayes, 0 nays, 0 abstentions. Motion carried.

MOTION for the Faculty Senate Executive Committee to compile a list of Academic Affairs issues and for Senators to take the issues identified back to their constituents for input. Seconded. 18 ayes, 0 nays, 0 abstentions. Motion carried.

Motion to table remaining items and adjourn. Seconded. 18 ayes, 0 nays, 0 abstentions. Motion carried.

15. Adjournment.

The New Mexico Highlands University faculty recognizes collegiality as a cornerstone of our academic community, characterized by a commitment to work together to support the academic enterprise. We value the diversity of people and perspectives; support open communication and constructive disagreement; and uphold the principles of academic freedom and shared governance. We expect all faculty members to maintain the highest standards of professional conduct, including mutual regard, collaborative engagement, and respectful debate.