

UNM moves to dismiss faculty union petition

University cites conflicts of interest as one reason for stance

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University of New Mexico officials have asked that a petition to form a faculty union be dismissed because, in part, it includes so many different types of professors within the university.

It was the first official response from the university to an effort by faculty to form a union at the state's flagship university. University officials said the faculty proposed "an insufficient community of interest" that is full of conflicts of interest and also includes some positions that are excluded from inclusion in a bargaining unit under state laws, UNM Chief Legal Counsel Loretta Martinez wrote in the university's position, which was filed Monday with UNM's Labor Management Relations Board.

An attorney representing the faculty union said the makeup of the proposed union is similar to faculty unions at other universities around the country.

Some of UNM's faculty last month moved to create a new bargaining unit, which would be comprised of more than 1,600 full- and part-time faculty on UNM's main campus in Albuquerque as well as its campuses in Gallup, Los Alamos, Taos and Los Lunas. It would be the United Academics of the University of New Mexico, according to a website created by organizers.

"There are significant issues of unit scope and inclusion as presented in the petitioned-for bargaining unit," Martinez wrote in the university's filing.

The university asked the board to order faculty to find supporters from each bargaining unit, such as tenured and non-tenured professors and those who work on main and branch campuses.

"We believe (the professors) have an appropriate community of interest and the petition is appropriate," said Shane Youtz, an attorney representing the union. "We read it pretty clearly as an attempt to delay the process."

Martinez or other university officials could not be reached for comment on the university's position on Tuesday.

On Monday, Interim Provost Richard Wood sent a letter to faculty about the unionization effort. The letter didn't say that the university was taking a position to dismiss the faculty's position. It does say the university created a web page with documents related to the unionization effort and it welcomed future communication and forums between faculty and university officials.

The university has hired the law firm Jackson Lewis to advise the university during the union effort. The contract is for up to \$60,000, according to university documents.