



PRESIDENT'S WEEKLY PERSPECTIVE



November 2, 2020

Good afternoon, Lobos.

Since 1986, November has been designated as National American Indian Heritage Month, a time for our nation to celebrate and recognize the significant contributions the original inhabitants of America have had on the United States. At The University of New Mexico, we honor our deep American Indian roots all year round, as a foundational part of our distinctive university culture and proud heritage as Lobos. [We gratefully acknowledge and recognize our history.](#)

UNM is proud to be home to faculty, staff, and students from our state's 23 tribal nations, including 19 Pueblos, 3 Apache Tribes and the Navajo Nation in New Mexico—as well as many from tribes beyond the borders of our state. Each is distinct and different, with unique passions and personalities—passions we see reflected in our American Indian students themselves. It is a point of pride that we work hard to recruit Native students to provide them with the support needed to ensure they arrive here as enthusiastic students and leave as graduates and Lobo alumni.

To that end, we are very fortunate to have the leadership of Pamela Agoyo and her team at UNM's [American Indian Student Services \(AISS\)](#). For four decades, AISS has been working hard to recruit and retain Native students, ably serving as UNM's liaison with students, tribal and community colleges, tribal governments, and other tribal education programs. Even through a global pandemic, American Indian Student Services continues to provide safe and friendly workspaces with computers for student use, and [offers support and advisement for students](#) both virtually and safely in-person. It is a testament to their hard work that, this past Spring, we conferred more than 400 degrees to American Indian students on our Main campus alone, a significant increase over the previous academic year. I am very proud of all that AISS does, and even prouder of all that continues to be accomplished by our Native students.

Under normal circumstances, we would be celebrating American Indian Heritage Month with countless events featuring educational, social, cultural, and artistic programming to engage the university community in learning more about the indigenous experience and perspective. While COVID restrictions have made most in-person events impossible this year, you can find a [calendar of virtual activities and celebrations](#). I also hope you'll take some time to read any of the countless books on the [American Indian experience, or by Native Americans authors, available from University of New Mexico Press](#).

We celebrate this part of our heritage as Lobos and honor the extraordinary American Indians that are a vital and vibrant part of our community, our state, and our nation.

Agora Crisis Center Marks 50 Years of Supporting Mental Health

Fifty years ago, [UNM's groundbreaking mental health support service was born of a tragedy](#), when a freshman

who was unable to find professional mental health help on campus committed suicide. In response, Frank Logan, who was then chair of the Department of Psychology, pulled together a group of students and professors to found the [Agora Crisis Center](#), which opened on our campus on October 22, 1970. That makes it one of the oldest crisis centers in the country, as well as one of the first 24-hour centers in the United States that provides free support to anyone in the world. Today, Agora director Molly Brack, her staff, and volunteers each year provide support for more than 30,000 people in need through their hotline and online chats. I am so grateful to Agora for its work and dedication; congratulations on fifty remarkable years of strength and compassion.

In a Time of Uncertainty, Let Ethics and Compliance Guide Us

At UNM, we are proud that our guiding principles include a focus on academic excellence, accountability, integrity, respect and a profound commitment to the diverse local and national cultures that make up our campus community. That is why we're pleased to join hundreds of other institutions and organizations this week to celebrate [Corporate Compliance and Ethics Week](#), to reflect on the importance of these two pillars of our institutional integrity. An ethical culture is one that exhibits a constant willingness to examine and reflect on its own decision-making processes and, when necessary, look for ways to keep improving; here at The University of New Mexico, we take this responsibility seriously and value the trust of our students, employees, and community. We promise to always work to do well and, more importantly, to do good.

Vice President for Research Search Advances

Three finalists have been selected by [our Search Advisory Committee](#) to interview for the position of VP for Research. The finalists—[Dr. Colleen Fitzgerald](#), [Dr. Ellen Fisher](#), and [Dr. Pamela Padilla](#)—will each hold two open forums that will welcome all staff, faculty and students who wish to participate. The first forum, with Dr. Fitzgerald, begins on November 4, from 11:00 to noon, and the second will be held on November 5, from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. Additional background on all three candidates, as well as complete schedules for all open forums, are [available here](#).

UNM Community Demonstrates Praiseworthy Efforts to Mitigate COVID-19

Even as cases and hospitalizations continue to rise in New Mexico and the United States, UNM has adopted model practices and protocols for health and safety that, thankfully, are keeping the Lobo community safe. While we must continue to be vigilant, I am particularly grateful to our students who have been conscientious about wearing masks and maintaining physical distancing and are responsibly refraining from holding in-person gatherings. Simply put, their diligence continues to save lives. I know it's been a long year, but I can't tell you how much [I appreciate our faculty, staff, and students taking the threat of this virus seriously](#), and regularly making the sacrifices that are keeping our campus and our community safe. Every day, Lobos prove they are looking out for their pack—and I couldn't be prouder of everyone.

Remember to Vote!

Tomorrow, November 3, is Election Day 2020—and as part of our COVID-configured Fall semester calendar, we have selected tomorrow as one of the Fall Break days for students. If you didn't have the opportunity to vote early, please [find your polling location](#), and then [make a plan to go vote](#) on Tuesday. I encourage you to go in

prepared, and familiarize yourself with the candidates and the ballot initiatives—like [several General Obligation Bonds important to our state universities and libraries.](#)

Stay safe, stay healthy, and let's go, Lobos!

Regards,

Garnett S. Stokes
President