



From the Office of the President

April 3, 2017

Members of the New Mexico Tech Community:

April is an action-packed time of year here on our campus. With just over a month before the end of the semester, students, faculty and staff alike are all busy trying to make sure we all close this term on a high note. That said, I have some important information to convey.

Exciting Campus Opportunities in Innovation and Entrepreneurial Endeavors

This Friday and Saturday, Tech will host the Second Annual NMT Inventors and Entrepreneurs Workshop. The event will be held in the Fidel Center, starting at noon on Friday, April 7. The consensus opinion about last year's Workshop was that both the mix of content and the distinguished people presenting that content made for the best event of its kind in the state, and the lineup of speakers and panelists is even more impressive this year. If you would like more information, the event website is management.nmt.edu/invent, or you can also contact Dr. Peter Anselmo (peter.anselmo@nmt.edu) if you have with any questions. I urge faculty and students to consider attending and participating in this very worthwhile workshop.

In addition, Dr. Craig Kenesky, PhD and patent attorney with Wilson, Sonsini, Goodrich & Rosati, will share a short presentation on intellectual property, followed by an informal Q&A session on intellectual property, with faculty and other interested people. The session is scheduled for 9 a.m. on Friday, April 7, in Brown Hall 201. This presentation is intended for anyone in the campus community (faculty, students, and staff) interested in learning about intellectual property property and technology commercialization. Dr. Kenesky has been working with a number of our on-campus researchers, and he is therefore familiar with Tech. His firm is also a Gold Sponsor for this Friday and Saturday's 2017 NMT Inventors and Entrepreneurs Workshop.

Funded and Proposed Capital Projects on Campus

Here's some very good news—the the State of New Mexico's Board of Finance approved the construction of a new \$2.67 million Data Center building on the NMT campus. The new Data Center will ultimately replace our old one, currently located in a renovated 1940's era fire station. Reliable computing resources are central to the functions of a research university, and, when completed, our new Data Center will provide the appropriate facility to house those resources.

A key part of my vision for NMT is to create a “sticky” campus by creating an environment that (1) motivates students to remain on campus over weekends and (2) provides quality-of-life opportunities for students, faculty, and staff, as well as to our Socorro community. Thus, as part of our university's capital improvement projects, Vice President McDaniel and his team have provided a conceptual design for a new comprehensive recreational center on the NMT campus. The purpose of the conceptual design is to provide a graphic representation of how such a center would look and what it might include, so that we can develop an estimate of cost and assess the potential for donations and community support for the recreational center.

Such a facility may exceed 80,000 square feet, and, based upon input from a previous campus survey monkey, could include an indoor Olympic-size pool, multi-purpose gyms, weight and fitness space, indoor jogging track, indoor bouldering/rock climbing wall, class rooms, and multipurpose rooms. We hope you share in our enthusiasm for this vision. As we move forward with the design, we will be reaching out campus-wide to stakeholders for their input.

Research University Components and Increasing NMT's Research Endeavors

As we have become well aware, the funding for higher education in New Mexico will decrease in the next fiscal year. As I laid out in my goals for our university, I am seeking creative ways to diversify NMT's funding base. NMT, as with most research universities, is supported by state (or "hard") funds for instruction and general operating costs, and by research contracts and grants (or "soft") funding. Thus, NMT has positions that are directly funded by the State of New Mexico, as well as those that are funded through contracts and grants. The latter sources of funding provide direct support for positions, such as academic faculty or research faculty. Contracts and grants also support key administrative positions indirectly through approved overhead (indirect cost returns, or ICR) charges. It is my intention to take progressive steps to increase research funding in order to preserve the current levels of staffing in both academic and research divisions at Tech. In order to accomplish this goal, we've made investments in some salary and support areas within the soft-money research funding areas. This is intended allow NMT to remain competitive and to generate new revenues that will ultimately assist our university with increased indirect-cost returns. The duration of these financial investments is contingent upon the success of meeting established goals related to increasing our research portfolio.

Another key point to understand is that research and administration positions supported by soft money differ significantly from those supported by hard money. Unlike the private sector, universities do not have the resources to bridge gaps in funding. Due to our small size, it is difficult to move personnel to comparable positions within our community. Should soft money positions lose funding at New Mexico Tech, as they occasionally did at my former institutions, we'd be forced to lay off the affected personnel. While some of our research centers have long-term, stable funding, such as the Bureau, PRRC and IRIS, this is not the case for EMRTC. EMRTC depends on bringing in a large number of short-term contracts every year. In years when federal budgets are uncertain, these short-term contracts can dry up quickly, and we have been able to deal with reduced funding at EMRTC through attrition in the past few years. The good news is that funding is on the increase at EMRTC. Now we not only have to fill vacant positions (and in some cases hire back), but we also have to retain the workforce that is currently in place. All of these soft money positions are highly valuable to NMT, and, as a result, their related funding is continuously monitored.

Best to all as we continue on our voyage of inquiry, inspiration and innovation.

Stephen G. Wells
New Mexico Tech President