

## **New Mexico Highlands University**

Board of Regents Special Meeting

September 19, 2025

The New Mexico Highlands University Board of Regents met on September 19, 2025. The meeting was held at New Mexico Highlands University's Rodgers Administration Building, Board Room 107. Notice of the meeting was posted in the Rogers Administration Building and on the NMHU Board of Regents website as required. The university made every effort to accommodate members of the public as stated in the meeting notice. The meeting was also livestreamed via the following Zoom link: <https://nmhu.zoom.us/j/99373471046>.

### **Call to Order**

Chairman Frank Sanchez called the meeting to order at 11:02 AM.

### **Roll Call**

Board Members present: Dr. Frank Sanchez, Mr. Robert Lucero (via Zoom), Ms. Elaine Luna, and Mr. Gary Tripp

### **Administrative Personnel Present**

Dr. Neil Woolf, President; Dr. Dann Brown, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs; Dr. Brandon Kempner, Chief of Staff; Dr. Kimberly Blea, Vice President for Student Affairs; Stephanie Gonzales, CPA, Vice President for Finance & Administration; Dave Lepre, Vice President for University Relations; Paul Grindstaff, Vice President for Student & Donor Engagement; Mr. Scott Noble, Athletic Director

### **Others Present**

Aaron Flure, Associate Vice President for Finance and Administration; Benito Pacheco, Associate Vice President of SEM; Sylvia Baca, Associate Vice President for Facilities and Maintenance; Joseph Dominguez, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs; Amalinda Arguello, Executive Administrative Assistant to the Board of Regents; Dr. Jennifer Lindline, Faculty Senate Chair; Dr. Veena Parboteeah, Dean of the School of Business, Media, and Technology; Dr. Luis Flores Porras, Associate Professor of Marketing; April Kent, Interim Library Director. Faculty, staff, students, and community members also attended.

### **Compliance with Meeting Notice Requirements**

Chairman Sanchez stated that in accordance with the Open Meetings Act, the notice and agenda with the meeting date, time, and place for the September 19, 2025, meeting were posted in a timely fashion and in compliance with the NMHU Board of Regents Open Meetings Act.

### **Approval of the September 19, 2025, Meeting Agenda – Action Item**

Motion: Regent Tripp

Second: Regent Luna

Vote: Unanimous approval (4-0) – Motion carried

### **Approval of Meeting Minutes – Action Item**

### **June 20, 2025, Regular Meeting**

Motion: Regent Luna

Second: Regent Tripp

Vote: Unanimous approval (4-0) – Motion carried

**June 26, 2025, Special Meeting**

Motion: Regent Luna

Second: Regent Tripp

Vote: Unanimous approval (4-0) – Motion carried

**July 25, 2025, Special Meeting**

Motion: Regent Luna

Second: Regent Tripp

Vote: Unanimous approval (4-0) – Motion carried

**Public Comments**

No public comment.

**Regent Reports**

**Finance & Administration Committee Update – Regent Lucero**

Regent Lucero noted that Vice President Gonzales had held very productive Finance and Administration Committee meetings which she would be reporting on per the agenda. He also mentioned that both the Human Resources and Payroll departments had been seeing progress toward their respective goals which would also be discussed in detail later in the meeting.

**Academic Affairs Committee Update – Chairman Sanchez**

Chairman Sanchez announced that he had begun building and appointing members to the committee including new Provost, Dr. Dann Brown. Dr. Brown noted that the committee was beginning work on their first initiative – a high school Youth Day program set for October.

**Athletics Committee Update – Regent Tripp**

Regent Tripp introduced Scott Noble and asked for his input on athletics updates. Mr. Noble shared details on the ongoing facility upgrade renderings developed with Ampere and noted a focus on upcoming homecoming events. He also mentioned that the 2025 Hall of Fame Banquet was a sold-out event. Members of the 1992 Women’s Basketball RMAC Championship team were honored – all of which were New Mexico natives. Committee members praised the growing energy, culture, and success across athletics, highlighting recent football wins and strong engagement across sports programs.

**Highlands Land Development Committee Update – Chairman Sanchez**

Chairman Sanchez provided a brief overview including that Titan Development of Albuquerque has been selected to lead the golf course property development, including construction support and securing project financing. The chair noted the project has been decades in the making and thanked Dr. Woolf for helping advance it. Dr. Woolf reported that the project aims to expand local housing supply using available university land, with plans to break ground by next summer. State funding tools will support needed infrastructure. The housing will be publicly available, and community stakeholders will be included as planning progresses. With the new Land Development Corporation in place, leadership expressed strong optimism for the project’s future. For clarification, Regent Robert Lucero added that he recused himself from this committee before the RFP process due to a conflict.

### **Gene Torres Golf Course Ad hoc Committee Update – Chairman Sanchez**

Chairman Sanchez expressed enthusiasm about the continued growth of the University Golf Course, noting a significant increase in membership and activity. He shared that he is looking forward to working collaboratively with the Golf Course Committee and exploring new opportunities and partnerships to further enhance the facility long-term.

### **Hall of Fame hoc Committee – Regent Luna**

Regent Luna shared an update on behalf of Mr. Dave Luna, current Hall of Fame President. She noted that the NMHU Hall of Fame is on track to surpass its goal of 500 members during homecoming, with membership fees continuing to support all athletic teams. Work is underway to enhance the display of Hall of Fame inductees. David Luna has been actively updating photos in John Wilson Gymnasium, where 42 inductee photos have already been installed. The trophy display window in the Wilson Complex is being refreshed with memorabilia and will be completed by September 30. In coordination with Scott Noble, the Stu Clark building will serve as the designated Hall of Fame location, with plans for a future lobby kiosk.

### **Vice President for Finance & Administration – Stephanie Gonzales, CPA**

#### **Quarterly Report and Certification (FY26/Q1) – Action Item**

Stephanie Gonzales, Vice President of Finance, presented the Quarterly Financial Certification Report required by the Higher Education Department (HED) for the fourth quarter of FY2025. The quarterly report and certification for fiscal year 26 quarter one had all "no" answers for fiscal stability questions and was approved. The unaudited financial statements for FY24 show an ending fund balance of \$6.6 million, with revenue and expenditures at \$105 million. Expenditure totals for FY25 are at 94% spent. The cap matrix update shows progress on audit findings, including a new dedicated payroll manager. An electronic workflow for faculty contracts has been implemented, along with an off-boarding process and a student contract workflow. An updated evaluation form has been sent to the union.

Chairman Sanchez called for a motion to approve the Q1 report.

Motion: Regent Tripp

Second: Regent Luna

Vote: Unanimous approval (4-0) – Motion carried

#### **EFOP (CAP Matrix, Unaudited Financial Statements) – Action Item**

Vice President Stephanie Gonzales presented the Quarterly EFOP update. The unaudited financial statements show a strong balance sheet, with final audit adjustments still pending. Revenues and expenditures for FY24 both totaled approximately \$105 million, with expenses coming in slightly below revenues. The university reports an ending fund balance of \$6.6 million. Revenue performance for FY25 appears positive, and expenditures for FY24 closed at 94%, reflecting strong budget discipline. Leadership commended the university community for efforts that support rebuilding the fund balance.

An update was also provided on the CAP matrix. A running record of actions taken to address audit findings will be included in future board packets. While specific audit work cannot yet be discussed, significant progress has been made in strengthening internal controls, including hiring a dedicated payroll manager to improve payroll processes. Staff efforts were recognized, and optimism was expressed regarding ongoing improvements and the outcome of the audit.

Regent Lucero and Chairman Sanchez called for a motion to accept the EFOP (CAP Matrix, Unaudited Financial Statements) as presented.

Motion: Regent Lucero

Second: Regent Tripp

Vote: Unanimous approval (4-0) – Motion carried

### **Disposal of University Property – Action Item**

The annual report on the disposition of university property was presented, reflecting the equipment inventory review conducted by Jennifer Madrid and her team. The review identified damaged or unserviceable items, resulting in five pieces of equipment slated for disposal and auction. One additional item will be donated to a university in Utah through coordination between ORSP and Dr. Williamson.

The item was brought forward for board approval.

Motion: Regent Tripp

Second: Regent Lucero

Vote: Unanimous (4-0) – Motion carried

### **HR Task Force Update**

Vice President Stephanie Gonzales provided a brief update on the progress of the HR Task Force. A memo was presented outlining the progress of the HR Task Force, which includes representatives from faculty, staff, and administration. The group completed a major project this year: implementing an electronic workflow for faculty contracts. Due to the complexity and many variations of these contracts, developing workflows, templates, and training required substantial effort, but the new system is now functioning well and replaces the previous paper-based, email-dependent process. While a few one-off contracts remain outside the system, most are now processed electronically, with automatic reminders and proper distribution of finalized documents. Collaboration with Academic Affairs and the new provost will continue to ensure contract details are accurate and coordinated. The task force also completed a new offboarding process in Paycom, ensuring all relevant departments are notified when an employee leaves.

### **Lunch Break**

The Board hosted lunch with Counseling Center staff. No public policy was formulated, no public business was discussed, and no motion was required.

The Board recessed for lunch at 12:08 PM.

Chairman Frank Sanchez called the meeting back into order at 1:12 PM.

**Executive Session for a) discussion of limited Personnel Matters related to President Neil Wolf's contract and annual performance goals pursuant to NMSA 1978, § 10-15-1(H)(2); and (b) discussion of the potential purchase, acquisition, or disposal of real property of the university, relating to a property of interest located near the John A. Wilson Complex along 9th Street, pursuant to NMSA 1978, § 10-15-1(H)(8)**

Chairman Sanchez called for a motion to enter executive session.

Motion: Regent Lucero  
Second: Regent Luna  
Vote: Unanimous approval (4-0) – Motion carried

### **Reconvene in Open Session**

Motion to reenter open session. Only matters listed in the motion to close were discussed and no action(s) necessary. Regent Lucero exited the meeting following executive session due to a prior commitment.

Chairman Sanchez called for a motion to return to open session at 2:46 PM.

Motion: Regent Luna  
Second: Regent Tripp  
Vote: Unanimous approval (3-0) – Motion carried

### **Consent Agenda – Action Item**

Regent Luna commended all the hard work that was put into producing both the Student Handbook and Faculty Senate Policy.

Chairman Sanchez called for a motion to approve.

Motion: Regent Luna  
Second: Regent Trip  
Vote: Unanimous approval (4-0) – Motion carried

### **Appointment of new Highlands Land Development Committee members – Action Item**

Two individuals, Les Montoya and Don Bustos, accepted appointments to the Highlands Land Development Committee.

The board was asked to act on the item, and a motion was made to approve their appointments.

Motion: Regent Luna  
Second: Regent Trip  
Vote: Unanimous approval (3-0) – Motion carried

### **President’s Report – Dr. Neil Woolf**

#### **Enrollment**

President Woolf reaffirmed the university’s mission of student-centered, regionally responsive academic excellence and noted areas of ongoing improvement. The fall enrollment report shows overall headcount up 2%, driven by a 4% increase in undergraduates, while graduate enrollment declined by 2%. Undergraduate new freshmen grew by 34% and transfer students by 22%, producing a strong incoming class. Full-time enrollment increased, residence halls are nearly full – only 19 beds available, and the Las Vegas campus undergraduate population is up 8%. International student enrollment rose by 52%, and out-of-state enrollment also increased. Some centers, including the Albuquerque Center, will focus on strengthening enrollment.

#### **HLC Update**

Accreditation preparations continue, with upcoming HLC campus activities and ongoing communication through the liaison team. The institutional Budget Committee remains active, reviewing tuition and fee structures and exploring incentive-based budgeting models that could

reward academic units for growth while maintaining support for essential areas. Leadership emphasized the value of campus-wide collaboration in forming recommendations that ultimately support sound fiduciary decisions.

Leadership reaffirmed NMHU's longstanding commitment to serving Hispanic, first-generation, and underrepresented students, noting that this mission remains unchanged despite recent federal policy shifts. The university reported that the U.S. Department of Education has eliminated competitive programs for Hispanic-Serving Institutions and other minority-serving designations, folding them into programs reserved for HBCUs and tribal colleges. This resulted in the cancellation of Title V and Title III opportunities, including a Title V proposal recently prepared by NMHU. One existing Title V grant in Social Work will continue in its sixth-year extension, and staff worked quickly to draw down remaining funds before program closure.

The university also learned that upcoming TRIO program competitions, including Upward Bound, have been canceled. Although this represents a significant loss of potential federal funding, leadership emphasized that the university's core mission remains intact. The state has introduced RPSP funds to help offset federal funding losses, and NMHU intends to pursue this support. One DHSI grant remains active pending federal notification. Overall, NMHU continues to advocate for students and seek alternative funding despite the reduction in federal opportunities.

#### **Anahuac Puebla University Trip**

The university announced a new formal MOU with Anáhuac University Puebla, established during a recent visit by NMHU representatives. The partnership is intended to expand global learning opportunities and strengthen students' educational experiences by connecting them with peers abroad. Puebla, a major academic center with hundreds of higher education institutions, offers significant potential for exchange and collaboration.

#### **Infrastructure Improvements Project**

The university is advancing major facility improvements, including upgrades to the library and athletics areas. These materials are being prepared ahead of the upcoming legislative session to ensure NMHU can present fully developed plans rather than preliminary concepts. Work on student housing and campus development also continues, and contract negotiations are underway with the master developer for the land project referenced earlier in the meeting.

Initial athletics renderings illustrate a redesigned multi-purpose stadium with a widened track, an eastward shift of the field, a new branded entrance, and seating for approximately 3,500, supporting both university and community events. Concepts also show improved access points connecting to the baseball, softball, and Stu Clark areas, with interior upgrades such as modernized locker rooms. Cost and timeline estimate from developers are in progress and will guide next steps.

#### **Highlands Elevated**

The university formally launched the public phase of the Highlands Elevated campaign at an event hosted at the Governor's Mansion, where strong attendance and donor engagement marked a successful kickoff. With a goal of \$10 million, the campaign has already reached nearly \$9.75 million in commitments and gifts during its private phase. A significant recent contribution secured the naming of Sininger Hall, and the university also received its largest-ever scholarship endowment – \$1.12 million.

As the campaign moves into its public phase, attention will shift toward current-use funds, annual giving, and expanding participation through Project Purple, which aims for 35% faculty and staff involvement in recurring gifts. Leadership emphasized the importance of responsiveness in donor relations and encouraged the community to learn more at HighlandsElevated.com.

### **Vice President for Marketing, Communications, and Government Relations – Dave Lepre**

#### **RPSP and Special Appropriation – Action Item**

Vice President Lepre reviewed his RPSP packet outlining that the university submitted three special requests and thirteen Research and Public Service Projects, all requiring Board of Regents approval. Special requests include \$1 million to renovate Connor Hall for approximately 70 additional residential beds, \$5 million to renovate the Natatorium for student recreation and wellness, and a supplemental \$44,495 request for athletics broadcast technology.

Of the thirteen RPSPs, ten are renewals at their current funding levels, covering programs such as AP New Mexico, the Native American Social Work Studies Institute, the New Mexico Reforestation Center, Social Work and Nursing initiatives, teacher pipeline programs, and tribal education efforts. Three RPSPs involve new or expanded requests aimed at replacing lost federal funding: an expanded request for the Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute (\$1.54 million), an expansion of the Open Educational Resources project (\$191,200), and a new research investment and support request (\$252,276). Approval was sought to finalize and submit all requests.

Chairman Sanchez called for a motion to approve.

Motion: Regent Tripp

Second: Regent Luna

Vote: Unanimous approval (3-0) – Motion carried

#### **Approval of 9/1/25 Foundation Gift Agreement – Action Item**

Dr. Grindstaff provided a brief overview of the gift agreement tied to the previously discussed naming commitment, noting that under university policy, such naming actions become final only upon Board of Regents ratification. He requested board approval of the agreement.

Chairman Sanchez called for a motion.

Motion: Regent Luna

Second: Regent Tripp

Vote: Unanimous approval (3-0) – Motion carried

#### **Faculty Senate Report – Dr. Jennifer Lindline**

Dr. Lindline reported that the Graduate Council approved a proposal concerning graduate student discipline and noted that the effective date had been removed from both the outcomes assessment and contingent faculty handbooks. She explained that the Outcomes Assessment Committee and the Faculty Affairs Committee had been jointly charged with reviewing these handbooks for potential revisions. Dr. Lindline also announced that members had been elected to faculty senate committees and that efforts are underway to fully populate all committees in coordination with academic departments and the schools and colleges. Additionally, she is working with the Office of Academic Affairs to schedule formal training for the faculty grievance and conciliation committees. She concluded by expressing her commitment to continued collaboration with the administration on policy development and decision-making.

### **Staff Advisory Report**

Officer Carlos Nevarez presented the campus safety report noting that traffic enforcement efforts began three weeks before the start of the school year, with an initial focus on stop-sign and speeding violations to help familiarize students with expectations. Once the radar system was fully implemented, officers stopped fifteen vehicles and issued written citations, with drivers described as courteous and professional. Most received written warnings. These early enforcement efforts quickly became known among students, leading to quieter patrol periods with fewer violations. The report emphasized that maintaining a safe campus relies on a mix of coordinated messaging and vigilance and highlighted an ongoing challenge with off-campus individuals using university property as a through-route. Carlos expressed appreciation to the Board and administration, particularly Dr. Blea, for their support and noted that the current system is functioning effectively.

### **Associated Students of NMHU Report – Lydia Okojie**

Lydia Okojie delivered the report emphasizing the organization’s mission to amplify student voices, ensure their concerns are heard, and collaborate with university leadership to enhance student life, academics, and campus resources. The 25th ASNMHU administration has prioritized improving cafeteria meal services, and a culinary committee – made up of students and administrators – has been formed to provide structured feedback to help strengthen food service quality. Lydia also shared updates related to housing and campus safety, noting meetings with the housing department and outreach efforts to inform students about safety practices and emergency protocols, including clarifying the purpose of campus “blue light” emergency systems. She then announced the inauguration of the 2025 ASNMHU Senate, listing newly sworn-in officers and senators, while noting that positions remain open for graduate representatives from the Schools of Education and Social Work as well as senators from the centers. She concluded by highlighting ASNMHU’s collaboration with the President on upcoming homecoming activities, reaffirming the administration’s commitment to delivering more engaging and impactful student events, and welcoming suggestions to support the institution’s continued improvement.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chairman Sanchez moved to adjourn the meeting.

Motion: Regent Luna

Second: Regent Tripp

Vote: Unanimous approval (3-0) – Motion carried

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:17 PM.



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Chairman  
NMHU Board of Regents



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Secretary/Treasurer  
NMHU Board of Regents