

Faculty Meeting Minutes

December 4, 2020

(via Zoom)

The meeting was called to order at 2:01 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, Joseph Gallardo, Sonia Gipson Rankin, Veronica Gonzales-Zamora, 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, Gabriel Pacyniak, Mary Leto Pareja, Sergio Pareja, Alejandro Rettig y Martinez, Joseph Schremmer, Alexandra Siek, Sarah Steadman, David Stout, Carol Suzuki, Sherri Thomas, Gloria Valencia-Weber, Cliff Villa, Samuel Winder, Peter Winograd (20 needed for quorum; names that count toward quorum in bold)

Staff: Krista Allen, Tony Anderson, Cheryl Burbank, Chad Covey, Stephanie Grant, Melissa Lobato, Bonnie Stepleton

Students: Taylor Bingham

Guests: Bonnie Minkus Holmes
Cristina Serrano-Johnson

Announcements:

Dean Sergio Pareja: Dean Pareja reminded everyone that all faculty and senior staff can attend the 2021 Annual meeting of the AALS, January 5 – 9, 2021. No additional fee needs to be paid. You must register at <https://am.aals.org/registration/>.

Dean Pareja attended a national meeting of law school deans and noted other schools are reporting “Zoom fatigue” as well. Some law schools had 25% of classes in-person for the fall but are shooting for 50% in the spring.

Professor Elizabeth Elia: Samuel Taub, 2L student, created a program to comb through New Mexico landlord-tenant cases online in a matter of minutes, compared to the prior time-consuming method of manual searching. He developed a website as well as online charts and graphs that can be created with the data. The New Mexico AOC and the committee for SOPA gave approval for the website and data to be made public. The website will become live on 12/7/20. Other people have been requesting the use of Samuel’s program, including legal service organizations. Eventually, the project will go to the National Eviction Lab Project at Princeton University.

Melissa Lobato: Please share all news and announcements with Melissa so she can post on the Law School’s website and share our accomplishments and stories with the world.

Action Item: Approval of minutes from October 16, 2020 faculty meeting – Dean Sergio Pareja: Motion made by Associate Dean Sherri Thomas, seconded by Professor Gabe Pacyniak. Minutes approved unanimously with 0 ‘no’ votes and 0 abstentions.

Discussion regarding annual reviews and classroom visits – Dean Sergio Pareja: Professor Suzuki reported for the Faculty Retention, Promotion & Tenure Committee (additional members are Alfred Mathewson, Christina Zuni-Cruz, Ernesto Longa and Jenny Moore.) The FRPT Committee is charged with the review of Prof. Cliff Villa for tenure and the promotion of Prof. Sonia Gipson Rankin for her mid-probationary review. The committee is also charged with administering annual reviews, which includes observation of classroom teaching. The FRPT Committee asked to be placed on the agenda today to discuss the annual review process and observation of classroom teaching. Professor Suzuki stated that the law school is subject to the UNM Faculty Handbook of policies and procedures. She referenced Section B of the handbook, which covers the policy on annual reviews. See UNM Faculty Handbook Section B here: <https://handbook.unm.edu/section-b/>. There are six types of reviews as indicated in Section B 4.1. Section B 4.2.3, “Procedures,” addresses “chairs.” Professor Suzuki clarified that “chair” does not mean the chair of the FRPT Committee; rather, it means the Dean as chair of our ‘department,’ the Law School. A prior FRPT Committee draft policy that was approved by faculty had created two-party review teams. There are standards for classroom visits. For example, after observation the reviewer meets with the professor to provide feedback.

Dean Pareja raised concerns about classroom visits during the current remote instruction period with Provost Holloway. The Provost responded that classroom visits and peer reviews of teaching are still required during this period of distance learning. Dean Pareja explained that there is a duty to assess teaching that comes from two external sources, the Higher Education Dept. and the ABA. There has been some anxiety over classroom visits because of the classes being online and the stressful environment created by the pandemic. Generally speaking, there are three ways to assess teaching: materials, course evaluations from students, and peer review observation. The first of those is provided by the professor himself or herself, and the second and third are from parties other than the professor. UNM’s current policy, in light of the pandemic, is that student course evaluations from this semester will not be utilized in annual reviews or for promotion and tenure purposes, which removes one source of external observation of a professor’s teaching. Though there is a lot of anxiety due to classroom visits being online, remember that everybody is going through the same thing. Dean Pareja reminds reviewers that there is a lot of stress on the pre-tenured faculty and lecturers whose classes they are visiting. Reviewers should reach out to the teachers who are being observed and ask if there is anything they should know about the class or what might be in the background, such as kids or animals, etc., so they can take it into consideration in their review. Be mindful of the high anxiety situation of online teaching. Dean Pareja stated that, while student course evaluations can be quite negative, he has never seen a negative report on a classroom visit from a faculty member. As a result, classroom visits generally have been used to strengthen a faculty member’s annual review or dossier. That seems more likely to be the case this year, given that everybody knows about the unusual, challenging year that we are all having.

Discussion points made by faculty:

Prof. Cliff Villa – The online classroom visit was a positive experience for him.

Prof. Gabriel Pacyniak – Asked if perhaps a statement can be added that acknowledges the inequities of teaching in the state we are in so the reviewer takes that into account.

Dean Pareja – Does not think a statement will be necessary because negative reviews seem unlikely this year. He will reassess if that's not the case.

Prof. Jen Laws – Shared a concern that there are no agreed standards of best practices or guidance for evaluations of teaching classes that are not the traditional classes. She suggested that people be allowed to include materials that reflect the faculty member's instruction, such as course materials, to accompany evaluations if a pre-tenured faculty member wants to.

Prof. Sonia Gipson Rankin – Would like reviewers to note that teaching on-line is different and that the teachers are doing their best.

Prof. Reed Benson – When talking to junior faculty, there is an assumption that those who have tenure or have taught for many years bring value to the evaluation process under normal circumstances. However, that assumption is less valid when evaluating teaching by Zoom. He suggests perhaps the senior faculty might not be the best evaluators for people teaching via Zoom.

Prof. Alex Siek – Agrees with colleagues; we should have more guidance and a blanket statement, especially as a lecturer, on the conditions which they are teaching under.

Associate Dean Sherri Thomas – Would like to see a contextual statement on reviews this year because in the future when people come up for review, we will have a different dean. We do not want to forget what happened this past year with a pandemic and online teaching. Any contextual statement should include information regarding Covid and the data outage.

Prof. Ernesto Longa – The decision to do annual peer evaluations is up to the departments and schools per University policy adopted 20 years ago. The Union is currently negotiating this with the central administration.

Prof. John Lavelle – Supports negotiation mentioned by Ernesto and prefers to defer to the outcome of those negotiations. Suggests turning off the Zoom camera during classroom visits.

Prof. Josh Kastenbergh – Suggests to meet with pre-tenured faculty prior to the classroom visit and ask what they prefer.

Prof. Ernesto Longa – A policy fix could be specific to the pandemic stating teaching evaluations can be done on an opt-in basis. Also suggested maybe a self-reflection paper on handling teaching during the pandemic.

Strategic planning session – Associate Dean Sherri Thomas and Professor Scott England, Co-Chairs of the Strategic Planning Committee, and Dr. Cristina Serrano-Johnson, Ph.D, and Dr. Bonnie Minkus Holmes, Ph.D, Strategic Planning Co-Facilitators: Draft 1 of the strategic planning document emailed to faculty members in advance of the meeting. Associate Dean Thomas reminded everybody that the committee strived to create a document that faculty can vote on by end of spring semester, 2021, on issues that they would like to be addressed that are not

covered in other policies. Surveys went out and feedback was collected by the committee. The committee worked on creating “SMART” goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely. The Strategic Planning facilitators, Dr. Serrano-Johnson and Dr. Holmes, both from UNM Employee and Organizational Development, went over ground rules for discussion of the first draft of the strategic planning document. Do not criticize individuals but instead focus on the ideas.

Focus area 1, Curriculum: Discussion points made by faculty and deans:

- Not enough focus on equity and justice topics in classes. Need conversation about UNM’s efforts to deal with race and inequity in curriculum.
- The issue of equity and justice is addressed in some strategies, such as 1.1.2 regarding periodic review and update of family categories in online course descriptions. Discussion held about the number of existing requirements and past social justice classes not always being very popular among students.
- Mention was made of the Law & Indigenous Peoples Program and Natural Resources certificate programs. We need to make sure those certificate programs are adequately served by the curriculum.
- Justice teaching is being taught in classes; maybe that can be better identified through classroom evaluations. A goal should be to train students to serve justice in the state of New Mexico.
- Committee has addressed diversity, not just race but veteran status, disability, socio-economic backgrounds, etc.
- One question was “Are the goals in order?” Answer: “The goals will change over the course of the next semester and/or when a new dean starts.”
- The committee will prioritize goals.
- Is the Law School identifying a focus in teaching or in support for students? Is the law school about social justice in NM or promoting public interest, or what is the larger goal?
- Great goal [as stated above] and needs to be added.
- We need to be committed to NM and the issues of social justice that arise in NM, both rural and urban.
- Facilitator – A mission statement is built by the goals in the strategic plan as we go along.
- Would like to incorporate new opportunities coming to NM like Netflix, etc.
- Suggestion made to put the topic of new opportunities under section 1.1.2.
- New opportunities will not necessarily be a part of courses but might be included by way of internship opportunities in places they don’t currently exist.
- New opportunities could be listed under section 1.2.
- Our goal should be to encourage students to dream big. We need opportunities for students in industries coming to NM, Netflix, NBC, US Space Force, etc.
- Section 1.1 should include website interface to include links for opportunities for students on top of updating program curriculum descriptions. Need to have someone assigned to faculty so they know who to contact to make changes.
- Section 1.1.3, we’re going to assess the value of retaining the writing seminar requirement but if we want students to think big, they have to learn to “write big” to better their opportunities.

- Discussion regarding writing requirement vs. drafting courses.
- Under section 1.1, define curriculum that is responsive to skills that students are coming into law school with, such as technology innovation. Under section 1.2.2, expand the opportunity for clinical and practical experiences.

Focus area 2, Students: Discussion points made by faculty and deans:

- Discussion on BA/JD program 2.2.4 pipeline.
- Discussion on making a goal that establishes a clearer commitment to admitting a more diverse student body.
- Discussion on adding a “dream big” statement in goals.
- Discussion on commitment to NM and serving legal needs of the state, but don’t send a message to students that we do not want them if they don’t want to practice here.
- Discussion on commitment to NM communities and diverse groups.
- Discussion on LGBT data, which represents a part of diverse student populations but is not collected on applicants or students. There are also pipeline issues for LGBT students at UNM.
- Data is collected on applicants but there are issues with it and will talk about that topic later.
- Discussion on sections 2.1.8, 2.2.3, 2.2.2, to help underrepresented communities, create LSAT prep for undergrads, and a suggestion that Bar prep should be offered with LS tuition.
- More pipeline programs, summer program like PLSI are needed.
- Discussion on 2.1.6, grading systems. Wants to know what other universities are using.
- Discussion also on pass/fail grading systems. Some spoke against p/f system.
- Under section 2.3, wants to add a goal of being aware of students’ life commitments and being mindful of the caregiver/parent student populations.
- Discussion of the process of strategic planning.
- The draft of the Strategic Plan is to start conversations about goals and strategies.
- Draft document states that the plan will be implemented within six years; some faculty are not comfortable with the document in its current version using the term “implementation.”
- Law School has never had a Strategic Plan. We are trying to identify priorities to give to a new dean. A faculty member responded that the Law School has had a strategic plan created with a new dean at the time (Scarnecchia). The faculty member participated in discussion of that strategic plan.
- Surveys have gone out and people have had an opportunity to participate. Give suggestions and ideas throughout the process.
- Discussion on why the strategic plan is being done this way, and expectations. Should be a fun process.
- Planning during the pandemic is challenging.

Meeting adjourned by unanimous consent at 5:00 p.m.