

Senate Chair's Report

February 6, 2014

The Spring Semester is well underway. This will be my last semester at New Mexico State University: I have accepted a faculty appointment at the University of Cincinnati effective in August of this year. I want to thank you all for your support and efforts on behalf of our University. Although I will join the Bearcats next academic year, I will always be an Aggie.

Activities

In the past month I have met with the Senate Leadership Committee, the Academic Dean's Council and the University Executive Council as well as the Board of Regents. I also spent last weekend in Santa Fe in conjunction with the Board of Regents meeting. I have been in active correspondence with the Council on Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA), a group of faculty senate/councils to which we belong.

Meetings

The campus visits of the candidates for Chief Information Officer are complete. I expect an announcement on the hire by the end of this month. Campus visits of candidates for Vice President for Advancement started yesterday and will likely complete next week if the weather cooperates.

The Board of Regents met in Santa Fe last Friday in conjunction with Las Cruces Day (held Monday). I informed the Board of our legislative actions to date and about upcoming items of legislation from us (see below).

Legislative Update

The situation with the Lottery Scholarship crisis is getting murkier. As of last count there were ten (10) distinct bills dropped in the House and Senate. Figuring out what will come out in this legislative sausage is difficult. It appears likely that GPA requirements will increase to 2.75 (from 2.50); minimum credit hour requirements will increase to 15 per term (from 12); the eligibility period will decrease to 7 semesters (from 8); and that award amounts will be capped at \$2100 per semester for NMSU, UNM and NM Tech. Lower awards will be made at community colleges (\$800) and at the regional schools.

The House Education Committee passed a new funding formula proposal that looks much like the Council of University President's proposal. This proposal awards degrees and certificates much more than student head count.

The University's capital outlay requests have not fared well so far. The top request was for renovations of Jett Hall and Rentfrow Hall. The request was cut by the LFC and apparently cut further by HED. The University's request was for \$21.3 M and the last amount I heard in Santa Fe was \$18.5 M.

Finally, Representative Steinborn introduced House Joint Resolution 7. This resolution would put a constitutional amendment before the voters to create nominating commissions for the Boards of each of the state's education institutions. Faculty and student representation are required under the proposal. I am unsure at this time where our Board and administration stand on this issue. I view it as a useful step, but not as immediately useful to us as increasing the Board's size.

Current Issues

We have a final proposal on the new admissions requirements. This has been sent to you over the Senate's List-serv. Feel free to discuss the proposal there. The language in the proposal is about as sterile as the current language is. Given the magnitude of the change, it would be better if we used more welcoming language – something that says, “We want you to be an Aggie” between the lines. Vice President Montoya and her staff have the proposal now to craft such language. The guts of the proposal are there. The final catalog language proposal will come to the Senate in March.

This is a large change in our admissions policy, and the Senate Leadership Committee and I want the discussion to be very broadly based. Please coordinate with your Dean and your caucus to be sure that each Department meets with a Senator present to discuss the proposal. I leave the structure of those meetings to you. My only advice is to listen much more than you talk. Please bring back any pertinent points to the Committee meeting after the proposal has been introduced and to the full debate in the Senate if the proposal comes back in some form of “Do Pass”.

There is a move originating in the State Legislature to make the University a tobacco-free environment. Restrictions on tobacco usage do not fall in the purview of the Senate. Prior actions in this regard bear out that position. However, if any Senators wish to organize a memorial regarding the action (whether in support or opposition), they are of course free to do so.

It has come to my attention that our community college campuses have faculty committees similar to the Senate. The question of proper naming of these bodies has come up. My view is that if we are a single university with several campuses then we should have one Senate. One suggestion (from Carlsbad) is that these bodies be called “Faculty Councils”. It is not clear to me that this requires Senate action to accomplish.

Respectfully submitted,

Dennis L. Clason
Faculty Senate Chair 2013-14