



**Board of Regents Meeting
Thursday, August 17, 2023
1:00 pm
Macey Center Galena Room**

MINUTES

The New Mexico Tech Board of Regents convened at 1:00 pm on Thursday, August 17, 2023, with Regent Chair Jerry Armijo presiding. Board members present were Dr. Dave Lepre, Dr. Yolanda Jones King, Dr. Srinivas Mukkamala (via Zoom) and Adrian Salustri. Other university administrators, staff and guests included: Dr. Daniel López, Dr. Van Romero, Richard Cervantes, Dr. Michael Doyle, Dr. David Greene, Dr. Michael Jackson, Vanessa Grain, Lala Garcia, Dr. Robert Balch, Dr. Nelia Dunbar, Dr. Brian Borchers, Dr. Aly El-Osery, Jenny Ma, Emma Aafloy, JoAnn Salome, Tammy Roof, Dylan Schroeder, Dylan Purcell; and Carlos Romero and Mark Adams (both Zoom).

1. Call to Order. Regent Armijo called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm.

a) Proof of Meeting Notice. Ms. Grain confirmed that legal notices were placed in the *Albuquerque Journal* and *El Defensor Chieftain*.

2. Approval of Agenda. Regent King moved to approve the agenda. Regent Salustri seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

3. Public Comment. None.

4. Recurring Reports.

a) Student Government Updates. **GSA** President Purcell said he is learning how the Graduate Student Association operates and where funds are spent adding that travel is the principle expense. He stated that the bylaws needed to be reviewed and updated. Mr. Purcell said he would like to give the voting council a list of spending options, and to ask students their preferences. The rising cost of graduate student housing is another concern, he said. One idea is to field student concerns and take them to the appropriate entities. Regent King commented that Santa Fe is always seeking student input. **SGA** President Schroeder told Regents the Student Government Association is working to ensure that club budgets are in order, with a focus on updating the Student Activities Center (SAC) to make it more usable and inviting, with its own tables and chairs.



The Student Activities Board is launching T&T (Tech and Town) on Thursdays, Mr. Schroeder said, whereby students will be transported to the City Plaza on the first Thursday of the month for activities. Other Thursday events will take place on campus, offering students opportunities for socializing and activities. Chair Armijo recognized Mr. Schroeder and Mr. Purcell as members of the Presidential Search Committee.

b) Student Life. VP Greene reported NMT enrollment data and demographics and FTE statistics, telling Regents he will report retention data at the next meeting. Last year's grad and undergraduate enrollment totaled 1523. This year's enrollment total for both groups was 1476. NMT has 123 international students: 23 undergrads and 100 graduate students. Current FTEs taking 15 or more credit hours number 1072; those with 12 credit hours total 1340. VP Greene said FTE numbers are reported separately to state and federal agencies. As part of a discussion, Regent Lepre said HED enrollment data include age, gender and ethnicity, issues to be discussed at the Retreat. He cited a headcount of 1688 for FY22; of those, 789 were classified as "white," suggesting some 900 were Hispanic, American Indian, Black, Asian or other races. VP Greene noted that in his last report to Regents, 51 percent of degree-seeking students were classified as non-white, including 41 percent identifying as Hispanic. "Going back, people would be surprised by how the Institution has changed, said Regent Lepre, "an important message to policy-makers and supporters."

c) Academic Affairs. IVP Jackson noted that this is the time of year when accolades begin to surface. As such, he announced that NM EPSCoR recognized Dr. Sihua Shao with its 2023 Mentor Award. Dr. Shao is an Asst. Prof. with the Electrical Engineering Dept. The letter states: "Dr. Shao exemplifies the qualities of an excellent mentor by supporting students' academic, research and career endeavors, and by creating inclusive research environments." Dr. Jackson brought to Regents' attention an incident last spring in the days leading up to Commencement, whereby a faculty member mistakenly posted the wrong grade for a student. The rush prior to Commencement leaves the process open to error, he said. Fortunately, the incident did not affect the individual's status; however, if it had, "What steps would we take?" IVP Jackson asked Regents to consider not doing degree conferrals prior to Commencement. No action can be taken on information items, said Chair Armijo, calling the issue a "heads-up." President López suggested there might be other options, but starting the conversation is a good idea.



d) Admin & Finance. VP Cervantes updated Regents on infrastructure projects, including completion of the Brown Hall remodel, built in 1929, and the two-phase plan to replace aging Kelly Hall, home to the PRRC. The HED has approved Phase 1 of the project, which awaits Legislative action. If given the green light at the DFA meeting in September, Tech plans to begin construction in October. Additional funds required for Phase II were requested during the NMHED summer hearings in July, said Mr. Cervantes, when NMT presented its top three capital project requests as approved by Regents at their May meeting. Once Phase II is completed, old Kelly Hall will be razed.

e) Research. VP Doyle reported that NSF has approved a Type I request from the Institute through the NSF ENGINES program. NMT is in the final stage for an NSF Type II \$60 million research grant with other entities. NMT has \$118.9 million in sponsored research funding, about \$28 million more than last year, he said, equivalent to that of NMSU, and \$10 million behind UNM. Currently underway is a NSF grant in collaboration with the National Center for Genome Resources for \$24 million to be disbursed over six-years to create a program to serve both the state and nation. NMT also has started the process to create a National Center for Spatial Science Station at NMT, he said, and is working on a U.S. Dept. of Education grant to build up research infrastructure. That, and the new field of spatial biology, are key areas of focus. As such, Dr. Doyle cited an interview he gave to the journal, BioTechniques, explaining the origin of spatial biology and his role in its creation. The article's publication nicely coincides with an Oct. 2, 2023 deadline for the NSF and Education grants. As part of the Education grant, toward greater student support at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, is an effort to create a virtual research core to build a culture of camaraderie and support among software engineers, to help solve the problem of finding good software engineers for research projects.

f) Special Research. VP Romero reported that NMT is in the final stages of integrating the second dome into the Interferometer at MROI. A crew from Italy will complete work this weekend. Dr. Romero shared the good news that two telescopes will be operational this fall, a process that's only taken 20 years. He updated Regents on the proposed Hantush-Deju National Center for Hydrologic Innovation, saying that of the top three candidates for director, one is "head and shoulders above the others." NMT is under negotiations with this candidate for the position. Dr. Romero, President López, and Ms. Colleen Foster will apprise Dr. Raul Deju of updates during an upcoming visit with him in San Francisco. Recent rains washed out the road leading to NMT installations, said VP Romero, giving kudos to the heavy equipment crew who filled the eroded areas with dirt. On his return trip down the mountain, Dr. Romero said he couldn't even find the washed out area.



To protect the road from the next washout, he hoped to install barriers, wire cages filled with boulders, which then would be covered with dirt. Tech maintains the road, built in the 1960s, but qualifies for federal highway funds.

g) Bureau of Geology. Director Dunbar said the Bureau has submitted an NSF Type I proposal with a focus on energy transition in the Permian Basin; and will work toward a Type II proposal over the next couple of years. Even if the proposal is not successful, the process will serve the Bureau well, she said. The Bureau recently wrapped up an NSF-funded internship program with four geoscience students from New Mexico and four from other places, who worked on high-level research projects. The NSF "was absolutely thrilled," Dr. Dunbar said. "I think they're hungry to have us do that again." The Bureau received final notification of a sizeable grant from the National Nuclear Security Administration for a single crystal x-ray diffraction unit she said opens the door to future funding. In addition, Dr. Virginia McLemore will be inducted into the N.M. Mining Association Hall of Fame, the first woman chosen for the honor. The Bureau is securing incremental funding toward water conservation efforts, led by Dr. Stacey Timmons. Bureau personnel, and a small contingent including U.S. Sen Martin Heinrich and an LFC representative, toured the Rio Chama as part of a briefing on the state's water infrastructure. The focus was on areas where the Bureau is the only agency well suited to address, such as water education, said Dr. Dunbar, adding that the Legislature is very aware of water resource issues facing New Mexico.

h) PRRC. Director Balch reported ongoing studies by PRRC researchers, noting significant outreach efforts at national energy conferences focused on CO₂ discussions. During the previous fiscal year, PRRC staff delivered 128 presentations, wrote one book, and submitted 68 proposals, an all-time record; 29 still are pending. The division's budget is based on 100 percent soft money, and leverages what it can. Citing the Sept. 25 deadline for state RPSP submissions, Regent Lepre offered his assistance, noting the difficulty in summarizing the scope of PRRC's work.

i) Faculty Senate. Dr. Borchers reported results of a Faculty Senate survey distributed in March with 57 participants, asking faculty for their top three priorities to meet Strategic Plan goals. Faculty concerns were many and varied, including outdated lab equipment; questions related to student recruitment and finance; empowering student success; and the number of colleagues who leave Socorro because of educational concerns. Regent King, citing her passion for STEM outreach, asked about outreach at Socorro schools. Dr. Borchers replied that Dr. Sharon Sessions conducts outreach statewide, and two faculty serve on the School Board.



Addressing faculty data, IVP Jackson said numbers for part-time faculty are down since the high of 2014, but an increase of 10 leaves the level relatively flat.

j) President's Report. With most issues already covered, President López offered general comments. The year-end balance for last fiscal year looks healthy, he said, noting the need for increased enrollment, which the Board will discuss at length at the Regents Retreat on Aug. 18. On that note, high school graduation rates are not encouraging. The President said he has attended every function on campus involving Socorro-area students. Congresswoman Melanie Stansbury, a N.M. native and scientist, joined one such gathering, the President said, inspiring students with her own educational journey. There is a strong desire among NMT's leadership team to address enrollment and to find ways to make STEM exciting. The campus has an immediate visual impact on visitors, and NMT is working to make it more attractive. Other issues Dr. López cited were reaching out to the entire campus community in opening up lines of communication ("Don't complain to each other, complain to me."); personnel ("We're in better shape than a year ago."); attracting additional donors; and the President's Golf Tournament, which raises funds for student scholarships. Thus far, the annual tournament has raised \$258,000 plus in-kind contributions, totaling ~\$270,000. This year's target is to reach \$300,000,

5. Information Items.

a) NMT Foundation Updates. Regent Armijo reported that at the Foundation's meeting several weeks ago, members were able to work through several issues.

b) NMT Univ. Research Park Corp. Updates. Regent King reported that the Research Park Board will continue its strategic planning process.

c) NM HERC Updates. Regent King attended the recent CUP meeting via Zoom, which elicited a good discussion, with a focus on support services. "We need money across the board (to address the basic needs of students)," noted Regent Salustri.

d) NMT Finance Subcmte/Legislative Updates. Regent Lepre reported that the Finance Subcommittee will become more involved with information-gathering with the full board when it comes time to make funding recommendations.

e) NMT Research Subcmte. Regent Mukkamala said the committee will meet after the Retreat to develop a plan for the next two years. He and Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham met one-on-one to discuss issues from a macro-perspective, adding that she was very supportive.



f) NMT Student Updates. Regent Salustri said that from his perspective, things are running pretty smoothly. He called the process "really quite impressive," adding that he will have much to say at the Retreat. Salustri said he is ready to help the University go through this period of change, along with Dr. Borchers on the faculty side.

g) Degree Conferrals for June and July 2023. IVP Jackson provided lists of candidates for degree conferrals.

h) Restricted Fund Purchase Notifications > \$100k. VP Cervantes said most of the 21 requests for Restricted Fund purchases exceeding \$100k are related to Security. He noted some diversity in terms of funding sources.

i) Financial Reports ending June 30, 2023. VP Cervantes prefaced his report by saying the University is trying to provide faculty with more financial transparency, as requested. Overall, balances look good, and operating expenses are shrinking as Tech is making more efficient use of its resources, he said. Trending upward are personnel costs (primarily due to mandated raises in July 2022 and an increase in the state's minimum wage). While monthly reports are required by the state, measuring financial health goes beyond these reports, said Mr. Cervantes.

6. Action Items.

a) Approval of July 17, 2023 Special Mtg. Minutes. Chair Armijo asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the July 17 special meeting. Regent King so moved. Regent Salustri second the motion, which passed unanimously.

b) Approval of Emeritus Degree for Dr. Wedeward and Dr. Seright. Dr. Kevin Wedeward of the Electrical Engineering Dept. is retiring after 25 years, said IVP Jackson, recommending Board approval for Emeritus status. Dr. El-Osery said Dr. Wedeward was an outstanding professor and researcher who often stayed late to make himself available to students. Dr. Wedeward also developed robotic kits long before they became popular, distributing them to middle- and high schools. Regent Salustri moved to award Emeritus status to Dr. Wedeward. Regent King seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Director Balch, in recommending Dr. Randy Seright for Emeritus status, noted his long, distinguished career at PRRC for the past 36 years, retiring as Associate Director. He is the number-one expert in the world for polymer flooding, and in 2002 received NMT's Distinguished Research Award. Regent Lepre moved to approve Emeritus status for Dr. Seright. Regent Salustri seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.



c) Approval of Resolution SW NM Council of Govts. Mr. Romero said the Council requires a yearly resolution for NMT's continued membership. Regent King moved to approve the resolution. Regent Salustri seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

d) Approval of NMHED FY25 Research and Public Service Projects Ranking and Funding Requests. VP Cervantes presented the sixteen items ranked by priority for the university. Regent Lepre asked several questions and further discussion ensued. Regent Lepre said he would need additional information to make an informed vote. Chair Armijo then asked for a motion to table the request. Regent King so moved. Regent Lepre seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

e) Approval of NMHED Endowment Report. VP Cervantes requested authority to submit the Endowment Report to NMHED by Sept. 15, as outlined in his report to Regents. Regent King moved for approval. Regent Salustri seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

f) Approval of NMHED Qtr. Certification for June 30, 2023. VP Cervantes requested certification approval. Regent King moved for approval. Regent Salustri seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

g) Approval of NMT Property Resolutions. VP Cervantes requested approval for the property resolutions. Regent King moved for approval. Regent Salustri seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

h) Approval of Unrestricted Fund Purchase >\$250k (Presbyterian Healthcare Services and Southwest Concrete and Paving). VP Cervantes requested approval for both purchases. Regent King moved for approval. Regent Salustri seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

i) Approval of Resolution Requesting a .75% Admin. Fee on NMT Endowments. Chair Armijo said the resolution was a Foundation request to assess an administrative fee on endowments, thereby allowing the Advancement Office to increase its staff to help meet its financial goals, said President López. The .75% fee would be from the drawdown from the endowments, capped at 4.5 percent, Chair Armijo said, adding that as a member of the Foundation, he supported it. Regent Salustri moved to approve the resolution. After a pause, Regent Armijo seconded the motion himself, opening the door for discussion. The Foundation, he said, exists to benefit Tech; its largest distribution is for scholarships. Without the fee, said Chair Armijo, the Foundation would need to reduce scholarships or erode Restricted Funds.



"We're a fiscally conservative administration," the Chair continued; other options are not attractive, such as reducing Advancement staff and scholarships. With the administrative fee covering a portion of salaries, Regent Lepre said he would support the resolution. The Chair called for the vote, and the motion for approval passed unanimously.

7. Individual Board Member Comments. Regent Lepre asked that a meeting be scheduled after data on RPSPs are available.

8. New Business. Regents, with assistance from Ms. Grain, agreed to the following dates for the next three Board meeting: Monday, Oct. 9 and Friday, Nov. 17, 2023; and Friday, Feb. 2, 2024.

9. Executive Session. NMSA 1978, Sec 10-15-1(H)(2), (If required to Consider Legal and/or Personnel Matters). Regent King moved to meet in Executive Session. Regent Salustri seconded the motion. A roll-call vote was taken by Ms. Grain and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 3:25 pm.

10. Reconvene in open session and take final action, if any, on such limited legal and/or personnel matters which shall be acted upon in open session following conclusion of the closed session. Chair Armijo at 4:55 pm entertained a motion to reconvene the meeting. Regent King so moved, and Regent Salustri seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. The Chair announced that only matters relating to legal and/or personnel were discussed. President López announced a Memorial Reception to honor W.D. (Denny) Peterson, former VP for Administration and Finance around noon on Sept. 12, with several speakers, himself included.

11. Adjournment. Regent King moved to adjourn the meeting. Regent Salustri seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

DocuSigned by:

Jerry Armijo

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President

Attest:

DocuSigned by:

Dr. David Lepre Sr.

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Secretary- Treasurer