



President's Weekly Perspective

Welcome back! I hope everyone had a relaxing fall break, and reenergized as we begin the second half of the semester.

Employee Benefits Update

Early last week Board of Regents President Jack Fortner released a message regarding potential changes to employee health care benefits. We recognize the importance and complexity of these issues, and are committed to slowing down the conversation. UNM employees and retirees are important, and no decisions will be made without input and thorough discussion. You can read the entire [message from the Regents](#).

UNM and MRN Introduce “Brain Safe” Program

Frontline's League of Denial – a documentary on the NFL's concussion crisis – aired this week on our New Mexico PBS, just as UNM introduced a new [“Brain Safe” project](#). In partnership with the Mind Research Network, the project is an innovative, state-of-the-art concussion assessment program designed to student and minimize the impact of brain injury on NCAA athletes in contact sports. Researchers Dr. Kent Kiehl, Dr. Vince Calhoun and Dr. Andy Mayer are collaborating with UNM Athletics on the study, and more than 200 UNM athletes will receive MRI scans of brain structure, chemistry, connectivity and function as part of their physicals. Every year, or after any acute injury, the athlete will be scanned again and the results will be compared to their initial baseline MRI.

This is a topic that is near and dear to me personally, having spent several years running a brain injury program at the University of Missouri. I saw first-hand the life-altering impact that brain trauma can have on an individual and their families.

Although many universities are now doing studies on concussions, the Brain Safe protocol is one of the most advanced and sophisticated approaches in the country, and is an excellent example of the many research programs at UNM on the leading edge of their fields. I would also like to thank Dr. Kiehl for his efforts in publicizing the project, creating opportunities for an even larger impact. For more details, visit [Brain Safe project](#).

Telling our Story

On that note, I would also like to congratulate our Political Science faculty for being recognized for their contributions in the media. The Center for a Public Anthropology ranked UNM 22nd for Political Science on its [Faculty Media Impact](#) website. These rankings assess the degree to which faculty in various universities and departments, especially those that receive public funding share their research with the broader public. I want to re-emphasize how important it is for us to “tell our story” in the media. Having faculty share their expertise with reporters is an excellent way for us to showcase our faculty and the outstanding work being done at our university. We know how remarkable our faculty, staff and students are and we want everyone else to see that excellence as well.

Have a great week and Go Lobos!

Bob