



# PRESIDENT'S WEEKLY PERSPECTIVE



June 15, 2020

Good afternoon.

This Friday, June 19th, marks the 155th anniversary of Juneteenth – the day in 1865 on which Union soldiers landed in Texas and delivered the news that the Civil War had ended and that the Emancipation Proclamation had freed nearly four million from chattel slavery. Over the past few weeks, our country has been very publicly reflecting and taking action on issues involving racism and its systemic bearing on our communities, giving this year's Juneteenth celebration an even greater impact. I don't think it could be any more important, and I don't think there could be a better time for amplifying the message that Black Lives Matter.

We remember this occasion not only to commemorate the liberation of our fellow Americans, but also to reflect on the progress that remains to be made to ensure that Black Americans have genuine access to freedom, opportunity, and self-determination. Here at The University of New Mexico, it's a time for celebrating the contributions of Black voices and Black art to our wonderfully diverse New Mexican culture, and honoring the Black faculty, staff, and students in our community who make our lives and experiences at UNM that much richer. And as Dr. Assata Zerai, UNM's Vice President for Equity and Inclusion, remarked: "What better way is there to celebrate Juneteenth than to ensure we have a complete count in the US census to ensure that resources are set aside so we can hire teachers with competitive salaries, and provide crucial information technologies to our students?"

Appropriately, too, we're also marking the occasion with some conversation and self-reflection, beginning on June 19 at noon with [\*Laughing Through the Hard Times: Centering Trans and Queer Black Voices in 2020\*](#) – a conversation between Frankie Flores of the UNM LGBTQ Resources Center, and musician, activist and scholar Laz Letcher on Black queerness, history and survival in 2020. Then, on June 25 at 4:30 p.m., the UNM Division of Equity & Inclusion will host [\*a virtual dialogue with the Albuquerque Mayor's Office for Equity and Inclusion\*](#), titled *Soft & Strong: Centering Black Womxn, Youth & Queer Communities*. We're proud to be taking part in these ongoing efforts to make space for silenced voices in the Black Lives Matter movement.

Additionally, beginning June 19 and running through the end of August to coincide with the 57th anniversary of the March on Washington, the [\*UNM Newsroom\*](#) will be running a series of features on race and racism – including pieces exploring the history of the civil rights movement leading up to the Emancipation Proclamation and Juneteenth, race-related protests in the United States, and anti-Blackness in the media among others. I'm proud of the ongoing work that's being done to educate and raise awareness of some of the fundamental issues related to race and racism in New Mexico and the United States – including gaps and omissions in our cultural knowledge that we need to fill in now more than ever.

## **It's June 15th. Here's What You Need to Know.**

As New Mexico begins to slowly and safely re-open, The University of New Mexico and our Health Sciences Center are also working hard to responsibly "Bring Back the Pack" by enacting a [\*comprehensive plan to move\*](#)

[our campus back to a fully operational status](#). This week, here's what you need to know:

- Summer courses, which began on June 1, are being conducted remotely, while [some laboratory and research facilities are continuing to carefully ramp up their activities](#).
- UNM's Main and Branch campuses are continuing with [a daily screening policy for all employees](#). Employees will receive a daily e-mail inquiring whether they will be working on campus--and if so, checking to see if employees are showing any symptoms of illness.
- To the extent possible, please continue to work remotely. Some faculty and staff will need to return to campus to carry out their functions; please do so in a safe and responsible manner, following [worksite protocols](#).
- Social distancing and the use of masks continue to be required whenever individuals are working or spending any time around others.
- Parking enforcement has resumed its [normal summer schedule](#).
- Lobo Athletics has issued [guidance for the Lobo football home opener](#) at Dreamstyle Stadium on August 29.
- To help slow the spread of infection, we are continuing with our [policy of self-reporting](#) either symptoms of or a positive test for COVID-19.
- We're also constantly updating our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) as new questions arrive.

## Harris Smith Named as Dean of the College of Fine Arts

Just as the arts are a vibrant element of the New Mexican culture, so, too, have they been an essential part of the University of New Mexico since our inception more than 130 years ago. Our College of Fine Arts remains a global destination, admired for its cultural, academic and research distinction, and I'm pleased to announce the arrival of [Harris Smith as our new Dean of the College of Fine Arts](#), effective August 1. Smith, who recently chaired the Department of Theater at the University of Utah, comes to us following a [thorough search conducted during the pandemic by a series of open forums and Zoom interviews](#). My thanks to the committee for their work and for finding such a remarkable candidate. Smith earned his B.A. in Theatre Arts at Montana State University, and his MFA at the University of Washington. We're delighted to welcome him to the Lobo pack.

## ABQ BioPark Welcomes New Lobos

As we Bring Back the Pack, I thought I'd share a bit of enjoyable news: in Albuquerque, the Lobo pack got a little bit larger, following the birth of seven Mexican gray wolves at the ABQ BioPark this past May, and just last week, the [Lobo pups left their den for the first time to adorably explore their surroundings](#). The litter is the result of a cooperative breeding program between the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Mexican Wolf Species Survival Plan and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Wolf Recovery Plan, which aims to restore Mexican wolves to their native southwest territory, including New Mexico. The BioPark has now welcomed 79 Lobo pups since 1983.

Have a good week, stay safe, and let's go Lobos!

Regards,

Garnett Stokes  
President