



President's Weekly Perspective

Good afternoon,

Since we heard your concerns at the faculty and staff meeting on April 10th, I have been a part of many discussions about the best ways to address the impact of our new health plans, as well as help our employees adjust to these changes. We have given special thought to assisting those who are least able to afford new expenses, and believe we have several accommodations that will help immediately. In addition, I have asked Chancellor Roth and Executive VP Harris to lead a workgroup that will provide recommendations for FY16 that increase consumer-driven services for all our plans.

In this initial year, as we move forward to comply with the [Affordable Care Act \(ACA\)](#) while also attempting to control medical costs, we have found a way to provide some relief from the effect of the higher out-of-pocket maximums that were implemented as a cost saving method. Under the new ACA guidelines we will be able to apply all out-of-pocket payments toward meeting your out-of-pocket maximum. This means your office visit co-pays, prescription co-pays, coinsurance, and deductibles will all be applied to that maximum amount.

Currently, not all out-of-pocket costs apply to the calculation of the maximum, so this could result in significant savings to individuals and families. We will also change the application of individual and family maximums so they apply simultaneously, and in a manner that is most advantageous to the employee. These enhancements will be explained in more detail at the [Open Enrollment Information Sessions](#).

Even with this relief, our lower-paid employees need reassurance that assistance is available while they adjust to the new plans. We will help to connect employees with existing assistance programs for which they may qualify, and we will explore the establishment of a loan fund, guaranteed by the University, that uses similar guidelines to provide assistance to those who have serious need. These two actions will lessen the impact of the changes in the coming year and give us all time to adjust to our new health care environment. Your message of compassion and concern for every member of our Lobo community was loud and clear, and I am glad we have been able to find creative ways to deal with this transition. The conversation will be continuing throughout the next few months, as we work with faculty, staff, and administrators to identify forward-thinking health plan designs that will contain costs and increase the well-being of our community.

Awards and Accolades

It is always exciting to hear about new academic achievements within our institution, and this past week seems to have been packed with announcements about honors and awards.

Last week, in his Wednesday Communiqué, Provost Abdallah congratulated two Lobos on their outstanding achievements: Professor Ivan Deutsch who has been selected as [UNM's 59th Annual Research Lecturer](#) and UNM junior Ryan Roco who was one of 59 students nationally to receive a [2014 Truman Scholarship](#) for graduate study. Professor Deutsch's distinction and Ryan's award are exceptional honors.

Additionally, five talented doctoral students in the humanities at UNM will receive [2014 Russell J. and Dorothy S. Bilinski Dissertation Fellowships](#) thanks to a generous gift from the Bilinski Educational Foundation: Rebecca Ellis (History), Mary Henderson and Rachel Spaulding (Spanish & Portuguese), Nicholas Schwarz (English), and Gino Signoracci (Philosophy).

Finally, [UNM Business Plan Competition winners](#) were announced on April 11th, after a long day that included multiple rounds of judging by experienced economic leaders. The annual competition attracts teams of students from varied degree programs and awards entrepreneurial start-up funding for innovative business ventures.

Regent Don Chalmers

As I write my last notes for this, I have learned of a huge loss to our Lobo community, Don Chalmers, a former Regent and enormous supporter of UNM who died on Sunday. Don has been a leader for our Foundation, the UNM Hospital Board, our Board of Regents and many worthy community causes. His calm, thoughtful, energetic presence will be difficult to replace. This loss will be felt by all of UNM and New Mexico. He truly embodied the Lobo spirit.

In honor of Don, please take a moment this week to reflect on what the Lobo spirit means to you.

Best,

Bob