

Faculty Meeting Minutes

September 18, 2020

(via Zoom)

The meeting was called to order at 1:04 pm by Dean Sergio Pareja, once a quorum was reached. The following people were present for at least some portion of the meeting.

Faculty: Maryam Ahranjani, George Bach, Reed Benson, Camille Carey, Barbara Creel, Elizabeth Elia, Scott England, Paul Figueroa, Marc Tizoc González, Vinay Harpalani, Steven Homer, John Kang, Joshua Kastenber, April Land, John LaVelle, Jennifer Laws, Ernesto Longa, Nathalie Martin, Serge Martinez, Jennifer Moore, Aliza Organick, Gabe Pacyniak, Mary Leto Pareja, Sergio Pareja, Sonia Gipson Rankin, Alejandro Rettig y Martinez, Alexandra Siek, Leo Romero, Joseph Schremmer, David Stout, Carol Suzuki, Sherri Thomas, Cliff Villa, Samuel Winder, Peter Winograd, Veronica Gonzales-Zamora (20 needed for quorum; names that count toward quorum in bold)

Staff: Krista Allen, Beverly Akin, Chad Covey, Stephanie Grant, Tony Anderson, Ernest Tafoya

Students: Jessica Arreola, Taylor Bingham

Announcements:

Dean Pareja noted that, given the risks posed by COVID-19, AALS has decided to hold the 2021 AALS Annual Meeting in a virtual format rather than in person. The 2021 Annual Meeting will be held on the same dates previously scheduled: Tuesday, January 5 through Saturday, January 9, with sessions taking place each day between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Mountain Time. Dean Pareja reminded the faculty that the SOL has paid for the intuitional rate, which means that as many faculty and staff members as would like to may participate virtually.

Dean Pareja stating that he had been visiting with the 1L's over the lunch hour, when time permits, chatting with all of them, going from table to table, asking how their classes are going, and asking how they like coming in one day a week. With the exception of the 17 1L's who are exclusively online, the feedback received is they are extremely grateful for the lunches and for the most part are very pleased with their schedules. One thing they have said repeatedly about online classes is that staring at the screen all day is fatiguing, and they do not feel that they are absorbing as much. They also are hesitant to speak via Zoom because they are worried that others will speak at the same time. Dean Pareja noted that we just finished the fifth week of the semester, which means that we made it a third of the way through the semester without a major incident.

Dean Pareja gave a quick update on the Wellness Center. He noted that he toured the Wellness Center and that it's looking great. Assuming that the work continues uninterrupted, they are looking to be finished by or around Thanksgiving or early December. Due to the pandemic, however, we probably will not be allowing people to access the Wellness Center until next summer at best.

Associate Dean Sherri Thomas noted that we will be having an election series as we approach the November 3 election. We will have a post-election series as well. We will have space for discussion at an academic level and at an interpersonal level. Our goal is to offer support regardless of the election outcome. Associate Dean Thomas stated that she would be reaching out and asking for volunteers to help with the series. If you have a brief presentation on election law, or you would just like to host or facilitate a couple of the series' sessions, that would be great.

Associate Dean Thomas also announced that, in coordination with the FUN Committee, the law library will be hosting its annual Halloween Party Extravaganza/Costume Parade/Costume Contest online! There is no age limit. Please dress up your little ones, your grandparents, your dog, your cat, and your hamster. It will be held on Friday, October 30, 2020. Reminders will be sent out closer to the event.

Professor Veronica Gonzales-Zamora expressed her gratitude and thanks to Tony Anderson and Media Services for helping with the Hispanic Heritage event yesterday. It turned out really beautiful, and the honorees were very pleased. Professor Gonzales-Zamora thanked the dean for giving some remarks at the event, and she also thanked Professor Serge Martinez for attending and for his inspiring words at the beginning. The event was recorded, and it may be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GCUxFjEqIBw>.

ACTION ITEM: Approval of Minutes from August 21, 2020 special faculty meeting – Dean Sergio Pareja: A motion was made to approve the minutes and was seconded. The minutes were approved with 29 yes votes, 0 nay votes, and 5 abstentions.

ACTION ITEM: Selection of the SOL our primary and alternate representatives to the AALS House of Delegates for the AALS Annual Meeting – Dean Sergio Pareja: A motion was made and seconded to elect Professor Cliff Villa as the primary representative and Associate Dean Sherri Thomas as the alternative representative to the virtual meeting in January. It was voted on and passed with 34 yes votes, 0 nay votes, and 1 abstention.

Report on upcoming UNM Learning Management System Evaluation Process – Professor Jennifer Laws: Professor Laws noted that the university is in the midst of evaluating proposals for a new learning management system. This is something that gets done periodically because no piece of software works well forever. Professor Laws announced that there are three finalists that have been selected; however, because of procurement rules, she is not allowed to name them. What she could state is that they are major players in the learning management system market in higher education. The initial submissions have been scored, and there is going to be an opportunity for faculty to offer some substantive feedback on the three contenders. The faculty they will be receiving emails as to how to participate in the “confidentiality bubble.” There will be instructor training courses for all three platforms, as well as sample courses and orientation sessions. There also will be demonstrations by the vendors, who will respond specifically to questions.

Ransomware Update – Dean Sergio Pareja: Dean Pareja noted that the IT teams from the law school and main campus have been working extremely long hours on this. They have been working with outside companies that we hired that specialize in attacks like this, with Microsoft, with UNM Safety and Risk Management, with the Safety and Risk Management at the state level, as well as with our cyber insurance company. The dean stated, while it’s impossible to guarantee anything at this point, he is optimistic that we will ultimately get our data base back. In fact, we had a promising development yesterday when our team got into what they refer to at the “mothership system.” This does not mean we have access, but it is a promising development. We are proceeding extra cautiously for many reasons. One is that the threat actors appear to have laid out some booby traps that could destroy our data. Another concern is that traps could have been left on individual laptops and computers. As a result, IT will need to wipe everything out from everybody’s computers and reinstall the system in a safe fashion. Somebody from IT will email you to set this up. The dean also noted that there is at this point no evidence of unauthorized access to anyone’s personal data. Should we receive information to the contrary in the future, you will be update as quickly as possible.

Vice Dean Camille Carey interjected that one thing that came out of the meeting this morning was that the SOL will merge all our data to OneDrive or SharePoint. For those faculty member and staff who are not familiar with OneDrive or SharePoint, we will be offering training. Vice Dean Carey explained to the faculty that it was very important go through training, as it is very easy to accidentally share information with the ENTIRE university if you're not using the system correctly.

Associate Dean Sherri Thomas then informed the faculty that because we do not currently have a working intranet at the law school, students can no longer go there to view old exams. Associate Dean Thomas stated that the faculty would be receiving an email from her asking anyone who has taught any 1L courses to let her know if you would be willing to release an exam and an answer. IT has set up a SharePoint for this. A link will then be sent to the 1L's. Associate Dean Thomas said that people should not hesitate to contact her with questions.

Strategic Planning Report – Associate Dean Sherri Thomas and Professor Scott England, Co-Chairs of the Strategic Planning Committee: Associate Dean Thomas thanked everyone for participating in the survey that was sent to law school faculty, staff, and students. A total of 29 faculty members, 19 staff members, and 66 students responded. These raw responses are very useful to the committee to help organize our thoughts as we proceed. As of right now, the committee is working with the strategic planning facilitators and they are in the process of organizing the discussion. We have identified some additional stakeholders, who we want to reach out to for additional feedback. We did note that some of the questions received were questions about the process. These are the same questions that the committee is asking as well, which they are working through with the strategic planning facilitators.

Report and Discussion Regarding Planning for the Spring Semester – Dean Sergio Pareja: Dean Pareja noted that the spring semester may look a bit different than the fall semester. Dean Pareja has been working with Vice Dean Carey and with the Provost on planning for the spring semester. One possibility is to keep 1L classes as they are right now. The feedback received from our 1Ls is that they love the one-day-in-person class a week. They say that it helps with their mental health by giving them human interaction and something to look forward to. They also note that it is mentally exhausting to sit in front of a computer all day for class. If we keep 1L classes as they are now then we potentially could open up the other two days a week for a limited number of 2L and 3L classes. One thing that is currently being considered is whether 10 minutes between classes is too short, given the mental fatigue that students are experiencing with online classes. The problem with adding time is that it might mean that classes have to start earlier in the morning or end later in the day. Dean Pareja then opened the floor for discussion and questions from the faculty.

Dean Pareja then talked about graduation and presented the idea of delaying graduation until early August, after the bar exam. It would be coupled with an in-person graduation, the prior day, for the Class of 2020. Some people are advocating for an exclusively virtual graduation, but Dean Pareja noted that some students and their families were unhappy that we didn't have an in-person graduation for the Class of 2020 this past May (it's been promised to them that it will happen when it's safe to do so). The issue of graduation is complex because it's a large crowd, people have to invite family members from far away, and we have to invite a graduation speaker. It does not seem feasible to plan a May graduation unless it's exclusively virtual. After much discussion, Dean Pareja asked the 3L representative, Jessica Arreola, to poll the 3L class regarding how they feel about a virtual ceremony in lieu of or in addition to a delayed in-person graduation.

The meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 2:24 p.m.