

Freshman Convocation Ceremony Speech

Class of 2018



Find Your “PLUS”

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21st President of the University of New Mexico
Freshman Convocation Ceremony - Class of 2018

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Welcome to The University of New Mexico class of 2018!

Welcome to your families who have come to see you begin your life as a Lobo I hope we will see you often over the next four years.

On this campus you will be learning things that will surprise you, amaze you, and inspire you. And even have you think differently about things that you've never really questioned before.

Let me give you an example. At UNM you are going to learn a lot of new words. College professors LOVE words. It's their primary tool for conveying knowledge. A lot of us like big words like “quasquicentennial.”

In fact, I just learned that it means a 125th anniversary, which UNM is celebrating this year. Whether spoken or written words are the currency of communication and our words have real power.



You have been using them your whole life from the first utterance that made your parents heart skip to the application letter you thoughtfully prepared for UNM.

Words impact what we know. They influence our interpersonal relationships and inform our decisions. Words can inspire us (Go Lobos!) or just as easily bring us to tears like “Mom I lost my iPhone!”

Even words you’ve been using since kindergarten can take on new, powerful meanings in your life. Simple words can become touchstones that keep you grounded when things get a little crazy.

Today I want to talk about two of these simple words. I hope to expand their definitions so you will remember them while you are here... and maybe a lot longer. Those two words are “PLUS” and “WOW”.

As you begin classes tomorrow you will officially begin your academic career at UNM and as a part of the Lobo family.

Being a student, however, is not an adequate definition of who you are about to become on this campus. We want you to be able to say, “I am a student PLUS I am...”... what? What is your PLUS?

I actually had several PLUSes when I was a student here and I hope you will as well. When I was attending classes at UNM I was a student PLUS I was an athlete a member of the university’s swim team. So, I was a student, PLUS I was a swimmer. PLUS I was in the honors psychology program. These PLUSes mattered to me, a lot.

Some I found here, others I brought with me. They helped me form my identity as a UNM student and connected me to my circle of friends and mentors.

When it comes to finding your PLUS – if you don’t already have something in mind – you will discover that there are many places to look.

There are a wide variety of activities, clubs, and organizations in which you can participate. We have fraternities and sororities, student organizations, student government, volunteer groups, and intramural sports.

Your intellectual curiosity could get you an internship at a national lab. If you take dance your passion for a spot on the stage of our own Popejoy Hall. There are literally hundreds of ways in which you, as a student at UNM, can find your PLUS.

So why should I care and, more importantly, why should YOU care about having a PLUS? Well, the PLUS is a great predictor of how successful you will be in college, and in life.



You see, many students come to their university believing all they need to do is go to class, study, get decent grades, have an active social life, and at the end of it all hopefully get a college degree.

And many students start to do just that without identifying the PLUSes.

We know from studies that have been done on how engaged students are on campus. Those students who have one, two or three PLUSes are far more likely to have a better college experience. And they are much more likely to graduate with the knowledge and skills that will launch them into their chosen career.

So, step one find your PLUS, that club or group or activity that keeps you engaged in campus life. Your PLUS will help you work through difficult days on the road to graduation.

The second, and equally important step, is to keep your eyes open for what I call the “WOW moment.” You’ll know it when it happens. I sure did.

The WOW moment is when a professor says something that triggers a deep wonder inside of you. Or maybe it happens when you are studying and you uncover an insight that is so profound you can’t believe you never saw it before. Something that literally makes you say “WOW”!

There are countless ways that these WOW moments reveal themselves. They are electric and inspiring because they light the path to your future.

In these moments you will suddenly know yourself better. You’ll know more about who you are now and who you want to become. And in that stunning, charged moment, you will discover a purpose within your life.

As a senior member of the Lobo family, I envy you for having these amazing moments in front of you. Take them. Seize those moments. Absorb them completely and you will remember them the rest of your life... as they guide your life.

Whatever degree path you choose, whether it leads you straight into the job market, graduate school, or an alternate path of discovery, I hope you find your find your PLUSes and look for your WOWs starting right now.

To this end, I would encourage you to try to some key things in your time at UNM:

1. Get to know at least five faculty members – they are here for you and have a deep interest in your education and success. They are your teachers and mentors. They are here to provide guidance as well as academic support.



2. Take part in an internship. By gaining real world experience, you can focus your interests, establish valuable relationships, as well as expanding your resume.
3. Engage in at least one activity – maybe even something outside your immediate comfort zone. Academics and activities go hand in hand. Stretch both your intellectual and social curiosity to enhance your personal development and leadership skills.

In closing, as I look out at you, class of 2018, I just have to say ...WOW!

and one more thing...

GO LOBOS!

Robert G. Frank



LOBO Pledge

I will...

- L**ead with courage and integrity
- O**pen my mind to the diversity of people and ideas that surround me
- B**e engaged in my community, making a difference in the lives of others
- O**wn my future, through the pursuit of academic and personal excellence

I will take pride in The University of New Mexico

I am a Lobo!