



Board of Regents Regular Meeting

Friday, March 13, 2020 ~ 1:00 pm

NMT Campus

Macey Center ~ Galena Ballroom

801 Leroy Place, Socorro, NM

MINUTES

The New Mexico Tech Board of Regents convened at 1:00 pm on Friday, March 13, 2020 with Chair Deborah Peacock presiding. Other Board members present were Jerry Armijo, David Gonzales (phone), Yolanda King and Veronica Espinoza. Other university administrators, staff and guests included:

Stephen Wells	Lisa Majkowski	Henry Prager
Vanessa Grain	Alex Garcia	Jose Martinez
Juliann Ulibarri	Tom Engler	Emma Aafloy
Cleve McDaniel	Dave Landrum	Aly El-Osery
Peter Phaiah	JoAnn Salome	Mark Adams (phone)
Doug Wells	Valentina Avramidi	Steve Simpson
Carlos Romero	Robert Balch (phone)	John Larson
Nelia Dunbar	Peter Anselmo	Thom Guengerich
Dave Manzano (phone)	Michelle Sherman	Valerie Kimble

- 1. Call to Order.** Chair Peacock called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm. In accordance with social distance requirements ordered by Gov. Michelle Lujan-Grisham, the Chair announced that the meeting would be streamed to an audience seated in the upstairs lobby, who were invited to speak during the public comment period. She asked that speakers use microphones and identify themselves by name.
 - a. Proof of Meeting Notice.** Ms. Grain confirmed that proper legal notice was given.
- 2. Approval of Agenda.** Because of timely announcements regarding COVID-19, Chair Peacock asked that the Agenda be revised under 4. Recurring Reports to only include items a, b, d, e, l, o and p. Regent King moved to approve the Agenda as revised due to the COVID-19 restrictions. Regent Armijo seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.
- 3. Public Comment.** None.
- 4. Recurring Reports.**
 - a) SGA.** Ms. Sherman reported on the recent Spring Student Forum, noting student interest in promoting diversity, greater gender balance, health care options for grad students and faculty involvement in student recruitment. SGA elections have been postponed.
 - b) GSA.** Mr. Prager noted that new officers have been appointed for the remainder of the year, and elections for the 2020-2021 academic year are under way. He recommended that the symposium on climate change be canceled until 2021, and announced a new GSA event for the next travel grant period to include a workshop on grant writing. Mr. Prager also expressed appreciation to the administration in seeking solutions to provide health care insurance for grad students. While there is no current solution, the President noted that VPs Dr. Wells and Dr. McDaniel are working on the issue.

- d) Academic Affairs.** Dr. Doug Wells delivered two presentations to Regents, one on enrollment projections, based on data from the last 15 years. He reported a 94 percent retention rate between the Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 semesters, and a 3.1 average GPA for freshmen, both the highest on record. The current projection is 351 new undergraduate students for Fall 2020. The VPAA's report on Admission data was presented in a new format, as requested, using a dashboard format to reflect large amounts of data, and he requested feedback on what data the Board would like to see encapsulated. It was noted that over the past several years there was an increase in incomplete applications. Toward a more coherent communications plan, every student and their parents will hear from all offices relevant to incoming first-year students. Until now, financial aid was based on merit only; the VPAA introduced a need-based set of scholarships which should bring in more freshman students. The VPAA noted that former VPAA Dr. Warren Ostergren has been hired to review the entire process; as chair of the Mechanical Engineering Dept. during its peak enrollment years, Dr. Ostergren will be able to offer insights. VPAA Wells also cited the need to attend additional STEM events. Another finding was that enrollment levels went down at the same time as Lottery Scholarship funding was reduced from 100%. Dr. McDaniel noted that Scholarship funding now at 88 percent should help close that gap. It was agreed that collecting and monitoring data regarding high school student demographics will help guide NMT in asking the right questions.
- l) Capital Projects.** In his update, Dr. McDaniel reported that the Jones Hall renovation is moving along well. The chemistry lab buildout has started and is awaiting an EID permit. NMT has been working with low bidder Van Gilbert and staff to revise cost estimates for the Deju University House and President's Residence because bids came in higher than expected. He cited \$769k in cost reductions thus far with other reductions possible. Once the cost estimate issue is solved, the HED Capital Projects Director has the authority to approve the project without going through the entire suite of approvals normally required. During discussion, it was noted that construction costs could drop due to the current economic downturn
- m) Faculty Senate.** Dr. Engler announced that Honorary Doctoral Degree recipient Lukas Lundin will be on campus for Commencement.
- o) President's Report. *Coronavirus.*** The President called the coronavirus an evolving problem, commending the outstanding teamwork and extra hours put in by the Task Force. The number-one priority is the health and safety of the NMT and Socorro communities. The N.M. Dept. of Health has been extremely helpful and everyone involved has been very diligent. NMT is following the Governor's lead in limiting gatherings of 100-plus, noting the cancellation of the March 12 PAS performance and the N.M. Science and Engineering Fair. Restrictions are in place regarding university business and out-of-state travel; and anyone returning to campus from out-of-state must self-quarantine for 14 days. He cited an incident whereby false rumors circulated in the community were detrimental. NMT has extended spring break for students to allow time to develop a plan for their return and completion of semester coursework. One option is to offer classes online and to work with faculty, AFRL and other entities on how to implement the plan. Both Ms. Sherman and Mr. Prager expressed doubts that all students returning to campus would self-quarantine. Dr. Phaiiah reported that NMT is working with Chartwells to provide students staying on campus over the break with meals and activities. Students with any flu or COVID-19 like symptoms should call the Health Center. The President added that student employees can work up to 40 hours a week during break. Mr. Romero noted that the research office is working to mitigate risks to First Responder groups before the next class comes in. A federal health state of emergency is in place regarding grants and contracts, as



well as a telecommuter policy for non-essential personnel. The office continues to monitor each of the research centers. An Emergency Response Team tabletop exercise elicited the appropriate response. Hand sanitizing stations have been installed along with extra antiseptic cleansing.

Legislative Update. President Wells noted that the Legislature approved a \$7.6 billion state budget for FY21, including an average 4 percent compensation increase funded at 70 percent, and a 2.1 percent increase in NMT's I&G base budget. The university received \$10 million of \$16 million requested for capital outlay for Kelly Hall. During discussion, it was noted that the 30 percent NMT must cover of the compensation package will cost the university ~\$42k. This creates a real challenge when the State of New Mexico funds at the 90 percent level for PED compensation. The state minimum wage increase is an additional unfunded mandate. President Wells said the university is doing all it can to educate lawmakers and agencies how universities operate, and the burden of unfunded mandates on institutions of higher education.

5. Information Items.

- a) **NMT Foundation Updates.** Regent Armijo reported on two items from the Foundation board's last meeting: The Comprehensive Campaign is continuing to develop, with no firm launch date yet; and the transition of the Foundation from a research organization to fund-raising. The Foundation is following the advice of its consultant in terms of the composition of the board, noting the need to grow and diversify its membership.
- b) **Degree Conferrals for Dec. 19, Jan. 20 and Feb. 20.** In Regent's binders.
- c) **FY 2021 Auxiliary and Health Center Fee Changes.** Dr. Phaiah reported that NMT will propose an increase in room rates, an item shared with students at the recent forum.

6. Action Items.

- a) **Approval of Feb. 7, 2020 Minutes.** The Minutes were unanimously approved on a motion by Regent Armijo and a second from Regent Espinoza.
- b) **Approve Revised Tenure and Promotion Policies.** Dr. Doug Wells noted that the revised policies have undergone review by counsel and the Faculty Senate with the exception of appeals policies, which have not yet had a full legal review. The President recommended approval of the Tenure and Promotion Policies with the understanding that recommended changes, including those suggested by Chair Peacock, would be made before the policy package is returned to the Board. VP Wells said the current policy, which dates to 1990, lacks transparency and an appeals process. Regent Armijo moved to approve the policies subject to changes. Regent Espinoza seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.
- c) **Approve New Master's Program in Communication and Design.** Dr. El-Osery introduced the item as a graduate program proposal put together by the CLASS Department. CLASS Chair Dr. Simpson described it as an outgrowth of the department's B.S. program in Technical Communication. The 30-hour program includes four required courses and a variety of electives which integrate areas of expertise within the department. The new master's degree program was unanimously approved on a motion by Regent King and a second from Regent Armijo.
- d) **Approve FY 2021 Tuition.** Dr. McDaniel introduced a proposed tuition increase of 3 percent. This increase would provide only a 1 percent increase to the net operational revenue base to cover unfunded mandates and any structural deficit due to a drop in enrollment. The proposed increase is half of what was implemented last year and is consistent with tuition hikes at other institutions of higher education in New Mexico. Regent Gonzales expressed concerns about

continuing tuition increases and unfunded mandates and how they would impact enrollment levels and operational funding levels. Regent Gonzales stated concerns about NM higher education institutions not yet having a clear path to increase enrollment, and placing additional financial burden on students. President Wells responded that he expressed his concerns regarding unfunded mandates to the legislators and that a modest increase in tuition is needed for proper fiducial oversight of the university. Regent King moved to approve the 3 percent increase in tuition. Regent Armijo seconded the motion. Chair Peacock expressed her confidence that the university can increase enrollment. Regent Espinoza noted that both the SGA and GSA agreed with her that raising tuition was necessary, and that students have been very understanding. Regent Gonzales said he did not want to see layoffs, and that the Legislature needs to know that their unfunded mandates are hurting institutions. Regent Armijo said that while he shared the same concerns as Regent Gonzales, he did support the measure, otherwise decisions would have to be made with unwanted consequences. When Regent King called for the question, Regents approved the tuition increase on a 4-1 vote, with Regent Gonzales casting the nay vote.

e) Approve Unrestricted Fund Purchase.

- Southwest Contract for Mtn. Springs Dorm Furniture. Regent Armijo moved for approval, followed by a second from Regent King. The motion passed unanimously.
- Ameresco Award for Guaranteed Utility Savings Project. Regents unanimously approved the project on a motion by Regent King and a second from Regent Espinoza.

f) Approve Property Resolutions. Regents unanimously approved property resolutions 200313-01 and 200313-02 on a motion by Regent King and a second from Regent Armijo.

g) Approve Bank Resolutions. Regent Armijo moved to approve the resolutions as presented in Regent's packets. Regent King seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

- 7. Individual Board Member Comments.** While it cannot be made in the form of a motion, Chair Peacock requested and received unanimous Board approval for a vote of confidence for President Wells and his administration on how they are handling the COVID-19 issue. Regent King and Chair Peacock expressed appreciation for frequent updates on the coronavirus. Regent Gonzales noted his appreciation for the format and data capture on the Admission report.
- 8. New Business.** Regents agreed to take a wait-and-see approach on how to conduct the next Board meeting on April 3.
- 9. Executive Session.** NMSA 1978, Sec.10-15-1 (H)(2), (If required to Consider Legal or Personnel Matters). On a motion by Regent King and a second from Regent Armijo, the Board unanimously adjourned its regular session at 3:43 pm to meet in executive session under a roll-call vote conducted by Ms. Grain.
- 10. Reconvene in open session and take final action, if any, on such limited personnel matters which shall be acted upon in open session following conclusion of the closed session.** The meeting reconvened at 4:08 pm with the Chair announcing that no action had been taken, and only items so specified were discussed. Regent Armijo moved to approve the negotiated President's and Regents' goals and milestones. Regent King seconded the motion which passed unanimously.



11. Adjournment. The meeting was unanimously adjourned at 4:09 pm on a motion by Regent King and a second from Regent Espinoza.

President

Attest:

Secretary- Treasurer