



NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY BOARD OF REGENTS
REGULAR MEETING
May 8, 2025 at 2:00 PM

Educational Services Building, Regents Room
1780 East University Avenue, Las Cruces, NM
Live Webcast: <https://nmsu.zoom.us/j/82240874731>

Regents of New Mexico State University

Chair Ammu Devasthali, Vice Chair Deborah Romero, Secretary/Treasurer Christopher T. Saucedo, Marisol Olivas, Ricardo Gonzales

Non-Voting Advisory Members - ASNMSU President Ala Alhalholy, Faculty Senate Chair Vimal Chaitanya, Ph.D., Employee Council Chair Donna Johnson

University Officials - President Valerio Ferme, Ph.D., Interim Provost Lakshmi Reddi, Ph.D., General Counsel Lisa Henderson, J.D.

MINUTES

A. Call to Order, Chairwoman Ammu Devasthali

Chairwoman Ammu Devasthali called the regular meeting to order at 2:01 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

Joshua Ramirez led the Pledge of Allegiance. Chair Devasthali thanked Mr. Ramirez for his service and invited him to speak about his involvement with local veterans' organizations.

- Mr. Ramirez discussed his work with the Veterans Advisory Board of the City of Las Cruces to help young veterans find a sense of purpose and community.
- He also mentioned his collaboration with Hector Sanchez from the MVP Program to utilize student veterans and create a central hub.
- He highlighted the upcoming Memorial Day ceremony on May 26th at Veterans Memorial Park hosted by the City of Las Cruces, starting at 8 AM, with free food for all attendees.

1. Introduction of the Media and Elected Officials, Chief of Staff Justin Bannister

Chief of Staff Justin Bannister indicated there were no media or elected officials requiring introduction.

2. Introductions

a) Introduction of ASNMSU President Elect Wyatt Ziehe, ASNMSU President Ala Alhalholy

ASNMSU President Ala Alhalholy introduced President-Elect Wyatt Ziehe.

- Mr. Ziehe is a 5th-year dual aerospace and mechanical engineering student.
- He previously served as a Senator for the College of Engineering.
- He interns year-round at Sandia National Labs for the Qubit project.
- He will commission in the United States Air Force as an RPA Pilot after graduation.

Mr. Ziehe expressed his gratitude and eagerness to work with the Board.

3. Confirmation of Quorum, Chairwoman Ammu Devasthali

Board of Regents Chief of Staff confirmed the quorum by taking roll call:

Regent Gonzales: Present

Regent Olivas: Present

Regent Saucedo: Present

Regent Romero: Present

Regent Devasthali: Present

ASNMSU President Alhalholy: Present

Faculty Senate Chair Chaitanya: Present

Employee Council Chair Johnson: Present

President Ferme: Present

Provost Reddi: Present

General Counsel Henderson: Present

The quorum was confirmed.

4. Approval of the Agenda, Chairwoman Ammu Devasthali

Regent Olivas moved to approve the agenda as presented, with a second from Regent Gonzales. All in favor, and the agenda was approved as presented.

B. Approval of Minutes

1. Special Meeting on April 30, 2025

Regent Romero moved to approve the special meeting minutes for April 30 as presented, with a second from Regent Gonzales. All in favor, and the agenda was approved as presented.

C. Awards and Recognitions

1. Proclamation Recognizing the Service of Ala Alhalholy as ASNMSU President, Chairwoman Ammu Devasthali

Chairwoman Devasthali read the following proclamation in honor of the service of outgoing ASNMSU President Ala Alhalholy:

WHEREAS, Ala Alhalholy, as President of the Associated Students of NMSU (ASNMSU), has served with distinction as an advisory member of the New Mexico State University Board of Regents since May 2024; and

WHEREAS, she was raised on the NMSU campus from the time she was six years old after immigrating from Jordan to Las Cruces, New Mexico; and

WHEREAS, she served as the first Muslim student body president of NMSU; and as Senator for the College of Arts and Sciences during the 2023 academic year; and

WHEREAS, Alhalholy was committed to working with students, faculty, and staff as part of ASNMSU and outside of the organization; and

WHEREAS, she worked determinedly to advocate for resources for students and to make all voices of the student body heard – both in the state and at the national level; and

WHEREAS, as president she led the ASNMSU Governmental Affairs team at the 2025 New Mexico State Legislative session in Santa Fe to lobby for student safety initiatives, securing \$1,528,000, the second highest appropriation ever secured by ASNMSU; and

WHEREAS, she worked in collaboration with the ASNMSU Supreme Court on the process to send qualified candidates to the Governor of New Mexico for a new Student Regent; and

WHEREAS, she chaired the Student Fee Review Board, comprised of students, faculty and staff; and as chair she advocated for and secured funding for a free day care service for parents enrolled at NMSU; and

WHEREAS, Alhalholy secured funding to offer free feminine hygiene products across the NMSU campus; and

WHEREAS, she served on the Presidential Search Committee to send recommendations for candidates to the Board of Regents for their consideration; and

WHEREAS, she will graduate with a degree in biology on May 9, 2025, with plans to attend dental school following graduation; and

WHEREAS, Former Student Regent Garrett Moseley said, “During my time serving alongside Ala, I was continually impressed by her and came to admire her in many ways. Ala always fought for what she believed in, even if she had to do so alone. Ala truly embodies what it means to be an Aggie. I am thankful for her service to the students and the NMSU community;” and

WHEREAS, NMSU President Valerio Ferme said, “Ms. Alhalholy has shown outstanding leadership in her role as president of ASNMSU. She has been a staunch promoter of student welfare and wellbeing, and she has provided great insights about student issues during the early days of my tenure. I appreciate the warm welcome she provided on behalf of her peers – especially the walks around campus. I look forward to seeing what she will accomplish in the future, and I wish her all the best;” and

WHEREAS, NMSU Board of Regents Chair Ammu Devasthali said, “Ms. Alhalholy has been a tireless advocate for the best interests of NMSU’s students. She brought a critical student voice to our presidential searches and helped vet our selection of a student regent to recommend for this board. She is also sheer joy to be around. We have spent a lot of time together at football and basketball games, and I know that, having been a high school student-athlete herself, she is an enthusiastic cheerleader for students in general and student-athletes in particular. On behalf of the Board of Regents, I thank her for her valuable contributions and wish her the very best in the next chapter of her educational journey. I expect her to do great things.”

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED in official session that the Board of Regents of New Mexico State University thanks and commends Ala Alhalholy for her dedicated service and wishes her great success in her future endeavors.

PROCLAIMED this 8th day of May 2025, at Las Cruces, New Mexico.

D. Public Comment, *Chief of Staff Justin Bannister*

Chief of Staff Justin Bannister reported that no one had signed up for public comment.

E. Advisory Member Reports

1. Associated Students of NMSU Report, *President Ala Alhalholy*

President Alhalholy stated she had no report at this time.

2. NMSU Faculty Senate Report, *Chair Vimal Chaitanya*

Dr. Chaitanya reported on the Faculty Senate's ongoing activities:

- Working with NMSU administrative leadership to address challenges from White House executive orders, particularly concerns about proposed >50% cuts in NSF and NIH budgets, a fixed IDC rate of 15%, and federal agency staff reductions.
- Standing committees are examining the impacts:
 - Student Success Committee: Impact on student opportunities and assistantships.
 - Research and Creative Activity Committee: Impact on support staff in research offices.
 - Budget and Resources Committee: Exploring alternative funding sources.
 - University Planning Committee: Impact on promotion and tenure processes.
 - DEI and Curriculum and Program Committee: Engaging in related conversations.
- New members were inducted into the Senate on May 1st.
- Elections for Standing Committee chairs were held. Chris Brown was re-elected Chair of the Leadership Committee and will continue as Vice Chair of the Senate. Dr. Chaitanya was re-elected as Chair of the Faculty Senate.

3. NMSU Employee Council Report, *Chair Donna Johnson*

Ms. Johnson provided the following updates:

- Founders Day was a success, with recognition of the newest Aggie Legend, the late Charley Johnson, Aggie football great.
- Gabrielle Martinez, Associate Registrar from University Student Records, is the Spring 2025 A Mountain Staff Awardee.
- The Employee Council was represented by Chair Donna Johnson at the inauguration dinner and ceremony.
- 150 new tables and 600 new chairs have arrived, thanking the Board of Regents and Administrative and Finance for approving the purchase. This has significantly improved campus functions and safety.

F. Affiliated Entity Reports

1. NMSU Foundation Inc. Report, *CEO Sylvia Y. Acosta*

Dr. Acosta presented the Foundation's report for the last quarter:

- Founders Day raised a record \$385,744 (up from \$219,000 last year). A \$90,000 gift for the Aggie Cupboard was inspired by President Ferme's personal gift match. Three matches (AI, athletics, student leadership) are ongoing until the end of the fiscal year.
- Fundraising is at 91% of the MOU goal (approximately \$18 million), with expectations to exceed the goal.
- Reworked endowment reports led to a \$100,000 gift to HRTM due to increased transparency.
- 880 new donors have been identified (over 900 as of the day before the meeting), reversing a trend of declining donor engagement.
- The annual board meeting was held in Albuquerque, partnering with the University for "1888 Minutes of Giving," with significant student leadership engagement from ASNMSU and President Alhalholy.
- An alumni mixer in Albuquerque had over 117 attendees, showing exponential growth in engagement.
- Upcoming events: Outstanding Graduate Celebration (May 9th) and the launch of the first international alumni network in Chihuahua on May 29th.
- Senior Walk, in partnership with ASNMSU and organized by SLIP (Student Life Involvement Programs), had high attendance, reviving a campus tradition.

2. Arrowhead Center Inc. Report, *Interim Director & CEO Dana Catron*

Ms. Catron provided the following updates:

- Leadership & Governance: Currently in a leadership transition. The Arrowhead Director position posting is planned for September-October to align with the hiring of the new VPR for NMSU. A restructuring of the Arrowhead Center Inc. Board is proposed to include more external industry, investment, and policy voices.
- Financial Health (FY24): Brought in \$1.1 million (114% of revenue target) on the Arrowhead Center Inc. side. Expenses were held to 87% of budget, reducing projected loss by over \$300,000. Received a clean audit review from Los Alamos with no findings.
- Arrowhead Innovation Fund: 97% of capital deployed; no longer collecting management fees. Arrowhead Center Inc. is covering the fund's annual operating costs (approx. \$80,000/year). Evaluating long-term sustainability options. Companies like Parting Stone show strong growth potential.
- Arrowhead Park Progress: HB Construction selected for the soundstage design-build process; contracts under review. Groundbreaking anticipated Fall 2025, construction completion Summer 2026. Reviewing lease terms to absorb infrastructure costs for the proposed office building. Anticipate needing \$3.6 million in FY26 and \$3.7 million in FY27 for park infrastructure development; pursuing legislative funding and internal financing.
- IP & Commercialization: Continued growth in commercialization. "IP Days" in departments have increased faculty engagement and IP disclosures. Licensed climate-ready alfalfa (20+ years of NMSU research) to Mountain View Seeds. The IP office faces budget strains due to increasing legal costs and staffing not fully supported by central funding (Arrowhead Center absorbing costs for IP Director salary portion and fully funding IP Project Manager). Developing 5 and 10-year projections for the IP office, seeing it as an opportunity to increase university revenues.

In response to Regent Romero's question about the delay in posting the Director position, Ms. Catron explained it was to align with the VPR search (4th candidate visiting next week) to allow the new VPR time to acclimate. She will advocate for posting it as soon as possible.

3. Aggie Development Inc. Report, CEO Scott Eschenbrenner

Mr. Eschenbrenner provided updates:

- Two deals are working at Aggie Uptown:
 - A ground lease with Blake's Lotaburger is anticipated for Board approval.
 - Working with a local financial institution interested in the area. Ground lease terms are being developed for potential Ag Development Board review in May/June.
- Collaborating with Studio D Architecture for the thoughtful design of the remainder of Aggie Uptown, including utility surveys.
- Director position updates: President Ferme has transitioned into the role from Interim President Monica Torres. Regent Romero will be serving on the Ag Development Board. Thanked President Alhalholi for her service and welcomed Wyatt Ziehe to the Real Estate Committee and Ag Development.
- New community member Jake Redfern (NMSU alum, NA First Valley Realty principal) will be joining the board, bringing real estate expertise.

G. Consent Items, Chairwoman Ammu Devasthali

Regent Gonzales moved to approve the consent agenda items as presented, with a second from Regent Saucedo. All were in favor, and the consent agenda was approved as presented.

1. Mora-San Miguel Electric Cooperative Right-of-Way (ROW) Easement – John T. Harrington Forestry Research Center, Mora, NM, Special Assistant to the President Scott Eschenbrenner

H. Action Items, Chairwoman Ammu Devasthali

1. Authorization for Conferral of Degrees and Certificates, Interim Provost Lakshmi Reddi

Provost Reddi requested approval for the conferral of degrees and certificates to named candidates listed in the Spring 2025 commencement programs for the institution's four campuses, contingent upon satisfactory completion of courses and catalog requirements, and originality of theses. He thanked faculty and staff for their role in student journeys.

Chair Devasthali spoke about the significance of this rite of passage for students, wishing them luck and reminding them they will always be part of the Aggie family.

Regent Saucedo expressed that this is his favorite weekend, noting many graduates would be walking across a stage for the first time due to pandemic-era high school graduations.

Regent Romero echoed this sentiment, emphasizing the joy and the impact these graduates will have on the world.

Regent Romero moved approval of the authorization for conferral of degrees and certificates with a second from Regent Olivas. All were in favor and the motion passed.

I. Informational Items, Chair

1. None.

J. Report from the New Mexico Department of Agriculture to the Regents of New Mexico State University (Board of Agriculture), Cabinet Secretary & Director Jeff Witte

Secretary Witte provided his report:

- Thanked outgoing ASNMSU President Ala Alhalholy for her service.
- Reported on a recent trip to Washington D.C. with State 4-H and FFA leadership teams, noting that all but two of the 16 student leaders plan to attend NMSU.
- Legislative session update: NMDA received a \$610,000 new general fund recurring increase, with about \$400,000 dedicated to staff equity adjustments. Approximately \$600,000 (including fee income) will be invested in staff equity this year (proposal pending approval).
- International trade activity: Highlighted a recent show in Mumbai, India, focusing on the potential for New Mexico pecans. Tariffs on tree nuts (like pecans) to India were recently lowered from 100% to 30%. Partnered with Gauri Khan (wife of a well-known Indian actor) to promote NM and US pecans in India. Also participated in a Dubai food show.
- Upcoming: Kicking off "The Matriarch of New Mexico" marketing campaign next month, as 2026 will be the year of women in agriculture globally.
- Federal funding: No major changes since the last report. The Local Food Assistance Program (purchase program) was stopped by USDA before it started.
- Student employees: NMDA hires 15-19 students regularly. Highlighted graduating student employees: Jeremy Townsend (Master's in IT), Mason Heights (Finance degree). Elida Miller (former ASNMSU VP) will be "hired for a day" to be added to the NMDA "Wall of Honor" for student graduates, a tradition she requested as both her parents also worked there.
- Staff education benefit: Dina Katnack (NMDA Program Manager) will graduate with her Bachelor's in Agriculture, utilizing the NMSU staff benefit for classes. Staff members who graduate will now also be added to the Wall of Fame.
- Announced the Chili Roast in DC for August 16th.
- In response to Chair Devasthali, he explained the Chili Roast is held in Old Town Alexandria due to partnership with a grocery store for logistics but will look into requests to move it to the Mall.

K. NMSU Academic Report, Interim Provost Lakshmi Reddi

Provost Reddi presented academic data:

- 2,002 students graduating from undergraduate and graduate programs this weekend, plus 704 from branch campuses, a system-wide increase of over 2% compared to Spring 2024.
- Graduate breakdown (main campus numbers):
 - Doña Ana CC: 613
 - College of Arts and Sciences: 568
 - College of Health, Education and Social Transformation (HEST): 312
 - College of Engineering: 247
 - College of Business: 180

- College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences (ACES): 147
- Alamogordo: 56
- Grants: 35
- Degree breakdown: Bachelors: 1,454; Masters: 491; Doctoral: 57. Noted an increasing trend in Master's student population.
- Alignment with workforce needs:
 - Top 5 disciplines by number of graduates: Criminal Justice, Psychology, Mechanical Engineering, Nursing, Business Administration/Management.
 - Job availability for these graduates ranges from 1.2 to 5.5 job postings per graduate (Nursing: 5.5; Criminal Justice: 3.5; Business Management: 1.8).
 - Top 5 fields of employer demand in NM (aligns with national demand): Three of NMSU's top 5 graduating disciplines are in this category. The other two high-demand fields are Accounting and Computer Science.
 - NMSU produces significant numbers in Accounting and Computer Science, with approximately 5 jobs per graduate in these fields as well.
 - NMSU's share of NM graduates in key areas:
 - Accounting: 41%
 - Computer Science: 28%
 - Criminal Justice: 60% (largest share)
 - Mechanical Engineering: ~50%
 - Nursing: 73 graduates this weekend, representing 17.7% of NM nursing graduates (83% come from other schools). Provost Reddy indicated a more detailed analysis would be provided later to guide potential investments.

L. **NMSU System Report**, *President Valerio Ferme*

President Ferme provided updates on system-wide initiatives:

- Addressing Federal Grant Reductions: NMSU has lost \$25 million in federal grants to date (across the term of grants, some shared). The state (including UNM and NM Tech) has lost \$80-\$90 million. Meeting with UNM and NM Tech presidents to discuss legislative support. A task force is working on this, prioritizing understanding the impact of reduced Indirect Cost Recovery (IDC) rates (down to 15% from many agencies). Over 80% of VPR office staff are on IDC. The priority for state aid will likely be protecting the Office of Research operations. Deans indicate they are okay for the remainder of this year. The Graduate School Dean can likely fund affected graduate students for another year.
- Response to NM Department of Justice Hazing Report: More than half of the 35 recommendations have been completed. The current status is being sent to the DOJ to show accountability.
- Student Enrollment and Success: Summer enrollments are up 12% to 50% due to partnership between Enrollment Management and NMSU Global, with collaboration from Chancellor Torres on transfer pathways. This is seen as a positive indicator for improving graduation rates (currently 52.6%). Emphasized the importance of working as a system and team.
- County Tour: Continuing tour of extension offices across the state starting later in May.

- Statewide Engagement: Met with FFA leadership. Attending the Legislative Finance Committee meeting in Tucumcari next week with agricultural extension to showcase collaborations between traditional businesses (agriculture, ranching) and AI/machine learning.
- Innovation and Partnerships: Attended "Competitive Across America" meeting (supported by LANL and Sandia) on innovation, workforce development, and manufacturing. Meeting with UTEP President Heather Wilson next week to discuss collaborations in water and space.
- Expressed excitement for his first NMSU Commencement ceremony as President.

M. Announcements and Comments, Chairwoman Ammu Devasthali

1. Good News for NMSU!

- Chair Devasthali noted the best news is the graduation of over 2,600 students.
- Regent Gonzales:
 - Commended bringing Jake Redfern onto the Aggie Development Inc. board.
 - Joked with Secretary Witte about getting on the NMDA Wall of Honor for his Master's degree earned while working there.
 - Shared his positive experience at the recent veteran student ceremony on campus, noting the average age of graduating veterans was 34, and highlighting a 50-year-old graduating in computer science.
 - Mentioned participating in the Teachers Academy and learning about AI prompts.

N. Adjournment, Chairwoman Ammu Devasthali

Regent Saucedo moved to adjourn the meeting with a second from Regent Gonzales. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 3:12 PM.

Meeting Minutes Approved on August 18, 2025 by the New Mexico State University Board of Regents.



Ammu Devasthali
Board of Regents Chair



Christopher Saucedo
Board of Regents Secretary/Treasurer