

## **MESSAGE FROM NEW UNM PRESIDENT GARNETT S. STOKES**

Good afternoon,

A week ago my life changed when I was selected by The University of New Mexico to be its 23rd President and newest Lobo. Let me say that since that time, I have been overwhelmed by the support and enthusiasm I have received from so many of you, as well as members of the New Mexico community. I am truly honored and excited to join you officially in March, when my husband, Jeff, and I make the Land of Enchantment our new home.

Throughout my career in public higher education as a student, educator, researcher and administrator - I have learned the importance of building relationships with the citizens whom the institution serves. The best way for me to start this process is with you, the UNM community. In the upcoming months, I want to take every chance I can to get to know you. I will depend on your experiences, perspectives, leadership and shared history to inform me on how we best approach the many challenges and opportunities that lie before us.

I have only begun my immersion into the 128 year story of New Mexico's flagship university, as well as its distinctive culture and mission of public service and excellence. I am confident that my experiences have prepared me well to navigate the complex landscape of public higher education, as well as to attune myself to the issues unique to UNM, but it will take time and effort to understand it all. To that end, I plan to return to the UNM campus over the next few months to formulate a transition plan based on active listening, campus collaboration and a mutual expectation of excellence.

I don't need to tell you that change is something that occurs at a university almost daily - it is a part of the natural ebb and flow of what we do and how we do it, and is situational in nature. Transition, however, is the process by which change and the people affecting and affected by it come together to address its implications. In other words, transition presents us a powerful opportunity to collectively examine where we are, what we hold valuable and how that applies to our future. Many of the issues we are facing - some unique to UNM and some not - have been put on a very public front burner. While this can be uncomfortable, it can also ultimately lead to positive future outcomes if we take the right actions.

In leading UNM through this transition, and to set ourselves up for success, I intend to treat what has come before with respect, while encouraging innovations and insights that build upon that foundation to continue to improve the way we support our students and the institution across all of its many components. There will be both, the immediate and the long-term, the urgent and the important - all of which must be taken into

consideration with critical focus. I truly believe that public higher education is transformational in so many ways and for so many people. Each job we have, each hat we wear, in service to our students and to society is equally transformational and represents the value and trust that are expected by the people we serve.

I am truly proud to join you in becoming a Lobo. I was told that at UNM, each of us defines all of us. As your President, I will take that sentiment to heart, knowing that how I represent UNM in every word, action and decision is an indelible part of the UNM story. I am committed to my Presidency being one of inclusion, engagement and intent, at all levels. Many thanks to all of you for your confidence in my experience and abilities. I look forward to engaging with you on a much more personal level in the near future.

Warmest regards, and Go Lobos!

Garnett S. Stokes