



APPENDIX III:

**UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO
SHARED GOVERNANCE AND
COMMUNICATIONS**

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM
FOCUS GROUP RESEARCH**

AUGUST 2010

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INTRODUCTION

This appendix contains the summary of findings for the focus group research commissioned by the University of New Mexico to supplement a quantitative survey of faculty and staff that was conducted in March/April 2010.

Based on the findings from the focus group research, the observations and recommendations outlined in the Focus Group Report were developed to assist UNM in moving forward regarding shared governance and communications issues.

It should be noted that these findings are strictly among the faculty and staff members who attended the focus group sessions. The findings are not generalizable to the faculty and staff population at UNM.

CURRENT CLIMATE

Many longtime UNM employees (faculty, staff and deans) who attended the focus groups in May and June feel the level of tension between the Central Administration and faculty and staff is at an all-time high. Regardless of time employed at UNM, all participants acknowledged the emotional tension.

“There is a predefined ‘us versus them’ mentality that must be dealt with if UNM is to move forward.”

“The conflict has begun to feed on itself.”

Based on the discussions in the separate focus group sessions, the level of intensity and frustration regarding shared governance issues is more pronounced among faculty leadership and senior faculty than among junior, non-tenure-track faculty.

Those measures undertaken by the Central Administration to improve communication, following the spring 2009 HLC assessment, have largely been seen by the academic arm as placations, as “going through the motions.” They have not mitigated the deep feeling that the opinions of faculty and staff are omitted from financial decision making.

- Departmental presentations to the Central Administration were characterized as “one-way” and not conducive to collaboration.
- Creation of the Presidential Strategic Advisory Team (PSAT), while inspiring a glimmer of hope among some participants, is largely deemed as yet another ad hoc committee, substituting for the more permanent avenues of decision making that need to be clarified and utilized.

More vociferously, faculty leadership and senior faculty continue to be frustrated by their lack of voice in the development of the university’s annual budget.

The growth in the number of top tier administrators, as well as what is perceived to be high salaries continues to frustrate faculty and staff. The administrative decision not to fill the two recently vacated vice president positions, did little to assuage resentment because the decision was perceived to be due to attrition and not actively based on a policy decision.

LINES OF COMMUNICATION

The question of what constitutes ‘communication’ was posed in the focus group among administrators. Participants discussed whether effective communication only means that you have succeeded in getting others to change their opinion or action – or whether it can mean that both sides understand the logic by which they disagree. Given the current level of distrust, participants lamented that each side does not believe the other side has heard their opinion.

COMMUNICATION UP, COMMUNICATION DOWN

By and large, participants were not asking for new avenues of communication. Most participants felt the avenues for collaborative communication exist. However, they perceive a lack of a feedback loop, because the flow of information stops at the top. This is perceived as preventing open communication between the administrative and academic arms of the university. Faculty and staff described the current decision making practice at UNM as hierarchical, downward, unilateral and as “lacking the academic viewpoint.” These are pervasive views.

“You can communicate all day, but if someone else is making the decisions, what difference does it make?”

“It seems to me we are in a morass of misstatements, bias, myth. If there is a story to be told, no one is telling it. We have a whole system in place to create shared governance, we don’t need more mechanisms.”

“Enough channels exist, voices have been loud; a strategic response and evidence of understanding needs to be communicated.”

“The belief in relationship happens with follow-up, anyone can charm; few can persuade with speech and action.”

“Deans and faculty are frequently asked for input but there is no feedback loop, so we don’t know whether our information has been factored in.”

From the perspective of the Central Administration, the channels of communication from their offices, through deans and department chairs to reach faculty, are often closed. They said some deans discourage them from communicating directly with faculty and staff. They expressed considerable frustration with this situation, in part because they are sometimes accused of withholding information or making decisions without consultation with university constituents.

“I don’t think that the real decision makers are ever brought before the Faculty Senate.”

“Somewhere there’s a breakdown between the deans and rank and file faculty.”

“Faculty representatives fail to report back to the Faculty Senate or their department. Then we show up and get blamed.”

Participants in the Central Administration focus group also said they encounter deans who assign responsibility to department chairs rather than being accountable themselves, both operationally and communicatively.

From the point of view of faculty, the various modes of communication and administrative tiers that have evolved in recent years were perceived as having obscured the traditional communication and decision-making structure of a university.

“There are layers and layers between the deans and the President, making accountability difficult, contributing to the atrophy of the traditional core of Provost, faculty, department chairs and deans.”

Relative newcomers to the academic environment at UNM, including junior faculty, did not understand why faculty and deans were ignored. They perceived a pervasive breakdown in communication.

“In the two years that I have been here, there doesn’t seem to be a consulting with the academic side of the house.”

“Tiny fiefdoms that don’t function well with each other. Stagnation.”

Some participants wondered why suggestions for cost savings would not simply be solicited directly from the deans rather than setting up a special committee.

“If you want to set up cost cuts, go to the deans.”

However, throughout the focus group discussions we heard that the “deans have all but disappeared” from the decision-making structure. Even one of the deans described their role as invisible.

Faculty, staff and deans feel as though they are continually providing information, which flows upwards, without communication in return. Plus, participants felt that the administration does not take into account the unintended consequences or the ripple effect of the changes they enact.

“New processes are constantly pushed down on staff to enhance some need at the top, but with no consideration on how it will affect the process itself or students.”

NEW AVENUES OF COMMUNICATION

The creation of new avenues of communication has not convinced faculty and staff that university management is valuing their input. To some, the creation of the Presidential Strategic Advisory Team (PSAT) exemplifies the administration’s strategy of “going through the motions” in order to placate disgruntled faculty rather than fostering genuine collaboration. This perceived lack of open communication continues to preclude a sense of shared governance.

“We keep creating new ad hoc structures ignoring what is in place.”

While many applauded the establishment of the PSAT (consisting of 20 members, five of whom are faculty), many were unclear of its role or mission. Is it to provide advice on budget development? Is its focus on cost containment? Nevertheless, there was some optimism in the potential of the PSAT to provide a viable channel for the voice of academia.

Participants in the administrators focus group worried that some faculty leaders were closed to the PSAT communication efforts because the Faculty Senate was not asked to appoint the participating faculty and deans.

Even a faculty member of the PSAT wondered how this ad hoc committee was going to apply the ‘academic mission’ to formulating financial decisions.

Nevertheless, a small minority of participants held out for an additional committee that could ensure faculty voice in “real” decision making.

“We need structures in place where there is real decision making and we can’t be ignored.”

“We need a structure that supports and requires collaboration and interaction.”

Thus, some senior and junior faculty, as well as deans, spoke in favor of interdepartmental committees that create collaborative efforts. In general, participants do not want to abandon interdepartmental committees because they see the benefit of learning from one another. However, they do not see these vehicles as replacing the formal avenues of communication or the traditional model of university decision making.

STAFF CONCERNS

Staff feel their position is seldom taken into consideration when decisions are made. They want a more “inclusive role.”

“Work out processes for communication and inclusion in decision making. This should include representatives of mid-grade staff on taskforces, study groups, etc. and take the form of dialog over presentation.”

Staff also said they resent being told that “everything is alright” and then being surprised by layoffs.

“Let staff know they are part of the process. Don’t keep saying things are good, good, good, then do a 180 degree and it isn’t good. Keep us informed and be honest!”

DEPARTMENTAL PRESENTATIONS

Following the HLC report, departmental presentations to Central Administration were instituted. The forum was intended to enhance communication. Faculty and deans, however, described the presentations as ineffective at engendering open dialogue or at achieving collaboration.

“Over the past year departments made presentations to Central Administration – but the forum didn’t allow for interaction or dialogue – so it was just another example of information flowing upward.”

FUEL TO THE FIRE

Participants in the vice presidents focus group perceived many faculty pronouncements as fueling conflict rather than contributing to constructive dialogue.

“Inflammatory and accusatory. They throw out information that is just flat-out wrong, inaccurate or not true. If you want open, honest communication, it begins with honesty.”

In this vein, one Central Administration participant felt that, “faculty need to own up that they have contributed to the climate of distrust.”

Other than critical statements made by Regents, which all participants acknowledged had occurred, a few vice presidents were genuinely baffled at what faculty believe the Central Administration had done to cause “the lack of trust.” They wanted specific examples. That is, much of the criticism coming from faculty seemed “too vague.”

“It’s a perception or a picture, so it’s hard to really know what people [faculty and staff] are upset about.”

Some Central Administration participants were concerned that the Board of Regents members did not want to address the inaccuracies expressed by faculty because “they think it will just go away.” This situation was seen as further exacerbated by the proclivity of some faculty to alert the press. Involvement of the media was seen by both sides as perpetuating misunderstandings.

“Some faculty have a couple of journalists on speed dial. They don’t hesitate to call rather than try and work things out internally.”

However, many faculty said they were tired of the university’s issues being aired through the local paper.

UNM MISSION

Many participants did not feel UNM has a clearly articulated mission driving its financial decisions. They perceived a lack of focus on academic interests guiding financial decisions.

As a large state university, UNM has the challenge of meeting a diversity of needs.

“This institution has a mission broader than most other state universities – catering to students at both ends of the economic and academic preparedness spectrum. That is the root cause of tension that all stakeholders need to understand.”

Participants noted the conflict in pedagogical objectives between undergraduate and graduate education. To some participants, UNM is overly focused on undergraduate programs.

“A good research university prioritizes so it can attract graduate students and tenure-track faculty. UNM seems only capable of focusing in undergraduate students and programs; but it is important to attract good undergraduate students in order to build a strong foundation that can in turn attract quality graduate students.”

“Graduate students are attracted to the opportunities to teach or conduct research.”

Quite a few participants expressed concern over what seems to be a diminished emphasis on attracting research grants. Junior faculty expressed greater concern over what they feel is too little emphasis on grant writing.

“Deans take greater interest in developing research grants in *other* universities. This culture is lacking at UNM where the significance of grant writing is downplayed.”

“Regents need to be educated on the value and impact of research and then encourage the President and deans to support it 100%.”

Senior faculty complained about the lack of emphasis on attracting and/or retaining the tenure-track faculty necessary to attract research grants.

“The loss of seasoned professors reduces prospects for receiving research grants.”

Further, faculty suggested streamlining the bureaucratic systems that support grant application and administration. They complained about the “rigidity of the university bureaucracy” and slowness of Human Resources in processing new hires, inhibiting grant administration.

Additionally, there are differing views on the importance of the major athletic programs, particularly when it comes to funding. While the deans and administrators talked about the importance of athletics as a means of reaching out to the community, faculty and staff did not necessarily see athletics in this vein. Some participants felt betrayed by the claim that athletic programs are self-funding or wanted this to be demonstrated. However, some participants supported the notion of athletics being self-funded.

“There is an impression or claim that athletics is self-funding, but in reality it isn’t. We need transparency in this area so we know where the money is going.”

“Make athletics self-funding completely. Begin this shift immediately with a long term plan to result in fully self funding.”

SHARED GOVERNANCE

Both the academic and administrative arms are frustrated by efforts to achieve a degree of shared governance with which both sides are satisfied.

“So often if their input [faculty and staff] isn’t adopted they say they weren’t heard or their opinions weren’t considered.”

Some Central Administration participants felt that it is often necessary for a decision to be made by someone who can be ‘accountable’, and consequently it is not possible to go through a 100% collaborative process. These participants felt frustrated in conveying this perspective. Some administrators felt that most faculty and staff “do not understand the complexities of budgeting.”

BUDGET PROCESS – FINANCIAL DECISION MAKING

EARLY FACULTY ROLE

Faculty expressed concern regarding their lack of early involvement in the budget development process and the lack of an *expressed* vision (plan) for future academic and athletic goals.

Faculty feels they are brought into budget process “too late in the game.” While the budget process was said to unfold over a two month period, “faculty are only brought in 36 hours before decisions are made.”

“Financial decisions are made at the small tables. We are involved too late in the game after priorities have been formed. We are among seven constituencies. We are not treated for what we are – faculty – partners.”

“The administrators know things about the budget that we don’t and we need to know.”

“There is lack of understanding, articulation of the various roles of a university classroom, labs, athletics, and physical facilities. Different parts assert their dominance without accommodating the synergy they bring to New Mexico.”

Faculty suggested UNM model its budget making process after that of the University of Wisconsin where the administration, faculty and staff spend a full day “summit” designed to demonstrate “where money is going” and allowing all constituencies to have a voice in the allocation process.

The vice presidents explained that UNM conducted such forums during the five years prior to hiring the current president. The vice presidents said two years ago the budget director gave a presentation on the budget and explained proposed cost containment. The participating faculty were asked for their suggestions for reducing the budget. Following this step, the suggestions were converted to actual dollars and the faculty was said to have then “rejected their own suggestions.”

Some faculty and staff concede the importance of athletics and capital construction, but they believe the “influence of the few” is making athletic budgets and/or construction projects a priority. Countering this view, administrative decision makers believe the university must meet the expectations of citizens attending athletic and other events on campus, as well as provide amenities that will attract students, e.g., new dorms, foods services, more user-friendly enrollment facility.

EXPRESSED MISSION

Faculty and deans feel financial decision making needs to be guided by an “expressed mission.” The perceived lack of an articulated academic mission combined with the lack of transparency (education of constituents/stakeholders) clouds the budget development process. In a tense climate, this absence of information appears to fuel frustrations.

“The budget is reactionary, not visionary. It’s dealing with survival. There needs to be a greater focus on visioning – revenue generating rather than being told of the economic downturn – operating in a crisis mode. A few years ago we were visioning – but not lately.”

“There needs to be more direct accounting of the ‘administration’ side – budget, HR, IT, etc., to the academic administrators – deans and department heads, *before* the administration makes budget decisions and before the administration develops or changes policies.”

Faculty leadership, senior faculty and some deans feel the university has strayed from, and needs to return to, a traditional university model for budgetary decision making.

“The way it’s set up is a profound distortion of what an academic system should be.”

“We need more faculty input into major budgetary decisions; it’s really difficult to tell where the money is actually going.”

“Deans should have significantly more input into the budgetary decisions. They should not be seen as third-tier parties.”

“The financial allocations should be made according to priorities set by faculty, staff and students. This is predicated on having real influence or a voice in shared governance.”

Participants in the vice president group believe UNM operates according to the traditional university model, with academic interests guiding financial decisions. They disagreed that UNM’s decision-making apparatus had evolved into a corporate, top-down management style.

“If people understood the funding formula, and how it works, they might have a better sense of the fact that, on balance, the academic mission *does* guide most of our budget outcomes.”

Faculty felt academics should be the number one funding priority, with other endeavors funded as resources are available, rather than the other way around. They felt this approach would ensure the needed hiring of full-time, tenured faculty and thereby reduce the student-professor ratios.

“Put the majority of resources toward the academic mission and fund everything else only after the academic mission has been fully supported.”

While the Regents and the President may solicit faculty budget preferences or staff concerns, many participants feel there are, “many forces pushing them in other directions.”

“If the faculty voice were truly heard then they would have a say in financial decisions.”

It was suggested that faculty be consulted on how to revise the financial decision making process so that it ensures a faculty voice in formulation of policy guiding financial decisions and in formulating the annual budget.

TRANSPARENCY

A fundamental issue is the perceived lack of transparency regarding budgets and expenditures. This underlies people's inability to understand the allocation of funds.

“Theoretically, there may be some reasonable explanations for the [budget] structure, but in many cases the lack of transparency prohibits some of us from recognizing the usefulness.”

“We need more transparency; transparency is hard to achieve because of the complexity of the budget, the budget process must be handled better.”

The call for transparency is a national trend. As a publicly funded institution, faculty, deans and staff believe UNM's financial records should be accessible (“Open the books”). Given the tension over the allocation of funds, faculty and staff want transparency. However, from the administration's point of view, all of the information on budgets, allocations and expenditures are publicly available. A monthly financial statement is produced and presented to the Regents and is available online.

“This is an example of where faculty and staff come to the Regents meeting – the financial report is available in hard copy, as well as online, but the representatives are not carrying the message back.”

Participants in the central administrator focus group expressed frustration with faculty's continued accusations that funds have been diverted from academics.

“We have never diverted funds from academics; we have proved this over and over. We have conducted independent audits. It's not a communication problem because we have put all the information out there.”

Administrators expressed two concerns pertaining to transparency in the budget and financial decision making arena: the inability of many faculty and staff to understand something as complex as an institutional budget; and, the belief that providing more data was not going to solve the problems.

“I don't believe there is a way to clarify issues with more data. There are many ways to parse data.”

“Too few faculty are willing to put in the time to develop the knowledge base needed to understand the budget.

“I've had an advisory committee in place for two years. Only now are they beginning to be able to make helpful suggestions. And now they also understand why I sometimes have to make quick and therefore independent decisions.”

Academic participants complained the UNM Foundation, Lobo Energy and Lobo Development Corporation (all non-profit organizations) are “not subject to open meeting laws,” and “no one knows what the salaries are.” It was said that salaries are increasing for the UNM Foundation which is partly funded through the I & G budget. Participants felt the financial information for these organizations should be public.

PERCEIVED CENTRALIZATION

Interestingly, many participants refer to the Executive VP of Administration as the “VP of Finance” reflecting their perception of this position as “controlling the entire budget.” Many academic participants believed that elements of the budget or financial decision making process were invisible due to the control of the Executive VP of Administration.

“We are now in a ‘business model’ and VP of Finance [Executive VP of Administration] is the business manager. He has managed to centralize all of the money. He is the one that makes us question – where is the money going?”

Participants representing the administration disagreed with this characterization. They explained various consolidations of positions creating dual reporting lines in an effort to streamline. And, as noted previously in the transparency section, administrators felt all pertinent financial information is publicly available.

As proof that financial decisions are being made behind the scenes, academic participants identified a number of financially significant decisions that they perceived as having been made without their input: Development of UNM’s Rio Rancho campus; construction of new dorms (ACC); and, redesign and relocation of enrollment. Statements were made such as:

“The Faculty Senate was told about the Rio Rancho campus after all the decisions were made.”

“When the Faculty Senate was presented with the results of the master planning process, they claim they had no knowledge.”

From the administrative point of view, faculty had plenty of time and access to information to be apprised of the decision making process for these major developments.

“The ACC [public private partnership construction of dorm] project was developed over a two year period. There were all kinds of people involved and then when the plans are on the table the Faculty Senate show up claiming they are opposed.”

“The decision to use the Banner software was made 15 years ago. It’s an integrated university management software that most universities use. It’s specifically designed for universities.”

Administrators suspect that a formal system for faculty representatives to share information with the Faculty Senate is lacking.

Salary levels are another point of contention. Faculty, and especially staff, do not feel they are paid commensurate with employees of comparable universities, whereas they believe some athletic department positions and Central Administration positions are paid according to levels at comparable universities.

While data on salaries has been provided, members of the administration felt the effort had not been effective at ameliorating complaints.

“Two summers ago UNM conducted a thorough study. Three faculty members participated in the group. Faculty rejected the study because it showed that the administration is as underpaid as they are.”

Participants in the Central Administration focus group explained that some administrative job titles had changed in recent years to be consistent with changes at comparable institutions (including Vice President of Athletics and various vice president positions).

POLITICIZATION OF UNIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

Faculty, deans and staff would prefer Regents and vice presidents be selected based on their commitment to education.

Participants reported that a group of faculty from New Mexico research universities met with the current Governor to recommend that a process of consultation be established for guiding the Governor in the selection of Board of Regents members. This process would include setting qualification criteria and a formal vetting process. Though faculty participants described the Governor as open to the recommendation, they remained skeptical of change because he is in the final year of his term. A few participants said, “It doesn’t have to be a formal set of criteria,” as long as the Governor considers, “what faculty see as important traits in a Regent” when making appointments.

A major contributor to the tension between senior faculty and Central Administration is the perceived role the current governor has played, not only in appointing Regents, but in placing former state employees in highly paid positions at UNM.

“Jobs that bring \$70,000 in Santa Fe (state government) can earn \$150,000 in upper administrative university jobs. There is a pressure to place state government employees at UNM.”

“The Governor sees appointments as giving a glowing prize to someone he’s played ball with.”

Participants felt that setting criteria for the selection of Board of Regents members could “get the governor off the hook” of having to appoint contributors to positions for which they are not well-suited.

PLAYERS

BOARD OF REGENTS

Focus group participants clearly desire Board of Regents members that will represent the university in a favorable light before the public and restrict their actions and words as board members to formal events.

“Like ambassadors promoting the university to the outside.”

“Like a good board of directors.”

Faculty and staff perceived the appropriate role of the Regents as a formal body charged with ‘overseeing’ the operations of the university rather than as ‘primary decision makers’ guiding the institution on a day-to-day basis.

Faculty, staff and deans were hopeful about restoring their faith in the Board of Regents. They acknowledged that it will require time to heal the relationship.

“It takes time to cultivate trust.”

“It will take time to believe the Regents are acting in good faith.”

It was suggested that the Board of Regents members receive professional training including a comprehensive mandatory orientation for Board of Regents members.

“Board members need to be trained in best practices to be effective in their role. The Board chair needs to be able (trained) to lead and facilitate dialogues professionally.”

While not everyone favored a public forum approach to healing the relationship between the academic arm and the Board of Regents, it was suggested:

“Host Town Halls for visioning the university’s future; address the Regents’ willingness to change. Plant them into classrooms, faculty meetings, etc. to broaden their understanding.”

Participants spoke of having witnessed Regents expressing “open contempt” toward faculty, and “openly bad-mouthing” them.

“It is not evident that the Board of Regents has a clear understanding of their proper roles. They are policy makers, not managers, one subordinate (president), not many.”

“There’s been too much posturing on the part of the Regents in public.”

“Regents’ actions need to be confined to the appropriate environments.”

Some participants believed it would be beneficial to have more Regents with an academic or education background. A few participants felt some members of the Board of Regents are overly focused on athletics.

PRESIDENT

Opinions were mixed as to whether the current president understands what is meant by collaboration in the context of shared governance principles.

“Collaboration must be systematized and built into the fabric of all Central Administration activities.”

According to some faculty and staff participants, the President has made many statements over the past year confirming that he has heard the concerns and recommendations of faculty and staff. However, his subsequent decisions are said to “undermine his words.”

“I think he is fundamentally beleaguered, shocked, that he is not seen as collaborative, it isn’t sinking in why it is that people can’t see the goodness in his efforts – we’re seeing a man that doesn’t know what we are talking about.”

“It takes time to build trust and trust is built through action. President Schmidly often says the right thing, there is simply no action to reflect that he has actually understood.”

Some participants appreciate the President’s efforts to communicate on a regular basis with faculty and staff; however, there was considerable criticism of the “superficial” Monday Morning Message sent out by the President’s office. Rather than being “real,” the messages come across as “sugar coated” and “fluff” that avoids real issues. It was suggested that the President speak directly to current events (even if it includes bad news). It was suggested that the President use humor and perhaps humility in an effort to create a more equitable relationship with faculty and staff. One junior faculty stated,

“Sometimes President Schmidly’s general meetings or emails make faculty madder, rather than smoothing things out. His statements emphasize his superior decision making position. If he would just say one time, ‘I have heard you and I will not take the action I was contemplating,’ things would improve.”

Participants acknowledged that the fundamental problems underlying the tension between faculty and the administration were in place prior to the arrival of the current president.

“The problems didn’t start with him, but while he’s been here he hasn’t been able to rise above.”

“We cannot have a president that cannot garner support from faculty.”

Focus group participants did not necessarily attribute the expansion of the tier of VPs to the current president. Rather, they attribute the burgeoning tier of VPs to the dictates of the Board of Regents.

“The Regents set the agenda on student recruitment and retention and diversity goals that required hiring the many vice presidents.”

“When the President did not acknowledge the lack of sufficient math and statistics faculty, and said it was not a problem, he lost a whole lot of credibility.” Some participants felt that President Schmidly also lost credibility with what they perceived to be his dismissive response to the May 2010 resignation of the Faculty Senate President.

EXECUTIVE VP OF ADMINISTRATION

As noted previously, the Executive VP of Administration is believed by some faculty and staff leadership to have centralized financial decision making under his office. Participants felt this structure placed a non-academic in charge of deciding how funds are allocated rather than an academic with a focus on educational programs and research.

From the perspective of the Executive VP of Administration, only areas other than academics fall within the purview of the position.

Some administrators expressed frustration with the faculty perspective that too few tenure-track faculty have been hired in recent years. One administrator felt faculty was unappreciative of, “the fact UNM has almost doubled the number of part-time faculty to relieve the burden of full-time faculty because they want a bigger bite of the apple.”

It was mentioned by one participant that the HLC report noted that UNM’s own Self-Study acknowledged that approximately 45% of full-time faculty hold non-tenure-track positions. The HLC report further noted, “This ratio is questionable for a Carnegie I Very High Research Institution.”

PROVOST

Faculty and deans want a strong Provost. They do not feel the current Provost exercises the necessary authority.

“The Provost is the ultimate voice of the faculty.”

“The Provost needs to be clearly and widely empowered as the ‘second in command’ of the university and first among all central administrators.”

“I’m very conflicted about this issue. I cannot tell if she is actually able to make independent decisions, or is caught in a reactive environment, or is able to develop a unique vision and plan.”

Some participants felt strongly that the authority of the Provost is well defined, but felt that the power of the voice of the position has been weakened.

“We know what a Provost does. What power does the Provost not have that is needed to do her job?”

“The Provost’s role is well defined. It is then not a matter of revising the description of duties and responsibilities, but of empowering the Provost to carry out her expected duties.”

Some among the faculty and deans perceived the current Provost position as too weak to be effective at promoting academic needs. The weakness of the Provost position is seen as symptomatic of the administrative management structure of the Central Administration. The current configuration of the office of the Provost is seen by some as one of the reasons why financial decisions are overriding academic concerns. Some participants felt the control over the budget currently exercised by the Executive VP of Administration should be brought under control of the Provost. Participants said the Provost's budget had been reduced by \$3 million, hindering the faculty's ability to obtain needed administrative help and staff.

"The Provost needs to be a very strong position, an equal among others in upper management. This position has deteriorated in strength to the point of being ineffective."

"I don't think our Provost is set up with any power in this arrangement because she does not control the money, the VP of Finance [Administration] does."

From the point of view of some deans: "The current Provost has not really dealt with the faculty." Reflecting the theme heard throughout the focus groups, participants longed for the day when decision making moved through the academic channels.

"The Provost and deans on this campus have become invisible; it's never been like this, we have always had strong deans and a strong Provost."

EXECUTIVE CABINET

The growth in the number of vice presidents and assistant vice presidents is a cause of considerable dissatisfaction. While often critical, faculty, staff and deans acknowledge "pockets of capability within the Central Administration." The frustration with the growth in this tier of management derives from concern with the amount of budget going to salaries, the lack of an academic perspective among employees of this tier and a lack of understanding of their necessity.

Faculty and staff want to learn what each VP does – their job responsibilities, as well as their accomplishments. They want criteria set by which the VPs can be evaluated on an annual basis and they would like a bigger role in the evaluation process (see section on Performance Evaluations).

"The primacy of academic administrators needs to be more clearly embedded in the structure."

Central Administration participants noted that the goals of vice presidents are published and available online.

While faculty and staff are concerned about the portion of the budget going to the tier of vice presidents, they are frustrated by what is perceived to be high salaries paid to the VPs, and the expense of salaries for their support staff. It was suggested that an "empowered middle management," rather than the highly paid VPs, "would have better functioning offices and save the university money."

It was suggested that each VP give a presentation to the Faculty Senate to inform faculty of the origin of the position and the scope of their work. It was hoped that a thorough understanding of the role played by each VP office would explain how each serves the university mission.

“Reevaluate the mission, vision and values of UNM and clarify whether the current management structure ‘fits’ the model and serves the mission. Involve staff and faculty in a discussion with UNM executive leadership.”

As noted previously, the tier of vice presidents are perceived to be symptomatic of the corporate model. One participant disagreed that the structure could be called ‘corporate’ because, “a private corporation would require accountability.” Accountability of the vice presidents was a major concern to faculty and staff leadership.

“VPs are not responsible for Profit and Loss (P&L) within their area, as they would be in a true corporation; they are just added overhead. They should demonstrate how they are generating revenue – not draining it; if we are really going to have the corporate model, then build in financial incentives for the faculty to be more productive and require the Executive VPs to show a profit in their area by generating revenue.”

“Most faculty want UNM to return to the traditional model. We have too many executives. VPs reporting to the President, shifting or bypassing the Provost, which exacerbates the problem.”

Some among the Central Administration wondered whether the job titles given to some of the vice presidents have created the notion that UNM operates according to a corporate model.

It was noted that a more traditional model in universities places tenure-track faculty in vice president positions (in some cases these individuals are also spending time in the classroom) and some universities even place tenure-track faculty in the position of Provost. Participants in all focus groups agreed that this is sometimes the case.

The fact that the President decided not to fill two recently vacated vice president positions did not appear to ameliorate focus group participants’ frustrations because the reduction was perceived to be due to attrition rather than based on a policy decision.

REBUILDING TRUST

Faculty, staff, and administrators agree, trust is not established through a ‘promise’ or a ‘program.’ Only action and a track record, built over time, can establish an environment of trust.

“You can’t create a program to create trust. Trust has to evolve; it has to build through action.”

The lack of trust among faculty and staff leadership expands beyond feelings toward the President, and extends toward the larger body of Central Administration and the Board of Regents.

“They in no way have been able to respond to the issues.”

It will take time for the constituent parties to see that their voice is actively incorporated into decision making and it will take time “to see that the Regents have taken on the proper comportment,” before trust can be restored. Explaining actions is one avenue toward building trust.

“Don’t just appoint a new VP, explain why and what the VP will be responsible for.”

A few participants suggested training some internal staff in facilitation or possibly bringing in outside facilitators to assist with developing reliable communication. It was hoped that a facilitator could ensure the communication loop is completed and create genuine dialogue. Use of an outside mediator was also suggested, as well as a facilitated retreat.

“Facilitated one or two day retreat, using a highly skilled external facilitator to determine a shared vision and strategies involving the President, VPs, faculty leaders, staff leaders and Board chair.”

Some participants believed that mediation between faculty and Central Administration would enable constituents to move past defensiveness between the parties. Participants felt that in the current state of affairs,

“There is no real dialogue – rather each side states their position and then the faculty votes on a resolution.”

It was suggested that UNM conduct a study of best practices among universities that excel in shared governance. Participants suggested that evidence of shared governance needs to be shared with the university community as a means of building trust in the potential for collaborative decision making. Junior faculty described a successful process of different factions working well together to meet federal requirements on grants.

“We [faculty, staff and administration] had to come up with recommendations that were agreed to by all parties.”

Participants urged more face-to-face involvement by the administration at the departmental level. One participant described a visit by the Provost to discuss visioning of a position that needed to be filled, “It was really productive. We appreciated it.”

“If the Provost showed up more often it would make a big difference.”

Finally, as a means of building trust, it was suggested that UNM look into the Center for Appreciative Inquiry which provides programs for facilitating positive change.

PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

Faculty and deans support implementing upper administration performance evaluations that are “transparent and inclusive, with results shared openly and widely.” Participants felt the performance evaluations should be conducted annually and be based on the position’s scope of responsibilities and the outcome of their work, using performance criteria based on the best practices at comparable universities.

Central Administration participants were receptive to performance evaluations, noting:

“We welcome performance evaluations because we know we are held accountable.”

Participants felt it was important for the performance evaluations to be implemented in a timely manner. As one dean noted,

“It is imperative that 360 degree evaluations, tied to actual performance goals, be done now, especially with program evaluations being instituted.”

Quite a few participants suggested a 360 degree approach. Currently, faculty and deans are not asked to evaluate upper management. They felt faculty should only evaluate those executive cabinet positions with which they have direct interaction or those positions that have a direct impact on a faculty member’s department.

“We faculty realize that we do not have enough information to evaluate all VPs. So the evaluation would have to identify faculty who feel qualified to form an opinion.”

Some faculty did not feel it was necessary for the performance evaluation to be metric in nature. They were comfortable with the evaluations being qualitative. Faculty said the evaluation of the President “needs to include faculty goals.”

Faculty discussed the dissertation, *An Effective Instrument for Assessment of University Presidents*, written by Dr. Dennis Lester, as a helpful guide to developing performance evaluation instruments. They suggested that the Board of Regents request a presentation from Dr. Lester.

It was noted that the Regents have been working with the President to identify his goals and that for the first time faculty had been asked to contribute to the goal setting.