

ALL UNIVERSITY MESSAGE

Good afternoon,

Over the past several weeks, amid a worldwide pandemic and numerous uncertainties about what the future holds, we have also witnessed an upsurge of elevated consciousness responding to racial injustices embedded in our societies and in our own institutional histories.

The University of New Mexico recently marked its 131st year — that makes it 23 years older than the State of New Mexico itself. We pride ourselves on providing a distinctive environment, culture and experience that inspires critical thought, scholarship and research to thrive and better the world in which we live. We also take pride in being deeply rooted in our state's vibrant history and culture; but that does not mean that we should not sometimes be disturbed by it and question how the chaos of our past can illuminate a more determined future.

Throughout the history of our institution and our state, there have been cultural touchpoints that require us to re-examine the symbols, artwork and facilities that identify our University culture and environment – and sometimes our values. Similar demands for reflection and change are being levied across our country, and I want to assure the University community that we are listening. I also would like to provide you with an update on some of the actions and conversations that have been and are continuing to take place:

- **UNM Seal:** There has been strong interest in examining the historic representations that have been built into the UNM Seal for more than a generation. In 2016, it was determined that while the mark was under review, an interim seal would be used for all official representation. After a considerable amount of dialogue, research and input from over 8000 participants in our communities statewide and nationally, a comprehensive and diverse committee presented art submissions to the Regents' Academic Student Affairs and Research (ASAR) Committee this past April 30. The ASAR committee requested some modifications to the artwork, which will be returned for further consideration at its next meeting, likely to take place in August, after which it will go to the full Board for final approval.
- **Adams Mural in Zimmerman Library:** The recent intellectual discourse regarding the mural was conducted with considerable thought and insight, with many vested groups, and incorporated lectures, entire course sections, and meetings

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with interested constituents. This engagement led to a proposed solution involving a curtain veil concept, which then evolved to an enhanced technical display that allows for complete obstruction of view while still permitting the murals to be accessed for educational purposes. The transition of leadership and the viability of the selected technology unquestionably delayed the project, but this issue continues to be a priority for the University. We remain committed to covering the murals before Fall classes begin. Given the historical designation of Zimmerman Library, this process is strictly regulated by the New Mexico Historic Preservation Division, and we will continue to work diligently to comply with their requirements to implement changes.

- **Named Buildings:** This week, the Oñate Hall building sign was removed due to vandalism. Unlike the Adams mural in Zimmerman, the University has not entered into an extensive process to address controversial building names. However, the University administration understands the need to address this important issue. All naming requests currently are reviewed by the Committee on Naming Facilities, Spaces, Endowments, and Programs, [in accordance with existing guidelines and procedures](#). Since the naming of facilities has a long-term impact on the University, the current approval process is designed to ensure such actions are in the best interest of the institution. We will strive for an inclusive process and I have requested a review of the existing policy for naming buildings and other facilities.

As with any issues related to institutional symbols, art installations or named facilities, UNM will take a thoughtful approach that is grounded in inclusivity, research and scholarship in making any decisions that impact the campus environment and culture. At UNM, teaching and learning are the very heart of what we do as a university. We're more than just a gathering place or a common space; we're a place for a free and open exchange of ideas and different points of view. Sometimes, that exchange can be uncomfortable — some conversations are not easy and should not be. As most of us find out in a classroom—whether we're exploring Native American spirituality, discussing the writing of James Baldwin, looking for an underlying meaning in Hispanic interpretive dance - real life and real people are remarkably colorful and complex. But more often than not, an exchange of ideas — including those uncomfortable conversations about our painful past — leads to a better understanding of who we are, where we came from, and who we want to be moving forward.

Let's all keep listening and learning. Let's keep the conversation going, Lobos.

Garnett Stokes
President

