



**NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY BOARD OF REGENTS  
REGULAR MEETING  
December 11, 2025 at 2:00 PM**

Cholla Hall, Sound Stage  
2400 Film Street on Arrowhead Park  
and Livestreamed for public viewing at  
<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 Wyatt Ziehe, 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**

**Posting of Colors and Pledge of Allegiance Led by NMSU Army ROTC**

Chairwoman Ammu Devasthali called the meeting to order at 2:02 PM, followed by the posting of colors and the Pledge of Allegiance, led by NMSU Army ROTC.

**1. Welcome, Chancellor Mónica Torres**

Chancellor Mónica Torres welcomed the Regents to the Dona Ana Community College (DACC) and introduced Matt Burns, Department Chair of the Arts Department . Mr. Burns highlighted the specialized facility, noting the professional film set constructed in the corner of the room. He explained that the set was built to foster collaboration across disciplines and was constructed with the assistance of the IATSE 480 union, CMI students, and students from the building construction technology program.

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

Chief of Staff Justin Bannister reported that no media representatives or elected officials were in attendance.

**3. Confirmation of Quorum, Chairwoman Ammu Devasthali**

A roll call was taken, and a quorum was confirmed with Regents Gonzales, Olivas, Saucedo, Romero, and Devasthali all present.

**4. Approval of the Agenda, Chairwoman Ammu Devasthali**

Chairwoman Devasthali moved to postpone Item F9 (Proposal to Establish the Board of Regents Governance Committee) on the Consent Agenda until the next Board of Regents meeting and to move Item F1 (Southwestern Public Service Company Right-of-Way Easement) to the Action Items agenda as the first action item.

The motion was seconded by Regent Romero to approve the agenda as amended. The motion passed.

## B. Awards and Recognitions

### 1. Proclamation Recognizing the Service of Employee Council Chair Donna Johnson, *Chairwoman Ammu Devasthali*

Chairwoman Devasthali read a proclamation recognizing Donna Johnson for her service as Chair of the NMSU Employee Council and as an advisory member of the New Mexico State University (NMSU) Board of Regents. The proclamation highlighted her advocacy for staff salaries, improvements to employee health insurance premiums, and the addition of paid university holidays. Ms. Johnson plans to retire on April 1, 2026.

Ms. Johnson thanked the Board and shared her personal journey at NMSU, which began at the Carlsbad campus in 1984. She expressed her privilege in helping shape NMSU and thanked the administration for their support.

## C. Approval of Minutes

### 1. Regular Meeting on September 15, 2025

A motion was made by Regent Saucedo to approve the minutes for the Regular Meeting on September 15, 2025, as presented, with a second from Regent Olivas. The motion passed, and the minutes were approved.

## D. Regent Committee Reports

### 1. Real Estate Committee Report, *Regent Ammu Devasthali*

Regent Devasthali reported that the committee did not meet but voted to approve the easement with Southwestern Public Service Company via email.

### 2. Audit and Risk Committee Report, *Regent Ricardo Gonzales*

Regent Saucedo presented the report on behalf of Regent Gonzales. The committee met on October 23, 2025, and participated in an exit conference with Baker Tilly, the external independent auditor. The Office of the State Auditor has approved the financial statements and is currently reviewing the single audit. The committee also received an update on the internal audit from Interim Chief Audit Officer John Fry.

### 3. Financial Strategies, Performance and Budget Committee Report, *Regent Deborah Romero*

Regent Romero reported that the committee met the previous day and approved several capital project requests, the disposition of capital property, budget adjustment requests (BARs), and student housing fee requests. The committee also approved the quarterly financial report for submission to the Higher Education Department (HED).

## E. Advisory Member Reports

### 1. Associated Students of NMSU Report, *President Wyatt Ziehe*

President Ziehe reported record attendance numbers for events, including the "Keep State Great" community service event and Noche de Luminarias. He noted a 15% higher turnout in fall elections compared to the previous spring, as well as record voter registration numbers. He highlighted the legislative priorities, including a push for House Bill 449, which focuses on facilities and services.

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

Dr. Chaitanya reported that the Faculty Senate supported lowering the minimum GPA requirement for admission to 2.5. The Senate did not support Follett's "Books for Success" program for system-wide adoption, pending further review. He noted that the search for a permanent Provost is underway, with an announcement expected by the end of March, and the search for a VP for Research is expected to start soon.

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

Chair Johnson reported that the 2025 Employee Appreciation Picnic was a success, with over 2,000 attendees. She noted that the new classification structure has been integrated into PageUp and Banner, with Human Resource Services now focusing on compensation. She also announced the "Invest in You" resource fair to encourage employees to pursue education and training.

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

The consent agenda was approved as amended (with Item F9 postponed and Item F1 moved to Action) with a motion from Regent Romero and a second from Regent Saucedo. The motion passed.

- 1. Southwestern Public Service Company Right-of-Way (ROW) Easement – Rex E. Kirksey Agricultural Science Center at Tucumcari, NM, Special Assistant to the President Scott Eschenbrenner**
- 2. Confirmation of NMSU Spring 2026 Honorary Degree Recipient Selection, Regent Ammu Devasthali**
- 3. Disposition and Deletion of Capital Property, University Controller Ross Justus**
- 4. DACC Espina Welding Canopy, Interim AVP Facilities & Services Scott Eschenbrenner**
- 5. Agricultural Experiment Station Statewide House Units, Interim AVP Facilities & Services Scott Eschenbrenner**
- 6. Artesia Agricultural Science Center Office Replacement, Interim AVP Facilities & Services Scott Eschenbrenner**
- 7. Farmington Agricultural Science Center Shop Replacement, Interim AVP Facilities & Services Scott Eschenbrenner**
- 8. Appointment letter for the VP of Administration and Finance, General Counsel Lisa Henderson**
- 9. Proposal to Establish the Board of Regents Governance Committee, Regent Ammu Devasthali**

## G. Action Items

### 1. **Southwestern Public Service Company Right-of-Way (ROW) Easement – Rex E. Kirksey Agricultural Science Center at Tucumcari, NM, *Special Assistant to the President Scott Eschenbrenner***

Scott Eschenbrenner and General Counsel Lisa Henderson presented the request for an easement to provide power to a new shop building. While the power company did not agree to NMSU's standard language regarding easement termination, attorneys agreed on alternative language. The new language stipulates that if NMSU provides written notice that the easement has not been used for six months, the utility will abandon the facilities, and the title will revert to the property owner.

A motion was made by Regent Saucedo and seconded by Regent Olivas to approve the easement. The motion passed.

### 2. **Authorization for Conferral of Degrees and Certificates, *Interim Provost Lakshmi Reddi***

Provost Reddi requested approval to confer degrees and certificates to 1,686 candidates listed in the Fall 2025 commencement programs, including 1,256 from the main campus and 430 from branch campuses. Several Regents offered congratulations to the graduates, highlighting the resilience of this class in overcoming the challenges posed by the pandemic.

A motion was made by Regent Devasthali and seconded by Regent Olivas to authorize the conferral of degrees. The motion passed.

### 3. **Budget Adjustment Requests (BARs) for Fiscal Year 2025-2026, *Chief Budget Officer Kimberly Rumford***

Dr. Rumford presented the mid-year budget adjustment request. The adjustments included updating the beginning balances and appropriation amounts. Specifically, the request included a permanent increase of \$3 million to interest income revenue, raising it to \$3.8 million annually to address the structural deficit. Additionally, \$4 million will be transferred from plant fund interest earnings and \$1 million from Foundation funds to cover the current year's shortfall in athletics operations.

A motion was made by Regent Romero and seconded by Regent Saucedo to approve the budget adjustment request. The motion passed.

### 4. **Housing Rate Increase AY 2026-2027, *Interim VP Administration and Finance Chris Kinsley***

Mr. Kinsley requested a 6% increase in housing rates for the 2026-2027 academic year. He explained that, despite a previous 3% increase, emergency repairs have exceeded expenditures, and occupancy is currently at 99%. The estimated additional \$1 million in revenue would be used to address critical maintenance needs, including HVAC, roofs, and elevators. Mr. Kinsley suggested a future study to determine a 5-year rate plan, allowing for better forecasting and potential bonding for major renovations.

A motion was made by Regent Romero and seconded by Regent Olivas to approve the housing rate increase. The motion passed.

### 5. **Proposal to Lower the Minimum Cumulative GPA to 2.5 for Admission to NMSU, *Interim Provost Lakshmi Reddi***

Provost Reddi presented a proposal to lower the undergraduate admission GPA requirement from 2.75 to 2.5. Data analysis showed that the increase to 2.75 in 2016 did not result in higher retention rates compared to UNM, which maintained a 2.5 GPA. Approximately 492 students were denied admission due to this requirement, many of whom would likely have succeeded with current student success initiatives.

A motion was made by Regent Olivas and seconded by Regent Romero to approve the proposal. The motion passed.

demands.

Modest renovations (4,000 sq ft) are planned via the state GEO bond.

### 3. Transfer credits as outlined in Article V.C of the Operating Agreement Between NMSU and Doña Ana Community College

#### Issue Identification:

- President Ferme raised concerns that credits from community colleges (specifically Nursing) are not transferring smoothly to the main campus, despite operating agreements.
- Students reported having to retake courses or sit for exams because their associate-level credits were not accepted.
- Dr. Torres highlighted "classism" in higher education, where university structures may undervalue community college instruction.

#### Proposed Actions:

- **System Analysis:** The Board agreed on the need for a broad analysis of transfer gaps and registrar rules<sup>34343434</sup>.
- **NASH Project:** Dr. Torres, Dr. Val Ferme, and others are applying for a National Association of System Heads (NASH) project. This year-long seminar focuses on removing both technical (bureaucratic) and cultural barriers to transfer.
- **Co-Enrollment:** A new project between DACC and the College of ACES will launch in the fall to align sequencing, allowing students to finish degrees more efficiently.

#### "Reverse Transfer" Opportunities:

- Regent Olivas suggested facilitating opportunities for main campus students to take certificate courses (e.g., welding) at DACC.
- Dr. Torres confirmed that while "anti-swirl" policies had previously limited this, a committee is currently reviewing capacity to potentially allow NMSU students to access these trades again.

#### C. Adjournment, Chair Ammu Devasthali

Chair Devasthali thanked the attendees and expressed optimism for collaboration in 2026.

The meeting adjourned at 11:50 AM.

**Meeting Minutes Approved on February 18, 2026 by the New Mexico State University Board of Regents.**



Ammu Devasthali  
Board of Regents Chair



Christopher T. Saucedo  
Board of Regents Secretary/Treasurer