

## PRESIDENT'S WEEKLY PERSPECTIVE

### On Communication & Dialogue:

*"Words transform both speaker and hearer; they feed energy back and forth and amplify it. They feed understanding or emotion back and forth and amplify it." – Ursula K. LeGuin*

Good afternoon.

I spent the last week in my birth country, visiting my family and celebrating with them. This time of renewal and rebirth, marked by Easter, Passover, and spring equinox celebrations, has fascinated me since my early childhood. The concept of resurrection continues to captivate me as a metaphor for second and third chances. This time however, my thoughts drifted to the idea of communication and dialogue as I gathered with family and friends in a small patch of the world in great turmoil.

It is becoming ever clearer to me that most, if not all, of our societal difficulties are due to our inability to dialogue. In reading a recent [Brainpickings](#) blog, I learned of the book "On Dialogue" by the physicist David Bohm. In framing the topic, blog author Maria Popova asks the question, "What happens in a cultural ecosystem where the hearer has gone extinct and the speaker gone rampant?" Below are some poignant messages of the book, which I highly recommend:

*"'Communication' ... is based on the Latin "commun" and the suffix 'ie' which is similar to "fie," in that it means "to make or to do." So one meaning of "to communicate" is "to make something common," i.e., to convey information or knowledge from one person to another in as accurate a way as possible... Nevertheless, this meaning does not cover all that is signified by communication. For example, consider a dialogue. In such a dialogue, when one person says something, the other person does not in general respond with exactly the same meaning as that seen by the first person. Rather, the meanings are only similar and not identical. Thus, when the second person replies, the first person sees a difference between what he meant to say and what the other person understood. On considering this difference, he may then be able to see something new, which is relevant both to his own views and to those of the other person. And so it can go back and forth, with the continual emergence of a new content that is common to both participants. Thus, in a dialogue, each person does not attempt to make common certain ideas or items of information that are already known to him. Rather, it may be said that the two people are making something in common, i.e., creating something new together...."*

*But of course such communication can lead to the creation of something new only if people are able freely to listen to each other, without prejudice, and without trying to influence each other. Each has to be interested primarily in truth and coherence, so that he is ready to drop his old ideas and intentions, and be ready to go on to something different, when this is called for....*

*It is necessary to share meaning. A society is a link of relationships among people and institutions, so that we can live together. But it only works if we have a culture — which implies that we share meaning; i.e.,*

*significance, purpose, and value. Otherwise it falls apart. Our society is incoherent, and doesn't do that very well; it hasn't for a long time, if it ever did. The different assumptions that people have are tacitly affecting the whole meaning of what we are doing."*

## **UNM Dreamers Promote National Institutions Coming Out Day**

UNM is proud to be an institution that is welcoming and supportive of undocumented students. We have an obligation to make sure that all qualified students who have the curiosity to learn and a desire to earn a college degree have that opportunity, regardless of their background.

The UNM Dream Team is composed of students who advocate for immigration reform and seek to increase access and success for immigrant students and families at the university. On April 19, the UNM Dream Team will be promoting "[National Institutions Coming Out Day](#)," launched by [United We Dream](#) Network's [Dream Education Empowerment Program](#).

## **Nominations Being Accepted for Academic Advisor Awards**

UNM's Provost's Committee for Advising honors two academic advising staff in their role as advisors for their extraordinary contributions to students. UNM students, staff, and faculty are [encouraged to nominate advisors](#) for consideration. The nomination deadline is Friday, April 28.

## **Campus Climate Survey**

Sexual misconduct is a concern among college campuses across the nation; its effect on student safety and well-being is one of our most important concerns at UNM. Beginning on April 21, the Office of Equal Opportunity will begin a [confidential campus climate survey](#) to assess undergraduate students' exposure to sexual misconduct and related risks, and their knowledge of the University's policies and support resources.

The McBEE (Multi-College Bystander Efficacy Evaluation) Survey is being conducted by the University of Kentucky with support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and will be delivered to undergraduate students aged 18-24 enrolled at UNM. The survey will be open through May 5.

Candid input from our students will allow us to improve intervention, prevention and response to sexual misconduct. If you receive this survey, please take the time to complete it thoroughly and thoughtfully. Students who complete the survey will have the opportunity to be selected for \$50 Amazon gift cards, Lobo merchandise and other prizes.

Until next week,

Chaouki T. Abdallah

Acting President

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*There is so much more that happens on the UNM campus than can be conveyed in a weekly message. To find out about the latest stories and events, please visit the [UNM Newsroom](#), the central source of news and information for the UNM community.*