

Freshman Convocation Ceremony Speech

Class of 2017



Seeing More Than You Expect

Robert G. Frank, Ph.D.
21st President of the University of New Mexico
Freshman Convocation Ceremony - Class of 2017

August 18, 2013

Welcome, everyone, to The University of New Mexico, home of the Lobos. It is my honor to stand before the Class of 2017 today, not only as your President, but also as a fellow Lobo.

I want to first congratulate each of you on the hard work that has brought you here today. A few short months ago you were graduating high school seniors. Today, you are officially becoming freshmen at an exceptional university - one that will broaden your horizons like no other.

Becoming an undergraduate here at UNM is becoming part of a community of your fellow students and scholars. Your entire learning experience here will shape your character, build your leadership skills and enable you to learn more about people from places, cultures and beliefs other than your own.

There is an Importance to Seeing More than We Expect to See

A few years ago, a man sat at a metro station in Washington DC on a cold January morning, and began to play the violin. He played Bach for about 45 minutes, during which time about 1,000 rush-hour commuters passed through the metro station. One man stopped for a few seconds and then hurried on. A little later, a woman threw a dollar into the till and continued on her way without stopping. The



first person who really paid attention was a 3-year-old boy, whose mother had to move him along. The child continued to walk, turning his head back toward the musician. When he finished playing, no one noticed, no one applauded.

The violinist was Joshua Bell, one of the best musicians in the world. He had played one of the most intricate pieces ever written on his handcrafted, 300-year old, 3-and-a-half million-dollar Stradivarius violin. Three days earlier, Joshua Bell had sold out at a theater in Boston where seats averaged \$100.00. That day he made \$32.17 for his efforts and only seven people stopped to listen.

Joshua Bell playing incognito in the metro station was organized by the Washington Post as part of a social experiment. Because he was playing in a subway station, people assumed he was a street musician playing for handouts and paid no attention to his music. They saw and heard what they expected to see and hear from a street musician.

Michael Michalko refers to this well known narrative in his creativity post blog to illustrate that “we make these types of instant judgments every day, all informed by what we see and hear, and based on our past experiences.” Our stereotyped notions can cloud our vision and dim our imaginations. “We each construct how we choose to see the world.”

But... If You Change the Way You Look at Things, the Things You Look at Change

He goes on to say that “people tend to think of perception as a passive process. We see, hear, smell, taste or feel” things that stimulate our senses, and in this way we construct how we choose to see the world. Let me put it this way:

Think for a moment about a wolf – yes, it always comes back to being a Lobo...

A wolf eats a rancher’s sheep. The rancher believes the objective of the wolf is to deplete his livestock.

A naturalist sees the wolf as a keystone species and believes the objective of the wolf is to maintain the balance of nature within its ecosystem.

Here at UNM, we see the bravery and cunning of the wolf. I believe the objective of the wolf – the Lobo – is to focus...to succeed...to win...through both its independent determination and loyalty to the pack.

Each perspective is valid. If we use all of our senses to experience our university life, we can begin to think of perception as an active process – one through which the smallest shift can be transformational and bring what once seemed indistinct into perfect focus.

While you are here, you will be exposed to diverse perspectives in a way that encourages respectful understanding of differences, and recognizes those differences as strengths. You will be mentored by a world-class faculty, who will support your personal and academic growth. Applying multiple



perspectives on societal challenges will enable us to work together, for the best solutions with the best outcomes. It is so very important that people are able to talk to and understand each other. That is the value of education. That is what is necessary to creating change in this world.

Know and believe in your talents, even when you think the world is rushing by and not stopping to notice. We noticed, and here you are, a Lobo. How you choose to see your world will undoubtedly change here at UNM, and in turn will help you choose how you will change the world.

We - the faculty, staff and administration of this University - are here to provide the support and resources necessary to for our students to develop firm academic and social roots at here at UNM. At the same time, we will encourage them to always explore, to discover, to crave what is new. Parents and families, please stay in touch with UNM.... follow us on Twitter, become a fan on Facebook. Come back to campus for Family Weekend and Homecoming if you can.

As You Walk Out as Lobos Today...

We know from experience that this first year of college is the foundational experience... and that student success in this year is critical for success throughout the college journey. We want you to start your "First Year in High Gear." I hope you take advantage of the programs to support your success. They are intended to dramatically enhance the quality of your freshman year experience at UNM.

Remember, all of you come here from different parts of our state, our country and the world. You have different beliefs and backgrounds. You have different academic and personal goals. But what unites you - what unites us - is being a part of the Lobo family and that includes all of you in the audience today. That also means we have a shared investment in the success of our university – one to which we must all contribute, and one from which we may all reap the rewards.

I personally welcome you to the Lobo family, where we enjoy a deep and loyal bond to one another. As you begin your UNM journey, don't forget to leave some room for the unexpected...room for a new song on your iPod, room for a class outside of your major, room for a new friend in your busy new life.

Go Lobos!



LOBO Pledge

I will...

- Lead with courage and integrity
- Open my mind to the diversity of people and ideas that surround me
- Be engaged in my community, making a difference in the lives of others
- Own my future, through the pursuit of academic and personal excellence

I will take pride in The University of New Mexico

I am a Lobo!