



PRESIDENT'S WEEKLY PERSPECTIVE



July 6, 2020

Good afternoon,

When UNM went to remote instruction and limited operations in late March in response to the coronavirus pandemic, I'm not sure any of us imagined that, come July, we'd still be living in such uncertain times and under such unusual conditions. As we approach the beginning of the Fall 2020 semester—only a little more than a month away!—you've no doubt got plenty of questions about how The University of New Mexico will be operating as we “Bring Back the Pack” and move forward into the next academic year. The answer is: *very carefully*, and with your health and safety as our first priority.

The thoughtful guidance and planning that has been taking place over the past several weeks as a part of Bringing Back the Pack is continuing to be rolled out as we look toward the Fall 2020 semester. We have recently posted guidance on [safely conducting research both on- and off-campus](#) as well as the new protocols for [reopening buildings](#), and I want to bring to your attention the [Staff Return to Campus](#) and [Department Return to Campus](#) guidebooks just released by Human Resources. I think you'll find these documents will become some of your go-to references for working and functioning in the new campus environment, including maintaining safe workspaces, mandatory mask-wearing, and information on a new training that *must be* completed before returning to campus.

Our goal is to provide the campus community clear guidance that will help us all adapt to our new ways of operating, but I also want to explain our thinking behind many of these new protocols and procedures.

First of all, we keep an eye on the numbers. We regularly monitor the number of reported cases of coronavirus in New Mexico, following not only the trends in their rise and fall, but also, given that we have facilities all around the state, their locations. And frankly, as of this past weekend, the story the numbers have to tell us isn't a happy one. Reported cases, as well as corona-related deaths, are on the rise in communities across the state. If such trends continue, that may affect the way we approach the Fall semester.

Next, we work closely with federal and State health officials to ensure we're taking the appropriate steps to reduce outbreaks in and around our campus communities. You may have seen that, out of concern over increasing outbreaks, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham has paused the reopening of the state, endorsed mandatory quarantines for those coming to New Mexico from out-of-state, and required the use of masks in most public situations. We take these recommendations seriously—our own safety standards usually exceed this guidance—and we'll continue to base our decisions on science, and not social media. We wear masks, for example, not as a statement, but because science shows that wearing them protects us all—my mask protects you, your mask protects me. Period.

We also always keep in mind that running a university is like managing a small city. We have been working on our plan to phase in our reopening, to responsibly bring back our pack, for months, but it takes a lot of hard

work to anticipate every scenario, every last detail. While we have made decisions quickly, they've never been made hastily. From restrooms to classrooms, drinking fountains to dining halls, there is no matter or decision too small to think about or worry about. Any plans we have to bring UNM back to full operations means we must anticipate and devise solutions for the countless scenarios that affect our safety.

As ever, we remain committed to ensuring that we provide a quality education, cutting-edge research, and first-rate health care, but our first responsibility will always be health and safety. While we're moving forward with our plans to bring back the pack, we're also prepared to amend these plans if, at any time, enacting them unchanged would result in endangering your health, or the health of our communities. We are also aware that moving forward with or adjusting our blueprint for reopening at full capacity may impact certain students harder than others. We will work to ensure equity and inclusion for all students, faculty, and staff, and if you believe we're not anticipating your needs, please contact our LoboRESPECT Advocacy Center.

For now, please continue to follow the protocols and guidance set forth by our [Bring Back the Pack](#) plan, consult with your individual departments, and check our [Coronavirus/Bring Back the Pack FAQs](#) for further information. I'll also continue to include the "What You Need to Know" feature, seen below, in my weekly communication where you can find some of our most vital information.

We're in this together—and I appreciate your patience and flexibility as we continue to adjust to a new normal.

It's July 6—Here's What You Need to Know

The University of New Mexico, including our Health Sciences Center (HSC), is 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.
- HR has issued [guidance for staff](#) and [departments](#) on safely returning to campus.
- Guidance has been issued for [conducting research in both in on- and off-campus facilities](#).
- Facilities Management has established [a request process to re-open individual departments](#), designed to organize and prioritize the areas that can move towards an increased on-campus presence. Once a department's Return to Operations plan has been approved by the appropriate dean/director, the next step towards increasing specific department's on-campus presence will be to [submit a formal Facility Re-open Request on the Facility Re-open Request website](#).
- UNM and HSC are continuing with a [daily e-mail screening policy for all employees](#).
- 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](#).
- Physical distancing and the use of masks continue to be required whenever individuals are working or spending any time around others.
- The Main Campus and Medical/Legal Bookstores are both open, though with [limited hours and public health/safety restrictions in place](#).
- Residence Life and Student Housing has issued [guidance for the Fall 2020 semester](#).

- Parking enforcement has resumed its [normal summer schedule](#).
- Lobo Athletics has issued [guidance for the Lobo football home opener](#) at University Stadium on August 29.
- The [Fall 2020 instructional schedule](#) maintains the same start and end dates for the term, and the same number of instructional days as required by our regional accreditor, but will spread the two fall break days out over early October and early November, including making election day a non-instructional day. We will also end in-person instruction just before Thanksgiving. Finals will take place from December 7 through December 12.
- 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 arise.

State Budget Cuts Hit UNM

We're six days into Fiscal Year 2021, and the state legislature just concluded its special session to address the economic challenges associated with the COVID-19 outbreak, which required cutting the state's overall budget by nearly \$2 billion. For UNM, this more austere outlook means a reduction of \$22 million at our main campus, with HSC and branch campuses looking at similar declines in funding. While we will also likely need to address a decline in tuition revenues, the current budget still makes the Opportunity Scholarship available for four-year degree programs beginning in Fall 2021. These scholarships are vital to providing students with an access to a four-year degree at an increasingly critical time.

While I'm pleased the revised budget maintained funding for the Opportunity Scholarship, I share in the disappointment at the decision, borne of financial necessity, to eliminate the much anticipated 4% pay increase for state employees—an action that will consequently require us at The University of New Mexico to revise our own budget relating to employee compensation. Given the state's fiscal outlook, we may also be obligated to make further reductions, and the Budget Leadership Team and UNM administration will continue working together through the summer and into the fall semester to guide any of these necessary decisions.

I know this is discouraging news, and I can't tell you how much I appreciate all of you for your continued understanding, dedication, and patience as UNM charts the best path forward in this rapidly changing environment.

HSC Executive Vice President Search Advances

With Chancellor for Health Sciences Paul Roth retiring at the end of this month, the [HSC Search Advisory Committee](#) has continued with its task of conducting a rigorous search for a new HSC Executive Vice President. [Four candidates have been identified to visit campus and meet with various constituents via Zoom.](#) Their planned visits will abide by state and federal health guidelines, and all necessary precautions will be taken. While the limitations imposed by the current pandemic are a challenge, it is critical that the University community be engaged in this critical leadership decision.

Joseph Silva Selected as Interim UNM Police Chief

I am pleased to announce that UNM Police Department (UNMPD) Commander Joseph Silva has agreed to serve as the Interim Chief of Police while we consider the future structure and leadership of the Department. Joe is committed to establishing and fostering strong communications, engagement and positive working

relationships with UNM students, faculty, staff, and the greater Lobo community. During this transition, he will apply his broad law enforcement leadership experience to focusing on campus-based engagement, public safety, and community policing.

UNM and Sandia Laboratories Form New Strategic Alliance

The University of New Mexico and Sandia National Laboratories (SNL) recently [signed a ten-year Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\) for a strategic alliance](#), focusing on how UNM and Sandia can collaborate to solve challenges relating to national security. The MOU will focus on three areas--Solving Big Problems, Sustaining and Engaging Human Capital, and Accelerating Technology Adoption—and will replace and expand on an agreement UNM and SNL have had in place since 2015. I'm excited by the endless possibilities offered by this collaboration as we extend our mutual reach and expertise to bolster our national security needs.

Take care, stay safe, and let's go Lobos!

Regards,

Garnett S. Stokes
President