

An Important Message Regarding Faculty Unionization at UNM

March 18, 2019

Dear Colleagues,

The past year has been one of significant transformation at UNM – not only in the arrival of a new president and the implementation of important administrative changes, but also in the way the University approaches collaboration, communication, and leadership. This approach builds off advances to which many of you contributed in recent years, as UNM has learned to listen to many diverse voices and created deliberative processes to inform our decision-making. This transformation has laid vital groundwork for all we can accomplish together as the University *for* New Mexico. At the same time, university leaders recognize that challenges to New Mexico’s state budget have led to a significant period of time with stagnant wage growth and very limited state funded raises.

Today, I am reaching out to the entire campus community about a matter of critical importance to the University. As many of you are aware, [United Academics at UNM \(UA-UNM\)](#) has recently filed a petition to organize UNM faculty into a labor union. First and foremost, let me unequivocally state that UNM is committed to supporting all members of our faculty and their interests. University leadership will be frank regarding our questions and concerns about what unionization may mean for our shared commitment to excellence in the academic mission—and we will raise those concerns in a spirit of dialogue with faculty as partners in university governance. And we look forward to exploring whether or not unionization might be done in a manner that fosters such excellence.

We hope there will be multiple forums in which faculty can debate that question, including but not limited to the “education campaign” that labor law foresees in the run-up to a unionization election. Communications, information, and discussion forums provided by the University regarding unionization efforts will be designed to ensure that faculty members, administrators, and the campus community are afforded comprehensive information on the process and potential consequences of any decision. The University believes that such communications are an important part of a free and fair election process in which all involved carefully consider and evaluate the implications of unionization.

The University of New Mexico, in no uncertain terms, respects everyone’s right to decide whether to be represented in collective bargaining. Today the University works collaboratively with unions representing approximately 1,800 of our employees. However, when it comes to faculty, the premise and practice of shared governance is quite different from that of a management-employee relationship. Shared governance between the faculty and administration has been a long-standing part of our institutional identity as a public research university and we must look deeply and objectively at whether a unionized faculty—and, if faculty choose unionization, *what model of unionization*—will benefit our deeply held values of collegiality, shared governance and academic excellence.

Unionization in the setting of a research university also raises extraordinarily complex questions, including which members of the campus community constitute an appropriate collective bargaining unit; whether the interests of different categories among faculty (with very different functions vis-a-vis the academic mission) inherently diverge or overlap sufficiently to cohere; what union structure could fully and fairly represent the competing interests of such members; and whether in a collective bargaining setting retention offers could be made and outstanding research and teaching contributions be recognized and rewarded.

The University of New Mexico is committed to providing accurate and factual information about the process and implications of unionization that will support informed decision-making by our faculty. Ultimately, the choice of whether to unionize will belong to each member of the faculty.

University leaders will continue to communicate with you in upcoming weeks and months, and UNM will be notifying you about opportunities to publicly discuss the implications of faculty unionization. We have also developed a [dedicated web site](#) that will house information, FAQs, and resources about unionization, the election, and collective bargaining. The web site will be updated regularly.

Thank you for your careful consideration of this very important issue. I hope you will take the time to ask questions of both the union and your administration, and become thoroughly informed and engaged in this process. I also welcome any suggestions on how to better communicate and keep you updated. Please feel free to forward your thoughts and comments via email to provost@unm.edu. That input will be collated and help inform university leaders' deliberations.

Sincerely,

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