



President's Weekly Perspective

Good morning.

In the past week I've been speaking a great deal about the role of UNM in regard to economic development. Facilitating an environment that grows the economy and creates jobs is an appropriate part of a university mission. It is a way to provide opportunity for students and graduates. But it is only part of a university mission. The other part is preparing students to be ready and able to grasp the opportunities that an expanding economy offers as they enter the job market. This week I want to touch on two aspects of our UNM community that are contributing to our student success.

Student Success Summit

On Wednesday, September 19, UNM hosted a Student Success Summit in the Student Union Building. Dr. Drew Koch from the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education was the keynote speaker. More than 250 faculty, staff and students from across campus attended the event, which was intended to give the UNM community an understanding of the Foundations of Excellence protocol. At the summit, work began in earnest on the ["First Year in High Gear"](#) initiative that is now underway at the University of New Mexico.

"First Year in High Gear" is intended to dramatically enhance the quality of the freshman year experience at UNM. Step one is an assessment of the current first year experience. Step two will be the development of an action plan that will focus on enhancing student learning and improving student success and retention at the University of New Mexico. Success in the first year is a strong indicator for success across a college experience because the first year is the foundational experience. While student success encompasses many factors, we need to start by making sure that the resources for success are available to all first year students.

Mentoring and Supporting Each Other

The student success summit was geared to addressing the formal structures and systems that establish the university experience. Those systems create the framework in which students engage with the university. But there is an equally important aspect to student success that is based on a more informal, social connection.

Last week, I had a chance to meet with an impressive group of young men who have come together to support each other as they face the challenges of university life. The Men of Color Alliance (MOCA) is part of the UNM Division for Equity and Inclusion. The organization focuses on increasing access and success for male students of color at UNM.

I was very moved and impressed by the stories these young men shared with me. That they have come together to support each other is particularly important because recent data, not only in the United States but globally, is indicating that boys are rapidly falling behind girls in academic achievement from

grade school to college. The risk is especially high for young men of color. One way to combat that risk of failure is to identify and engage with social resources that create communities of support.

For these young men, MOCA provides that community; for others it can be found in places like in the Greek system, or athletics, or the LGBTQ Resource Center, or any number of student associations. The emphasis is on 'community.' What is absolutely clear is that student success at UNM must be inspired and driven by improving both the structural and the social systems that foster student success.

Have a great week, and Go Lobos.

Bob