

PRESIDENT'S WEEKLY PERSPECTIVE

Good afternoon.

There has been a lot of contemplation regarding how imminent changes to our Lobo Athletics program will affect its future and that of the many outstanding students, coaches and staff that proudly represent UNM. Ultimately, the measures that will be taken to ensure an accountable, compliant and successful program will be presented publicly in the coming weeks. Speculation about reorganization of the athletics program and elimination of sports has been a natural focal point for conversation among many, but I want to ensure that the process and rationale, as well as the future planning, receive comparable attention. While this process was initiated out of a need to address the department's finances, let me unequivocally state that this is not just about money. We are making a comprehensive assessment of how Athletics is structured and operated in order to have a thriving program that best supports our students.

Developing a Plan for Success

This undertaking is not unprecedented, as we have recently witnessed many universities grappling with the same challenges in response to a changing athletic and economic climate. While this process has by no means been simple or easy, we find ourselves presented with a singular leadership opportunity to rebuild and restore public confidence in the administration and stewardship of Lobo Athletics.

UNM has struggled for over a decade with an underfunded athletic department that sponsors a relatively large number of sports. In the Mountain West conference, we field the largest number of sports teams, at 22, among Title IX regulated institutions. The average in the NCAA is 19 and in the Mountain West Conference it is 18.5.

In conjunction with budgetary challenges, we are also examining our Title IX obligations with respect to intercollegiate athletics. We know we must proactively remedy any issues that [may lead to non-compliance and subsequent oversight and penalties from federal agencies.](#)

The Athletics budget and the operations and programs it supports must be in alignment to afford our student-athletes the experience they deserve. In the past months we have discussed various cuts and austerity measures, but we also need to remain committed to concurrently growing revenue streams as a part of achieving a healthy and sustainable budget for both current and future exigencies. We have shared the factors being considered as a [proposal is finalized.](#) Within the next several days, I will be receiving Director of Athletics Eddie Nunez's decisions for my review and approval before making them public and presenting to our Board of Regents, which recently announced a special meeting on July 19.

Carefully Weighed Decisions

My leadership style is centered on a consultative and well-informed approach to decision-making. In addition to examining data, I have continued to solicit the perspectives of many on the issues at hand, including possible reputational and economic implications. I have urged people to have the courage and conviction to tell me how they view our strengths and vulnerabilities. I have read the letters, the posts on social media, and what has been reported in the media. I have heard and witnessed the passion and pride of what it means to be a Lobo.

Public universities are anchors to their communities in many ways, including their athletic programs. Only a very few across the country are self-sufficient without receiving institutional, state and private support. Moreover, our programs need our continued support to be successful. Attending Lobo athletic events not only demonstrates Lobo spirit, but also contributes to an engaged community and long-term affinity for UNM. I hope to see many of you attending games and rooting for our Lobos. The decisions that are being made are difficult, but they don't need to be what defines us. What I hope will define us is a united commitment to doing the right thing, in the right way, at the right time for the long-term success of UNM.

Let's go Lobos!

Garnett S. Stokes

President

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