



# PRESIDENT'S WEEKLY PERSPECTIVE



July 13, 2020

Good afternoon.

As we approach mid-July, COVID-19 continues to spread and [current executive and public health orders](#) continue to shape and guide our plans to Bring Back the Pack. The resulting challenges we face in relation to re-opening safely have led to ongoing uncertainties across all dimensions of UNM. Anxiety levels are high among members of our entire community – due not only to the pandemic, but also to ongoing calls for social justice, precarious economies and trying to balance it all while maintaining our health and mental well-being.

Lobos, we have been through a lot, some much more than others. Good news seems in short supply, but it still exists; I see it in both the desire and deeds of our community to make it through and make it better. And that's why we cannot lose our focus. The success of this institution is driven by our mission and by the talent, creativity and dedication of our hardworking students, faculty and staff who always strive to improve how we serve the public. Thank you for all you do.

## **UNM Supports and Defends International Students**

Last week, the Department of Homeland Security, through its Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) office, [issued a draft rule](#) that will not permit international students to remain in the country if their classes are taken entirely online. I am alarmed that ICE would issue such guidance—a deliberate slap at the international students who are such a vital part of The University of New Mexico, where they conduct important research and contribute to our classroom culture. They are a vibrant part of our University community and an important part of our overall Lobo DNA.

As of Fall 2019, UNM served more than 1,100 international students from 100 countries; more than 600 of these students are graduate students, many of whom teach undergraduate courses, act as graders or are actively involved in research activities at UNM. The absence of international students from our classrooms, laboratories, and community would truly diminish us all. From a pure economic standpoint, international students studying at U.S. colleges and universities helped contribute nearly \$41 billion to the U.S. economy during the 2018-2019 academic year; at The University of New Mexico alone, their contributions in the same period amounted to more than \$43 million.

But the contributions of our international students are more than purely economic. Our international students make our university, our state, and our nation richer and more diverse, sharing with us different perspectives that enhance the education of our students and world view of all of us. This is especially true in a place like New Mexico, where the very fabric of our culture is a collective of wonderfully diverse communities, cultures, and perspectives. As Lobos, and as New Mexicans, we have always embraced the differences that make us individually unique, and woven them together to create a stronger, more diverse, and cohesive community.

And so, to our community of international students, let me promise you that we want you here, and we will do all we can to support you, your health, and your educational progress.

This Fall, UNM will be operating under a hybrid academic model, which permits students to take a combination of in-person and online courses. This means we can work with our international students to ensure at least one of their classes will be in-person—and many of our international students already do, in fact, meet this standard. We will work with others who may need to change their enrollment plans with the support of their academic and faculty advisors. For faculty and staff who need further information, the Associate Provost for Student Success and Associate Provost for Faculty Development have recently issued [joint guidance for supporting our international students](#).

It is also critical that any new rule or guidance from ICE does not impede our ability to implement policies that protect the health and safety of our students during a pandemic. Our students who are here on VISAs, away from their home countries during a global pandemic, should never have to worry that their health is being compromised. It is especially irresponsible to mandate any particular course of instruction for any students during a global pandemic, when colleges and universities must be permitted the flexibility to adopt policies, protocols, and means of instruction that protect the health and safety of the entire university community. This mandate issued by DHS hamstrings The University of New Mexico and other colleges and universities in our ability to provide a quality education in the safest and most appropriate learning environment.

I am pleased that New Mexico is one of seventeen states, and the District of Columbia, who are suing to block this unfair and restrictive rule proposed by ICE. I am hopeful that colleges and universities will ultimately be provided with the continued flexibility we need to provide all of our students with a fair and safe access to a great education.

### **It's July 13. 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:

#### **New This Week:**

- [Updated travel guidelines](#) have been issued for University employees.
- HR has released *Bringing Back the Pack: Phasing in Our Return to Full Operations Training*. This training is required of all employees before they return to work on campus, and has been automatically assigned in Learning Central.

#### **Continuing Policies:**

- 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 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. This is in accordance with state health protocols as well.
- 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.

## UNM Welcomes First Candidate for Health Sciences EVP

Amid the work being done to Bring Back the Pack, the [HSC Search Advisory Committee](#) continues with its task of conducting a rigorous search for a new HSC Executive Vice President. The first candidate, [Dr. Veronica Mallett](#), will [meet with various constituent groups via Zoom this Thursday and Friday](#). The second candidate, [Dr. Elena Fuentes-Afflick](#), will interview on July 20 and 22; the third, [Dr. Cheryl Healton](#), will interview on July 23 and 24; and the fourth candidate, [Dr. Douglas Ziedonis](#), will interview on July 27 and 29. While the limitations imposed by the current pandemic present any number of challenges—including those surrounding a potential site visit by any candidate—it is critical that the University community be engaged in this critical leadership decision.

## STC.UNM Changes Name, Draws National Recognition

Effective July 1, STC.UNM is now [officially known as UNM Rainforest Innovations](#), a nod to the innovation district created by STC in downtown Albuquerque, which includes the Lobo Rainforest Building. The organization's commitment to its mission of driving technology-transfer and economic development, however, remains unchanged. A new report from Opus Faveo Innovation Development and the George W. Bush Institute, in fact, [ranks The University of New Mexico 2nd among mid-sized research universities](#) for innovation impact

productivity—a substantial national ranking for UNM. Meanwhile, one of UNM Rainforest Innovations' start-ups, Avisa Pharma, is [planning to go public this summer on the TSX Venture Exchange](#) in Toronto. Avisa Pharma was formed to commercialize breath-test technology for early detection and treatment of lung infections, developed by UNM Associate Professor and Innovation Fellow Dr. Graham Timmins. Congratulations to Dr. Timmins and to the team at [UNM Rainforest Innovations!](#)

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

Garnett S. Stokes  
President