



2025 State of the University TOGETHER ... FOR TOMORROW

President Garnett S. Stokes | February 21, 2025

Good morning, Lobos, and welcome! Thank you all for coming to the 2025 State of the University address. Every year around this time, I traditionally take the opportunity to talk with the university community about the prior year, as well as to lay out some goals and aspirations for the future.

As always, before we talk about the future, it is our responsibility to honor our past.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' LAND & TERRITORY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Founded in 1889, the University of New Mexico sits on the traditional homelands of the Pueblo of Sandia. The original peoples of New Mexico—Pueblo, Navajo, and Apache—since time immemorial, have deep connections to the land and have made significant contributions to the broader community statewide. We honor the land itself and those who remain stewards of this land throughout the generations and also acknowledge our committed relationship to Indigenous peoples. We gratefully recognize our history.

INTRODUCTION

Today, we gather to reflect on the state of The University of New Mexico—or as I often call it, The University *for* New Mexico. As we stand at the crossroads of tradition and innovation, I'd like to offer a theme for this next year that encapsulates not just our aspirations but the very essence of who we are as an institution, and that is "Together... for Tomorrow."

Our university has long been an anchor of knowledge, discovery, and progress. We have weathered storms, celebrated triumphs, and continuously evolved to meet the needs of our students and our state. The past year has been no exception, marked by remarkable achievements that showcase the resilience and brilliance of our Lobo community.

Our faculty has secured groundbreaking research grants, pushing the boundaries of science and humanities. Our students have excelled in national competitions, bringing pride and recognition to our institution. Our staff have worked tirelessly to create an environment where learning thrives and innovation flourishes. Together, we have reinforced UNM's position as a leading public research university, one that serves as an economic and cultural engine for New Mexico. We're not just shaping the lives of



our 26,000 students and 10,000 faculty and staff; we're transforming communities across our beautiful state. From our original campus here in Albuquerque to our branch campuses in Gallup, Los Alamos, Taos and Valencia, we're building upon a network of knowledge and opportunity that spans the Land of Enchantment.

TOGETHER . . . FOR TOMORROW

In my role as UNM President and in all the ways I've proudly represented us locally and nationally, I've witnessed firsthand the power of collaboration. These partnerships have reinforced a crucial lesson: in today's interconnected world, our strength lies in our ability to work together, share knowledge, and leverage our diverse perspectives.

Yet, as we celebrate these accomplishments, we must also acknowledge the challenges that lie ahead. We find ourselves in a time of administrative changes and new directives that impact our institution and the broader landscape of higher education. These shifts can bring uncertainty and concern. But let me assure you: although we may need to adapt to new realities, we will not compromise the core values that define us. Our commitment to academic and inclusive excellence, and service to our community through discovery and compassionate care remains unwavering. The very spirit of UNM—our dedication to fostering critical thinking, embracing our diversity, and empowering our students to change the world—is who we are.

When we say each of us defines all of us, "all of us" is a powerful collective, driven by the minds, hearts, and stories of our Lobos. And as we navigate these changes, we do so together. Our strength lies in our unity, in the collective wisdom and passion of our entire university community. "Each of us defines all of us" is more than just a catchy phrase; it's a call to action intrinsic to our Lobo identity. It reminds us that our individual stories, struggles, and successes are threads in the larger narrative of UNM. It is this togetherness that will propel us forward, allowing us to turn challenges into opportunities for growth and innovation.

Let's harness the power of our connectedness, embrace the limitless opportunities before us, and write the next chapter of UNM's legacy—together. Ultimately, it is not just what we achieve that defines us, but how we achieve it—together, as Lobos, for tomorrow.

A PARTNER FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD

It's with good reason that we think of ourselves as The University *for* New Mexico. We know this is a very special state, with a distinctive culture, a unique population, and a landscape that you just won't find any place else. As an institution, we proudly embrace the opportunities and the challenges presented by our state—and we're proud to contribute to the growth, prosperity, and advancement of New Mexico. We don't regard promoting the public good as an obligation; we see it as a privilege.



A Transformative Health Care Initiative

As New Mexico's only academic health center, we know we play a unique role in addressing the health care needs of our state. Besides training the health professional workforce, we serve as the state's only Level 1 Trauma Center and the "one and only" provider for many critical health services. We are home to the National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, a dedicated children's hospital, and a specialized children's emergency department, among other unique services.

In short, if you need extensive or specialized care in New Mexico, you will, at some point, likely be at one of our facilities or treated by UNM-trained professionals. But there just aren't enough of them at the moment—and the need for highly-skilled health care workers will only increase over time.

This is why we are focusing on a bold and transformative initiative for UNM—one in which we will significantly expand our role in providing access to health care for the State of New Mexico— and especially for those unique services that only UNM provides. Part of this strategy will involve investing in a new School of Medicine facility—but this is about so much more than infrastructure. Ultimately, it will involve engaging nearly every part of our university, in every community in our state. It is about strengthening the health professions workforce, advancing excellence in health science education, and driving innovation through research.

Substance Use Disorders

Even as we're working hard to increase our capacity, we're still home to some of the world's smartest, most dedicated, and most compassionate care givers anywhere—and we're committed to addressing one of New Mexico's most pressing issues: substance use disorders.

Our state is number one in the nation for alcohol mortality, and 8th in the nation for drug overdose deaths. Those are stunning numbers—and as an institution, with our resources, our research, our clinical care capacity, and our *compassion*, we are uniquely positioned to help our state address substance use issues. We're so committed, in fact, that it's one of our strategic challenges built right into UNM 2040.

We're working with partners at the New Mexico Department of Health, Bernalillo County, and clinics around the region to provide a wide range of services for addiction and harm reduction. In the coming months I will conduct a search and name a Director of the UNM Office of Substance Use Disorders, who will lead our university in developing and implementing a comprehensive plan for expanding our workforce and increasing access to evidence-based treatment for all New Mexicans.

Again, The University of New Mexico is uniquely suited to address these challenges. It is our privilege to serve our residents who are in need of this help.

This is Your Brain on Microplastics

Speaking of looking out for your health, earlier this month, our Lobo researchers at the College of Pharmacy made some major international news with their alarming findings on microplastics in the



human brain. As published in *Nature Medicine*, our researchers built upon their previous discoveries regarding microplastics in organs like the liver and kidneys with the disturbing finding that there's even *more* in our brains—and we're adding to it all the time.

If you just felt a moment of concern . . . well, then, mission accomplished: we've just made our research personal. The findings of our researchers are helping to bring attention to human-made environmental contaminants, which—hopefully—can lead to meaningful solutions. That's science that's good not just for New Mexico, but for all brains around the world.

A Quantum Leap for New Mexico

We're also doing pioneering work in the development of Quantum Information Science and Engineering, partnering with Sandia National Laboratories to launch UNM's 11th research center, the Quantum New Mexico Institute. With some major funding from the U.S. Department of Energy, we're working together to make New Mexico a destination for quantum companies, nuclear technologies, and scientists around the world.

As part of this exciting initiative, we debuted Elevate Quantum, the Mountain West Tech Hub, which received more than \$127 million in funding to advance not just our region, but our nation as a global leader in quantum technology. We are pleased to be a major part of the effort to ensure the United States remains competitive in the technologies and industries of the future.

Talking Intelligently About Artificial Intelligence

In my remarks last year, I talked about the growing field of Artificial Intelligence and how UNM has been leading the way to understanding its implications for teaching and learning. Over the past year, we've seen AI usage explode across nearly every field, not just in education but in entertainment, medicine, finance . . . the list goes on and on. Through it all, we've remained at the forefront of AI research, even making what we find out available for anyone on our AI Resources website. And with the help of a \$3 million grant from the National Science Foundation, we now offer a graduate certificate in AI and Autonomy.

Now we're on the ground floor of another major initiative. We are pleased to be a founding member of the New Mexico Artificial Intelligence Consortium, a collaboration of key state institutions that aims to advance AI research, education, and economic opportunities in New Mexico. We'll be working with Los Alamos and Sandia National Laboratories to leverage our expertise in computing, AI security, and workforce training to make New Mexico a national leader in trustworthy and ethical AI development. It's a relationship that's good for addressing challenges about AI globally while promoting a strong economy locally. We're proud to be a part of it.

Thinking Globally, Acting Locally

While UNM is an urban campus at the heart of New Mexico's largest city, we never forget that we're part of the greater New Mexico community—and that we have a responsibility to be both good neighbors and

good stewards of our resources. We know that we can achieve our aspirations while still protecting the environment—and not just here in our backyard, but around the world.

For this reason, we collaborate across campuses to encourage sustainable practices that support our academic, research, health care, and community engagement mission. Did you know, for example, that we presently have 24 EV charging stations on our campuses? Or that we compost more than 500 pounds of food annually?

Or that we have 2,000 recycling bins? All of these little efforts together make a big difference.

For that reason, we're very proud that we recently received a STARS Sustainable Rating of Silver, highlighting our commitment to environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and community engagement. And we'll keep working every day to continue to keep our community, and our state, cleaner, safer, and healthier.

A Great Education for Great Educators

We're also committed to one of our state's most valuable resources: New Mexico's 300,000 K-12 classroom students. The job of making our state a great place to live and work starts early and starts in the classroom. Our College of Education and Human Sciences is preparing educators to teach some of the most diverse students in the nation, and we're helping them bring their skills to some of the students and communities that need them the most. Just recently, our college received major funding from the U.S. Department of Education to prepare diverse early childhood and special education professionals to teach in rural or tribal communities in New Mexico.

Our College of Education and Human Sciences is truly committed to preparing our students together . . . for tomorrow.

Trail Blazers

All of these initiatives I've just talked about don't happen by themselves. They're not created or run by computer programs—or AI programs—but by hard working faculty who make our university accessible and successful for *everyone*. It's our Lobo faculty who make The University of New Mexico such an exciting and interesting place—and who provide our students with the knowledge, encouragement, and support they need to succeed.

Here are just some of the wonderful accomplishments of our Lobo faculty over the past twelve months:

- We had 14 winners of our Women in STEM Awards, across 11 innovative projects, from carbon storage studies along the Rio Grande to addressing rural healthcare challenges in New Mexico.
- We elevated nine faculty to the elite ranks of UNM's Distinguished Professors.
- Six Health Sciences faculty were honored with Excellence in Research Awards for their work in helping to Advance New Mexico.
- We had the privilege of hearing lectures from recipients of two of the highest honors our faculty can receive, the Annual Research Lecture and the Community Engaged Research Lecture Awards.

- Eight faculty members were honored with Research and Creative Works Leadership Awards, honoring faculty who have accomplished outstanding research or creative works in their respective career stages.
- Similarly, we have one of only 10 recipients nationally of the McKnight Scholar Award, granted to young scientists who are in the early stages of establishing their own independent laboratories and research careers and who have demonstrated a commitment to neuroscience.
- Two of our Arts and Sciences faculty were recently awarded prestigious grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities to assist with their current research projects, the only recipients in New Mexico.
- And we recently had two faculty members in the School of Engineering presented with the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers, regarded as one of the highest honors that can be bestowed on early-career scientists.
- Finally, we had a genuine trailblazer, the winner of a \$3 million National Science Foundation TRAILBLAZER award, for a project that will develop a completely new way to control catastrophic wildfires.

Inspired Leadership

As you can tell, we're fortunate to have some of the most incredible faculty anywhere. But we are also lucky to have some of the best and most inspired leaders and staff around, who have the expertise and enthusiasm necessary to ensure UNM continues to provide our students, patients, and the Lobo community with what they need to succeed.

Over the last year, we've added some inspiring new Lobos to our pack. After a national search, I was thrilled to hire a fantastic new Vice President and Director of Athletics. And after only a few weeks on the job, our new AD was tasked with finding us a terrific new Lobo Football Head Coach, who will lead our team into an exciting new era. I also had the privilege of hiring our university's newest General Counsel. We're welcoming new deans at the Anderson School of Management and at our Honors College. And finally, we are delighted to welcome two new Regents.

I also want to take a moment to recognize some noteworthy accomplishments of our staff, whose achievements embody our value of excellence and reflect so positively on our university.

We have two Lobo leaders who were among 45 selected nationally as fellows of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities Leadership Academy.

And our Communications and Marketing department was highly decorated this year, winning several major awards, including a Gold and Best in Show Award for the *It's Probably Not Rocket Science* podcast.



CELEBRATING ALL CURIOUS MINDS

Clearly, we take seriously our role as New Mexico's premier research hub, just as we are equally proud to look out for the health and well-being of all New Mexicans. But we also never forget that, as a university, it all starts with our students. Without them, there is no University of New Mexico.

In times of uncertainty, I can promise you that we will continue to strive to create supportive, intellectually challenging, and exciting learning environments for our students, both inside and outside the classroom.

Igniting Potential

We're always listening to our students about new ways we can make their campus experience more responsive to their needs. For example, we'll shortly be launching our Student Hub, providing students with new tools to communicate with advisors and improve class scheduling.

And let me say this: we know that our students *also* hear about the rapid changes being proposed or enacted in federal programs. We hear their questions about what this means for student aid, or for our students studying here on work visas, or for a federally funded project they're pursuing as part of their degree. I want you to know that our rapid response groups will continue to analyze any enforced orders or regulations and will let our community know immediately our understanding of what they might mean.

In the meantime, we are continuing to keep in place the programs and resources needed to help support and encourage our students' success, whether it's one of our student resource centers, or the many physical and mental health programs available through SHAC.

Lobos By the Numbers

We know that our students and their families have many choices where they can attain a college degree—especially with the New Mexico Lottery and Opportunity Scholarships at hand. We appreciate you choosing The University of New Mexico for this important and life-changing time. It is our privilege to be on this journey with you.

We also know how fortunate we are that our enrollment has continued to climb, with increases across our branch campuses as well. Fall 2024 is the *third* consecutive year we have seen an overall increase—and, in fact, this was the second year in a row that we've had a record breaking first-year class. Our Fall 2024 class was the largest incoming class since UNM opened its doors in 1889. Pretty incredible!

Diversity Driven Excellence

In addition to the increased enrollment, our incoming class is increasingly diverse and more academically prepared to succeed.



UNM's first-year class is one of the most diverse in school history, with 73.6% of new students coming from traditionally underrepresented populations. As I always say, we are proud that our student population *looks* like New Mexico.

I am also grateful for our vibrant international community of students, scholars, researchers and professionals. Learning and living alongside people from around the world allows us all to develop a deeper understanding of international issues and foreign affairs, as well as affording us opportunities for cross-cultural experiences. And with more than 100 exchange programs, UNM Study Abroad in the Global Education Office can connect Lobos with a transformative international experience. It's with good reason that UNM has been designated as a Fulbright Hispanic Serving Institution for the fourth consecutive year.

We also continue to be named among the nation's Top Military Friendly Schools, and we will always be committed to providing our Green Zone training to ensure veterans and their families have the support they need for academic success.

Lobos Leading the Way

Our Lobo students had another memorable year. Among some of their notable achievements:

We have our first Rhodes Scholar in more than two decades, as we congratulate Abrianna Morales, who was selected as one of only 32 Rhodes recipients in the United States.

We also had three Goldwater Scholars, and a Churchill Scholar—with some overlap there, as you can see.

A team of students from the UNM School of Management made a great showing at the National Collegiate Sports Sales Championship, going up against competitors from 32 schools nationwide—and coming away with a first-place winner in one division and a Sweet 16 team in another. This is the second national title in four years won by an Anderson School of Management student.

Our Lobo student-athletes also had a year for the record books.

- Our Lobo Cross Country teams had incredible seasons, with both the men's and women's teams winning the Mountain West cross country titles. For the men's team, it was their second straight title; for the women, it was their 16th in the last 17 years.
- At the NCAA Championships, the Lobo women finished seventh, and the men finished ninth. We also had two Lobo runners finish as runners-up, and five Lobos earning All-American honors.
- Our men's basketball team also had a terrific season, winning the Mountain West Conference Tournament in 2024, winning four games in four nights on their way to the NCAA Tournament for the first time in a decade. And this season, they're presently at the top of the Mountain West with an incredible 22-5 record.
- A history-making victory happened at University Stadium this past season, as Lobo football defeated a Top 20 non-conference team for the first time since 1940, with an exciting victory over Washington State—many thought it was one of the best games they'd ever seen, anywhere.



- And we even had one Lobo recognized as a Mountain West Player of the Year for their efforts in Esports.

UNMatched Success

As you can tell, it was—and is—a great time to be a Lobo fan. Nothing brings our community together quite like Lobo athletics—and you might be surprised how good Lobo athletics are for our local economy.

Our student-athletes alone generate \$1.85 million annually in personal expenditures and contribute \$567,000 in volunteer economic impact. But the benefits go beyond dollars and cents. Given its public prominence, a thriving athletics program enhances our university's regional and national profile, attracting more students and faculty, and bringing us together and building community pride in ways few other programs can.

This has been a year of growth and transition. Apart from a new Athletic Director and head football coach, we also saw big changes in the structure of the Mountain West Conference, of which we were a founding member more than 25 years ago.

Teams have come, teams have gone . . . but beginning in 2026, you're going to continue to see a strong conference with some new but familiar faces like UTEP and Hawaii, as well as some exciting additions from California, Arizona, and even Illinois.

I've already talked a little bit about the amazing accomplishments of some of our Lobo student-athletes in competition—now let me tell you about their achievements in the classroom.

Lobo student-athletes set department records for female student-athlete GPA, male student-athlete GPA and overall GPA—and for the first time ever, every program was over a 3.0 GPA.

We also had 92 Fall Mountain West All-Academic selections, the second-most in school history.

I appreciate the leadership at UNM Athletics, and the hard work and commitment of our teams, who always keep the *student* in *student-athlete*.

WE R1

You've probably heard UNM referred to as our state's premier Research 1 university—one of only 187 in the nation. This means that scholarship and innovation infuse everything we do, from business to biochemistry, languages to laser technology. Our research and creative works—across campuses and across colleges—enable student success, engage local and global communities, and create new knowledge that opens limitless possibilities with every new discovery.

Let me give you just a sampling of some of the incredible things our researchers are doing at The University of New Mexico.



Helping all of us learn more about the world around us is The University of New Mexico's Museum of Southwestern Biology, which is helping educate and inform the public about rare, endemic, and threatened arthropod species in New Mexico. With the help of a new website, NM Rare dot org, you'll find everything you need to know about our local butterflies, bees, dragonflies, and more, so you can understand and protect them—yup, even the spiders and scorpions. It's all part of our commitment to sustainability under UNM 2040 . . . but it's also *really, really* interesting. Go explore.

Similarly, researchers at the Museum of Southwestern Biology have also discovered a new species with a migration pattern that's been baffling researchers since Darwin. As they followed the giant hummingbird's extreme long-distance migration over eight years, they realized that the world's largest hummingbird was also a new species. Say hello to *Patagona chaski*.

We're also learning more about ourselves and where we come from—sometimes by looking far into the past, and other times by making some unexpected connections in our present. For example, two of our Distinguished Professors have recently examined the moment in our planet's billion-year history when life went from single-celled life to diverse. Their work casts new light on the evolution of diverse species—like ours—told through the fossils preserved in the rocks of the Grand Canyon.

Five hundred million years later, our researchers have found that looking at the bacteria in healthy brains of fish may have implications for studying Alzheimer's disease in humans.

And if you're looking for research that affects your daily life, look no further than our researchers at Health Sciences who have set up a machine to test common types of ski boot bindings to see which might be more likely to cause an injury. Our research is putting corporate promises about safety to the test. For those in our state who get excited at the news of fresh powder in the mountains, this research may save you a trip to the emergency room with a torn ACL.

In short, our innovative research is breaking ground, looking at the world around us a little bit differently . . . and sometimes, it's even good for the knees.

Local Traditions, Local Communities

When we talk about community, we're thinking big. The State of New Mexico *is* the Lobo community, and we are proud to have a formal presence in so many parts of our beautiful state. Our branch campuses remain an attractive option to many of our students, not only because of their value and the strength of their programs, but also because they're rooted in the diverse regions and communities many of our students call home. These campuses not only enrich us with their history and vibrancy, but they embody our commitment to educational excellence and a more prosperous state.

With a new director at the helm alongside a dedicated long-time coordinator, the Center for Career and Technical Education at **The University of New Mexico-Gallup** is collaborating with area high schools to provide students with hands-on, career-focused education. It's one more way we're meeting the needs of regional employees, growing our workforce, and giving New Mexicans the skills they need for success.

As you can imagine, the Academy Award winning film *Oppenheimer* sparked plenty of interest in the Los Alamos area—and **UNM-Los Alamos** continues to be a vital part of that community and the region. Last month, our Los Alamos branch began teaching a 14-week certificate program for Early Childhood



Education, preparing educators who can effectively teach and support young children across diverse contexts of pre-schools, elementary schools and community centers. And did I add that we offered this certificate tuition-free? We are glad to be in the position to help with producing the highly qualified educators that New Mexicans need and deserve.

We're also working hard to address the needs of the Taos community. Last fall, **UNM-Taos** hosted its first paramedic graduation ceremony in more than 20 years, responding to the critical need for qualified paramedics in the community. All seven students in the class graduated and are now filling a crucial gap in the emergency medicine workforce in Northern New Mexico.

And out in Valencia, a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities is helping campus leaders create a vigorous humanities curriculum and provide undergraduate research opportunities emphasizing local Hispanic and Indigenous authors and history. **UNM-Valencia** is one of only 16 institutions in the nation to receive funding for this initiative.

Finally, there's our facility out in Rio Rancho, the **UNM-Sandoval Regional Medical Center**, which in the last year was ranked among the top hospitals in the nation for being equitable and socially responsible.

We're honored to receive this designation, as it reflects some of our core values as health care providers, educators, and as an institution. And it is a testament to our commitment to providing compassionate care that puts our patients first.

An Evolving Institution

As you can see, we are proud to be a part of the New Mexico community. In a state as diverse and as expansive as ours, we know that interests, opportunities, and challenges are ever-changing—and as an institution, we do our best to change with them. We're constantly revising and upgrading our programs and facilities to meet the evolving needs of our students, as well as the regional economies of our state and the expectations of our stakeholders. In short, we want our university to be more dynamic, more inclusive, and more impactful.

This is a place where our Grand Challenges are so important. Since 2018, our Grand Challenges teams have been working together to examine and solve some of New Mexico's most pressing issues. We started with three teams almost seven years ago—and since then, as new challenges have come to the forefront, we've added several more level two teams. And we're taking applications for even more.

Since 2018, the success of our Grand Challenges initiative has turned an initial \$2.25 million investment into over \$100 million in grants and awards. Over the last year, our Lobo researchers have continued to make headway—and headlines—in their endeavors.

Just last month, a Child Health Grand Challenges research team in the UNM Department of Pediatrics received a major grant to help support foster parents across our state. Meanwhile, another team in the UNM Prevention Research Center received more than \$1 million to increase family participation in statewide early childhood home visiting programs—giving families information on options they never knew they had.



And with New Mexico's leading role in space research, our Sustainable Space Research Grand Challenge Team has worked to connect New Mexico's entire space community, bringing together partners reflecting a wide range of disciplines and institutions—but all with the common goal of advancing space exploration and research . . . and advancing New Mexico.

Transformative Spaces

As New Mexico's flagship institution, we are constantly striving for a learning environment that is supportive, safe, and reflective of our role as the bustling heart of our community.

Thanks to the generosity of New Mexico voters, who supported the General Obligation Bonds that help UNM access critical funding for the renovation and expansion of some important facilities, we have several projects currently underway—and several more in the design phase—that will ensure UNM continues to provide a great education and student experience, spark top-tier research, and deliver first rate medical care.

Here are just a few of the many changes to our campus landscapes over the last year.

UNM's first dedicated space for transfer students, the Transfer and Transition Student Center, opened its doors on October 21. The center is focused on meeting the needs of transfer students, which make up about a third of the undergraduate population at UNM.

We also opened a beautiful new Lobo Welcome Center, a wonderful place to introduce our future students and their families to life as members of our pack. It's a great example of our commitment to sustainability, as we refurbished one of our oldest adobe buildings—a former men's dormitory designed by architect John Gaw Meem—maintaining its unique character while turning it into a state-of-the-art facility for all students. Its architecture is so special, in fact, that it's already brought home an award for innovative remodeling and adaptive use.

That big project you're seeing along Central Avenue? That's the Center for Collaborative Arts & Technology—an incredibly important project to our College of Fine Arts, which will, at last, have a much-needed home base for nurturing future creatives, while also creating a new hub for the New Mexico arts community.

Closer to the central part of our Albuquerque campus, we're in the process of revitalizing the Duck Pond to make it a cleaner, safer, and a better experience not only for our ducks, but for everyone else as well. This project did require relocating our duck pond residents while the area was being improved. Fortunately, we found space right in our own back yard—literally. They are camped over at the ponds at UNM's Championship Golf Course.

As I mentioned, thanks to voter support for GO Bonds in 2024, UNM has several important projects underway, including a new Humanities & Social Sciences Complex on the Albuquerque campus and some major improvements across our four branch campuses.

And at UNM Health, we're grateful to New Mexico's voters for approving the continuance of the Mill Levy that provides critical funding to patient care at UNM Hospital. And approval of the 2024 General Obligation Bond also unlocked millions of dollars in funding for the much-needed renovation and expansion of the UNM College of Pharmacy building.



Construction has also begun on a \$36 million replacement and expansion of the UNM Hospital Children's Psychiatric Center, which will increase the number of beds available for New Mexico's most vulnerable children and adolescents and allow providers to practice modern psychiatric treatments.

We're also delighted that we could start taking patients at our new Behavioral Health Crisis Center, providing psychiatric emergency services, inpatient acute care, psychiatric urgent care and addiction treatment, as well as a broad range of mental health services.

Work continues on our Critical Care Tower, which is slated to open later this year. Not only will it increase our ICU bed capacity, but with its two helipads, it will provide even more trauma care capacity. Every last inch of the 684,000-square-foot structure has been carefully designed with the experience of patients, providers and employees in mind.

Finally, we're proud to officially open the doors on our College of Nursing and Public Health Excellence building. This marks a big moment in the history of UNM Health Sciences, as we are actively endeavoring to grow our health care workforce, continue with our ever-expanding cutting-edge research, and increase access to exceptional health care for our patients. This facility represents an investment in a healthier, more prosperous New Mexico. And it is nothing short of a major investment in New Mexico's future.

A Culture of Inclusiveness

And while I'm talking about our campus learning environment, let me say that I understand that a safe and supportive campus environment is about more than just infrastructure. I know that the recent guidance that's come down from the U.S. Department of Education regarding non-discrimination has caused a great deal of uncertainty—especially among our programs designed to foster student success and inclusivity.

I can promise you this: When we say we're committed to creating a welcoming and supportive environment for *all* students, we mean it. Who we are, and what we stand for, is a reflection of the natural diversity of our state. As we review the guidance from the Department of Education, you can bet that our commitment to those core values will not be diminished. The facilities and programs we have in place to support, guide, inspire, help, and motivate our students play a vital role in their success. They have never been about exclusion; they are about creating a campus environment where all students can aspire and achieve to their fullest potential.

We embrace our differences with pride. It's all a part of our common identity as Lobos—each of us truly defines all of us. Always.

We Practice What We Teach

As home to the state's only academic health center, we offer New Mexicans access to a health care system that is both comprehensive and compassionate, and designed to meet the differing needs of diverse populations. We know that the health and well-being of our state, and our country, are directly linked to the health and well-being of our citizens.



We also know that a healthy New Mexico is a prosperous New Mexico—which is why we are always striving to expand our ability to provide access to health care services to *a//* New Mexicans, especially those areas of our state where our expertise is needed the most.

For example, we've recently opened a new clinic in Roswell, providing critical services to an area of New Mexico in need of HIV and sexual health care.

We have also started construction on a new reproductive health center in Las Cruces, bringing critical health care services to an area of New Mexico that needs it most, and ensuring women have safe, high-quality options when they need reproductive care.

And in a truly groundbreaking initiative—and in direct response to the needs of our state—UNM Hospital is training Zuni language interpreters to enhance patient care in local communities. Ideally, this first-of-its-kind initiative will lead to interpreter programs in other Tribal languages, enriching Native patient care and ensuring we can provide quality care in even more communities around our state.

A Foundation on Which to Grow

I am always awed and humbled by the generosity of our friends and fans from around the globe who believe in us and what we do. It is a testament to the extraordinary work of our Lobo pack that The University of New Mexico and the UNM Foundation have achieved a remarkable milestone in our comprehensive fundraising campaign.

Over the past four years of our campaign, we have raised over \$400 million—but while this milestone is extraordinary, it is also just the beginning. We are thankful for the generosity of supporters who recognize the role of education, research, and health care in shaping lives and communities—but we aim to achieve more by continuing to align the passions of our community with UNM's aspirations. The next phase of our campaign will begin in 2026, and we look forward to engaging even more of our community in this historic endeavor.

It's no surprise, then, that our Foundation has had a very good year. Just look at some of the major donations and gifts we've received.

We had an incredible \$5 million bequest to establish the Robert Holt Mallory Endowed Professorship in Integrative Human-Environment Dynamics in the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies.

A generous \$3.7 million bequest has endowed the Robbie and Lyman Jones Memorial Scholarship Fund, which provides significant financial aid to students in need.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of New Mexico has given a remarkable gift of \$1.6 million to fund scholarships for students in the Accelerated Second Degree Bachelor of Science in Nursing and Doctor of Nursing Practice programs.

The College of University Libraries and Learning Sciences received a \$1 million cash gift, allocated to a Technological Advancement Fund and a Mentorship Endowment.

And Gary Hines, a former UNM wrestler and successful business entrepreneur, gave UNM Athletics a \$1 million unrestricted gift, which is believed to be the largest unrestricted gift in department history. Thank you for your generosity.



Our donors regularly tell me how inspired they are by our innovative research, scholarship, and compassionate health care, and they remain firm in their conviction that a thriving UNM makes for a successful New Mexico with national and global impact. I appreciate their support for UNM and their passion for the transformative power of a Lobo education.

Once a Lobo, Always a Lobo

As always, we remain inspired by our Lobo ambassadors to the world at large: our more than 221,000 living alumni. Wherever they are in the world, we're proud they bring our Lobo pride and culture with them. With every graduating class, the ranks of our alumni grow—and our Alumni Association continues to celebrate the joy of being a Lobo for Life.

Our annual green chile roasts remain one of our most popular events for alumni—and this past fall, the roasts saw record-breaking attendance as thousands of alums across the United States enjoyed over *five and a half tons* of green chile.

Alumni has also expanded its community connections by establishing a robust career network that supports professional advancement, offering valuable resources and networking opportunities to UNM grads at every stage of their careers.

And they've really upped their game when it comes to the tradition of showcasing our university with the Lobo Living Room Program, most recently celebrating the legacy of renowned New Mexico author and UNM alumnus, Rudolfo Anaya and breaking down Swiftie-nomics with the Honors College—looking at the business of influencers like Taylor Swift and their effect on local economies.

IDEAS THAT DELIVER

Obviously, we're proud of all that we do to provide students with a great education, carry out innovative research, and deliver first-rate health care. But we also never forget that to advance New Mexico, it is vital that we lean into our resources and expertise to help advance and grow our local, global, and regional economies.

Just last week, in fact, the Mayor of Albuquerque and I signed a memorandum of understanding to explore ways UNM can expand its presence in Albuquerque, helping to revitalize the downtown district while creating new educational opportunities for our community. This could give us an unprecedented opportunity to create hands-on learning and career development while helping drive downtown Albuquerque's renaissance. More to come in the future as we engage with our community and consider our options.

Lobo Development

UNM has an extraordinary record of national leadership in entrepreneurship—largely because we understand that innovation starts with collaboration.



We work hard to support and advance partners like Innovate ABQ to promote economic development and job creation—and not just in Albuquerque, but across our region.

We also lead monthly meetings with national labs to maximize our resources and brain power. And it's paying off: UNM has over 250 jointly owned inventions with Sandia National Laboratories and over 50 jointly owned inventions with Los Alamos National Laboratory.

UNM Rainforest Innovations

And, of course, UNM's Rainforest Innovations is always looking for creative new ways to encourage entrepreneurship. As our tech-transfer and economic development organization, Rainforest Innovations protects and commercializes technologies developed at UNM by filing patents and copyrights. It is also a place where we inspire future entrepreneurs to be innovative through programs like Pitch Deck.

UNM was honored to be named as a 2024 Innovation & Economic Prosperity Award winner at the 2024 APLU conference, winning in the category of IEP Innovation for our commitment to initiatives sparking innovation, entrepreneurship, and technology-based economic development.

UNM Rainforest Innovations is also proud of its continued partnership with Right to Start, the national nonprofit organization championing entrepreneurship as a civic priority, to advance entrepreneurship in New Mexico by identifying barriers and exploring ways of removing them. We believe strongly that everyone has a right to participate in our economy, and it is our privilege to give them the tools to do so.

CONCLUSION

Looking to the future, I see a UNM that is more dynamic, more inclusive, and more impactful than ever before. I envision groundbreaking research that addresses the most pressing issues of our time. I see educational programs that not only prepare our students for the jobs of tomorrow but inspire them to create those jobs. I picture a campus that continues to be a vibrant hub of cultural exchange and intellectual discourse.

In a world that often seems divided, our campus stands as a model of unity, a place where differences are celebrated, and common ground is commonplace. Today, as we stand on the cusp of a new era, I invite you to join me in not just celebrating our past achievements but in actively shaping our collective future.

This vision is not just a dream; it is a roadmap for our journey together. It will require hard work, creativity, and sometimes difficult decisions. But I do not doubt that we are up to the task. For it is in times of change that our true character shines the brightest.

Together, we will shape a tomorrow that honors our past, addresses the needs of the present, and boldly embraces the future. Together, we will continue to be a force for positive change in New Mexico and beyond. Ultimately, it is not just what we achieve that defines us but how we achieve it—together, as Lobos, for tomorrow.