

Dear UNM Colleagues,

This email is sent to you from a group of UNM faculty that has serious concerns about the upcoming unionization vote, scheduled for October 16 and 17. In particular, little information has been provided regarding the downsides to unionization at a Research I Institution like UNM. Recently, some UNM faculty put together a website (<http://unmexcellence.org>) summarizing many reasons against unionization, which we urge you to visit to make sure that you at least hear both sides of the issue. In addition, faculty at another Research I Institution, the University of Washington, decided not to unionize a few years ago, and they put together a thoughtful analysis that is highly relevant to UNM's situation (<http://www.uwexcellence.org/the-case-againstunionization.html>).

Some key issues include (*several of these links go back to the UW web page, where more info can be found*):

- 1. If salaries are your major concern**, there is no convincing reason to believe that faculty salaries would compare more favorably with our peers if we had a union. Multiple studies have shown this, such as these: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/001979391106400307> and <https://www.chronicle.com/article/What-Good-Do-Faculty-Unions/127333>. Beware of misleading claims of higher salaries at unionized schools than at UNM - it's easy to cherry-pick data, but these studies give the big picture.
- 2. The proposed collective bargaining units are much too large and too varied to be beneficial** One unit includes adjunct employees, and the other includes 22 academic titles ranging from Professor to Research Professor to Instructor. These positions lie across very different Departments and Schools with different histories, needs, and levels of teaching and research. Consider policies regarding teaching loads, for example: we would be trusting a small set of union representatives to negotiate a single agreement that covers everyone. Even a very large bargaining committee with extraordinary outreach is unlikely to reach contract terms that make sense institution-wide.
- 3. Along the same lines, unionization may result in increased teaching loads for faculty.** After unionization, NM Highlands now requires all faculty to teach 12 credit hours per semester (**Section 12 of their collective bargaining agreement**). This could be why NM Highlands has been losing faculty since they unionized. It seems likely we will have a "one size fits all" set of rules across campus, shoehorning our diverse sets of needs into a prescriptive set of rules.
- 4. Unionization can result in losses of academic freedoms we now enjoy, such as requirements to be on campus at designated times** – for example, NM Highlands unionized and faculty are now required to be on campus for certain numbers of hours, times and days of the week (**Section 12 of their agreement**).
- 5. While unionization may be appropriate for teaching colleges, only a handful of the 131 Carnegie Research I institutions (doctoral/research universities-extensive) are unionized.** UNM has been doing a great job expanding its research mission, and unionization will greatly hamper that effort. Why? For one thing, **faculty unions often deemphasize merit pay** – this is antithetical to attracting and retaining outstanding faculty at a premier research-intensive university. A report from the National Bureau of Economic Research (2016) supported the view **that universities that unionize will face difficulty attracting and retaining the most productive scholars.** http://www.uwexcellence.org/uploads/6/2/7/4/62746481/nber_w22149.pdf
- 6. Finally, it is the wrong time to unionize.** This proposal would have made a lot more sense 4 years ago. Now we have a new provost, president, and governor. We should give them a chance to address faculty concerns before taking on the long-term obligations of unionization. We can always unionize later, with better-conceived bargaining units, but going back is extremely difficult, if not impossible.

We encourage you to consider the issues presented above, read through the links, consider the pro-union arguments as well, and discuss with your colleagues to come to your own conclusions. At the very least we all need to be informed about how this critical decision will affect the quality of our work experience, as well as UNM's missions to support our communities and to provide excellent education and research for a long time to come.

Regardless of the outcome, let us pledge to work together after the vote to address faculty needs across the board.

Sincerely,

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