

June 20, 2025

Dear faculty and staff,

I am writing to inform you about the outcome of the search for Vice President for Research, Creativity and Economic Development (RCED).

Unfortunately, despite offers that were competitive nationally, we were unable to secure a replacement for Vice President Luis Cifuentes, who will retire in August. Let me be clear about two things. Firstly, the search committee brought to campus four outstanding candidates. My congratulations go to Faculty Senate Chair Vimal Chaitanya and the search committee for doing an outstanding job of selecting candidates for the position. Secondly, the candidates themselves told us that the welcome and the level of engagement they experienced at all levels of the interview process were superior. So, thank you to everyone who devoted time and heart to this process, especially the members of the RCED office.

What happened, then, if all seemed to work like clockwork? The first candidate accepted an offer elsewhere before I could even make our pitch. At that point, I made two very competitive offers to candidates. One turned us down because their R1, nationally ranked university, made an offer ‘that could not be refused’ (the candidate’s words). A second candidate felt they were committed already to their school by the time we made our offer. Meanwhile, the remaining candidate accepted an offer elsewhere.

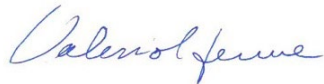
At this point, I could have asked the committee to review the semifinalists and go further into our pool. I chose not to do so, because I want us always to reach for excellence. I am sure that, among the semifinalists, there are excellent candidates, and I hope some will regroup and apply again. More importantly, I did not reopen the search because I want us to pause and think about how we present ourselves to those who apply for our positions.

What emerged for me from the selection process is that candidates appreciate the great trajectory we have undertaken to rise as a research and creative endeavors institutions. They see, however, an institution that is in transition, with a new president (me) who needs to establish himself, a strategic plan that has been completed and one that is in the making, and many leadership positions still in the interim and acting stage.

We need candidates who believe that they can change the status quo and who believe in what we are trying to build here: an institution that, while being true to its roots as a land grant university, expands its statewide mission to create educational opportunities, research and innovation, and public service, to take on the future challenges we will face together. Our tradition, I believe, is one of people who are not afraid to work hard to achieve goals that ‘punch’ above the university’s weight and demonstrate a hardiness that we have absorbed from our environment.

We have more searches on the way, and we will advance those at this time. Soon, I will announce what the next steps are for the Office of the Vice President for Research, Creativity and Economic Development. For now, know that I continue to be optimistic for the future of our university, and I believe we are moving in the right direction, even as we have faced some significant challenges in my first six months as president. We are resilient, we are resourceful, we are creative. We are NMSU, and we will find those who want to be with and like us.

Sincerely,



Valerio C. Ferme
NMSU President