

NMSU Employee Council
Meeting Minutes
April 8, 2021

Attendees:

Executive Council: Joseph Almaguer (Chair-V), Susanne Berger (Chair-Elect-A), Letty Gallegos (Past-Chair-A), Sandra Lujan (Secretary/Treasurer-A), Dacia Sedillo (Recording Secretary-V), Gary Bond (Web Master-V)

Voting members - Cynthia Pelak, Erin Wahl, Gaylene Fasenko, Humberto Morales, Karena Pirtle, Kathy Landers, Kim Allbright, Lucinda Banegas-Carreon, Marissa Fowler, Monica Dunivan, Nicole Sack, Polly Wagner, Rosa de la Torre-Burmeister,

Alternate members – Jagdish Khubchandani, Jamie Bronstein (alternate for Marisela Marquez), Karla Volpi, Krystal Espinoza, Sandra McKay, Seth Miner, Vandeen McKenzie

Absent:

Executive Council:

Voting members – Cortney Castle-Chavez, Hwiman Chung, Luis Velasco, Marisela Marquez (alternate Jamie Bronstein),

Alternate members - Julie Correa, Randi Bolding, Ryan Armendariz,

1. Call to order 2:32 p.m. by Joseph Almaguer, Chair
2. Welcome guests: Celeste Martinez, Nicole Heckathorn, David Chavez, Kim Altamirano, Sonia White, Ruth Johnston, Jon Webster
3. Roll Call
4. Confirmation of Quorum (18 of 21 voting members)
5. Approval of March minutes – tabled to correct next meeting date and clarify Climate Action Team report. Dacia will make corrections and vote will be held at May meeting.

6. Benefits Update – Celeste Martinez

Reminder: Use your annual leave. Carryforward limit of 240 hours reinstated for June 30, 2021. Conversation around why wouldn't the carryforward limit of 280 remain in place for this year, like last, as COVID was still affecting travel limitations and people were unable to "get away" from work because it was in their homes. Other side of the coin: employees should be making it a priority to take their earned time off to mentally disconnect after such a tough year. Letty reminded the group that employees' failure to use leave is a long-standing issue, not new due to COVID. Celeste reminded the group that AL is a benefit, not an entitlement, meaning that supervisors do have the management right to deny leave requests if the timing is bad. FMLA, on the other hand, is an entitlement and cannot be denied once the appropriate documentation and process to request it has been followed. Reminder that faculty do not earn annual leave, due to the flexibility of their 9-month academic schedule. Faculty do have access to family medical leave protections.

Flexible Spending Accounts have instituted quite a few allowances, due to COVID. Check benefits.nmsu.edu or email benefits@nmsu.edu for latest information.

State will begin negotiating insurance coverage revisions and premium rates now that the legislative session has ended. We will know more in the coming months.

7. ICT Future Team and Vice Chancellor Ruth Johnston

Ruth informed the group that, as a result of many high level ICT employees opting into the retirement incentive program, she and Jon Webster are leading a system-wide committee to re-envision the ICT organization and function at NMSU. Multiple sub-committees or Tiger Teams have been pulled together to review the current state of specific IT related topics and make recommendations for a future state. An interim CIO will be hired, from an external agency specializing in this type of placement. EC was then given a charge to breakout and jot down notes around the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats related to IT and NMSU. She asked that those notes be shared back with her and Jon, so they can utilize as much feedback as possible in the re-envisioning process.

Dacia informed EC that she is a member of both the overarching ICT Futures Committee and the User Experience Tiger Team.

8. Constitution and Bylaws – Sub-committee

Joseph called for volunteers to form an ad-hoc subcommittee to review and make recommendations to update the EC Constitution and By-laws.

No members volunteered, so Joseph indicated that the Executive Committee would take initial pass and then share with the full membership. This effort will take longer, because Exec Committee are committed to other initiatives in addition.

9. Benefits Review – Sub-committee

Joseph described this as an opportunity to review NMSU benefits package, compared to our regional and competitor peers. Not all benefits have a dollar cost (i.e. flexible work schedule, telework / alternative work arrangement, etc). Letty suggested we invite ELR back to visit with EC, since there are many new members. Sonia shared history of EC in advocating for the annual leave accrual amount to be increased. Cynthia and Karla volunteered. Rosa will be a resource and liaison with the CAT – Climate Action Team.

10. Committee Reports

Climate Survey

Rosa reported that the Climate Survey Action Team (CSAT) has been disbanded and a new group, for long-term action, is the Climate Action Team. CSAT members are acting as advisors to the CAT team. Next step will be developing sub-committees. Two will be Compensation and Appreciation, and Scholarship, Creativity and Outreach. The sub-committees will be responsible for developing action items.

Diversity Council

Vandeen reported that General Counsel attended the last meeting to discuss free speech and the 1st Amendment in relation to academic freedom. Take away: speech that violates the rights of others and work related speech are not protected. No decision has been made on the VP for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

11. Announcements

Executive Team is meeting with President Floros next Monday. Will report out on that meeting at the May EC meeting.

Joseph is meeting with Faculty Senate Chair, Monday morning, to address faculty unionization. Regents approved an increase to parking fees for 2021/22 fiscal year.

Karena informed the group that next week is National Public Safety Telecommunicators Appreciation Week.

12. Adjournment at 3:59 p.m. by Joseph Almaguer, Chair

Next Meeting: Thursday, May 13, 2021 @ 2:30

Items for next meeting:

AggieFit membership fee guest speaker(s)

Employee Labor Relations guest speaker(s)