



INTENTION & [IMPACT]

Garnett S. Stokes

23rd President of The University of New Mexico
Class of 2018 Commencement Ceremony and Presidential Installation

Congratulations UNM Class of 2018! And thank you all for allowing me the privilege of sharing this day with you to be officially installed as your 23rd president. Today marks a defining milestone in our lives. For our graduates, you have come to a point of completion in your Lobo journey. For me, I am just beginning. We share in being chosen to be Lobos, and in turn choosing to accept that distinction.

I was really thrilled by the suggestion that the installation ceremony be combined with commencement. It just felt right that it should be a part of an event that celebrates the achievements of our students, as well as brings together members of the Lobo family.

And we are here to graduate and celebrate our students, so my words will be brief.

Today is a day of profound thanks - as it is rare for anyone to accomplish life-changing goals without the love and encouragement of those who supported their dreams and aspirations. I am thankful to the many members of the UNM community for the trust you have put in me to lead this institution. I am thankful to my family, friends and colleagues, some of whom have traveled to be here today, for their support and caring over the years. My brother, David Stokes, and his wife, Felecia, are here from Lexington, Kentucky. Two of their children, Brittney and Zac, are also here with Brittney's son, Kyler, and Zac's wife, Alaina, and their son, Hudson. My brother, Jim, is here from Atlanta, Georgia with his friend, Janet, and his son, Jackson. I'm honored to be loved and supported by wonderful brothers, in-laws, nieces and nephews. Also here is my wonderful step daughter, Beth Ann Neri, her equally wonderful husband, Phil, and two fabulous grandchildren, Matthew and Blake, from Redondo Beach, California. I love being their "GG." Our dear friends from Texas, Dennis and Maggie Grill, are here and are the best friends one could ever hope to have. My Dad was not able to travel here, but I know he is watching the live stream. So let me say, "Love you, Dad!" And, most of all, I would like to thank my husband and my biggest fan, Jeff, for his wise counsel, his belief in me and his strong love and support.



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As I look out at all of you, and those who have been your towers of strength during your time here, I see a reflection of the Lobo spirit that convinced me that UNM is a special place at which I could succeed among you.

Intention & Impact

This ceremony gives me an opportunity to set a tone for the future of UNM. I have chosen to focus on two words: intention and impact. These words do not define an overarching vision for UNM in and of themselves, but rather serve as guideposts connected by action, and aligned to our mission and values.

Intention is defined as a purpose or a goal; a thing intended; a plan. It is worth thinking about what the word means because it can be a bit tricky. Paraphrasing a columnist at Inc., Rhett Power, “When we carry out activities thoughtlessly, without aligning them with our conscious intention, words and actions may no longer match our purpose, which can then undermine what we hope to accomplish.” It is important to slow down and consider what our intentions really are. There is considerable power in defining our intention; the power is derived from making a decision about life’s direction, which effectively focuses out energy.

I will say that when I started my career in academia, it wasn’t my intention to be a university president. Instead, the intention that drove my actions was to make a difference in lives of my students, to develop a deeper understanding of how people and organizations behave, to advocate for inclusion and respect and, in short, to make whatever environment in which I found myself a better place. That intention still guides my actions, and it is what ultimately led me here to UNM.

The second word I have chosen is impact, defined as having a strong effect on something or someone. The line between intention and impact isn’t always a straight one, and the distance between the two can vary. Sometimes an interaction of a faculty member whose intention is to be supportive of students can immediately change the direction of a student’s life through a single conversation. When I was in my senior year in college, I took a course on psychological testing from a professor named Kenneth

Younger. After reviewing my scores on a series of personality tests, he told me that I had the profile of someone who would be very successful in graduate school. Graduate school? I hardly knew what that was! But I listened, and I learned, and my life was forever changed by that recommendation.





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Years later, a senior faculty member in the Psychology Department at the University of Georgia, Joe Hammock, a professor with the greatest intentions to positively influence all of those around him, said to me out of the blue: “You will be our next department head.” I was astonished – I had never considered that I would be an academic leader. But after becoming a full professor, I was in fact overwhelmingly elected to become head of the department. And again, my life has been forever changed by that comment from Professor Hammock, because it was the beginning of my career in higher education administration and his early assessment of my talent for leadership gave me the confidence to compete for the position in a pool of much more established members of the department’s faculty. I became the first woman to be elected to lead the Psychology Department at UGA.



Of course, intentions alone don’t lead to impact. It is the point of origin for our actions. And universities are places where our intentions matter a great deal.

What we [do] changes the world.

For 129 years, we have been The University for New Mexico, delivering the highest quality teaching and research experiences in service to society. We have remained affordable and accessible, educating nearly half of our state’s college students.

As New Mexico’s flagship institution, we have expanded our role as an innovation leader. We are a culture of unique perspectives embracing our differences and discovering points of view no single person could imagine alone.

What we [teach] and what we [learn] changes the world.

We are educating our students to become more thoughtful and responsible global citizens and preparing them to put their talents and abilities into action.

What we [discover] changes the world.

Whether it's groundbreaking cancer research or finding new sources of energy. We engage the public which we serve to advance knowledge, stimulate social and economic progress, and improve our everyday lives.

What we [give] changes the world.

We don't just award diplomas. What we give to our students is opportunity, to our patients is world-class healthcare, and to our communities a lifelong partner in innovation and prosperity.

Impact can be profound and far-reaching, or more subtle and personal. The world we change may be our own, our family's, our community's, or, indeed, everyone's. There is no end to how we can imagine ourselves individually or as a university if we act with intention to realize a positive and far-reaching impact.

I believe all of us have been drawn to UNM, not just by our curiosity and desire to learn, but also by our resolve to put our knowledge to good use where it matters most. In the two-and-a-half months that I have been at UNM, I have been struck by how much people love this place, and how often I hear of people who've left who long to come back.

Here at UNM, each of us defines all of us. And our impact—what we do, what we learn, teach, discover, give....what you have earned here today — influences generations to come.



The late Fred Rogers - *the Mr. Rogers* - offered that, "*Often when you think you're at the end of something, you're at the beginning of something else.*" You are here now, at that very intersection. What you have accomplished changes the world.

Today, you will walk out of here a different type of Lobo, an alum of The University of New Mexico. I hope to hear about your next beginning, to see you back here, to find out what impact you are making.

It may be debated in what direction a road paved good intentions leads. So, as you go on to pave your own road, make sure that the intentions you set are mixed with integrity, compassion and some true grit.

What we [celebrate] changes the world. Here today, we celebrate you Class of 2018! Everyone's a Lobo!