Enhancement of Shared Governance
Through Effective Consultation with Faculty

2012 Provost’s Project Report
ADVANCING LEADERS PROGRAM
New Mexico State University

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2011-2012 Advancing Leaders Participants and Mentors

Participants & Authors
Jeffrey Amato
Derek Bailey
Shuguang Deng
Sue Forster-Cox
Tracey Miller-Tomlinson, editor
Andrea Orzoff
Richard Pratt
Harikumar Sankaran
Jonathan Schwartz
Brad Shuster

Mentors
Anne Hubbell
Ricardo Rel
Robert Czerniak
Sonya Cooper
Garrey Carruthers
Martha Mitchell
James Libbin
Christopher Brown
Kathleen Brook
Paul Furth

2011-2012 Advancing Leaders Committee

Ellen Bosman, Chair
Anne Hubbell, Past Chair
Kathleen Brook
Miriam Chaiken
Timothy Ketelaar
Norice Lee

James Libbin
Martha Mitchell
Ex officio:  Tara Gray
Shawn Werner
Mark Hohnstreiter
Greg Fant
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A Proposal for Enhancement of Shared Governance Through Effective Consultation with Faculty

Executive Summary

For the Provost’s Project of the 2012 ADVANCING Leaders Program, we studied how communication within an academic institution such as NMSU affects the processes of shared governance. We aimed to provide a broad overview of existing mechanisms for communication between administration and faculty and to suggest how shared governance at NMSU might benefit from additional consultation with faculty during the policy-making process. One of our main goals was to study the potential role of technology in improving communication at NMSU. Building on two past ALP reports that explored university communication and shared governance from a theoretical perspective, our focus throughout this process has been on practical suggestions that can be quickly implemented with limited expense.

We propose three broad improvements to facilitate communication between administration and faculty. We advocate that the university:

1) Develop a “sounding board committee” or board of faculty from all colleges to provide input in appropriate decision-making processes (Sections 3.1 and 3.2; 4.3)

We believe that a “sounding board committee” would be able to serve as a faculty voice, particularly when a quick turn-around is needed by administration (such as during a legislative session). Our proposed sounding board committee would be made up of members of all colleges, nominated by the respective deans. Two representatives should be chosen from Arts and Sciences and one each from the other colleges. Committee members would provide timely input on current initiatives and also report back to faculty in their colleges about the issues associated with current initiatives via a website posting or e-mail (within the respective colleges). The representatives would be charged with communicating input received within the college to the sounding board in a timely fashion.

2) Develop online sites for posting all pertinent information pertaining to issues addressed by the sounding board. (4.3); relevant documents might include viewpoints of the faculty that have been shared with administration, relevant reports (5.1); policy-related documents and ADC minutes (5.1, 3.1); and fostering faculty awareness (4.4)

We suggest the creation of a website that lists the top issues occurring on campus each month (4.3). This page would be maintained on the Provost’s website. Each issue might be linked to an individual web-based survey to allow faculty to respond. The sounding board or the Provost may also decide that web-based surveys would allow the quantification of opinions on a Likert scale (e.g., “75% of faculty strongly support this initiative”). Updates to current action issues would be sent out monthly through email with links to each issue and a connected survey were needed.
We further suggest that the University create an online repository of policy-related documents, linked to this website (5.1). NMSU library’s “Contentdm” digital collection, which is already being used for archiving some university documents, should be used as an online central depository for documents related to policies and procedures at NMSU. All faculty and administrators should be annually reminded of the requirement to deposit documents in accordance with Policy Manual 2.03, Section D4, and all official committees would be expected to state in their bylaws the process for adhering to this section of the Policy Manual. Among other documents, ADC minutes should be posted there regularly for consultation by faculty and administration (3.1). Current and incoming faculty and administrators would consult the repository for accurate information about policies and procedures, eliminating misinformation and ensuring continuity over time. University administration should direct the library dean to begin work on the creation of such a central depository and to take necessary steps to keep the repository current. The site would be maintained by the university library.

Last, we propose the development of an online faculty discussion board via our current learning platform, with discussion strings grouped by topic (4.4). With the assistance of ICT, our current learning platform could be used to provide an online forum for faculty discussion that may serve as a more convenient, topic-organized alternative to Faculty Talk. Administrators would be able to consult specific discussion strings to gain a sense of faculty ideas and concerns about particular topics.

3) Work with Faculty Senate to clarify the role of that body and administrative committees in development of academic policies (4.1).

We suggest that administration work with Faculty Senate to clarify the processes for amending academic policy currently in the NMSU Policy Manual. Figure 4 presents a revised flowchart for these processes. Among the recommended revisions contained in this flowchart is a provision which would enable legislation to be presented to the Faculty Senate Committee on Committees prior to presentation to ADAC. The revised flowchart also clarifies the advisory role of ADAC and ADC in the Faculty Senate legislative process, which is unclear in the existing Policy Manual.
PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

Tracey Miller-Tomlinson
Associate Professor, Department of English

1.1 The ADVANCING Leaders Program

The ADVANCING Leaders Program (ALP) is an initiative of the ADVANCE Program at NMSU, which was launched by an Institutional Transformation grant from the National Science Foundation (2002-2008). ADVANCE was established as a permanent program at the Teaching Academy in 2006. Whereas the initial NSF grant aimed to increase the numbers of female faculty in science and engineering, the ongoing ADVANCE Program aims to include all faculty at NMSU.

The Advancing Leaders Program was established in 2004 to develop the leadership skills of tenured faculty members from the Las Cruces and Doña Ana campuses of NMSU. Each year, twelve participants take part in a retreat followed by monthly workshops on topics relevant to leadership in teaching, research, service, extension, or administration. Participants are also paired with a mentor who provides insights into the core values and practices of leadership at NMSU. Each cohort is challenged to work on a “Provost’s Project” that addresses a campus-wide issue. The Provost’s Project culminates in a report describing recommendations that can be implemented within one year.

The 2011-2012 ALP cohort was drawn from faculty members in the colleges of Business; Arts and Sciences; Engineering; Education; Health and Social Services; and Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences. Participants were Associate or Full Professors, including full-time research and teaching faculty, academic department heads, and program coordinators.

1.2 The 2011-2012 ALP Provost’s Project

The 2011-2012 Advancing Leaders Program cohort met in scheduled monthly meetings and informal work sessions to develop this year’s topic for the Provost’s Project, “Enhancement of Shared Governance through Effective Consultation with Faculty.” This topic was agreed upon by the cohort and affirmed by the Provost in a collaborative meeting on December 9, 2011. The project builds on past ALP reports on related topics, particularly the 2008 ALP report, Maintaining Effective Communication at NMSU, and the 2009 ALP report, Shared Governance: Its Role at NMSU. Communication issues also appeared prominently in the 2010 ALP report, NUESTRO CORAZÓN: GROWING WITH NMSU, which discussed sources of faculty satisfaction and dissatisfaction that are relevant to faculty retention. Clearly communication and shared governance are perennial topics of concern at NMSU, as they are at other large institutions with diverse goals and commitments. These concerns are unique to no single administration at NMSU, and they have persisted through multiple shifts in institutional leadership. The cohort
also had the advantage of recent object lessons in the challenges of shared governance, as
discussed below in 3.1. The continued interest among aspiring faculty leaders in methods of
improving communication between administration and faculty also reflects the quick pace at
which technologies for communication and community-building are currently being refined and
applied to innovative uses.

This year’s project suggests practical mechanisms for improving communications between
faculty and administration that may help NMSU meet the challenges of shared governance. This
work is intended to complement the research on theories of institutional communication and
shared governance provided in the 2008 and 2009 ALP reports. Several of this cohort’s
suggestions, such as an online repository of policy documents and online faculty discussion
board, draw on technologies that are either relatively new or newly available for use in a broader
institutional context.

1.3 Issues in Shared Governance and Communication with Faculty

As noted in the 2009 ALP report, Shared Governance: Its Role at NMSU,

The idea of shared governance within an academic institution for the purpose of
increasing operational efficiency and effectiveness is extraordinarily complex…. Although complex and difficult to define, the idea of shared governance is one in which
many members within the institution from all employment levels (regents, administrators,
faculty, and staff) work diligently and jointly in key decision-making processes. These
decisions would include both formal and informal processes. The fundamental idea is that
decisions that affect both the institution and employees alike are better made from
inclusive participation rather than from an exclusive format or process. (Abbott, et al.,
2009)

Successful shared governance, in which members at all levels of an academic institution “work
diligently and jointly in key decision-making processes,” requires clear and ongoing
communication. Creating and maintaining the necessary channels of communication between
faculty and administration are among the many challenges of shared governance. Many faculty
members at NMSU express a desire for greater access to such channels. As the 2008 ALP report,
Maintaining Effective Communication at NMSU, concludes, “many lower-level NMSU
stakeholders (non-administrators) do not feel that they have much of a voice in University affairs. At
the same time, evidence points to the fact that some are more successful than others in
communicating with higher levels of the NMSU hierarchy” (Adkisson, et al, 2008).

This year’s ALP cohort considered a number of opportunities for improving communications
across levels at NMSU. These included:

- Clarifying the process by which academic policies are proposed, refined, and approved
  (including working with the Faculty Senate to revise the flow chart for legislation
currently in the NMSU Policy Manual)
• Making information on current policies and practices more accessible to the NMSU community and to incoming faculty and administrators

• Posting news about key policies under development for faculty comment

• Developing methods for quick and anonymous feedback from faculty to administration

• Developing a new, organized forum for faculty discussion of topical concerns as an alternative to the Faculty Talk listserv

• Using technology to speed the pace of communications between faculty and administration on time-sensitive matters

To address these opportunities for improving communication between administration and faculty, we propose that upper administration (defined as Deans and above):

1) Develop a “sounding board committee” or board of faculty from all colleges to provide input in appropriate decision-making processes (Sections 2.1 and 2.2; 3.3)

2) Develop online sites for posting ongoing issues for faculty feedback (3.3); disseminating faculty business and reports (3.2); posting policy-related documents and ADC minutes (4.1, 4.2); and conducting faculty discussion (3.4)

3) Work with Faculty Senate to clarify the role of that body and administrative committees in development of academic policies (3.1, 3.2).

In addition to analyzing some of the key aspects of current institutional communication at NMSU and a few of its sister institutions, this report details why these initiatives are needed and how they might be implemented. The report begins with an introductory survey of the recent history of communication at NMSU and UNM, as represented in institutional reports and interviews. The body of the report consists of two main sections addressing how to facilitate communication along “top-down” pathways from administration to faculty and along “bottom-up” pathways from faculty to administration. The suggestions made in each section are designed to be simple and straightforward, capable of being implemented in a year or less. Several chapters propose the use of technology that can speed communication during key decision-making processes. The report concludes with a detailed description of the online repository of policy-related documents that we propose, as well as a summary of our recommendations for improving communications between faculty and administration at key moments during the development and revision of policies. The authors hope that these suggestions will be of use in maintaining the tradition of shared governance at NMSU. We consider the present, relatively early in the administration of our President and Provost, to be an ideal opportunity to improve the communication channels upon which shared governance depends.
References


PART TWO:
HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

2.1 Communication reports undertaken at NMSU

Sue Forster-Cox
Associate Professor, Department of Health Science

What do we know about the outcomes of previous communication reports? To answer this question, we examined the conclusions of key communication reports undertaken by NMSU in the past decade. We also asked what could be learned from similar efforts to study institutional communication issues by other regional universities. The following provides an overview of four recent (2004-2010) communication reports within NMSU. For each study, the URL is provided as well as a brief synopsis of what the report concluded, specifically in regards to communication issues.

An additional survey was undertaken in 2010 by a group external to NMSU. Tenured faculty at NMSU participated in the national Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) survey of 2010, addressing job satisfaction. NMSU was one of eight universities that participated in the piloting of the survey and the protocols. The Provost provided an oral summary of the survey results to each College in fall 2011.

In 2004 the Employee Climate Survey was conducted at NMSU (http://www.nmsu.edu/Employee_Climat e_Survey.pdf). Under the category of “General University,” respondents were invited to comment on the university’s missions and goals, atmosphere, communication, administration/leadership, etc. Specifically under the heading of “Communication,” respondents were asked to assess the following: 1) open and ethical communication, 2) my immediate supervisor keeps me up to date on workplace issues; 3) administrators share information regularly with employees; and 4) NMSU has a good process for obtaining work related information.

For three of the questions (1, 3 and 4), 41-43% of respondents reported that they felt communication was open and ethical, information was shared regularly and that NMSU has a good process for obtaining work related information. A higher percentage of respondents (62%) for question 2 indicated their immediate supervisor keeps them up to date on workplace issues. See Figure 1 below for an excerpt from the 2004 NMSU Employee Climate Survey, Responses Related to Communication.

The Research Environment Survey was conducted in 2007 at NMSU (http://research.nmsu.edu/score/RESQual08F.pdf). Two suggestions emerged from this report, as it pertains to communication. First, NMSU researchers would like administrators at all levels to have a greater understanding of their work, which in turn could lead to more effective communication and increased potential for research progress. Second, upper administrators can enhance the research environment by developing more active, ongoing communication with researchers and allowing faculty input in decision-making.
Communication and collaboration issues occupied 20.5% of the comments, e.g., “Successful teamwork depends more on people who work well together and respect each other, than on the idea or topic used to bring them together, especially if externally imposed. Also teams cannot be too large, or the dynamics will fail” (p. 98).

A third report, *Maintaining Effective Communication at NMSU*, was conducted in 2008 ([http://www.advance.nmsu.edu/Documents/PDF/Provost_Project_07-08.pdf](http://www.advance.nmsu.edu/Documents/PDF/Provost_Project_07-08.pdf)). Three recommendations emerged from this report as means to enhance communication at NMSU. These were:

1) The “Why Not program,” which solicits good ideas for improving NMSU;

2) The NMSU Question Box, which provides an easily accessible means for NMSU students, faculty, and staff to ask questions and have the questions answered in a public forum. This mechanism is used by the NMSU Employee Council on their home page ([http://www.nmsu.edu/~acap/](http://www.nmsu.edu/~acap/)); and

3) Town Hall Meetings to generate suggestions and ideas for fixing specific problems in an atmosphere of shared governance.

The fourth recent report is the 2010 *APLU Institutional Assessment Tool to Enhance Regional Innovation and Prosperity Survey Analysis* ([http://irpoa.nmsu.edu/Survey/APLU.pdf](http://irpoa.nmsu.edu/Survey/APLU.pdf)). The report was to “serve as a self-assessment tool that an institution could use to evaluate its particular engagement in regional economic development” (p. 5). There were many references to communication as it related to both sharing faculty/staff successes as well as promoting a sense of openness in communication with businesses in the area.

In reviews conducted on the NMSU website, spring 2012, the following information reflects outcomes of the 4 communication reports referenced above.

Pertaining to the Employee Climate Survey of 2004, in a report entitled “Diamond in the Rough” (2008) pertaining to faculty retention, Eber recommends that this survey be repeated every three years to be able to assess changes. There were plans to repeat the survey in 2007, but due to administrative changes it was postponed to 2008 (Sterling, Cruzado-Salas, Daugherty, De Leon, Schoenmackers, & Hunt 2008). The report has been repeatedly cited in other documents developed over the years at NMSU, indicating that it has served as a common reference for people across campus. To date, the re-administration of this survey has not been undertaken.

In regards to the three recommendations made in *Maintaining Effective Communication at NMSU* (2008), there is no reference to the “Why Not program” or the “NMSU Question Box” aside from the recommendation in the report. Town Hall meetings have occurred in recent years at NMSU between the President or Provost and faculty and staff. In President Couture’s 2009 end-of-the-academic-year memo to staff and faculty, she reports “we instituted open forums in each of our community colleges and in the NMSU-Las Cruces academic colleges. In these
forums, our Central Administration leadership team presented a state-of-the-system message and received input.”

In regards to the 2010 *APLU Institutional Assessment Tool*, there is very limited information as to what has come from the results of this survey. Two specific references to the survey appear online, and they are from the College of Business and the Arrowhead Center indicating the use of the survey as a benchmark to measure future strategic efforts (Office of the Vice President for Economic Development [2012]).

While four surveys have been conducted at NMSU since 2004 which address, in part, communication issues, a review of the NMSU website does not indicate whether active implementation of methods or repeated efforts on the part of NMSU administration to improve communication have taken place.

Based on this review, some recommendations for improvement include:

- Conduct the Employee Survey, last used in 2004, every three years to gauge changes in sentiments of NMSU staff and faculty
- Establish and engage in regular communication among NMSU researchers to enhance administration’s understanding of the research conducted among staff and faculty and how administration can support the efforts.
- Share any administrative responses to data gleaned from reports on the university website.

*Communication studies review - University of New Mexico*

University of New Mexico’s (UNM) website describes their challenges with communication and governance. The information that follows is based on the 2010 *UNM Governance and Communication Survey*, a report mandated by the Higher Learning Commission as part of UNM’s reaccreditation, which incorporated faculty and staff responses ([http://www.unm.edu/president/communication-survey/](http://www.unm.edu/president/communication-survey/)). A minority of faculty, 26%, express satisfaction with the overall effectiveness in communicators between staff and Central Administration.

A follow-up report was undertaken in 2011 (Research and Polling, 2011). There was a slight improvement in staff and faculty’s sense of positive changes in communication with administration. Faculty representatives to the senate, institutional committees, and other representative bodies were identified as good means to keep communication lines open between faculty and administration. Faculty has been brought into discussions about budgets with increased frequency since the 2010 survey, including sharing the entire budget (apparently a first time action), and this has been seen as positive. The fact that the follow-up report was made one year after the initial report can suggest that while communication changes may be underway, their impact may not be clearly known at present.

Some points pertaining to communication made by UNM faculty staff include the following: while avenues for communication with Central Administration have increased, many believe
their input is not being seriously considered and that their opinions are not being valued; the majority of faculty does not feel that communications between themselves and the Central Administration (57%), as well as between themselves and the Regents (68%), are carried out in good faith.

**Conclusions: Communication Matters at NMSU and UNM**

Both of the major New Mexico universities (NMSU and UNM) struggle with communication issues between administration and faculty/staff, based on polls taken in the past several years. At NMSU, while numerous suggestions have been made to enhance or promote communication with faculty and staff, only limited changes appear to have been implemented. At UNM, the increased involvement of faculty on more senate and institutional committees and other representative bodies, including those addressing budget matters, is seen as positive, along with the sharing of the entire budget. This is an on-going, complex issue among the two largest universities in New Mexico, which necessitates regular, open discussion to determine the best ways to promote and enhance communication between administration and faculty.

*Figure 1. 2004 NMSU Employee Climate Survey: Responses Related to Communication*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Does Not Apply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q9. Open and ethical communication is practiced</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q12. My immediate supervisor keeps me up to date on workplace issues</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13. Administrators share information regularly with employees</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q25. NMSU has a good process for obtaining work related information</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

References


2.2 Shared Governance and Communications at the University of New Mexico, 2009-2011

Andrea Orzoff
Associate Professor, Department of History

Between roughly 2005 and 2011, the University of New Mexico was embroiled in many difficulties, one of which involved a perceived breakdown in faculty-administration trust and communication. This tumultuous period ended with the replacement of UNM’s central administrative posts, including the president and provost. NMSU is not experiencing a similar crisis, but faculty report an endemic sense of low morale and great frustration. Administrators share that sense of frustration, and speak in us-them terms about their relationship with the faculty. NMSU should not have to reinvent the proverbial wheel when it comes to bridging these gaps, especially when UNM’s experience is so recent and so relevant. Crisis or no, there are lessons for NMSU in UNM’s transition, especially regarding intra-faculty communication, the current structure for faculty-administration relations, and the new role of UNM’s (newly reorganized) Faculty Senate.

What happened at UNM?

In 2009, UNM went through an Accreditation Review. During the accreditation process, faculty and central administration expressed mutual distrust and frustration, particularly regarding the tenure of President David Schmidly (2007-2012). The accreditation commission recommended this impasse be addressed first by conducting an opinion survey of faculty, staff, and administration.

Research and Polling, Inc., conducted both a quantitative survey of faculty and staff and an in-depth qualitative survey relying on focus groups (see also 2.1). The results of this survey are online at http://www.unm.edu/president/communication-survey. Each focus group session lasted roughly 2 ½ hours, and consisted of between 8 and 12 participants. The five focus groups sampled members of the following populations: staff leadership, junior faculty, faculty leadership/senior faculty, deans, and vice presidents.

The comments from this survey could have come from NMSU’s campus. UNM faculty and staff on the one hand, and the Board of Regents and central administration on the other, viewed each other’s statements and knowledge base with deep suspicion and skepticism. Both sides held deeply different beliefs about how the climate of distrust had arisen. Faculty were frustrated by vague definitions of the faculty role in shared governance. Faculty and staff generally felt that central administration consulted them too little, too late, or assigned supposedly-consultative committee work that was subsequently ignored or dismissed. Faculty felt that they had an inadequate and tardy voice in budget development. Faculty were greatly concerned about hiring imbalance – i.e., that more administrators were being hired than faculty, thus increasing faculty workload, reducing availability to students, reducing student access to courses, and impeding UNM faculty’s ability to attract research grants. Faculty were also frustrated that their salaries were substantially below those of their peer-institution colleagues, while administrative salaries were roughly equal to peer institutions.
Faculty were also concerned that Faculty Senate was not taken seriously, and that Central Administration had in previous years drastically cut colleges’ share of indirect cost monies. Faculty noted that they had difficulty contacting the provost and some deans directly, and that this denoted a hierarchical, bureaucratic model.

Central administration, for its part, felt that faculty were unaware of administrative efforts at transparency, and hindered communication flow by neglecting to communicate important information among themselves.

Faculty noted that increased communication, while beneficial, differed substantially from shared decision-making – that faculty input was ignored, and communication had deteriorated into a monologue from the administration. Votes of no confidence by the faculty against the president and members of the Board of Regents had been ignored. Faculty and staff perceived UNM’s leadership model as “corporate” or “military,” while central administration believed its model was “traditional academic.”

Specific to UNM, a conflict had arisen regarding the position of Executive Vice President for Administration, responsible for “non-academic” university functions, finance among them. Faculty were unsure, and concerned, about the role and influence of the Executive Vice President vs. the Provost with regard to budgetary decisions affecting UNM’s academic mission. The confusion about these two positions exemplified the faculty’s strong sense that the university’s core academic mission was not receiving top priority. The faculty also wanted a retired faculty member or dean on the Board of Regents, noting that students were represented, but not faculty.

From within, the faculty did a self-study to try to reinvigorate the Faculty Senate. They noted that most committees were very slow, dealt with small-scale issues, had a set or inflexible membership, and wound up being marginalized by administrators.

President Schmidly met repeatedly with a group of faculty leaders through the Faculty Senate, and worked with them to review hiring imbalances and to bring faculty into the budgetary process. The faculty voted no confidence in President Schmidly and the head of UNM’s Board of Regents in early 2009. Despite this vote, President Schmidly and Faculty Senate representatives continued working together to address the university’s budgetary shortfalls, as in the following document: http://facgov.unm.edu/specialmtg/January2011/materials/PSAT-Recommendations-Fall-2010.pdf.

The long-term result of UNM’s internal shifts was the hiring of a new president and provost, and substantial internal reorganization of UNM’s Faculty Senate, as reflected on the UNM Faculty Senate webpage: http://facgov.unm.edu/facsencommittees.html. UNM’s Faculty Senate now has committees which address the main issues facing the university; those committees work collaboratively with the relevant administrators and organizations to address issues or problems facing the university.
Concluding Remarks/ Lessons for NMSU

1) Involve faculty in the budgeting process, in the spirit of true shared governance.

As at UNM, faculty nationwide are increasingly resisting traditional definitions of shared governance, in which faculty governance deals primarily with questions related to curricula, subject matter, methods of instruction, research, faculty status, and aspects of student life which relate to the educational process. At UNM, faculty involvement in “academic” issues now relates to resource allocation throughout the university, including complex issues like institution-wide budgeting.

NMSU faculty have a general sense that financial policy is made about them, without them. Administrators at NMSU have been heard to complain that faculty do not understand the difficulty of crafting budgets; faculty complain that they lack information about budgetary decisions and are rarely consulted about them in time for their input to be meaningful. Resource allocation pertains directly to academic questions; thus NMSU faculty should be able to help determine resource allocation through shared governance.

To provide a specific example, in 2009 UNM’s faculty proposed a new budgetary process, which brought together the Faculty Senate, the deans and provost, the Staff Council, and elected leaders of undergraduate and graduate students. The process was described to the Board of Regents and approved by the president and executive vice president. At this budgetary summit, the groups brainstormed responses to the current fiscal climate, argued together over priorities, and pushed to find areas where resources could be saved. UNM managed to avoid steep tuition hikes. The UNM Faculty Senate regards this as an imperfect process, but a major improvement over previous budgetary decision-making, and a useful pilot project. Also, this budget, in the faculty’s view, kept the university’s academic mission of teaching and research at the heart of university activity.

2) Survey faculty, staff, and administration to get an idea of the main problems affecting NMSU communication.

It would be useful to conduct a wide-ranging survey akin to the one conducted at UNM, to better understand the nature of faculty-administration communication problems. The current survey being conducted by the Huron Consulting Group is a good start, but faculty are concerned that they did not receive any reminders about the focus group meetings (in other words, many faculty simply may not know that the survey is taking place). Also, holding the focus group meetings in the summertime means that a far smaller percentage of faculty will participate. These factors will affect the quality of information presented in this survey. Thus, other means of surveying faculty would be a useful complement to the Huron Group survey.

3) Intra-faculty communication: in addition to faculty-talk, Faculty Senate should run its own listserv.

The unmoderated faculty-talk email listserv is of limited usefulness. It has become dominated by a few faculty voices; many faculty have withdrawn from it; all faculty are aware that it is read by
the president’s and provost’s offices. It should not be terminated, but a moderated listserv through Faculty Senate, run by and for the faculty, would be of great use. (See also 4.4.)

4) Reorganization of NMSU’s Faculty Senate; restructuring of Faculty Senate webpage.

NMSU’s Faculty Senate is routinely dismissed by both faculty and administrators alike. Its committee organization is abstract, and spends considerable time on issues that do not centrally affect the way NMSU runs, much less its academic mission. With regard to faculty outreach, NMSU’s Faculty Senate webpage contains significantly less useful information than its counterpart at UNM (http://facgov.unm.edu/). Both the Senate and its outreach to faculty need to be rethought, so that it can serve as the voice of the faculty more effectively.
PART THREE:
“TOP-DOWN” COMMUNICATIONS

3.1 Communication Pathways from Administration to Faculty

Richard Pratt  
Professor and Department Head, Plant and Environmental Sciences

Harikumar Sankaran  
Associate Professor, Department of Finance and Law

This section explores the existing formal structures for communication that are vital to shared governance. Information on the official committee structure at NMSU found in the NMSU Policy Manual is supplemented with commentary on the functioning of this structure in practice.

Upper-Administration Level Committees and Membership

The University Administrative Council (UAC) and the Academic Deans’ Council (ADC) are the two standing committees where the administration conducts university business. The ADC is an advisory committee, and its recommendations are voted upon by members of UAC. The UAC is chaired by the President of NMSU, and the ADC is chaired by the Provost of NMSU. Members of UAC include the Executive Vice President and Provost, Senior Vice Presidents, community college Presidents, Vice Presidents, Associate Vice Presidents, Athletics Director, Deans, Faculty Senate Chair, ASNMSU President, Graduate Student Council President, Chair of the Employee Council, University General Counsel, Chief Audit Executive (ex officio), and others as invited by the President. The members of ADC are the deans of the colleges, Faculty Senate Chair, and the Provost. The Associate Deans meet in a committee called the Associate Deans’ Academic Council (ADAC), and the Vice Chair of the Faculty Senate is a member on this committee.

Scope and Communication

The NMSU Policy Manual (1.05.60) explains the scope of the ADC. Among other duties, the ADC performs the following roles that pertain to shared governance:

1. Provide[s] an administrative vehicle for the dissemination of information, provide ready pooling of ideas, and provide a testing ground for the matters of concern to the administration of the university.
2. Act[s] as a sounding board and evaluation body for new ideas emanating from the staff or administration.
3. Consider[s] ways and means of improving the academic quality and other aspects of the institution, including proposals dealing with academic policies and programs.

Since the Faculty Senate chair serves as a liaison between faculty and administration on both the UAC and ADC, it is assumed that the chair effectively communicates information to the
members of the Senate. However, perhaps due to the sensitive nature of topics discussed in the committee meetings, it appears that this committee finds it often necessary to maintain confidentiality. The committee does not make minutes available to the university community at large. While the need for confidentiality on certain topics is understood, the lack of available minutes inhibits the communication of non-confidential information to the faculty at large. The lack of publicly available minutes does not allow the faculty at large to know what critical topics may have been discussed. In addition, faculty perception is that the ADC has the potential to generate important discussion that involves shared governance that may then be shared with the UAC. For example, it would appear that the faculty community might have been better informed about the incentive program for early retirement or the process for rewarding and selecting distinguished professors through the provision of minutes. During our interviews it was suggested that these decisions could have been processed under items (1) or (2) listed above, within the scope of communication for this committee. More importantly, if ADC had posted minutes that contained the gist of any discussions on these above topics, this might have afforded an opportunity to engage interested parties outside the committee in shared governance. We would offer that the availability of minutes would help to improve faculty awareness of important issues before the ADC.

Middle-Administration at the College Level: Deans, Associate Deans, Department Heads

In some colleges, administrative meetings take place twice a month, and in some once a month. Informal meetings occur as necessary. There appears to be considerable variation across colleges in the frequency of these meetings. Meetings at this level also tend to be informational, but also allow considerable opportunity for discussion. Interviewees across the three colleges consulted indicated that a variety of topics may be discussed. A substantial component of any given meeting may include college operations, curriculum issues, faculty issues, and implementation of higher administration directives. Confidential topics are assumed to be less frequent than at UAC or ADC meetings. The minutes from these meetings may be kept in various manners and may or may not be available broadly.

A close examination was made of communication at this level in the College of Business (COB). There, Dean Carruthers has initiated a shared governance model. The model is based on informational transparency. The Executive Council in the College of Business (similar to ADC) meets twice a month. Every standing committee posts an agenda and minutes on the COB website. A template for these posted minutes is included below as Figure2. At the beginning of every semester, the faculty votes on issues that were raised and circulated prior to the end of the previous semester. In this manner faculty input may be considered by the Dean before decisions are made.

Similar to the NMSU Faculty Senate, there is also a College Faculty Council with elected members from each department. The chair of the College Faculty Council is an *ex officio* member of the College Executive Council, much in the way the NMSU Faculty Senate chair is a member of the UAC and ADC. It is the responsibility of the chair to serve as an informational nexus and maintain effective communication between administration and faculty. Since the minutes of the College Executive Council and the College Faculty Council are accessible to all in the COB, the chair of the Faculty Council is held accountable if he or she fails to perform his
or her liaison duties. We propose that if a similar mechanism were initiated by ADC to render minutes available to faculty at large, it would greatly enhance shared governance. The online repository proposed in 5.1 would be an ideal location for these minutes.

*Figure 2.* Template for Posted Committee Minutes in COB

**College of Business**  
**COLLEGE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**  
**March 28, 2012**  
**MINUTES**

**Members:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agenda Item</th>
<th>Description and Follow Up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Review of minutes of March 14 and tracking tool</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Updates and Announcements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Development and Public Relations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Academic and other issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Action/follow-up items are in bold.*

*Direct Communication from Higher Administration to Faculty*

“Provost Posts” include informative updates, and the President’s State of the University Address and town meetings and open forums also provide important information to the entire faculty body. Open forums allow informational exchange and opportunity for question and response follow up. Some concerns were expressed during the interviews that these opportunities are not fully realized because faculty teaching schedules make faculty attendance challenging. At the last President’s town meeting, many questions were asked and the President responded directly to those questions, but it is not clear whether or not these discussions make a significant contribution to shared governance.
Possible informal mechanisms to facilitate communication: Sounding Board

It has been expressed that mass solicitations for input from upper administration for faculty input have been ineffective. This group proposes the formation of an informal “sounding board” that might allow identification of issues of importance to the faculty in an ongoing manner (see also 3.2). Suggestions or comments might then be brought to the attention of higher administration. This “route” could be purposely less hierarchical than existing formal structures, and enable broader participation. We realize that further discussion would be needed to identify the method of implementation of such a board. It is also understood that at times various issues are associated with vastly different “clock-speeds” which may be very fast (e.g., legislative demands) or slow (e.g., policy revision). An ongoing “sounding board” might foster more immediate interaction as opposed to the time-frame afforded by the formal calendar for committee meetings.

It is further proposed that the President and Provost’s offices might consider calling meetings with a limited number of Vice-Presidents and Deans without a formal agenda. It is considered that constructive and creative discussions would be fostered by smaller groups. These meetings could be in response to the “sounding board” recommendations. It is envisioned that these meetings might also occur on a periodic basis allowing opportunities for various colleges to interact with upper administration.

References

3.2 Approaches to improve communications from administration to faculty

Derek Bailey
Professor, Department of Range Science
Director, Chihuahuan Desert Rangeland Research Center

Shared governance requires a readily available and functional medium for faculty to provide effective and useful input during decision making. Several approaches have been used recently to solicit comments from the university community, including campus-wide email requests and town hall meetings. Such approaches are clearly useful approaches for faculty to provide input. We strongly support continuation of these forums. However, at least two factors may limit their effectiveness:

1) Faculty may not be aware of important issues impacting the university or options and alternatives being considered by administration.

2) Faculty, especially untenured faculty, may be reluctant to provide input to administration because of fear of (real or imagined) retribution or adverse action during their tenure and/or promotion evaluation.

Recommendation: Opportunities for Faculty Feedback

Administration should provide an opportunity for faculty feedback on issues under consideration that directly affect the fundamental missions of the University. General and non-specific requests for comments and input are not always effective and likely reduce the number of responses from faculty. The recent controversy over the establishment of the Distinguished Achievement Professorship may provide an example. President Couture requested faculty input on “faculty investment pool funds” on May 4, 2011 (Appendix A). This was a very general request for input with virtually no mention of the alternatives that were being considered. Six weeks later on June 21, 2011, the President informed the faculty that half of the $1 million that was available was to go to new faculty lines, and the remainder to highly productive faculty ($400,000 to full professors and $100,000 to other productive faculty) (Appendix B). There was no request for faculty comment on this June 21 decision. On October 20, 2011, the Provost reported to the faculty that the $400,000 identified earlier (plus some additional funding) would be used to create Distinguished Achievement Professorships (Appendix C). The Distinguished Achievement Professorship generated a significant amount of controversy and many of the faculty felt that they were not consulted. If Administration had asked for input specifically about this proposal, the response from faculty might have been more useful in formulating policy. Instead of the general input request on May 4, the President could have asked questions such as:

a) Should the faculty investments pool funds be spent on new faculty lines, faculty raises or both?

b) Should faculty raises be merit-based or cost of living?

c) Which levels of faculty should receive priority for raises?
   a. Professors
   b. Associate Professors
   c. Assistant Professors
d. Equally divided among ranks
   d) Should merit-based raises be determined using current NMSU policy (usually determined by Department Heads), or should a new approach be determined including letters from peers?
   e) Do you favor development of a Distinguished Achievement Professorship?

Such questions might have resulted in a much more informed discussion by faculty. We expect that participation in such a discussion would have been greater than the input provided by the President’s May 4 request.

Proposal for Posting Issues and Soliciting Faculty Feedback

Online posting of issues facing New Mexico State University should result in a greater response by faculty and staff, and more importantly, the campus community could engage in a more informed discussion. Identification of issues and alternatives are required for the development of website/survey monkey approaches to anonymously poll faculty (cf. 4.3). Correspondingly, development, communication and posting of important issues would improve both the quantity and quality of responses from faculty during Open Forums and from Open E-mail Requests for Input.

Development and communication of NMSU issues would require a small group discussion with faculty. We propose development of a “sounding board” that would provide faculty the alternatives and various points of view on issues that are important to the NMSU community. Sounding boards have been used as advisory boards in university and colleges in the USA (Worth, 2008). At University of Georgia, the staff council provides a sounding board for staff to communicate with administration (https://www.externalaffairs.uga.edu/index.php/staff_representative_group). The Board of Trustees acts as a sounding board by reviewing and providing advice on public relations and marketing issues at the American University in Washington, D.C. At NMSU, the Policy Manual states that the Academic Dean’s Council (ADC) acts as a sounding board for new ideas (cf. 3.1, 3.2). Thus, the development and communication of issues could be undertaken by ADC. However, ADC is part of administration, and it might be more appropriate if a separate committee could be established consisting of active faculty in all colleges. This sounding board would consult with administration on issues that are important to the NMSU community and then communicate the alternatives being considered by administration and various points of view to the faculty and staff through website posting, email, and through Faculty Senate.

It should be noted that there may be existing structures on campus that could readily serve the function of a faculty sounding board. For example, the NMSU Employee Council was previously named the Advisory Council on Administrative Policy (ACAP). Employee Council is composed of faculty and staff and is not an official part of the legislative process. Discussions about the concept of a “sounding board” with the Employee Council appear warranted. They might be willing to serve as the “sounding board” that we discuss here. Otherwise, the sounding board might be selected as follows: one person should be nominated by the Faculty Senate and seven nominated by the respective colleges. Two representatives should be chosen from Arts and Sciences and one each from the other Colleges.
This proposed sounding board would serve a different purpose than the Faculty Senate and be able to convene more rapidly than the monthly Senate meeting. The focus of the Faculty Senate is policy (see NMSU Policy Manual 1.05.70, A.2.): “Faculty Senate and other faculty representatives, shall be involved in personnel decisions, selection of administration, preparation of budget, and determination of educational policies.” In contrast, the role of the sounding board would be to consult with administration to identify potential issues and then communicate those issues and any alternatives being considered by administration to faculty. This information would allow faculty to provide input in a more informed manner and would likely increase the volume of responses from faculty. The communications from the sounding board to faculty could be direct, using email or postings, or indirect, through inclusion in requests from administration for faculty input. The sounding board could meet on short notice without waiting for the monthly Faculty Senate meetings.

Another example of how a sounding board could help improve communications is the recent announcement about a funding request to improve the NMSU football stadium. A story in the Construction Reporter initiated a heated discussion on the faculty-talk listserv starting on June 2, 2012 (“New Mexico State University Wants to Upgrade Stadium,” May 31, 2012). Chris Brown provided some information on the issue and pointed out that critical information was missing from the story. If this issue had been given to a sounding board before being published in the newspaper, they could have identified critical information and outlined the important issues, which could have been included in the news release. Also, the sounding board could have sent a summary of the issues and critical information to the faculty so that they could have responded in a more informed manner.

*Use of anonymous surveys and clicker technology to solicit feedback*

Faculty, particularly untenured faculty, may be reluctant to provide input to administration because of fear of retribution or adverse action during the tenure evaluation. Development of a website that includes online polling, for example using SurveyMonkey (http://www.surveymonkey.com), will allow faculty to anonymously weigh in on issues facing NMSU. Many faculty may not be willing to send in comments for a general request similar to the May 4, 2011 email from President Couture (Appendix A). An anonymous survey can provide an option for faculty who may be reluctant to send an email to administration to provide constructive input.

A similar problem could occur during open forum meetings. Some faculty may be reluctant to provide comments in an open meeting with administration. Such fears and concerns may limit discussion and reduce participation in Open Forums. However, clicker technology may allow faculty and staff to provide immediate anonymous feedback from attendees to administration during meetings. Clickers have been used to engage students and enhance active learning (e.g., Martyn, 2007). Similar technology termed an “audience response system” can be used to query and engage audiences during meetings. The system can be easily set to provide anonymity either through the software or by randomly giving clickers to the audience. Software can be set up to record audience responses. A moderator can pose questions, inviting either multiple choice or Likert scale (i.e., “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”) responses. Questions could be readily developed so that audience could respond to ideas presented by administration or posed by
members of the audience. This system would allow faculty and/or staff to respond anonymously to important issues. For example, faculty in an open forum meeting could agree or disagree with a proposed policy change using a Likert scale. Responses can be automatically tallied and stored for later analysis by administration and given to the audience so they can see the results of the polling. Such an approach should improve audience participation and quantify faculty feedback on important issues. Companies have been using audience response systems for focus groups for several years. (See, for example, Moody 2001, Appendix D.) Software and hardware for audience response systems are readily available and can be purchased or rented (e.g., http://www.replysystems.com/).

References


PART FOUR:
“BOTTOM-UP” COMMUNICATIONS

4.1 The Role of Faculty and Faculty Senate in NMSU Policy Changes and Communication Between Faculty and Administration

Jeffrey Amato, Professor, Department of Geological Sciences

Introduction

Faculty at New Mexico State University have, over the past few years, expressed frustration about various administrative policies. An outlet for communicating their opposition was developed, resulting in the Faculty Talk listserv. This outlet may be effective for communicating amongst faculty, but there is no evidence that it is effective at influencing administrative policies at NMSU. Some issues raised on the listserv have inspired Senate legislation.

Historically, the most effective way for faculty to create or modify NMSU policies has been through the Faculty Senate. The Faculty Senate (FS) has jurisdiction over policies affecting the university’s academic mission in regard to teaching, research, and service, including the definitions of purpose and objectives. The FS does not have direct influence on budgets, salaries, or benefits, but in some cases indirect influence can modify proposed plans or models.

How does the FS influence NMSU policies? Mainly through Propositions and Memorials. These can be written by any faculty member but there must be at least one faculty senator co-sponsor. The goal of this chapter is to make clear to both Faculty and Administration the ways in which effective legislation is written and how it moves through the system. This legislation is a type of “bottom-up” type of communication from the Faculty to the Provost, President, and Regents. Finally, the Provost could elect to work with the Faculty Senate Chair to encourage these procedures to become more widely known amongst faculty who feel that they have a limited ability to influence NMSU policies.

We also recognize that the Faculty Senate can be a forum for the Provost to communicate issues to the faculty. However, it is probably common that these briefings from the Provost, while informative, rarely leave the Senate floor. We encourage the Provost and the Faculty Senate Chair to work towards improving the communication of any Administrative proposals or requests for feedback from Faculty Senate to the faculty at large.

Senate Legislation Types

The FS functions similar to other legislative bodies: actions are effected through legislation. A critical point that is not widely known is that any faculty member can write legislation, but it has to be co-sponsored and introduced by a faculty senator. Two types of legislation can be written, Propositions and Memorials. Although both are labeled “Propositions,” some propositions are subtitled “Memorials.” These are described thusly:

1) Propositions: these concern changes to existing academic policies. Examples:
a. Changing the name of a department  
b. Creating a new academic program  
c. Changing the General Education program  
d. All NMSU Policy Manual and Catalog Changes

2) Memorials: these express the wish of the FS to the administration on matters other than those the Senate directly influences. Examples:  
a. Asking NMSU to stop funding Athletics with I&G funds  
b. Asking the Governor to allow for input on selecting Regents  
c. Asking NMSU to reduce the proposed journal cancellations

Examples of previously introduced legislation can be found on the FS website at http://facultysenate.nmsu.edu/propositions/.

Procedures for Passing Propositions

The typical procedure for introducing legislation is that a proposition is written. Again, any faculty member can write legislation, but a Senator must be a cosponsor. In the past, the majority of FS propositions written by non-Senators were written by Department Heads—for example, when program changes are put forward (see examples 1a and 1b, above). The Proposition is introduced at the Committee on Committees meeting, which occurs once every month. The schedule for this meeting can be found at the FS website at <http://facultysenate.nmsu.edu/meetings/>. The Proposition is then introduced at the next FS meeting and assigned to a committee. The Committee discusses the Proposition and votes to bring it to the full Senate, where the Full Senate votes on the Proposition. If passed, it goes to the President and Regents for approval.

Two administrative committees also provide input on Academic Policy and typically are involved in the FS legislative process. These procedures are illustrated in Appendix F-A of the NMSU Policy Manual (see attached Figure 3). ADAC is the Associate Deans Academic Council. They are more directly involved in the process, and have sometimes initiated changes by recommending that legislation be written. The NMSU Policy Manual specifies these roles (among others) for ADAC: (1) “Approve new degree programs by the community colleges” (1.05.95); (2) “All new courses, course changes, and course deletions are approved by ADAC” (6.35).

The other administrative committee is ADC, the Academic Deans Council, which typically wants to be informed about major changes. The roles of ADC, according to the NMSU Policy Manual (1.05.60), include (among others): (1) “Act as a sounding board and evaluation body for new ideas emanating from the staff or administration” and (2) “Consider ways and means of improving the academic quality and other aspects of the institution, including proposals dealing with academic policies and programs.”

Typically Senators would present important legislation to these bodies to get input/approval prior to presenting it to the FS (see Figure 3). It is unclear whether these two committees have veto power over academic issues unrelated to program changes. According to an interview with
Associate VP and Deputy Provost Greg Fant, the role of ADAC in FS business is to give them an opportunity to comment on, and in many cases approve, legislation, thus allowing administration to have an opportunity to not only be apprised of upcoming propositions, but also to alert sponsors to possible conflicts or unintended consequences (Interview, 3/7/12). In the latter case, ADAC might recommend various amendments that could make the Proposition palatable to the administration. Thus, according to my own interpretation, if ADAC voted against a FS Proposition, the Proposition would not be killed, but the opposing views of ADAC and the FS would be noted by the ADC, Provost, President, and Regents, and could be used to influence their ultimate approval of the Proposition. Note that the FS is the final approval prior to the Provost and President; this is why certain propositions need to be vetted/approved by ADAC and ADC prior to their introduction to the Senate. A proposed revision to the process that adopts this interpretation of the Policy Manual is outlined in a flowchart (Figure 4).

The recommended revision incorporates the following changes to the existing policy:

1. The introduction of legislation at the COC meeting can precede any presentation to ADAC. This step is occasionally implemented currently in cases where the authors of the legislation do not know that the proposition in question should be vetted by ADAC. This step could be modified to having an informal presentation to the FS Chair and Vice-Chair at any time instead of having to wait until the monthly meeting of the entire COC.

2. The advisory role of ADAC and ADC in the legislative process is clarified. In the existing flow chart, it is unclear what influence these committees have on FS legislation, particularly proposals unrelated to “Academic Program Changes”—for example, the recent changes to the Grading System.

Ad Hoc Committees

The role of ad hoc committees in drafting and forming a consensus is not to be overlooked. For important changes to policy, it is beneficial to get input from all of the interested parties. This can reduce (though not eliminate) roadblocks later in the process, and potential unintended consequences can be dealt with during initial meetings with stakeholders. These committees can be established either through the FS or informally. Our recommendation is to keep ad hoc committees small but get representatives from several groups. Possible members include:

a. Someone from ADAC
b. Someone from ASNMSU
c. Someone from Faculty Senate
d. A non-FS faculty member
e. Someone from Administration
f. Other potentially interested parties

The Faculty-Talk listserv could also be used to solicit input about Propositions. However, it should be acknowledged that the input one receives via this outlet might be biased towards
extreme positions. The alternative methods of soliciting faculty input proposed elsewhere in this document have the potential to foster less biased discussion.

Memorials

Memorials can have an indirect effect on policies that are not under the jurisdiction of the FS. Thus, Memorials can be written with the aim of communicating the interests of the faculty to the administration. In our opinion, Memorials relating to Administrative matters should be written judiciously and rarely. Their impact is potentially inversely proportionate to their frequency.

The tone of the memorial is important. Setting up an adversarial relationship with Administration is rarely productive. In the past, many memorials have been influential prior to their passing through the system. In other words, the knowledge that a memorial is being written or is winding its way through the system can influence a decision. In some cases, if an issue has been resolved, the memorial can be withdrawn from consideration.

However, many memorials have had zero effect on policy, and it is worth noting this fact. In addition, most memorials are met with silence and their influence is unknown. Faculty should be realistic about the likelihood of directly influencing policies outside of the documented sphere of influence of the Senate.

Communication from Administration to Faculty Via Faculty Senate

The FS has a crucial role in communicating information from the Faculty to Administration. This is done through Propositions and Memorials as described above. Lesser known is the role of the FS in communicating information from the Administration to the Faculty.

The main way that FS receives information from the administration is through the Chair and Vice-chair, who issue monthly reports to faculty senators. These reports relate the activities of the FS representatives on various administrative committees, particularly ADC and ADAC, but sometimes Regents Meetings on which the FS Chair sits as a non-voting member. These reports are informative and should go out to a wider audience (see recommendations below).

Faculty Senators on the Committee on Committees are supposed to report back to their electing bodies (i.e., their College). I am under the impression that this rarely occurs. This role of the COC should be emphasized at the beginning of each FS session, and these reports could be standardized. In addition, Faculty Senators are supposed to report back to their departments. This is not overtly encouraged but would go a long way towards improving communication about University activities. Guests (non-senators, including regular faculty) are also allowed to attend the meetings and can speak to the senate if a request is made to the Chair.
Figure 3. Flow Chart on Academic Policy Changes (NMSU Policy Manual, App. 5-A)

CHAPTER 5 - FACULTY POLICIES

5-A Academic Units (Procedures for Changes)

APPROVAL PROCESS FOR ACADEMIC PROGRAM CHANGES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approval Channels</th>
<th>Information Channels</th>
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<tr>
<td>Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review/Recommendation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Appropriate Academic Committee</td>
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<td>President</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review/Action</td>
<td>Decision</td>
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<tr>
<td>(if required)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Board of Regents

Review/Action

Decision

(HED Grad Degrees)

board of Finance

HED (Undergraduate Degrees)

NM Council of Graduate Deans

Academic Council of Higher Education
Figure 4. Proposed Flow Chart for Faculty Senate Legislation

Proposed Flow Chart for Faculty Senate Legislation

Jeffrey Amato
Faculty Senator (2006-2012)

Idea for changes/improvements

Is it related to program changes, or changing the Policy Manual or the Catalog?

Yes

Write a Memorial

No

Consider convening an ad hoc committee to get feedback on the idea

Write a Proposition

Introduce it at FS Committee on Committees

Does COC think it needs to go to ADAC? Most Propositions, yes; Most Memorials, no

No

It gets introduced at the full Senate meeting

Yes

Ask the Chair to put it on ADAC Agenda; Present it to ADAC; ADAC may choose to vote:

Does COC think it needs to go to ADAC? Most Propositions, yes; Most Memorials, no

No

Ask the Vice-Chair to put it on ADAC Agenda; Present it to ADAC; ADAC may choose to vote:

Consider revising/amending based on their comments

Yes

Submit it again to COC

Yes

Committee reports negative vote to Full Senate

No

It gets assigned to Committee. Was the committee vote result:

Is it Emergency Legislation? Critical timing constraints Memorials for deceased faculty

Yes

It gets voted on at that same meeting at which it is introduced

No

Full Senate votes to accept Committee Report. Was the committee vote result:

Yes

Proposition Dies

No

Proposition Goes to President. Does she veto it?

Yes

Full Senate votes on Proposition. Was Senate vote result:

It goes to the Regents who ultimately decide its fate

No
4.2 Recommendations for Improving Communication via the Faculty Senate

Communication could be improved in several ways. We propose the following:

1) Faculty who are not senators should be made aware that they can draft legislation, provided they get a senator as a co-sponsor.

2) FS Chair and Vice-Chair reports should go out to all of the faculty

3) Reports on FS legislation should go out to all faculty

4) COC members should report FS business to their college, e.g., through a relevant Associate Dean.

5) Faculty Senators should report back to their department, probably at a faculty meeting, but preferably shortly after the Senate Meeting as faculty meeting frequency varies significantly by department. These reports should include updates on legislation as well as information provided by the Provost.

6) The Faculty Senate website, which remains under-utilized by non-senators, could be integrated into a new website for all NMSU communication. (See 5.1.)

7) Faculty Senate business could be a section of the new faculty forum. (See 4.4.)

8) The adoption of the proposed revision to the flowchart for Faculty Senate legislation provided in Figure 4 (see above).

References


4.3 Use of Technology to Facilitate Feedback from Faculty

Jonathan Schwartz
Professor and Department Head, Counseling and Educational Psychology

One of the challenges of higher education institutions is to facilitate transparency and empower faculty to have a voice. One method to facilitate this process is the use of technology to solicit timely faculty feedback. The purpose of this section is to review how other universities are utilizing technology to solicit feedback and make a general suggestion for the use of technology for this goal at New Mexico State University. Fifty universities were surveyed in order to understand the use of technology to facilitate communications between upper administration and faculty. To choose the universities surveyed, first, a number of internet searches were completed focused on searching different keywords on the use of technology to communicate with faculty. Second, the websites of NMSU peer institutions were also surveyed. In addition, four interviews with faculty members at large institutions (e.g., University of Houston, University of Albany) were conducted. Questions were asked related to communication between administration and faculty. The information gathered indicates that, overall, technology use is not the primary way communication or feedback is garnered. Nonetheless, some important technological and non-technological methods used to facilitate communication within universities were identified. These are listed below. These examples are followed by our suggestions to use technology to facilitate communication at NMSU.

University Communications pages from the Provost’s website

A number of universities (e.g., Colorado State University, Oregon State University) use the Provost’s website to communicate goals and new initiatives on campus. Although these pages are not interactive, they provide a place for faculty to quickly learn about administrative activities. The majority of these web pages were used to promote the administration and university goals.

One interview with a Department Head at the University of Albany included mention of the use of a climate survey. This was based on the initiative of a new Provost. The survey was provided electronically through an e-mail link to an online survey, and faculty were encouraged to respond anonymously. Themes were identified in the feedback. The Provost appointed working groups based on the themes and action plans were created to address each of the areas identified.

Emeritus faculty counsel as advisory to the Provost

Although using Emeritus faculty as an advisory board to the Provost does not use technology it does provide a valuable conduit between faculty and administration. For universities that use this approach, it is the job of the Emeritus faculty to obtain feedback from the faculty to share with the Provost. The University of Iowa utilizes an Emeritus Faculty Advisory Board. They created an association of emeritus faculty that is made up of retired tenured faculty. This association elects leadership who serve on the Emeritus Faculty Advisory Board.
Engaging Faculty in Identifying Challenges and Potential Solutions

Through feedback solicited from the faculty in person and through e-mail, the administration at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville identified the top challenges and potential solutions on campus. The focus of this initiative was to meet the goal of improving their standing as a public research institution. One example of a challenge and potential solution is the need to increase undergraduate research. One potential solution they have implemented is to have faculty discuss their undergraduate research experience on the Office of Research website to peak undergraduate students’ interest. The administration (Chancellor and Provost) discussed these issues with colleges and departments through the use of “road shows.”

A proposal to have a website/survey design to receive faculty feedback.

After examining other universities approaches to using technology to solicit feedback from faculty, it appears that the ideal approach is to use technology to both communicate new initiatives with faculty and receive timely feedback. We suggest the creation of a web page that lists the top issues occurring on campus each month. This web page will be maintained on the Provost’s website. Each issue will link to an individual web-based survey (for faculty to respond. These web-based surveys should have a Likert scale to gather quantitative opinions on the issue (e.g., “75% of faculty strongly support this initiative”) and an open ended qualitative component for faculty to provide more detailed feedback. The Likert scale is commonly used to rate respondent’s responses by specifying their agreement or disagreement with a symmetric scale (e.g., 1= strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3= neither agree or disagree, 4 = agree, or 5 strongly agree). Updates to current action issues will be sent out monthly through e-mail with links to each issue and a connected survey. The multiple modes of communication will lead to faculty being informed of the top issues on the website each month and provide the ability to immediately provide feedback. Each faculty member could click on a link in the e-mail, be taken to the Provost’s webpage and read a summary of the issue and immediate link to a survey to provide their opinion. In addition, the main action issues will be provided to Deans to provide to Department Heads to be discussed at Departmental meetings where faculty members could be encouraged to provide feedback. For example, an issue could be a revision to the tenure policy. Faculty could read a summary of the potential change and immediate link to an online survey where they could respond on a Likert scale to provide their opinion. The administration would be provided timely faculty opinions and faculty would have an anonymous venue to provide their input.
4.4 Fostering Communication Amongst Faculty at NMSU

Brad Shuster, Associate Professor, Department of Biology

Overview

Just as communication and transparency between the central administration and the faculty and staff is key to building trust and understanding, providing a forum for communication between the faculty is also key to community building. In 2008, the Faculty-talk email listserv was initiated as a mechanism by which matters may be brought to the attention of entire faculty. The impetus for Faculty-Talk came from proposed changes to the Freenger food court that elicited strong responses from the faculty and staff, but attempts to voice their opinions through the existing listserv were blocked by the administration. In an effort to create an opportunity an open dialog amongst faculty, the Faculty Senate passed memorial Proposition 20-07/08 “Establishment of an Open Faculty Listserv.” The resulting listserv initially enrolled all faculty and instructors from all campuses (as identified through Banner), and was to be moderated by one of the bill’s co-sponsors, Prof. Jon Holtzman. Faculty-talk served as a platform to share information regarding academic or employee issues, and had the potential to inform the faculty in a way that no other instrument could. Indeed, issues such as plagiarism, incremental grading, and changes in the ERB were raised over the list-serve, with fruitful and productive discussions resulting in raised awareness and in legislation being brought before the Faculty Senate.

As successful as these conversations were, issues became apparent from the start. Because faculty received each reply to the list-serve, individuals soon felt bombarded by email, and began to unsubscribe from the list. The immediacy inherent in incoming email also resulted in reactive responses, resulting in some threads degenerating into ideological or personal attacks. Although rare, these unproductive discussions served only to further alienate faculty, who understandably did not want their in-boxes filled with such polemics. As a result of this continuing attrition, the listserv now only reaches a portion of the faculty, and thus is no longer an effective means to either inform or engage the ranks.

Can an alternative be developed that will allow for extended and productive discourse without inundating faculty in-boxes? One alternative to Faculty-Talk would be a moderated online discussion board where faculty can initiate and respond to threads regarding any number of topics. Such a forum:

- Would be secure, available through either Banner or LMS (more on this below), and available to only the members of the NMSU community (faculty, staff, etc)
- Would allow for faculty to follow or participate in threads that are of interest, while ignoring others, thus eliminating one of the more negative aspects of Faculty-Talk
- Would be moderated, such that personal attacks or inappropriate content would be removed
• Could be kept as a general forum or could be subdivided into specific areas of interest (academic, employee, or university-wide issues)

The feasibility of such a forum was discussed with Shaun Cooper of ICT, who indicated that the most straightforward mechanism for this would be to use the discussion board format already in place in the Learning Management System. Under this model, the moderator (possibly assigned on a rotating basis by the Chair of the Faculty Senate) would set up a “class,” opening enrollment to faculty. Faculty could then choose to enroll or not, just as they can unsubscribe to Faculty-Talk. A discussion board established in this manner would also allow the moderator to block or disenroll particularly belligerent individuals, although that would presumably be employed only in extreme cases. Additional features of such a discussion board include but are not limited to:

• Discussion boards could be specific to a particular campus or be university-wide. Many threads in Faculty-Talk have been specific to Main campus issues, prompting branch campus faculty to unsubscribe from the listserv. Through this mechanism, faculty from branch campuses could participate in their own discussion groups where they can address issues specific to their own campus and mission.

• Discussion boards may be set up where faculty can initiate discussions regarding general topics, or entire boards may be set up that are dedicated to specific issues (Instruction, research, retirement, etc). In each case, the individual may initiate or respond to discussion threads that are of interest, while ignoring others. This ability to participate in some discussions while avoiding others represents a fundamental difference from Faculty-Talk, where faculty received all posts to all discussion threads.

• In a manner similar to other forms of social media, there is an optional function where individuals would be notified if their posts receive replies. Thus, if faculty post questions (such as questions regarding Canvas, or using clickers), they would not have to login repeatedly to check for responses.

There is no perfect instrument for online discussions, and Faculty-talk was the first iteration of what is an ongoing evolution in public discourse at NMSU. A discussion board, whether administered through LMS or under the Faculty/Employee tab in Banner may not engage the entire faculty nor will it prevent individuals from non-constructive behaviors. However, it would create a non-obtrusive mechanism by which the NMSU community may come together to discuss issues pertaining to the institution’s many missions.
PART FIVE:
RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Enhanced Communication through Institutional Repository of Policy Related Documents

Shuguang Deng
Bob Davis Professor, Department of Chemical Engineering

While research and university libraries increasingly serve as on-line providers of searchable, full text materials, the institutions that they serve are focusing their attention on using these portals as platforms for their own publishing to a broader even global community of users. These institutional on-line repositories, and the idea of open access, mark another significant development in how knowledge is produced and made available. They also offer new possibilities for change and some significant challenges, as well, for the libraries themselves.

New Mexico State University has many different academic units and employee organizations, and develops and publishes various meeting minutes, policy related documents and faculty discussions about current issues of interest to the university and faculty. Currently these documents are published and archived by individual units and access to them is very limited; information seekers may need to visit several sites to find desired information. To enhance communications between administrators and faculty and among the faculty, it is crucial to establish a central institutional repository to publish and archive important policy related documents for open access to the entire institution. The existing online repositories being used for research and teaching at NMSU can be easily adapted for this initiative.

Online repositories provide key continuity of institutional information. Challenges and needs addressed by online repositories include the following:

- Fast turnover of upper administrators
  The fast turnover of upper administrators at New Mexico State University is one of the many challenges the state of New Mexico and the faculty at NMSU have faced. Although the transition of upper administration in the university does not affect faculty members directly, the change or shift of power does create significant obstacles for communication between administrators and the faculty. The new administrators tend to develop duplicated policies without checking previous ones because the previous policies are not readily available. It is imperative for the upper administration to learn the institutional history and have access to an institutional repository that archives important policy documents.

- Lack of continuity of institutional policies
If the administrators are not aware of all the existing policies due to limited access to these documents, it is impossible for them to make/develop policies that are continuous and consistent with previous ones. It is crucial to have a central depository for archiving the policy related documents, not only for enhancing communications between the administrators and the faculty, but also for improving communications among administrators.

- Difficulty finding policy related documents
  
  The lack of a central depository also limits faculty to access to the important policies, which creates a communication barrier between the administration and the faculty.

Why an institutional repository?

The main objective of establishing the NMSU repository is to archive many policy-related documents and convert them into digital information, so that they are well organized, in a central location, and readily accessible to the NMSU community.

What is to be deposited?

*Policy Manual* 2.03, Art, Archives, and Other Cultural Collections, stipulates that policy-related documents should be kept in a central depository. I have surveyed the ALP members and their advisors and received many very positive responses regarding the policy related documents to be archived in the central depository. The following is a partial list of policy related documents suggested by the ALP members and their advisors:

1. Email communications to faculty from the President and the Provost Office
2. Reports from NMSU employee organizations and committees and panels
3. Selected discussions from the Faculty-Talk forum.
4. Mercer report on salaries
5. Reports on faculty morale
6. Faculty Senate Chair and Vice-Chair reports
7. Minutes for Faculty Senate meetings
8. Minutes of the Academic Deans Council
9. Minutes of the Associate Deans Academic Council

Open access policy

We intend to allow the entire NMSU community to access the central depository without any limitation.

5.2 Actions to be taken to establish on online repository

NMSU library currently subscribes to a digital collection program known as “Contentdm” [http://contentdm.nmsu.edu:2011/cdm/] that is used for archiving documents generated at NMSU. While this library resource has only three collections at the time being, it can be used as
the central depository for NMSU. We suggest that the President and Provost direct the dean of the Library to immediately begin work on the creation a central depository and take all steps necessary to keep the repository current and its contents in accordance with state law and the Policy Manual 2.03. The following are our suggested actions for establishing the central depository:

4) All faculty and administrators should be annually reminded of the requirement to deposit documents in accordance with Policy Manual 2.03 Art, Archives and Other Cultural Collections, Section D4, and all official committees shall state in their bylaws the process for adhering to this section of the Policy Manual. Any university employee is encouraged to recommend additional documents to be deposited to the review committee.

5) The review committee will upload the documents and the University’s relevant web pages shall contain links to the central depository.

6) Because the “Contentdm” program requires an annual maintenance fee, we suggest the Provost Office cover a portion of this cost to support this central depository initiative.
5.3 Summary of Recommendations for Improving Communication at NMSU

Individual chapters of this report analyze institutional history, decision-making structures, and existing channels of communication between faculty and upper administration at NMSU and selected peer institutions. Overall, the report advances three broad initiatives to assist in shared governance by facilitating effective and timely communication between administration and faculty. We advocate that the university:

1) Develop a “sounding board committee” or board of faculty from all colleges to provide input in appropriate decision-making processes (Sections 3.1 and 3.2; 4.3)

We believe that a “sounding board committee” would be able to serve as a faculty voice, particularly when a quick turn-around is needed by administration (such as during a legislative session). Our proposed sounding board committee would be made up of members of all colleges. Committee members would provide timely input on current initiatives and also report back to faculty in their colleges about the issues associated with current initiatives via a website posting or email. As an alternative, the existing Employee Council or a new Emeritus Faculty Board might be used to serve as a liaison between the faculty and administration (3.3).

2) Develop online sites for posting ongoing issues for faculty feedback (4.3); disseminating faculty business and reports (5.1); posting policy-related documents and ADC minutes (5.1, 3.1); and conducting faculty discussion (4.4)

We suggest the creation of a website that lists the top issues occurring on campus each month (4.3). This page would be maintained on the Provost’s website. Each issue might be linked to an individual web-based survey to allow faculty to respond. Updates to current action issues would be sent out monthly through email with links to each issue and a connected survey.

We further suggest that the University create an online repository of policy-related documents, linked to this website (5.1). NMSU library’s “Contentdm” digital collection, which is already being used for archiving some university documents, should be used as an online central depository for documents related to policies and procedures at NMSU. All faculty and administrators should be annually reminded of the requirement to deposit documents in accordance with Policy Manual 2.03, Section D4, and all official committees would be expected to state in their bylaws the process for adhering to this section of the Policy Manual. Among other documents, ADC minutes should be posted there regularly for consultation by faculty and administration (3.1). Current and incoming faculty and administrators would consult the repository for accurate information about policies and procedures, eliminating misinformation and ensuring continuity over time. University administration should direct the library dean to begin work on the creation of such a central depository and to take necessary steps to keep the repository current. The site would be maintained by the university library.
Last, we propose the development of an online faculty discussion board via our current learning platform, with discussion strings grouped by topic (4.4). With the assistance of ICT, our current learning platform could be used to provide an online forum for faculty discussion that may serve as a more convenient, topic-organized alternative to Faculty Talk. Administrators would be able to consult specific discussion strings to gain a sense of faculty ideas and concerns about particular topics.

3) Work with Faculty Senate to clarify the role of that body and administrative committees in development of academic policies (4.1).

We suggest that administration work with Faculty Senate to clarify the processes for amending academic policy currently in the *NMSU Policy Manual*. Figure 4 presents a revised flowchart for these processes. Among the recommended revisions contained in this flowchart is a provision which would enable legislation to be presented to the Faculty Senate Committee on Committees prior to presentation to ADAC. The revised flowchart also clarifies the advisory role of ADAC and ADC in the Faculty Senate legislative process, which is unclear in the existing *Policy Manual*.

In addition to these broad initiatives, individual authors make the following recommendations:

4) Conduct the Employee Climate Survey regularly (4.1, 4.2)

We recommend that the university conduct a survey such as the Employee Climate Survey, used in 2004, every 3 years to gauge changes and sentiments occurring within NMSU staff and faculty. We also recommend that these reports be made available to the university community, along with any administrative responses to data gleaned from such reports.

5) Use “audience response system” technologies at faculty forums (3.2)

“Audience response system” or “clicker” technologies currently in use in the classroom might be incorporated into faculty forums to provide immediate and anonymous feedback on topics under discussion.

6) Improve awareness among faculty of Faculty Senate processes and ongoing business (4.1)

There is broad agreement that few faculty who are not members of the Faculty Senate are knowledgeable about the legislative process at NMSU or benefit from that body’s briefings on current issues by the members of upper administration. We propose that the administration work with Faculty Senate to educate faculty about the role of this body and to improve mechanisms for disseminating information about Faculty Senate business (such as by providing monthly reports on current business to all faculty).
Appendix A. Request for input on faculty investment pool funds

Date: May 4, 2011

To: NMSU Las Cruces Faculty

From: Barbara Couture, President

Subject: Request for Faculty Input

At the recent Faculty/Staff forum, I mentioned my desire to receive input from NMSU Las Cruces faculty on how we might best allocate available faculty investment pool funds in the coming fiscal year. As you know, we have many needs from acquiring new faculty lines to investing in current faculty.

You may be aware from the recent budget discussions of my commitment to invest $1 Million next year in our NMSU Las Cruces faculty. While the amount available is far less than any of us would desire, this is a start in our effort to invest in the faculty that serve our university.

We want your input for review and consideration as the Provost continues discussions on this matter. Please submit your comments to president@nmsu.edu, no later than Tuesday, May 31, in order to ensure timely decision-making. Thank you for your continued support of NMSU.
Appendix B. Email informing faculty of fund allocation  

Date: June 21, 2011

Dear NMSU—Las Cruces Faculty,

As you know, at the April 8, 2011, Board of Regents meeting, our Regents approved my request to allocate $1M in permanent funding for faculty enhancement. I also announced this funding in forums I held with faculty and our students. In a previous letter to you, I asked for your input on ways that we might expend the $1M, including attention to the need for new faculty lines and to support faculty retention. I received a number of good suggestions; many of you spoke to the need for salary increases, emphasizing both merit and equity. Many also spoke to the need for new faculty lines and help with retention. A few suggestions came in to use the funds for faculty development. It is truly gratifying to have received such thoughtful input from our faculty; all responses reflected serious consideration of our most pressing needs. Needless to say, it is difficult to make a decision on this distribution of funds when the needs are so great for so many.

After reviewing all of the suggestions that you have offered and after several conversations with the Provost, I have come to the following decision regarding the faculty enhancement funds:

1. $500,000 of the recurring funds will be allocated for new permanent faculty lines. The Provost, after reviewing prioritized requests from our deans and after consultation with a faculty committee that she appointed, will recommend distribution of this funding.

2. $400,000 of the recurring funds will be allocated for a program designed to enhance the salaries of productive, full professors and to encourage their retention. To identify and select qualified candidates, we will design a voluntary review process, supported by external letters. I pledge to work with University Administrative Council, senate leadership, and our Human Resources Department to develop the process for awarding these funds to meritorious full professors. The Mercer study showed the salaries of this group to be below market more than any other faculty group and their leadership is critical to our mission as a comprehensive, research land-grant university. Details on the program will be issued later this summer.

3. $100,000 of the recurring funds will be allocated to address severe inequities for highly productive faculty whose salaries have fallen most behind market levels. These adjustments for faculty will be based on recommendations of the Provost, in consultation with deans, department chairs, and our Human Resources Department.

In addition to these funds, our Regents approved the use of $470,000 to restore funding in academic programs that were severely hit by specific cuts to state appropriations; the Provost will work with college deans to distribute this funding. In consultation with our deans, the Provost will also approve additional faculty hires with the funds she has in vacant lines returned to her from our colleges.

I recognize that these faculty enhancement measures do not adequately meet our serious need to provide salary increases for all of our faculty who have been productive. During next year’s legislative session, I will advocate strongly for a salary increase program for faculty and staff. I also will look for ways we might provide temporary relief through one-time funding this year, barring another budget reduction. We will have a better picture of our FY11-12 budget at the end of the summer when revenue projections are complete.

Thank you for your continued excellent service to NMSU. And best wishes for your research, teaching, outreach and creative work this summer.

Sincerely,
Barbara Couture
President
Appendix C. Email informing faculty of Distinguished Achievement Professorships

October 20, 2011

TO: NMSU Las Cruces Faculty
FROM: Wendy K. Wilkins, Executive Vice President and Provost

We are very pleased to inform you of our two new faculty salary enhancement programs.

The first program recognizes tenure and tenure track faculty who are demonstrably meritorious and are also demonstrably below market salary for rank and discipline. There is a total of $100,000 available for this purpose. Funds will be allocated to the colleges proportionally, based on the total market salaries of tenure system faculty within the college. In order to be eligible for consideration, faculty members must be both meritorious and below market salary as well as supported at least partially from permanent I&G funding or state appropriated funds for Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service faculty.

Each dean will submit a proposal for allocations to the EVPP for final approval. The proposal must indicate not only the reasons particular faculty members were recommended, but also the process used to determine the recommendations. All recommendations are due to the Office of the EVPP by December 1, 2011. Salary adjustments will be effective January 1, 2012.

The second is a professorship program designed for full professors (tenured or college track) who have been in rank for at least seven years, and who are at least partially supported from permanent I&G funds or state appropriated funds for AES and CES faculty. Following the Board of Regents’ approval of a pool for Faculty Investment, the President allocated $400,000 for this program and an additional $100,000 was allocated from the central faculty pool, for a total of $500,000.

Each faculty member who is nominated or volunteers to be considered for this program will be reviewed based on accomplishments at the rank of professor. Successful faculty will receive a base salary adjustment of $10,000 and the designation of Distinguished Achievement Professor. At least $100,000 per year will be allocated to this program, so that Distinguished Achievement Professorships may be available annually.

Deans, together with department heads and representatives of the faculty within each college, will be responsible for developing a plan for the review of eligible individuals. The process must include an internal review at department and college levels (similar to that which is done for promotion) that includes peer input, and which also includes letters from external reviewers. The review process must be developed and approved by the EVPP prior to any formal invitation to professors to participate. The 50 professorships available this year will be allocated to the colleges proportionally, based on the number of eligible full professors.

Each dean will be responsible for recommending candidates for the Distinguished Achievement Professorship to the EVPP for final review and approval. All recommendations will be due to the Office of the EVPP by May 1, 2012. Salary adjustments will be effective with the new contract period.

cc: Barbara Couture
    Angela Throneberry
Appendix D. Enhancing focus groups with wireless group response systems

Enhancing focus groups with wireless group response systems

Article ID:
20010301
Published:
March 2001
Author:
Pat Moody

Article Abstract

Wireless group response systems are becoming a frequent sight in focus groups. This article discusses use of wireless group response systems, including benefits.

Editor’s note: Pat Moody is director of marketing and new business development in the electronics division of Fleetwood Group, Inc., a Holland, Mich., maker of portable response systems.

Wireless group response systems are starting to become a frequent sight in focus groups. These systems combine handheld keypads, computer software, and (usually) a projection device. When used by a skilled moderator, these systems create an interactive environment that can inspire honest feedback and generate quality data that can be instantly sorted in myriad ways.

Using response systems is both simple and straightforward. At the beginning of a
session, each group member receives a handheld keypad. During the course of the session, a moderator uses the software to pose a series of questions to the group while each member responds using his or her keypad. Generally, these questions involve simple multiple choice or Likert scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree) responses. However, depending on the type of response system, group members can also rank order options, compare alternatives, process lists, or even indicate their point-in-time response to a stimulus (which is sometimes useful in niche research like speech critique or advertising testing). After the computer receives the group’s input, the results are tallied for immediate display to the moderator, group members, and/or observers.

Speed - the immediacy of tabulating group responses - is the most apparent characteristic of research sessions that employ response systems. Researchers can gather a lot of information from numerous people in a short period of time. Also, they can view and manipulate the data live. Granted, doing things fast can sometimes present a risk to accuracy. However, electronic tools actually increase the accuracy of focus group research in several ways:

- With response systems, data is immediately stored on the computer. This avoids data entry errors that can occur when converting paper information into electronic files.
- Using wireless keypads instead of a show of hands or verbal responses ("all those in favor...") allows participants to respond anonymously, which may encourage more thoughtful and honest responses.
- Once group members realize that they will not be singled out for criticism or suffer political consequences for their answers, they become less likely to follow the lead of a dominant personality. They may also more willing to participate, which further improves response rates and sample accuracy. This can be especially important when discussing sensitive topics.
- Because a moderator can clarify questions or options to all group members at once, this group survey method avoids many biases common to one-on-one interviews or individual self-paced techniques.

The researcher’s perspective

Opinion Polling Service, Teaneck, N.J., specializes in the technical and logistical sides of focus group research. It typically works with independent focus group moderators, supplying the equipment and technicians needed to conduct the
research so that the moderator can focus on leading the group. The company has been using a wireless response system called MeetingNet in focus group settings for several years. MeetingNet is a group survey and analysis solution for Windows PCs consisting of wireless response hardware manufactured by Fleetwood Group, Inc. and software that Option Technologies, LLC (OTI) developed for use with it.

“From a strictly logistical standpoint, the fact that the response system is wireless and portable provides us with an important advantage over our competitors,” says Hal Meier, president and project director of Opinion Polling Service. “The system is not hardwired into a particular location, so our technicians can travel with the system to wherever the focus group research needs to be conducted. Group members can be drawn from a variety of locales, ensuring a more diverse mixture of responses and opinions.”

Wireless group response technology can also increase the audience’s interest and participation. “Allowing group members to view data as it’s generated increases their level of interest,” Meier says. “Now, some clients may not like the idea of allowing focus group members to see the data; they may fear that this will taint the data or lead the group astray. But in my experience, some of the very best and most interesting focus group research that I’ve ever seen came out of groups where the respondents could see how their fellow group members answered particular questions. Seeing how other group members answered led them into all types of wonderful conversations and noticeably increased their participation.”

Wireless group response systems increase the amount of data available to focus group researchers, Meier says. “In a typical focus group research project, a moderator may work with eight different focus groups in four different cities. If there are 10 people in each group, then there are a total of 80 different people who are interviewed. And if those 80 people all voted on the same set of questions, then surely you would want to find a way of tallying their voting patterns or preferences. The response system allows us to track the numbers and compile all the data at the end of the project.

“The system software also allows us to add questions during focus group sessions, which gives the moderator the ability to react to feedback that he or she receives from the group in real time. We can create not only new questions but also new crosstabs for referencing purposes. To be able to react like this in a group setting
within the span of seconds allows the moderator to pursue new avenues that may not have been evident before the research started.”

Another group response system user is Reality Check, a St. Louis research firm that conducts group interviews to help clients decide how to position their products, understand their brands, and evaluate advertising. Typically, it arranges for a group of 30 to 60 people to meet in a hotel ballroom or large focus group facility. The firm’s personnel lead the group through a quantitative questionnaire using a group response system also consisting of Reply-brand wireless hardware plus Unity software developed by Communications Technology International (ComTec). They then follow up with several smaller focus groups after the general session to gain an in-depth understanding of the answers given in the quantitative session.

Clients can unobtrusively observe these focus group sessions from a backroom, and they can watch the results being graphed in real time. Before the company began using the system, says Jim Chastain, president of Reality Check, some clients would question the results of quantitative research because they couldn’t get a feel for the respondents used in the study. “Using response system technology, our clients can attend the sessions, observe the results, and also observe the people responding to their product or brand,” Chastain says.

**Combined benefits**

According to Mark Fite of Option Technologies, two characteristics of the wireless response system allow focus group researchers to increase the value of their research. First, the speed of the system permits moderators and clients to identify patterns more quickly in the data being generated by the focus group. And second, the moderator can then drill down and uncover the valuable insights they are trying to identify, whether they are audience reactions or pre-conceived beliefs.

In terms of expense, Meier says that the cost of conducting focus group research with his firm is roughly comparable to the cost of videoconferencing on a per day basis. This will vary somewhat depending on the individual circumstances (mainly due to travel costs). Conducting focus group research on short notice on a particular day will cost more. The more days of research involved, the more advance notice given, and the more flexible the schedule, the lower the cost per day will be. The equipment is not the major cost. The technicians and travel, as usual, account for much of it.
Of course, response systems can also be purchased. Starter kits begin around $3,500. These kits include 10 keypads, a base station, and basic polling software. When more sophisticated survey, quantitative analysis or decision support software applications are substituted for the basic software, the kit price can range from $4,000 to $8,000. Additional keypads can generally be purchased for $250 or less. So if a customer routinely uses the system a few times per year, buying may prove to be a better investment than renting. But first consider the value of getting someone skilled to run the equipment for you - which is where the research firms come into play.

**Valuable element**

Wireless group response systems are now adding a valuable quantitative element to the focus group process. They generate individual, demographic, and group data that can be analyzed immediately and in multiple fashions. This releases moderators to focus more on exploring ideas and identifying segmented interests, rather than worrying about how to collect all of the data necessary to support an interpretation of what happened in the group. With response systems, “what happened” is automatically documented, thereby providing more time to figure out what it means.