



**NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY BOARD OF REGENTS  
REGULAR MEETING  
March 14, 2022 at 2:00pm**

**Regents of New Mexico State University**

Chair Ammu Devasthali, Vice Chair Dina Chacón-Reitzel, Secretary/Treasurer Arsenio Romero, Christopher T. Saucedo, Neal Bitsie

**Non-Voting Advisory Members** - ASNMSU President Mathew Madrid, Faculty Senate Chair Julia Parra, Employee Council Chair Joseph Almaguer

**University Officials** - Chancellor Dan E. Arvizu, Ph.D., Interim Provost Dorothy Campbell, Ph.D., Vice Chancellor Ruth A. Johnston, Ph.D., General Counsel Roy Collins III, J.D.

**MINUTES**

**A. Call to Order, Chairwoman Ammu Devasthali**

Chairwoman Devasthali called the meeting to order at 2:00pm.

**Moment of Silence in Memory of Javier Gonzales, Chairwoman Ammu Devasthali**

All attendees arose in observance in a moment of silence in memory of former Regent and Santa Fe Mayor, Javier Gonzales. Mr. Gonzales passed away on February 9, 2022. Mr. Gonzales served as a member of the Board of Regents from 2009-2015 and serving as the Vice Chair in 2009 and 2013.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

Second Lieutenant Zachery Martin lead everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance. Zachery is in his 3<sup>rd</sup> year of Agricultural Business.

Chairwoman Devasthali read the following statement, "Like others around the world we've been watching with heartache as the events of the past few weeks have unfolded in Ukraine. We've been even more saddened in recent days as the Russian invasion of a sovereign nation has escalated and civilian casualties continue to mound. At New Mexico State University we have students, faculty, and staff from around the world and we know that these events have been felt on our campus. We are fortunate that NMSU is such a caring community and we are thankful for those who have contributed in a number of ways to try and help the situation. While our individual actions may not be able to bring this conflict to a swift end, we are hopeful that by coming together we'll be able to help ease at least some of the pain for those who need it most."

**1. Introductions**

**Introduction of Interim Provost Dorothy Campbell, Vice Chancellor Ruth Johnston**

Vice Chancellor Johnston introduced the new Interim Provost, Dr. Dorothy Campbell, who joined NMSU on March 1 as interim provost. Dr. Campbell served as interim vice chancellor for academic affairs at Texas A&M University in 2016, where she managed diversity initiatives to secure the commitment of chief academic officers to follow through with annual diversity reporting, and worked on the delivery of inter-campus online

course transfers. She then served as Interim College of Liberal Arts & Sciences Dean at Frostburg State University in 2018, and recently at Nevada State College in 2019-2020, where she led faculty through a major reorganization involving the merging and creation of new departments. Dr. Campbell earned a bachelor's degree in speech education from Southeast Missouri State University, a master's degree in communication from Central Missouri State University, and a Ph.D. in education with an emphasis in speech communication from the Ohio State University. Dr. Campbell will serve as interim provost while we conduct a national search to identify a permanent provost.

### **Introduction of Library Dean Kevin James Comerford, Interim Vice Provost Dorothy Campbell**

Interim Provost Campbell introduced Mr. Kevin Comerford. Mr. Comerford joins NMSU as the next dean of the NMSU Library. Mr. Comerford comes to us from the University of Riverside, California, where he served as associate university librarian for research, technology, and the digital library. Previously, Mr. Comerford was the director of digital initiatives and scholarly communication, and the head of information technology services at the University of New Mexico Libraries. Prior to UNM, Mr. Comerford was a Group Manager at Microsoft Corporation. He holds a master's degree in Information Science from the University of North Texas and a Masters of Fine Arts from Texas Christian University. Also, he holds a bachelor's of fine arts in studio art from Texas A&M. Mr. Comerford begins his new role tomorrow, March 15, 2022. We welcome Mr. Comerford to NMSU.

### **2. Confirmation of Quorum and Roll Call, Chairwoman Ammu Devasthali**

The Chief of Staff confirmed the quorum. Four members of the Board were present in the board room; Chairwoman Ammu Devasthali, Regent Arsenio Romero, Christopher Regent Saucedo, and Regent Neal Bitsie. Regent Dina Chacón-Reitzel joined virtually via Zoom.

The Chief of Staff took the roll call. University administrators who were present in the board room were Vice Chancellor Ruth Johnston and Interim Provost Dorothy Campbell. General Counsel Roy Collins, Faculty Senate Chair Julia Parra, Employee Council Chair Joseph Almaguer, and ASNMSU President Mathew Madrid joined virtually via Zoom.

### **3. Approval of the Agenda, Chairwoman Ammu Devasthali**

Regent Saucedo made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Regent Bitsie seconded the motion. All were in favor and none opposed. Motion passed.

### **4. Public Comment, Associate Vice President Justin Bannister**

Associate Vice President Justin Bannister stated, "Several people were signed up for public comment. Public comment is provided so members of the community have the opportunity to give input to the Board of Regents. Please note that within compliance of New Mexico Open Meetings Act, the Board is prohibited from taking any action on any item that does not appear on the agenda, except in the case of an emergency. Consequently, the regents will not take into account or action or communication made in public comment unless that matter is already on the agenda for consideration for today's meeting. Each individual addressing the board is asked to state their name and please keep their comments to three minutes and I'll let you know when 30 seconds remain."

Associate Vice President Bannister introduced the first person, Bryson Stemock.

Bryson Stemock stated, "My name is Bryson Stemock. I am a third Ph.D. student in the department of astronomy. I was lucky enough when I came here in 2019 to have my tuition covered because of a donation to the department. With that donation, I didn't have to pay tuition; however, I still spent six months sleeping on

the floor on a leaky air mattress and I was saving up for a bed, which I was finally able to purchase for 75% off six months into my employment at NMSU. I can't imagine coming to work here and also having to pay tuition. I wouldn't have been able to do it myself and I know a lot of graduate students are not able to do it, but somehow find a way to make it work. I spoke at the December Board of Regents meeting and gave public comment and it is disheartening to say the least to see that our words made absolutely no impact on the Board. The Board still continues to employ Dina Holcomb, a union busting lawyer to ensure that your employees continue to receive wages below the federal poverty line. I don't know how you can look at yourself in the mirror, knowing that these are the conditions and this is the suffering that you inflict on your graduate employees and not only are these the conditions that are in place underneath you, but these are the conditions that you're paying someone to ensure that they continue to be in place moving down the line. There are a number of issues that need to be addressed, which is why we have unionized. The biggest issue is tuition remission. There are 80% of our peer institutions offer at least some form of tuition remission and most of those universities also provide some form of health insurances as well. NMSU does not. We want to strive to be an R1 research institution, but when we refuse to offer even remotely competitive wages for up and coming researchers there's absolutely zero chance that that is going to happen. The most immediate and the most necessary change that needs to happen at this university is tuition remission must be provided for graduate students starting in fall of 2022. This cannot continue to happen, period. Thank you for your time."

Associate Vice President Bannister introduced the next person for public comment, Sarbajit Basu.

Sarbajit Basu stated, "Board of Regents, Provost Campbell, Vice Chancellor Ruth Johnston, ASNMSU President Mathew Madrid, ladies and gentlemen, and all people present here, I am here to talk to you about my experiences as a student who identifies as Asian and to that end, I have two experiences to share with you. One experience, dates back to 2021, where I was walking down in front of Pan Am Center and a policeman stopped me because somebody had reported to them that they saw someone like me walking down in front of Pan Am Center and they felt that I was suspicious. The other incident occurred right outside Corbett Center, where someone went out of their way to poke their head out of their car and told me that they were glad that I, someone they identified as Asian just by their complexion, was in the United States and that my culture exists in the United States. So, what I'm talking about here is racism and discrimination toward Asian students in general and I'm sure that there are other people with similar experiences, but I would like to point out that even NMSU diversity data lacks proper presentation of Asian students. There is also no proper support to any student who identifies as Asian. There are student programs for Black students. There are student programs for Hispanic students, but no programs or support for Asian students. The best thing I have for support is the International Students' Office and even then, that is not an organization dedicated for helping me in a moment of crisis. So, I just wanted to let the Board of Regents know that there is, at least in my books, a glaring omission for someone who looks like me or anybody who identifies as Asian. I hope at some point that the Board of Regents and NMSU will try to do something in this regard."

Associate Vice President Bannister introduced the next person for public comment, Matthew Varakian.

Matthew Varakian stated, "Hello members of the Board. I'm a fourth year Ph.D. student in the astronomy department here at NMSU. I gave public comment the last regular meeting Board of Regents meeting in December and I used my time to speak on behalf of the Graduate Worker Union. I highly value the labor we provide through teaching and research. I mentioned the pitiful working conditions NMSU offers its graduate students, especially compared to peer institutions and the lack of action taken by the university administration to address these issues. Rather than work with us to negotiate solutions, you continue to work against us by claiming we are not employees in the first place, a stance that NMSU has embarrassingly held onto in the face of inevitable momentum toward the contrary. The State Labor Board has ruled that graduate workers in New Mexico are public and regular employees and have the right to unionize. UNM has withdrawn their appeals to union there and has agreed to negotiate with their fellow graduate workers. UTEP has committed to partial tuition coverage for graduate workers starting in the fall. On March 4, Governor Lujan Grisham signed a bill

providing comprehensive tuition coverage for a large majority of in-state undergraduates in New Mexico. Whether we are unionizing or not, it's clear that tuition coverage is becoming the most basic level of support that universities should offer. I believe that everyone deserves to be able to afford an education and I'm happy to see this new bill commit to tuition coverage and raising teachers' salaries, but we now have an even more untenable situation for graduate workers at NMSU. As a graduate student and teaching assistant, I will now be paying NMSU tuition so I can work here and teach students, who themselves will not have to pay tuition. I, along with other graduate students, with hundreds of other graduate students will be providing labor for the university, yet still paying to work, while thousands of others attend NMSU for free. What does this say about how much you value graduate workers? As of March 4, the floor in the state of New Mexico is that students get their tuition covered. This is now a standard for undergraduates and has been standard for graduates at many other universities for a long time. If the floor is going to be raised, bring it up for everyone. Withdraw your appeals. Agree to negotiate with us. Commit to covering graduate tuition starting in fall 2022 and from there on out. Do you know how many people who have told me they would come to NMSU for graduate school if their tuition was paid? Do you know how many prospective graduate students gasped when they figured out what their take home pay would be if they came here? The working conditions at NMSU drive potential graduate students away from this university. You have a chance to fix that now. Do not leave your graduate work force behind. Do not let NMSU fall by the waist side and become a relic of the time when students were forced into poverty when they wanted to get an education. Follow the lead of your peers and invest in us now. Thank you."

Associate Vice President Bannister introduced the next person for public comment, Liam Goodale.

Liam Goodale stated, "Good afternoon everyone. Good afternoon Board. My name is Liam. I'm a master's student in the biology department. I work in radiation biology on bacteria and mosquitos. I spoke at an earlier board meeting and I'm disappointed to say that I'm here for the same reason. There are about 50 of us here in person. On Zoom, there's only a couple of them. There are a lot of us here and most of us are here for the same reason. Working conditions for graduate workers have not improved. They started out pretty difficult, especially in full lock down. I was teaching one of the only classes that were in person because everything was online. The work load has not slowed down, even since. So, I'm here to say that first I think it's really important that we prioritize coverage tuition. I think that there are a lot of formalities and polite responses, but not much has changed really. So, a lot of us have to make decisions between paying rent, seeing a doctor, and really basic things. The bare minimum we could do is to not have to pay to come to work. Let alone the wages that we're paid for the work we're expected to do. We teach classes. We do research and on top of that we don't have enough money to bring home for ourselves and some of us have families. We have sick parents. We have a lot of other things that we have to pay for as well. I think the bare minimum we could do is cover tuition. That's all I have to say. Thank you."

Associate Vice President Bannister introduced the next person for public comment, Brad Hanson.

Brad Hanson stated, "Hello fellow Aggies. My name is Brad and I'm a graduate worker at NMSU since the fall of 2020. I would like to talk to you today about calculators. In my time as an Aggie, I've been underwhelmed by the actions of those in your positions, especially those sitting before us today. You and other NMSU leaders seem to rely exclusively on budgetary calculators. While it's critically important to come out in the black, NMSU's budgetary woes stem from the current inability of our leadership to understand social calculations. You have broken non-existent relationships with those directly carrying out the university's mission. When graduate workers and our supporters pour our hearts out to you last December, you callously continued with your meeting without acknowledging us. It would seem you also have dysfunctional relationships with those who provide funding for our university. I had a conversation with a state legislature and they informed us that NMSU receives significantly less funding per student than the University of New Mexico. This seemed unfair, but they explained that this funding gap exists because of how NMSU leadership spends the money you are given. If money were spent on things like graduate workers having their tuition waived, this member of the

legislature said they would be happy to send more money to our coffers. Back in December I shared with you all my main concern was not the fate of President Floros, but the culturally entrenched ineptitude of NMSU leadership. Standing before you today, I can confidently say that much of this ineptitude is in the social realm. This was confirmed when this Board decided to continue to pay a lawyer to argue that we are not state employees. That we do not deserve the same rights granted to the grad workers at UNM. Anyone with a hint of social awareness can tell you this was a poor decision. These are the kind of actions that funders and state legislatures look at. Myself and my fellow grad workers had to organize because the current NMSU leadership culture does not understand how to use a social calculator. Without healthier relationships with the workers of NMSU and those who decide where funding goes, the Aggie family will continue to be under funded, not just financially, but socially, emotionally, and spiritually. After this public comment section of this meeting is done is when this Board has its opportunity to begin to heal one of its broken relationships. Before you move on with the meeting, tell those who have shared their needs that you have heard them. This does not mean that you agree with all that we have said, but it is a sign of our mutual respect and humanity. I look forward to the day when you decide to come out from behind the desk and sit on the same level with those you are charged with leading. I want to chat and get to know each of you as a person and not the cold heartless bureaucratic personas you give off. I hope we can not only talk about how to make graduate workers' lives at NMSU better, but how NMSU Graduate Workers United can help NMSU's relationships with state legislatures, so we can get more money coming into the Aggie family than either of us could alone. We need to work together to educate, research, and extend our skills to the great people of New Mexico. Thank you."

Associate Vice President Bannister introduced the next person for public comment, Christopher Brown.

Christopher Brown stated, "Madam Chair, members of the Board, Vice Chancellor Johnston, and Interim Provost Campbell, thank you for the time to share a few comments with you today. My name is Christopher Brown and I'm a full professor in the department of geography, faculty fellow for the Beyond Borders project, co-director of Small Sponsored Projects Lab, former Faculty Senate Chair and former department head. Today I speak in strong support of the effort by NMSU graduate students to advocate for some form of tuition waiver or relief. I also request that NMSU's leadership engage in discussions with graduate students engaged in seeking to be recognized as a union. I share three simple points, which I shared previously with you. Support by request. Point 1, graduate research assistants are literally the life blood of NMSU's research efforts and key players in our efforts to re-achieve our R1 status. RAs work in our labs and in the field to do the work external sponsors want us to do. They assist and report generation and, in some cases, they write grants that bring external funds to NMSU to support our research effort. Point 2, TAs are key in the efforts to teach our students and advance student success. Graduate teaching assistants conduct lab sections, grade students' work, provide support in labs and are the first contact students make in seeking assistance in classwork. Students identify and connect better with TAs than many faculty members and we simply could not teach our classes and advance student success without them. Point three, the compensation package we pay graduate students lacks tuition relief and comes up way short on support needed to be successful graduate students and researchers. The hourly wage we pay is reasonable, but in many cases, we take back a good portion of their wages to pay for tuition and health insurance. NMSU policy mandates faculty include requests for funds to cover tuition and health insurance in our funding proposals, but not all project sponsors allow these items in the budget. TAs are simply left out in the cold. I close my comments with two requests. I urge NMSU's leadership to re-examine our budget and find the funds needed to provide tuition relief to all graduate assistants, both TAs and RAs. I also urge NMSU leadership to engage in smart, frank, respectful, and I hope mutually beneficial conversations about recognizing their unionization efforts. The students dropped the cards and got the votes. They secured the support they need and now is the time for these conversations to start. Thank you for your time."

Associate Vice President Bannister introduced the next person for public comment, Nelson Crane.

Nelson Crane stated, "I'm Nelson Crane. I'm a graduate student in the Social Work department here at NMSU.

My program requires students to take 15 credit hours per semester, work for a minimum of 16 unpaid hours a week in a practicum internship, and on top of that I'm a graduate assistant at the Autism Diagnostic Center on campus. I love my work and I love it here, but I'm not thriving and I'm going into debt really bad. Supporting GAs with tuition coverage is going to support our health, well-being, ability to thrive, start our careers. I don't know why you wouldn't want that for us. We're scrapping by. I'm from New Mexico. My Mom graduated from this university. My uncles and aunts did too. I wanted to come here, but if I had known that I could have gotten tuition coverage at another university out of state, I would have absolutely done that. If I had my tuition covered, I would have money to get my power steering fixed and go to the dentist."

Associate Vice President Bannister introduced the next person for public comment, Duncan McGraw.

Duncan McGraw stated, "My name is Duncan McGraw and I am a second year Ph.D. student and research assistant at the University of New Mexico in the Optical Science and Engineering program. As someone who is in a graduate program in New Mexico, I see the graduate workers at NMSU as future colleagues, laborers in highly technical fields and friends. I find it deeply troubling that they don't receive tuition remission despite putting countless hours into helping this university run and cultivating an academic environment where students can truly reach their full potential. From my own experience, when I moved to New Mexico to start my Ph.D. program in the summer of 2020, I faced delayed and insufficient pay for my work and internship, to where I had to ask my family for support. It culminated taking out a short-term loan just to make ends meet during the height of the pandemic and then paying it back with interest in the following month. If I had to pay tuition on top of that, I wouldn't be here standing before you right now. I ask that you, the Board of Regents, were to immediately implement tuition remission for all graduate assistantships as is the norm for other public universities. It is crucial for the next generation of academics. I also ask that you work to bargain with NMSU Grad Workers United as soon as possible so that grad workers have agency in their workplace. Solidarity with NMSU, GWU. Thank you for your time."

Associate Vice President Bannister introduced the next person for public comment, Dan Vargo.

Dan Vargo stated, "My name is Dan Vargo. I am a graduate in the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Ecology department. I'm here today to advocate along with my peers for fall tuition reimbursement for all graduate students. Currently, I receive a stipend, tuition reimbursement, and health care through grants, which were secured by my advisor before advertising my current position. Because I receive what most would consider the most basic necessities to live in this country, I'm able to live above the poverty line and seek necessary medical care for chronic health conditions. I'm also able to receive my education without going into further debt. I know that my fellow employees are not so lucky. As you well know, they are being exploited for their labor and talents, while being forced to choose between rent, food, medical care, and debt."

Associate Vice President Bannister introduced the next person for public comment, James Lee.

James Lee stated, "Good afternoon Board of Regents and everyone else. Dan is actually a good friend of mine. Like him, I'm a graduate student in the department of Fish, Wildlife, and Conservation Ecology. We're on the same project and much like Dan, I am very fortunate enough to be funded by my project, tuition, health insurance and a stipend in order for me to attend at NMSU. Were that not the case, I would not be standing before you. Truthfully sometimes, I don't understand how other people at NMSU, many of whom I call my dear friends now, are able to attend. It is truly abhorrent to the competitions they need to make on a daily basis in order to be able to continue their education here and to continue to work here. I implore you not only to implement tuition remission immediately for the Fall of 2022, but I also want you to remember our faces today because I remember yours. I remember your cold unmoved faces and responses to all the passion that I see here today. I want to be proven wrong. Thank you."

Associate Vice President Bannister introduced the next person for public comment, Komla Basile Koumi.

Komla Basile Koumi stated, "Hello everyone, ladies and gentlemen, Chair, and Board of Regents. Good

afternoon. My name is Komla Basile Koumi. I'm from Togo, West Africa. I'm a GA and a doctorate student, second year, from the department of Business, also known as Economics, Applied Statistics, and International Business. I work on teaching. I'm here today because I can no longer afford to pay my tuition. It has been very difficult for me this semester. I almost lost my GA position. As you can see, most of us who come here as students, we left our job to come and work for a school and take care of our career path. We have a lot of charges that we cannot pay because we use our money to pay tuition. A colleague, who lied on parent financial support, from Africa, can no longer expect any inflow from countries because of the COVID pandemic. It is very difficult to receive money from home now. A current student employee at almost all our peer institutions volunteer second level of university wide tuition coverage for graduate employees, which we don't have here. If I were to walk in at Brandeis University, where I got my masters degree, and is a Fulbright school, I wouldn't be standing before you today trying to beg you to accept the union. Many students do not want to come to universities here because of tuition. If it's possible to do it for undergraduate students to give them the opportunity to not pay tuition and UNM can do it for their graduate students, then I'm sure that can be possible for NMSU. I'm calling on the NMSU Board of Regents to commit tuition coverage for all graduate employees for Fall 2022. Thank you."

Associate Vice President Bannister introduced the next person for public comment, Paramveer Singh.

Paramveer Singh stated, "Hello everyone. My name is Paramveer Singh. I am a graduate assistant in the Environmental Science department. This is my sixth year here at NMSU. I'm here today because we can no longer afford to pay about \$6500 a year in tuition. We're already financially crunched, but now rising tuition costs, inflation, and gas prices are adding to the pain we endure. Taking a much needed and unpaid break to go on vacation or even to a grocery store, we have to do that math. As an international student, it takes us about 2-3 years to save enough money to buy a plane ticket to visit our family back home. Graduate students are already highly pressed individuals as mentioned by several research and news articles. Graduate student employees at almost all peer institutions get a decent kind of university wide tuition coverage provided. If I were working as a GRA at Albany University in Albany, Alabama, where my brother is doing his Ph.D. I would not be paying a third of my wages to tuition fees. This is a highly exploited situation and it's holding NMSU back from reaching full potential as a university. Most of the R1 institutions provide, not just tuition coverage, but high wages and health insurance benefits as well. Over half of the graduate workers in a recent survey reported that they would not recommend NMSU for graduate school. I think this is shameful and it is passed time for a change. We love NMSU and we want our graduate programs to be a competitive option for all graduate students. Just this month, the governor extended tuition coverage for undergraduate students in New Mexico. Regular UNM employees working at least 20 hours a week are provided with a tuition waiver. Coverage tuition for graduate students has been recommended again and again. At NMSU, now is the time for real action. Thank you."

Associate Vice President Bannister introduced the next person for public comment, Samantha Cooney.

Samantha Cooney stated, "Hello Regents. My name is Samantha Cooney and I am a 5<sup>th</sup> year Ph.D. candidate at University of New Mexico. I am here on behalf of the UNM Graduate Union there in solidarity with our colleagues here at NMSU. Like many grad workers here at NMSU we've also struggled to make ends meet. I have struggled to pay my own groceries and make rent as a graduate worker on the income that they give me at UNM. We unionized because many of us are in the same boat as our colleagues here. There's a lot of things that UNM does well. They provide us with tuition remission. This is a very basic need for graduate workers. I would not have made it into my 5<sup>th</sup> year without tuition remission. I do not know how my colleagues here at NMSU do it. Here, the workers are paying the university to work and that is absolutely horrible. How can NMSU admin expect to attain research 1 status when they won't even provide basic tuition remission to their employees? There's a statement online that I found very easily on the NMSU webpage and it said, "We seek to excel in student success and social mobility for our diverse student populations, achieve the highest Carnegie research status R1, and maintain our Carnegie community and engagement classification." That is not possible

without providing tuition remission to the graduate workers here. It is not possible. Your other peer institutions provide tuition remission. UNM provides tuition remission. Other universities provide tuition remission. It is very basic. By refusing to provide tuition remission, NMSU is preventing social mobility. You are preventing diversity because BIPOC students face the brunt of bad working conditions and poverty wages. UNM and other public universities can do this, so can you. If NMSU admin wants to see the same level of success as their peer institutions, the basic necessities need to be provided to graduate workers. The university works because graduate workers do. Millions of dollars are brought into this institution because graduate workers work here. If you want to do well in research, pay your researchers better and give them tuition remission so they are able to stay at this university and attain the level of research that you want to see. Thank you.”

Associate Vice President Bannister introduced the next person for public comment, Iñigo García-Bryce.

Iñigo García-Bryce stated, “Hi my name is Iñigo García-Bryce. I’m a full professor in the history department. I was the director for the Center of Latin American and Border Studies. I was a Fulbright scholar in Peru some years ago. While I was there, there was a strike at the university and it was taken seriously. People didn’t cross the picket line literally when students were striking. I hadn’t planned to say anything. I wanted to come to support the students. Now I can only say that I’m embarrassed to be a faculty member at this university. Embarrassed because I rely so heavily on my graduate assistants to do my work. In other words, I wouldn’t be able to do my work without my graduate assistants. So, what kind of world are we living in then, that they don’t get tuition assistance. That you’re not willing to talk to them when they form a union. One of the things that I’ve learned as a professor is that people can fall asleep during lectures. I’d actually like to engage you and give you some of my time using a method that I teach in my class called Team Based Learning. Could I hear from somebody about what your thoughts are? Thank you.”

Associate Vice President Bannister introduced the next person for public comment, Trevor Karpinski.

Trevor Karpinski stated, “Hello. My name is Trevor Karpinski. I’m a Ph.D. student and a graduate research assistant in the Mechanical Engineering department and a member of the Graduate Student Union. I want to thank you to the Board of Regents in allowing the graduate students to comment today on the issue of tuition coverage for graduate students. I want to start by taking us on a trip to Silicon Valley and visiting Google’s campus. I will emphasize that it is indeed called a campus because of the sheer size of the property. Google’s location is a one-stop-shop for their employees because they’re acutely aware that convenience and peace of mind make for a better workforce. Why worry about waiting in line at Chick-fil-A when the cafeteria that you can walk to at your work is a full-service kitchen? No need to stress about how you’re going to get your kids to the daycare when the daycare is at work. At Silicon Valley, these and many of these are a dime a dozen and the feud over whose property has the nicest features is no accident. These benefit packages and amenities make them more money because some of the world’s leading engineers and managers are attracted to these features and going on to make world leading products. I want to reel it back a little bit to Las Cruces. Here the point still stands, companies offer benefit packages to be competitive in the market, which leads to these benefit packages actually netting a profit for them in the long run. Top talent would rather take a pay cut if it meant that their company offered a great 401K and they had more vacation days. In return the top talent producers talk to your profits. If we really want to nail the point, NASA landed humans on the moon with a 40-hour work week, a pension, health insurance, paid vacation, 401K, social security and so much more. As a research institute innovation is not built off the backs of selflessness and sacrifice. At least that’s not what NASA thinks. It is built by scholars and academics who put their passion into their work. We cannot strive for greatness when we have to fight against immense inflation, nor can we innovate in our field when we’re worried about paying next month’s rent. Lastly, allow me to hone my message on why we are here today. Tuition coverage for graduate students. Because of tuition payments I had to really look at my budget last year and cut back on a lot of free time activities just to afford the necessities. I can’t drive to White Sands because gas is too expensive. I can’t eat out to experience local cuisine and culture because it doesn’t fit in my budget.

Not only that, but healthcare isn't covered by the university either. Although this is a topic for another time, the point still is very present. If I didn't have to pay for tuition, I could afford better healthcare. After going through COVID for two years, I hope we all can see the benefit of a healthy workforce. The fact of the matter is that NMSU cannot be competitive in the academic market when students are paid less than surrounding universities and additionally have to pay tuition. Tuition coverage, like a 401K or vacation days, will positively net NMSU in the long run because top tier students will bring with them top tier funding. That is all I have for you today. I want to greatly thank you for your time and I hope you take these words into consideration for your future decision making. Thank you."

Associate Vice President Bannister introduced the next person for public comment, Neal Rosendorf.

Neal Rosendorf stated, "I want to thank the Regents for the opportunity to speak in strong support of the Graduate Student Workers Union and in particular today, full tuition remission for all graduate students, especially full-time grad students. To note, I indeed am Dr. Neal Rosendorf. I'm a professor in NMSU's Government department and a faculty senator. I was previously a member of the Domenici Institute Chancellor's Advisory Board and a member of the teams' effort. I have three points to make. First of all, for many years public higher education was considered a public good first. That is a benefit to society at large and a private good second, a benefit to individual students. Generous funding policies were based on this formula. For the past several decades this perspective has been flipped with higher ed degrees seen as a primarily private good. This is both inaccurate and frankly, wrong-headed. Graduate students certainly derive a benefit from their education, but society benefits as much or more from the skills and expertise they gain from the employee professionally. Second, a graduate degree properly done is a full-time job. Full tuition remission should thus be seen as a form of compensation for graduate students doing their job. Finally, over the course of several university administrations there have been repeated calls and plans to raise New Mexico State University's status to that of a respected high level R1 research university. If this is to be more than wishful thinking, then NMSU must do the things that a respected high level R1 research university does and one of them is indeed to provide full tuition remission to graduate students. Until then, NMSU will remain a second-tier institution, out shown and outperformed by peer universities. I exhort the regents to do the right thing for the benefit of students of society and of NMSU. Thank you for your time."

Associate Vice President Bannister introduced the last person for public comment, Andres Perez-Rojas.

Andres Perez-Rojas stated, "Good afternoon. My name is Andres Perez-Rojas. I'm an Assistant Professor and Co-Director of Training for the Counseling, Psychology, Ph.D. Program for the department of Counseling of Educational Psychology in the new HEST college. As a psychologist and a professor, one of my areas of expertise is college counseling and student wellness. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you all today and urge the Board of Regents to provide tuition relief and health insurance to graduate students and to recognize their union, all of which will enhance student wellness. I was a graduate student once myself at the University of Maryland. I loved my time as a graduate student, but it was also very hard. I was a student, a researcher, a teaching assistant, an instructor, a therapist in training and more. My stipend was modest, but unlike our students here, I received tuition remission. I didn't have to pay to attend the university that employed me. Also, unlike our students I was provided health insurance, which provided me to access therapy and other medical services that helped me to cope with the stresses of being in graduate school and have a healthier lifestyle. So, graduate school was hard, but at least I had these basic protections which made it a bit easier. It is astonishing to me that we ask our graduate students to do what I did and more without those basic protections. Graduate student workers have helped me conduct research, teach, mentor other students, and run our program. Without these student workers, the university would come to a halt. There would be no path to R1 status and no way to achieve the core mission of the university. Universities, particularly public universities, are meant to allow students to pursue their dreams and make life better for themselves, their loved ones, and their community. But today we are forcing our students to choose between pursuing their dreams or paying rent, putting food on the table, or getting routine medical care. Graduate students are

having to take out loans and immiserate themselves, while the university prospers in other ways. As a program coordinator, I have much difficulty recruiting students into our program because we cannot provide competitive assistantships. We are losing out to other universities and doing a disservice to our students. Working conditions are learning conditions and our graduate students deserve better now. I fully endorse our graduate students' right to organize to bargain collectively and negotiate better working conditions and I urge you all to come to the negotiating table and address our concerns. Thank you."

Associate Vice President Bannister stated that this concluded public comment.

**B. Approval of the Minutes, Chairwoman Ammu Devasthali**

**1. Special Meeting February 7, 2022**

Regent Chacón-Reitzel motioned to approve the minutes as presented. Regent Saucedo seconded the motion. All were in favor and none opposed. Motion passed.

**C. Consent Items, Chairwoman Ammu Devasthali**

- 1. NMSU Las Cruces: Departmental Storage Unit C Renovation, University Architect Heather Watenpaugh**
- 2. 2022 Annual Open Meetings Notice Resolution, University General Counsel Roy Collins**
- 3. El Paso Electric Company Perpetual Easement for electrical service to Burrell College of Osteopathic Medicine and the Turf Grass Research Center, Special Assistant to the President Scott Eschenbrenner**
- 4. Mora Purchase Agreement, Special Assistant to the President Scott Eschenbrenner**

Regent Romero made a motion to approve the items on the consent agenda as presented. Regent Chacón-Reitzel seconded the motion. All were in favor and none opposed. Motion passed.

**D. Action Items, Chairwoman Ammu Devasthali**

**1. Election of Officers, Chairwoman Ammu Devasthali**

As provided by the state statutes and Board of Regents by-laws the regents are to elect a chair, vice chair, and secretary/treasurer in their annual meeting in March.

Regent Romero nominated Regent Devasthali to remain as Chair. There were no other nominations. Regent Devasthali was elected as Chair by acclamation.

Regent Chacón-Reitzel nominated Regent Romero as Vice Chair. There were no other nominations. Regent Romero was elected as Vice Chair by acclamation.

Regent Saucedo nominated Regent Bitsie as Secretary/Treasurer. There were no other nominations. Regent Bitsie was elected as Secretary/Treasurer by acclamation.

Chairwoman Devasthali thanked Regent Chacón-Reitzel for her service as Vice Chair.

**E. Announcements and Comments, Chair**

**1. Good News for NMSU!**

Regent Romero recognized and thanked everyone for their hard work at the university as we are moving out of the pandemic and into a normal environment as well as their continued hard work to make sure that

students, staff, and faculty are kept safe. Regent Romero was impressed with the capital projects going on at the university and looking forward to seeing their completion.

Regent Saucedo acknowledged those who showed up to support the Aggies basketball teams in Las Vegas, Nevada. The crowd was lively and engaging, which shows the great support for the university. Regent Saucedo said, "To all the fans! To all the alumni! Great job!"

Regent Bitsie acknowledged the efforts of the women's basketball team. Regent Bitsie said, "Time and time again our women's basketball team prove themselves to be resilient with the support of the community. I want to give a shout out to women's basketball. Good job in Las Vegas and I look forward to next year!"

Regent Chacón-Reitzel congratulated all the student athletes. It's a very difficult and challenging way to go through college as a student athlete. Regent Chacón-Reitzel stated that they appreciate the integrity that they show and their hard work they exhibit.

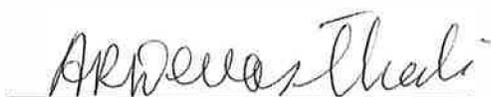
Chairwoman Devasthali congratulated the men's basketball team for winning for the WAC championship.

Vice Chancellor Johnston gave a shout out to the band, cheerleaders, sun dancers, and the athletic department.

F. **Adjournment, Chair**

Regent Romero motioned to adjourn. Regent Saucedo seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 3:06pm.

**Meeting Minutes Approved on May 6, 2022 by the New Mexico State University Board of Regents.**



Ammu Devasthali  
Board of Regents Chair



Neal Bitsie  
Board of Regents Secretary/Treasurer