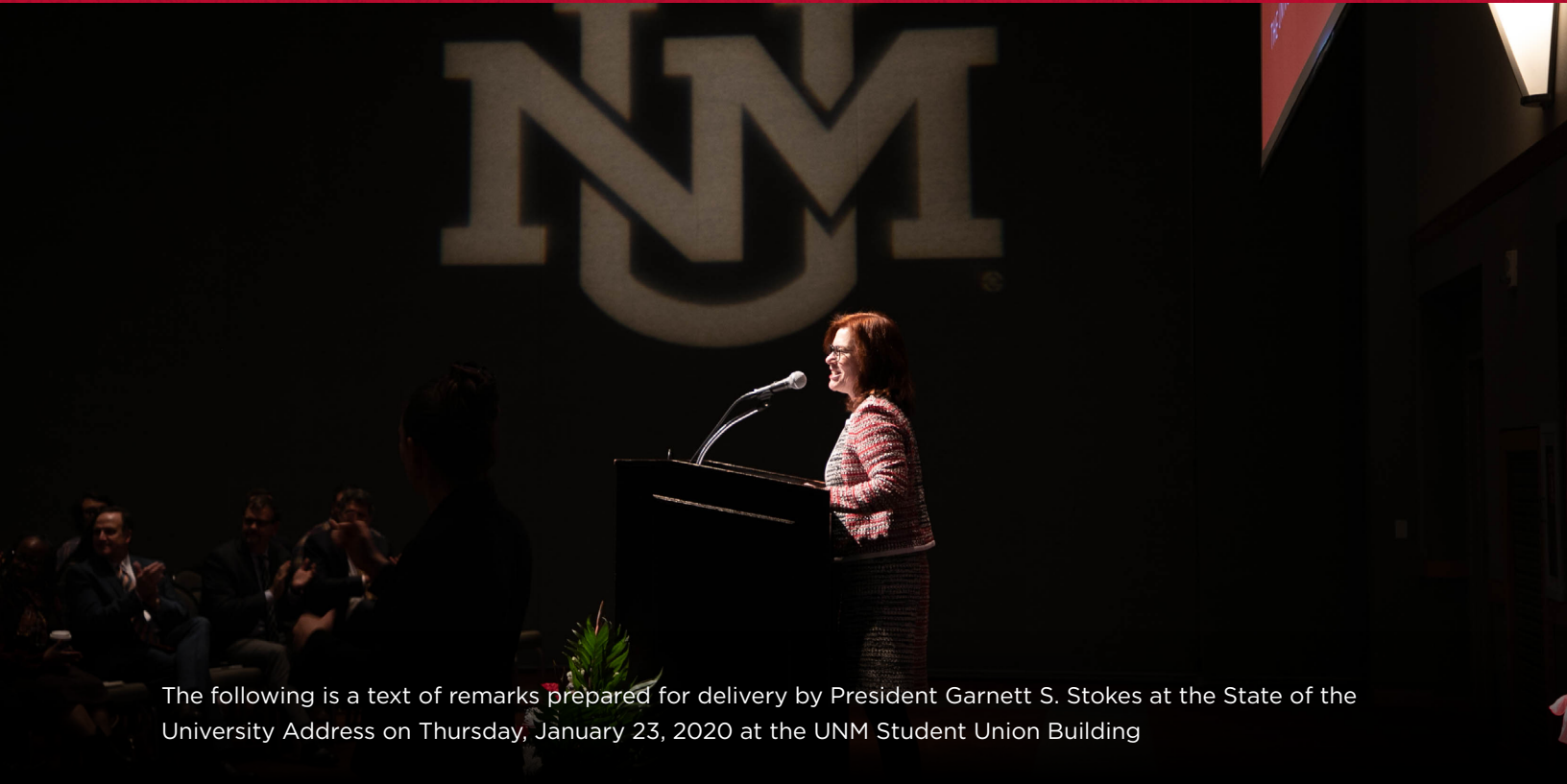


# STATE OF THE UNIVERSITY



The following is a text of remarks prepared for delivery by President Garnett S. Stokes at the State of the University Address on Thursday, January 23, 2020 at the UNM Student Union Building

## OPPORTUNITY DEFINED

### THE STATE OF THE UNIVERSITY

Good morning and welcome. It's another beautiful New Mexico day as we kick off the first full week of the Spring 2020 semester. I always think of this time of year as one of renewal and reimagination, and today is no exception, as I am privileged to share the State of The University of New Mexico with you.

March 1st will mark my second anniversary as president of UNM—an honor I am grateful for every day. One of the best parts of being President? The opportunities for face-to-face engagement with the University community. I've heard your professional and personal stories; campus history and lore; and questions, concerns, and suggestions. What is most evident is the pride and passion you have for UNM—together we are building on nearly 131 years of excellence, tradition and innovation. Over the past year, we have been shaping a culture of continuous improvement and self-reflection, collaborative problem solving and proactive response—your voices have made a difference. You have shared thoughts with me at town halls and traveling office hours; you have visited with me at campus events; you have contributed to defining the qualities and skills we seek in our newest leaders.



We have come together to discuss the most efficient and effective ways to make our campus a better place to work, live and learn. And we are turning ideas into action. We are taking steps to reduce campus crime while revitalizing community relationships; we are providing excellent teaching that has led to better student outcomes; we are advocating for increased scholarship money; and we are generating groundbreaking research while paving the way for current and future students to lead the nation in innovation.

I applaud each of you for the measurable and valuable impact you have on our students and our community. As the University for New Mexico, we are improving, gathering momentum and making change to better serve our students and state. At its core, our success is rooted in opportunities—the opportunities we provide, and the opportunities we pursue.

In its most basic terms, opportunity can be defined as “a set of circumstances that makes it possible to do something.” Sometimes, these circumstances may be outside of our control. But with timing, preparation and an openness to new ideas, we can seek out or initiate opportunities and do something impressive, something transcendent, something beautiful, or something groundbreaking. Here at UNM, we acknowledge opportunity isn’t simply found; it’s created. And from what I have experienced, I think we value opportunity a bit more than most...simply because we work a little harder for it. As we continue pursuing excellence, it’s worth revisiting our foundational principles, both to properly evaluate what we have accomplished and to envision what we can achieve in the future.

### **CULTIVATING THE COMMON GOOD**

Sometimes, in public higher education, we know so well the importance of the work we do, and are so busy doing it, that we don’t invest the time necessary to express the resulting value. Not just the story...but why it’s important. In our country, and even here in New Mexico, we are experiencing a crisis of confidence

in higher education and its value. National polls and surveys have made headlines over the past few years, reflecting an increase in public skepticism about the value of a college degree and the impact our institutions have on society. I think those surveys reflect an unfair cynicism about higher education—one we must work to overcome.

Higher education—including research and innovation – has never been more necessary to better understand and improve the world in which we live. We are dedicated to tackling the most challenging problems facing society today, and this translates into how we approach our health, protect our environment and care for our families.

At UNM, we are preparing our students to lead and become productive citizens to advance New Mexico, the nation, and the world. Learning critical and deep-thinking skills enables them to seek knowledge, clarification and new solutions; to be skeptical and challenge assumptions, and to catalyze those “aha” moments into opportunities to ‘seize the day.’ The value lies in meeting the needs of our state and country, by educating healthcare providers, teachers, scientists, policy makers and influencers, artists and architects who return to their communities to share their acquired talents.

Recent studies have even lauded the public and economic benefits, finding that “universities act as ladders for social mobility,” as well as laboratories for research and knowledge creation. A Brookings study, in fact, ranked us eighth nationally among universities who do both well, placing us well ahead of peer universities like Temple, Rutgers, and Georgia Tech.

Higher education is an indisputable engine of opportunity—and it’s even good for your health: a 2019 US News study found that a higher education contributes to a longer, healthier life. So, let’s start with recognizing the environment that will keep our engine of opportunity firing on all cylinders—and lead to longer, happier lives.

## **A CULTURE OF (UN)COMMON GROUND**

D.H. Lawrence called New Mexico “the greatest experience from the outside world that [he had] ever had,” and said that it “changed [him] forever.” This applies not only to our states’ natural beauty, its people and its history, but to the heart of our university as well. UNM is indeed a life-changing place. We have the incredible strength, innovation and grit to lead our state in so many ways...including providing a momentous experience for our students that begins with providing a safe, supportive and healthy environment in which our community can thrive.

A critical priority for me this year is an expanded focus on diversity, equity and inclusion. When we share our diverse cultures, experiences and perspectives with one another, we build a richer, more sophisticated understanding of our world. This diversity lies at the heart of who we are—we’re a state and a university like



no other, a healthy blending of different cultures, each of which retains its own unique identity while, at the same time, complementing other cultures to create something entirely new and vibrant. This is the UNM experience. And this experience informs an approach to education that exposes minds to new ideas and fresh perspectives while equipping them with habits of thought and action that will translate into a better life and better opportunities down the road.

But education is more than preparing our students for a career. In a time of deep ideological divisions, a 24/7 news cycle and increasing skepticism and distrust of both media and government; cultivating the capacity for clear and critical thinking is more vital than ever. And while empathy and compassion aren't something to be found in a university course catalog, I sincerely believe that higher education promotes values of tolerance, fairness, curiosity and mutual respect—traits that are essential for civil discourse and rational self-government. This is our responsibility as educators and as citizens.

Initiatives are being developed with this in mind: we are planning to launch a postdoctoral program to better support members of underrepresented minorities pursuing academic careers. We will also expand the diversity training for faculty search committees, which has been shown to help people become aware of their implicit biases and provides tools for helping to guard against it.

In recognition of the service of our veterans, active-duty service members and their families, we offer Green Zone training for faculty and staff to better understand the experience of veterans and their unique needs; we have instituted a veteran hiring preference program; and of course, we will relentlessly pursue improved educational experiences and outcomes for this group who has sacrificed so much. And we have already embarked on changing UNM's seal in response to our community's concerns. The five new seal designs are available online for public comment until Friday, February 7.

### **A Foundation of Respect, Ethics and Integrity**

Another baseline requirement for a thriving campus culture is cultivating an environment of mutual respect, ethics and integrity. In December, we completed the terms of our three-year agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice to address complaints of sexual misconduct on campus. As a result, our investigations into sexual misconduct are stronger, more proactive and more transparent than ever...and it must be reflected in everything we do.

Going forward, we want to formalize and institutionalize all the work we've been doing for the past three years, smooth out remaining bumps and serve as a model for other institutions across the country. We have been asked by the Department of the Navy to host a regional discussion with universities and military service academies on February 6th that will explore how to effectuate cultural change and how to use best practices and data to prevent sexual harassment.

Where we are and where we aspire to be as a university are reflected in the decisions that have been made in the past and those we make now. Those decisions should be driven by shared institutional values that act as a common blueprint for the entire Lobo community. In keeping with my commitment to improve our campus culture and processes, I have appointed a task force on Institutional Ethics and Integrity. Subcommittees are at work and meeting regularly, and a final report is expected this spring. Together, we continue strengthening our ethical standards and practices to be consistent with our institutional values, culture and policies, informed by our own professional principles and personal values.

### **An Inspired Physical Environment**

Improvements to our physical environment enhance experiences and make life better, more comfortable, and more interesting for everyone on campus. Just look at the difference the improvements to Smith Plaza have made. Last October we also opened our new Physics and Astronomy and Interdisciplinary Science (or PAIS) Building and plans are afoot to start the renovation of Clark Hall, home to our Chemistry faculty later this year. The \$35 million Johnson Center renovation is very close to completion. It will add a new fitness area, an indoor running track and revitalized activity space for dance, aerobics, cycling and team sports.

We're also nearing completion of the Student Health and Counseling building expansion, which will provide a pharmacy and an enhanced setting for behavioral health services. Over a longer timeline, we're making plans for a new building to house the College of Fine Arts that will support New Mexico's ancient, but also cutting edge, arts industry. At the UNM Health Sciences, we recently broke ground on the new Nene and Jamie Koch Movement Disorders Center, and we are moving ahead with plans to construct a much-needed new surgical tower. Plans are also in the works to construct a 16,000-square-foot addition to Pete and Nancy Domenici Hall, which will provide much-needed space for neuroscience and addictions-related research.

### **A Safer Physical Environment**

We are not just modernizing and beautifying the campus landscape but are also making headway in improving the safety of our students, staff, faculty, and visitors. Built environment improvements are not just impactful at the largest scale. Smaller upgrades to campus locations such as Girard and Central and Yale and Central will greatly enrich those areas by promoting safe pedestrian patterns and behavior.

I commend our University Police Department for their devotion to providing a safe, secure university environment. Notably, there was a 40% decrease in automobile thefts and attempted auto thefts reported at UNM in 2018 compared to the previous year. I believe that this change can be attributed to our proactive efforts in adding police officers, the strategic placement of cameras in various parking lots, our increased

coordination with the City of Albuquerque Police Department, and the vigilance of our University community. We are continuously evaluating all possible solutions that improve safety for our campus and surrounding neighborhoods, while remaining a welcoming part of a proud urban tradition.

## **A COMMUNITY OF OPPORTUNITY**

### **We Are New Mexico**

The heart of our success resides in our inspirational student body, dedicated staff and outstanding faculty members... and in our accomplished alumni and generous supporters. In my time as president, it has been my privilege to meet and get to know many of you and the ways in which your individual talents, accomplishments and contributions serve our students, the citizens of New Mexico and our scholarly and research communities. Our people are what make us curious, resilient and successful...they are what make us New Mexico.

Our students are among some of the most driven and diverse in the nation, coming from cities and pueblos, sprawling ranches and small towns, mountain communities and valley villages to join the Lobo family. As the state's premiere institution, we present nearly 50% of all college degrees awarded to New Mexico students annually. Every day, our students challenge us with their curiosity and inspire us with their achievements. They make us better educators, leaders, and people. They embody the best in all of us.

It can never be emphasized enough that our outstanding faculty are at the very foundation of our flagship mission. They are passionate about the success of our students and apply their knowledge and talents for the betterment of the world. Our faculty members conduct vital research and scholarship that has tangible benefits for the state - and impact that reaches far beyond our borders. And let's not forget the incredible service the university provides to the community in the form of cutting-edge healthcare and other programs that improve the lives of people from across the region.

Our staff—those who are often working behind the scenes—are truly the engine that drives the daily business of our university. Whether they're organizing meetings, facilitating research, assisting students, tending to the landscaping, or any one of the many important jobs we have at UNM, our staff make the University experience richer, safer, and more supportive.

Some are here every day, regardless of weather, clearing sidewalks of snow, caring for patients or ensuring the community is safe and comfortable. All those little things that seem to happen automatically and seamlessly are actually the result of hard work and true dedication. I am grateful for the thoughtful advice I receive from the Staff Council on a host of issues affecting the functioning of the university. In response to our staff voices, I am happy to say we have implemented a paid parental leave policy and considered

valuable staff input on compensation and retirement policy.

Our nearly 200,000 alumni worldwide are also a rich source of support and inspiration. Their record of achievements through the years animates the University's legacy. The UNM Alumni Association is taking on a more active role in recruiting new students to the University. Alumni volunteers are staffing college fairs, contacting prospective students and assisting in efforts to keep students enrolled. The UNM Foundation continues to change worlds for so many Lobos through its comprehensive fundraising campaign and is currently undergoing its own strategic planning process.

### **Leadership Transitions**

Making this community of opportunity successful requires inspired leadership—and one of the greatest opportunities we have shared over the past year is the unprecedented transition of some of our key administrative positions. What has made the process equally rewarding is being able to lean into the institutional knowledge and leadership that exists on this campus during times of transitions. Many thanks to those who have acted in interim capacities, and to the University community for creating an environment of optimism, transparency and inclusion that has attracted diverse and dynamic individuals to UNM.

I'm actually starting to feel less like the newest cast member of an established ensemble, as we've celebrated retirements and bid farewell to some old friends and colleagues, while also adding new members to our pack, who bring fresh perspectives, experiences and most importantly, visions of positive transformation. My first hire was Loretta Martinez in 2018, who oversees our Office of University Counsel. This past year we welcomed Provost James Holloway, Senior Vice President for Finance & Administration Teresa Costantinidis, Vice President for Equity and Inclusion Assata Zerai, and Vice President for Enrollment Management Dan Garcia. The UNM Foundation also selected Jeff Todd as its new CEO.

Recent transitions include Connie Beimer as the interim vice president for Alumni Relations and Barbara Damron to the role of interim chief government relations officer. And of course, we have just launched an absolutely crucial search for the executive vice president of Health Sciences. Additionally, there are active searches for the Deans of the College of Education, School of Architecture and Planning, College of Fine Arts and the Anderson School of Management. Our Leadership team embodies the exciting opportunities ahead for UNM, and I'm excited about the work we'll be doing together.

### **A COMMITMENT TO SUCCESS**

Student success will always be our first priority, and I appreciate the shared commitment we have as a campus to infuse that critical purpose in everything we do. A supportive environment leads to student success in the classroom—and I'm very proud of our shared efforts to improve academic achievement.



## **Preparing Lobos for Lifelong Success**

We understand our students' needs for a successful and timely college experience and a campus that supports the pursuit of excellence. By consistently increasing our retention and graduation rates, as well as offering new and innovative pathways for non-traditional learners, we are producing more lifelong Lobos. We've redesigned many of our degree plans and implemented new and enhanced support services available to all students. The rate of full-time first year students returning for their sophomore year also improved in Fall 2019. And as a result of concentrated campus-wide efforts to improve student success, persistence rates of African American, American Indian, and Hispanic students at UNM also improved.

Our 4-year graduation rates have shown dramatic improvement over the past several years, increasing 23 percentage points since 2010, among the best gains in the country. And our 6-year graduation rate stands at over 50%. However, our role is not simply to grant degrees, but to also deliver the best educational tools, programs and overall experience to every student enrolled here. We must keep the momentum of this academic success to matriculate more students; introduce new paths for students to obtain degrees on all of our campuses—at levels ranging from the associates, to the bachelors, masters, doctorate, and professional degrees--and eliminate achievement gaps.

## **Lobo Nation**

The Lobo Athletics Program is a critical part of the University experience and a vital part of the Lobo community. It's larger than any single player, coach, or sport, and it's never about the final score. Lobo Athletics has the power to anchor us to the community, bring people together who may otherwise never connect, and provide opportunities not available anywhere else. We are one university - one team - aligned by values, goals and transparent accountability. Our Athletic Director understands the University's mission and priorities and has worked closely with me and UNM's leadership to build a culture of high performance and integrity that is integrated into our institutional framework.

As one of the most visible components of UNM, the integrity of our athletic department is vitally important - our athletes and coaches are our ambassadors with the community at large. Over the last year, we have seen successful efforts to streamline the Athletics Department and restructure the Lobo Club with a targeted emphasis on fundraising. We have proactively addressed many of the issues that have been identified for improvement.

Collectively, our teams have done very well, with five conference titles since 2018. Our women's cross-country team was ranked fourth in the nation and one of its members won the NCAA national championship. I'm proud of our student athletes, many of whom are Academic All-Americans. It is a real credit to UNM that



over the past eight years we have had the greatest number of honor roll students in the entire Mountain West Conference. The future of the Lobo Nation is bright. Working together, we continue to look for meaningful ways to be innovative and create a culture of change and accountability.

### **Enhancing Health and Health Equity**

Our commitment to identifying health interventions and providing service-learning opportunities is in perfect alignment with UNM's mission and advances our role as a public research university dedicated to improving our communities. As the only academic medical center in a state in which many communities lack providers, the UNM Health Sciences Center is critical to advancing access to care and improving the health outcomes of all New Mexicans through education, research, and patient care. It is a cornerstone of our flagship identity.

Our School of Medicine, College of Pharmacy, College of Nursing and College of Population Health offer students an exceptional education in the health sciences and provide the people of New Mexico with the highest quality of healthcare. The Colleges of Nursing and Pharmacy are both building pipeline pathways that admit new undergraduate students directly into their programs. Meanwhile, the College of Population Health is seeing growing numbers of students enrolling in its new undergraduate major.

We're presenting a proposal for new funding that would enable the School of Medicine to eliminate tuition for students in the M.D. program in return for a promise of service in the state after they complete residency. The hope is that this will help fill the gap in health care providers, particularly in rural and underserved areas of New Mexico. If successful, it could serve as a model for cultivating other crucial health professions and get those graduates to stay in the state.

We continue to seek funding for other exciting and groundbreaking research opportunities. For example, this year we will ask the Legislature for additional funding: to expand Project ECHO, which links specialists with primary care clinicians throughout New Mexico; and for the UNM Comprehensive Cancer Center, which treats virtually all of the pediatric cancer cases in the state - and most of the adult patients as well. Clearly, our health education programs and services are critical to the physical and economic health of our state and improving the lives of all New Mexicans.

### **New Challenges, New Opportunities**

As we move forward into this new decade, we are preparing for both the challenges that lie ahead and the opportunities that can be created. The University's financial health is less precarious than it was a year ago. We still have not been funded to the level we would like, but we're gratified to know that higher education is a priority for the Governor and the Legislature. This year, the Council of University Presidents and other higher education associations made a unified funding request that proposes increases in formula funding and

compensation funding. And importantly for UNM, progress has been made at clarifying the deficiencies in how compensation funding has been calculated.

The truth is, we're still recovering from years of cuts that included state reductions and declining tuition revenue. Even with much-needed and welcome help from the state, we're still looking at very real reductions in our funding level and are working hard to work through funding shortfalls. We need to continue looking for ways to improve efficiency, without compromising our mission.

Over the past year I have heard a great deal from our faculty and staff, who – due to budgetary restrictions – have consistently been asked to do more with less. They have always come through – and as part of our effort to create a supportive work environment worthy of our employees, I'm pleased that earlier this year, we were able to implement 3-percent raises for faculty and staff. I am hopeful that we will be able to continue to improve compensation in coming years. It remains one of my highest priorities.

This past fall, the faculty voted to unionize – and we have now begun the collective bargaining process. I want to emphasize that regardless of who is included in the bargaining unit, we are one University, with one faculty. We are all here to further the development of new ideas and to cultivate the intellectual growth of our students, our post-docs and our residents.

Enrollment remains one of our most significant challenges as the economy improves and high school graduates decline. This is more than just a math problem or a budgeting exercise. This is about missed opportunities, for the citizens of our state and for the University, and it has a very real impact on the economic and cultural health of our New Mexico communities. The decline of enrollment impacts UNM across many dimensions and demands a University-wide approach to address recruitment and retention of traditional and non-traditional students.

Last year, I convened a cross-campus Enrollment Task Force to develop recommendations to increase enrollment at all student levels and across multiple market segments. Some of our strategies included “growing our own” by increasing transfer, retention and graduation rates of students who start their academic career at a UNM branch campus or offering ways for them to earn a bachelor's degree at the branch. We are looking to grow targeted graduate programs. We offer a terrific and affordable education to New Mexico's young people, as well as to the many students who come from beyond the Land of Enchantment to make us a place of diverse global cultures, perspectives and ideas.

While some challenges remain and new ones will emerge, there is still good news. We're finding that when students get here, they're likely to stay. Our first- to second-year retention rates improved substantially this year, increasing four percentage points in just one year. This compares very favorably with the national rates of improvement and is a strong predictor of a student's likelihood of graduating. I'm also very pleased that

our retention rates for Native American and Hispanic students have improved greatly over the past few years, a reflection of efforts we have made to support these students when they first arrive on campus.

I think a major piece needed to solve the enrollment puzzle clearly lies in making higher education more affordable. New Mexico already provides Lottery Scholarships for qualifying students, and federal Pell grants help, but many students still face a funding gap. UNM's enrollment management team has been working diligently to identify ways to help students minimize their costs. Governor Lujan Grisham's opportunity scholarship is a key piece of legislation that will be considered during our current session.

I expect a UNM diploma to be financially in reach. I look forward to working with state leaders, and with you, to come up with new ideas and initiatives to make a college education accessible and affordable for all New Mexicans. Opportunity is priceless, but it shouldn't be cost prohibitive.

### **Grand Challenges, Grand Opportunities**

Improving the lives of our citizens is exactly what we are doing through one of our signature institutional initiatives - the UNM Grand Challenges. Listening to New Mexicans from every corner of the state and in between reaffirmed my conviction that we must harness the dynamic and diverse research power at UNM to seek out and provide solutions to what stands in the way of intellectual, social and economic health and prosperity.

A little over a year ago, I invited faculty from across campus to propose three Grand Challenges that would bring together multidisciplinary teams to tackle issues of great societal importance. These initiatives are intended to help the University better focus research expertise to improve the quality of life for all New Mexicans. This was not just a call to action, but a call to ideas in action - to bring our campus and state together through multiple viewpoints and a common purpose. To date, we have nearly 300 people participating.

UNM's Grand Challenges are ideally grand partnerships; ones that involve collaborative, interdisciplinary research and engagement with community organizations, industry and government. They empower UNM researchers to bring more federal and private research money into the state and strengthen cross-departmental research collaborations. By engaging stakeholders throughout New Mexico, the initiative is fostering new connections to our rural and underserved communities.

The **Sustainable Water Resources** team is leveraging interdisciplinary research in law, policy, natural sciences, social sciences and engineering to help guide better choices about managing water in our arid environment.

The **Successful Aging** effort focuses on compressing the "period of disability" for our aging population,



so a person can remain independent longer. As New Mexico's population becomes one of the oldest in the nation in the next decade, this effort seeks to expand programs and services for vulnerable seniors, support independent living and create technology to support greater autonomy.

The **Substance Use Disorders** Grand Challenge is broadly focused on substance use challenges in New Mexico – including the opioid crisis and alcohol abuse. Multiple teams seek to change perceptions of substance use to improve prevention and access to treatment, and to build resilience in communities to prevent opioid and substance misuse.

## RESEARCH WITH A PURPOSE

Beyond the Grand Challenges, we believe that a thriving, vibrant research community at UNM is not only essential to our state's economy and culture, but vital to our students' success. UNM continues to capitalize on its reputation as the state's leading research institution, creating and pursuing new and groundbreaking research opportunities, whether it's understanding the impact of snowmelt and how to predict and prevent forest fires, developing a vaccine for Alzheimer's disease, or tracking black holes in the remotest regions of the galaxy, no challenge is too small—or too remote—for our brilliant Lobo researchers.

It's easy to see that research we conduct at UNM serves two necessary goods; the good of the people, and the good of the economy. UNM research discoveries foster cures and solutions that improve lives—and the commercialization of these discoveries has a tremendous economic impact, generating millions of dollars of activity, and serves as one of the key drivers of our state's economic engine. Simply put, our outcomes are also building incomes. STC.UNM, the Innovation Academy, our research centers and business partnerships are creating entrepreneurial opportunities like never before and UNM students are starting businesses before they even graduate.

## Grand Partnerships

Just as important as our research are the relationships and partnerships we forge as we pursue these opportunities. Our mission is not just about our students' time on-campus, but about where they go when they graduate. Many of our faculty and students find chances to collaborate at all three of our national and federal labs, which offer exceptional career opportunities to a number of our graduates—including a new cooperative joint faculty agreement with Los Alamos National Laboratory.

Additionally, the caliber of UNM research was further enhanced this past year as we signed a Cooperative Research and Development Agreement, or CRADA, with Sandia Labs to share knowledge about national security while strengthening science and engineering. We're the first and only Adobe Creative Campus in New Mexico, digitally empowering students, faculty and staff to tap into their creative side and apply it

within their classroom's research, projects and coursework—and without ever leaving their desks.

We've also put our best minds to work on societal problems, whether for the global good or in our own backyard. Last year, Albuquerque Mayor Tim Keller, Health Sciences Center Chancellor Paul Roth, and I signed a joint letter of intent signifying our shared commitment to finding innovative and effective solutions to improve the lives of those experiencing homelessness, as well as understanding its root causes. This doesn't necessarily mean a gateway facility will be anywhere on our campus, but it does mean that wherever it is, UNM will be an invaluable partner in addressing this community crisis.

Finally, we will work on building greater partnerships with our business community to build a 'talent pipeline' by developing meaningful internship opportunities for our students and increasing our chances of keeping that talent in New Mexico. Connecting our students' academic path with a career path early on through internships, and entrepreneurial opportunities gives them an advantage in seeking employment after graduation. Just last month we hosted a rare and out of this world opportunity for New Mexico school children to live chat with NASA astronauts aboard the International Space Station, as well as engage with space experts and other space enthusiasts in an interactive atmosphere. What a great way for us to stress the importance of—and excitement for—a STEM curriculum.

## **RISING TO THE CHALLENGE**

John F. Kennedy said that “efforts and courage are not enough without purpose and direction.” This is true as we embark on a strategic planning initiative that is intended to help guide our way forward over the next few decades.

The strategy for UNM 2040 is one of my top initiatives, and will be coordinated by our provost, Dr. James Holloway. This will be an iterative, inclusive and collegial process and I look forward to participation from across the University. Let me be clear: we're asking for your participation. This is our planning and visioning process, and our opportunity to shape the future of The University of New Mexico.

We know that UNM is recognized as serving the greater good through our mission of education, innovation, health care and community commitment—trust and support are built upon a number of factors that must be woven into everything we do. So, as we plan for the future, we must ask ourselves: Are we articulating the value we bring to our students as learners, the value we bring to our state as a center of creativity, scholarship, and service? Do we have big, important ideas in research for which we must lay the groundwork for future opportunities? Do we fully realize the advantages that come from being a center of diversity and culture? Are we securing our future through the development of critical resources that will make all of this possible? If the answer to any of these isn't “yes,” then we must ask ourselves “why not?” and “what should we do about it?”

The ultimate purpose of this type of planning is not to check boxes, but to develop a long-term aspirational vision of UNM while also addressing shorter-term goals to move toward that vision. This past year marked several accreditation milestones in comprehensive and specialized peer evaluation. The reports show that we are demonstrating proactive responses to address many of the expected criteria. But our plans will need to include both capitalizing on the many ways we are excelling in fulfilling our mission, as well as strengthening those areas identified as needing improvement. We must remain nimble and adept at embracing change while respecting our legacy and remaining true to those core principles that help define who we are.

In closing, I am extremely proud of who we are and how far we have come together. And I am so deeply grateful to each of you for your hard work and many contributions. I'm excited by what we have achieved so far and I have confidence in what we can achieve together as Lobos—in our ability to rise to the challenges presented by new and often unexpected opportunities, and in our capacity to create those same wonderfully inspiring and life-changing opportunities for our students.

Thank you and let's go Lobos!